



## THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG

*Celebrating 20 Years of Progressive Judaism in Hong Kong*

### SHABBAT SHALOM

26 – 27 February, 2010

13 Adar 5770

Parashat Tetzaveh  
(Exodus 27:20-30:10)

Rabbi Stanton M. Zamek  
Cantorial Soloist Shani Ben Or

## From the Rabbi's desk

My column this week is an invitation to a very important Jewish community event. I hope you will join me at a dinner on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March celebrating the work of ZAKA. ZAKA is an Israeli volunteer search, rescue, and recovery organization that renders aid at disaster scenes in Israel and around the world. Its mission is succinctly stated in the ZAKA motto: "Saving those who can be saved, honoring those who cannot." ZAKA volunteers are highly skilled "first responders" to accidents, natural disasters, and terror attacks. Simply put, they save lives and ensure that those who do not survive can be buried with dignity and honor.

The dinner next month, in addition to paying tribute to the great mitzvah work of ZAKA, also marks the establishment of the ZAKA Hong Kong/Macau/China International Search and Rescue Unit. This unit will be located in Hong Kong and will be ZAKA's base in South East Asia. While the bulk of ZAKA's activity takes place in Israel, ZAKA participates in rescue and recovery efforts around the world. Most recently, ZAKA teams responded to the earthquake in Haiti and succeeded in rescuing nine people.

Rabbi Martha and I have both worked with ZAKA directly. A ZAKA team was in Louisiana shortly after Hurricane Katrina. ZAKA's Rabbi Isaac Leider retrieved the bodies of a number of people who died in a Jewish nursing home in New Orleans just prior to the evacuation. I was with him when we temporarily buried two of these bodies in my synagogue's cemetery. With modesty and skill, he completed a holy task that no one else was willing and able to undertake. Rabbi Leider also retrieved the Torah scrolls from Beth Israel Synagogue (see picture). Beth Israel went under eight feet of water and the Sifrei Torah were damaged beyond repair. When the waters receded, the scrolls were laid to rest in the New Orleans Jewish cemetery.



In the coming months, the Jewish community of Hong Kong will be working with ZAKA to build local response capacity. Having a presence in the region will mean that help will come to those in need of assistance much more quickly. The leadership of the UJC is committed to doing what we can to help ZAKA in its holy work. In our dealings with ZAKA founder Rabbi Yehuda Meshi Zahav and David Rose, director of ZAKA's International Communities Division, we have found them to be respectful of our place in the community and eager to include us in this important project. We know that our local Hong Kong chapter of ZAKA will be a model of how Jews from diverse backgrounds can come together for the cause of pikuach nefesh, the preservation of life, and chesed shel emet, the selfless kindness of caring for the deceased.

Please join us at the dinner on Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> (see details in the attached booking form). Come and learn how you can become part of ZAKA's vital and holy work.

All Blessings  
Rabbi Z  
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25<sup>th</sup> February 2010