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POINT OF VIEW

Each issue of the CJN features an article written by one of the rabbis active in the Charlotte community.

This month:
Rabbi Jim Bennett of Temple Beth El



"FINDING JOY IN TIMES OF CRISIS"

We have just recently completed our celebration of the festival of Shavuot, concluding the cycle of our festivals for another year. Before we know it, summer will also be a memory, and the month of Elul will arrive, reminding us once again to reflect upon the meaning of our lives. Rosh Hashanah will bring hope and promise for a new year.

Knowing that time marches on, then, we cannot help but think about the year that has passed. What a painful year it has been. Reflecting back to last September, we began our new Jewish year with the shock and tragedy of September 11. As the reality of a new global terrorism sank in, the conflict in Israel intensified, and the Jewish community was challenged, even more, to rally around a beleaguered Israel. Many of us have struggled to make sense of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We have been challenged to sort out facts from propaganda, to encourage newspaper and magazine reporters and editors to be accurate and unbiased in their presentation of the stories, and to encourage our friends and neighbors to be objective in evaluating the situation. The apparent increase in anti-Semitism around the world, particularly in Europe may horrify us, recalling memories of distant

hatreds that are still much too close. We rally around our Jewish pride, our peoplehood, our unity with our fellow Jews here, across the nation, around the globe.

It may seem that our Jewish pride and unity are at their strongest when we are threatened from the outside. It is human nature, after all, to rally to defend our families and ourselves when we are threatened. When Israel is threatened, when fellow Jews are the victims of anti-Semitism, we realize that all of us are Israel, that all of us are Jews. Many of the differences that seem to separate us fall away, and we seek our commonalities. *Am Yisrael Chai*—the people of Israel lives.

Such unity is important, particularly at times like this, and the rallying cries that unite us in times of crisis are important. For example, it is of critical importance that all of

us support the emergency appeal for Israel coordinated by our Jewish Federation and the United Jewish Communities. If you have not yet made your contribution to this appeal to help Israel and our people in this time of crisis, please consider doing so now. Now is the time for all of us to unite and to support our people in Israel and wherever they may be.

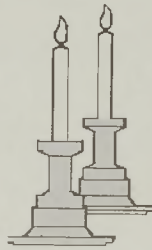
Yet we must not allow our Jewish faith to focus solely, or even primarily, on this crisis mentality. A Judaism that is only strong in crisis is hollow and empty. A Judaism that teaches only the fear of anti-Semitism and the threats of our enemies will fail to impress a new generation with the beauty of Jewish celebration, spiritual meaning and joy. Many young American Jews who came of age in the fifties and sixties learned this lesson the hard way. Religious schools that taught Jewish children that being Jewish meant merely, or even primarily, remembering the Holocaust and supporting Israel, left many of that generation cold. We have learned that our faith must not only teach us to respond to crisis, but to live meaningful Jewish lives when we are not in crisis. We must celebrate and rejoice that we are Jews, that most of us are free to practice our faith, that most Jews live in freedom and equality. We have the obligation to build a positive Judaism and a faith of joy, not merely to respond to our enemies and our fears.

As we face new and old threats to our Jewish welfare, we also face this great challenge: how do we unite to support Israel, stem the rising tide of anti-Semitism, and not forget the core Jewish joy which is the essence of our faith?

To this challenge, we must devote our energies during these difficult months. As we rally to defend our people in Israel and wherever they may be, we must seek to emphasize the blessings of our own Jewish lives as well. As we draw upon our resources to support Jews in need, we must also use those resources to strengthen the institutions of Jewish communities that further the joy of daily Jewish living. As we pray for peace and the welfare of our people and all people, we must also pray that our Jewish lives will be rich, meaningful and filled with the joy of Jewish living. ✡

CANDLE LIGHTING FOR JUNE AND JULY 2002

Friday, June 7 8:17 PM	Friday, June 28 8:23 PM	Friday, July 19 8:18 PM
Friday, June 14 8:20 PM	Friday, July 5 8:23 PM	Friday, July 26 8:14 PM
Friday, June 21 8:22 PM	Friday, July 12 8:21 PM	



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Jewish Community Center of Charlotte.....	704-366-5007
The Foundation of Shalom Park.....	704-366-5007
Charlotte Jewish Day School.....	704-366-4558
Charlotte Jewish Preschool.....	704-944-6777
Jewish Family Services.....	704-364-6594
Charlotte Jewish News.....	704-944-6765
Speizman Jewish Library.....	704-944-6763
CAJE.....	704-944-6780
Consolidated High School.....	704-944-6782
BBYO Local Office.....	704-944-6734
Temple Israel.....	704-362-2796
Temple Israel Religious School at the JCC.....	704-944-6785
Temple Beth El.....	704-366-1948
Temple Beth El Religious School at the JCC.....	704-944-6789

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POINTS OF VIEW

*Would you like to
give us your
points of view?*

Join us on the second and
fourth Tuesday of each
month at Temple Israel at
12:30 PM. Our group of
male retirees meet to
discuss subjects offered
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