

The Jewish Year began with our local rabbis declaring this the “Year of Civil Discourse.” Noticing more vitriol and even violence within the Jewish community surrounding Israel, the economy, and local politics, we rabbis coordinated public statements about better dialogue and mutual respect. Last year’s Yontov sermons, if you recall, focused on Yiddish revival, and one of my points was that the Yiddish language was able to be both caustic, insightful, and disarming at the same time. Jewish discourse on the left, on the right, pro-Zionist, or anti-Zionist has lost a good deal of humor and insight and these need to be retrieved.

With all the hopes and misgivings in the Jewish community about the “Arab Spring,” B’nai Tikvah together with Beth Chaim, B’nai Shalom and Isaiah will be bringing a Jewish scholar on Islam and the Arab world to deliver a series of lectures at all 4 synagogues on “Understanding the Muslim Faith and Community.” When anxieties and change polarize Jewish opinion, it will be good to temper our emotions with real knowledge.

Last year’s Rabbi Joseph Asher Memorial Lecture was delivered by one of Israel’s first women rabbis, Maya Leibowicz, who high-

*(continued on page 8)*

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## ***Reflections...***

By Cantor Jennie Chabon

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On Monday evening, June 20<sup>th</sup>, the Shir Joy band and I went to play music at Juvenile Hall in Martinez. We were invited by Jennifer Rosenberg, (Rabbi Asher’s wife), who reads to the boys there once a week. You might be wondering how it came about that we were invited to play Jewish music for a group of non-Jewish inmates. Well, it’s