

# THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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## Editorial

### Will the Well Run Dry?

Friends and enemies, Jews and Gentiles, all express amazement at the efficiency and effectiveness of the Jewish communal philanthropic apparatus. Perhaps more than any other group in American society, Jews have professionalized and organized their fund raising activities. They have taken what was once an amateur's pastime and refined it into a social art form. The phrase "I gave at the office" has become the punch line of many comedy routines. Comedy aside, Jews have been generous, have been charitable, have been responsible members of their voluntary community.

Many adult American Jews can remember the blue and white *pushka* (the collection box) that stood in their parents' kitchen. Pennies, nickels, dimes and an occasional quarter were put into the tin box so that trees might be planted in Israel or orphans given a place to live, or "consumptives" sent to rest and recuperate in clean, healthy air. The Jews in America voluntarily taxed themselves to support a wide range of Jewish charitable and communal institutions. Children were given money to bring to their Hebrew Schools for Keren Ami — a kind of junior United Jewish Appeal. Even the poor gave. After all, some other Jew was probably poorer and in need of help. The remarkable thing about all of this giving was that it was voluntary.

There are two basic alternative theories to explain why Jews give. These are the "division of labor" theory and the "more the more" theory. The division of labor theory argues that different Jews do different kinds of Jewish things. Some Jews (a few) pray. They keep G-d happy and keep the minyan alive for the rest of us when we might need it (G-d forbid). Other Jews think profound Jewish thoughts and maintain our tenuous tie to "the book" of which we are the people. Still another group forms, joins and leads Jewish organizations, ensuring its own immortality on the ever growing letterheads that each of these organizations prints. And last of all are the philanthropoids who write checks and encourage their friends and neighbors to go and do the same.

It could be argued that observant and involved Jews are richer and that's why they are more likely to give and to give more. Committed Jews tend to be "square" and financial rewards tend to go to more conventional people. Artists starve in garrets while businessmen prosper. Observance has shown that the more Jewish one's behavior (however measured) the more likely one is to give, the more one gives, and the higher the proportion of income given. It is strikingly clear that Jews who are committed to one or another aspect of Jewish tradition or communal life are far more likely to give. The pattern is very clear. Jews who take their Jewishness seriously in their day-to-day lives accept their obligations to the Jewish community. They pay their dues in both a literal and metaphoric sense.

Philanthropic behavior among Jews is a voluntary form of taxation. There is no Jewish communal IRS to tell a Jew that he must give and just how much he must give. Why should an uninvolved Jew give to Jewish causes? If you tell him a tale of Jewish need, he can point perhaps to a greater need among other people who are not Jews. More than that, he may well decide that he and his family are his most deserving beneficiaries. Why give money to a bunch of strangers when you don't have all that you want within your own household?

For the concerned Jew, the ultimate recipients of his contribution are not strangers even if he does not know them. They are Jews who need his help. They are his own, his family, his fellowship, seen and unseen, known and unknown. Concerned Jews befriend other concerned Jews and want their esteem. One of the ways in which they earn esteem is through expressing Jewish concern through participation in Jewish communal affairs and through giving. Givers are part of a community of givers.

Until now, the Jewish fund raising enterprise has done very well, but will it do so in the future? If Jewish giving is a consequence of Jewishness, then when Jewishness declines, giving should decline as well. Looking about the Jewish community, we see evidence both of growing and declining Jewish commitment. Jewish Jews are becoming more Jewish, and the "non-Jewish" Jews, less Jewish. Those who wish to remain Jewish and want their children to remain Jewish can no longer depend upon the Jewishness of the street. They no longer have direct access to the culturally rich Jewishness of parents or grandparents born and raised in the Jewish towns of Europe. They have no Jewish proxies in their homes. Will they allow the well to run dry?

The Editors welcome comments and letters expressing all points of view and reserve the right to edit.

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

## A Happy New Year

### Federation & JCC

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Charlotte Jewish Federation and the JCC, to wish you individually a healthy and contented New Year. I hope the coming year brings us closer to the fulfillment of those goals toward which we Jews are continually working.

Among these goals are: support of local agencies to strengthen and unite our community, support of Israel to help her existence, improved community relations of the Jewish people, and Jewish education to ensure continuity of our heritage.

The continued striving for these goals is our strength and is what will ensure our survival as a people.

Shalom,  
Marvin Bienstock  
Executive Director

### Hebrew Academy

"This day the world was called into being; this day all the creatures of the universe stand in judgement before Thee..." These words, recited in the synagogue during the Mussaf service of Rosh Hashanah, express the basic theme of the High Holy Day Period — judgement. We ask God to judge and to weigh our actions and behavior in the year that has just past. We entreat Him for pity, that He may be gracious unto us and be merciful.

Rosh Hashanah 5741 marks a beginning in my life. I have joined the Jewish community of Charlotte, assuming the position of the Director of the Hebrew Academy. I feel extremely fortunate to be closely involved with the Academy, for it is truly an exciting and stimulating institution, one in which all of Charlotte Jewry can take pride. It is my fervent hope that in the coming year, the Academy will grow and will develop, meeting all the challenges that any Hebrew Day School must inevitably encounter.

The growth and development of schools such as the Academy are the key to Jewish survival in America. It needs to be emphasized that without a strong commitment to Jewish education, the future of the Jewish people is in doubt. A year from today, when we will again stand before God in judgement, we must ask ourselves: What have I done in the past year to ensure my children's and grandchildren's knowledge of Judaism? The answer to that question, I believe, may determine how we are to be judged.

At this time, I would like to thank all of you for the warmth and kindness you have bestowed upon me, and to wish all a "shana tovah umetukah," a sweet and happy year.

Raphael I. Panitz  
Director

### Temple Israel

All during the year, and especially at this season before Rosh Hashanah, the tradition bids us to be doubly careful of what we see, what we hear, and above all, of what we say. It is a word of advice that we moderns need to take to heart, at least as much as the ancients did.

How can we see no evil, when to walk down the streets of any

major city is to be bombarded on all sides by poverty and want that is offensive to the soul? Truly, it's hard to keep our eyes from becoming contaminated. So, especially at this season of the year we need to put some kind of a guard over what we read and what we look at. The small talk that we hear at parties takes its toll as well. We listen as people's reputations are cut down with a snicker as their good deeds are explained away with some psychological jargon, as their lives are weighed and judged casually.

We can have little control over what we see or what we hear, but surely we ought to put a guard upon our mouths, especially at this season of the year. The Midrash says that the tongue is a dangerous instrument and therefore the Lord has provided it with two sets of guards — teeth and lips — and yet it goes out and does damage.

Few of us ever hurt anyone with our fists or our feet, and yet all of us are guilty of having hurt others with our tongue — a cutting remark, a sarcastic joke, a cynical word have the power to crush another human being's sense of self-worth.

There was a school of Jewish pride that had practiced fasting from speech during the days of this month. We who are involved with so many diets for the sake of our bodies ought to at least consider the possibility of this diet for the sake of our souls — to see less and hear less and say less that is wrong would do much to prepare us inwardly for the coming of the Days of Awe.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a healthy and fulfilling New Year ... L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu.

Rabbi Richard K. Rocklin

### Temple Beth Shalom

The flow of time and nature has once again come full cycle. The heat of summer is ending as we begin to think in terms of the year ahead. Our work/vacation schedule, our children's school routine, the leaves on the trees all stimulate us to think in terms of "newness" and "change" and "freshness."

These concepts are, indeed, the very essence of Rosh Hashanah. It is a time when we come before God to pledge contrition and change, when we seek the opportunity to start anew in the year ahead.

Have you ever wondered why first we usher in a new year at Rosh Hashanah and then, ten days later, seek atonement for the previous year? Logically it should be the opposite: first concluding the business of the prior year and then proceeding on to the new. Logic prescribes that Yom Kippur should come first; but it does not.

Therein, perhaps, is a message for us. We approach the joy of the new year at Rosh Hashanah with unfinished business of the previous year still pending. We come to pray on Rosh Hashanah, asking for a year of health and prosperity while still the judgement of the previous year hangs over us. We do not need to be atoned before celebrating the new year; we operate on faith. We enter the new year with faith that it will be good, that when the final t'kiah is sounded on Yom Kippur, we will be cleansed and fresh and eager to continue our

lives.

The very fact that Rosh Hashanah precedes Yom Kippur is symbolic of our faith — a faith in God as well as a faith that we are basically good. In the spirit of that faith, on behalf of the members of Beth Shalom, I wish you a shana tova uvriah, a year of health and all things good.

Rabbi Robert A. Seigel

### Temple Beth El

Tradition tells that Rosh Hashanah celebrates the divine drama of creation. "Hayom harat olam — On this day did the world come into being."

Whether or not we take the Biblical story literally, the essential truth is stamped into our consciousness: the universe is no accident; it was the work of a conscious Creator — a world pregnant with meaning and purpose, endowed with the marvelous machinery of natural law.

And never more dramatically than at the change of seasons are we made aware of the inexorable cycle of the natural world. Rain-spattered and wind-swept, myriads of leaves fall in crazy spiraling patterns — bright with gold, green, and rust-red, and the earth is covered with autumn leaves come to rest.

It is easy to understand how the regular march of the seasons, the predictable phases of the moon persuaded the ancients that all nature, and all human life also, follow set patterns determined by the gods on high, or by some irresistible fate. This is the essence of Greek tragedy: man is by nature a captive of forces beyond his control; he is ultimately helpless.

Our father Abraham, intuiting a divine pattern overarching all natural phenomena, was the first "radical." He preached a revolutionary doctrine: that all creation, including man, was NOT trapped forever in predetermined cycles, but rather that man, by his moral acts, could influence his own fate and that of human history.

This open-ended approach to life is central to Judaism. It breathes of hopefulness instead of despair, of human possibilities and options, instead of sheer dumb fate.

We had better start taking Abraham seriously. It is man, not fate, who has dumped his garbage into the air and the waters. It is man who succumbs to greed and mindless nationalism; it is man who makes war. It is man who persecutes and kills his fellow-man. It is man who perpetrates injustice and cruelty, not only towards enemies on the battlefield, but also towards wives, husbands, children and parents.

So, if the world is destroyed, as well it may be, we shall not have the comfort of the ancients who could blame it all on the capriciousness of the gods. We know that the monkey is on our own backs.

"Repentance, worship and acts of loving kindness may avert the evil decree."

I believe in the human enterprise because I believe in God. What do you believe in?

We wish you all a sweet and healthful New Year.

Rabbi Harold I. Krantzler