



חדשות משדה התעופה

News from... *International SYNAGOGUE*

by Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman

UPDATE, JANUARY, 2006 ראש חדש שבט, ה' תשס"ו

ANNUAL CHANUKAH PARTY AT THE International SYNAGOGUE

Once again the annual Chanukah party and candle lighting ceremony was held at the *International SYNAGOGUE* on Wednesday, December 28, 2005, the fourth evening of the holiday. The administration of IAT allowed us to use "real" candles for the religious ceremony. Almost two hundred people were in attendance. The HAFTR fifth grade girls' choir entertained as the guests enjoyed holiday refreshments catered by SuperSol of Lawrence. All enjoyed the *latkes* and doughnuts, fruit and vegetable platters, and all present were delighted. Guests were able to appreciate the beautiful *mechitzah*/tapestry created by Mimi Wohlberg, that was featured in our last Newsletter. The true beauty of this artwork can only be appreciated in person.

We are indebted to Mel Birnbaum, Joel Ditkowsky, and Murray Gottlieb who helped make our raffle sales a huge success. The following people were the lucky winners:

Limited Raffle:

- 1st Prize - Round Trip for 2 to Israel - EL AL Israel Airlines ~ Rabbi Joseph Potasnick
- 2nd Prize - Round Trip for 2 to Israel - ISRAIR Airlines ~ Dr. Morty Katz
- 3rd Prize - Round Trip for 2 to Ireland - Aer Lingus ~ Mr. Joel Berkowitz
- 4th Prize - Round Trip for 2 to Switzerland - SwissAir ~ Rabbi Ari Berman
- 5th Prize - Round Trip for 2 to Italy - Alitalia ~ Mr. George Farber
- 6th Prize - Round Trip for 2 Systemwide - Jet Blue Airlines ~ Rabbi Melvin Sirner
- 7th Prize - Round Trip for 2 to North American Airlines ~ Rabbi Irving Greenberg
- 8th Prize - Round Trip for 2 Systemwide - American Airlines ~ Mrs. Edith Zaro

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### General Raffle:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Prize - 25" Color TV ~ Ms. Ilene Brodman
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - DVD/VCR (with remote) ~ Ms. Mae Liss
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - Guess Wrist Watch ~ Ms. Judith Mesch
- 4<sup>th</sup> Prize - Guess Wrist Watch ~ Rabbi Leonard Lifshen
- 5<sup>th</sup> Prize - Metro Museum \$50.00 gift certificate ~ Mr. Norman Friedman
- 6<sup>th</sup> Prize - High Mountain Knapsack ~ Ms. Lynn Bresler
- 7<sup>th</sup> Prize - Commemorative Wrist Watch ~ Mr. Al Mittman
- 8<sup>th</sup> Prize - Perfume ~ Rabbi Paul Hait
- 9<sup>th</sup> Prize - Commemorative Wrist Watch ~ Mrs. Rosemary Fisch
- 10<sup>th</sup> Prize - Perfume ~ Mr. & Mrs. Eric Lustig
- 11<sup>th</sup> Prize - Select Services Partners \$18.00 gift certificate ~ Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz
- 12<sup>th</sup> Prize - Folding Luggage Cart ~ Ms. Lorraine R. Cohen



HAFTR choir singing at Chanukah candle lighting ceremony and party.



YACHAD prepares to leave on mission to Israel outside the *SYNAGOGUE*.

## ***WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM HAS A REPEAT***

For the past few years the Women's League has organized missions to Israel. A group of approximately twenty-five women spend ten days in Israel – for half a day they volunteer their in schools and community centers of the *mesorati kehillot*; for half a day they sit and study/learn with Israeli women. They provide *chizzuk* – strength and support to their Israeli counterparts. Before the group left on October 30, they gathered in the **SYNAGOGUE** to *daven ma'ariv* and recite *Tefillat HaDerech*. May they continue to perform such good deeds for many years to come.

## ***LOOKSTEINS LEAD MISSION TO ISRAEL***

For many years Rabbi Haskel Lookstein has led various groups on trips to Israel. On November 23, both Rabbis Haskel and Joshua Lookstein brought seventy people on a trip to Israel to celebrate Thanksgiving. The chapel was used as the starting point to *daven ma'ariv* before boarding the EL AL plane.

## ***SYNAGOGUE HOSTS VISITING DIGNITARIES***

At its inception in the 1960's, the *International SYNAGOGUE* was meant to serve as a place to receive foreign dignitaries arriving from Israel. We have greeted many prominent Israeli politicians and Jewish world leaders in our beautiful shul. On December 7, we were able to host the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, the *rishon l'tzion*, as he arrived from Israel on an early morning flight. With the help of Mr. Jack Avital, we were able to arrange for a *shacharit* service, followed by a breakfast catered by Borenstein Caterers. Rabbi Amar was en route to board a 9:00 A.M. flight to Mexico.

On Saturday night, December 17, Rabbi Rackman returned to JFK to escort Rabbi Amar on his return trip to Israel. In addition, he was also able to greet the Chief Rabbi of Haifa, Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, on his return flight to Israel. Rabbi Rackman had spent many weekends with Rabbi Cohen and his wife Naomi during his year of study in Israel during 1958-59.

On January 16, Prof. Robert J. Aumann of Hebrew University, joined the *ma'ariv* service in the **SYNAGOGUE**. Prof. Aumann is the new Nobel Laureate in Mathematics for his work in the area of conflict resolution.

## ***NEFESH BENEFESH HAS FIRST WINTER TRIP TO ISRAEL***

The general and Jewish media have publicized the enormous accomplishments of Nefesh B'Nefesh in arranging for *olim chadashim* (new immigrants to Israel from North America) to resettle in Israel. On December 27, the third night of Chanukah, as 250 Jews were ready to board an EL AL plane for Israel, Rabbi Rackman lit the Chanukah candles for over 400 people in IAT near the EL AL check-in counters. Overall Nefesh B'Nefesh has enabled 3,200 people to move to Israel this year. We have reprinted an article and photograph describing the event at the end of this Newsletter.

### ***AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE SPONSORS NAAG MISSION***

The American-Israel Friendship League sponsors a mission to Israel every few months to showcase the State of Israel to prominent non-Jews. On January 10, Bob Abrams the former N.Y.S. Attorney General, led a delegation of several State Attorneys General to Israel for a ten day tour. These members of the National Association of Attorneys General from Colorado, North Carolina, Oregon, and Wisconsin toured the country and studied the legal system. Prior to their flight they received an orientation in the conference room of the ***SYNAGOGUE***.

### ***POST-NEW YEAR PARTY AT IAT***

Each year the administration of IAT invites all business workers and employees in the building to a post-New Year party. The TRI-Faith chapels also participate with IAT in wishing everyone a happy and successful year. The party was hosted this year on January 11. Kosher food was available for those requesting it.

### ***A SPECIAL, SPECIAL MISSION TO ISRAEL***

On Monday, January 17, the ***SYNAGOGUE*** was asked to host a **birthrightIsrael** mission to Israel. Daniella Lichtman and Naftali Hermann reserved the chapel for a group of twenty YACHAD young adults going to Israel for a ten day tour. Ten counselors accompanied the young men and women with developmental disabilities on their first trip to Israel. The travelers and their parents enjoyed "nosh" and prayed in the chapel.

### ***MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.***

Three times during the year, TRI-Faith chapels (Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish) join together to serve the JFK Airport community with ecumenical services: a 9/11 Memorial Service, Thanksgiving Service, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service. This Year we honored the memory of the slain civil-rights leader by hosting the memorial in the shul. Rabbi Rackman joined with Reverend Gerard T. Walker (the new Catholic Chaplain) to honor the accomplishments of this great American leader. Rabbi Diana Monheit, who heads the *Shma Kolenu* program at the NYBR, spoke about the atmosphere of intolerance that existed in the city of Atlanta and the involvement of the Jewish community in the civil rights movement. Both employees and passengers at JFK attended the ceremony.

### ***MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE***

Those who read our Newsletter are aware of our many activities. We do not receive any government funding or funds from Jewish organizations; we rely upon our membership for financial support of our activities. Money from the dues and raffles is the means by which we are able to fulfill our **mission** at JFK. We appeal to everyone to join us in representing Jews and Judaism to the world flying public at the only Jewish chapel in an airport in all of North or South America.



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / THOMAS A. FERRARA

Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman lights a menorah at a service at Kennedy Airport for the 250 people who headed to a new life in to Israel last night.

# Their dreams realized

■ Growing numbers of North Americans are moving to Israel, says a group that helps them immigrate

BY BART JONES  
STAFF WRITER

Paula Burg has dreamed of moving to Israel for three decades, since she was 16. Last night, finally, the Woodmere resident boarded an airplane at Kennedy Airport and headed overseas.

She was among 250 North American Jews moving to Israel en masse, capping a year in which the largest number of Jews from the United States and Canada immigrated to Israel since 1984 — some 3,200 strong, according to the group Nefesh B'Nefesh.

For Burg, a first-grade teacher who has visited Israel several times, the decision was spurred largely by her religious beliefs.



Paula Burg, center, hugs her daughter-in-law Ahiza Burg and her granddaughter Chana Burg before she leaves for Israel.

"The modern state of Israel is a gift from God, and we want to accept this gift," she said. "It's an idealistic thing to do. It's from the heart."

She dismissed any fears she might become a victim of terror-

ism. "Living in Israel is no different from walking through the streets of Manhattan," she said. "Terrorism can strike anywhere, so we might as well be where we think is right to be."

Burg, her husband, Eli, and

their daughter, Becca, 8, traveled on a jumbo jet chartered by Nefesh B'Nefesh, an Israel-based organization with an office in Manhattan that promotes immigration by North American Jews to Israel by assisting with paperwork and locating housing, jobs and schools. The group chartered one jet in 2002, the year it was founded, three in 2003, four in 2004 and seven this year, organizer Charles Levine said. It hopes to charter between 10 and 12 jets next year.

"There's an impulse here for Jewish people to reconnect with Israel," he said. "Israel is the center of the world for the Jewish people."

The group held a send-off ceremony last night at the airport, with leaders offering speeches as tearful relatives hugged those who were leaving. It was followed by a candlelit ceremony. In Israel, they were to be greeted by the country's deputy consul general, among others.

"There is nothing more important to us" than encouraging im-

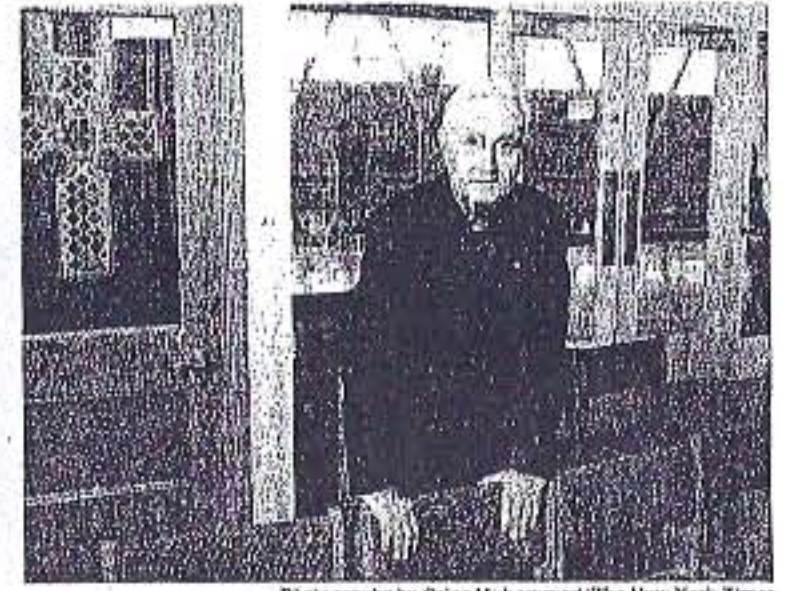
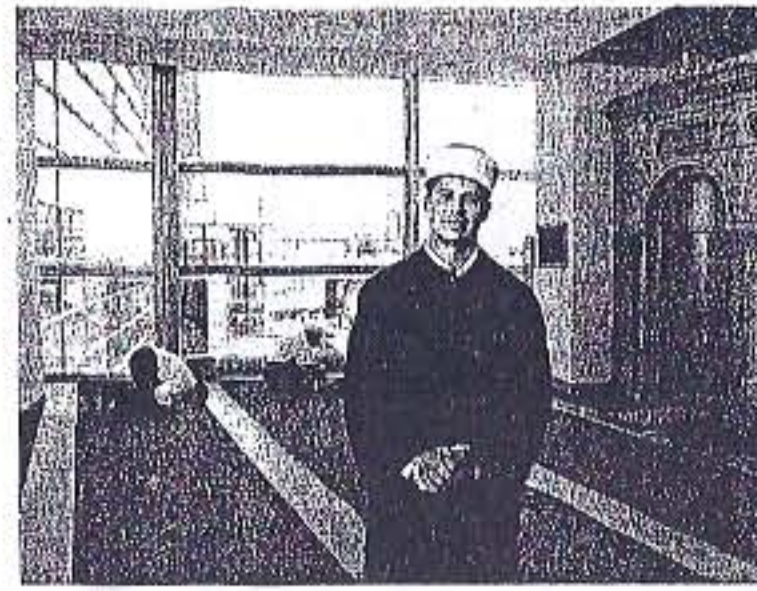
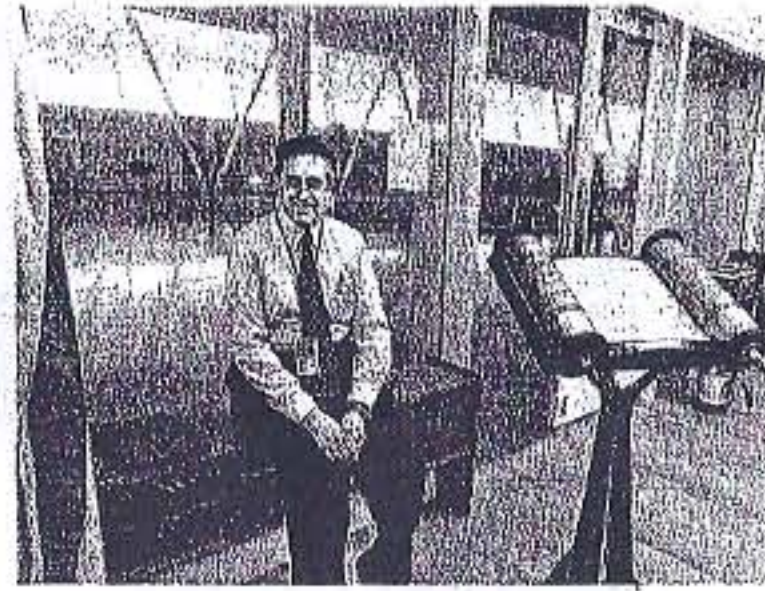
migration to Israel, said Benjamin Krasna, deputy consul general at the Israeli consulate in Manhattan. "There is nothing we are more committed to."

Levine said nearly all the North American Jews who have immigrated since 2002 through his group and its quasi-governmental partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel, still live in Israel. Half have come from the greater New York area.

Nava Yasgur, 23, of Woodmere, said she is making the move because she wants to help build Israel. "It's a young country and it's just getting set up. It really needs support from all over," Yasgur said. "I care too much to just watch from the sidelines and visit once a year."

Burg said that beyond the religious motivations there is no logical reason for her to leave Long Island. "We have a beautiful home. My husband has a great job," she said. "It goes beyond rationality."

She has only one regret: "We should have done it sooner."



Photographs by Oziir Muhammad/The New York Times

The Rev. Patricia A. Evans in Christ for the World Chapel; Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman in the International Synagogue; Imam Osman Erdogan at the Multifaith Chapel; the Rev. James T. Devine at Our Lady of the Skies.

## When Thoughts Turn to Higher Things: At Kennedy, There Is a Place for a Preflight Prayer

By COREY KILGANNON

For 50 years there has been a chapel at Kennedy International Airport. And for 50 years people have been praying to land safely.

"Some people come in asking, 'How can I secure a place in heaven if something happens?'" said the Rev. James T. Devine, 71, chaplain of the Roman Catholic chapel, Our Lady of the Skies, since 1986.

The rabbi of the International Synagogue at the airport, Bennett M. Rackman, 64, said some travelers seek out airport chaplains because "it can be easier to bare your soul to a stranger.

"I think some people find it easier to confide in a spiritual leader who they know they probably won't see again," he said.

The Protestant chaplain, the Rev. Patricia A. Evans, 35, runs Bible study classes and Sunday services at the airport's Christ for the World Chapel. "I can walk through my chapel and see a broken heart," she said.

For instance, she said, one passenger came in and said he was torn about leaving his job and family to go live with a woman he did not intend to marry.

"He accepted Christ as his savior and decided not to go," she said.

Fifty years ago, the Roman Catholic chapel opened at the airport, then called Idlewild, to serve

passengers, airport and airline employees. Local residents got a discount on short-term parking if they mentioned they were attending Mass.

The chapel's Sunday Mass is still going strong, and the walk-in worshipers keep coming, partly because the check-in counter of Aer Lingus, the Irish national airline, is nearby. But the original Roman Catholic chapel is gone, replaced by a much smaller one and surrounded by three other houses of worship: the Christ for the World Chapel, the International Synagogue and the Multifaith Chapel. They are grouped together in a corner of the fourth floor of Terminal 4, which has airlines representing 37 countries.

The chapels are on the depart-

ure level because most worshipers are people preparing for flights, the chaplains said. They are near the Emirates airlines lounge and overlook the terminal's shopping corridor one floor below.

Rabbi Rackman calls himself "the luckiest rabbi" because he does not have to perform religious services on the High Holy Days or Friday nights; observant Jews avoid traveling on those days, he said.

Synagogue services are not announced, at the request of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates Kennedy Airport, Rabbi Rackman said. So he personally notifies passengers on such airlines as El Al, the Israeli national airline, about services.

"For security reasons, the Port

Authority does not want it, so I have to go and let people know quietly," the rabbi said. "A lot of people don't want to come. They say, 'I'll be late for my plane,' or 'I davened already.' But others are grateful to have a synagogue two minutes away from the check-in counter."

The Multifaith Chapel is an uncluttered space where worshipers, mostly Muslims, come and kneel on plush carpeting, while outside the large windows, the AirTrain can be seen swooshing silently by and huge white jets taxi along the runways.

Places of worship at the airport date back to the early 1950's, when a portable altar was constructed for Roman Catholic services being held in various places.

Opened in October 1955, the orig-

inal Our Lady of the Skies chapel was demolished as part of a 1965 airport expansion, Father Devine said. It reopened in 1966 along with a synagogue and a Protestant chapel as part of the airport's Tri-Faith Chapel Plaza, which was later torn down in a 1988 renovation. Rabbi Rackman said that the chapels' proximity had fostered a sense of respect, co-existence and common understanding between the religions.

"We each have our own way to God, yet there is a commonality," he said. "We respect each other. There's a feeling of understanding and tolerance that the whole world could learn from. If every town on earth could move all their chapels into the town square, the world would be a better place."

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!