



Dear Readers:

Shana tova umetukah and welcome to the 10th issue of *Asian Jewish Life*.

This issue has a large focus on personal journeys and discovery and touches on Israel, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India, China and Uzbekistan. We have received a number of reader requests for articles on the Uzbekistan region, or rather Central Asia generally, and in this issue we present an interview of Maria Tumarkin by Susan Blumberg-Kason. The article, *Our Intimate Relationship with Places*, discusses Tumarkin's recent visit to China as well as her family's history in Uzbekistan. Susan Blumberg-Kason also has included her quarterly book reviews, this time focusing on the Jews of Harbin.

Another first for us is a look at Jewish Bangladesh in *The Unknown Jews of Bangladesh – Fragments of an Elusive Community* by Dr. Shalva Weil. And from Cambodia, another country that one would not necessarily associate with Jews, we present a look at Ben Justus and his organization EGBOK that helps underprivileged young people enter into careers in the hospitality industry. *Justus' Journey from California to Cambodia* is our *Best of Asian Jewish Life* feature this month.

We also speak with Ela Thier, writer, director and producer of the film *Foreign Letters*, in an interview titled *A Story of Friendship and the Ties that Bind Us*. The film beautifully portrays the deep bonds of friendship between an Israeli immigrant to the United States and a Vietnamese refugee and is in English, Hebrew and Vietnamese with English subtitles. It is a much larger story though that speaks to friendship, shame, family, poverty, acceptance and identity.

Also speaking on identity, we bring you a reflective piece by So-Han Fan titled *My Two Diasporas- On Being Jewish and Chinese*. Fan discussed his recent exploration of and acceptance of his own multi-cultural background.

And while Fan journeys to China for the first time, Ellis Jacob, author of *The Shanghai I Knew*, returns to his childhood home. Jacob's wife, Helen Lippman, has contributed an article entitled *Discovering/ Rediscovering Shanghai- An Insider's Tour of Shanghai Today*.

Also out of China, Tiberiu Weisz, author of *The Covenant and the Mandate of Heaven: An In-Depth Comparative Cultural Study of Judaism and China*, contributed the article *Is Judaism the Yang to China's Yin- Exploring the Meeting of Two Ancient Cultures*. This is the first in a series of articles by Weisz for *Asian Jewish Life*.

Next, moving onto India, we have the cover photo and accompanying photo spread, *Opher Weds Sarah- Invite to a Bene Israel Simcha*. Here we present beautiful photography by Yoraan Rafael Reuben and a glimpse of a traditional Bene Israel wedding in Thane, India. If you have never been to a Bene Israel wedding or have never been to India the beauty of these photographs could just change that.

Also from the Bene Israel tradition, as promised in our last issue, we have included Nissim Moses' piece, *The History of Malidah - Roots and Meaning of a Bene Israel Service*.

Also out of India, we have Miriam Wasser writing about her trip to India to volunteer with MASA's program LIFE (Leadership International Fellowship Experience). Miriam's reflective piece is titled *Barefoot and Jewish in Tirupati*.

Last but not least, Alvite Ningthoujam has written *Shabbat with the Bnei Menashe- Meeting My Countrymen in Israel*. Alvite Ningthoujam, a non-Jewish Indian, spent 8 months in Israel as a Fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. While in Israel he had the opportunity to get to know a Bnei Menashe family, originally from his home state, who had made aliyah.

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.

Have a happy and sweet new year.

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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