

## **NEWS from .....INTERNATIONAL SYNAGOGUE**

*By Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman*

**Update, May 2004**

### ***The International Synagogue Hosts Women's League***

On February 19, the Women's League for Conservative Judaism conducted a mission to Israel led by Janet Tobin, immediate past president of Women's League. Mildred Zagelbaum, our Board member and officer, went on this mission. The group was greeted at the ***International Synagogue*** as the ladies were about to board the EL AL plane. The ladies made the trip to Israel to give both moral and financial support to Jews.

The group gathered in the chapel to *daven mincha*. Rabbi Rackman praised the women for their support and thanked them for their commitment to the State of Israel. The Traveler's Prayer was recited publicly. The participants felt that the mood was set for their pilgrimage to Israel. This was to be an inspirational and spiritual journey. And it was! When Israelis encounter American tourists visiting their country with a mission they draw strength and establish community. We are all one people!

Mrs. Tobin was recently interviewed on a TV program and described the benefits of the trip for the participants. The ladies had an opportunity each day to both *daven* and study Torah with Israelis. They volunteered their services in hospitals. They participated in the *bar-and bat-mitzvah* ceremonies of children with learning disabilities. Theirs was a *mitzvah*-packed trip.

Hopefully, more Jewish organizations will be able to send missions to Israel in order to give support to our beleaguered brethren. Participants in Israel missions certainly provide spiritual benefit to Israelis whom they encounter, and to themselves as well as they become more committed to Judaism and the State of Israel.

### ***Quiet Purim at the Synagogue This Year***

This year the holiday of Purim occurred on Saturday night, March 6. Since passengers flying on EL AL would already have heard the *megillah* reading immediately after *Shabbat*, no service was conducted at the ***Synagogue***, although *hamantaschen* were served at the EL AL check-in counters. Next year when *Purim* will occur on Thursday night, March 24, 2005, we will arrange for *maariv* and a *megillah* reading with *graggers*, *hamantaschen*, and masks.



### ***Getting a "High" without Drugs***

Not everyone is fortunate to be able to travel frequently to Israel. But, one can draw inspiration when one encounters the excitement of others who are able to make the trip. Such is the role of the chaplain at the *Synagogue*.

Rabbi Joel Epstein from Columbus, Ohio had contacted the *Synagogue* to reserve the Chapel for a group of high school students traveling to Warsaw and Israel on a birthright Israel mission. The group arrived in New York – LaGuardia Airport on April 14 and *davened shacharis* in the hallway. They arrived at JFK and *davened mincha* in the *Synagogue*. Then on April 28, on their return from Israel, we *davened shacharis* in the *Synagogue*. What a difference!

On May 5, EL AL had scheduled an extra flight at 2:45 P.M. Most of the passengers on the flight were *Chassidim* traveling to Israel for *Lag B'Omer*. The period of time between Pesach and Shavuot is considered a semi-mourning period because the students of Rabbi Akiva died in a plague during the first century. On the thirty-third day the plague stopped. The day is festive and celebrated with singing and dancing. A popular custom is for Jews to visit the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Miron. Several groups of Jews came to the Chapel to pray and study. We had five separate *minyanim* in succession. Travelers are increasingly using the new Chapel once they know that there is a separate holy space for Jewish worship. JFK, Tel Aviv, and Brussels are the only airports that have separate for prayer.

### ***Kosher Food at JFK***

The students from Columbus, Ohio also needed a place to purchase kosher food between their flights. As reported in the last Newsletter, kosher food can be purchased in the International Arrivals Terminal on the third floor. CUCINA *Express* restaurant (non-kosher) on the third floor has kosher sandwiches (egg, tuna, salmon, chicken salad, and a house salad) – all under the O-U *hashgachah*.

### ***Yom HaAtzmaut Celebration***

In honor of Israel Independence Day, the *Synagogue* once again celebrated Israel Independence Day with the security personnel and some administrative staff of EL AL. After a brief prayer service in which gratitude was expressed to all, a collation of Middle Eastern food was served. Without the scrupulous examination of the security personnel, we would not feel reassured in our travels that we are safe.



## ***Lunch and Learn***

The Lunch and Learn program has been meeting on a regular basis, every Thursday at noon. We hope that more people will become involved in this pleasant activity for both body and soul. If you are available to participate or you know of people who might like to join our group please let us know.

## ***Shomrim Society Marks 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary***

Jewish police officers refer to themselves as "Shomrim" – GUARDS. The Shomrim Society of the Police Department of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey recently marked their fortieth anniversary. The Jewish members of the Police Department and employees of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey would hold their annual meetings and publicly celebrate holidays (eg. Chanukah) at the World Trade Center. With the destruction of their base of operations the Shomrim had no place to go. On Sunday morning, May 16, after three years without a "home," the Shomrim convened the annual Fellowship Breakfast at the ***International Synagogue***. After a brief prayer service, breakfast was served in the International Arrivals Terminal. About seventy –five members and friends of the Shomrim came to honor Rabbi Edgar Gluck, senior spiritual advisor. Rabbi Michael Melnicke delivered an uplifting address emphasizing that all Jews are members of the same family. We are responsible one for each other since what happens to every Jew impacts and affects every Jew.

Rabbi Rackman offered greetings and gratitude to the Shomrim upon whom we depend daily for our safety. To mark the occasion of the fortieth anniversary, he presented the officers with a special prayer composed for police officers to be used daily. Tefillat "HaShomrim" – The "Shomrim" Prayer, was adapted by Rabbi Rackman from the Hebrew Tefillat HaDerech – The Traveler's Prayer, to offer the Jewish police officer an opportunity to pray prior to the start of a tour of duty. It seeks to provide a spiritual moment at a time of uncertainty. This new prayer, modeled after an ancient prayer, is printed on laminated, small-sized cards that fit into a wallet. It was warmly received by all the attendees who received copies. Those wishing to receive additional copies can contact the ***International Synagogue*** at JFK Airport or by calling 718-656-5044.

The ***International Synagogue*** extends sincere condolences to Sgt. Scott Jablow, member of our Board, on the sudden death of his father, Milton. May he be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

## ***Chapel Hours and Services***

Some people are unaware