



Dear Readers:

Welcome to the 6th issue of Asian Jewish Life. As I write this letter I am preparing to attend the 2011 ROI Summit in Jerusalem. ROI is a global community, created by Lynn Schusterman, that works towards creating an international network of young Jewish leaders with innovative and diverse paths for connecting to Jewish life.

Living in the Far East, Jews find themselves somewhat 'off the radar' and a bit disconnected from the major arteries of Jewish life. The ROI Summit represents an incredible opportunity for *Asian Jewish Life* to actively engage in conversations and partnerships with global Jewry, outside the limits of the virtual world, and another opportunity to help put Jewish life in Asia on the map.

The massive earthquake and tsunami in Japan temporarily shifted the Jewish world's focus to this region and we saw Jewish and Israeli organizations take the lead on humanitarian aid efforts. AJL teamed up with *eJewish Philanthropy* and utilized the *eJewish Philanthropy* platform to provide first hand information on how the Jewish/Israeli world responded in the aftermath of the quake. Together we highlighted the efforts of organizations that included: American Jewish Committee (AJC), Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), ZAKA, Chabad of Asia and IsraAID. AJL would like to commend all the Jewish and Israeli organizations that contributed to and continue to contribute to the relief work in Japan. These organizations, in addition to providing desperately needed humanitarian aid, continue to make a lasting and positive impression on the Japanese people. They all are the 'best of Asian Jewish life'.

In this issue, our *Best of AJL* feature highlights and recaps the work of the IDF in Japan, again, just one of many Jewish world responders. This mission again gives a sense of the importance of Tikkun Olam in our tradition. We also bring you an *Expat Diary* piece written

by Aimee Weinstein of the Tokyo Jewish Community as she struggled with the decision whether to leave Japan and when to return.

Away from Japan, we have also included an array of creative pieces. *AJL* officially welcomes Allison Heiliczer on board as our Photography Editor and we have chosen to showcase her photography and accompanying poetry in our poetry section. Our Books Editor, Susan-Blumberg Kason, has provided an insightful read of the *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* with a contrast to the educational values discussed in *Fortunate Sons*. Yes, the debate continues.

We also have included a beautiful piece by Raquelle Azran, *Hanoi and Counting*. Her work appeared previously in our Spring 2010 issue. Likewise, I have included one of my own Hong Kong-based memoir-type pieces, *Holy People in the Taxi*. These are both in our *Writer's Desk* section.

For the first time, we have a feature focused on the little known Sri Lankan Jewish connection. Australian writer and photo journalist Andrew Harris has contributed photographs and editorial in *Secrets of Ceylon - What happened to the Jews of Sri Lanka?* As he, more correctly adds, "And did they ever exist." As for additional little known connections, Dr. Shalva Weil connects Rachel's Tomb and the Bene Israel for us in *The Tomb of Rachel - the Bene Israel Connection*. We bring you another look at India's Bene Israel in the cover story, *Siona Benjamin's Interviews on Canvas - Faces of the Bene Israel*.

And surprising, yet true, we offer a look at a new sitcom in the US called *Kosher Pig*. The show follows a Chinese girl, adopted by a Jewish family, as she searches for her Chinese roots. On a much more serious note, Carice Witte, representing an organization called SIGNAL, out of Israel, will give insight into the Israeli/ Chinese academic connection and explain the importance of this partnership. Though looking towards the future in China, we still are looking back. A *Travel Diary* piece by Rabbi Mark S. Bloom, gives a tourist's view of Kaifeng. I hope the addition of a *Travel Diary* section will give readers a greater opportunity to contribute to Asian Jewish Life.

I hope you enjoy this tour of Jewish Asia!

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.

Asian Jewish Life is a registered charity in Hong Kong. AJL is also under the fiscal sponsorship of the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity, a qualified US 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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