



# HA-KESHER

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Newsletter of Or Hadash  
A Reconstructionist Congregation  
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## From Rabbi Roni

“One of the greatest obstacles to our meeting the environmental challenge is that we often *forget* that nature matters. We may have momentary glimpses of the value of nature when we travel to mountain retreats and tropical resorts, but how do we consistently maintain a sense that the earth is sacred so that stewarding the earth becomes habitual and normal? What can keep us remembering, acting? That’s where community comes in. In my case, that’s where Jewish community comes in.”<sup>1</sup>

Ellen Bernstein elucidates the difficult reality that despite our best intentions in moments of awe-inspiring connection with the natural world, on a daily basis the environment may not be on the top of our list of problems and concerns. Recognizing that it is challenging to hold onto these ideals as individuals, we come together as a Jewish community to inspire, support and implore each other to do what we can do to educate ourselves, change our habits, and advocate for national and global improvements.

On Rosh Hashanah I shared a few of my favorite Jewish texts that teach us important lessons about the link between Judaism and the environment, texts that might motivate us to take action for the sake of our planet. These included encouragements to “serve and preserve” the land, to be careful not to waste our resources, and noticing the ways in which we can extract environmental lessons from our Jewish holidays, such as Shabbat. This year at Or Hadash, we dedicated ourselves as a community to take a closer look at how we, as individuals and as a community, are impacting the environment around us. As we look back on the last six months since the High Holidays, this is the perfect time for us to reflect on what we have accomplished in this arena, and also an opportunity to recommit ourselves to make further strides over the next six months.

Whether or not environmental issues and actions are in your *kishkas*, we need only to look back at the snowpocalyptic winter and the intensely hot summer we just experienced to notice the effects of our actions on the global climate. The effects of our actions and inactions extend further and longer than we can fathom. Though we cannot solve global warming by ourselves, we know that the more we rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of a healthier environment, the better our world will fair. In this spirit, Or Hadash continues to build on our theme of Judaism and the environment, hosting several opportunities for you to learn and be inspired about Jewish environmentalism during the months of March and April.

On March 11 and 12 we will be hosting Ellen Bernstein as this year’s Dickstein Scholar-in-Residence. Please mark your calendars and join us Friday evening as we highlight the environmental messages within the psalms of Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat morning for a text study on Song of Songs, or Saturday evening for a viewing of the film “Renewal” followed by a discussion.

April 3, we will host Rabbi Nathan Martin from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (who also taught a fascinating session during the Jewish Global Day of Learning) focusing on the root of *kashrut*, and examining consciousness and sacredness around food. We will take a close look at how we might extend or amend the traditional notions of *kashrut*, including *eco-kashrut*, *Heksher Tzedek*, and *Magen Tzedek*.

I have talked to several members who have ideas about how to lessen the ecological footprint of Or Hadash. As we build up to Earth day on April 22, let’s work together to make this year of environmental concentration a success.

B’vracha, Rabbi Roni

<sup>1</sup> Bernstein, Ellen. *Ecology & the Jewish Spirit*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing. 2000. p. 253



## President's Message

### *21st Century Eating*

By Janet Karp

It's something we do everyday. OK, maybe not on Yom Kippur but on all the other days we eat. We look forward to special meals. We look forward to gathering with family, extended family, and friends in each other's homes, in favorite restaurants to break bread together. So what has changed? The world has changed and many Americans are thinking beyond what's for dinner?

As American Jews, that question goes back thousands of years because our heritage teaches us that what we eat and how we eat are integral to who we are. Oh, so maybe there is new relevance to that 19th century, reborn in the sixties expression "you are what you eat"! Jews can take this way back, all the way back to the Torah.

Lots of Jews are taking the opportunity to bring it forward to the 21st century. Many of us are concerned about how our food is grown, how far it travels, how animals that provide food spend their lives, how people in the food industry work and whether what we eat is healthy for our bodies and minds. In the Jewish year of 5771, Judaism teaches us about eating and the role we play in choosing what is on our plates. It may surprise you to learn how well Judaism keeps up with our modern sensibilities.

Please save the morning of Sunday, April 3rd, when we will have the privilege of learning and thinking about this topic with Rabbi Nathan Martin, of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, as our guide. He was very well received as an engaging teacher at our Or Hadash Global Day of Learning last November.

If you eat, and if at least sometimes you think about your food, please come to Or Hadash on Sunday, April 3rd. This program is free and open to the public. Bring yourself, bring your teens, and bring your friends and neighbors.

This program is made possible by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia through the Jewish Partnership Grant. We are fortunate to have been granted this funding opportunity. I thank Aliza Green with whom I discussed these ideas prior to applying for the Jewish Partnership Grant.

Watch your email for more details to come! Thanks for reading this. See you there!

## THE 2011 DICKSTEIN SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE WEEKEND

By Marty Jacobs, Chair, Spiritual Life Committee

On Friday, March 11 and Saturday, March 12 Or Hadash will host Ellen Bernstein as our Dickstein Scholar-in-Residence. The program will incorporate ecological topics from a spiritual point of view. Ellen is widely recognized as the pioneer thinker and activist who helped define modern Jewish environmentalism. She was the founder in 1988 of *Shomrei Adamah* (Keepers of the Earth), the first national Jewish environmental organization. After Shomrei Adamah, Ellen served as Director of Community Building at the Jewish Federation of Philadelphia. She has written several books: *Let the Earth Teach You Torah, Ecology & the Jewish Spirit* and *The Splendor of Creation*. Today Ellen works "to deliver the Bible's deep ecological message through writing, teaching, speaking and consulting."

Our program begins on Friday evening, March 11 with a 7:00 P.M. vegetarian dinner catered by the Saffron Indian restaurant (RSVP required). Services will begin at 8:00 P.M. and will include a presentation by Ms. Bernstein on "Ecological Dimensions of Shabbat through the Psalms of Kabbalat Shabbat."

Several events are planned for Saturday, starting with a bagel breakfast at 8:45 A.M. (no charge, but RSVP requested) followed at 9:00 A.M. by Torah Study led by Ellen on "Song of Songs from an Ecological Perspective." Services will begin at 10:30 A.M. as "*Shabbat B'Yachad*" – an intergenerational service.

Ellen will present a video at 7:30 P.M. on Saturday evening, entitled "RENEWAL." It contains several ecological topics presented from a faith perspective and lasts slightly over one hour, to be followed by a Q&A session and oneg.

This promises to be an exciting and informative program, so please plan to attend.

**Or Hadash has been the recipient of many gifts from our congregants, for which we are grateful. However, we are requesting that all donations of treasured items such as books, tapes, videos and other Judaica be placed on hold. We appreciate your cooperation at this time.**



## Religious Action Center's Rabbi David Saperstein Poses the Next Big Question

**In Avot, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel observed "It is not the study of Torah that is the essential thing; it is the doing of it." What should that mean to modern Jews? What does "doing Torah" mean to you?**

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz and Rabbi David Saperstein begin the discussion but *want to know what YOU think*.

Here is a sneak peek at the Rabbis' responses:

Rabbi Saperstein: "To many Jews, the "doing" of Torah remains the doing of the 613 commandments as prescribed by rabbinic law. To far more Jews, the doing of Torah is living their Jewish lives: working for Israel's security; fighting anti-Semitism; engaging in the forms of worship of the various streams; strengthening Jewish learning; and engaging in social justice..."

Rabbi Steinsaltz: "The mitzvot ("commandments") provide the content of what it means to be a Jew. Like the abundant, complex leaves and flowers of a tree, their manifold, seemingly disparate forms actually comprise a wondrous whole: the derech, or way, of Torah..."

***Be a part of the conversation, share your thoughts and read the entirety of the Rabbis' responses.***

Sincerely,

Rachel Weiss-Berger

*Project Director, Global Day of Jewish Learning*

## From the Administrator

*By Laurie Albert*

I would like to remind you of all the work that goes on behind the scenes to make our programs, dinners, and community events happen. Many hands are needed to coordinate, set up, and publicize. There may be caterers involved, or shopping needed, or handouts to prepare. All of this takes time, which is why we ask for RSVP's in advance. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE respect our deadlines and make your reservations promptly. It makes everything else so much easier, and we really do not want to have to turn anyone away.

## MAZEL TOV

- To **Rachel Shimer** on her marriage to James Castro on February 14, 2011

## CONDOLENCES

- We all mourn the passing of **Debbie Friedman**, songwriter and singer extraordinaire and friend of our congregation
- **Rabbi Vivian Schirn** on the passing of her husband, Dr. Andrew Nemeth

## B'NAI MITZVAH

### MARCH 5

Bar Mitzvah of **Jesse Wisch**, son of Susan and David Wisch

### MARCH 26

Bar Mitzvah of **Bret Harris**, son of Jill and Jim Harris

### APRIL 2

Bar Mitzvah of **Noah Doman**, son of Rosalind and Douglas Doman

### APRIL 16

B'not Mitzvah of **Maureen** and **Victoria Sandler**, daughters of Alison and Jan Sandler

### APRIL 30

Bar Mitzvah of **Robert Wilf**, son of Shirley Ann and Frederic Wilf

## ADULT STUDY HAVURAH

*will meet on*

**Sunday, February 20 at 10:30**

*The discussion topic will be*  
**"ACROSS THE STEPPES TO THE PROMISE LAND — Escaping the Holocaust to Shanghai"**

**COME TO LISTEN, DISCUSS, ENJOY!**

*We will meet again on*  
**Sunday, March 13 & Sunday, April 10 at 10:30**  
*Topics to be announced*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Friday, March 4 and April 1 - Three Part Harmony** with Tot Shabbat at 6 pm, Dairy/vegetarian pot luck dinner at 6:30 and Family Service at 7:00.

**Friday, March 11 & Saturday, March 12 - Scholar-in-Residence Weekend** with Scholar Ellen Bernstein.

Friday evening will include a Shabbat dinner at 7:00 and Service at 8:00. Saturday's Shabbat B'Yachad will include a Torah Quest/Family Education Program on Blessings for families and children from 9 - 10:30 and then we'll join the rest of the congregation for services at 10:30.

8:45 Breakfast  
9:00 - 10:30 Torah Quest with Lori Rubin  
9:00 - 10:30 Torah Study with Scholar-in-Residence Ellen Bernstein  
10:30 Shabbat B'yachad Service  
7:30 Havdallah service followed by a screening of "Renewal," a film of ecological topics from a faith perspective, and a question-and-answer session with Ellen Bernstein. (The film's running time is approximately 70 minutes.)

**Friday, March 18 – Erev Shabbat** service will include a program from our SATO Committee. Guest Speaker - Fran Held from Mitzvah Circle Foundation ([www.mitzvahcircle.org](http://www.mitzvahcircle.org)). Please bring new school supplies (For more information about specific supplies,

please look for the Mitzvah Day flyer when you are at Or Hadash). A potluck dessert oneg is in the works, as well!

7:00 PM - Social action project  
8:00 PM - Service and presentation  
9:00 PM - Oneg with potluck dairy desserts

**Saturday, March 19 at 6:30pm - PURIM** will be celebrated with a costume parade for kids and an adult costume competition. Arrive by 7:15 to get a free Raffle ticket for a *very special gift!* **You must be present to win!**

7:00pm – *Reading from our very own Megillah and Purim Service*  
8:00pm – Purimspiel musicale  
8:45pm – Yummy-in-my-tummy HAMENTashen

**Friday, March 25 and April 15 - 8:00** service with the choir.

**Friday, April 8 – Shabbat Schmooze** "Spanish Spread with Sangria" (Details to follow.)

**Saturday, April 9 - Shabbat B'yachad**, an intergenerational Shabbat. Watch for details.

**Sunday, April 10** Trip to the Lower East Side of NY including lunch at a Greek synagogue and a walking tour of the lower east side with Big Onion Tours and dinner at Ben's Kosher Deli.



**April 19 to 26 – Passover - First Seder** is April 18.

The Or Hadash office will be closed April 18 to 20 and April 25. There will be no Sunday school on April 17 or 24, and no Hebrew School on April 19 or 26.

## MOVIE SERIES

*Upper Dublin Township's EPAB (Environmental Protection Advisory Board) and Pennypack Farm are co-sponsoring a movie series on sustainability presented at the Ambler Theater.*

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8**

*Two Angry Moms (school lunches)*

**TUESDAY, MARCH 8**

*A Chemical Reaction (lawn care)*

**TUESDAY, APRIL 12**

*Ghana: Digital Dumping Ground and Bag It (plastic bags)*

Tickets are on sale at [www.amblertheater.org/pennypack](http://www.amblertheater.org/pennypack). All movies start at 7:30p and run 1-1/2 hours or so.

## SAVE THE DATE

**May 21, 2011 at 8 p.m.**

**Rock the (Or Hadash) House at a Dance Party with**

**The Dukes of Destiny**

**\$15 Entrance Fee**

**Tell your friends and neighbors and join us for the Or Hadash spring fundraiser and a GOOD TIME**

**Tickets will go on sale later this winter.**

## From the SATO Committee

### *Social Action/Tikkun Olam (SATO) Committee Invites You to Get Involved!*

*By Debbie Bernstein & Alisa Belzer, Co-Chairs, SATO*

We have accomplished a great deal so far this year, but we have lots left to do. In September and October we collected hundreds of pounds of peanut butter and assembled over 100 delicious pasta meals for the homebound. For the month of November we housed and fed and transported two families, and in December we collected piles of gifts for recent immigrants. But it didn't stop there!

Our congregation came out in force for Martin Luther King Day in January to produce about 950 containers of soup which were donated to Aid for Friends. For those who do not know exactly what Aid for Friends is, you might be interested to know that its mission is to "serve needy, isolated shut-ins, primarily the frail elderly, in the 5 county Greater Philadelphia area, with free daily home-cooked meals delivered weekly" (from their website, [www.aidforfriends.org](http://www.aidforfriends.org)). If you're wondering what else you can do for them, they are currently in need of canned goods which can be dropped off at their warehouse in the northeast (12271 Townsend Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154). Thank you to everyone who cooked, froze soup containers, and schlepped them to Aid for Friends! If you have unused containers please return them to the synagogue. We ran short this year, but we are already stock piling for next year. Please help us by bringing the empties back.

We have many events planned for this spring. We will have a **SATO Shabbat service on March 18th** when our guest speaker, Fran Held from the Mitzvah Circle,

will speak about ways to make a difference in our community, and we will conduct a participatory mitzvah project that evening. This program might be of special interest to families whose children have an upcoming bar or bat mitzvah and are in search of new ideas for mitzvah projects, or high school students who are looking for community service opportunities. In April we will be conducting our **Passover Chametz Food Drive** for the Mitzvah Food Pantry. We will again focus our efforts on collecting cereal, so please keep your eye out for sales! **Mitzvah Mania is April 3rd** and in the spirit of mania, we will have three different ways to get involved. You can volunteer at the Klein JCC garden to ready it for planting; you can help with spring clean up at Fort Washington State Park; or you can help prepare a meal in a soup kitchen (location to be announced). In May, we're going to be walking the walk for social action! We are organizing teams for two fundraising walks. Our religious school will organize a team for **Race for the Cure is May 8th** ([www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)). We are planning an Or Hadash team for **The ADL Walk Against Hate is May 15th** ([www.walkagainsthate.org](http://www.walkagainsthate.org)), as well.

Please watch the weekly news blasts for details on how to get involved in all of these events, and plan to join us!

Alisa Belzer ([belzera@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:belzera@rci.rutgers.edu))  
Debbie Bernstein ([Debbie.bernstein@mac.com](mailto:Debbie.bernstein@mac.com))  
Social Action/Tikkun Olam

# SAVE THE DATE

## APRIL 13, 2011

### *Celebration of Jewish Life and Learning*

honoring  
**Joseph H. Levine**


6:00 PM • Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue

**Event Chairs**  
 Marcy and Dan Bacine  
 Alina and Adam Levine  
 Jennifer and Brian Levine  
 Rachel Knieriem and Jonathan Levine  
 Marcy Panzer and Manny Pokotilow  
 Maxine and Elliot Rosen  
 Lainey and Beryl Simonson

**President**  
David Smith

**Executive Director**  
Rabbi Phil Warmflash  
[www.ajaje-jop.org](http://www.ajaje-jop.org)


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## From the Education Director

*By Lori Rubin*

Next week, I am going to present a workshop along with my friend Rabbi Erin Hirsh, the Director of Education for the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation. We are co-presenting a workshop entitled, “Tikkun Olam as a Path to Teen Growth: Repairing the World as a Tool for Personal Transformation.” Geared to parents and educators of adolescents, the conference where we’ll present this workshop is called, “Understanding the Teen Brain and its Implications for Our Work as Educators and Parents.” Why do I share this with you? Well, I thought I’d share a little about how Tikkun Olam is a path to teen growth and why we incorporate so much social action work into our religious school program. If you are interested in this conference, please let me know and I’ll share with you what I learned from the keynote speaker about the teen brain.

In the past month, the 7th grade went on a trip to Cradles to Crayons. We had a very successful Mitzvah fair where we made fleece blankets, instant soup cups, breakfast bags, homemade dog treats and dog toys. In addition to these activities at the Mitzvah fair, many families made soup for Aid for Friends. Also during this month, some of us assisted residents at the Abramson Center on Shabbat and we did a winter clothing drive for the Mitzvah Circle Foundation. Social action activities have become an integral part of our Judaism. We teach that Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, is a Mitzvah, a commandment. If it is commanded that we help “fix” the world, then we, at Or Hadash, should provide some opportunities for these activities. Our calendar is chock-full.

In addition to the social action programs we run, we also teach about this mitzvah of Tikkun Olam. One way we can do this is through music. Dan Nichols, a contemporary Jewish musician wrote a song that is, in fact, a prayer thanking God for giving us the ability to repair the world—because we can and should. It incorporates this blessing: *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shenatan lanu hizdamnut l’takein et ha-olam*. Blessed are You God, Ruler of the world, who has given us the opportunity to repair the world.

But besides the fact that it is a mitzvah, Tikkun Olam projects can help youth develop empathy and compassion. When teens become engaged in meaningful individual or group *tikkun olam* projects, they can also develop leadership skills, self-esteem,

*(continued on page 8)*

## My Bar Mitzvah Project

*By Bret Harris*

For my Bar Mitzvah project, my mom and I got certified as pet therapists; and our dog, Katie, was certified as a therapy dog. We were certified by Therapy Dogs, Inc. We worked with a woman named Debbie Jordan to get our certifications. We met Debbie at different nursing homes on Sunday afternoons to be tested and certified, and to visit the residents. Now we can visit nursing homes and any place that allows therapy dogs.

I contributed to pet therapy by sharing Katie with people who love dogs but are not able to own one. I spent many Sundays visiting nursing homes with Katie. I talked to the residents while they petted or held Katie. I could tell this made them happy by the smiles on their faces. On Halloween, we took Katie to a nursing home so they could see her dressed up as a pumpkin. Everyone, including the employees, appreciated us being there to brighten up the day.

When I first started, I did not know what to expect. It was much better than I expected. I loved seeing other dogs and how happy it made the people there to have visitors and see the dogs. At first, I felt a little shy about going up to strangers, but I learned what to say and do from Debbie during training. Now I look forward to going to make the elderly happy. I also like getting to know the residents.

We went to Englis House, which is a home for disable people. After seeing these people who had no use of their arms and legs, I felt very lucky to be able to move around on my own, to run, and to do everyday things. These people cannot live on their own. They will always need to be taken care of. It was exciting to see their reaction when I put Katie’s head near their hand to feel her soft fur. It felt good to see them smile!

When we get in the car to drive home I feel excited. At first, I could not explain why. I learned how good it feels to see the other dogs, meet other people, and to make them happy.

I would recommend this project to other students who like dogs and like to share their dogs with others. I am proud that I am a pet therapist and happy that I chose this as my Bar Mitzvah project. I have learned the importance of helping those less fortunate than I am; and I plan to continue doing pet therapy after my Bar Mitzvah.

## ECO CORNER

By Doug Smithman, ECO Chairperson

I just had a conversation with a friend who was considering a new electricity provider in our recently deregulated marketplace. She wasn't sure what was involved or how much she might actually save. Michelle thought the analogy I used was a good one so I'm going to share it here.

### THE WATER ANALOGY

Imagine that we're talking about water instead of electricity. Water is supplied to your home from a long trough the runs on top of the utility poles in your neighborhood (As for those of you with no utility poles, imagine them too!). A hose runs down to each house from the trough and each hose has a meter to measure how much water you use. Obviously



somebody has to replace the water that homeowners use or else the trough will run dry.

PECO owns and maintains the trough. If it gets a hole in it, PECO has to fix it. If it rusts, then PECO has to replace it. PECO is responsible for water *transmission* to your house.

PECO owns the hose and the meter at your house. They maintain these items and read the meter to see how much water

you use. PECO is responsible for *water distribution and metering* to your house.

Your electricity provider is responsible for adding water to the trough to replace the water you've used. They don't care which of their houses use the water. All they know is that they need to provide enough water to the trough to make up for what their customers take out. How do they know what to put in? PECO will tell them based on the meter readings performed by PECO. That is also the basis for your bill from your electricity provider.

So in the end you get two bills. PECO will bill you for transmission and distribution and metering. Your provider will bill you for supply or generation.

In the case of our friend, she wasn't sure if it was worth it to change providers. She lives alone in a modest house and is pretty good about turning off the lights, etc. Her December 2010 electric bill was for about 300 kilowatts-hours of usage. At PECO's new rate of 9.92 cents per kilowatt-hour, that translates to \$29.76. The Philadelphia Inquirer ran a summary on December 27 and the lowest fixed cost provider was BlueStar Energy Solutions at 8.878 cents per kilowatt-hour. Their cost for December would have been \$26.63, a difference of **\$3.13!** (Do you think she puts this much thought into a Starbucks coffee?)



Michelle and I recently signed up with BlueStar, not because we save much money with them but because they have a program that allows customer to opt for renewable power at a somewhat higher price. Cheaper than PECO, we pay about 9.3 cents per kilowatt-hour; and we like the knowledge that we're supporting a fledgling renewable power industry. We also wanted to stay away from variable price contracts and short term, usually six month, contracts. Both sounded like they had risks that we didn't want.

Finally, a word of warning if you do select an electric supplier that sells renewable power. There are providers that advertise using renewable sources with as little as 20% renewable sources. Also, look for cancellation fees. Some of these can be significant. Read the fine print.



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**From the Education Director** *(continued from page 6)*

self-direction, and self-reflection. Students who participate in such activities can think beyond themselves and their own personal needs to others who may need their support with clothing, food, or other supplies. At Or Hadash, we strive to have our students think about others before themselves. When we make dinners for those who are hungry, house those who have no homes, and create bandannas for those who are losing their hair due to illness, we are providing our students and families with the reminder to be grateful and appreciative of all they have. We will continue to do this work on an ongoing basis. It is important for our students to reflect upon all they have, and all they can do to make this world a better place.

This spring, there will be a multitude of ways to get involved in helping others through Tikkun Olam work. One way we will be doing this is by participating in Race for the Cure on May 8th. There will be more information to follow, but if this article inspires you before then, here are some websites for you to peruse:

- <http://www.komenphiladelphia.org/>
- <http://www.abramsoncenter.org/>
- <http://mitzvahcircle.org/index.php>
- <http://www.aidforfriends.org/>
- <http://www.kleinjcc.org/MitzvahFoodProject>
- <http://www.montgomerycountyspca.org/>

Please contact me with any comments, questions, or for more information.

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 Let a new light shine forever upon Zion.

A donation has been made to Or Hadash in honor of

by

*Or Hadash donation card front cover design and inside note area.*



May God console you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

A donation has been made to Or Hadash in memory of

by

*Or Hadash in memory of cover design, and inside note area of card.*

**These special cards are now available for a donation of \$20.00 for 5 cards, to benefit Or Hadash.**

(+ \$2.00 shipping and handling)

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Call Laurie Albert 215-283-0276 or Amy Grossman 610-828-7725

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