



## חדשות משדה התעופה

News from... *International* **SYNAGOGUE**

by Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman

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ט"ו בשבט, ה'תשע"א

### ***CHANUKAH PARTY HELD AT International SYNAGOGUE;* *HAFTR CHOIR PERFORMS***

The annual Chanukah party and candle lighting ceremony were held at the *International SYNAGOGUE* on Wednesday, December 8, 2010, the eighth night of the holiday. More than 250 joined in the celebration. Several airport officials participated in lighting some of candles, among them Jerry Spampinato, General Manager of JFK.

In order to accommodate travelers leaving on the 6:00PM EL AL plane that evening, arrangements were made with airport officials that these travelers would be present for the candle lighting and then immediately leave to board the plane. Indeed, these passengers were able to board the plane in time.

It is strictly forbidden to light candles in the airport buildings as this presents a fire and safety hazard. There is one exception to this rule. If a fire guard is present during the ceremony, then real fire can be used. The **SYNAGOGUE** hired a special officer for the evening so that we could comply with both the *Halacha* and also maintain safety in the building. (On the other nights of Chanukah the *menorah* was lit with real candles near the EL AL check-in counter [Row 1] and a safety officer was stationed nearby to comply with the fire safety rules. Many passengers were grateful that they could "participate" in this *mitzvah*.)

Seventy-three students from the HAFTR choir entertained the guests. It has been a long standing tradition that the HAFTR choir has come to brighten the Party at JFK. We are so grateful to Ms. Tova Zucker, coordinator of Student Activities who arranged the performance. We also appreciate the involvement of Ms. Joy Hammer, Principal and Rabbi Dr. Steven Eisenberg, Director of Judaic Studies for the Lower School. All agreed it was a lovely, special evening. Traditional holiday refreshments catered by Silver Creek Foods (Jerry Blum and Abe Orzel) of Far Rockaway were served.

Several Israeli faculty members from HAFTR were present, as well. They were returning to Israel and boarded an EL AL plane later in the evening.



HAFTR CHILDREN'S CHOIR

KINOR DAVID - HARMONY GROUP



STRANDED JEWISH PASSENGERS

REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING SERVICE



## **LIMITED RAFFLE WINNERS SELECTED AT CHANUKAH PARTY**

Each year the **SYNAGOGUE** conducts a Limited Raffle as the only fund raising activity. This year eight airlines donated (two round trip tickets) so that we might offer these grand prizes to lucky winners. We are very grateful to the station managers of these airlines for the donations of the tickets. **Everyone should realize that all those who purchased raffle tickets are winners! Without the financial support of the entire community, we would not be able to serve the traveling public and meet their needs.** Below are listed the airlines, the station managers, and the winners:



~ Andrew Halley - Rabbi Myron Rakowitz



~ Moshe Mishol - Mr. William Rapfogel



~ Gerry Moore - Mrs. Ruth Pechman



~ Alex Battaglia - Mr. Dennis Waldman



~ Daniel Murray - Rabbi Michael Miller



~ Ana Lemos - Ms. Erica Stempler



~ Bill Boasi - Bel Air Electric

## **PLANS FOR A JFK HEALTH FAIR**

In September Rabbi Rackman attended the dedication of new facilities for the Airport Medical Office at JFK together with the other clergy in IAT. Tom Kelliher is the Director of this facility. One of the outgrowths of this event was a decision by the heads of the three chapels to sponsor an expanded Health Fair to be held in IAT/Terminal 4, endorsed by the TRI-FATH CHAPELS. The religious facilities at the Airport need not only be responsible with the spiritual needs of employers and workers at JFK. The clergy are also concerned with the physical and emotional needs of the community. By joining together, we hope to add another dimension, toward meeting the physical and health needs of a community of approximately 30,000 members. And, of course the health facilities at the Airport are there to serve the passengers as well.

## **SOME UNUSUAL GATHERING AT THE SYNAGOGUE**

On a Sunday evening in October we once again hosted a reception for Rabbi Kopelman on his return to Switzerland. This religious leader, who is over one hundred years old, has made several visits to the United States and we are more than happy to offer space in the Museum for him to greet men, women, and children who hold him in high regard. The atmosphere in the room where more than two hundred faithful followers of this sage come to show respect and ask for a *brachah*/ blessing was quite palpable.

On Sunday, October 24, Rabbi Rackman participated as a chaplain with the Disaster Chaplaincy Services and the American Red Cross in an all day “drill” at La Guardia Airport. The training involved preparedness for a mass disaster following a natural or terrorist event. The focus of the training was to set up a **Family Assistance Center** in a secure and safe location in the aftermath of a major tragedy. We pray that this should never come to pass, but we must be “prepared.”

On Saturday night, October 30, Rabbi Rackman attended a *levayah*/funeral at JFK for the father of a close friend. People know that these unfortunate events take place at the EL AL cargo area. But, some people have difficulty finding the location (especially at night). By visiting the website ([www.jfkshul.org](http://www.jfkshul.org)) and accessing **Resources**, people will find DIRECTIONS to the EL AL cargo area. Now people can find their way easily and lessen their anxiety at a time when tension and sadness prevail.

On November 3, a small group of handicapped young adults came to the **SYNAGOGUE** on a “field trip.” These special people live at home or in group homes and spend their day in a Day Treatment Program where they are provided with academic, vocational and social training. This program is called KINOR DAVID. The trip was supervised by Moshe Dovid Boylan and other counselors. We hosted the group on their monthly field trip.

Those who read regularly about the events taking place in IAT/Terminal 4 know of the work of PROJECT INTERCHANGE, of the American Jewish Committee. Under their auspices, another group traveled to Israel on December 5, for an educational and information gathering “mission.” The group consisted of fifteen state legislators from different parts of the country. The travelers gathered in the TRI-FAITH CHAPELS MUSEUM for orientation prior to boarding the EL AL plane.

On December 15, Rabbi Elyse Winick, Associate Director for **KOACH**, accompanied a group of eighteen young people from all over the country on a Shorashim Taglit/Birthright Israel “mission.” All of these travelers had various learning and physical handicaps. The joy and excitement exhibited by all the participants was inspiring. We hosted the group with the usual refreshments as they gathered in the Museum prior to their departure. We at the **SYNAGOGUE** are grateful that we can serve as an “oasis” for the many passengers who pass through this main gateway to the United States.

### ***SUNDAY AND MONDAY THE RABBI WAS SNOWED IN; FIVE TOWNERS CAME TO THE RESCUE***

The New York metropolitan area experienced a severe blizzard on December 26 and 27. All activity in and around the city came to a halt. EL AL was forced to cancel its flights. As a result, a group of more than one hundred young adults assembled from was forced to alter their travel plans. Each year during the last week of December a group called **Jewish Fellowships International**, a *kiruv* organization, arranges for a two week tour

of Israel coordinated with Aish HaTorah, Ohr Sameach, and Shabbat.com. Rabbis Benzion Klatzko and Aaron Eiseman were the leaders of this “mission” to Israel.

Because of the blizzard conditions and lack of access to transportation only a skeleton staff was at work during the storm. However, the stranded passengers used their cell phones and e-mail to send out messages of their plight. One person to heed their call was Yanky BRACH. He and others in the Five Towns were mobilized and used vans, SUVs, and trucks to gather and deliver food provisions from several stores and restaurants and then deliver them to JFK. Rabbi Rackman was contacted by phone to assist in finding a more private and secluded area for the group. Using the phone and e-mail, he was able to speak with Susana Cunha, the duty manager, to authorize the use of the TRI-FAITH CHAPELS MUSEUM for these weary travelers.

The following day when normal operations resumed, all the volunteers could breathe a sigh of relief knowing they had brought comfort and order to the lives of more than one hundred very anxious passengers. They had performed acts of pure *chesed*.

Full coverage was given to this “rescue” effort in the Five Towns Jewish Times (5TJT) as reported by Larry Gordon, publisher and editor. Several “Letters to the Editor” of the 5TJT from the parents and the travelers themselves expressed gratitude for the wonderful efforts made by these *chesed* volunteers.

Several **birthrightIsrael** groups used the **SYNAGOGUE** and/or Museum for either *mincha/maariv* or orientation sessions. We were especially **busy** during late December and intersession. The **SYNAGOGUE** continues to host groups of young men and women on their way to Israel.

### ***REV. MARTIN LUTHER MEMORIAL SERVICE***

Each year the four chapels commemorate the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by conducting a memorial service in the Airport chapels. This January, the service was held in the **SYNAGOGUE**. The participants included Rev. N. J. L’Heureux, Father Krystian Piasta, and Rabbi Rackman. We also invited Rabbi Jonathan Pearl of the Astoria Center for Judaism to be the guest speaker and share reflections with the group. He reminded the audience that while Martin Luther King Jr. was a Dr. he was first and foremost a Rev. since his whole life and teachings emphasized morality and ethics. Everyone agreed that the brief service was inspirational.

### ***KOSHER FOOD STILL AVAILABLE IN IAT/TERMINAL 4***

At the present time kosher sandwiches, wraps, and salads are available in the food concession called Peet’s Coffee on the third floor - Commercial floor. These items have the STAR-K *hashgachah*. On the B Concourse passengers can purchase Reisman's cakes, cookies, and croissants with O-U and CRC supervision.

## ***MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NEEDED NOW***

The Limited Raffle campaign was successful. **But, *International* SYNAGOGUE also relies upon income from our membership drive in order to fulfill our financial obligations.** Fully half our budget comes from dues. Rabbi Rackman often tells people that his role is half time rabbi and half time executive director. We serve travelers and workers at one of the world's busiest airports. We conduct prayer services prior to flights, provide a tranquil setting for visitors to sit and learn/study. We host young adults on their travels. We represent Judaism to the non-Jewish travelers. We are unique in that we are the only Jewish chapel located in an airport in the Western Hemisphere. Please help us fulfill our **mission** at JFK so that we can continue to serve you and provide for your needs. The Dues range is Friend \$25, Supporter \$50, Congregation \$100, Sponsor \$180, Board Member \$250, and Diamond Club \$1,000. **Donations can now be made via the Internet by using our website ([www.jfkshul.org](http://www.jfkshul.org)) and using the Donations link.**

## ***SYNAGOGUE HOSTS MANY VISITORS***

Over the past several months we have been privileged to host rabbis and lay leaders in the *International* SYNAGOGUE. A partial list follows:

Shaltiel Aberelay (Modiin, Israel - Love, Live, and Believe); Gandhi Gregory Avner (Trivandrum, Kerala, India - Peace, Love, Kindness, and mostly WISDOM); Andreas Balg (Wilot, Switzerland - God bless His people and His kingdom to come); Mrs. Queen Aphrosodia Kanawakee Arista (Kingston, Jamaica - looking forward to being home); Bernard D Bienstock (Cedarhurst, NY - This is a sanctification of God's name); Bleier Family Thanks, very nice; Brian Douvdeldmont (thornhill, Ontario, Canada - Thank you very much for enabling Jews to pray while traveling); Yitzchak Fierstein (Jerusalem, Israel - Congratulations); Moshe Goldman (Monsey, NY - excellent place, especially during the snow storm); Rabbi Sheldon Goldsmith (New York, NY); Harmony Services/Kinor Dovid (Brooklyn, NY); Eli Kohn (London, NW11, England - Thank you for the Shul!); Manny Krausz (frequent flyer, first time in this shul, I LOVE IT!!! I wish they could have it in every airport like it should be); Yechiel Markovitz (Mitpe Rashaf, Israel – Congratulations and praised is Israel); Joshua Mehlman (Cedarhurst, NY); Ron Nahshon (Jerusalem, Israel); Shimon and Miriam Osibel (Brooklyn, NY - the best place in the whole airport); Rabbi and Mrs. Irwin Pechman (Belle Harbor, NY and Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel); PROJECT KHARKOV (Yeshiva University - Go Judaism! YAY!); Nosson Peeker (Monsey, NY); A.M. Rabi (Woodmere, NY and Jerusalem, Israel - a great favor for all Jews, Congratulations); Jackie Sachar (Constantia, South Africa - Thank you for providing a wonderful place to daven before and after my flights to and from South Africa); Aleks Salkin (Omaha, NE); Jake Rothman and Jared Spitz (University of Michigan, Hillel Birthright); Miriam S. (London, England); Shimon Shtub (Bayit V'Gan, Jerusalem, Israel); Iqbal and Mastan Singh (Giurdaspur, Punjab, India); Stimmel (Orlando, FL - Thanks); Baruch and Eva Twersky (Los Angeles, CA); Daniel and Rebecca Weiss (Woodmere, NY); Deborah Wilkenfeld (Hamden, CT); Zik (Congratulations for the synagogue);

## ***MEGILLAH READING WILL NOT TAKE PLACE THIS PURIM***

This year we will celebrate the holiday of Purim on Saturday night, March 19. Therefore, there will not be a *megillah* reading on the evening of Purim, as we have done in past years. We wish everyone a *Simchat Purim!* a *Freilichen Purim*.