

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2005

Attendees: Gary Winters, Leon Weiseltier, David Epstein, Elanit Rothschild, Baruch Fellner, Debbie Rogal, David Sloan, Natasha Rosenstock, Jonathan Frenkel, Ken Weinstein, David Barak

1. Dvar Torah

Leon Weiseltier gave a dvar Torah on being judged “as you are.”

2. Program Update

It was noted that the New Member Lunch was a big success. The Learner’s Service had 150 attendees, and the reviews were very positive. Ninety people came for lunch and there were many new faces. Elul Shiurim at shul have been well-attended and there are many new membership applications. The Shabbat explanatory service was initiated October 8. The IMAX event was a qualified success with a decent participation of more than 70 people. We broke even on costs and perhaps raised a bit of money. Some other tremendous education programs are coming up.

3. New Members

We approved seven new members:

Jordana Luks

Michael Yerushalmi

Rosa Alonso

Suzanne Bryant

Allan Barall

Rebecca and Alon Cohen

Chanah Delisle Gavzy and William Gavzy

4. Budget

There were no financial numbers for September. The first quarter financial status will be circulated for July-September. We expect dues to exceed what was predicted.

David Epstein made a motion to close a particular account as a trustee, and move that to a consolidated account. The motion was approved and David was authorized to close and consolidate the account.

5. Refurbishment

The Gottesman family has donated \$500K to affect Milt Gottesman’s vision for the shul. Gary Winters and David Epstein are making decisions for the project, with the support of additional experts. The total cost of the project, exclusive of architectural fees, will be approximately \$750K. We expect to raise \$250K from the membership.

The windows are to be changed to be tinted glass. The goal is to meet the needs of halacha and Milt’s vision, but the plan may not meet all needs regarding heat and light.

The new roof is already put on. The refurbishment will include repainting the wood. The chairs will be refurbished. (The newer women's chairs in the center of the balcony will not be changed.) The carpeting will be redone. The plaques will be moved to the back of the room, and lamps over them will be removed. It may be possible to bring air conditioning to the downstairs women's section. The landings on the first and second floor can be retiled.

There has been an acoustical study regarding addressing sound on the stairs and improving the acoustics for speakers. One possibility is putting "baffles" going up the stairs. Another possibility is removing the curtain over the aron kodesh. We haven't yet come to a conclusion regarding carpeting upstairs, which may help the sound. Sound boards could address the sound from the stairs and the landing. One option is to add carpeting to the landing and stairs. Carpeting will need to be cleaned and eventually, replaced.

The electrical engineer is working to identify electrical issues. We will change the lights in the men's section and the small lights on the ceiling. Work will be done on the shelves outside for the siddurim and machzorim. We will improve the benches in the back of the women's section. The downstairs closet will be made smaller and the coat rack will be placed between the outer wall and stairway. The front door will be refurbished.

The bathrooms will be improved with a changing station in the men's and women's bathrooms. The trash bin will be made larger. The tile on the floor will be improved, the size of sink basin will be enlarged, and the ceiling and lighting will be improved.

The kitchen will become a "pantry" and the wall will be broken down, with only a small locked area. The sink and refrigerator will be open for access, as well as ovens for warming. The Bayit kitchen will also need to be improved.

The timing for refurbishment will be after Simchat Torah. We are looking at a Nov. 1 start date for the bathroom work. We may need to use the Bayit bathrooms. There will be 16 weeks to do this space between November 1 and Purim.

Leon Weiseltier warned that projects like this will not be done on schedule. We also must expect cost overruns. We need a project manager for a major project like this. Gary explained that Kadcon is the general contractor and will manage the work.

David Barak urged that we get a kitchen person helping to make the kitchen decisions. He also requested a partition in the bathroom between the urinal and the sink. He said that he was not satisfied with the window decisions, but understood he had been outvoted.

Dave Sloan said that he did not want the project to go forward without knowing the time of displacement. Gary said that he has expressed that he wants to minimize the time, but we haven't gotten the timing yet. Dave said that he would give up the project elements that would exclude us from the space.

Roz Singer suggested sound boards on the walls of the stairwell. She said that talking is more problematic than walking. Gary said that one option discussed was having a softer, rubberized floor to cut down on foot sounds. For talking, we could put soundboards on the wall, or a lower, sound-absorbing ceiling. That would make the space enclosed and was not recommended. The third option is a molded plastic sprayed on the wall, which is also not ideal. David Barak suggested tapestry instead of sound boards.

Baruch Fellner echoed the concern for the displacement of the shul kehillah. He asked whether the windows will be the principal cause of the displacement. He expressed that the aesthetic value of windows are not worth the disruption.

Natasha Rosenstock recommended the Beth Sholom tissue dispenser for bathrooms. She asked what the tint on the windows will look like. It will look “greenish” but pretty close to clear. David Barak suggested a trial of the windows, and recommended the upper right window in the women’s section.

Elanit Rothschild said that there are events scheduled for November, including one big event. To only have one bathroom would be embarrassing. What will happen to the kitchen during the dinners with scholars-in-residence? Gary said that the kitchen will be done separately, later. The bathroom and downstairs will be done first, and then the upstairs. The kitchen will be a self-contained project later.

Leon Weiseltier said that we have bitten the bullet and need to do this. He said if the curtain on the aron was removed, we must have a new cover designed that is consistent with the beauty of the shul.

Gary said that he did not want to minimize shul disruption issue. He has had stern conversations with the contractors. Roz Singer asked if any work has been done to research where we will go. Neil Rosenbaum did a preliminary survey. Elanit Rothschild said that we need open communication with people who are running programs, so that we know how to adapt.

We are down to a few outstanding issues. There will be a letter to the congregation and he will mention the refurbishment on kol nidre.

6. New Membership Idea

David Sloan said that Steven Krieger had volunteered to take a sales approach to shul membership, if some percentage of the membership could go to a charity supporting his efforts for Darfur. The donation to Darfur will go only for the first year. The organization is called “Save Darfur” and it is an informational, direct aid, “unobjectionable” organization. The rabbi is OK with the idea.

He would make calls to potential members, as well as associate members and people whose membership has defaulted. The members would have to indicate on their membership application that part of their fee should go to the Darfur charity.

Debbie Rogal said she would prefer not to have him approach associate members.

We agreed that someone needs to double-check the organization.

We agreed to do this as a trial and see how it goes. We will not do it with any other organizations until we see how it works. Steve will report afterward how the project went.

This project was approved by the board.

7. Good and Welfare

It was noted that there is a naming opportunity for the new white parochets, other than the one over the ark. This will last 20 years; the rabbi does not know the names currently on the ones to be replaced. The donation must be significantly more than the cost. David Epstein suggested a donation in the \$10-15K range. There is also an opportunity for the small parochets for the shtender and Torah covers. We could get all the new stuff for \$5K total.

David Barak commented that the learner's service went very well, thanks to Gary.

It was asked whether for Columbus Day and Veteran's Day, minyan should continue to be at 8 AM? Eight percent of the shul cannot attend. Perhaps we should discuss each holiday individually. Gary suggested that we change to regular time for Columbus Day and Veteran's Day. This was agreed.