



**THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG**

*Celebrating 20 Years of Progressive Judaism in Hong Kong*

## **SHABBAT SHALOM**

4 – 5 December, 2009

18 Kislev 5770

Parashat Vayishlach  
(Genesis 32:4-36:43)

Rabbi Stanton M. Zamek  
Cantorial Soloist Shani Ben Or

### **From the Rabbi's desk**

As we prepared this week for Rabbi Sam Joseph's visit to the UJC, I realized that Martha and I have known him almost as long as the UJC has. The two of us were in Rabbi Sam's class in our first semester at HUC Cincinnati way back in 1992. He has been our teacher, friend, and advisor ever since.

Little did I know when Sam (forgive the informality, but this is what he had us call him in class) talked to our class about his experiences serving the Progressive congregation in Hong Kong that I would one day be the direct beneficiary of his congregation - building work at the UJC. What a strange symmetry life creates at times.

Of course when I became seriously interested in the UJC, I gave Sam a call. As ever his advice was sound, including his strong recommendation that I take the position if it were offered. The fact that he was enthusiastic about the idea of me taking stewardship of his "baby" was very gratifying.

Few other teachers at the seminary focused as intently as Sam did on giving us the tools he believed we needed to succeed in the field. I remember poring over rabbinic contracts and congregational budgets as well as learning how to develop teachers and evaluate curricula. Over the years I have quoted one of my favorite Samisms to congregational boards many times: "A congregation's budget is a statement of its values." I will also never forget how he had a fifteen minute sit down with me just before senior placement in which, with withering accuracy, he laid out for me all the strengths and weaknesses of the congregations in the pool and their respective senior Rabbis. There are many, many easier ways of making a living than being a congregational Rabbi. It has been a blessing to have Sam as an ally and a source of unvarnished truths.

It is a great pleasure to welcome Sam and Dori back to Hong Kong. Brace yourself for a concentrated blast of high quality programming in the next two weeks. How fitting to have our founding Rabbi return to help us celebrate 20 years of Progressive Judaism in Hong Kong. Sam's visit is a great thing for the UJC. Selfishly, it is also a great thing for Martha and me as we get the chance to catch up with our mentor and friend. I cannot thank him enough for all the help he gave us as we contemplated this adventure in Hong Kong. It is both wonderful and a bit strange that I am the serving Rabbi who has the privilege of welcoming Rabbi Sam back home for this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary visit. You never know where life can take you, particularly if you are as fortunate in your friends and teachers as I have been.

All Blessings,  
Rabbi Z  
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*3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2009*