



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG

Celebrating 20 Years of Progressive Judaism in Hong Kong

SHABBAT SHALOM

9 - 10 October, 2009

22 Tishrei 5770

Shemini Atzeret

Rabbi Stan Zamek
Cantorial Soloist Shani Ben Or

From the Rabbi's desk

Our Sages teach that the season of repentance that begins on Rosh HaShanah extends beyond Yom Kippur. There is still time to make teshuvah up through Hoshanah Rabbah, the seventh day of Sukkot. So as Shabbat Shalom goes to press, I still have time to offer some overdue thanks.

Our Chazanit, Shani Ben Or, made the High Holidays this year. Of course her voice is beautiful, but her contribution to our worship is much deeper than mere aesthetics. When she recites the liturgy she is not just singing, she is praying. The liturgy of the High Holidays is extremely demanding and to sing it well requires a very high level of technical skill. But a service is not a recital. A congregation needs more than an accomplished singer for the message of the Yamim Noraim to penetrate the heart. With Shani we get more than virtuosity. We get authenticity. We get a *shelichat tzibbur*, a prayer leader, who is not singing for us, but before HaShem.

High Holidays provided another occasion to marvel at the skill and dedication of Nancy and Charlene. They are always the first to arrive and the last to leave Olympic House. With grace, good humor, and calm they handle the complicated logistics of our High Holiday services, a task that begins well before Rosh HaShanah and continues long after Neilah concludes and the fast is broken. As always, I don't know what we would do without them.

Many thanks too to Rabbi Martha (no, I do not call her this at home) who gave up much of her High Holidays to ensure that our children had an enriching and engaging experience on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. I think the technical term for the craft projects she had the kids make this year is "way cool." She has become an expert in the ancient Jewish style of origami (known as *OYrigami*). Martha's preparation for the children's activities was complicated by having to operate temporarily as a single parent when I was seized by High Holiday sermon mania. Many thanks to my kids as well for understanding that I would not always be the crazy person I became. Abba is back now — it is safe to talk to him again.

As was true last year, I was supported this High Holidays by our able gabbaim, Jordan Potash and Joshua Goldman-Brown. Not only do they handle the important task of distributing High Holiday honors, but they also provide logistical support during services. I appreciate and depend on these two skilled Torah wranglers.

Our security team once again did a fine job of managing the flow of people and securing the facility. We all appreciate the hours these men and women devote to training and to preparing the site, in addition to the time they spend manning the security stations. Thank you for protecting the sanctity and serenity of the High Holidays.

And to all the members of the UJC and to all our guests — thank you for being part of a special worship community. Together we transformed an auditorium in a sports center into a holy place. Hearing all of you singing Avinu Malkeinu and the "On Rosh HaShanah it is written" line of Une Taneh Tokef was a spiritual high point of the Yamim Noraim for me. Your prayers lifted me up. Without an active and receptive congregation, nothing we do from the bima matters. By being present in the true spiritual sense, you invited the Divine into our midst.

May the year 5770 be a time of growth, renewal, and blessing for The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong and for us all.

Chag Sameach!

All Blessings
Rabbi Z
rabbizamek@ujc.org.hk

8th October, 2009