

Shalom U'vracha / Greetings and warm blessings --

I am delighted to introduce myself as the “Gladstein Fellow” who has been matched with Kehillat Shalom to serve as your student rabbi during the coming two years. Congratulations to the entire community on being chosen as a recipient congregation of a visiting Student Fellow as part of your participation in the Emerging Kehillah Initiative of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. The purpose of this program of the Jewish Theological Seminary is to provide rabbinic leadership and assistance to new and growing Conservative Movement congregations that are moving from the “emerging” stage of synagogue development to a point where a community decides to hire full-time clergy. How exciting that Kehillat Shalom is now at this point in its history – from all that I have learned thus far, I am thrilled that I will be working with you!

I am writing to you this morning from Jerusalem where I am spending my third year of Rabbinical School, studying as a visiting student at Machon Schechter, the Israeli partner institution of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Four months into my time here in Israel, I am having a fantastic year. My classes are going well. Rebecca (my wife) and I are enjoying being in Israel – for the first time – together. And, most importantly, our family has *doubled* in size in recent weeks. On September 25, just before Sukkot, we welcomed our daughters Ary and Rena Hammerman into the world at Hadassah Hospital here in Jerusalem. From a purely objective point of view, they are absolutely delicious, the cutest babies that we have ever met. We have been very happy with the medical care they have received and my JTS classmates and our local Masorti (Conservative) synagogue have showered us with love and assistance. Ary and Rena will surely be joining me in Skokie from time-to-time. For now, a family photo is attached below (with plenty more available upon request).

In addition to my new status as an “Abba,” which seems to trump everything else on my resume, a bit more about myself: I came to the Jewish Theological Seminary with six years of post-college work experience. I worked in New York City as a consultant to nonprofit organizations for three years, focusing on fundraising and board development for small organizations. After our wedding, Rebecca and I took an extended “honeymoon” to volunteer for *Masorti Olami*, the World Council of Conservative Synagogues and assisted in the establishment in Madrid of *Congregación Bet El*, the first Conservative/Masorti synagogue in Spain. We returned to the United States where, for two years, I directed the Jewish Youth Philanthropy

Institute. This organization runs tzedakah and community service-related programs for adolescents in the Greater Washington DC area. Though I was very, very pleased with my work in Washington, I felt that Rabbinical School was, ultimately, the right path for me and so we moved (once more) back to New York in the Fall of 2005.

During school, beyond my class work, I have maintained my connections with Masorti Olami, serving as the organization's Projects Coordinator for the last two years. I also direct the Rabbinical School Placement Service, helping my classmates find employment during their time in school. I am a Ramah, USY and Nativ alum and am now a board member of Mercaz USA, the Zionist Organization of the Conservative Movement. Outside school, I am an avid bicycle rider and love the outdoors. We travel internationally as often as we can and, once our girls get passports, we'll take them along too! There is plenty more to share but I will save it until we meet either in Jerusalem (a number of Kehillat Shalom families will be visiting this year) or upon my arrival late this summer to Skokie for the first of what will likely be ten visits during each of the upcoming years.

For now, Shalom u'L'hitraot – see you soon.



-Eytan Hammerman

