



Dear Readers:

Welcome to Issue 8 of *Asian Jewish Life*. Here in Hong Kong, we are settling in after winter holidays and are already gearing up for Chinese New Year in just a few weeks (our third and final New Year's celebration for 5772). It is also the start of *Asian Jewish Life's* 3rd year.

Chinese and Jewish traditions both focus on the significance of numbers. The number three in the Jewish tradition is certainly a good number. To name just a few references: we are divided into three groups (Kohen, Levite, Israelite), there are three major pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot) and there are three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

At *Asian Jewish Life*, we have in place significant plans for our 3rd year to grow *AJL* both as a magazine and as an organization that builds on the strength of our magazine. This includes the launch of an *Asian Jewish Life* speaker's series that will bring speakers to many of your communities. Topics will include: *The Contemporary Jewish Communities of the Far East- an Overview*; *Jewish Hong Kong and Shanghai- The War Years*; *Raising a Jewish- Chinese Child*; and *Asia Through a Jewish Lens*.

We also have plans to participate in regional gatherings and plan to host in Hong Kong some of our favorite *AJL* writers and movers and shakers from around the globe.

In the meantime, in this issue, our cover story offers a glimpse at the work of Laura Margolis, a seemingly unlikely heroine, for the Jews of Shanghai's Hongkew ghetto during World War II. A very special 'thank you' to the JDC for the use of their incredible archive of documents and photographs for this article. In *Laura Margolis in the Spotlight- Portrait of a heroine in Shanghai*, you will see that Ms. Margolis's years as the JDC representative reads like an epic novel.

The topic of the Jews in Shanghai is a favorite among the quickly growing class of Chinese scholars of Judaic Studies. Interests also include the Torah, Jewish

history in general and Holocaust studies. Steve Hochstadt looks at these rapidly burgeoning areas of study in China, in depth, in *A Strange Foreign Import -Jewish studies in China*.

Experts in Indo-Judaic history, Jay Waronker & Shalva Weil, uncover the little known history of the Parur Synagogue in *A History of the Parur Synagogue- Trial by fire, inquisition and neglect*. In their article, they reference the better well-known Paradesi Synagogue of Cochin. *AJL's* own photography editor, Allison Heiliczer, had the rare opportunity to worship in this synagogue and describes her own journey to Cochin in *Life, Vision and Persistence in Jew Town*.

It seems we couldn't get enough of India this issue and bring you a special look at the Bene Israel traditions of henna, mehendi and Malida. Photographer Yoraan Rafael Reuben focuses his lenses on Mehendi in a beautiful photo essay, *The Beauty of Tradition- Mehendi in full color*. While food writer and food photographer, Shulie Madnick, hones in on Malida in *The Malida Ceremony- The Core of the Bene Israel Tradition*, complete with a recipe.

But it is not all India for us this issue. We stop very briefly in Vietnam for a Writer's Desk piece by Raquelle Azran titled, *Treasure Hunting in Hanoi*.

AJL Books Editor, Susan-Blumberg Kason, interviews Alan Paul on his new book *Big in China, Rocking it Big in Beijing- An Interview with Alan Paul*. Learn the secrets to becoming a stay-at-home dad and rock star in Beijing.

From Shanghai past, we bring you Susan Blumberg-Kason's book reviews, *City on the Sea: Timeless novels about 1930s Shanghai*. She specifically looks at Vicki Baum's *Shanghai '37* and Emily Hahn's *China to Me*. Though far from being new books, these works, first published in 1939 and 1944, consecutively, are a must on your reading lists.

And last, but not least, the Viewpoint article, by Jordan Potash, *Here and Now- A Jewish understanding of Buddhist teaching* explores the power of the term Hineni.

Please write in and tell us what you think.

For those of you using the Gregorian calendar, a bit belated Happy New Year. And for those of you looking East, it's a bit early, but Kung Hei Fat Choi (Happy Chinese New Year) from *Asian Jewish Life!*

Erica Lyons
Editor-in-Chief



Asian Jewish Life is a free quarterly publication designed to share regional Jewish thoughts, ideas and culture and promote unity. It also celebrates our individuality and our diverse backgrounds and customs.

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