



## The Revival of Our Sister Synagogue in Göttingen, Germany



Rabbi Alex  
Lazarus-Klein

One of the central miracles of Hanukkah is that a small amount of oil was able to last for eight days, thus ensuring that the Temple menorah would once again be lit at the end of the Maccabee revolution. While seemingly insignificant, the miracle of the oil had and continues to have a powerful psychological effect on our people. We were suffering, at the end of a long, cold winter. The lit menorah showed us that sometimes survival is just holding on, doing just enough to make it through the hard times, to be able to enjoy the rewards when things turn around.

I was reminded of this lesson during my trip to Göttingen, Germany in November. Here was a town whose entire Jewish community was seemingly wiped out 73 years ago, on what is now known as the November Pogrom: The synagogue burned to the ground and more than 200 Jews were ruthlessly murdered. But, through the hard days of the next seven years, and the decades and decades of rebuilding, tiny embers continued to burn. Slowly, Jews like George and Wilma Iggers returned to Göttingen. There were not enough people to form a synagogue, but they would meet one another, often informally, and dream of a day when the synagogue could be rebuilt.

In the early 1990s, as Jews began to flood into Germany from the former USSR, Jews and Christians began to strategize about how best to start again. An old synagogue was discovered from a neighboring village, preserved from destruction by a creative farmer who had turned it into a barn, thus evading Nazi wrath. And, piece by piece, the synagogue was taken apart and flown 20 miles or so, into the heart of downtown Göttingen.

In November, I was able to take a tour of the newly rebuilt synagogue led by Harold Juttner, one of the first presidents of the budding community. And, while simple and somewhat small, the building is spectacular. The wood floors gleam and even the former balcony used as the women's section feels full of life. A diorama of the former synagogue sits in the window; it was five times larger than the current space, with the ornate structure of other older European synagogues. Looking at it, one could feel the sense of loss that still permeates the city. But, one also feels the joy, how proud the Jews who live there now are of their new space and how proud the overall Göttingen community is to have Jewish life restored.

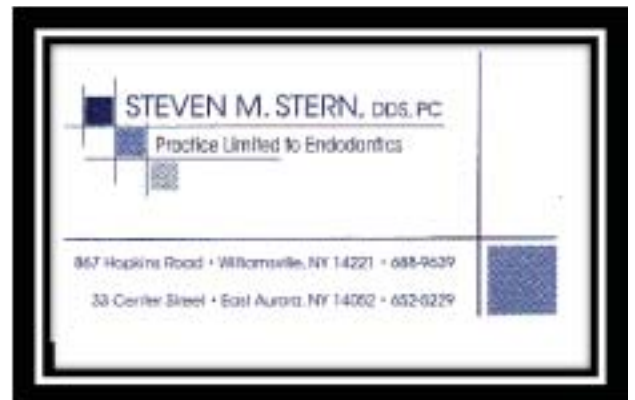
I was only there for two-and-a-half days, but in that short time I was able to meet many of the leaders of the overall community, teach them a little about American Jewish life, and participate in the November 9<sup>th</sup> memorial service. While half the size of Buffalo, Göttingen teams with life; bicycles zoom en masse around the narrow streets of downtown, and the statue of the girl with the goose greets all visitors with a warm, loving smile. How different this is from what it was like three quarters of a century ago.

However, the future of this lovely, warm community, just like our own, is still in doubt. While there are now 100 individual members of the synagogue, the majority are elderly and there is no Hebrew school, yet. Whether the new building will become a museum or whether it will remain a living center of Jewish life has yet to be determined. I hope that this flask of oil will last long enough for enough Jews to return, just like it did for the Maccabees 2000 years ago. This year, let us light our Hanukkah lights in honor of our sister synagogue in Göttingen and their struggle to remain vibrant in the face of such difficult odds.

I look forward to lighting candles together at our Hanukkah seder and of sharing stories of my recent trip overseas.

Chag Hanukkah Sameach (a happy and joyous month of December),

Rabbi Alex



## Proclamation From Temple Sinai To Göttingen, Germany Community

We, the members of the board of Temple Sinai in Buffalo, extend our best wishes to the members of the Jewish Gemeinde in Göttingen. We are very pleased that our Rabbi Alex and two of our members, Georg and Wilma Iggers, who are also members of your congregation, are able to join you in the observance of the pogrom on November 9, 1938, a date which in many ways stands for the beginning of the Holocaust. The very spot on which the memorial now stands, at which we are observing the memory of the horrible events, is where the synagogue which had served the Göttingen Jewish community for many decades was destroyed on that fateful night. By 1942 the Jewish community had been systematically destroyed and its members, whose names have been engraved on the wall of the memorial, were murdered by the Nazis. It is encouraging that there is Jewish life again in Germany, that since 1994 the Jewish congregation exists again and has become a haven not only for Jews of German origin but also for recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union who have escaped the discrimination they had experienced there. We in Buffalo followed with great interest the dedication three years ago of one of the few synagogues which had survived the pogrom in a small German town and was moved to Göttingen. We are also aware that the non-Jewish Göttingen community provided the means by which this reconstruction was made possible and has given not only financial but also moral support to the Jewish community. We hope that Rabbi Alex's visit will be part of an ongoing cooperation and exchange between our two congregations, both of whom share a liberal Jewish religious orientation.

B.shalom

## Rabbi Alex's Visit to Göttingen, Germany



Pastor Rhelbon, Rabbi Alex,  
Georg Iggers



Göttingen Holocaust Memorial From outside



Proclamation Presentation



Göttingen Holocaust Memorial from Below

## From an article in the Göttingen monthly Jewish newsletter translated by Esther Bates.

On November 7, we welcomed Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein to our community. He traveled to Göttingen with Georg Iggers in order to visit our congregation, to give a talk at the Reform Congregation, and to participate in the memorial service at the Memorial Monument. At an intimate supper, Alex told us about our partner congregation in Buffalo, which belongs to the Reconstructionist Movement. This congregation also has problems with an aging population and insufficient new young members. Therefore, a joint venture with another congregation is being considered.

Alex is a young, cheerful and knowledgeable Rabbi. We spent a pleasant and interesting evening with him and Georg Iggers. They presented us with a lovely Hanukkah and a written greeting from the congregation in German, English and Russian.

The memorial service took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. at the Memorial Monument. This year, it was put together by theology students. At the end, Rabbi Alex and Jaqueline recited the mourners' kaddish and sang Eli, Eli together. We sincerely thank Georg and Wilma Iggers for having made this visit possible, and thank Rabbi Alex for having undertaken this long journey! We send heartfelt greetings to the congregation in Buffalo! Through this visit, we have become much closer.

Remembering Temple Sinai's sixty years of history

Children help light the Chanukah candles CIRCA 1960

Group photo below shows a group of Israeli scouts along with Rabbi Gaynor, his wife and Alva and Nathan Finkelstein



Dialogue editor apologizes for forgetting this entry last month

Dear Temple Sinai members:  
Thank you for your support during a difficult week for us. We appreciate all of the cards and well wishes we have received and know all of your prayers helped. We are grateful to be part of such a warm and caring community.

B'Shalom,  
Alex, Ashirah, Jarah and Boaz

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## FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Jill Hamilton

It's December, and everyone is busy. There are work and family holiday parties, and of course, Temple Sinai's own Hanukkah Seder, which has been going on for more than 30 years. But please take an hour of your time to come to the focus group for which you have been scheduled, to discuss the state of our talks with Temple Beth Am. Things are moving along very quickly now. We have been keeping the board apprised of our progress, but it is very important for our membership to understand what is being proposed, and have a chance to make suggestions, prior to a possible congregational vote. The finance subcommittee is working on a budget proposal, and the governance subcommittee has nearly worked out the combined bylaws, and a means of ensuring equal representation on the combined board. We want YOU to know all about it. If you need a ride, call the temple office. If you need to change your time, please contact me directly. Hope to see you soon!

Jill

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## Library Corner

by Leslie Jaszczak

Many Sinai members may be aware that we have a sister congregation in Göttingen, Germany, which Rabbi Alex recently visited with our member Georg Iggers, the primary architect of that relationship. Georg has generously donated a copy of his memoir, *Two Lives in Uncertain Times: Facing the Challenges of the 20th Century as Scholars & Citizens*, written with his wife Wilma, to the temple library.

Narrated alternately by Georg and Wilma, *Two Lives in Uncertain Times* spans most of the twentieth century, as well as the beginning of the twenty-first, and intersects with many of the most important social and political movements of that period. Born in Europe (Georg in Germany, Wilma in Czechoslovakia), both fled with their families to North America after the rise of Hitler. After meeting as students in Chicago, they married and taught in black colleges in the South, playing an active role in the civil rights movement before moving back north. They and their three children finally settled in Buffalo, Wilma at Canisius and Georg at UB, where he participated in the protests there and counseled young men facing the draft. Beginning in the 60s, they also traveled to Europe and found a second home in Göttingen, as well as cultivating an extensive network of contacts throughout Germany and Eastern Europe.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

(please see weekly email updates or call the office for details)

**Rabbi Alex's office hours** Thursdays @ 3pm

**Potluck dinner** Friday December 2 @ 5:30pm, **Tot Shabbat** @ 6pm, **Family Shabbat Service** @ 7pm

**Focus Groups** to meet Sunday December 4,11,18 @ 10am, everyone has been given a scheduled time to attend

**Board meeting** Tuesday December 6 @ 7:30pm

**Abby Kaplan's Bat Mitzvah** Saturday December 10 @ 10:30am

**Erev Chanukah** Tuesday December 20, light the first candle at sundown

**Chanukah Seder** Friday December 23 @ 5:30pm call the office to make reservations

Shabbat services at Temple Beth Am Friday December 30 @ 7:30pm

### Weekly Schedule of Services:

**Shabbat Service**, Fridays, 7:30 pm (Family Services on first Friday of month at 7:00 pm; Tots at 6:00 pm)

**Shacharit Service**, Saturdays, 10:00 am (unless noted above)

**Beit Midrash Torah Study**, Saturdays, 11:00 am (at 9:30 am on day of Bar/Bat Mitzvot)

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