Dear Readers:

Welcome to the 9th issue of Asian Jewish Life. We are commencing our third year, and we have experienced much growth in recent months. We have co-sponsored two events to kickoff our Speaker’s Series, bringing AJL writers, editors and topics off the page. In February, along with the Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong, AJL presented a lecture by Xu Xin, Director of the Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies, Nanjing University, China.

The following week we co-sponsored, with the Jewish Community Center of Hong Kong a lecture by Michael Freund of Shavei Israel along with Jin Jin, a Kaifeng Jew who has made aliyah. You can read more about Shavel Israel, in this issue’s Best of Asian Jewish Life in Helping “Lost Jews” Find The Way Home by Gaby Wine.

This issue is primarily focused on China, to mark twenty years of diplomatic relations between China and Israel. The intersection between Jews in China and Israel and China though is a story that is not limited to twenty years, it spans centuries into the past and is one that enjoys a promising future.

SIGNAL has contributed an article, Herald in a New Era of Exchange - A review of China-Israel relations, that explores this relationship and also discusses some of the work they are doing to help further strengthen these ties in the academic arena. This will also be our first article available in Chinese on our website. Ultimately we hope to role out an online Chinese version of the magazine.

Speaking of translations, our cover story, Comic Strip Diplomacy — Sketching Chinese and Israeli history, reveals a new project in Chinese by Yaakov Kirschen, the creator of Dry Bones, which is now similarly focused on strengthening the relationship between Israel and China. Kirschen was coincidently a guest of SIGNAL’s on a recent visit to China.

In addition to these projects, we take you to Harbin where Professor Dan Ben-

Canaan offers a glimpse of the history of the Jews in Harbin and discusses what his center is doing to help preserve this fascinating chapter in Jewish history in Digging Out the Past- Quest to uncover Jewish Harbin.

And, of course, the story of the Jews in China would not be complete without a story from Shanghai. This issue we have selected an unpublished memoir written by Harry Todtenkopf and edited by Howard Kleinmann. While Harry Todtenkopf passed away in 1985, I recently had the pleasure of meeting Howard Kleinmann when he was visiting Hong Kong’s Ohel Leah Synagogue. Over Kiddush lunch, he talked about the memoir and I was sold.

We also speak with a ‘local’ in Beijing, the host of the ever-popular internet show Sexy Beijing, Anna Sophie Loewenberg. In an interview by Jocelyn Eikenburg, we get a close up view Loewenberg’s show as well as her documentary work.

And Naomi Nason offers a personal reflection piece in our Travel Diary on being Jewish in China, titled You Tai Ren Zai Na Er? (Where are the Jews?) Akira Ohiso, author of the book Surviving and one of Asian Jewish Life’s favorite Jewish Japanese Americans, has now taken his skills into the kitchen. Akira fixes up a kosher- Chinese recipe with a dash of nostalgia.

Last but not least, we have included book reviews by our Books Editor Susan Blumberg Kason and our poetry section presents the work of Bangkok-based, poet/ photographer Boaz Arad.

If you are wondering what we are up to between issues, in addition to the recent sponsored lectures, please follow us on Twitter and Facebook (@AsianJewishLife) for a daily dose of news on Jewish life in Asia, Asian Jewry and Israel-Far East relations.

And on a final note, I will also be giving a talk at TEDx Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong on May 18 entitled Cultural Heritage Tourism and A Minority’s Perspective, on how tourism can help preserve China’s Jewish history. Please be sure to check it out online.

In the meantime, enjoy reading through our Jewish tour of China.

Erica Lyons
Editor-in-Chief