



Argentina Social Action Packet

To: Rabbis and Social Action Chairs

This is a time of many concerns for the Jewish people. The situation in the Middle East and the rise of terrorist activities are in the forefront of our minds. However, we must also focus attention on suffering Jews in the international community. Argentine Jews are currently in a state of crisis and we must reach out to assist them.

Argentina, home to the largest Jewish community in Latin America, is now in the midst of economic and social disaster. For Jews in Argentina, the current economic difficulties were preceded by a series of terrorist attacks in the 1990s. In 1992, terror hit the Jewish community in Argentina for the first time with the bombing of the Israeli Embassy. Two years later, in 1994, another bomb devastated the Argentine Jewish community, this time at the Jewish community center AMIA (Association Mutual Israelite Argentina) in Buenos Aires.

As the community was recovering from the second bombing, a sudden economic collapse left a once-comfortable working-class populace deprived of their basic needs. Nearly 60,000 Jews are living below the poverty line because of the ravished economy. Many Jewish business-owners have lost their businesses and Jewish families face the daunting task of purchasing food, clothing and the bare necessities to survive.

While the Jewish community in Argentina has come together to support those who are suffering, they cannot meet all of the community's needs. Argentine Jews are in desperate need of assistance. Jewish tradition teaches that all Israel are responsible for one another and we are obligated to respond to cries for help from those in need. Therefore, we have an obligation to join in solidarity with the Argentine Jewish community and answer their call.

In this packet you will find material on ways to help the Argentine Jewish Community.
Enclosed, you will find:

- Background Information
- Jewish Texts and Sample Sermons
- Reform Movement Initiatives in Argentina
- What You Can Do to Help
- Sample Temple Bulletin Articles
- Additional Resources and Links

If we can be of any further assistance please contact:

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
2027 Massachusetts Avenue, NW at Kivie Kaplan Way
Washington, DC 20036
202.387.2800
fax 202.667.9070
e-mail rac@uahc.org

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017-6778
212.650.4160
fax 212.650.4229
e-mail csarj@uahc.org



Background Information

Jewish Life

With a population of approximately 200,000 Jews, Argentina is home to the largest Jewish community in Latin America. During the late nineteenth century, a substantial wave of Eastern European and German Jews began arriving in Argentina, and the Jewish community blossomed. As many settled in Buenos Aires, organizations and synagogues were established, and an energetic cooperative spirit was created. For example, members of the community formed an organization to protect the political and human rights of Jews, the Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) and also a Jewish community center, the Association Mutual Israelite Argentina (AMIA). Argentine Jews have made significant impacts on the broader Argentine society in many fields, including medicine, journalism, and social justice throughout their history. Today, some 160,000 Jews reside in Buenos Aires alone, and the city has more than 70 synagogues.

In the wake of the recent economic collapse, one third of Argentina's Jews have sunk below the poverty level. The combined effects of unemployment and hunger have battered this previously vibrant and self-sufficient community. Businesses have shut down, health services have become unaffordable, and monthly bills have put many families on the verge of eviction. (For personal accounts of the lives of Argentine Jews visit the JDC site: www.jdc.org/media_res/nm_ar_Faces.pdf.)

Fighting Poverty

It has been difficult for Jewish organizations in Argentina to withstand the unexpected impact. Nonetheless, Jewish organizations work vigorously to provide food and clothing and support families with the costs of living. The response of the Progressive Jewish Movement in Argentina has been substantial.

Rabbi Sergio Bergman, a leader of the Progressive Movement in Argentina, has established a critical social welfare program to help ameliorate the impact of poverty on Argentine Jews. Founded in 1963, the Progressive synagogue Congregation Emanu-El now serves as Rabbi Sergio Bergman's headquarters for social action and relief. The main program, called "*Chavura*," includes medical/pharmaceutical assistance, clothing, employment assistance and small business loans. Congregation Emanu-El provides food for hundreds of people each week, including more than 300 children. In addition to regular meals, Rabbi Bergman instituted a weekly "Rabbi's *Tish*" where hundreds of hungry Jews are provided with a Shabbat meal and spiritual sustenance. The congregation also operates safe transportation and employment services for impoverished Jews. It has also established a Jewish bakery.

The Reform Jewish Movement in North America continues its commitment to the Jews of Argentina. The Central Conference of American Rabbis has initiated an "Adopt a Family" program, created by a special task force on Argentine Jewry. The World Union of Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) has sent delegations to Argentina. After one such mission, a task force known as *Yad b'Yad* was formed to identify community needs through their contact with Argentine community leaders and to publicize those needs in North America.

Likewise, other Jewish organizations in North America have worked to ease the plight of Argentine Jewry. In particular, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has committed extensive resources and funds to provide relief to Argentine Jews and raise awareness and concern abroad. The organization has helped communities rebuild infrastructure and provide for the needs of the poor. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) has worked with countries throughout the Americas and Europe in allowing small numbers of Argentine Jews to resettle, and helps Argentine Jews find jobs and obtain legal immigration status authorizing employment in the United States.

Combating Anti-Semitism

In recent years, random acts of anti-Semitic violence have raised alarms throughout Argentina. This heightened antagonism has negatively affected the Jewish community even as it struggles economically. Although much remains to be done, the criminal courts have consistently upheld a 1988 law prohibiting religious discrimination. Those who vandalized Jewish cemeteries, assaulted innocent civilians on religious grounds, and distributed anti-Semitic literature have been prosecuted and sentenced to prison. Nonetheless,

according to the 2000 Freedom House report on religious freedom, "Suspected high-level security force complicity in carrying out and/or cover-up of the 1992 bombing by Islamic extremists of the Israeli Embassy and the 1994 bombing of the city's Jewish community center (AMIA) might have been responsible for lack of progress in bringing those guilty of terrorist outrage to trial" (Religious Freedom in the World, 57).

Jewish Texts and Sample Sermons

If there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements, in the land that Adonai your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsmen. Rather, you must open your hand and lend them sufficient for whatever they need... Give to them readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return Adonai your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings. For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land.

- Deuteronomy 15:7-11



Comfort my people, comfort them, says your God.

- Isaiah 40:1



Share your bread with the hungry...when you see the naked, clothe them...do not ignore your own kin.

- Isaiah 58:7



It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.

- *Pirkei Avot*, 2:21



All Israel are responsible for one another!

- Talmud, *Sh'vuot* 39a



You are commanded to give to the poor according to what they lack. If they lack clothing, you must clothe them, if they lack household tools, you must purchase [tools] for them...Even if these poor people were accustomed to ride on a horse with a slave running in front of them but then become poor, losing all their possessions, you must buy a horse for them to ride upon and a slave to run in front of them, as it is written, "lend them sufficient for what they need." (Deuteronomy 15:8) You are commanded to restore them for what they lack, but you are not required to make them wealthy.

- Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* 7:3, Gifts to the Poor



Saying grace is an act of the greatest importance. To be able to eat and drink is a possibility as extraordinary, as miraculous, as the crossing of the Red Sea. We do not recognize the miracle this represents because we live in a world which, for the moment, has plenty of everything, and because our memory is short. Yet those who live in less fortunate countries understand that to be able to satisfy one's hunger is the marvel of marvels...the route which takes bread from the earth in which it grows to the mouth which eats it is one of the most perilous. It is to cross the Red Sea...

-The Open Door: A Passover Haggadah, Emmanuel Levinas

Sample Sermons

Excerpts from a Sermon by Rabbi Michael Berk, Director, UAHC Pacific Central West Council

Jews are, if you can say such a thing, required to be hopeful. Or, to put it another way, Jews are forbidden to despair.

That was the message I heard Elie Weisel give last week at the Reform Movement's Consultation on Conscience. Weisel spoke and asked the question, where, in this awful time of profound despair, where can one possibly find any hope. Here was his answer: It is very tough, but we **must** be hopeful. We Jews are commanded to be hopeful. But hope cannot be found within oneself – hope can only be found in relation to others. That was his message: simply stated, Weisel, perhaps one of the greatest moral witnesses of our day, said that we must look to others, see their pain, and seek to relieve it. We cannot be overcome by suffering; we are not allowed to despair. By seeing the other, by helping another, that is where hope exists in this crazy world of ours.

Now I want to tell you a story about the most hopeful, the most optimistic, Jew I have ever met - Rabbi Sergio Bergman. I met Rabbi Bergman when he greeted a mission of Reform Rabbis at a liberal Jewish day school on a tree-lined residential neighborhood of Buenos Aires, Argentina, on a Friday afternoon in their early summer. We had just arrived from our exhausting trip. But we went to Buenos Aires knowing we were there not to bask in the warm weather and relax, God forbid, but to hear about spiraling economic and social meltdown, about Jewish engineers and professors learning how to beg and wash neighbor's windows, of homeless and hungry Jews, of a specter of anti-Semitism in the country that offered Nazis the warmest welcome of any nation on the planet after fleeing Germany, about businesses closing, schools folding, Jewish organizations ceasing to exist. We went to hear about the potential demise of a proud and distinguished Jewish community.

Writer friends of mine, compelled by the stories of the travails of the Jews of Argentina that appeared in our UAHC Reform Judaism Magazine, visited on their own. These are their words to describe their first impression of Rabbi Bergman: "The slim, 40- year-old Rabbi looks exhausted." They wrote. "His well tailored suit seems to hang on his slender frame. His eyes are blood shot."

And that's because he's exhausted. Why is he so tired? It goes back to 1992 when the Israel embassy building in downtown Buenos Aires was bombed. That explosion shocked the comfortable and prosperous Jewish community of Argentina, 80% of whom live in or around Buenos Aires. Rabbi Bergman was a young, energetic, and idealistic Reform Rabbi at the time, ordained both by the rabbinical seminary in Buenos Aires and the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. He decided that in response to that terrorist act of hatred and its goal of instilling fear in the Jews, every day of his life, wherever he went, he would wear a large and distinctive kippah to loudly and proudly announce he is Jewish.

And then, in 1995, another terrorist act: the bombing of the AMIA Building, a particularly devastating target, as it was the historic central address for the Jewish community of Argentina. And another profound decision was reached: Along with other leaders, Rabbi Bergman decided that in answer to death, terror and ignorance, the Jews would respond with an act of creation and peace; a place of learning would be founded– a Liberal Jewish day school. Thus was the Arlene Fern School established, named after the daughter of its primary benefactor. Today, that school has about 471 students. Less than half can afford tuition. Three-quarters of them receive hot lunches for free. They have the most stunning and impressive program for special needs students I've ever encountered.

The woes of the Jewish community would continue and sadly, deepen, increasing the heavy burden on Rabbi Bergman's shoulders. They count five crises that bring us to the current picture of the Jewish community of Argentina: in addition to the bombings of the Israeli embassy and the AMIA building, two Jewish banks collapsed in 1998, and with them a lot of Jewish private and communal money was lost, wreaking havoc on the personal and communal lives of the Jews. Between 2000 and 2002, there were two waves of economic crises until, in 2002, they were talking about the complete economic and social meltdown of Argentinean society. While my figures are a few months old, they are talking about unemployment growing to over 20 % of the

workforce (while for those aged 20-24 the rate is over 30%!). Fully one-quarter of society is considered indigent poor, with monthly incomes of less than \$100.

To give you an idea of how the fortunes of the Jews have spiraled downward: before the economic turmoil, the Jews had always counted about 4,000 impoverished members of their community. In 2001 there were 11,000 added to that number. By the end of 2002 the Jews suddenly faced a stunning 35,000 Jewish poor men, women, and children. Most of these Jews are trying to survive on less than \$60 a month!

Rabbi Bergman's response to these crises has essentially been to hoist the Jewish community on his back and carry them to safety. He rarely starts his workday after 7 am, and he is rarely home before 1 am. Rabbi Bergman is in a great rush to save Jews. Along the way he is building a remarkable community of committed and passionate Jews, he is saving existing Jewish organizations and synagogues, he's created and revitalized schools for Jewish children, he is providing food, clothing, medicine, and learning for hundreds, maybe thousands. Oh, and he is the rabbi of at least two synagogues. Oh, and did I mention that he is also a pharmacist?

So that is why when my writer friends wandered into the Libertad Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Argentina, to meet Rabbi Bergman, his eyes were red from exhaustion. He had just led the service in the main sanctuary before perhaps 300 people of all ages file into the social hall for a real treat: The Rabbi's Tish – a tradition from Eastern Europe where a community gathers around the rabbi's dinner table for a Shabbat of good food, fellowship, stories, lessons from the Torah portion, and singing. Here is the scene as my friends described it: "It's a balmy night as we join those filing into the basement social hall of the venerable Libertad Synagogue. It resembles any Friday night service crowd anywhere in the U.S. The only visible difference here is that the hall is packed—virtually standing room only. An elderly man sings Yiddish songs in a still strong tenor followed by a young duo on saxophone and clarinet playing selections from "Fiddler on the Roof." The crowd applauds, while sipping tiny paper cups of Kiddush wine. This is what they've come for. This and the food—especially the food. Not that it's anything to write home about. The meal is rice stuffed tomato, and dry gefilte fish—served terrine style. Dessert -- ice cream straight from the carton, is simple in the extreme. But there are few left overs. When you're hungry it all tastes good. And these people are hungry."

That's when Rabbi Bergman entered, with those sad puppy dog eyes, blood shot from the staggering pace he keeps. For the next couple of hours, while everyone else eats, he strolls the room greeting the diners, teaching, singing niggunim, leading prayers.

And this is the key to the genius of Rabbi Bergman's vision. Sergio Bergman is not just a social worker concerned with the necessities of life for his people. He is a rabbi who wants to build a Jewish community. So, his response to the crises his people face has been to create what he calls a Net – using the imagery of a fisherman's net – to bring together Jewish institutions and volunteers to work together. We might think of a network of people and organizations, under his leadership, which does this remarkable work.

The social purpose of the Net is clear – to provide services and volunteers to assist the overwhelming number of needy Jews. The religious purpose of the Net is to strengthen liberal Judaism. The financial motivation has been to save as many Jewish institutions as possible by economizing efforts, merging wherever possible, and sharing volunteers.

See how this vision comes to life at the Rabbi's Tish and you get a clue into Bergman's brilliance. At the Tish he is feeding hungry Jews – not a bad mitzvah. Those Jews are not just given food for their bodies, but food for their souls as well. As far as the food for their bodies – how elegantly and with what dignity they accomplish that mitzvah! The utensils may be plastic and paper, but there's a tablecloth on the table, the diners are served by congregants (oh – and don't forget that this whole process has given them the opportunity to be part of a community and fulfill the mitzvah of feeding the hungry), and one cannot tell who in the room had paid for their meal and who didn't have the few pesos to do so. And these folks are not just treated as hungry animals, their rabbi teaches and sings and touches. So, with the Net, you have Jewish institutions saved, Jews brought into community and taught about what it means to be a Jew, Jews given a chance to perform mitzvot by helping others, and young Jews inspired by Rabbi Bergman's boundless energy and creativity to a life of commitment

and work on behalf of the Jewish community. And along the way, you have programs that provide needy Jews with food, clothing, medicine, support services – and does so in a way that does not rob them of their dignity.

And why did I say I think Rabbi Bergman is the most optimistic person I've ever met? Because of what he told my friends the writers: "In the crisis [the Jews] come to the religious institutions to receive support, and this is a new opportunity to involve them in Jewish life." Despite the exhaustive and burdensome work of saving Jewish lives and organizations, despite the enormous risks, sometimes taking out mortgages in his name to save a Jewish building, and despite great personal sacrifice to take care of his people, to him, it's an opportunity to make Jews and a truly caring Jewish community. That's a rabbi who has two things that I know make a real leader and hero: passion and vision.

So, again, I say thank God for mitzvot that enable us to find hope in the world. Tonight I want to leave you with the thought that you can become part of Rabbi Bergman's Net – our Reform Community in North American is rallying in impressive numbers to help our family in Argentina. You can become part of this community by contributing to any of the programs I've mentioned this evening, including the Rabbi's *Tish*, the feeding programs, the pharmacy run out of one of the synagogues, a used clothing store, scholarships for students attending Jewish schools or Jewish winter and summer camps, and more. All you need do is contact me at mberk@uahc.org.

At dinner one night I sat next to one of Rabbi Bergman's disciples – a young rabbinical student who works on many of the Net's projects. He told me that one of the teachings Rabbi Bergman emphasizes over and over with them is the importance of saying *motzi* and *birkat hamazon*. The rabbi has taught them that having lived through the times they are, they must never take the gift of food for granted. It is something to be grateful for – even in good times, especially in bad times.

Our rabbis go a step further. They say that if you enjoy something like food without saying a blessing – meaning acknowledging God as the source of your bounty – it is like stealing something from its rightful owner. I hope that before you can truly enjoy the next morsel of food you eat, or your comfortable and warm home this evening, that you will give thanks to God for your good fortune. And I hope you will make it a real blessing by deciding to help others in some meaningful way. Then you'll join me in thanking God for the mitzvot we have, for by them we refine our lives and find the hope we need to make life worth living. Amen.



Excerpts from a sermon by Rabbi Stanley M. Davids, Temple Emanu-El, Atlanta, Georgia, delivered on Shabbat Hagadol, 5762

There is no Pharaoh in a Kaffiyah in Argentina. But there is suffering and fear, and the Jewish community has in a matter of several months been transformed from one of Latin America's most affluent and successful communities into a community that literally has 25% of its population living below the poverty line, 25% of some 200,000 people. Picture men in Armani suits standing in line at a soup kitchen, unable to find the money to purchase food for the family table. Picture one of the world's largest networks of Jewish day schools shutting the doors to new enrollment, closing facilities, firing teachers, sharply curtailing programs. Parents literally no longer have money for books or uniforms or even for school buses. Picture families being torn apart as young people in their 20's struggle to obtain visas that will take them anywhere – to Israel, to Spain, to Italy, even to Poland – because their homeland is bereft of hope.

And then don't be surprised that the poisonous viper of anti-Semitism has already begun to crawl out from behind its rocks of concealment. When 8000 new poor are added to the Argentine lists each week, with 12 out of 36 million now subsisting below the poverty line in a country that lacks the social welfare safety net that social security and unemployment insurance might provide, where 2 million people are literally starving - then scape-goating is almost inevitable. It certainly happened here in the United States during the Great Depression. And it is certainly happening in Argentina. After all, anti-Semitism is no stranger to Argentina, no stranger to the country that opened its doors warmly and wide to Nazis seeking to escape the collapse of the Third Reich and the demands from the world for justice at Nuremberg. Just last week, one of the larger

provinces of Argentina, La Platte, woke up to find its major buildings smeared with Swastikas. There was no surprise.

During the 1970's and 1980's, a period marked by harsh military dictatorship – more than 30,000 Argentines simply disappeared – and their bodies have never been recovered. Of the 30,000, more than 13% were Jews, while Jews comprise only some 1% of the population. Among those fortunate enough to have been arrested and imprisoned – it is publicly acknowledged that the Jewish prisoners were treated far more brutally than the others.

I had come to Argentina just this past Monday morning at the invitation of Edgar Bronfman and the World Jewish Congress. Nine rabbis from North America were asked to spend just 30 hours in Buenos Aires – to bring with us money to help pay for community Seders throughout the country – and to pay as well for Pesahdik supplies for synagogue-run soup kitchens. Bolstered by the generosity of many members of Temple Emanu-El, and supported by friends and colleagues across the country, I brought in more than \$18,000 – part of our total of close to \$150,000. We met with synagogue and Jewish communal leaders. And we were granted a one hour meeting with Argentina's president in the CASA ROSADA, the Pink House – Argentina's equivalent of the White House.

From the briefings I had received, I wasn't supposed to be surprised by what I heard from the president – but I found myself almost gasping for breath when, in response to my question, the President asserted that there is absolutely no record of historic anti-Semitism in Argentina. A bald-faced lie made by a man whose own Mafia-like paramilitary organization played no small role in creating the 30,000 so-called “disappeared.” “You are wrong, Rabbi. There is no anti-Semitism in Argentina. A few bad incidents perhaps. But we are a people free of engrained European prejudice.”

There is strong suspicion that the current president's friends were directly involved in the fatal bombing of Buenos Aires Jewish Community Center, and in the earlier bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires – events that deeply traumatized the Jewish population. The trial of some of those implicated in the bombing began just five months ago – after a seven-year delay. And that trial is nothing more than a charade put on to quiet international criticism.

The President expansively assured me that the perpetrators of the bombings were probably part of an international Muslim conspiracy – and that when the United States crushes Muslim religious extremists and terrorists, then the Buenos Aires bombings will have been resolved. We were dumbstruck. He had blithely pushed all responsibility for pursuing the murderers away from his government, out beyond the borders of his own country, washing his hands clean and feeling proud of his passionate concern for his Jewish citizens.

I must note that I was pleased to discover that Argentina's press is still free enough to allow for the open discussion of such matters. I was interviewed both on television and for the largest daily and asked about the current government's responses to the concerns of its Jewish citizens. My uncensored comments were carried live and in full.

There are two substantial congregations affiliated with Progressive Judaism in Argentina. I spent a great deal of time with Rabbi Danny Goldman - a passionate and charismatic laborer for social justice and a pioneer in the area of religious pluralism for the Argentine Jewish community. Danny, who spent two years with Rabbi Schwartz and Rabbi Balaban studying in Cincinnati, spoke with me about synagogues that are full to overflowing with worshipers – but whose staff now works basically without pay. His family members routinely defer the purchase of prescription medicine because of the need to buy bread. Few would have been able to obtain Passover food without the money we had brought in – as more than 800 people come to his own synagogue's soup kitchen each day. And this in a community which for decades had raised millions of dollars in support of Israel, whose teenaged children are fluent in Hebrew, and whose community institutions at one time rivaled our own. It is now projected that 6000 of Argentina's Jews will move to Israel this year - choosing the situation in Israel over the crisis at home.

For the full text of the sermon, visit:

www.te-atl.com/EmanuEl/Members/RabbiDavids/Pesach2002

Reform Movement Initiatives in Argentina

NFTY Initiatives

[NFTY](#) has embraced Argentina's Jews by creating resources for education and action on the NFTY website. In addition to background articles, NFTY has compiled a list of fundraising opportunities for chapters that wish to contribute to the Argentine community. The NFTY site suggests donations for food, summer camp tuition, school tuition, medicines and teacher/rabbi salaries. To view the full listing, go to: <http://www.nfty.org/resources/studytheme/2002-2003/argentina/fundraisingforargentina.html>

KESHER Argentina Ambassadors Program

[KESHER](#) Ambassadors are college students from within the Reform Movement who visit Argentina on group missions and actively participate in social action. When they return to America, these students work to publicize the needs that they witnessed in Argentina and to build support for Argentine Jewry.

To contact the KESHER office and find out about future Argentina Ambassador Programs, visit <http://www.keshernet.com/> or call (212) 650-4070.

To view photos, information and articles about the first KESHER Argentina Ambassadors program in May 2003, go to: <http://www.keshernet.com/argentina/> and <http://wupj.org/news/article.html?id=175>

Gillian Lindzon was a participant on the first KESHER Argentina Ambassadors program. To read her article about the experience, published in *The Canadian Jewish News*, go to: <http://www.cjnews.com/viewarticle.asp?id=941&s=1>

ARZA/World Union North America Initiatives

In August 2002 the World Union of Progressive Judaism sent a delegation to Argentina. Upon their return the *Yad B'Yad* (hand in hand) task force was created. Through this task force, a number of specific welfare programs that require assistance were identified. For information about what the *Yad B'Yad* task force has accomplished and what remains to be done, visit: <http://www.uahc.org/gnycrs/argentina.htm>

To make a contribution to the efforts of the task force, send a check made out to World Reform Appeal to the World Union office in New York, c/o ARZA/WORLD UNION, North America, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY, 10017. Please indicate that the funds should be directed to the *Yad b'Yad* task force effort on behalf of Argentinean Jewry. For further information, please contact the [ARZA/WUNA](#) office at 1-212-650-4280.

The following are links to an article about and a powerpoint presentation of the ARZA/World Union Rabbinic mission to South America in November 2002. <http://wupj.org/news/article.html?id=138> and <http://www.uahc.org/pcwc/argentina.ppt>

What You Can Do To Help

Send funds to meet specific needs highlighted by the WUPJ or NFTY on the following websites: <http://www.nfty.org/resources/studytheme/2002-2003/argentina/fundraisingforargentina.html> and <http://www.uahc.org/gnycrs/argentina.htm>. Your Temple Youth Group or Religious School may choose to allocate *tzedakah* funds to the Argentine community. The Religious School may also partner with a Jewish school in Argentina and commit to providing lunches for students or sponsoring a teacher's salary.

Sponsor a Jewish college student as a KESHER Argentina Ambassador for \$1000.00. Your donation will enable a Jewish College student to go with KESHER and the UAHC's College Education Department to Argentina. Please make out your check out to KESHER and send donation to:

KESHER Argentina Ambassadors
UAHC
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Visit the Argentine Community personally. College students can participate in the KESHER ambassadors programs and adults can contact ARZA/World Union, North America for information about upcoming missions. The next KESHER mission is in the early planning stages and there is an ARZA/WUNA mission scheduled for December 2003. For ARZA/WUNA mission information and registration go to: <http://www.arzaworld.com/2003/missions.html> and for KESHER Ambassadors information go to <http://www.keshernet.com/>.

"Adopt A Family" through the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) program. For just \$100 per month individuals or congregations can adopt an Argentinean family. Congregations are asked to make a two-year commitment (\$2400.00) and preferably to pay it in a lump-sum payment. To get specific information about the project and what it requires, visit: <http://www.ccarnet.org/argentina.html>

Sponsor a "Rabbi's Tish" at the Libertad Synagogue for \$250.00 and help feed hundreds of needy people. Rabbi Sergio Bergman and the *Chavurah* organize this weekly Shabbat dinner. Please send your check along with your name to:

CCAR Task Force on Argentinean Jewry
355 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Donate clothing, eyeglasses and over the counter medicines to the *Chavurah* Social Action Center. Please write DONATION/NO VALUE under the address and send to:

Rabbi Sergio Bergman/Tati Schagas
Fundación Judaica
Libertad 769 (1012)
Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires
ARGENTINA

Educate your community about the crisis in Argentina and the needs of the Jewish community there. Use the texts that we have provided to stimulate discussion about our obligation to help all fellow Jews in need, and the Argentine community in particular.

Sample Temple Bulletin Articles

This bulletin article about the Argentina crisis can be found on the Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA website at http://www.templeisaiah.com/Isaian/2003/06/Around_Temple_Isaiah.htm.

Movement Responds to Jews of Argentina in S. America and Israel

The Progressive Movement responded to the crisis in Argentina by reaching out to two communities in need of help: the Jews of Argentina whose lives have been destroyed by a failing economy, and the new Argentinean olim of Israel who are making a difficult adjustment to a new land and a different culture.

Under the leadership of Jerry Tanenbaum, Sr. V.P. of the World Union For Progressive Judaism, donations and pledges for the struggling community of Buenos Aires have reached nearly \$300,000. Co-sponsors: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Women of Reform Judaism, National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, HUC-JIR, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

In Argentina, funds are being used to support these and other projects:

- A soup kitchen that feeds more than 100 people a day, five days a week, in conjunction with a Catholic relief agency
- Meals, transportation, and scholarships for the Arlene Fern Community School for 300 students, 10 months of the year
- Tuition for the Fern Kindergarten for 12 months
- Summer camp scholarships
- Medicines for the community pharmacy

In Israel, seven congregations affiliated with the Progressive Movement are helping new olim from Argentina assimilate into Israeli life and culture with:

- A weekly study session with the rabbi conducted in Spanish at Haifa's Or Hadash Congregation
- Services of a professional counselor for friends of a teenage boy from Argentina killed in a terrorist attack at the Kfar Sava mall provided by Ra'anana Congregation in Ra'anana
- Negotiations with the City of Carmiel to discuss establishing a Progressive congregation in this secular city, with a population of 2,000 Argentinian olim
- Publication of "Bienvenidos a casa" or "Welcome Home," a pamphlet for olim from Argentina distributed by the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) at absorption centers
- Creation of a committee to work closely with olim from Argentina at Har El Congregation in Jerusalem



This article from Temple Oheb Shalom Baltimore, MD can be used to promote CCAR's "Adopt a Family" program. It can be found at <http://www.ccarnet.org/argentina.html>.

Loreena and Sergio
A Message from Rabbi Steven Fink, Chair
Task Force on Argentinian Jewry of the CCAR

Loreena is a lovely, intelligent, and proud young woman who could no longer control her emotions. The color of her face matched the color of her flaming red hair. As I spoke about the situation in Argentina to the Maryland Federation of Jewish Women, tears fell down her cheeks. She relived the pain she and her family personally experienced as I described the predicament of Argentina's Jews to the assembled guests.

Loreena and her husband, Sergio, have been in Baltimore for less than two months. They live in a tiny apartment in Fells Point near the Marriot Waterfront, where Sergio is working as chef trainee. They came from Buenos Aires to Baltimore to create a better life for themselves and the children they eventually hope to have. They cannot imagine raising a family in the chaotic and desperate place Argentina has become. Sergio had his own trucking business, hauling merchandise to and from Brazil. Loreena taught English as a second language at the university level. Sergio's business, like so many others, no longer was viable as the Argentinian economy failed. The bank took his trucks, his office, and warehouse. Flexible and full of ambition, Sergio went to culinary school while Loreena supported them. He was able to obtain a one year visa to the United States as a chef. They live quite modestly on Sergio's salary. We "discovered" them when they went to Jeffrey Caplan's store at Broadway and Fleet Street to buy linen. Jeffrey, sensing they were "*landsmen*" asked them if they were Jewish. That was, as they say, the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

Our Argentina Jewry Committee, chaired by Enid Brecker, is working on how we can integrate Loreena and Sergio into our congregation as well as trying to help them stay in the United States. They are the first of perhaps many Argentinian Jews who wish to join our community. I know we will eagerly and lovingly embrace them.

But what of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who cannot leave Argentina? How can we help them?

As chair of the Central Conference of American Rabbi's Argentina Task Force, I urge you to help support the despairing Jews of Argentina. The CCAR, the rabbinic arm of Reform Judaism, in cooperation with the World Union for Progressive Judaism, is creating an "Adopt an Argentinian Jewish Family" program. For as little as \$50 to \$100 per month, we can keep a Jewish family in their home, by providing them with adequate food and helping to pay their utilities. The funds will be collected by each Reform congregation and sent to the CCAR office which will send them directly to the American Joint Distribution Committee, American Jewry's organization that has helped sustain poor Jews outside of the United States for almost 100 years. The JDC already provides services to thousands of Argentinian Jews and has identified families at risk who can benefit from our *tsedakah*. Would you be willing to contribute as little as one dollar a month for two years so that our congregation can "adopt" at least one Jewish family? We will, of course, accept any amount you wish to contribute. We will receive information about the family we are helping and be able to communicate with them. Please fill out the form and return it to the temple office. I pray that each one of us will take on responsibility for saving Argentinian Jewry. Don't let Loreena and Sergio down.

(Sample Coupon)

Dear Rabbi,

I am personally taking on the responsibility for saving an Argentinian Jewish family. I agree to contribute _____ each month to the congregation's Argentina Fund for two years so that we can sustain a family. Please find my check enclosed for _____ months.

B'shalom,

_____ (Name)

Additional Resources and Links

The mission of the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** (JDC) is to rescue, offer relief and help renew Jewish communities. Their website provides a wealth of information on how the JDC is helping the Jews of Argentina: http://www.jdc.org/p_amer_arg_current.html

For over 122 years, the **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society** (HIAS) has been saving and rescuing Jews. HIAS' Latin America office, located in Buenos Aires, has developed alliances with Jewish communities in the Americas, Europe, and elsewhere to allow small numbers of Argentine Jews to resettle. In the United States, the HIAS Latin America Visa Program develops legal migration options in the United States by providing job search, legal, and resettlement assistance for Argentine Jews, and providing employers, job seekers, and the Jewish community with information about the crisis in Argentina, the employment needs and professional qualifications of Argentine Jews, and U.S. immigration laws and procedures. For more information, go to: http://www.hias.org/Join/argentina_appeal.html.

For those Argentine Jews who want to leave the country, Israel is a viable option for emigration. The Israeli Government and the **Jewish Agency for Israel** (JAFI) are offering subsidies and expanding benefits to new immigrants from Argentina. This website describes current projects that JAFI is promoting for Jews in Latin America: http://www.iefund.org.il/search_results.asp?search4=Latin+America

Reform Judaism Magazine published a detailed article describing the history of the Jewish community and the current crisis. The article, titled "Argentina: Land of Learning and Loss," was written by Ben G. Frank. He is the author of a number of travel guides highlighting Jewish historical sites and points of interest. This article can be found in the Winter 2002 edition of RJ Magazine Vol. 31, No. 2, pages 71-5.

The **JTA**, the Jewish world news service, reports on the crisis in Argentina. To read one overview article written about the situation, visit:

http://www.jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=12991&intcategoryid=5

Sally Ogle Davis and Ivor Davis wrote an article titled "Cry, Argentina" for the **Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles**. The piece describes the situation in Argentina and includes the personal stories of some of the community members. To read this article go to:

<http://www.jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=10134>

Ve'ahavta, the Canadian Jewish Humanitarian and Relief Committee, has prepared a webpage describing the situation in Argentina and outlining some of the current needs. To view the site, go to:

<http://www.veahavta.org/programs/crisis/argentina/>

The **American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise** has created a virtual library. Within their library they have included a page dedicated to the history of the Argentine community. To read more about Argentine Jewish History visit: <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/vjw/Argentina.html>

Students at **Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School** in Maryland embarked on a mission to provide lunches for students at a sister school in Argentina. To read an article about their work go to:

<http://www.lionstale.org/apr02/n-argentina.html>

The Commission on Social Action's work on international issues is supported by a generous contribution from Marilyn Herst Karsten.