



# JEWISH COMMUNITY OF THE HILL COUNTRY

July-August, 2024

## Looking Ahead . . .

The first half of the year has come and gone. Below are the dates and times of the holidays and celebrations for the remainder of the year. As always, you'll receive reminders as the events draw near. But for now, **be sure to mark your calendars!!!**

### **Rosh HaShana**

Evening Service: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Morning Service: Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. (Tashlich following the Service)

### **Yom Kippur**

Kol Nidre Evening Service: Friday, October 11, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Short Yizkor and Closing Service: Saturday, October 12, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

(Followed by blessings and Potluck Break the Fast)

### **Sukkot**

Once again, Greg and Ellen Bitkower have graciously agreed to host our celebration in their Patio Sukkah! Sukkot this year is from October 16th through October 23rd. Once the date is chosen, you'll be informed.

### **Community Hanukkah Celebration and Menorah Lighting**

Always a much anticipated annual event, both for the JCHC and the citizens of Kerrville and Kerr County. This year, Hanukkah begins on December 25th. Since we don't wish to compete with Christmas, the celebration will be held on Sunday, December 15th at 6:00p.m. As has been our custom, our giant 12-foot Menorah will be on the Courthouse lawn by the gazebo, right next to the big Hanukkah Bush!



## Shabbat Services

Friday, July 12, 2024 at 6:30pm

Friday, July 26, 2024 at 6:30pm

Friday August 9, 2024 at 6:30pm

Friday August 23, 2024 at 6:30pm



## Torah Study

Saturday, July 6, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, July 20, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, August 3, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, August 17, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

## Getting to Know You

*In this edition, we feature our newest member — Charlie Tilton.*



Charles L. Tilton II was born in Kerrville, Texas. After graduating high school, Charlie attended Texas Lutheran University (TLU) where he discovered his passion for teaching and coaching. While pursuing his degree, the terrorist attack occurred on September 11th and Charlie immediately put his education on hold and enlisted in the US Army on September 12th. The Tilton family has a long lineage of military service that includes the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War (both sides), WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. Charlie felt obligated to carry on the family tradition. His first assignment was with the 82nd Airborne Division. Upon returning from Iraq, Charlie attended Special Warfare Training and grad-

uated in March of 2007 earning the coveted Green Beret. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group. He has also had the privilege of serving as an instructor at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School. He finished his education at the American Military University with a BA in History. Charlie has recently been hired by Schreiner University as a VA Certifying Official. He will be working with veterans and dependents regarding their VA educational benefits. In addition, he will be teaching Military classes and helping with the Schreiner Institute. And if that weren't enough, he will be a volunteer coach for the Women's Soccer Team. Charlie is married to Ashley; they have one son, Cooper.

# Small Shuls

## Paradesi Synagogue

### Kochi (Cochin), Kerala, India

It is, of course, obvious that the JCHC is a small shul. And there are more of them than you might think. So beginning with this issue of *Gedenk* I'll give you a brief look at some them around the world. And the first is one with which I'm intimately familiar—the old Paradesi Synagogue in Kochi, India.

“Paradesi” means “foreigner” and it's an apt name. It was build in 1568 by Sephardic refugees fleeing religious persecution in Portugal. The majority were well-educated and successful spice merchants—oy, but of course!—so money was not difficult to come by. It's easy to find—just go to Jew Town and walk to the end of Jew Street. No slur intended; Indians are pragmatists, so the names are logical.

The congregation is small, around 30 members, and very Orthodox. They will not meet without a minyan and when they needed a 10th man, they called me, just 45 miles away in the Leper Colony outside of Alleppey where I lived and worked for over 16 years. I'd usually bum a ride from Mar Koorilos Kuriakos (of blessed memory), a Bishop of the Malankaran Syrian Orthodox Church whose sister lived in Kochi. They'd visit while I attended Shabbat services.

As you will see from the photos on the next page, the exterior is not particularly inviting

but it belies a lush interior with the original furnishings brought from Portugal. The only nod to modernity are the light fixtures. They were originally candles and oil lamps, and are now fitted with electric sockets and bulbs.

Like the JCHC, Paradesi by tradition has no rabbi. The services are led by the elders of the community. Unlike us, though, there is no participation by the individual members in reading the various prayers. Those attending are separated by gender with the men sitting in the center and along the walls while the women sit in the balcony.

Over the centuries, the synagogue has been the recipient of many gifts and honors. On its 400th anniversary in 1968, then Prime Minister, Indra Ghandi attended and spoke at the celebration, saying, “May I offer my good wishes and say mazel tov to our good Jewish friends.” In addition, the Indian government marked the occasion by issuing a postage stamp in the synagogue's honor.

Today, tourists pay 200 rupees (about \$2.40 US) to visit what was the seat of the city's once-thriving Jewish heritage. With the Jewish population in Kochi continuing to decline, it's unlikely that Paradesi will be able to survive other than as a historical attraction. More's the pity!

# Paradesi Synagogue

## Photos



Clock Tower at the end of Jew Street constructed in the 18th Century. Restored in 1998 and 1999.



Entrance to the synagogue. Note the shoes by the door. All who enter must first remove their shoes.



The original metal gate with gateposts dating from the 17th Century.



Oil lamps with floating wicks from Belgium acquired c. 1600, now converted to electric.



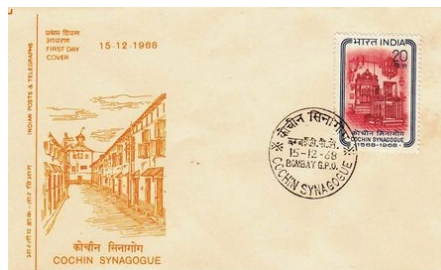
Men's seats in the center and along the wall with women's seats in the balcony. Note the large Torah in the Ark; it weighs over 70 pounds and takes two men to lift it.



Getting ready for the High Holy Days! If you think you see Hindu elements, you're right. All Indian religions borrow from each other when decorating.



Jews in Jew Town on Jew Street. The Paradesi Synagogue clock tower can be seen at the far end of the street.



Commemorative stamp issued by the Indian government on the 400th anniversary of the founding of the synagogue.



The synagogue's floor is laid with 1,100 hand-painted Chinese porcelain tiles imported in 1763. Note balcony for women.

# Finding Our Inner Jew

By

David Suissa

*David Suissa is the editor-in-chief of the Jewish Journal (Los Angeles, CA)*

Something deep—tribal—has touched more than a few Jews since October 7. The massacre of that fateful day, followed by months of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rage, has triggered among many Jews a sense of being under siege—a feeling that “it’s us against the world.”

This “us” is a reconnection with Jewish peoplehood, a realization that we are part of a distinct and ancient people with a uniquely dramatic story. The horrific drama of October 7 has brought Jews closer to that ancient story and to one another. We might call it a reconnection with our Inner Jew.

In America, this sense of kinship has long been referred to light-heartedly as being a MOT—“Member Of the Tribe.” October 7 has made MOT deeper, sober, more serious. For many Jews living through this period of pervasive antisemitism, connecting with other “Members Of the Tribe” has become a kind of necessity—Jews are looking for other Jews.

Whether we realize it or not, it is our souls that are being touched by the threatening winds of the moment. Our souls can’t be touched by a superficial 24-hour news cycle or the frantic talking points of propaganda. Our souls can only be touched by something that goes very deep, something as deep as a sudden death in the family. And October 7 was a massive and sudden death in the Jewish family, a reminder of the eternal existential threat facing Jews.

This unprecedented horror and the anti-Israel frenzy that now surrounds us, has brought us emotionally closer to our Israeli brethren. This story cannot and will not let us go. It transcends politics, policies, current events. It goes deep enough to touch our souls, to connect us with the Inner Jew we so often take for granted.

In this Inner Jew lies the courage to fight back. We fight back, each in our own way, on behalf of our Tribe and in honor of our ancestors who kept the Jewish flame alive since the dawn of history.

But in this Inner Jew also lies other Jewish ways of fighting. We fight back by having joyful Shabbat tables, by spreading the light of kindness in our little worlds, by caring for our families and supporting our communities, by praying for the hostages, by reaffirming life.

Maybe, then, this is what it means when our souls are touched and we find our Inner Jew: we are warriors against those who wish us harm, we are transmitters of light and seekers of justice, and we never apologize for being proud members of an ancient Tribe.