
The Voice

Founded 1906

Congregation Ahavath Israel A Liberal Conservative Synagogue

Affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

December 2007

Kislev-Tevet 5768

Message from the Rabbi

From time to time I need to go back to the basics. And for me one of the basics in how we think about a synagogue. The following is excerpted from a 1995 article by the great Rabbi Louis Jacobs.

"The mishnaic rule (Berakhot 9:1) that one must not use the Temple Mount as a shortcut is applied in the [Babylonian] Talmud (Berakhot 62b) to the synagogue as well. The 16th century standard code of Jewish law] Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 151) under the heading: "The Laws With Regard to the Sanctity of the Synagogue" reads in part:

"One should not behave in a frivolous manner in a synagogue or house of study, by cracking jokes there, for instance, or by indulging in humorous or pointless gossip. One should not eat or drink there nor should one adorn oneself there or walk about there. One should not enter there in summer to cool off or in winter to seek shelter from the rain. In an emergency, scholars and their disciples are permitted to eat and drink there."

"No monetary calculations should be made there unless they are for religious purposes, collecting money for charity, for example, or for the redemption of captives. No funeral orations should be delivered there unless it is for one of the leading citizens of the city when all assemble there for the purpose. If a man finds it necessary to enter there for his own needs, to call someone, for instance, he should read or study something and then call him so that it should not appear as if he has entered for his own needs.... "

A synagogue is not like any other building. And a congregation is not like any other organization. In Hebrew we call a congregation a *kehilla*, from the word *kahal*, to be gathered. The actual name is *kehilla kedosha*, a holy gathering, reminding us that we have formed this entity for a separate purpose, the service of God.

As I reconnect to this basic thought I am reflecting that our behavior, our language, even our thoughts should be

separate from the way we frame things outside the synagogue. The way we relate to others, the things we say, the way we frame our discussions should all have the sense of being a holy congregation with goals that are far different than the world of business outside. *Continued on page 4*

Rabbi Crystal

Message from the President

Many years ago, my daughter's middle school music class had an oral quiz: the teacher would play portions of a Christmas song, and they would have to identify the song. People did not understand why I was upset. After all, students who did not know the songs weren't penalized. A few months before that, I got into a mini battle with my daughter's softball coach over games played on Saturday morning (My daughter was studying for her bas mitzvah at the time and was in shul every Saturday morning). The coach didn't understand why I was upset. After all, she would not be penalized for missing games. (He had no answer when asked why it was alright to schedule games on Saturday mornings but not Sunday mornings). A few years ago, the local Board of Realtors scheduled an important membership meeting and vote on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. I complained and the Board, to their credit, rescheduled it after being informed of the conflict, although the first reply was, "What's the problem, your broker's not Jewish."

For those of you who think these events are ancient history, think again. Just a few months ago the Village of Herkimer held its bicentennial parade on Yom Kippur. The village had been aware for many months of the scheduling problem, yet refused to move the parade back a day, giving various excuses such as the participants would not be able to attend if the date was changed (although all but one had no problem rescheduling it for the next day). And closer to home, Kingston High School held a marching band competition on Yom Kippur.

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Congregation Ahavath Israel
Rabbi Tamar Crystal

On the web at
<http://ahavathisraelkingston.org>

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SPONSOR A SHABBAT LUNCHEON

Have a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion? Why not sponsor a Shabbat luncheon? Starting in October, we hope to have a monthly Shabbat luncheon. Please consider sponsoring one. Call the office or Candy Belles for information.

Sign up for Goodsearch.
Go to: <http://www.goodsearch.com>

Sign up for the charity Congregation Ahavath Israel and every time you use Goodsearch as your search engine you help make money for the synagogue.

The Voice Online

The Voice will soon be available by e-mail or online only, except for those with no access. Please make sure the Office has your e-mail address. If you need to continue receiving the Voice by mail, please let the Office know.

Schedule of Weekly Services

Shabbat Services

Friday 6:30 pm
Saturday 9:30 am
Sunday Minyan 9:00 am



Office Hours

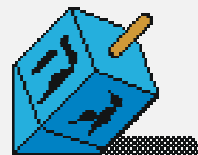
Tuesday - Friday
10:00-3:00

TO CONTACT RABBI CRYSTAL

Study and voice mail: (845) 339-3956
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email: rabbi.crystal@gmail.com

Rabbi Crystal is usually available during our regular office hours except for Tuesdays and welcomes all to drop in. But please be advised that community meetings and visits to those who are ill, in trouble or mourning may take her out of the office during those times. In addition she welcomes all who wish to make appointments after office hours including afternoons, evenings and Sundays. Please call or e-mail her to set up an appointment.

Happy Chanukah



This issue of The Voice sponsored by

Dr. Cy Gruberg, PhD

In memory of my beloved father

Joseph Gruberg

December 24th, 1896

“There is not a day that you are not thought of and missed.”

Love, Cy

Kitchen News and Views
By Candace Belles

The kitchen is in full Fall swing. The month of December will be devoted to baking for the onegs. We're always looking for new treats and always a few extra hands. We will also be setting up our Kosher 101 classes again for anyone interested or in need of a refresher on Kashrut practices in the shul kitchen as well as your home. Call Candy for details at 331-3711.

Our December and January dinners are set and flyers are in this issue. We are looking for dinner ideas for February and March. Anyone interested in sponsoring and or preparing can call me.

Sisterhood News
By Candace Belles

We had a successful paid up meeting and the program was well received. Our November general meeting was postponed due to an outside lecture event at SUNY New Paltz. We hope to get a report on this lecture at our next general meeting. The general meeting will be a Chanukkah Sweets celebration on Wednesday, December 5 at 7:30 pm. Look for the flyer in this issue.

During January and February, our meetings will be suspended due to the winter. Our Book club continues to bring a group together and is doing very well. The next Book review will be on December 12 at the home of Susan

Rafkind. The book to be discussed will be, "The Search for G-d at Harvard" by New York Times Religion writer, Ari Goldman.

We will hold a few workshops and craft projects over the winter months for anyone interested. Watch your email and snail mail for times and dates. Any ideas please call our craft chairs, Lisa King-Smith or Marlene Steiner.

Plans are being finalized for our trip to Israel in March 2008. There are still a few openings. Don't miss out on the great price and a chance to help Israel celebrate 60 years. Call the office or Candy Belles for forms.

We have had two of our major fund raisers during the past month. The brisket dinner was well attended and with very little food left over. Our fall rummage sale was stocked full. Traffic was light but those who came were looking for bargains. We gave our leftover coats to the Ulster County Coat Drive and also provided men's and women's clothing to Social Service agencies for the back-to-work program. We would entertain any new ideas for fundraisers.

In the next month or so, when coming to shul, bring an item for the food drive or the holiday gift drive. Baskets and suggested items are in the main foyer. Both of these community drives are sorely needed and greatly appreciated by the people they help. Both of these programs will run through December 15.

Shabbat Services

Please come for Shabbat services, but please, when you do, remember that at shul we are shomer shabbas and therefore the use of cell phones is prohibited during Shabbat and should be turned off during services, and that calls should not be made to the Synagogue from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday night. (Check the conveniently located calender in each issue for candle-lighting and end times).

No synagogue business may be conducted on Shabbat (ie: shopping for synagogue functions, phone calls or emails to synagogue members regarding synagogue business, etc.)

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

**CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT:
 EMBARKING ON A NEW "MASA"**

The Conservative Movement is looking at new options for young adults wanting long-term work/study programs in Israel that are, on the one hand, connected with important contemporary areas of social/political concern and, on the other, infused with the values of Jewish living.

Three new programs have been proposed and are being organized in conjunction with the MASA Program, which is the joint endeavor of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Government of Israel. They are:

A. A Conservative/Masorti Internship option based within the context of one of our Masorti communities which would both identify work opportunities and provide ongoing social, educational and religious support to the interns.

B. A Conservative track at the Arava Institute, located at the Masorti-oriented Kibbutz Ketura, which would combine the institute's academic program in environmental studies with Jewish sources.

C. A new Galilee-based program which would focus on inter-religious/inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

While no official launching date for the three new Conservative work/study programs has been set, MERCAZ and United Synagogue are in serious discussions with "MASA" towards the start of registration in the next 3-6 months. For more information, please contact Nahum Binder, USY Central Shaliach, at binder@uscj.org or Itamar Kremer, Shaliach to the Conservative Movement, at shaliach@mercazusa.org.

Rabbi's message continued from page 1

We have created this holy gathering to connect with God and to enable others to serve God through prayer and education. That is the primary purpose of a synagogue - prayer and education. A secondary purpose is charity - supporting the sick and those in need through rituals, acts and funds. Alongside this may come much-needed socialization. But our tradition tells us where to place our priorities.

Remembering our primary purpose will help us reorder our priorities. The synagogue does not exist to support a building. The building exists to support the primary purpose of the synagogue. And it should help us reorder our thoughts and expressions. If we remember that this is literally a house of God we will act with the respect and loving-kindness detailed throughout our Torah.

Respect and loving-kindness are the foundation of every synagogue. I hope that by constantly remembering our primary purpose we will increase our respect and love for each other in every area of our holy community.

Rabbi Tamar Crystal

President's message continued from page 1

These events, though many years apart and quite different from each other in nature, point to a greater problem: how do we, and more importantly, our children, maintain our Jewish identity in a Christian world? Do we speak out, and

risk offending our non-Jewish friends? Or do we remain silent and act like nothing is wrong? In 2000, after Senator Lieberman was tapped as VP Gore's running mate, newspapers throughout the country sought out Jewish politicians for their reaction. One local politician stated in our local paper that she was Jewish, but never told anybody for fear it would hurt her at the polls. In fact, she said that when people would make anti-semitic comments, she would nod her head in agreement and just go along with the crowd. Just recently, this politician advised Marsha to remove all references to Ahavath Israel from her campaign literature. Marsha, of course, refused.

While some of the above occurrences might seem minor, they are symptomatic of something larger, and far more dangerous. For many years the religious right has been attempting to push religion (their version of it) into government and the schools, slowly eroding the separation between church and state. On its surface, a non-denominational moment of silent worship in school might seem harmless, and it probably is. The problem arises when those members of the religious right start to inject their beliefs on young, impressionable children. If these people truly believe that two minutes of prayer is so important for the well-being of their children, then they should wake their kids up a few minutes earlier and spend some quality time in personal prayer with their children, not trust it to some teacher who may or may not believe as they do. Imagine the uproar if a Christian child came home from school and told his mother that their teacher had the class recite the Amidah.

During one of my High Holiday speeches, I believe I said that we were assimilating ourselves into extinction. Unless we are willing to stand up and proudly acknowledge our heritage, and speak out, both individually and as a group, we will indeed cease to exist. One may ask why I bring all this up now. The answer is simple. For the next month, we will be bombarded with everything Christmas. From Christmas carols blaring from speakers on the city streets to Christmas sales at just about every store in town. During this time it is important to remember who we are, and not to get carried away by the "Christmas spirit." When everybody around is talking about Christmas, remember what Hanukkah stands for and why we celebrate it.

So, as the holiday season approaches, remember the important holiday, the one with the candles, not the one with the jolly fellow shouting, "Ho, ho, ho!" .



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NOVEMBER YAHRZEITS

"The Lord will guard your going out
and your coming home, now and forever"

יהוה ישמר צאתך
ובואך מעתה ועד עולם - Psalm 121

21 Kislev December 1	Nathan Badian Joe Wasserlauf	5 Tevet December 14	Nathan Finkelstein
22 Kislev December 2	Hindla Luksberg Harry Spiegel Bella Jacobs	6 Tevet December 15	Sarah Plasker Louis Kalina
23 Kislev December 3	David Netburn	7 Tevet December 16	Sydney Lebow Joseph Schweitzman Edna L. Kessler Newton Teitel Sharon Adin
24 Kislev December 4	Deborah Helmrich Mrs. Jacob Laber	9 Tevet December 18	Philip Rice David Berg
25 Kislev December 5	Frieda Pekarowitz George Schwartz Falek Schildhorn	10 Tevet December 19	Philip Glickman Marilyn Werbalowsky Ronder
26 Kislev December 6	Ben Schecter Richard Adin Vitta Solomon Johnston Kate Wendrow	11 Tevet December 20	Fayne Grossman Julia Werner Joseph Jacobson
27 Kislev December 7	Florence Margolis Sidney Raymond	12 Tevet December 21	George Kramer
28 Kislev December 8	Louis Feldman Jean Friedman Harold Seidel	13 Tevet December 22	Morris Davidowitz Max Plasker Rebecca "Betty" Sultar Joseph Weber
29 Kislev December 9	Karel Cohen Bertha Lehner Dr. Samuel Edelstein Jacob Heller Emil Klein	14 Tevet December 23	Yussie Greenstein Regina Berger Sadie Levine Max Lewis
1 Tevet December 10	Sadie Fiedler Leon Millrod Eva Shaffer Joseph Rabinowitz Arnold Klein	15 Tevet December 24	Bessie Feinberg Dr. Irving Adner Oskar Salmon Israel Avis
2 Tevet December 11	Shirley Zwickel Paye Brossman Moishe Itelson Rose Kirschner	16 Tevet December 25	Stuart Rosenthal Yekusiel Tompkins
3 Tevet December 12	Bessie Millens Jacques Schwalbe	17 Tevet December 26	Meyer Levy Herbert Raymond Singer Aaron Burman
4 Tevet December 13	Carrie Sobel Lillian Alpert William Weiss William Field	18 Tevet December 27	Celia Steigman Beatrice Jacobson Louis Ross Eva Tamin Weber

19 Tevet
December 28

William Spiegel
Barney Millens

21 Tevet
December 30

Ella Kobransky

20 Tevet
December 29

Jules Schwartz

22 Tevet
December 31

Gene Saks
Jack Furman
Michael Rand Karpin

MI SHABERACH LIST

We are updating our Mi Shaberach List. As of 7-01-07, names will remain on the Mi Shaberach List for one month; unless the office has been notified to keep the person on longer. You must call the office (338-4409) each month that you want the person left on the list. We would like their Hebrew name and their English name along with the name of the person submitting this information. Thank you for your co-operation.

Chris Kowalenko

Congregation Ahavath Israel Burial Benefits

Are you aware that synagogue membership allows you to purchase burial rights in Congregation Ahavath Israel's section of Montrepose Cemetery in Kingston? The burial benefit plan includes the cemetery plot plus payment toward some of the internment costs. Plan fee is based on age at the time of enrollment. If you would like more detailed information on the burial benefit, call the synagogue office for a Plan description or contact David Goodlife.

Talmud Torah

Comprehensive Jewish education is being offered from kindergarten through high school. Our enhanced curriculums include Hebrew, Torah, music, prayer, Jewish and Biblical history and cooking, as well as complete Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparation.

We offer small classes with individualized attention specific to your child's needs!

****NEW!**** Comprehensive two-year Bar/Bat Mitzvah course for children 10 and up who have not previously attended Talmud Torah (or have limited Hebrew education).

Call the synagogue secretary at 338-4409 or Rabbi Crystal at 339-3956 for more information.

**** Free 2 week trial for new students****

KASHRUT CLASSES

Kashrut classes will start in late November or early December. Anyone interested should call Candy Belles at 331-8711 or Chris Kowalenko at 338-8612.

Congregation Ahavath Israel can now accept credit cards in payment for dues and other fees from members. Currently we accept payments from Mastercard, Visa, and Diners Club. For dues payments, we can credit your account annually, quarterly, or monthly. If you wish to pay by credit card, we need to know your card number, the expiration date, the amount of the credit, and the expense which you are paying. Please make sure the numbers are legible. After completing each transaction, we will mail a record of the transaction to the member. Please mail the information to the synagogue.

David Goodlife, Financial Secretary

A Happy and Healthy 2008



From the Voice Editorial Board