

Journal #5: Hope and Change

This past Shabbat I was back in Maryland after spending most of July in Vermont. It was a special Shabbat because it was my first time to sit on the bimah as president with Rabbi Maltzman, who also had just returned from his annual July sojourn. This is a distinct privilege to sit next to the Rabbi who is at the top of my list, the best Rabbi of any congregation where I was a member. I am deeply thankful for this privilege.

Rabbi Maltzman spoke that day about an incident that was very much on my mind, and on the minds of many.

As background, Annette's brother Peter lives in Israel, specifically in Haifa. Peter and his family belong to a Conservative/Masorti congregation in Haifa, Congregation Moriah. I've prayed there and it's lovely, a small and spirited congregation. The synagogue building was damaged in the terrible fires of 2016, and many of the books burned on the shelves. Thank God firefighters arrived in time to save the building itself.

The congregation's rabbi is Dov "Dubi" Haiyun. "Dubi" was ordained at the Conservative/Masorti rabbinical school in Jerusalem (Schechter Institute) and has served as Congregation Moriah's spiritual leader since 2008. From the limited contact I had with him, I can tell you that he seems like a nice guy, a gentle soul, and a warm presence.

Dubi performs weddings. He follows halakha (Jewish tradition) in checking out the backgrounds of the couple and ruling out any forbidden relationship that would have prevented the marriage. He performs weddings according to Jewish tradition.

There is an Israeli law passed in 2013 prohibiting Jewish weddings from being performed outside of the Israeli Rabbinate and its network of (all male, all Orthodox) rabbis. The law had not been enforced, and Dubi (and other Reform and Masorti rabbis) went on serving young couples.

The Haifa police woke Dubi up early in the morning and brought him in to the police station for interrogation, pursuant to that law.

Rabbi Maltzman's sermon emphasized the need for hope and change, not outrage and disrespect, over this incident. He and many other observers have commented on the timing of this incident, in the days preceding the observance of the 9th of Av (Tish'a b'Av), the commemoration of the destruction of both the first and second Temples in Jerusalem, and of many other tragic events in Jewish history. The [Talmud teaches](#) that the Temple was destroyed due to *sin'at hinam*, baseless hatred of some Jews toward other Jews. I learned that in fact Jewish tradition [attributes many causes](#) to the Temples' destruction. But *sin'at hinam* is clearly destructive, and there is too much of it happening today.

By the way, as a result of the incident, Dubi's phone is ringing more often, couples wanting to be married by him. And fundraising is up. So there may be a silver lining to this incident.

I resoundingly endorse and support Rabbi Maltzman's guidance to channel our emotions and thinking into positive change, in a spirit of hope and love. There are so many ways we can work for change in Israel. We can support the Masorti movement, and the US support organization Mercaz (of which our own Marilyn Wind is President!). We can support Masorti congregations through a direct connection between them and us. We can be activists in communicating with the Israeli government and the

embassy to express our desire for pluralism. And we can travel to Israel and attend services at Masorti congregations.

Among the things I hope to accomplish as your president is to increase the connection that we have with Israel. There is so much good in Israel: dance, art, fashion, food & wine, history, archaeology, science, technology, business, ecology, water conservation, nonprofits, and on and on. I hope that we will see much more of Israel here at Kol Shalom in the coming months. As we engage and learn more about Israel, we strengthen our love of Israel, and I am confident that we will find more and more opportunities to support Israel to become a place where there are manifold paths to doing acts of merciful justice and loving kindness.

I want to be in dialogue with you. You can click [here](#) to send me a message, or you can email me at mplieber@ymail.com. I am thrilled to hear from you, to get to know you better, and to hear your suggestions on continuing Kol Shalom's growth and value to you.

Thank you for your help and for your part in our kehillah k'dosha, our sacred community!

Marc Lieber, President