



# THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

9 – 10 December, 2005

9 Kislev, 5766

Parashat Vayetze  
(Genesis 28:10–32:3)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz  
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

## D'var Torah by Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

“Nothing so characterizes the change in Jewish life over the past two decades,” writes Rabbi Arthur Green, a major scholar and leader in the Jewish world today, “as does the new wave of desire for learning. Intelligent Jewish adults, highly educated and sophisticated in many ways but bereft of any Jewish knowledge beyond the most elementary, have sought out teachers, endowed chairs of Jewish studies, and created new formats for serious programs of adult learning. The best of these...all take place in a ‘trans-denominational’ context. This means that Jews who pray in a variety of synagogues – or in none at all – come together under neutral auspices to engage in the most sacred of Jewish acts: that of learning, discussing, absorbing and reshaping our tradition.”

Rabbi Green further notes: “Two Jews not only have three opinions, as they say, but are likely these days to have different races, educations, childhood Jewish memories, sexual orientations, and lots more.” Jewish learning has always been, and continues to be, the glue that holds the entire Jewish People together.

You have the opportunity to join this important trend, and - more importantly – to do some really great learning, at the JCC’s *Limmud* this weekend. This community-wide event features an intriguing scholar-in-residence who will discuss issues that are and will continue to shape the future of Judaism. Other members of our H.K. Jewish community will lead discussions, and three of Hong Kong’s rabbis, including me, will lead study sessions.

It is crucially important that all of you bring your understandings and outlooks, your views and thoughts, your ideas and values to the table. At the same time, true pluralist practice demands that we each be open to the different understandings, outlooks, thoughts, ideas, and values held by others. None of us should expect to be the same human being after the learning encounter as we were before it began – such is the power of open study, such is the sacredness of learning.

Details of the program are on page one of this *Shabbat Shalom*. The opening event, dinner and a talk by Dr. Daniel Polisar, is Saturday night and a full day is scheduled for Sunday. There is also programming for children ( a 4-6 year-old group and a 7-12 year-old group; with baby-sitting for under 4s) so bring the kids and make it a day of family learning.

I look forward to learning with you.

Shabbat Shalom!  
Rabbi Michael  
7 Kislev 5766

8<sup>th</sup> December, 2005