

Rabbi Lewis' Message for January, 2011

I spent New Year's Eve in Jerusalem twice in the mid-seventies and I can't remember doing anything special. That's not to say that nothing happens in Israel on New Year's Eve. In fact, as Israel continues to enjoy adopting western traditions, the celebration of New Year's Eve has expanded. It isn't called New Year's, however; it is called Sylvester as it is in some European countries. You don't say "l'shanah tovah" like we do on Rosh Hashanah (the real Jewish new year); you say "Sylvester sameach." Sylvester is named in honor of Saint Sylvester, who was reputed to have initiated anti-Semitic legislation in 325 CE at the Council of Nicaea. Go figure.

I am hoping that we will spend New Year's Eve/Sylvester quietly in Jerusalem next year as the final day of a congregational trip to Israel. I know not everyone can go on this trip; would that it were possible to take the whole congregation. I am hoping that those of us who do go will bring back some inspiration for everyone else.

On January 30 at 1 p.m., we will have an information session for anyone interested in going on the trip or just in learning about it. The only details we have so far are the trip dates. We would leave Dec. 21, 2011, and return January 1, 2012. By the time of the meeting, I will have the figures on the approximate cost per person and details of the proposed itinerary. The tour company is [Arza](#), an arm of the Reform movement in Israel and the same group that ran the tour I was on in November.

Many of you have asked me how my trip to Israel was. I have never been on a bad trip to Israel. Every trip is unique; I have learned something new each time I have visited. The one feeling I come away with each time is that nothing substitutes for seeing Israel with your own eyes.

May the secular New Year 2011 be a happy, healthy and peaceful one. And may we spend next New Year's together in Jerusalem.