

Congregation B'nai Tikvah Board Meeting
Minutes of Meeting
April 1st, 2002

Attendees:

Janice Baer	Mitch Frumkin	Jodi Marcou
Gary Bergman	Madeline Gaynor	Harold Schneider
Larry Cohen	Dan Greenberg	Lisa Tannenbaum
Elliott Danto	Naomi Jackenthal	Gary Tinkel
Marc Dillman	Jerry Kaminsky	LouAnne Wolf
Jerry Edley	Mark Kasdin	Keith Zimmerman
Hadas Elami	Ruth Anne Koenick	
Rabbi David Eligberg	(representing	
Harvey Finkelstein	Sisterhood)	

Not Attending:

Cheryl Asnis	Cindy Gittleman	Cantor Bruce Rockman
Arie Behar	Ann Gold	

Non-Board Guests

Marty Abschutz	Donna Glazer	Kerry Olitsky
Arthur Cedarbaum	Irwin Millinger	
Nancy Danto	Cheryl Olitsky	

Call to Order [Mitch Frumkin]

Meeting called to order at 8:01 PM by Mitch Frumkin.

Approval of Minutes of March 2002 Meeting [All]

Motion for Approval of Minutes [moved by L. Wolf, second by G. Tinkel]. Approved [4 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention]

Dvar Torah [Rabbi]

One of the ancient rabbis sent his servant to the market with the general instruction, "Buy the best thing there that one can eat!" the servant returned with a tongue. Later, the rabbi asked him to go back to the market to buy the worst thing that one could eat. The servant again came back with a tongue. "What is with you?" asked the rabbi. "Here, I've asked you to buy both the best and the worst, and you come back with a couple of tongues." "That's true," responded the servant, "after all, cannot a tongue be one of the best things in the world and an evil tongue be one of the worst?" –Vayikra Rabbah

- A controversy for Heaven's sake will have lasting value, but a controversy not for Heaven's sake will not endure.
- What is an example of a controversy for Heaven's sake? The debates of Hillel and Shammai.
- What is an example of a controversy not for Heaven's sake? The rebellion of Korah and his associates.

We can, and should engage in controversies for the sake of heaven. We debate and disagree, and that is good. We can build a community, or we can tear it down.

President's Report [M. Frumkin]

There are so many things going on here that are really insignificant compared to what is going on in Israel. What can we do? Don't really know, but try to express support for Israel in any way we can.

Please send emails to the president of United States and the president of France. Also federation has set up a fund that will go directly to Israel – see Keith Zimmerman for more info.

Guests

Donna Glazer. Head of school at SSDS. Here to talk about what happened this past Shabbat morning. Arthur Cedarbaum, who was the Gabbai that day, spoke from the bimah about the fact that there were no services on Wednesday night (Pesach). He was very upset because he came for minyan and there was none. There were words between the Rabbi and Arthur that did not end well.

The pulpit belongs to the rabbi, and Shabbat morning in front of everyone was NOT the appropriate forum for what took place. What took place was an abomination and was very upsetting, particularly since it was USY Shabbat, and there were many young people in the congregation. I think that the rabbi is owed an apology.

Cheryl Olitsky. I agree with Donna. Being Gabbai is a position of honor, and it is simply wrong what took place. I am particularly upset that there was no support shown for the Rabbi that day.

Kerry Olitsky. I am particularly aware this week, when there are so many rules and regulations to be followed, of the rules of synagogues. Rebuke. Mindful of the D'var Torah that David gave, and I offer the following (as a Rabbi). To Arthur: I believe you were wrong and that you misused the honor of a gabbai. Mitch, I felt badly that you did not support the rabbi on the bimah, and I feel badly that the Rabbi felt he had to leave to separate himself from his anger.

It's ironic that we spend so many hours cleaning out the chametz from our homes, but we had all this "chametz in our hearts." The rabbi is owed an apology because of how the community was embarrassed by what happened on Saturday.

Adrienne Ross. Read the following letter:

March 31, 2002
Board of Directors
c/o Mitchell Frumkin
President
Congregation B'nai Tikvah

Dear Board.

I was in synagogue with my family this past Shabbat and an incident occurred which I believe, must be addressed by the Board of Directors. This matter should be taken seriously and, like other congregants I have spoken with, I would like to know what action the board will take.

During services Mr. Cedarbaum took the opportunity of being a “gabbai” to make a statement of disappointment relative to cancellation of services on Passover eve (Wednesday evening). While I cannot condone the actions taken by Mr. Cedarbaum as being appropriate either in time or place, my concern is the reaction of our Rabbinical Leadership.

The Rabbi approached Mr. Cedarbaum noting that this was not the place for his comments and asked him to leave the Bimah. When Mr. Cedarbaum replied that he said what he needed to say and would not leave, the Rabbi said that he would then leave. He threw his Tallit on the pew and stormed out. (Some observant youth even commented that the Rabbi did not walk off the bimah backwards, as is his usual custom). He did not return to the pulpit until after the Torah service was over, a situation that created a number of ritual issues and concerns. There were a number of individuals who were saying a “Misheberach” for a yahrtzeit – the list of names was not readily available. The “incident”, happening just prior to the beginning of the Torah reading also created a stressful situation for the Torah readers who had taken the time to prepare and dedicate themselves to the proper decorum and seriousness with which one should read Torah. In addition, when we usually do a prayer for the sick, this was not done. My guest had wanted to say a Misheberach for a friend and I had to tell her that this was not going to be possible. Although Cantor Rockman led the congregation in the Misheberach at the usual point in the service, there was no request for people to come and provide names. We “redid” this part of the service at a later point when it was recognized that individuals did not have the chance to say a prayer for a loved one and the Rabbi was once again willing to take his place n the bimah.

At the conclusion of the service, it was noted that the Rabbi did not join the congregation in the social hall for the kiddush and oneg, as is his usual practice on any other Shabbat. Of particular note is that this Shabbat was our congregations’ “farewell” to our Israeli guests and our rabbinical leadership did not publicly wish them well or take the opportunity to thank the many host families for their hospitality.

Many of our synagogue youth were in attendance as well as congregational guests. My own family was visiting from another city. Sitting next to me was a gentleman who was visiting our congregation. He was most confused by the bimah theatrics. I felt the need to apologize for this incident to our guests and let them know that this was truly unusual. The question left in my mind was whether the “unusual” should be accepted. If any of your children got mad at a friend for what they said and threw their tallit down, would it go “unnoticed” or would you have some significant discussion and reprimand? We want to teach our children by example.

The USYers led our service beautifully. With all the commotion that occurred, our Rabbi did not even say a Yasher Koach to the youth. They do not do this for the praise but a little praise goes a long way in encouraging further participation. A missed opportunity!

What am I asking of you? I would like to provide you with some concrete suggestions for your consideration.

- The Rabbi should meet with our USYers and discuss his behavior and apologize to them for the “tantrum” and “overreaction” that occurred. Perhaps it’s a chance to discuss right and wrong, extreme emotion and sensitive issues.
- The Rabbi should send a letter of apology to the congregation for the “inappropriate behavior” that he exhibited in front of everyone.
- Determine what, if any, reprimands should exist relative to the Rabbi’s contract. Can we afford another “incident”, provoked or not?

Respectfully yours,

Adrienne Ross

Nancy Danto. I agree with Arthur’s words, though not his choice of venue.

Arthur Cedarbaum. I am terribly embarrassed by what happened on Saturday. It was not my intention to embarrass or offend the Rabbi. I apologize profusely to the board, the congregation and the rabbi. I sincerely hope that he is not reprimanded in any way. For 22 years there has been services on Passover eves – I came that Wednesday night with my family as I do every year. I was mortified to see the building closed. Even ritual committee didn’t know that there were no services. My words were said at the wrong time, and I feel terrible about what happened, but why were there no services?

M. Frumkin: Saturday was the most embarrassing thing that I have ever seen at a synagogue. The message you had was totally lost – in my mind I am ready to try to put this all behind us, accept your apology, and deal with this differently.

J. Kaminsky: I was surprised that there were no services also – I noticed in the handout that there was none – I think it was wrong not to have a service.

E. Danto: there was definitely confusion in the handout. I was told that there were no services because the rabbi felt that there would be no minyan, so it was cancelled. I don’t know if that’s true, but I would like to see more proactive measures taken to get people.

L. Tannenbaum: I was also on the bimah on Saturday. I was appalled – and the people reading the Torah were mortified.

R. Koenick: I was appalled by Arthur’s conduct. I was in tears. It ruined my Shabbat morning, and that’s the only time I have to myself. Do I wish he hadn’t left in anger? Absolutely, but I absolutely understand why he was so angry and upset. I was also angry and upset. Also – this was NOT the first year that there were no services – I know it didn’t happen last year.

M. Kasdin: how do we right this with the youth? They probably have many questions.

Adrienne Ross: the youth missed most of what happened but not the Rabbi storming out.

Donna Glazer: I disagree. They are very perceptive.

M. Frumkin: to focus on the positive, can Arthur and Rabbi put together a presentation to the youth to show that we can still have disagreements?

Question [Cheryl Olitsky]: whose pulpit is it? By contract it's the Rabbi's.

M. Frumkin: it's the rabbi's pulpit – period.

G. Tinkel: who cancelled services and why? M. Frumkin: that's not relevant here. That's between the Rabbi and the ritual committee.

H. Finkelstein: I have been attending shul for over 30 years and I was shocked and dismayed by what happened. Two wrongs never make a right – the worst thing that someone can do is embarrass someone publicly – and I commend Mitch for not further embarrassing Arthur that morning. We have a problem that we need to deal with in closed quarters – I commend the rabbi for returning that morning – and I commend Arthur for coming today and apologizing. We now have shame – as a congregation – and I don't know what to do about it.

M. Frumkin: we will continue to speak to ritual committee – Mark Binder – to see what can be done.

Expansion Committee Report [M. Kasdin]

The congregation endorsed the plan; we have a meeting on Thursday to select a builder.

N. Jackenthal: How will increase in dues be affected by those paying less; will we see more people not paying full dues? That was taken into account.

G. Tinkel: DPE's is calculated by just dividing the money we have by the rate per member. There were only 61 member families – which is 59 DPEs. That's only 20%.

N. Jackenthal: Will the building fund remain the same for new members? Don't know yet. M. Abschutz: The building fund was increased last year by \$100 per year.

M. Frumkin: Regarding the new carpeting for the sanctuary → it was advertised in Hakol, but no one responded. We have the one bid, which was based on putting pews back in same holes (i.e. not adding an additional row of pews. The price will change if we have to drill new holes for the pews. G. Bergman: has anyone checked with Home Depot? They don't have experience with this kind of thing. L. Cohen: can a swatch be made available for both the board and the congregation? We will try to.

Treasurer's Report [M. Dillman]

We are currently about \$156,000 ahead of budget.

Catering will end up ahead by at least \$9,000. Fundraising will be at least \$10,000 over; member dues about \$7,000 over budget and should end up that much.

On the expense side, mortgage will finish \$5,000 under budget; we had allowed \$5,000 for refinancing which will NOT be spent this year. Utilities has great savings (currently about \$13,00 under budget) – thank the great weather for that.

We should end up at least \$40,000 ahead of budget – which will put us in a wash for the end of the year.

G: Bergman: do we have any plans for financial management of these accounts? M. Dillman: we don't have the money for long – at least 2/3 will go away for the expansion. We don't need long-term management.

Men's Club Report [J. Edley]

There will be a major meeting in May – featuring a sportswriter from The Daily News.

Ramla Program Report [Marty Abschutz]

Thank to again to the board for supporting this program

Vice-Presidents Reports

Activities [E. Danto]

See attached.

Education [H. Schneider]

See attached.

J. Kaminsky: I don't know how many packages we send out to college students, but they are great! My daughter got one – thank you – it's fantastic! We send out about 30. Thanks to Marcy Finkelstein and Marcia Schwartz.

Ways & Means [J. Marcou]

"Prom nite" was great. Thanks to everyone on the committee who helped it succeed. Thanks also to Dr. Steve Gordon and all the other donors who gave such great auction items.

Financial Report [G. Tinkel]

We are down 3 families to 440, which is 306 DPE's. Of the eight who had made pledges and had not paid dues, 2 now have.

New Business [All]

1. L. Tannenbaum: will be trying to draw new members from the adult communities (over in Monroe) H. Finkelstein: have you approached real estate brokers? Yes – but it's not effective.

Many years ago, we did Sunday morning things at various clubhouses – works well. Will try to do that again.

2. Moved by J. Marcou to create a new Vice Presidency of Membership to take effect in June, 2002. Second by J. Baer. We currently have 4 vice presidents. H. Finkelstein: Why?

J. Marcou: Membership has taken a back seat to everything else. There is no real marketing aim to the synagogue. With the expansion, VP Programming will have a lot more to do – so membership should not be under them. We are not growing – we need to do a much better job at marketing.

G. Tinkel: What about folding other things under membership – like Hakol, or the B'nai Mitzvah program. Absolutely. Motion carries [unanimous].

50+ Club [M. Gaynor]

Next meeting, which is open to the public, will be on Tuesday, April 23rd at 1 PM. We will be presenting a program about George Segal called "An American Still Life." Please join us.

Good and Welfare [Rabbi]

- Look for ballots and vote for Mercaz (Slate #3).
- *Remainder of G&W unavailable.*

Confirmation of Next Meeting

Next meeting is Monday, May 6th, 2002.

Motion to Adjourn

By L. Tannenbaum, second by D. Greenberg. Approved unanimously. Adjourned at 9:32 pm.