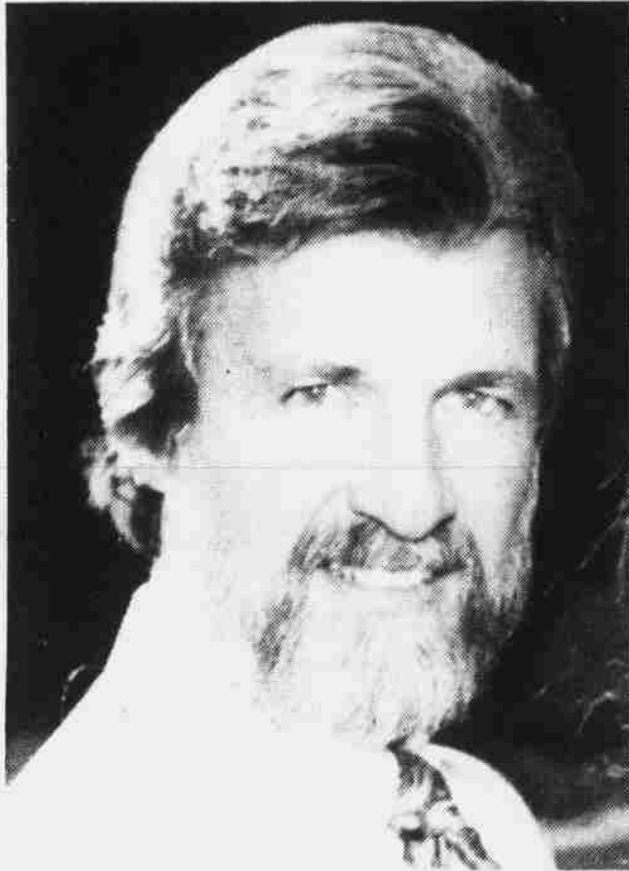


# An Open Letter From Rabbi Mel Hecht



Dear Members Of The Jewish Community Of Las Vegas,

I'm writing this Open Letter to you to seek your support and involvement in an exciting and meaningful undertaking - the formation of a new synagogue, Temple Beth AM (House of the People). I have made a commitment to stay in Las Vegas because of the love, support and ac-

ceptance the community-at-large has granted me; but also, because so many of you have come forward to encourage me to continue building and influencing what I began some four years ago - a congregation and a community dedicated to service and mutual support for one another, and committed to the highest ideals and expression of Judaism and the Jewish people.

We're fortunate in being able to hold our High Holy Day Services and Friday Night services at the Dunes Hotel. All services will begin with Rosh Hashanah Eve, September 26th at 8 P.M. Religious and Hebrew School will both be held on Sundays so as not to interfere with children's extra curricular activities. For information about the High Holy Days, membership and religious school, please call me at my home at 645-6624.

The name, Beth Am (House of the People) was chosen because it emphasizes a philosophy of service and outreach in a community where the great majority of us are from elsewhere. Although Reform, Beth Am's practice will be along more traditional, conservative lines - emphasizing the rootedness of our people in a rootless environment, while having the latitude and freedom to change and adjust within the

context of Reform.

It has been said that we Jews are short-term pessimists, long-term optimists. But we're also the descendants of dreams the likes of our Jacob, and of men and women of our own generation who created an Israel when everyone thought it impossible. When I first came to this community, people said the congregation couldn't grow because it didn't have a building. I said a congregation is - first and foremost - PEOPLE. Love them and be responsible enough and they will join regardless. I was proven to be right. When I first came to Las Vegas, the Jewish institutions of the community barely took an interest in one another. Since then, we've joined hands where appropriate and all have benefited from it.

To this day, people will still argue we're too small a community for another synagogue. I say, "Nonsense." The census taken by the Jewish Federation has proven this to be false. We are as big and as viable as we want to be. If we want to remain strangers to one another, we will. If we want to rationalize that we did our thing "back home" and not take an active interest in this our chosen community, we won't.

At this stage, however, we shouldn't be thinking in terms of the difficulty in building another synagogue. Rather we should be looking for ways of drawing closer together as a group dependent on fellowship and not mortar and brick; we should be creating the kinds of experiences which deepen our lives; and we should be developing the kind of pride in ourselves which can only come through reaching out beyond the confines of our private worlds.

Never forget - we're the descendants of wanderers who etched their monuments not in marble and stone, but in things of the spirit - Love, compassion, truth, justice, peace. That's why I've decided to remain here. I believe that enough of you share the dream of a loving, sharing, trusting community that is accepting of each other's humanity. I believe that most of you will not allow your lives to be governed by indifference, cynicism, rejection and what can not be accomplished. I believe enough of you want an institution devoid of an attitude of exclusivity that ultimately becomes self-serving and only drives us further from one another.

We Jews have changed and influenced history many times before. There's no reason why we can't do it here in Las Vegas. I ask you to join me and to participate in and support such an endeavor. As always, the choice is yours.

With Faith, Love and Affection,

Rabbi Mel Hecht  
Temple Beth Am  
645-6624

TEL AVIV (WNS) — Three new settlements were formally established in the Gaza Strip on July 22, just 24 hours before the Knesset elections. The Ministerial Settlement Committee also voted in favor of the establishment of three settlements beyond the "Green Line," the old line on the maps which separated Israel proper from the occupied areas. The only minister present at the meeting was its chairman, Yuvan Neeman of the Yehiya movement.

NEW YORK (WNS) — NBC-TV will air a miniseries next year on Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who rescued tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews from being exterminated by the Nazis. The script of the film, based on interviews of people who knew Wallenberg, books and articles, is being written by Gerald Green who authored the TV miniseries "Holocaust," according to Mike O'Hara, NBC's publicity director for movies and miniseries. Richard Chamberlain, star of two successful miniseries, Shogun and The Thorn Birds, will portray Wallenberg, O'Hara said.

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