

# My Voice . . .

By Susan Kramer

Dear Friends,

I always wait until the last moment to write my column, but this month, I've taken it to a new extreme. I am literally only hours away from delivering the paper to the printer, and I am finally sitting down at the computer. There's no mystery why I've delayed so long — quite simply, I hate goodbyes.

I have shared with you over the last months some of the struggles my family and I are dealing with as I battle cancer. Most recently, I told you of a new treatment I was exploring. The good news, of course, is that I am working hard on getting better, and have great expectations of beating this thing. The bad news is that the course of treatment that I have chosen is very rigorous and demanding — and I guess I'm not super woman, after all.

After much soul searching, I have come to the realization that right now, all of my attention must focus on doing what I must do to get well. Any time or residual strength must be spent on my family.

Unfortunately, that leaves me with not enough time or energy to do justice to editing the *Charlotte Jewish News*. With great regret, I have tendered my resignation to

the Board, effective March 1.

I take this step very reluctantly. This has been one of the most rewarding times of my life. The people I've met, the things I've learned, the sheer excitement of seeing the paper come together each month have given me an incredible amount of pleasure. But I also must be fair to the paper, the Editorial Board and the Jewish community. My hope, of course, is that someday I'll be able to contribute again in some way, but to get to *there*, I have to take care of *here*.

I sincerely appreciate the understanding and concern that Marvin Goldberg and the Board have shown as I struggled with this decision. They have, as always, been a major source of support.

It certainly helps to know that I will be leaving the paper in good hands. The Editorial Board has appointed Board Member Suzanne Cannon as Interim Editor as they begin their search for a permanent replacement. Suzanne is already at work, learning the ins and outs of putting together a newspaper, and I know she will do a superb job.

I've done a lot of reading in the last few months. Early on, I found a poem that spoke to my heart. As

a parting gift, I'd like to share it with all of you. It was said to have been written by an American Confederate soldier seriously disabled in the Civil war:

*I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,*

*I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.*

*I asked for health, that I might do great things,*

*I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.*

*I asked for riches, that I might be happy,*

*I was given poverty, that I might be wise.*

*I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,*

*I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.*

*I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,*

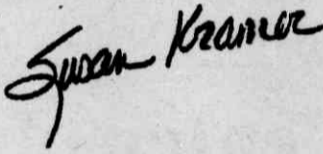
*I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.*

*I got nothing that I asked for— but everything I had hoped for.*

*Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.*

*I am, among all men, most richly blessed.*

Shalom,



## The North Carolina - Israel Partnership's Second Annual Student Trip to Israel

Lenore Behar

The North Carolina-Israel Partnership is once again sponsoring a trip to Israel for high school students, ages 15 and 16. The trip, which will focus on the 50th Anniversary of Israel, is scheduled for July 1- July 16. To celebrate the founding of Israel 50 years ago, the students will visit historic sites, meet with people who were involved in the establishment of the State of Israel and participate in seminars with Israeli students to discuss history, culture and life today in Israel. They will also visit the traditional sites such as the Dead Sea, Masada, the Old City in Jerusalem, archeological sites in the Upper Galilee, a kibbutz and Yad Vashem, the memorial to the Holocaust.

As was done last year, the students will stay in Rehovot in the homes of host families who have teens of similar ages. Rehovot is a very beautiful city south of Tel Aviv and is the home of the Weizmann Institute, a major research/industrial park and small businesses. The Municipality of Rehovot takes pride in hosting teen groups from Grenoble and Heidelberg and last year, offered a stimulating experience for 14 students from Durham, Chapel Hill and Greensboro. Annie Zipper was one of the teens who took the trip, and she says:

"I encourage anyone interested in learning about Israel, its people, and its history to take this trip. You will experience Israel from a tourist's perspective, but also with a host family, and with Israeli peers your own age. My host family provided me with an inside look at Rehovot and Israeli life, something you cannot experience traveling on your own. I look forward to returning to Israel in the future."

Last September, following the trip, Professor Ephraim Katzir who was the 4th President of Israel, came to North Carolina and presented awards to the 14 students for being North Carolina-Israel Ambassadors of Understanding.

The chaperones from last year, Ilana Dubester and Andre Webb, have enthusiastically agreed to go again this year. The cost of the trip, including air fare from North Carolina, will at most be \$1,900. Last year, the cost of the trip was reduced several hundred dollars by foundation grants.

The North Carolina-Israel Partnership will seek similar support this year. For more information, call Lenore Behar at 489-1888 (home) or 733-0598 (office in Raleigh) or Merritt Mulman at 489-0676. ✪

*There is no vessel which holds blessedness more securely than peace.*

Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot

## The North Carolina - Israel Partnership

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guage and Israelis are not necessarily fluent in English; therefore readings had to be tailored to the needs of the two communities. Flexibility and understanding have become two important factors in the development of this program. Two demonstration classes have already been held with outstanding results. Professor Meyers stated that "Both [conferences] were real successes. With the film footage we have we can bring groups literally to the Galilee to visit some of the most important sites for a richer understanding of the religious and cultural legacy of Judaism and Christianity in the land of Israel."

Professors and experts from both America and Israel have been

coordinating the production of this program. Professor Meyers has been excavating in Israel for 35 years and supervised the video shooting of more than 20 ancient sites in Israel this past summer to be used as part of the course. Recently, Professor Meyers co-curated the exhibit "Sephoris in Galilee" at the N.C. Museum of Art. Dr. Zeev Safrai, Professor Meyer's counterpart at Bar Ilan University, is also renowned in his field. Dr. Safrai is an expert on the economy of Roman Palestine in addition to being a Talmudic scholar. Faculty from Bar Ilan's satellite campus, Jordan Valley College, have also been working hard on the development of the course.

Currently there is a grant pending with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources for the expansion of this project. NCIP wants to organize the course content so that it can be made available to faculty at the numerous universities and colleges across the state. In addition, the course has the potential to be adopted by the staff at various North Carolina museums, as well as libraries and other institutions. The potential impact of this project is immeasurable and extends well into the 21st century. If you have any questions or want any additional information about the program, please call the NCIP at 919-489-0676. ✪

## Rabbis' rejection of proposal seen as a 'declaration of war'

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) - Reform and Conservative movement leaders are denouncing the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's rejection of a key component of a compromise proposal aimed at resolving the controversial issue of conversions in Israel.

The Chief Rabbinate "declared war on the Reform and Conservative movements," the heads of those movements in Israel said in a joint statement in February.

Rabbi Uri Regev and Rabbi Ehud Bandel, the Reform and Conservative representatives of the committee that had worked seven months to hammer out a proposal, said that in taking this step, "the Chief Rabbinate endangers splitting the Jewish people."

The strong words came after Israel's Chief Rabbinate Council rejected the creation of a conversion-training institute in which non-Orthodox rabbis would participate. The institute, which would be overseen by the Jewish Agency for Israel, was a key component of the compromise proposal reached by the Ne'eman Committee in January.

The proposal also included a provision that all conversions in Israel would continue to be performed only by Orthodox officials.

The Rabbinic Council restricted its discussion to the Ne'eman Committee's recommendation the conversions be conducted in Israel in accordance with halachah, Jewish religious law.

It was not immediately clear what impact the decision would have on efforts to reach a compromise on the conversion issue. The Ne'eman Committee, chaired by Israel's finance minister, Ya'acov Ne'eman, had been meeting since last year in an effort to achieve a compromise acceptable to all of Judaism's religious streams.

The religious parties in the Knesset are now likely to press for resumption of legislative action on a bill that would set into law the Orthodox establishment's sole authority over conversions in Israel. The bill already passed the first of three legislative hurdles last year.

At the same time, however, a majority of Knesset members recently said they would oppose such legislation.

And court cases brought by the Reform and Conservative movements, which are seeking recognition of their authority in Israel, are now likely to move ahead after being put on hold while a compromise was sought. ✪

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