

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Minutes – September 12, 2004

Attendees: Roz Singer, Leon Wieseltier, David Barak, Gary Winters, Rabbi Freundel, Michael Gelfand, Debbie Rogal, Natasha Rosenstock, David Sloan, Evonne Marzouk, Healthier Zomer, Elanit Rothschild, Jerome Chapman , Jonathan Frenkel, Baruch Fellner, Barry Schochet.

1. New Members

The board approved the new membership of the following applicants:

Shula Gross

Eric (Yisroel) and Kimberly Brumer

Ari Elias-Bachrach

Jared Max Hendler

Avraham Infeld

Aviva Krauss

Jack Kustanowitz and Penina Rantz

Richard Pollock and Karen Holtzman

Alan and Rivka Spiegel

2. Approval of Minutes

One change was requested to the August minutes: Debbie Rogal noted that the education survey was to be sent to Evonne Marzouk “for information” rather than for review.

The minutes from the meetings in July and August were approved as amended.

3. Financial Report

The board reviewed the financial report from the last month. It was noted that the dues revenue is less than the annual goal. Family dues are only at \$36,508 as compared to \$65K budgeted. Gary Winters confirmed that this is consistent with last year. It was noted that it had only been six weeks since the requests for dues were sent.

In terms of disbursements, it was noted that it was a good month for reasonable expenses: \$20K total disbursements for the month.

It was noted that holiday seating revenue seemed low, however it was clarified that this budget was cut off at the end of August. Debbie Rogal said that there are only three men’s seats available and fewer women’s seats. By the end of last year, only four seats were not paid.

There will be an appeal for membership and/or donations at the downstairs minyan on Yom Kippur.

It was also noted that Heather Zomer is taking over much of the children's responsibilities that Debbi Wilgoren used to manage, and Heather was commended for this.

4. Update on Bayit Sheni Purchase

Michael Gelfand explained that we are currently in a holding pattern. The contract is written such that they will notify us 30 days prior to closing, which could be any time between October 1 and December 25. They have not notified us yet. The loan will be for \$500K.

Michael sees fundraising coming from three pools:

- Major Benefactors. So far \$300K has been committed from this pool over 3-5 years. Not everyone has been reached yet. About \$25K of this is, at least in part, related to use of the building as a school. Michael is hopeful that this will be more than half of the \$600K we need to raise.
- General congregation – This would include specific contributions done on an individual solicitation basis, but with smaller amounts, and from a larger pool, than the major benefactors.
- Entire congregation solicited for a building fund. This would need to be voted on. It would include a capital campaign of perhaps \$1000 per member over three years. Michael thinks that this amount – \$300/ year – is benign compared to other campaigns and other shuls. (It was noted that almost all synagogues have capital campaigns that are obligatory. We wouldn't turn people away if unable to pay, but we would expect them to support the community decision if they could.)

There are some issues to be dealt with. There is the ongoing cost of servicing the loan (ie, interest), which will cost \$30K per year. This must be included in the plan. Additionally, we will need renovation to the house. It does not need to be huge. If it's a school, it is a matter of connecting the two buildings, which would be relatively inexpensive.

Michael figures that the total expenses would be \$1.5 m over 5 years, including the renovation cost.

Leon Wieseltier congratulated Michael for his work, but also raised other concerns regarding renovation to be considered, for example, lead paint. He pointed out that the shul has a bad track record on maintaining our current physical plants and we need a subcommittee to address the ongoing annual cost of upkeep. We should study this.

Daria Fane has submitted a very useful and thorough report on the issues to be dealt with in order to have a school [*see page 8*]. There are many details to be worked out and we need a committee to build on her work. Nir Baras, an architect, has taken an interest in this project. Daria Fane and Jen Bradley are also interested. We need volunteers from the board separate from fundraising.

Heather Zomer pointed out we also need to confirm there will be enough interest for the school. She has talked to people and their greatest challenge with staying in the area is not the school issue, but the cost of housing.

Gary Winters said that we need to create excitement for this project -- that it will have Jewish content, which will be very helpful for parents. There are minimal convenient options for parents downtown now. The JCC daycare and nursery school has minimal Jewish content. Gary is thinking this school would accommodate about 20 kids. Debbie Rogal said this would probably be the maximum given the square footage. Regardless of whether or not the school has Jewish content, people will send their kids (even non-Jewish kids) if it's a good school.

Rabbi Freundel said that since the establishment of the eruv, the main comment he hears for people leaving is the lack of daycare/nursery school for kids. The eruv extended the amount of time people stayed here; would a school further extend that time?

Barry Schochet congratulated Michael on his work. He said that he had heard from a friend, a contact of Gayle's, who has run one of these schools, and wants to help.

Gary Winters said we need a serious effort to evaluate the economic and legal aspects of the school. He suggested adding a lawyer to the committee. He asked whether it makes sense to rent the building for a year while we figure this out.

Michael agreed, but said that whenever the project gets started, it will still take time, in terms of renovations, which would postpone it further. He suggested that we rent the house for 6 months. Of course, any money that comes in will help.

David Sloan asked some questions about the proposed budget for the house and renovations. The house itself cost \$1.2 m. The renovations estimate we heard was \$500K – although it was clarified that this was based on combining the old Bayit with the new house. For only bathrooms and preparations for kids, it would be more like \$200K-300K.

Adding the house, renovations, and \$150K interest, this is a project with a budget of \$1.5-1.85 m. Where will funds come from? The plan is to raise \$600K from the major donors, \$250K from the shul assessment (this number was questioned – would 250 members really be able to give \$1K over three years?). Where would the additional between \$650K to \$1 m come from? Michael said it would come from general contributions and naming opportunities (above the major donors mentioned earlier). The assumption is that no money will come out of the general shul operations. In regard to the capital campaign, the question was asked whether this would apply to associate members or students? The board could determine this. There could also be a staggered cost for different types of members. This could be part of the campaign.

We need to separate out what the school will be responsible for – what will be the organizational costs of the school. Michael had included staff, furniture, refrigerators, maintenance, etc. in those costs. It was noted that it is a nicely upgraded building and should not need heat or air conditioning work. It was also noted that to have a “good school,” it would need customized carpeting, edging, etc.

There was a question about whether the Bregstone money would be donated to the house or would need to be paid back. But even if this money is included, the other parts of the down payment will need to be paid back.

Baruch Fellner said that \$1.5 m for 20 children is very dear. Michael pointed out that the school would be an asset. The price is comparable to less or equivalent structures. The changes we make should not dramatically affect the asset value.

David Barak said that his needs survey now has final approval, including nursery school questions, which will hopefully clarify this issue. David Barak reminded us that the some information from the survey would inform our decision about whether we should keep the house or re-sell it. He agrees with the idea to rent for six months. We should spend extra time to make sure this is right to avoid problems.

If the board and synagogue does not feel the nursery school is a positive step for retaining members, this is not something we should do. However, it was raised as a major issue that we can't take care of our kids. Still, these issues were raised about Shabbos, and the school will make little difference for Shabbos.

Leon Wieseltier pointed out that if we use the building as a nursery school, it would be hard to put to multiple uses. Its only significant use may be as a school.

It was suggested that it might be useful for the committee to also look at alternate locations for a nursery school, where we could accommodate more kids for less money. Jonathan Frenkel suggested that it might be better to rent a place. This should be considered.

Gary Winters said that all these questions are constructive, and we must work through them in a sober way. To be on the committee will take serious work. We need specific numbers, pay scales, etc.

It was noted that Gary's original consultant for this project did not work out. We need expertise on the issue. Baruch Fellner said that Mrs. Koss is retiring from JPDS, and we should get her involved. Rabbi Freundel said he would contact her. One thing to discuss with her is the “Jewish content” of the school, for example, kosher options in terms of buying and bringing food. This should also be a topic for the committee.

Questions were asked regarding whether raising this amount for the school would exhaust our ability to raise money for the shul for operational needs, or decrease our intake from annual fundraising activities. It was noted that there would need to be a fundraising

campaign above the \$1K capital campaign to meet the full cost of the building and renovation.

Michael Gelfand said that this is always an issue, but that he thinks there is money available for capital investment that is not available for operating. When there are naming opportunities, money also becomes available. There may be a reduction in shul fundraising for a period. The expectation is that a reduction in that fundraising would be relatively small. We may also get money for the school from other sources beyond the Keshet Israel community. Jerome Chapman also pointed out that we need to get people excited about the idea, and it needs to be done right. Otherwise we will be more likely to lose fundraising capacity.

Baruch Fellner asked when the \$30K carrying cost would hit the Keshet Israel bottom line.

Gary Winters suggested that we rent the building immediately, which could pay off some costs or at least cover carrying costs. Jerome Chapman agreed, since we will not be ready till next September anyway.

A question was asked about where the notification on the closing cost goes, but it was clarified that this will be sent immediately to the main contacts.

Since it appears there is no one on the board who can chair this committee, David Sloan suggested an outside chair with a board representative. Michael Gelfand recommended Daria Fane. Apparently this was discussed with her and she was willing to work but did not want to chair. Perhaps someone can help her or she could be given a co-chair. David Barak and Elanit Rothschild volunteered to be co-board representatives to the committee.

In terms of funding, Rabbi Freundel said there might be grants or endowments available to explore. He said he saw this as a pivotal moment in the vision of the shul. A nursery school would increase pressure for a school. The question is, does this community want to become self-sustaining, or does it want to remain dependent on Silver Spring? A school says that we can take care of our own. Will we always be a transient community? The rabbi's vision is to build the community as much as possible.

Michael Gelfand said that he will focus on the financial side, and requests help on this from committee members who can help him talk to people about fundraising. He needs help presenting the idea. People have been very positive about the project, and we need to inject excitement into the community. He believes the house is the right direction to move in and will be very productive in the long run. He said it's very expensive to do anything in Georgetown, but if we don't get in now we never will. He requests people to participate in the development aspects, and a motion for a community meeting. He said that the Bregstone money must be considered. He would like a proposal for the capital campaign at the next meeting or the one in November.

Gary Winters said he would do a letter during the chagim bringing the congregation up to date. Elanit Rothschild suggested that after the internal committee has done some work and after the needs survey, we can select dates for a community meeting.

Evonne Marzouk stressed that it was important to build the case for the vision in Gary's letter and in our work, not to present ourselves as being on the fence. Gary agreed and said we need to be positive when we talk to people about this project.

It was agreed that at the community meeting, Gary Winters, Michael Gelfand, and Rabbi Freundel would make presentations.

5. Keshet needs survey

David Barak said that there will be no changes to the draft circulated following the last meeting, and he will plan to present some results by the next meeting. The next meeting will be Sunday, October 17.

6. Shalom Baranes Progress

We also need a committee for the more immediate renovations taking place in the shul. These renovations will include things such as the entrance, bathrooms, minimal work downstairs, and also upstairs aesthetic improvements. Shalom was here during the week, and we expect that he will present ideas to us soon. Norman Jemal is also pricing out options. Gary Winters asked if anyone else would like to be involved with him on this project. He also indicated that non-board members are welcome. We hope for more information by the next board meeting.

7. Sisterhood

Natasha Rosenstock raised a question about food at Kiddush. Apparently the DC Minyan has a really great Kiddush. She wondered if it might be possible for people to give a little bit of money to have a slightly better Kiddush on weeks when it is sponsored by the congregation. Natasha said that she has a contact with the Deckelbaums, who run Max's, and wondered if this might be helpful. Natasha will talk to Shoshana and find out the money issues.

Natasha also raised the idea of a Chinese Auction, where there are many activities donated by the shul members which are auctioned off. It was suggested that perhaps this could be included as a silent auction in the fundraiser this year. Natasha will find someone to lead this project and give details at the next board meeting.

Natasha also reported that the Sisterhood will be hosting a Chanukah fundraiser on Sunday, December 12, a concert with a cellist and pianist who will be donating their services. They are having trouble finding a venue. If anyone has a piano and a home that can accommodate 40 people, please tell Natasha. This will be in place of last year's Chanukah bazaar.

8. Other items

The pre-Yom Kippur reception for those who have made significant donations to the shul was held the evening of September 12, 2004 at Jonathan Pincus' home. At the time of the board meeting, there had been a poor response for attendance even though it was the same methodology, and a larger list, than last year. There will be follow up to try to raise funds anyway.

It is the appropriate time of year to begin planning a major fundraiser, such as a dinner. Someone needs to coordinate this, and David Sloan will not be able to do this because of other commitments.

Jane Field has put together a great brochure for the fall semester. Debbie Rogal has confirmed some great speakers, including Rabbi David Berger for the Martin Zlotnick Memorial Shabbaton, October 22-24. He will speak several times throughout the weekend. There is a book event with Rabbi Freundel and Leon Wieseltier scheduled for November 7. Rabbi Tuvia Kaplan is also confirmed for December. Richard Joel will also come, but the dates are not confirmed and it may be in the spring. We are also co-sponsoring a Yom Iyun with Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah on Sunday, December 5. It was noted that there are no copies of the Rabbi's book left in the office. They should be available at the November 7 event and the Yom Iyun.

The rabbi raised a concern about one of our membership streams – the internet. If you put DC-synagogues in Google, for Orthodox synagogues you will see the Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah and the Chabad – both “National Capital” and then you will see Keshet Israel – the Georgetown synagogue. There is a concern that people don't know that Georgetown is downtown. We should say where we are on the internet. David Sloan says there are simple ways to tweak this. He will do this.

It was also raised that we need to tell hotels we are here. Leon Wieseltier volunteered to write a text for a 1-page glossy to give to concierges, and David Sloan will turn it into a glossy sheet. We need to make clear that we are “the only Orthodox synagogue in the heart of DC.” Debbie will send the information to the hotels once Leon and David complete the blurb. It was also suggested that we get included in the “Where” magazine that hotels subscribe to.

The Rabbi said that he was approached by several students at GW who are putting together a 7 am minyan, and need a few additional people to make minyan. They are willing to commit to send people to Keshet Israel at night. They also want to organize GW lunches to encourage students to come to Keshet Israel. It was proposed that we should announce this early minyan. This could be a way to service GW. We have benefited from a lot and have not done a good job of servicing them. This should be done with Hillel's approval. Simon Amiel has been supportive, and we should work with the new director.

A question was raised about whether it would be possible to change the current policy regarding “taking talisim off before announcements” which officially ends the service, and enables women to give the announcements. The sense is that people are taking this as a cue to leave and not giving Gary the respect he deserves when he makes the announcements. If we do not make the announcement, a woman can’t give the announcements. However, she could still be president or vice president. One option is to say it only when a woman will give the announcements, but this was regarded by some as more offensive. We agreed to discuss this further and vote on it at the next meeting.

Keshet Israel Nursery School: A Preliminary Analysis

by Daria Fane

Purchase of the building at 1310 28th St. NW would provide the space necessary for Keshet Israel to have its own nursery school. Opening the space up by linking it with the Bayit would allow for a significantly larger nursery school program that could accommodate more children. Establishing a nursery school would be a major step forward for the synagogue that could help stem the flow of families with young children away from our community northward towards Kemp Mill and Wheaton, and provide a local option for Jewish education for Keshet’s growing community of small children.

Setting up a Committee: A “Nursery School Committee” or “Advisory Board” should be established. This should include some parents who would want to send their children to the school, and other shul members including, if possible, people with some expertise in the following areas: financial management, legal issues, building construction and renovation, teaching and school administration, etc. Ideally we should include someone with direct nursery school expertise either as a committee member or as a consultant.

Jewish Education: The committee or board needs to establish a common vision of the founding principles for the Keshet Nursery School, including a decision about who the potential students should be. Will this program serve only Keshet children? or only Jewish children? or will it be open to the larger community, including non-Jewish children? As a Jewish program with Jewish content taught by Jewish staff, the Keshet School would fit into the category of “Faith-Based Child Care.” The Civil Rights Act respects the rights of religious groups to operate religiously-based programs and make religiously-based employment decisions in hiring. The White House has established an office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives which supports preserving religious hiring rights, and even has various federal grants available for faith-based child care programs. Some states, such as Virginia and Maryland, have specific exemptions from licensing requirements for day care centers operated under the auspices of a religious institution. DC exempts childcare programs run during religious services from licensing requirements, but some further research will be necessary to determine if DC has any exemptions for full time religious child care facilities.

Age Range: A question to be determined is the age range to be covered, and thus whether Keshet is establishing a day care program, a nursery school, a kindergarten or an elementary school program. Nursery programs are usually for three and four year olds, while kindergarten classes are for children who have reached their fifth birthday, while infant and toddler day care is for younger students. This must be determined before applying for a license, as one of the first questions on the DC municipal licensing application involves the age groups of the infants or children to be served. Among other neighborhood programs in Georgetown, Georgetown Montessori has toddlers 18 mos – 2 ¾ years and primary from 2 ¾ - 6; St Albans Day Care is 2-5, Franklin Montessori 2-6, the Preparatory School for Early Learning starts with a group 3 months – 24 months, St John’s Episcopal Pre-school 2 ½- 5. Classes for younger children require a higher adult to child ratio than those for the older children. DC regulations define “infant” as under two years of age.

Number of children in the Program: DC licensing requirements for child development facilities specify that there must be adequate indoor space suitable for the daily program. DC regulations stipulate that a minimum of 35 square feet per child per session is required, exclusive of bathrooms, closets, halls, kitchen and storage places. The standards set by the Montessori schools are somewhat more generous, suggesting about forty square feet per child recommended. Thus the size of the building to be purchased and the play space made available if it is linked to the Bayit will determine the maximum permissible number of children in the program. The new building has a large space downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs which would be suitable for use as classrooms. The rooms may be somewhat smaller than ideal, but the larger downstairs space could be utilized for a larger group and for general play activities. Building floor plans would have to be used to calculate the square-footage available in order to determine the number of student permissible.

Staffing Requirements: DC Municipal Regulations require that there be a director physically present at the facility at least one-third of the time, and also spell out basic requirements in terms of education and experience for the teachers, assistant teachers, aides and volunteers. DC regulations also articulate maximum group size and adult-child ratios, requiring smaller groups and more adults for younger students. As salaries for the staff will form a significant portion of the school’s operating budget, the adult to child ratios may affect the decisions on what ages to include and how many students the school will have. DC Municipal Regulations on staffing requirements are summarized in the table below:

Age	Max. Group Size	Child: Adult Ratio
2 years – 2 yrs 6 mos	8	4:1
2 yrs 6 mos – 3 years	16	8:1
4 years	20	10:1
5 years	25	15:1

Hours of Operation: Nursery school programs are usually part-time, such as M-F 9:00-12:00. A full day program is considered 9:00-3:00. However, in order to permit parents to return to work full time, most of the neighborhood programs have some kind of extended hours available, i.e. 8:00-9:00 A.M. and 3:00-6:00 P.M programs, for additional fees. We would have to decide what hours the Keshet Nursery School will operate, whether it should provide all day care, or whether working parents will have to make other arrangements for the rest of the day. This

must be determined before applying for a license as under the DC municipal regulations, one of the questions on the licensing application is the number of hours per day that child development programs will be offered.

Fees: As a parent of infant twins, I called a variety of the nursery school, day care, Montessori and other programs in the neighborhood to inquire about their programs, including hours and fees. The fee structures are generally related to the hours, with early morning and late afternoon programs costing extra, and fees also dependent upon age of the child. As the fees would be an important source of income for the nursery school, we would have to set fees, keeping in mind what the local market charges. In general, fulltime programs in Georgetown cost around \$10,000 per child per year, with half-day programs costing less. The committee will have to draw up an estimated operating budget, and determine whether additional fund-raising will be necessary beyond the tuition fees in order to cover operating expenses.

Tax-Exempt Status: We will need to consult an attorney about the merits of incorporation of the Nursery School as a separate legal entity, as the National Capitol Mikvah will be, or of maintaining it as a program run by Keshet Israel. We will also need to determine if it should be established as a for-profit or as a not-for-profit entity. *Non-Profit* status would presumably be better as it would allow for the necessary tax-exempt status (including sales tax and property tax exemption), permitting the solicitation of tax-deductible gifts from foundations and individuals, which will be necessary for the purchase of the building and the school startup costs.

Local Requirements for Licensing: The DC Municipal Regulations 29 Public Welfare Chapter 3 on Child Development Facilities (May 1987) were available on the DC Municipal Government website. Prior to commencement of operations, child development facilities must first obtain a license from the Mayor authorizing their operation. The initial application must specify the address, the director, the officers and directors, the facility's name, the age groups to be served, the number of hours per day, the program statement, staff resources, and "proof that the premises conform to all applicable federal and District health, fire, safety, building and zoning regulations and codes and that any necessary permits for occupancy have been issued by the appropriate authorities and are in full force." It will require some modifications to the building to comply with these regulations and codes.

Modifications to building for use as a Nursery School: All child development facilities must conform with the Building Code of the District (DCMR Title 12 as amended by the provisions of Reg No 74-34). Some of the regulations, such as proper heating, and not using lead-based paint, we might take for granted. Other regulations will require some modifications to the building. For example the toilets and lavatory requirement of at least one flush toilet and one lavatory for every ten occupants of the facility, including staff, with adult facilities provided separately from those for the children, will require renovation of the bathrooms. Ideally there should be washrooms located just off the classroom with child-sized toilets and low sinks. The bathroom facilities in the current building would have to be modified to add child-sized facilities and to increase the number of toilet fixtures. Child-height water sources and drinking fountains are also nice features, along with low light switches. DC Municipal Code specifies that if the toilets and lavatories are not of a height to be used by the children without assistance, then a block or step must be provided. A series of other requirements such as barriers to prevent falls on the porches, and panic release hardware on the exits must be studied to ensure that the building

complies with all requirements and regulatory laws on building and zoning codes. Such details as panic bars, exit lights, fire alarm pull stations, fire exits, and safety plugs should not be overlooked, as these will only cause cost and inconvenience later.

Outdoor Space: DC Municipal Regulations specify that each child development center shall include at least two hours of outdoor play every day in a full-day program and at least 30 minutes in a part day program, except in extreme weather conditions. A minimum of sixty square feet of outdoor play area per child or infant per session must be provided in an enclosed yard on the premises or in a nearby park or playground. Some outdoor space would be available in the garden behind the building for outdoor activities, which could possibly be extended by linking it to the Bayit outdoor space. This could include a garden with child-sized picnic tables and some safe playground facilities. However, the building is conveniently located one block from the Rose Park playground, which would provide access to a much larger playground facilities nearby, satisfying the legal requirements for outdoor space. Other occasional outings could include visits to the even larger playground area at Dumbarton Park a few blocks further away.

Equipment and Furniture: DC Municipal Regulations specify that centers shall be equipped with furnishing, including tables, cots, chairs, and shelves, appropriate to the age, size, and activities of the children, and sufficient for the number of children enrolled in the program. Children's furniture styles are varied in design, and children's tables and chairs vary in height according to the age level of the class. Shelving should be child-sized, and should provide easy access to toys and equipment. In order to set up the Nursery School it will be necessary to purchase such suitable child-sized furniture.

Food: DC regulations also address the issue of meals and snacks, noting that food must be protected and stored as required by Chapters 20-29 of DCMR Title 23 (General Food Regulations). It says that food suitable to the ages of the children should be provided, and to the extent possible, appropriate cultural and ethnic foods should be part of the menu planning. In the case of the Keshet Israel Nursery School, that would clearly refer to the provision of Kosher food for the children. The Rabbi of Keshet Israel should be responsible for determining what Hashgacha is appropriate for the Nursery School. DC regulations specify that individual eating and drinking equipment (including but not limited to a fork, spoon, plate and cup for each child) must be provided by the center as appropriate when meals or snacks are served. DC regulations also stipulate that menus should be planned and posted and kept on file for six months so they can be reviewed by District officials as needed. It is possible that structural modifications will need to be made to the current kitchen to render it suitable for use as the Nursery School kitchen. Suitable furnishings, such as tables and chairs will be needed for the children's use during meal times.

Conclusions: A Keshet Israel Nursery School could definitely be operated in the building located at 1310 28th Street NW. A nursery school committee should be established, and based upon committee recommendations the Keshet Board will need to resolve certain questions discussed above to make a coherent plan. We will have to determine what will be the philosophy and goal of the school, whether it will be run as a non-profit organization, how students will be recruited, how many students can be served, the age limits, what tuition will be charged, and what the operating budget will be. We will also need to determine the number of teachers

needed, their salaries, costs for setting up the school, operating costs. etc. Some modifications to the existing building will be necessary to comply with DC Municipal Regulations and Building Code. Once established a Keshet Nursery School can provide a high-quality, Jewish-oriented educational facility serving the next generation, and helping to keep the parents of young children part of the Keshet community.