Rabbi’s Message

The Gemarah in Taanis (29a) states that just like when the month of Av is upon us, our joy is diminished and we recede into sorrow, when the month of Adar comes upon us, our joy increases.

Why is this so? When the wicked Haman was scheming to exterminate the entire Jewish nation, he calculated that the month of Adar would be a most auspicious time to achieve his goal. Through the miracle of Purim, it backfired. Hence Adar was transformed from a month of sadness and impending doom to one of great joy and a reinvigorated Jewish nation.

Purim is one of two rabbinical holy days, Chanukah being the other one. The story of each is different in many ways. One of the most important differences is that the miracle of Chanukah was an overt miracle. Oil enough for one day burnt for eight days. Whereas the miracle of Purim was covert. Only through reading the Megilla can we see how Hashem wove so many seemingly unrelated events into this beautiful tapestry of salvation, which culminated with the overwhelming victory of the Jews over their enemies on the 14th of Adar. The literal translation of the word Esther is concealment, emphasizing this point about the story of Purim. The hand of Hashem was there throughout, yet it was thoroughly disguised.

As we know, Jewish festivals are not just commemorations, but convey a message that is meant to inspire us throughout the generations. It is incumbent upon us to draw that message into our own lives.

The message of Purim is clear. Though we may not see the Hand of Hashem so clearly at all times, we must always remember what Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim (Ch 121) "Behold He neither slumbers nor sleeps the Guardian of Israel ". The Hand of Hashem is always there. In these times of uncertainty and apprehension it behooves us to internalize this message. But let us keep in mind that this being a leap year, we have two Adars. Let us take heart in the fact that we have been served with a double dose of a month that imparts such great joy and optimism.

Rabbi Eliezer Kreiser

5th Annual Community Service Award

It was with great pleasure that the Ezras Israel Board honored Ilene and Rick Van Houter as the recipients of the shul’s 5th Annual Community Service Award. The Award Dinner, held Sunday, March 9, at 6:00 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center in Rockville, was attended by over 80 well-wishers. Mr. Moshe Fox, Minister of Public Affairs of the Israeli Embassy, was Guest Speaker. Rabbi Sholom Raichik and Rabbi Kreiser delivered words of Torah in their personal tributes. Son Jake made Hamotzi; son Andrew delivered a personal tribute and led Birkat Hamazon.

Ilene and Rick were recognized for their work in organizing two Ben Yehuda Fairs and years of dedicated service to the Greater Washington Jewish community. Letters in appreciation of our honorees continued to be received even after the Dinner Journal went to press from all over, including Alabama and Israel. At the dinner Ilene’s creativity and love of Israel was also evident in all the little touches — ‘Seven Species’ centerpieces and bentchers which included Megillah Esther.

continued on Page 3

Urgent Purim and Pesach Tzedakah Requests

Participate in one of the four mitzvot of Purim by giving tzedakah through Ezras Israel’s Matnot Levyonim Campaign. The money will be distributed to the needy in the Greater Washington area, Argentina and mainly Israel. Make checks out to Ezras Israel, marking ‘Matnot Levyonim’ in the memo area, and mail today.

You can also participate in another mitzvah by donating to our Maot Chitim Campaign to help those in need prepare for Pesach. Again, make a notation in the check memo.

Congregation Ezras Israel
803 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20852 • 301.468.1317 • www.ezrasisrael.org
President’s Message

As I look back over the period since the High Holidays, a few highlights stand out in my mind.

First, we have added several new members to our shul. (This is a testimony to the Rabbi’s outreach work and the fact that we offer a friendly, relaxed atmosphere for newcomers.) Even better is that some of these members are young families which is the life blood of any synagogue. It is very gratifying to see a nice blend of age groups at our services. We also had a nice turnout for our Hanukah party which was a beautiful evening.

Speaking of services, I don’t believe we have missed a minyan on Friday night or Saturday afternoon (the two most difficult to make) this winter. This is extraordinary considering the short days. Our weekday minyan, however, has been struggling. Without the yeshiva boys from last year, and the loss of some seniors, the daily Ring House minyan has been struggling. Thanks mostly to the efforts of Rachmil Jacobovits, it is still going. But we need your help. Please try to give us one day a week. 8:05, Mon, Thurs, 8:15 other days.

Educationally, the Rabbi did six classes on prayer in Nov, Dec. We had about 5 – 6 participants each week. I personally find these kinds of classes very enriching since the concepts taught get an immediate reinforcement from my daily prayers. This class is, of course, in addition to his Sunday morning Talmud class and Sunday night mishna class.

Thanks to the efforts of Morris Altshuler our Gan Zikaron Memorial Park relationship has been strengthened and some in the community are taking advantage of it. The more services we can offer, the more people will be attracted to us.

I would also like to thank Marshall Lewis for his help with shul mailings and many helpful suggestions for various events. Keep it up Marshall!

Right after Pesach we plan to have an annual meeting at which time we will want to vote on the shul by-laws. Then we will have written “constitution” to go by when difficult questions come up.

Ilene and Rick Van Houter were honored at this year’s annual dinner for all the extraordinary work they have done for Israel and our local community. Many members were there for this important event.

As we approach Purim and Pesach we can only pray that the current anxieties with respect to a mid-east war and terrorism threats in our country, indeed around the world, abate and that somehow we come to the peace that we ask for in our daily prayers.

If we can’t achieve peace in the world, let us at least work toward peace within ourselves and within our families.

Sheldon

Ezras Israel Kaddish Program—New

If you’d like Rabbi Kreiser to recite Kaddish memorializing a deceased loved one on his or her Yahrzeit date, please provide us the Hebrew name and Hebrew Yahrzeit date. If you only know the English date (month, day and year) we will provide the correct Hebrew date. The cost of this service will be $25 per name with the proceeds going into the Synagogue’s general fund. Send your check and the Yahrzeit information to the shul’s mail address.

Ezras Israel Board Elections

Shauna Johnson and Kaenan Hertz join Sheldon Needle, Rachmil Jacobovits, Lazer Fuerst, Ilene Van Houter and Ben Beroukhim as confirmed nominees to the Board. Please introduce yourself to Shauna and Kaenan (who will be replacing Itzhak Goldberg and Manny Zymelman) at Shabbat kiddush if you don’t already know them. Ezras Israel members should be receiving their voting package in April.

Ways to Help Israel

What can we do? Lots. Each day we can recite Tehillim 20, 83, 121, 130, and 142 for Israel. We can recite the tefillah on behalf of the Israel Defense Forces (Tefillah L’chayalei Tzahal). And we can reach into our pockets.

Suggestions for making donations are:

Another organization caring for IDF soldiers is ‘A Package from Home’ which has made an urgent request for donations. A package is $30, but any amount would be appreciated. Make out tax deductible checks to American Friends of AACI and send to AACI, PO Box 4337, Jerusalem, Israel 91042. Notes to soldiers may be included. Email emess@netvision.net.il.


Yad Sarah is an Israeli-wide network of volunteers aiding the sick, disabled, elderly, isolated and housebound with an array of services aimed at making homemaking possible. Call 972-2-6444429, email donations@yadsarah.org.il or go to www.yadsarah.org.il. Cards are available.

And if you want more ideas, see Aish’s 54 Ways You Can Help Israel (www.aish.com/jewishissues/jewishsociety/).
President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon are expected to attend a May 19 rally in Washington to commemorate Israel’s 55th birthday. The ‘Concert for Israel’ will feature support for Israel. Check local announcements for further information.

Some Ezras Israel members and non-Ezras Israel related businesses might be interested in advertising in Kol Ezras Israel. In order to plan for the next newsletter, please call me at 301-468-2472 or email JanetBW3@aol.com.

Hag Purim Sameach and Kosher l’Pesach
Janet

Yoram Bar Noy, Ruben Lamdany, Larry Raigrodski, Rabbi Kreiser and Andrew Van Houter for Torah reading.
Rabbi Seymour Panitz for his weekly Torah reading at Shabbat Mincha.
Judy Lowitz for serving as the Shul’s Kiddush Coordinator and for keeping us abreast of opportunities to help Israel.
Morris Altschuler, for serving as Ezras Israel’s Cemetery Committee Chairman.
Lerone Beroukim for leading the Children’s Program.
Ron and Tami Unger for the beautiful piece of art from Israel.
For sponsoring a Shabbat kiddush:
Dr. Jack Trompka and Rabbi Kreiser for Simchat Torah honors, and to Rebbetzin Perl Kreiser for making a wonderful kiddush; Lazer Fuerst and Ana Kliksberg; Ruben Lamdany; Scott Klippel.

Mazel Tov to Ilene and Rick Van Houter for being our 5th Annual Community Service Award Honorees.
Mazel Tov to Ruben Lamdany on the Bat Mitzvah of Mya.
Mazel Tov to Judye Groner on receiving the Association of Jewish Libraries’ Sidney Taylor Body of Work Award for outstanding contributions to the field of Jewish children’s literature;
Mazel Tov to Joel Kliksberg for winning the Tri-State Area High School Journalist of the Year Award and for being the third member of his family to graduate from the Jewish Day High School.
Mazel Tov to Ariel and Herschel Lutch and the Lutch and Lubin families on the birth of a daughter/granddaughter.
Mazel Tov to the Steve Loewy family on the marriage of Tamar to Yonason Spolter.

Israel’s Cemetery Committee Chairman. Lerone Beroukhim for leading the Children’s Program.
Ron and Tami Unger for the beautiful piece of art from Israel.
For sponsoring a Shabbat kiddush:
Dr. Jack Trompka and Rabbi Kreiser for Simchat Torah honors, and to Rebbetzin Perl Kreiser for making a wonderful kiddush; Lazer Fuerst and Ana Kliksberg; Ruben Lamdany; Scott Klippel.

Mazel Tov to the family of Fred Goldberg
Nancy Zymelman

Condolences
Refuah Shlemah

Dinner cont.
The sentiment continually expressed was ‘this is just the beginning’ of their contribution to Am Israel. May they go from strength to strength.

7 Species Centerpiece

Help Build the Ezras Israel Jerusalem Wall
Contact Ilene Van Houter
ilene.vanh@verizon.net or 301.984.9680

Discover Gan Zikaron Cemetery
Call Morris Altschuler at 301.770.5591
Ask about special pricing & $700 tax break information

Let someone know you are thinking of them with a personalized Chessed Card & help Ezras Israel at the same time
Call June Graff 301.770.7129

Celebrate a special occasion!
Sponsor a Kiddush
Call Judy Lowitz 301.816.9151
Also Visit our Gift Shop at the Shul
Congregation Ezras Israel
803 Montrose Road
Rockville, MD 20852