

# beth am commentator



June 15, 1979

Miami, Florida

Rabbi Herbert M. Baumgard

"WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT CAPITAL PUNISHMENT"

Friday, June 15, 8:30 p.m., RELIGIOUS SERVICE

Saturday, June 16, 9:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m., TORAH SERVICE

## School Registration First Come First Served



Registration for membership and for our Religious and Hebrew Schools are pouring into the Temple office. Members should realize that in the selection of days of attendance at schools, registrations are handled on a first come, first served basis. If you have not sent in your registration forms for the fiscal year, which starts on July 1, 1979, do it now.

All Temple members who are current with their dues and fees received their membership applications for the coming year. If you have not received your forms, you have received a statement of your overdue account. Contact the Temple office with your schedule of payments in writing to receive your registration forms for the 1979-80 fiscal year.

The registration form this year is a single sheet, printed on both sides. One side has the information about your Fair Share contribution, school fees, and building fund pledge; the other side is for school registrations. PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES OF THE FORM.

**FAIR SHARE DUES:** This is the most important section because you select your own dues level by consulting the schedule printed on the form. Fair Share provides the main source of income for the Temple.

**SCHOOL REGISTRATION FORMS** on the back of the form are similar to what we have been using.

**CAPITAL FUND AND BUILDING FUND:** That portion of your unpaid pledge which is due.

**TO REGISTER** officially for the schools and for membership: School fees, Fair Share and capital fund pledge payments must be returned to the Temple office with the membership record in the envelope provided.

## Rabbi Davidow Honored at Services Friday, June 15, Leaving for Atlanta in July

Rabbi Fred Davidow, who has served as Temple Educator for the past years as his major role as Associate Rabbi, has accepted a call to the Temple in Atlanta, Georgia, to be the Associate Rabbi serving in a wider capacity. Rabbi Davidow will be honored as part of our Sabbath Services on Friday, June 15th, at 8:30 p.m. We will be sorry to see him and Susie leave with their wonderful children.

Beth Am has interviewed a number of possible replacements for Rabbi Davidow and is currently making its decision in that regard. The announcement of his successor will be made shortly.

## Installation Dinner Huge Success

Early in the month of May, the Temple held its Installation Dinner at which time Rabbi Baumgard installed the new Officers and Board of the Temple, Brotherhood and Sisterhood for the coming year. The dinner was a huge success, with a great time being had by all those in attendance. Steve Carner, a member of the Board, acted as the Master of Ceremonies for the evening and introduced the various participants. All in all, it was a light, fun type of affair. Pictured below are some scenes from the evening.



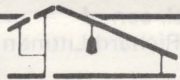
Sam Steen, our outgoing President, presenting the gavel to Dr. William E. Silver, our new President.



Stan Mintz receiving the Harry Gunther Service Award from Sam Steen.



Selma Rappaport, newly elected President of Sisterhood, Dr. William E. Silver, newly elected President of the Temple, Abe Eiseman, newly elected President of Brotherhood.



## The Committee of 100

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS REJOIN FOR '79-'80

In a show of support, the following member families have rejoined "The Committee of 100" for the new fiscal year.

Donald and Elaine Berkowitz  
Dr. Daniel and Iris Franco  
Howard and Merle Frank  
Martin Gallant

Dr. Karl and Joan Kramer  
Dr. Max Kulvin  
Dr. Richard and Barbara Litt  
Dr. Joel and Sallie Mann  
Dr. Terry and Marcia Reisman

Ferinand and Frieda Rosenthal  
Jay and Bernice Rossin  
Dr. Richard and Cessy Rubinson  
Bertram and Suzanne Schild

**LAST CALL: Summer Camp Starts Monday, June 18th**



FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) has gone on record as being opposed to capital punishment - under any circumstances. Traditional Rabbis (Orthodox and some Conservative) follow the Talmud which teaches that capital punishment is permitted in certain cases, like premeditated murder, but by and large, throughout the centuries capital punishment rarely, if ever, took place under Jewish auspices.

The State of Israel had outlawed capital punishment until recently when it enacted a law concerning terrorists who killed women and children wantonly. You will recall that Eichman, Hitler's henchman, was tried and executed in Israel for acts of genocide.

I suppose my position is similar to that of the traditional Rabbis and of the State of Israel. I believe that capital punishment should be a possibility but that it should be used in the most extreme circumstances. For example, I would not have used it in the case of Spenkelink.

It is possible for a person to commit a murder and not be a hardened criminal. People can kill others "in the heat of passion", as in a fight. Jewish law does not provide capital punishment for this. When a person coolly, and over a long period of time, thinks about killing someone and plans it out in detail, this is a different matter. This is premeditated murder. Jewish law indicates that such a murderer earns capital punishment. However, this same law (in the Talmud) tries to find reasons that might ease the punishment. Did the murdered person steal the killer's wife, for example? Had the murdered person badly mistreated the killer, etc.? If so, capital punishment might be set aside.

The nature of the killer is also important under Jewish law. Was he otherwise a good citizen? Did he have a good record beforehand? Could he be rehabilitated (could he change and lead a good life)? On any of these grounds, the capital punishment could be set aside.

But suppose the killer was sane (insanity is another reason to set aside capital punishment) and deliberately set about to kill many innocent people. Suppose he had a long record of doing violent things, and in spite of having chances to change, he never did. Such a person might indeed be given capital punishment. (Although Jewish law permitted this, the number of people killed by a Jewish court was extremely small.)

Some people argue, "Only God has the right to take a human life". Such people, like most Reform Rabbis, would never, under any circumstances, resort to the death penalty. It would be nice if we could all retire from the necessity of making decisions and let God do everything for us. Unfortunately, we cannot avoid the responsibility of declaring war sometimes, in the extreme case of self defense, and we cannot avoid the responsibility of making difficult decisions to restrain those who have demonstrated in frightening deeds the inclination to harm others. Should society give an Eichman a long and sheltered life when he regards others as a bacillus "to be exterminated as one would a disease virus"? Does Israel have the responsibility to protect the longevity of a terrorist who kills women and children or anyone else who crosses his path? Should a madman rest secure in the knowledge that no matter how heinous his deed, society will protect his right to life?

I find it difficult to agree with those who would rule out capital punishment completely. I am more comfortable with positions which still give me some element of choice. For example, I have been for thirty years a member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship and have contributed to its important work; I was on the "red list" of the Un-American Committee in the old days because of my considerable activity in behalf of the Committee for Peaceful Alternatives. Nonetheless, I would not say that I am a pacifist under any and all circumstances. I would not let a madman kill a

(Continued in column alongside)

Joan's Gems . . . . . By Joan Schwartzman

"Sixty years" of marriage are being celebrated by Pearl and Harry Scherer. Proud daughters include Rita Rachwerger and Arlene Schwartz. Many more years of happiness to all..... Kudos to Lee, son of Murray and Florence Birchansky who has been selected as the outstanding student in the Chemistry Dept. at Miami-Dade Community College. Lee has been recommended to receive the Florida Atlantic University Scholarship for the upcoming academic year..... We are pleased to announce the birth of Melody Iris, daughter of Andrea and Bob Herman. This young lady made her appearance May 2nd..... Much good news about Deborah, daughter of June Friedman. Debbie has graduated Georgia Tech and received a fellowship for graduate studies at Tulane in Bio-Medical Engineering. She has been chosen by Glamour magazine as one of the top ten college women in the U.S. and will be featured in the August edition..... Mazel to Jeffrey, son of Phyllis and Sidney Walker who was a Silver Knight nominee in speech from Palmetto Senior High. Along with his classmate, Jon Serbin, son of Phyllis Yawitt, Jeff and Jon placed second in the State of Florida speech competition amongst high schools in the state. How about that!

We are pleased to announce the engagement of Paul, son of Millard and Betty Suid to Susan Rones..... Our own Ann Aibel has been installed as President of the South Dade Chapter of Women's American O.R.T. .... Kudos to Sidney Schreer who has been elected President of the National Parkinson Foundation..... Mazel to Neil Odessky, son of Babette Lustig, who graduated from the University of Florida and was elected to Beta Gamma Sigma, the National Honorary Society in Business Administration. Neil will begin law school in the fall. Brother Jay is studying for Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the So. Florida School of Professional Psychology.....

B'Nai Mitzvah

Saturday, June 16



9:15 a.m.

Scott, son of Mrs. Eunice Gunion and Dr. James Arnold



11:15 a.m.

Alexander Scott, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Feinberg Michael, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Littman

Scott, son of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Lencz (no photo available)

good and innocent person, even if I had to harm that madman. I think that war is the worst of insanities, yet I would not say that I would never bear arms. God has created our world in such a way that human beings have to make some awesome decisions from time to time. One of those decisions may be whether or not we should take a human life.

Judaism has always taught a reverence for life. The Talmud teaches, "He who takes one human life is as if he had destroyed the world". Yet, this very Talmud provides for the possibility of the death penalty in rare cases. Having this law on the books, the Rabbis made sure never to employ the right to capital punishment except in those cases where every sense of human decency called for this extreme measure. I think the law should be on the books, even if it is never used, but I do believe it should be employed in those rare cases when it is the only way to express society's outrage at a deed (like Eichman's) so unthinkable as to be a denial of all that goodness and ethics stand for.