

and tell its history before lighting the candles. “The children speak about *chanukiot* brought from all over Europe, South America, Israel—by parents, grandparents, and other relatives,” says longtime member Betsy Hoover, “sharing the story they’ve learned of their *chanukiah*’s journey, and its meaning to them. It’s always an awesome day at our temple.”

“THE GREATEST CHANUKAH ON EARTH”

Sometimes it takes a bit of hype to energize a congregation at Chanukah time. Members of Temple Emanu-El in Tucson, Arizona bill their celebration “The Greatest Chanukah on Earth!” “We’re very modest about it,” jokes Outreach coordinator Mila Anderson. “But everyone participates—the preschool kids sing songs in dreidel costumes, and our religious school kids, the youth choir, teen choir, adult choir, and rabbis all perform a skit that offers a modern take on the ancient Chanukah story. Last year our associate rabbi did a hilarious Chanukah rap. And every year our impromptu dra-

ma club, involving players of all ages, tells the story of Chanukah in a different way. We dressed up as pirates one year, football players the next.”

At the end of the one-hour show, Anderson says, “we turn down the lights and everyone lights the menorahs they brought from home. Then we serve a brisket dinner, followed by a Chanukah fair for the kids with arts and crafts, clowns, and games.” More than 600 people attend the show, and about 275 stay for the dinner—a great success, and that’s no hype.

“CHANUPLEX”

Central Synagogue in Rockville Center, New York has invented its own multifaceted celebration, titled “Chanuplex.” Throughout the day, explains congregant Peter Levy, “the synagogue hosts a Chanukah coffee house/café with music for members in their twenties and thirties, cooking classes on preparing both traditional and modern Chanukah cuisine, and educational workshops on the historical and biblical elements of the Chanukah story.”

SPONSORING FAMILIES

Some congregations view Chanukah as a *mitzvah* opportunity which extends beyond the Jewish community. At Larchmont Temple in Larchmont, New York, each religious school class “sponsors” a family in need, donating food, money (raised through such *tzedakah* projects as the holiday bake sale and book fair), and gifts (including dreidels and gelt). In addition, each student contributes at least one personal gift he’s/she’s received for the holiday. “It is really important that we incorporate an element of social action in our celebrations at the temple,” says Larchmont Temple’s associate rabbi Mara Nathan, “so our students put into action the *mitzvot* they are learning about.”

“It is this last activity—education—that anchors the festivities to Chanukah’s essence,” adds Rabbi Nathan. “The root of the word Chanukah comes from the Hebrew *chanuk*—meaning education and dedication.”

Each of these congregational celebrations is bringing renewed light to Jewish life. □

Rebel With a Cause

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Do you expect to win?

Yes, we’re making inroads elsewhere. After a six-year legal battle—short by Israeli standards—we secured state funding for six non-Orthodox synagogues—the first time in Israel’s sixty-year history that the government recognized the religious needs of non-Orthodox Jews and provided them with a sacred place to pray. What a change: in the past we haven’t even been able to get permits to establish a Reform synagogue, let alone receive assistance in actually building one. Hopefully, this will be but the first step in securing full and equal government funding for the Reform Jewish presence in Israel. Our country desperately needs a Jewish movement like ours that promotes humanistic, egalitarian, and democratic values—a spiritual Judaism that can not only help to heal the world, but to heal Israel.

So, you see, if we keep up the pressure year after year, eventually we will win. We’ve got to. □

Get Off Oil

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network’s thousands of charging stations. Presumably, while anyone with an electric car could join any of the plans, only those cars that are marketed through Better Place and its Renault-Nissan Alliance partner will have access to this GPS-based priority system. But what matters is any plug will work.

How many cars will be available?

A crash program is underway as we speak that should put thousands of cars on the ground in Israel, Portugal, Denmark and the U.S. by 2010. By 2015, hundreds of thousands of purely electric-powered cars manufactured by a number of companies will be on the road, utilizing charging infrastructures based on the Israeli model.

That sounds like real change.

Yes. I have hope, especially for the long term. But in the short term we have to stop rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. I hope we wake up and get a plan. □

U.S. Postal Services Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

1. Publication Title: Reform Judaism. 2. Publication No.: 0482-0819. 3. Date of Filing: September 18, 2008. 4. Issue Frequency: 4 times a year. 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 4. 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$12.00. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778. 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Union for Reform Judaism, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778. 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: Union for Reform Judaism, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778; Editor: Aron Hirt-Manheimer, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778; Managing Editor: Joy Weinberg, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778. 10. Owner: Union for Reform Judaism, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778, incorporated as a nonprofit organization. No stockholders. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None. 12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes, a., have not changed during preceding 12 months. 13. Publication: Reform Judaism. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Fall 2008. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: A. Total No. Copies: 305,704. B. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail): (1) Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 0. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 0. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 8,806. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 152. C. Total Paid Distribution: 302,159. D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail): (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 0. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: 1,083. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: 1,879. E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: 2,962. F. Total Distribution: 305,121. G. Copies Not Distributed: 583. H. Total: 305,704. I. Percent Paid: 99.03%. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date. A. Total No. Copies: 305,118. B. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail): (1) Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 292,606. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 0. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 8,808. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 164. C. Total Paid Distribution: 301,578. D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail): (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 0. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: 770. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: 1,917. E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: 2,687. F. Total Distribution: 304,265. G. Copies Not Distributed: 853. H. Total: 305,118. I. Percent Paid: 99.12%. 16. Statement of Ownership is printed in this Winter 2008 issue. 17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete: Joy Weinberg, Managing Editor.