



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG

Celebrating 20 Years of Progressive Judaism in Hong Kong

SHABBAT SHALOM

9- 10 April, 2010

26 Nissan 5770

Parashat Shemini
(Leviticus 9:1-11:47)

Rabbi Stanton M. Zamek
Cantorial Soloist Shani Ben Or

From the Rabbi's desk

It is stunning how fast this year is fleeting by. I cannot believe that Pesach has already passed. Given that the tempo of the calendar always increases this time of year, we UJCers will be scattering on our various summer migrations before you know it. So before the pace gets too breathless, it is worthwhile to pause and consider all the great things that will be happening at the UJC before the conclusion of the programmatic year in June.

Next week we welcome Rabbi Joel Oseran back to Hong Kong. Rabbi Joel, who served as the UJC's Rabbi in 1997-1998 and as an interim Rabbi over the years, is joining us as part of the UJC's Year of Torah. He will be leading a Breakfast Chavurah, giving the d'var Torah at services, and teaching a special session of Bagels & Binah. Rabbi Joel is a real *mentsch*. Martha and I were lucky that the beginning of our tenure at the UJC overlapped with the end of Rabbi Joel's last stint. It was a pleasure getting to know him and we look forward to catching up with our colleague and friend. Don't miss this opportunity to reconnect with a great friend of the UJC and to learn from a leader of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. (See this issue of Shabbat Shalom for details).

In early May (6th-9th) we will welcome Rabbi John Levi back to Hong Kong. Rabbi Levi provided critical assistance to the proto-UJC by officiating at the community's first Bar Mitzvah. He also made a *shidduch* that proved to be extremely fruitful in the development of the congregation. It was Rabbi Levi who introduced Rabbi Sam Joseph to the UJC. Rabbi Levi embodies the history of the Progressive Movement in our region, as he was the first Australian-born Rabbi to serve in his own country after ordination.

Later in the month (May 26th-30th), and in time to join us for our Gala, Rabbi Lee Diamond, the UJC's Rabbi Emeritus, will visit the congregation. Rabbi Lee served the UJC from 2001-2004 and given his importance in the history of the congregation, we are so pleased that he will be able to be part of our 20th anniversary celebration. For those who were part of the congregational family during Rabbi Lee's tenure, his visit will be the opportunity for a joyous reunion. Our newer members will have the chance to deepen their understanding of the congregation's history and learn from a *mentchy* and engaging teacher.

All these 20th anniversary events are opportunities to reflect on the UJC's history and to marvel at what it has accomplished in its relatively brief lifetime. Our Year of Torah, however, is also about the future of the congregation. In this light, Jamie Shear, our Sofer, will return to Hong Kong as we continue the holy task of bringing a new Sefer Torah into the world. Jamie will be here from May 25th-June 3rd to write with all those members who have sponsored the books, parshiot, chapters, verses, and words that make up the Holy Torah. Having witnessed these writing sessions during Jamie's last visit, I can tell you that there is no better way to feel part of the transmission of the Torah than to assist in its creation.

If you have already submitted your sponsorship, *mazal tov*. You have given a gift that will enrich the Jewish people long after you leave this life behind. For those who have not yet formally become part of this exciting project, now is the time. A sponsorship at any level helps build Progressive Judaism in Hong Kong and, more important, allows you to fulfill the once in a life-time mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah. You are being offered an opportunity to perform a kind of Jewish magic. Support the writing of even a word and it is as if you have written the entirety of the Torah yourself. For you, for your children, for generations not yet born, commit today to fulfill the 613th Commandment: *Now write for yourself this song, and teach it to all the children of Israel.*

All Blessings
Rabbi Z (rabbizamek@ujc.org.hk)

8th April 2010