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IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education.

IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

A WORLD WITHOUT DARKNESS

This is a season of light. Without darkness we do not know light. In the midst of the darkest day of winter, the light is lit and intensifies for seven days during Hanukkah, commemorating the miracle of Hashem's presence, of survival and hope. During the same days of darkness, the Zen Buddhists sit for Roshatsu Sesshin to commemorate the "enlightenment" of Buddha, the realization that all beings are essentially light, essentially goodness, joy and love. Preparations for Christmas, occur simultaneously, celebrating the birth of a being dedicated to love and forgiveness, to the manifestation of the light.

Light protects, light nourishes, guides, illumines, soothes. In our depths we are all nothing but light. What is this force called darkness, pain, separation, struggle, loneliness? If we look deeply it is easy to see that it is nothing but the absence of light. As soon as the smallest amount of light is brought in, the illusion of darkness immediately dissolves. Do not struggle with the darkness, simply light the candle of light in your life. It is not enough to talk about light. *Totally Live* the love, kindness, and warmth that you are, and all difficulties inevitably dissolve.



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Brenda Shoshanna, Founder of One Tent (All Faith Center for Sitting and Contemplative Prayer)

Here is an idea to enhance the enhance the traditional menorah blessings:

1. As we light this first Hanukkah candle, let us think of the

light of goodness that shines in the heart of every human being.

2. As we light this second Hanukkah candle, let us think of the light of goodness and of the Maccabees, who fought the important battle for religious freedom many centuries ago.

3. As we light this third Hanukkah candle, we think of the light of goodness, of the Maccabees, and the glow of love that brightens our lives.

4. As we light this fourth Hanukkah candle, let us think of the light of goodness, of the Maccabees, of the glow of love, and of the warmth of family that we share tonight.

5. As we light this fifth Hanukkah candle, let us think of the light of goodness, of the Maccabees, of the glow of love, of the warmth of family, and of the shining traditions of our people, the Jews.

6. As we light this sixth Hanukkah candle, let us think of the light of goodness, of the Maccabees, of the glow of love, of the warmth of family, of our shining traditions, and of the bright beauty of friendship.

7. As we light this seventh Hanukkah candle, let us think of the light of goodness, of the Maccabees, of the glow of love, of the warmth of family, of our shining traditions, of the brightness of friendship, and of the white light of peace on earth and in our hearts.

8. As we light this last Hannuka candle, let us think of the goals all of us can reach: of self-knowledge and of personal strength, which may help us bring all of these things into our lives.

- Ethel Levine, Birmingham Temple

Go forward with the Forward-Get Over Yourself : Response to The Forward – Rabbi Barbara Aiello

I read with great interest the article by Josh Nathan-Kazis, "Online-Ordained Rabbis Grab Pulpits," (Forward, Dec.3, 2012). What grabbed me was a comment made by Rabbi Gerry Weiss when he described the phenomenon of non-traditional rabbis in Florida. Weiss said, "It's a plague down here." As a non-mainstream, non-traditional Florida rabbi I am part of that plague.

In the early 90's, when I was in my forties, I served as lay leader for a small congregation. The senior rabbi who was traditionally trained, observed my work, applauded my skill and encouraged me to consider becoming a rabbi. That's how I became a student at Hebrew Union College's Para-rabbinic program.. After spending a summer in training to become a "para-rab," I was certain that I wanted to become a rabbi. Apparently HUC realized that some of us were rabbi material because I and several others were invited to meet with a representative of HUC's admissions office.

During my interview I was praised me for my summer work, but then the bubble burst. It was explained to me that I was not a good candidate for admission. I was told that my status as a middle-aged woman, often meant that I would be last one hired and that when older women do accept a pulpit they also accept a much lower pay, which "pulls down the average class salary." I was told that in the seminary's eyes older students were not a good investment.

But the rabbi covered himself and offered that I could apply if I wanted to. Obviously I did not, and clearly admissions standards to the traditional seminaries have changed, but back then I was stuck. There I sat, with two graduate degrees, one in educational psychology, business skill, organizational ability and leadership as a Jewish professional. How could I become a rabbi?

Thanks to two non-traditional programs (both mentioned in the article) I was able to realize my dream. I received *smeicha* (rabbinic ordination) in 1999 from Rabbinical Seminary International (RSI) and later on I continued my studies with Rabbi Charles Agin at the Rabbinical Academy.

Rabbi Roger Ross, dean of RSI, puts it well when he describes the RSI program as self-guided. With the help of RSI's founder and dean, Rabbi Joseph Gelberman (z"l) I was able to craft a rabbinical study program that was academically-based, rigorous and one that gave me the practical pastoral skills I needed to serve a congregation.

After four years of study, that included Hebrew language courses on the JTS campus, Ladino and anousim studies at Florida Atlantic and Florida International University and a year -long supervised student rabbinate in Ft.

Lauderdale, Florida, I sat for an intensive examination and appeared before a Bet Din. Two years later I entered the distance- learning program offered by the Rabbinical Academy. Under the guidance of Rabbi Charles Agin I studied interfaith relations and honed my chaplain and pastoral skills.

As one of those described as Florida's rabbinical "plague," I accepted my first pulpit in a small congregation south of Tampa where I served for five years. My second rabbinate was in Milan, Italy as the country's first woman and first non-orthodox rabbi. As a *Bat Anousim* and specialist in helping marranos and conversos discover and embrace their Jewish roots, I received a small grant to establish the first active synagogue in the deep south of Italy since Inquisition times. I have served my Italian community since 2006 and I spend part of each year in Florida where I continue to "plague" my traditionally- trained colleagues as resident rabbi for 250 seniors a retirement campus.

Like the other rabbis mentioned in the Forward piece, I have faced prejudice, slander and *Lashon Hara* that would "cross a rabbi's eyes." I have been described as "not a real rabbi," as a "matchbook rabbi," and my personal favorite, a "gypsy" rabbi (I treasure this one because it gives me a sense of solidarity with the Roma people whose history includes ostracism and persecution.).

Because traditional rabbis seem so threatened and fearful, the list of professional organizations from which I have been excluded is breathtaking and spans not one, but two continents. My requests to join two Boards of Rabbis in the US have been turned down. In fact one board even disbanded and restructured to assure that rabbis like me couldn't get in. And although I was hired by and served a progressive synagogue in Italy, the European office of World Union of Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) refused my membership to the professional organization. When I asked for an explanation the acting director just shook his head. "I know," he said. "It all seems so Kafka-esque!"

Parenthetically, I am a founding member of the International Federation of Rabbis, a pluralistic organization that represents rabbis from all streams of Judaism and encourages application from rabbis from both traditional and non-traditional preparation.

What it all comes down to is this. If mainstream preparation had been completely adequate and if mainstream rabbinic graduates were mostly successful, there would be no market for what Mr. Nathan-Kazis describes as, "rabbis with questionable qualifications."

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Go forward with the Forward-Get over Yourself-continued from page 2

Yet more and more congregations are willing to look beyond the diplomas on the wall and examine the practical hands-on skills that candidates demonstrate. And, economic considerations aside, it seems that more and more search committees, board members and congregants are increasingly appreciative of rabbis like me who have overcome incredible obstacles to serve the Jewish community. This "boomlet" in hiring non-mainstream rabbis may indicate a level of trust that we "gypsies" have what it takes to stand up to the challenges that synagogue service often presents.

To my traditionally-prepared colleagues and to their seminary staff, I suggest that they take a cue from our young people who, when they confront myopic and ego-centered peers, say, "Get over yourself."

The emergence of non-traditional rabbis and non-mainstream seminaries signals a sea change in the relationship that many synagogues have or want to have with their rabbis. A synagogue's willingness to look beyond the label and focus on the individual can be an opportunity for everyone.

I envision partnerships between distance learning programs and traditional seminaries where mature students with families and jobs could combine at-home study with summers on campus in Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles or London. Mainstream seminaries could extend the hand of Jewish welcome to practicing rabbis from these small but apparently effective programs. Rabbis like me could be evaluated and offered an associate certification that could lead to a traditional *smeicha* – a path that would recognize the work and study that we have already done.

With more trained rabbis available – rabbis who represent a wide range of age and experience – small and struggling congregations would be more inclined to hire a spiritual leader. Fewer synagogues would face closing their doors and Jewish communities could be revitalized.

In the meantime, I encourage rabbinic outreach to non-traditional rabbis in the same way that my colleagues reach out to Christians, Muslims and interfaith families. Extend the hand of Jewish welcome and judge us as you would like to be judged – on behavior, character and demonstrable skill. Or not. Either way we non-traditional rabbis along with our non-mainstream programs are here to stay.

IFR Rabbis News & Shmooze**UTUBE LINKS:****Red Alert Song**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXmmSJyaj_Q&feature=youtu.be

Chanukah's theme of religious freedom, speaks to the resourcefulness of Am Yisrael in the face of extreme danger.

Chanukah Greeting from IFR rabbi David Sirull

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ze1udTZ6mxM&feature=plcp>

Quickly becoming one of America's favorite Jewish performers, RABBI DAVID SIRULL presents his latest whimsical video --

CHANUKAH MEANS DEDICATION!

Although he really is a congregational rabbi in Augusta, Georgia, he does a limited amount of touring and can be reached by emailing aysrav@gmail.com.

**TO:****Rabbi Mark Ben Meir-Publication of Book****To new IFR member:****Rabbi Stuart Jay Robinson****IFR News Editors**

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Rabbi Frank Tamburello

Layout/shosh



Ravenous Ravens

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column

featuring Jewish Holiday Eats and Treats: Kislev 5773



CREAM CHEESE KUGEL



- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup milk

1/4 cup sugar
 4 cups (8 oz.) egg noodles, cooked, drained
 1/2 cup raisins
 2 cups corn flakes, crushed
 2 Tbsp. butter or margarine, melted
 1 Tbsp. sugar
 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

HEAT oven to 375°F.
 MIX cream cheese and 1/4 cup butter in large bowl until well blended. Blend in eggs, milk and 1/4 cup sugar. Add noodles and raisins; mix well.
 POUR into 13x9-inch baking dish. Mix corn flake crumbs, 2 Tbsp. butter, 1 Tbsp. sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over noodle mixture.
 BAKE 25 min. or until center is set.

Chanukah Donuts: Sufganiot



Another oily concoction that commemorates the miracle of the oil, is the fried, greasy and the favorite Chanukah tradition in Israel, the Sufganiya (Sufganiyot pl.)

This tradition has spread beyond the borders of Israel, and nowadays, no Chanukah party that is self-respecting will be complete without this sweet "delicacy."

Recipe for Sufganiyot (Chanukah Donuts)

- 3 cups sifted flour
- 2 eggs (beaten)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 cup oil
- 2 packages of dried yeast
- 1 packet (.2 ounce) vanilla sugar
- 1 cups warm water
- jam
- confectioners sugar

Place 2 cups flour in bowl with salt, sugar, yeast, vanilla sugar. Mix well. Add oil and water and mix till smooth. Add eggs and mix again. Add remaining flour until smooth, elastic texture is obtained. Let the dough rise in a moist warm place. Knead again then roll out the dough with rolling pin.

Cut into the rolled-out dough with the rim of a glass. Allow the doughnut rounds to rise for another 20 minutes or so. Use a heavy pot to fry the doughnut rounds in deep hot oil (350-375 degrees) until golden brown.

Drain doughnuts on paper towels. Inject with jam and roll in confectioners sugar. Enjoy.

The Jewish Origins of the Wreath

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

An unadorned wreath, such as one made entirely of bay leaves, without any additional ribbons and *tchatchkes* (ornaments) is supported, incredibly by Jewish tradition.

Author Rae Rockland Tupa writes about the Jewish history of the wreath in her column found in the December issue of the Interfaith family newsletter.

Ms. Tupa writes that the simple wreath is reminiscent of the Greek victory crowns that Judah and the Maccabees made and then used to decorate the entrance to the Holy Temple.

The wreath was visible during the rededication ceremony held after the Jews re-conquered it in 164 B.C.E – an event that is part of the Hanukkah narrative. In fact, in the first book of Maccabees we find that when Judah and his men rededicated the Temple, they "decked the front of the Temple with crowns of gold and small shields."

Crowns in that period were wreaths.

Hellenization had been going on for well over a century, and the Jews had acquired a Hellenistic veneer in clothing and furniture, so it is not surprising that when the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple they decorated it with golden "victory crowns".

Wreaths as decoration appear on the ceiling tiles of the Dura Europos synagogue, a 2000 year old synagogue discovered in Syria. Jewish use of wreaths was so common that in the 4th century C.E. an early church leader issued a warning to Christians to avoid the use of wreaths, since it "is the custom of Greeks and Jews".

Jews continued to use the wreath/crown as a symbol, but as fashions changed, the crown associated with Jewish decoration and celebration became a more modern hat-like crown. Early on in the symbolic usage of the victory crown, the Jews reinterpreted it into a symbol signifying the majesty and dignity of the Law and began embellishing Torah scrolls with crowns.

Our sage, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohar (Pirkei Avot 1V, 17) said, "There are three crowns: the crown of learning, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty; but the crown of a good name excels them all"

So, for Jews of all streams, including interfaith families, placing an unadorned wreath on your front door is a legitimate way to connect to our ancient Jewish roots!

Dura-Europos Synagogue-Syria

Courtyard, western porch and prayer hall



This dedicatory inscription on a tile from the synagogue ceiling records the date and the names of donors who sponsored the renovations in 244/45 CE: **"Samuel son of Sapharah [Bar-saphara], may he be remembered, he built these things thus."**

This information is repeated in significantly greater detail in several Aramaic inscriptions, suggesting that the Jewish community was diverse and perhaps composed of civilians and members of the Roman military.

IFR CONFERENCE 2013



Tuesday March 5 – Thursday March 7 2013

Duncan Conference Center

Delray Beach, Florida

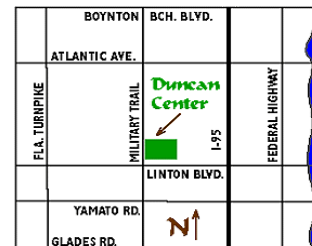
Download Conference Form
from IFR website:
www.intfedrabbis.org

It's official!

The IFR Conference will be held Tuesday March 5-
Thursday March 7 2013 in sunny Delray Beach, FL

Presentation Slots are filled for March 6 Workshop

Conference photos 2000-2011



IFR Conference 2009 Duncan Center-Delray Beach



IFR Conference 2001 Duncan Center-Delray Beach



IFR Conference 2011 Duncan Center-Delray Beach FL.



IFR Conference 2000 Duncan Center-Delray Beach FL.