



REFUGEE CRISIS

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Doing Our Part – If Not Now, Then When?

A Message from Rabbi Alan Green, Senior Rabbi

In Chapter 1 of the *Sayings of our Fathers*, Hillel asks three famous questions: “If I’m not for myself, who will be for me? But if I’m only for myself, what am I? And if not now, then when?”

Here, Hillel makes it clear that we are all ultimately our own responsibility. If we don’t take care of ourselves, we can’t expect anyone else to do so. At the same time, if we only take care of ourselves, “What are we?” In other words, what good are we at accomplishing the task of *Tikun Olam* (rectifying the ills of the world) that God implicitly assigns to every Jew, if we only take care of ourselves, or our own?

This past week, in a unanimous decision, the Board of Congregation Shaarey Zedek voted to extend support to Yazidi refugee families who will be settling in Winnipeg sometime in the next six months. Because “if not now, then when?” The threat of a Yazidi genocide at the hands of ISIS is too compelling—too much like our own people’s experience with genocide a mere seventy years ago—for us not to take action.

Continued on reverse ...

About the Yazidi People and the Winnipeg Community Response

The Yazidis are an ancient Kurdish-speaking ethno-religious minority from Northern Iraq. They practice their own monotheistic religion which predates Christianity and Islam. Persecuted for several centuries, their numbers have been decimated from 23 million to about 700,000. Today, they face a genocide.

Operation Ezra is a city-wide community effort that has brought together various organizations to sponsor and resettle Yazidi refugees from the Middle East. The goal of Operation Ezra is to sponsor and successfully integrate 15 families over the next 12 months; 10 families by the Winnipeg Jewish community and members of the Operation Ezra coalition and 5 families by a coalition of local churches. Currently 5 families have been sponsored by the community through the Jewish Child and Family Services. The Shaarey Zedek has agreed to sponsor the next 2 families.

A special fund has been set up to bring Canadian Government screened Yazidi refugee families to Winnipeg where they will be welcomed by the broad community of participating organizations as well as the Winnipeg Yazidi community.

Please make a donation

Online: www.jewishwinnipeg.org

Cheque: Payable to the *Jewish Federation of Winnipeg* noting *Shaarey Zedek Operation Ezra* in the memo line mail to C300-123 Doncaster St, Winnipeg, MB R2N 2B2

Phone: Linda Levesque at 204-477-7428 (credit card)

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CHAZZAN

Anibal Mass

CANTOR EMERITUS

Rabbi Louis Berkal z"l

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Shaarey Zedek Yazidi Rescue Committee

A Message from Uri Kraut, Shaarey Zedek President

The Shaarey Zedek Yazidi Rescue Committee is co-chaired by Anita Neville and Lorne Weiss. Our sponsoring group will be responsible for collecting donations of furniture, clothing, and household goods. Our group will also be responsible for assisting the families in the many aspects of their settlement in Canada. All the funds that we are raising to support these families will be through private donations and not from Shaarey Zedek Synagogue funding.

On **Sunday, January 17th at 2:00 PM an information meeting** will be held at the Shaarey Zedek. Everyone is welcome to attend the information session – members and non-members. Walk-ins are welcome, but pre-registration is encouraged by contacting the shul office at 204-452-3711 or info@szwinnipeg.ca. At the meeting we will provide more details about the families we will be sponsoring and their needs.

"if not now, then when?"

Uri Kraut
Shaarey Zedek President

Questions? Want to get involved?

If you have questions or would like to get involved in advance of the information meeting, please reach out to us at rescue@szwinnipeg.ca and the committee co-chairs will be in touch.

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