



חדשות משדה התעופה

News from... *International* **SYNAGOGUE**

by Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman

UPDATE, SEPTEMBER, 2008

ראש השנה, ה'תשס"ט

LIBRARY ADDED TO THE TRI-FAITH CHAPELS MUSEUM

When the **SYNAGOGUE** had its own "fee-standing building," there had been a room designated as a library. With the move from outside Terminal 4 to the inside, our space became very limited. We were only able to place a few shelves in the chapel for prayer and holy books. A month ago we installed two bookcases in the Museum to allow for additional seforim. The Museum is a large room shared with the Catholic and Protestant chapels in which we are now able to exhibit Jewish artifacts. It also serves as a Conference Room where various meetings are held by different groups, businesses, and organizations, for training airline staff in our terminal, for executive meetings of the Port Authority or IAT, and our Chanukah Party. We are asking our friends and supporters to donate money to purchase additional books.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The annual meeting of the *International* **SYNAGOGUE** was held this year on Wednesday, June 18. As we do each year, we review the activities of the past year and make plans for the coming year. The financial situation and budget for the upcoming year were approved. Rabbi Rackman reported on the increased usage of the chapel by travelers (see below). We now have kosher vending machines on the third floor of our Terminal. We conducted elections for officers and members of the Board of Directors.

President: Manny Weiss

Vice Presidents: Melvyn Birnbaum, Allan Gewirtz, Erica Stempler

Secretary: Dr. Shalom Miller

Treasurer: Bonnie Aidelman

We welcomed our new Board members, Steve Gelles, Ruth Pechman, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, and Arthur Zigelbaum. However, the main attraction this year was that the meeting was held in the TRI-FAITH CHAPELS MUSEUM. We invite all to come and visit this new attraction at JFK Airport.

PLEASE RESERVE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2008, FOR THE ANNUAL CHANUKAH LIGHTING CEREMONY AND PARTY AT JFK. THIS YEAR WE WILL OFFICIALLY DEDICATE THE CHAPEL LIBRARY AND HONOR MANNY WEISS, PRESIDENT. PLEASE BE SURE TO JOIN US AT 5:00 P.M.



LIBRARY



RABBI MOSS "MISSION"



TOURAY TORAH



HADASSAH

SYNAGOGUE *WEB-SITE IS NOW IMPROVED AND INFORMATIVE*

At the suggestion of Bonnie Aidelman, we engaged David and Rosa Matsas (art@conceptmarketingsolutions.com) to develop a website for the *International* **SYNAGOGUE**. We are happy to announce that we have enhanced our site. One can now view many pictures of the **SYNAGOGUE**. We have placed copies of our Newsletter from the past five years on the site. We have posted information about EL AL plane schedules. We have a site called *International* **TORAH INSIGHTS** as well as a Travel column. And, we also have selected divrei Torah on the weekly Torah portion, occasional updates from JFK Airport, etc. People will be able to contact us at the *International* **SYNAGOGUE** via the web (www.jfkshul.org or www.internationalsynagogue.com).

***International* SYNAGOGUE - A PLACE OF SOLACE IN TRYING TIMES**

The **SYNAGOGUE** and terminal are not involved in the transfer of deceased people for burial in Israel. These services are conducted at the EL AL cargo area of JFK. However, during the past few months we have been called upon to assist mourners returning to the United States from funerals in Israel. We receive requests from bereaved families or travel agents to arrange for a shacharis minyan in the chapel. On one occasion, the bereaved family was making a connecting flight to Baltimore. On another occasion, the mourners had to catch a flight to Montreal. In the latter situation, the travel agent arranged for students at Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Kew Garden Hills to join us on a Thursday morning. We had over twenty-five participants at our morning service.

RABBI DELIVERS INVOCATION AT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON

Various philanthropic and civic organizations usually conduct luncheon meetings during the year within the Airport. The chaplains are often asked to deliver the invocation on these occasions. During the past year Rabbi Rackman was asked twice to do so by the Chamber of Commerce at JFK. It should also be noted that each year all chapels commemorate the tragedy of 9/11 with a joint ecumenical service.

VISITORS TO THE SYNAGOGUE

As in past years, this summer season was a very busy time at JFK. There were generally three or four airline flights to Israel each day. Besides conducting services ("minyanim"), we try to greet and host groups of teenagers leaving for a visit or longer stay in Israel. We daven mincha/maariv and serve light refreshments.

As reported in a previous Newsletter, the American Jewish Committee sponsors several educational fact-finding trips for various groups of adults in decision-making positions to see the mid-east situation for themselves. These ten day trips in the past included Christian

clergy, Muslim community leaders, and Spanish speaking Pentecostal Latino pastors. On June 29, we hosted a “mission” of twenty University Presidents. Rabbi Bruce Ginsburg gave an orientation as they ate dinner provided by AJC. These leaders also saw the ecumenical spirit that exists in Terminal 4, with the four chapels side by side. A group (Directors of National Organizations, e.g., Chinese, Hindu, Evangelists, etc.) scheduled for August had to be cancelled because of Summer thunder storms at several airports.

During June and July we had several BBYO groups (Passport to Israel , sponsored by Lynn Schusterman) gathering at the chapel for orientation and send-off. We also saw Young Judea leave for the Summer. Some of these groups traveled directly to Israel while others first went to Europe (Prague or Poland). We have also had some birthright groups start their travels by meeting first at the chapel and eating some “nosh.” Several Bnei Akiva groups (Torah VaAvodah Institute , Mach Hach , and Summer Tour Camp) also flew to Israel at the start of the Summer. We hosted eighth grade students, with their teacher Rabbi Yaakov Marks, from the Soille San Diego Hebrew School on their way to Israel. And, we also greeted twenty-two teenagers from Aish Denver under the guidance of Rabbi Nachum Wasosky. Robyn Fisher, the Rabbinic Director of Hillel at the University of Miami, also brought a birthright group to the **SYNAGOGUE** before leaving on ISRAIR.

NCSY also sponsored several groups (TJJ - The Jewish Journey, GIVE - Girls’ Volunteer Experience, TJJ - The Jerusalem Journey, ICE - Israel Create your own Experience, NCSY - Kollel , NCSY - DROR, NCSY - Michlelet , and NCSY - YACHAD and Yad B’Yad).

We hosted seven Summer camps: Camp Morasha - SULAM, Camp Sdei Chemed - Boys and Camp Sdei Chemed - Girls , Camp Tuv HaAretz , Camp Menucha , and Yeshiva Aish Kodesh (Norfolk, VA). We greeted and hosted a new Summer camp sponsored by the National Council of Young Israel, called Touray Tanach , which focused on touring Israel with the Bible in one hand. The group also brought three sifrei Torahs to army bases. We danced with the Torahs as we wished well to the young men. Rabbi Rackman and/or the rabbinic interns greeted groups traveling to Israel sponsored by NFTY, USY, and Tzofim - Israel Scouts . The groups used the chapel for prayer and had “nosh.” In the middle of July we also greeted additional birthright groups sponsored by Maayanot , ORANIM/SPNI, Israel Outdoors , Israel Experts , and LIVNOT. Accolades must be given to all staff members involved in organizing and executing the trips.

In August, Rabbi Steven Moss (Congregation Bnai Israel , Oakdale, N.Y.) led a mission of his congregants and utilized the chapel to recite Tephilat Haderech with them. Another adult “mission” praying in the chapel was KRAV MAGEN Foundation (Karate enthusiasts).

During the last week of August we prayed with fathers and their sons as the young adults left to start their studies at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh , Sha’alavim , Chofetz Chaim , and Yeshivat HaKotel . On the same evening we also greeted students leaving for Aderes HaTorah , and Belz. In total more than 360 students left for Israel in one day.

On Sunday, August 31, Elite Academy , a unique high school program for select high school students who complete their studies in grades 10 through 12 in Israel, used the chapel and Museum for a day long orientation. Lunch was served to over 120 students and adults. This program is fully subsidized by the Jewish Agency, Israel Aliyah Center. The students attend different institutions (yeshivot or regional high schools) in Israel. The program is coordinated by Rabbi Ellie Klein, Director of the Academy.

On the same evening, we also coordinated the departure of students to Yeshiva Bais Yisrael , Michlelet Mevasseret Yerushalayim , Darchei Binah , Torah Ore , and Young Judea - an additional 170 young adults.

The following evening was also quite hectic at the **SYNAGOGUE**. Two hundred students boarded planes for Torat Shraga , Ohr Jerusalem (OJ) , Orayta , and Emunah V'Omanut (a college program in Israel sponsored by EMUNAH Women focusing on the Arts). Dr. Francine Stein, President of Emunah, was at the Airport to wish success to the young ladies as they checked in to EL AL.

On September 2, more than 450 young people departed for Israel. The schools included Shvilei HaTorah , Midreshet Tehillah , Sha'alavim - Women , Yeshiva Shaarei Mevasseret Zion , Ohr Yerushalayim , Meohr , Toras Chaim , Seminary Chaya Mushka , Chochmas Lev , Michlelet Mevasseret Yerushalayim , and Tiferes Yerushalayim.

The following week was equally busy at the **SYNAGOGUE**. On September 7, more than two hundred young women left to study at Machon Maayan , Mesillos , Bnos Chana , and Michlalah . The next day more than 400 students traveling to Lev HaTorah , Netiv Aryeh , Tiferet , Hadar HaTorah , Bnos Chava , Bais Yaakov Academy , Mesoras Rochel , and Nachalas boarded ELAL flights. And, on the day after we bid farewell to students traveling to Reishit , Neveh Zion , Ner Yaakov , Seminar , and Midreshet Moriah. On the last "travel" day (Thursday), we said goodbye to 65 young ladies planning to study at BJJ - Beth Jacob Jerusalem .

On Wednesday, we were also able to greet and host a gathering of thirty regional presidents of HADASSAH for light refreshments prior to their departure on EL AL for a fact-finding "mission" to Israel.

Throughout the Summer there are also individual young men and women who choose to make their own travel plans. These schools include such prominent yeshivas as BRISK, MIR, and Ponevitz. These young men also participated in the "farewell" whenever possible.

This year *International* **SYNAGOGUE** had hosted 2,660 young adults on Summer programs, excluding parents who may have accompanied their children to JFK. It is now well established that young people who have attended Jewish day schools or yeshiva will spend a semester or year in Israel engaged in intense Jewish study. This year is no

exception as it is estimated that approximately 7,000 teenagers are spending 5769 (2008/9) in the Holy Land. These young people started their journeys in late August and continued through mid-September. We, at *International SYNAGOGUE*, said goodbye to these dedicated young adults. The total number of one-year students who davened in the chapel and enjoyed light refreshments, served courtesy of the shul, was 2,380. Again, this figure does not include the large number of parents and relatives who accompany the traveler to JFK. This past Summer between Summer camps a yeshiva year programs, we served a total of 5,040 teenagers.

CHAPLAIN INTERNS FILL IN DURING SUMMER

(The **SYNAGOGUE** was fortunate to have had two rabbinical students assist during the Summer. They greeted passengers, conducted services, and hosted groups of teenagers on their way to Israel. Indeed, without their help, we could not have accomplished as much as we did and for this Rabbi Rackman is very grateful.)

When Rabbi Rackman first approached me about helping him at the International Synagogue I was skeptical. Though I had worked extensively in the past for synagogues and other organizations (such as the OU sponsored NCSY), the job description I received was unlike any other I had previously pursued. In my past positions as an advisor and lecturer, my job focused on basically one specific goal: to impart the Torah's teachings and values to my fellow Jews. I found attempting to and the satisfactory achievement of these goals both challenging and rewarding. Serving refreshments and validating parking seemed to be a job that I would struggle to find such challenges and rewards. Despite the obvious differences in how my new job and old jobs functioned, ultimately the experience I had was quite fulfilling in its own unique way.

Assisting Rabbi Rackman at the International Synagogue gave me the opportunity to meet and aid a full spectrum of my fellow Jews. On one particular day, I had the opportunity to meet with a group of college students, many of whom had never been to Israel before. Many of the students were looking forward to their trip to simply begin a connection to their Jewish heritage. On the very same day, I met with ultra Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, and Conservative Jews. It was an opportunity to meet and help any Jew, no matter what their affiliation may be, that made my time at the International Synagogue so special and rewarding. It was an experience I will not soon forget.

Mutti Frogel, Chaplain Intern
R.I.E.T.S, Yeshiva University

This past summer I worked for the International Synagogue at JFK Airport as an assistant rabbi. One of my responsibilities during this time was organizing minyanim, prayer groups, through out the day. I would walk around looking for newly-arrived visitors to New York and bring them back with me to the synagogue. At one time, I was seeking a minyan for Minchah. I noticed some commotion at the check-in desk. A man trying to check in luggage for a flight to Israel had more than the allotted weight, but because he spoke no English, he couldn't understand what the clerk was telling him. As a result, the man was becoming more and more frustrated. I walked over and immediately began interpreting the clerk's instructions to the passenger. Relieved at finally being able to understand what the problem was, the man took care of his baggage dilemma within minutes and happily accompanied me to daven minchah. Because I was trying to organize a minyan, I was able to help a fellow Jew in need.

Nathan Terenio, Chaplain Intern

PRAYER DURING ASERET YEMAI TSHUVAH - THE INSERTIONS

During Aseret Yemai Teshuvah (the Ten Days of Return from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur we insert several phrases in our Amidah prayers. These phrases are זכרנו לחיים - Remember us, מי כמוך - Who is like thee, וכתוב לחיים - Inscribe us, and בספר חיים - May we be inscribed. In these additions we are beseeching God to grant us “life” during the coming year. It has become customary that the entire congregation recites the phrases out loud when the shaliach tzibur or cantor repeats the Amidah - Silent Meditation.

This practice, however, is not universal. Rabbi Hershel Shachter in his book, Nefesh HaRav (The Soul of the Rav [Soloveitchik]), cites the custom of his rebbe, that he did not say the first two phrases out loud based upon the custom he had observed in Europe. He only recited בותכו , and בספר with the congregation. His reasoning was based on the fact that when we pray to God, we are not permitted to make bakashot - “requests” during the first three and last three blessings of the Amidah. The custom to repeat these requests is based on the supposition that they are words of praise and not requests. This explanation can be deduced from the commentary Bnei Yissachor. But, Rav Soloveitchik was of the opinion that the first two phrases are not praise of God, but rather requests. And, the last two phrases of וכתוב לחיים and בספר חיים are words of thanksgiving, requiring the public to respond.

Rabbi Pinchas Teitz offered another reason. The first phrase contains the name of God (“elohim”) and should not be said to avoid unnecessary use of God’s name. And the second phrase does not follow the format of request, rather praise.

Rabbi David Rackman, my zaidy, offered another approach. In the first two phrases, we ask God to grant us חיים - life, in the year ahead. In the latter two phrases we have “upped the ante.” We now are asking God to grant us חיים טובים - a good life. How can we now lower our request in the repetition of the Amidah and only ask for חיים - life. We want a good life and a long life!

Indeed, it is my opinion that it is not only מיבוט מייח that we are requesting. In the latter Two phrases we also ask for a good life for כל בני בריתך and שי תיב רמע לכוראל. We are asking God to grant the good life to all of His people. How can we possibly lessen our request to ask only for “life” for the petitioner? Therefore, it is not appropriate to repeat the first two insertions when the Amidah is repeated because now we expect חיים טובים for everybody.

May God grant us all in this New Year, a good life for all people, a life filled with health and happiness. May this year bring fulfillment of all our desires for the good. May we all be filled with the knowledge and understanding of God’s truth. May we be granted a year of peace and tranquility for us, all Israel, and all humankind.



International Synagogue Chapel, JFK Airport

Chanukah Candle Lighting and Party
Tuesday, December 23, 2008 5:00pm-7:00pm

41th Anniversary Celebration

Special recognition to Manny Weiss, President

The children's HAFTR Choir will perform.

Airline Limited Raffle drawing
latkes ~ soft drinks ~ doughnuts will be served

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*Please come and join us for this special event.*