



# SINAI DIALOGUE



## Rabbi Alex's End of the Year Letter presented at the congregational meeting on May 25<sup>th</sup>:



“Somewhere out of time/In the mystery of time/Somewhere between memory and forgetfulness,/Dimly though/I remember how I once stood/at Your mountain trembling.”

-Nancy Lee Gossels (Kol Haneshamah page 781) Chevre:

Tonight marks the thirty-seventh day, making five weeks and two days of the Omer. In a little less than two weeks we will gather again at Mount Sinai to celebrate the holiday of Shavuot. There we will receive revelation just as we always have and just as we always will.

According to Jewish tradition, Mount Sinai exists simultaneously in the past, present and future. The great mountain serves as a gathering place where all generations can connect, giving and receiving Torah, serving as “a witness to that timeless moment” when all of our people were united as one.

Walking around Temple Sinai, I cannot help but feel the timelessness of our nearly sixty-year-old community. Each wall of our inner sanctum reminds me of the many decades of Jewish children and adults that have come through our building.

I feel the joy of the first stone that was placed on Alberta Drive by Rabbi Nathan Gaynor, Reuben Goldstein, and Irving Wunder back on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1956, inscribed with the words, “And this stone which I have set for a Pillar shall be God’s house.” And, I feel all the subsequent generations that have celebrated their simchas and mourned their losses; the bustling and excitement of a newly formed community, the crescendo of our heyday when four-hundred families seemed in reach, and the wisdom and fortitude of a community that has been a fixture in the Buffalo suburbs for the past three generations.

This past year, my third year at Temple Sinai, has been an opportunity to celebrate all parts of Temple Sinai’s life. On Rosh Hashanah, I spoke about the creation of Temple Sinai and I encouraged our membership to “unpack our boxes” and proudly display them in our synagogue. A senior in High School, Rebecca Slonim, took up the call and decided to devote her Girl Scout Gold project to organizing and digitize our pictures. Now seven-months later we have access to our history in new and exciting ways. What fun it will be to work with this digital archive as we prepare for our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.

Of course, all of you are no doubt aware of the discussions we have been having about our future. While we are still very early in our conversation with Temple Beth Am, I give the synagogue board, led by our president Jill Hamilton, a lot of credit in its willingness to explore all options for ensuring a bright future for our community.

As for the present, this has been an incredible year of growth and learning for me and our entire community. From our adult education learning sessions on the Matriarchs, our study of the five Megillot, to our wonderful Chanukah Seder, Purim Speil, and Passover Seders to the well attended Shabbat evening and morning services, Temple Sinai continues to be a vibrant hub for our Jewish lives.

Personally, I have felt even more connected to the larger Buffalo community, serving as an active participant on the boards of the Network of Religious Communities of Western New York, Jewish Family Service, the Buffalo Board of Rabbis, and the Buffalo Board of Jewish Education. We are all one family here in Western New York, and I have been so proud to represent Temple Sinai in so many different venues.

This year I was also blessed with a new three-year-contract with Temple Sinai, something that has given my family and me a great deal of stability in these very unstable times. There is a lot of hard work ahead for us but, together, I know we can continue to make Temple Sinai a place where past, present and future intersects and where all who enter our doors can feel at home.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Alex

**If you are interested in volunteering to be part of the dialogue between Temple Sinai and Temple Beth Am please contact Jill Hamilton. There is a need for sub-committee members. We want the congregation to be as involved in this process as possible.**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Wow – what a month Temple Sinai had in June!

We had a wonderful visit from Cantor Audrey. We finally passed our new bylaws (Thank you to everyone who came out to make our new rules a reality). We held a joint Affirmation/Confirmation service with Temple Beth Am. The choir sang at Shabbat services. And our first BBQ Shabbat was held on June 24<sup>th</sup>.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, we begin our new fiscal year. We have some enthusiastic new board members starting, and will be welcoming Rayna Grossman, Rebecca Utech, Leslie Jaszczak, and Georg Iggers to the board. In addition, Rachel Anderson, Michael Rosenberg, and Gilda Laufer will be continuing on the board. Alan Friedman, Lois Heller, and Jim Myers will be taking a “break,” as mandated by our bylaws, having served two terms. Elaine Kellick is also taking some time away from the board. We thank them for their dedicated service. They will all continue to serve temple in other capacities in the coming year.

The start of the fiscal year also means that dues bills will be going out. As explained elsewhere in the Dialogue (see the minutes of the congregational meeting), the budget passed by the board derives most of its income from dues. For those who participated in the “protection assessment” over the last few years, your total dues payment will remain the same as the total amount you paid for dues and the assessment. For those who did not contribute toward the assessment, there will be a small percentage increase. This will be explained in greater detail in the letter you will receive with your bill.

Last, let me update you on our talks with Temple Beth Am. The religious practice and finance subcommittees continue to meet, but have come to no firm conclusions as yet. We have also decided to activate two additional subcommittees – the building/physical facilities subcommittee, and the social/activities subcommittee. These committees will be forming very soon. We have a couple of possible committee members in mind, but please let me know if you are interested in participating. Additionally, it was suggested that during the rabbis’ summer vacations, we coordinate with Temple Beth Am, so that our members attend Friday night services there when Rabbi Alex is off, and their members attend Temple Sinai services when Rabbi Tanenbaum is off. The first such service will be Friday July 15 at Temple Beth Am. One other important decision was made at the last meeting of the merger steering committee: The first of what will probably be a series of “Town Hall Meetings” has been scheduled. Please mark your calendars for Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m. (at Temple Sinai). This will be your chance to meet all of the committee members from both temples, hear first-hand about our plans and progress, and ask questions. A similar meeting will be held the following week for members of Temple Beth Am.

I hope everyone has an enjoyable and safe summer!

Jill Hamilton

## LIBRARY CORNER

by Leslie Jaszczak

Summer and the Fourth of July are upon us, and what is more quintessentially American than the comic book? In “From Krakow to Krypton,” comedian and Mad Magazine writer Arie Kaplan explores the intertwined history of American Jews and comic books from the 1930s to the present.

Beginning with the Golden Age of comics, when many of the best known characters were created but artists were often exploited and underpaid (Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the creators of Superman, sold the rights to the character outright and did not receive full credit and a financial settlement until the 1970s), Kaplan shows how Jewish contributions to the art form often reflected the position of Jews in American life. When Jews were marginalized and discriminated against, comic books contained few overt Jewish references, although subtle influences can be found. When the US entered WWII, Superman and Captain America fought Nazis. Finally, in the last few decades Jewish themes became popular, most notably in graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman’s Maus.

A large format, full-color softcover lavishly illustrated with cartoon bubbles, reproductions of representative comics, photos and original drawings, From Krakow to Krypton is, as Amazon’s product description says, “a visually stunning and exhilarating history.”



## BAT MITZVAH PROJECT HELPS NEEDY KIDS



My name is Nora Slonim. For my Bat Mitzvah project I am collecting art supplies for Summit Educational Resources (a school for autistic children). These supplies will be handed out the first part of July. I am going to be working/volunteering there to help with the children. I have been doing things to help Summit for two years now. Last year a couple of my friends and I taught the kids how

to dance. This year, with the Girl Scouts, I collected over \$1000 worth of toys that we donated to Summit. I wanted to help Summit because over the past couple of years I have seen how sweet and kind these kids were. I wanted to give something back to them for all the sweet smiles they had given to me.

If you would like to help me with my project, a box for art supplies is located in the hall at Temple Sinai.

## CONVERSION CLASS

Rabbi Alex has announced a class for people interested in converting to Judaism. It will meet Sunday mornings at 10:00-11:30 AM. Those interested can contact Rabbi Alex directly through the Temple office or his email address, both listed on the back of the Dialogue.

## Temple Sinai visible in the LGBT Community

This year's Gay Pride Festivities were bigger and better. The main parade, Sunday, started at Lafayette Ave and ended on Chippewa, at the corner of Elmwood Ave. This is where AIDS Community Services is housed. Canalside became this year's site for the after parade festivities. Many people stopped by Temple Sinai's booth to ask questions and to talk. Thank you to the many volunteers who helped Karin Lowenthal hold down the fort.



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**James I. Myers**

*Attorney at Law*

**Myers, Quinn & Schwarz, LLP**

5500 Main St., Suite 312  
Williamsville, NY 14221

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716-634-6443 fax

[jmyers@myersquinn.com](mailto:jmyers@myersquinn.com)

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A check to Temple Sinai for value of service must be written at appointment time. Value is \$40-\$45)

## Temple Sinai Congregational Meeting - May 25, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by President Jill Hamilton. Rabbi Alex led us in the prayer for doing the work of the community.

### **A. President's Greeting & Remarks:**

Jill welcomed the congregation, thanked everyone for attending, and thanked the people who have helped her this year.

### **B. Rabbi's Report:**

Rabbi Alex summarized our accomplishments this year, and offered some announcements regarding upcoming events.

### **C. Presentation of Board Candidates and Voting:**

President Jill Hamilton presented the slate of nominees to serve on the Board of Trustees. There was a motion to approve their election, which was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **D. Budget Presentation & Vote**

Treasurer Sid Weiss reviewed the budget for the fiscal year: July 2011 – June 2012. The major points of his presentation were as follows:

The budget was developed by the Finance Committee with the assistance of Office Manager, Renae Gatozzi. In the coming year, dues will be calculated as follows: for those who paid the full assessment, they will pay the same total amount as this past year, with no increase. For those who did not participate in the assessment, who have essentially had no increase the last 2 years, there will be a 6% increase in dues.

Dues and High Holiday contributions account for 90% of revenues. The estimated dues income is based on the total membership at the time the budget was generated. Expenses were based on experience. The shortfall of \$26,475 was made up by interest generated by the Endowment Fund as well as Ruach and Gift Shop profits. The Endowment Fund currently has a balance of approximately \$450,000.

### **E. Presentation of Revised By-Laws and Vote:**

A committee was formed to review Temple Sinai's 1952 Constitution. The committee was formed in order to update the Constitution so that it reflects our current practices and policies, while maintaining the spirit of the original document. Committee members were: Adrienne Crandall, Michael Gold and Dan Mangold. Jim Myers provided invaluable assistance to the committee.

Adrienne Crandall presented the committee's revisions and explained the reasons for those changes. . In addition to modernizing the language and practices to conform with our current practices and legal requirements, the new bylaws have built in flexibility in the size of our committees and governing bodies, to allow for our changing population. Some other changes of note in the revised bylaws are that Associate Members (non-Jewish spouses or partners of members) will be permitted to vote at Congregational Meetings and chair committees (with the exception of the Ritual and Liturgy Committee and the Religious School Committee). Language changes include the changing of the "Women's Club" to "Ruach," to reflect the egalitarian nature of this committee. We have also eliminated references to the very first Board of Trustees, which are no longer applicable to our present Board. The original "Constitution" will be kept as an historical document, but the revision to be voted on will henceforth be called "The By-Laws of Temple Sinai", in keeping with modern terminology used in most synagogues today.

A change in the wording of the last sentence of Article IV - Section 2. (b). was suggested by Esther Bates. The new wording below clarifies the meaning of that statement:

*"Associate members shall have the right to vote, but may not be officers or members of the Board of Trustees, except for a committee, the chair of which is automatically a member of the Board."*

The motion to accept this change was made by Rebecca Utech, seconded by Judith Olin and passed unanimously by the congregation.

Adrienne pointed out that the position of Corresponding Secretary is no longer listed as an officer in the new bylaws.

There was a brief discussion of how Temple Sinai answers: 'Who is a Jew?' This is not in the by-laws. Adrienne explained that many things are not in the by-laws - funerals and burials, for example - because they are too fluid. These policies are written down in a book which is kept in the temple office.

Karin Lowenthal's motion to accept the revised By-Laws was seconded by Charlotte Wolpin and passed unanimously.

By the time you read this, the second required vote will have been held (on June 12<sup>th</sup>) to place the new bylaws in effect.

*(continued on the next page)*

## F. Talks with Temple Beth Am

Jill answered several questions relating to the discussions with Temple Beth Am:

Q: Will this be a merger or a sharing of activities?

A: At this point, we are exploring the possibility of a merger.

Q: We presented a list of “deal-breakers” to Beth Am. Do they have a similar list?

A: They have none at this time.

Q: What will happen with regard to rabbinic leadership?

A: The understanding at this time is that, since R. Tanenbaum is retiring in the near future, Alex would become the rabbi of the merged congregation.

Q: What are the plans for the physical facilities?

A: A Facilities Sub-Committee of the Steering Committee will discuss this and develop a proposal. TBA's building is larger and in better condition than ours. Their location is also considered to be an advantage.

Q: What about the diversity of our community? Mixed marriage?

A: The general understanding is that many of our policies and practices are the same.

Jill invited anyone who has questions or concerns regarding the possible merger of Temple Sinai and Temple Beth Am to call her or other members of the committee: Marc Slonim, Michael Rosenberg, Marina Finkelstein, Kathy Gordon, Robin Raphael.



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## FROM A PREVIOUS DIALOGUE EDITOR

Someone recently asked me how my late husband's family came to live in China, if there were many Jews in China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Jews first came to China and whether there are Jews in China now.

According to Professor Xu Xin, the Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Nanjing University, more than 40,000 Jews came to China between 1860 and 1940. Sephardic Jews from Baghdad and Bombay established businesses in Shanghai in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ashkenazi Jews from Russia and other East European countries arrived in Harbin in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1920, there were about 12,000 of them in Harbin. Marty's parents came with Russian businessmen, fur traders in Mongolia. They eventually settled in Tianjin. From 1937-1940, about 20,000 European Jewish Refugees swarmed into Shanghai, one of the few places that refugees from the Nazis could enter without a visa. Each Jewish community in China set up its own schools, synagogues, cultural clubs and cemeteries. After World War II, when the State of Israel was established and the Communists came to power in China, most of the Jews left. A few hardy souls remained, and there are small Jewish communities in Hong Kong, Beijing and some other large cities.

But there were Jews in China long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Records of Jewish merchants called Radanites (those who know the way) dating from a thousand years earlier have been found; and there are some delightful little statuettes of clearly Semitic traders in the Albright Knox Museum's Chinese collection. It would seem that these Radanites came from Spain and France via Yemen, Persia or India along the "Silk Route" and established communities in a number of port cities. They brought with them Torah scrolls and books, some written in Judeo-Persian (Persian written in Hebrew letters). The exact dates of their arrival are difficult to establish because some of the tombstones and other inscriptions may have been dated earlier than they really were to avoid a "newcomers' tax" imposed by the Chinese government. But there are Chinese records attesting to the presence of Jews there in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and to the building of a synagogue in Kaifeng, the best known of these communities, in 1163. The Kaifeng community had a mikvah (ritual bath) kosher slaughter house, communal kitchen and commemorative arches and gateways. There were three stelae, one dated 1489, which are now in a small, hard to find museum in Kaifeng. The Torah scrolls and some of the decorations from the synagogue compound were brought to Toronto by Bishop White about 100 years ago and are in the possession of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Since merchants usually were single men, those who stayed married Chinese women, and by the time the Jews of Kaifeng were "discovered" by a Christian missionary in 1605, the Jews of Kaifeng did not look very different from their neighbors. Until 1500, when China closed its borders to outsiders, the Jewish community of Kaifeng had contact with other Jewish communities in India and Persia as well as in China, and had imported rabbis, scribes and teachers as needed. But the twelve new Torah scrolls written in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, are full of misspellings because no one in Kaifeng was sufficiently knowledgeable.

Despite the loss of Jewish knowledge, buildings and institutions and the relocation of old Jewish cemeteries, there are still people in China who know that they are descended from ancient Jewish families. Unlike in Europe, Chinese Jews did not disappear due to anti-Semitism. In past centuries, they were lost by assimilation, and more recently by emigration. China was a comfortable home for many of them. As a reminder of their sojourn in China, an organization of former Jewish residents of China exists in Israel. It sponsors a "China Israel Friendship Society" and a fund for Chinese students who want to study in Israel.

To learn more about Jews in China and to see pictures of some of the descendants of Chinese Jews from Kaifeng, google "Chinese Jews." There is an amazing amount of information and a large number of pictures available on several web sites.

Esther Bates

## **CHESED COMMITTEE**

We deliver meals (Kosher if needed) to members who :

Are home from the hospital,

Are having a shivah service or have experienced a loss,

Have just had a baby.

We have created a FUND for this purpose, called the "**Chesed Fund**"

When you make a donation to temple for someone who is convalescing, just had a new baby, or has just lost a loved one, consider writing on your check or note that you want it to go to the

**"Chesed Fund"**. This will insure that money is always there for anyone who needs meals.

Contributions can also be made to this fund for any other reason, just because you want to help.

## **GENERAL FUND**

### **In Honor of**

TEMPLE SINAI by Estelle Deemer

### **In Memory of**

ISRAEL CELNIKER by Philip Celniker  
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LUYBOV BROYTMAN by Alex & Sonya Blitshteyn  
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## **MEMORIAL FUNDS**

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### **In Memory of**

SHIFRA SWEET & NATHAN SWEET by Sally & Mark Noznisky  
JUDITH SWERDLOFF by Ruth Axlerod  
SAM AXLEROD by Ruth Axlerod  
ANNETTE FAVUS by Millie Saks

## **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**

### **In Memory of**

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WALTER FROEHLICH by Carol Froehlich

## **NEUSTATTER- SHAPIRO SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

### **In Honor of**

THE BAT MITZVAH OF ISABELLA ZIONTS by Esther Bates

### **In Memory of**

MIRIAM DAVIDSON by Elliot Shapiro  
ANN BONESS by Esther Bates

## **DR. ALEX MORRISON MEMORIAL LIBRARY FUND**

### **In Memory of**

ANNE CHASE by Irv & Elaine Weinstein  
MIRIAM DAVIDSON by Marianne & Norman Goldstein

## **BESS AND MORRIS MICHAELS MEMORIAL COURTYARD GARDEN FUND**

## **CHESED FUND**

### **In Honor of**

THE BAT MITZVAH OF ISABELLA ZIONTS by Michael Rosenberg & Alan Lemanski Memory of MORRIS UNHER by Donald Gilden  
ANITA KAUFMAN by Barbara Markel  
MARY ROSENBERG by Michael Rosenberg & Alan Lemanski  
MIRIAM DAVIDSON by Mirel & Melania Puius  
ELIAHU PUIUS by Mirel & Melania Puius  
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### **In Memory of**

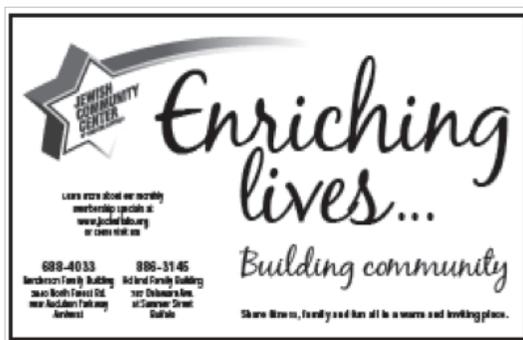
LENA KAUFMAN by Florence Ruben

## **MAZEL TOV**

Adam Goldstein & Jared Geist on their Affirmation  
Rebecca Slonim received Girl Scout Gold Award  
Adam Goldstein achieved the rank of Eagle Scout  
Nora Slonim on her Bat Mitzvah  
Janet & Marc Slonim on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Nora

## **CONDOLENCES**

Norma Unher on the loss of her husband Morris Unher  
The family of Ann Boness  
The family of Anita Kaufman  
The family of Sid Spector



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Choir rehearsal Wednesdays at 7:30PM

Friday July 1, Tot Shabbat 6PM, Family Service 7PM (No pot luck dinner)

Tuesday July 5 Temple Board Meeting 7:30PM, everyone welcome

Saturday July 9 Nora Slonim's Bat Mitzvah 10:30AM

Friday July 15 Shabbat service at Temple Beth AM 6PM (No service at Temple Sinai)

Friday August 5, BBQ pot luck dinner 5:30PM, Tot Shabbat 6PM, Family Service 7PM (bring parve dish to pass, nominal fee)

Thursday September 8 Town Hall Meeting at Temple Sinai

Be on the look out for our next Chai Club fundraiser, Let's all try to make this a big success.

### 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)

## TEMPLE SINAI STAFF AND OFFICERS

Alex Lazarus-Klein, Rabbi  
[rabbialex@templesinaibuffalo.org](mailto:rabbialex@templesinaibuffalo.org)

Renae Gattozzi, Office Manager  
[templesinai@juno.com](mailto:templesinai@juno.com)

Karen Houser, Temple Secretary  
[templesinai@juno.com](mailto:templesinai@juno.com)

Jill Hamilton, President  
[psydocmom@yahoo.com](mailto:psydocmom@yahoo.com)

Marina Finkelstein, Vice President  
[mfinkl@aol.com](mailto:mfinkl@aol.com)

Michael Rosenberg, Dialogue Editor  
[drrosenberg@roadrunner.com](mailto:drrosenberg@roadrunner.com)

Sid Weiss, Treasurer  
[sewiss@bwzucpa.com](mailto:sewiss@bwzucpa.com)

Kathy Gordon, Recording Secretary  
[kghrhg@verizon.net](mailto:kghrhg@verizon.net)

Amy O'Donnell, Tikkun Olam  
[odnn825@aol.com](mailto:odnn825@aol.com)

Sandy Seide, Fundraising Chair  
[sgs16@hotmail.com](mailto:sgs16@hotmail.com)

Maureen Seitz, Ruach President  
[17seitz@gmail.com](mailto:17seitz@gmail.com)

Temple Sinai  
50 Albert Dr.  
Amherst, NY 14226  
[www.templesinaibuffalo.org](http://www.templesinaibuffalo.org)  
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