

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2006

Attendees: Gary Winters, Ken Weinstein, Roz Singer, Marty Ramirez, Jesse Mendelson, Elanit Rothschild, Dave Sloan, David Barak, Elana Lederman, Leon Weiseltier, Isadora Binder, Gamliel Kronemer, Seth Opert, David Epstein.

1. Dvar Torah (L. Wieseltier) – Parshat Nitzavim has a verse: “I am not just making this covenant with you; I am making it with those who are not here.” All sorts of interesting questions regarding the continuity and perpetuity of all sorts of contracts, and the work of a shul. Everything we do here we don’t do just for ourselves – it’s for perpetuity. A few verses later the Torah says “To cleave unto them.” The Midrash asks “Is it possible to cleave to the divine spirit?” (with the assumption being no). The answer is that you don’t cleave to the shechinah, you cleave to talmidei chachamim. The commitment to institutions *is* the d’veikut, the connection.
2. Approval of new board members
 - a. Jerome Chapman moves from Director to Trustee; Under the bylaws, the President appoints a person to open position – and Gary appoints Seth Opert to that spot. Gamliel Kronemer is Presidential Appointee. Board agrees.
3. August board minutes approved by acclamation.
4. Gary asked for a formal board vote to allow email voting – we won’t turn board meetings into email conversations, but it helps tremendously when we only have one meeting per month. Gary reviewed the bylaws – no objection in there. Since Suzette doesn’t have an email account, we’ll make sure Max gets the board emails on his email for Suzette. Most things will be routine, but we want to make sure this is formalized – vote issues with 24 hours advance notice.
 - a. D. Barak made motion – “Approve use of voting over emails for routine matters with 24 hours notice, and 9 members will be considered acceptance.” D. Sloan seconded the Motion, all approved.
 - i. If there is a challenge as to what is considered a “routine matter” – President shall be consulted.
5. New Members Approved:
 - a. Fred and Kathy Lawrence
 - b. Merideth Weber
 - c. Marissa Shuback
 - d. Mike and Shilly Makovsky

6. Renovations update:
 - a. They are pretty much done. Al Moses said to Gary that windows are allowed to stay as is. D. Epstein said work is 85-90% done, and its really quite an achievement – the congregation didn't disintegrate, the work was done on time and on budget. There are a few small things left to be done (windows, balcony, part of the far wall, light fixtures, row of seats, odds and ends). Gary said there is a punchlist of items to be done, and people should mention items if they see them. At end of work, there will be a thorough walk-through with contractor.
 - b. Gamliel asked about the davening time board, which is currently sitting behind the coat hangers. Gary agreed it is not in a good place, but that's a detail to be worked out later.
 - c. E. Rothschild pointed out that Andrew Jakobavics spent money to make that board look better in memory of his grandparents, and would have to be informed of any board changes.
7. D. Barak asked for a formal policy regarding food in the main sanctuary. The main problems are Cheerios (which get ground in to the carpet) and lollipops (which stick to everything). Question raised is – are we ok with this, or do we want to try to combat it in some way?
 - a. D. Epstein mentioned wine spilling as a much greater issue; Leon wanted greater parental supervision because there really isn't much to do about it; E. Lederman said we should mention it as an issue of greater concern. G. Kronemer wanted paragraph in SAP for parents to keep eye on their kids and food – it says we're concerned about it, but we won't bludgeon people over the head with it.
 - b. Board agreed to two things going forward:
 - i. White wine in sanctuary
 - ii. SAP mention for the next few months asking for parental supervision
8. R. Singer brought up the issue of what maintenance will be brought into shul. Gary said that the current maintenance contract is with a company to come twice a week and they do vacuum upstairs. Gary has asked Shoshana to go upstairs and watch them vacuum the first few times they come.
 - a. D. Barak mentioned that since carpets have a life, one of the things he would like to do is put together a projected life-span of the four shul properties and when we expect things to die. Barak has group of people who have agreed to run the project with an outside company. D. Sloan said that he did it with his condo company and it cost them \$5K. Barak said he intended to try and build it off of free estimates, and will come back to the board before any money is spent. Gary said he should be able to get it out of the current architecture company. Leon said he'd ask a super genius contractor friend to go through the Rabbi's house, and possibly more.
9. Fundraising for renovations
 - a. \$50K from Al Moses to come soon (we're on the cusp of hitting the \$200K target to trigger Al's \$50K)

- b. \$50K more from Gottesman – not doing the windows will cut some amount from the final amount, but we’re still going to have raise another \$30-40K above and beyond the \$200K from shul and the \$100K from Moses and Gottesman. D. Epstein said Gottesman money on windows was separate from the rest of the money, so that’s not an issue.
 - c. We want to pay contractor on time. Final amount of renovation is roughly \$700K, and D. Epstein thinks there is another \$150K we could raise from the congregation. If we have to, we can tap into the line of credit for a relatively small amount.
 - d. Gary said the social hall is next to be done, once we have enough money. The contractor said we shouldn’t spend a lot of money down here, but the floors, chairs and tables need to be replaced. Darker color floor will work better, as will removing “basement effect” of walls. We can put money into the kitchen can have money put into it to make things better, but will not be renovated because it is not practical.
 - e. Kol Hakavod from everyone to Gary and D. Epstein.
10. Roz asked about Bayit kitchen as dumping ground for things – there are just piles of junk in there right now. Gary and Roz agreed that we don’t need a full kitchen, but Roz insisted that we do need at least running water and a working refrigerator. Roz said we need to take a look and figure out and decide what needs to be there. Main room and kitchen need to be cleaned ASAP, especially since Learners Service is coming.
11. Rejoining the Orthodox Union (OU)
- a. B. Fellner feels most strongly about not rejoining, but he is not in attendance. Gary’s view is that it doesn’t serve any point any more to protest (we left six years ago because of the Baruch Lanner sexual harassment issue), and feels it is important for the shul to be publicly identified as part of the mainstream organization. OU has an active Department of Synagogue Services, as well as other ways they can help us – they have many ideas programmatically, etc. He thinks there is value of being part of the OU. Other views:
 - b. D. Sloan thinks they’re political activities are abominable and their hashgacha activities are questionable, if not outright wrong. IPA’s (OU’s lobbying arm) activities are not reflective of most members’ ideals outside the NY area, and even within NY (specific information is on their website – school vouchers, Iraq, etc). They take a broad shot view of a lot of things that doesn’t necessarily have the best interest of the community and without regard to anyone outside of NY baal-habatim cadre. D. Barak agrees with Dave on the political issues, and J. Mendelson agrees wholeheartedly with the kashrut issues.
 - c. Gary says they are mainly a synagogue and kashrut organization, and being in a prominent city, being a member of the organization has value. His view is that they are always likely to reflect the political views of their member synagogues – and likely on the conservative side. D. Sloan disagrees – stating that its really two people who make the decisions but they throw around the shul member number.

- d. Gamliel said we should invite the Deputy Director of the IPA (who is also a member of Keshet) to plead his case. D. Sloan said he'd be ok with that, and would "gladly interrogate them in person."
 - e. The cost of rejoining is minimal.
 - f. OU hashgacha issues are suspect, and based only on money. Leon said he's told people for 25 years that the first Pulitzer Prize for a Jewish newspaper would be an expose of the kashrut world, and no one will touch it.
 - g. Gary countered by saying that we never would have left if not for Lanner issue, so we should join again because that issue has passed, and all of these other issues were there then and we never would have left if not for Lanner.
 - h. No other institution pulled out of the OU – and all other major synagogues in this area are still members.
 - i. Elanit asked Gary what are the real actual benefits of joining. Gary said they are very active now in conferences in gabaiim, trying to help shuls in outlying areas become a part of the mainstream; NCSY is a big part of the OU – and its important to be supportive of such an organization.
 - j. Board agreed to table the discussion for a later date when Fellner is here.
12. Fundraiser in Spring – Gary proposed to plan a similar thing as last year – fundraising was very substantial. Roz mentioned possibility of doing something for 75th year, or for the new Sefer Torah that we have/are getting. Gary said whatever we do, we have to do standard fundraiser with honoring someone (Al Moses? He has the greatest longevity of the congregation now), etc.
- a. Rededication – 75th anniversary of shul, but also need something for Gottesman family and Al Moses (who has been very generous in the past and now). Won't do it as a fundraising thing, just at the shul and about the shul. D. Epstein will head committee, along with Gamliel.
 - b. Ideas about Fall Homecoming Chanukat Habayit and Spring Fundraiser:
 - i. There are architects in the shul who can discuss items of continuity and the beautiful things upstairs, and kedushat bait haknesset
 - 1. Daniel Liebeskind
 - 2. Moshe Safdye (through Leon)
 - ii. We want to do this when all items are completed, so that probably gets pushed into January
 - iii. Leon says that if we do a rededication, we should really do a rededication with new "Rabbi" Mayor Fenty
 - iv. Daniel Lipskind could be invited
 - v. Roz will be Chair of Fundraiser Committee and D. Sloan is perpetually on committee as well, irrespective of continued procreation.
 - 1. Shana Siesser is building a combined shul calendar, and will consulted with dates, etc.
 - vi. D. Sloan asked Gamliel about doing archival work in shul with older people, but there is a question if it is relevant, futile, and worthwhile
 - c. Long discussion on this, where it was decided that just prior to one of the two events, we should have an evening where we should unveil archive of materials

- i. Cost will be minimal, essentially just to cover A/V presentation and some materials

13. Sisterhood Update

- a. Isadora said that Sisterhood is working on combining younger women and older women in shul, through teas, etc – they're trying various methods of trying to bind people to the shul, especially given Keshet's incredibly rich and varied and interesting history

14. Leon said that Herman Wouk has dedicated some very valuable books to the library and we should put something in the SAP thanking him for it.

15. Ritual and High Holidays update

- a. D. Barak said the High Holidays chazzan/teacher lineup is set except for a few Learners Service teachers. Rosh Hashana Learners Service is in Social Hall, as is the sponsored lunch afterwards. Learners Service on Yom Kippur is in the Bayit. Babysitting on Rosh Hashana is in the Bayit, and Yom Kippur is TBD (people need to bring their own Pack and Play). We have a vendor for lulav and etrog.

16. Roz brought up issue of Homeland Security grants (for example, KMS got \$10K). K. Weinstein said he'd look into this more broadly, and the Board agreed this is a good idea

- a. D. Sloan and Ken met with Cmmdr. Solburg of District 2 Police, who was very helpful for giving us people from MPD when we need extra help, etc. So if there is access to that money, that would work well.
- b. Panic buttons will be installed throughout the shul over next week or two.
- c. Leon said custom in Brooklyn is that one person in shul has a working walkie talkie. We have a cellphone hidden under Rabbi's chair when Rabbi is here – but we should make it a permanent fixture for emergencies.

17. Gary mentioned the Beatles Cover Band Concert, to be run by Shana and Daniel Siesser, along the lines of the Keshet Theater Party in the past. They discussed the details of it, and did a great deal of research on it, and we're going to go ahead with it. Board was assured that it would not be a fundraiser (with sponsorships and the like), just the purchase of a concert ticket.

18. Jesse made motion to adjourn.