

From the Chair

As we await with bated breath the outcome of our incoming Rabbi's immigration procedures, I can announce a couple of other developments.

At the last Council meeting in July, it was agreed to establish a donations committee. This will keep track of the needs of the congregation and the building, and offer suggestions, both large and small, to anyone who might wish to give a donation on the occasion of a happy family event, or to commemorate a loved one. It was agreed that the committee could also be proactive in suggesting people might like to donate, and to remind members for instance of the existence of the Etz Chaim in the shul foyer, and of the procedure to have leaves embroidered to commemorate people or events. The fundraising for the Rabbi, led by Mike Harris, will be a subcommittee of this one, so you will be able to give a month, a week, a day, or an hour of the Rabbi's time if it takes your fancy. The committee will be chaired by Colin Dean, and he will welcome one or two additional members, so do contact him if you are interested.

There is an interesting debate re how proactive we should be in soliciting donations. On the one hand, we are dependent on everyone's contributions to make things happen, and to maintain and develop our shul and its appurtenances. On the other hand there are wide discrepancies in wealth between our members, and it is embarrassing for people who have less to feel they cannot contribute as much as others, especially if it begins to feel 'expected'. I have often thought that we put off potential members when they find out how much participation in this community is dependent on money. But then most of you know that I have always dreamt of turning NPJC into an anarchist co-op...

Another area of controversy is how active we should be in seeking new members. Catherine Strauss is our new membership secretary, and is keen to recruit. We need new members, as the more of us there are, the smaller the contribution required from each, both in time and in money. However the idea of seeking new members can evoke strong reactions. We may feel we only want new members if they are 'like us'. We may feel threatened by anyone different, be it in terms of their idea of Judaism, or their personality. Our image of the ideal member will reflect our view of the ideal community, so some will think of someone interested in Jewish text, others in social activities, others in rediscovering Jewish practice... It is my view that we should be as open as possible to a wide range of potential new members, and to allow the congregation to evolve naturally. It may be scary, but the alternative is stagnation and death. If you know anyone who might be a potential member, Catherine would be delighted to hear from you.

Meanwhile the High Holy Days approach and I wish everyone Shana Tovah and Gemar Chatimah Tovah

see you in Shul

Susan King  
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