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WHAT'S INSIDE:

- 2 • President's Message
- 3 • From the Education Director
- 4 • From the Program Coordinator
- 5 • From the Administrator
• Upcoming Events
- 6 • 5th-Annual LimmudPhilly conference
- 7 • Golden Slipper Camp
- 8 • How to Conduct an Effective Job Search

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HA-KESHER

Spring 2013

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Newsletter of Or Hadash
A Reconstructionist Congregation
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From Rabbi Josh



"The more Torah, the more life; the more study, the more wisdom; the more advice, the more understanding; the more charity, the more peace. One who acquires a good name acquires it for himself; one who acquires words of Torah has acquired himself a share in the World to Come." (Pirkei Avot 2:8)

Torah is the heart of who we are as a people. For more than two thousand years The Torah has been our source of wisdom, insight, and understanding – the basis for what it means to be Jewish. It doesn't simply tell our story: it is our story and we in turn become a part of it through our repeated reading, interpreting, and study. Traditional Jewish belief claims that the Torah contains God's words, given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionism, saw the Torah as a human project and asserts, "The Torah represents the first conscious attempts on a large scale to read and understand the destiny of human life in order to learn the direction which man's efforts should take." Regardless of our beliefs in the origins of the Torah, we share a sense of awe and wonder when the scroll is taken from the Ark and processed around the synagogue – an awe and wonder borne from countless generations of Jews who have sought holiness from its wisdom.

For the past fifteen years, we have been fortunate to house two Torah scrolls in our Ark, and as we return one of those scrolls to the former Suburban JCC-B'nai Aaron, which generously lent it to us for the past fifteen years, we will have the enormous privilege of welcoming two new scrolls to our community. On Sunday, May 5th, we will welcome one scroll on a generous long-term loan from the Abramson Center for Jewish Life in Horsham, and one as a very moving and beautiful gift from Congregation Adas Israel in Fall River, MA. Our entire community is deeply grateful to Scott Crespy and Jeff Chebot for making the arrangements that have brought these new scrolls to our congregation – their efforts on our behalf means that Torah will increase continually in our midst.

The celebration will begin at 10:30 with a ceremony at the Abramson Center where our second and third graders will join residents as they send off their Torah to our congregation with love. The Torah will travel in a celebratory caravan to a site near Or Hadash, where we will join with the Torah scroll from Adas Israel in a ritual procession to the synagogue. Finally, in our sanctuary, the two new scrolls will be officially installed with songs and blessings. It is my hope that a cross-section of our entire community – from our youngest students to our most senior members – will be on hand for this momentous occasion. And then, just six days later, these new scrolls will add even greater sweetness to our community as five adult congregants celebrate the culmination of two years of study as they become B'nai Mitzvah and read from the Torah for the first time– reaffirming the preciousness and centrality of Torah in the lives of the Jewish people and our community.

I hope you will be able to join us for both of these celebrations of Torah – one of the scrolls themselves and one of the timeless words they contain, read and reread by our congregants of many generations.

Rabbi Josh

Sunday, May 5 at 11:00 – Torah procession to Or Hadash beginning from Scott Lane and Wenner Way
Saturday, May 11 at 10:00 – Adult B'nai Mitzvah celebration at Or Hadash

President's Message

By Lani Moss

One of the challenges of everyday life is that we are often so caught up in the mundane that we fail to realize the extraordinary in the ordinary. Several years ago, I was asked to write an article for *Reconstructionism Today*, as part of a collection of descriptions of spirituality. In the piece, I wrote about a summer trip to Alaska and how I had assumed that the grandeur of the natural world would provide a spiritual experience. After all, “there had been other times in my life when, in the presence of great natural wonders, I had experienced a sense of awesome power, a sense that surely some spirit – God – was present in that place.” Reconstructionist theology speaks of the godliness within each human being. For me, the connection forged amongst people and played out on life’s stage provides a stronger, deeper sense of spirituality.

In his book, *Radical Judaism*, Rabbi Art Green, this year’s Dickstein Scholar in Residence, speaks to just this idea. He writes, “In the midst of life, our ordinariness is interrupted. This may take place as we touch one of the edges of life... We may see it in the wonders of nature... It may happen to us in the course of loving and deeply entering into union with one another, or in profound aloneness. Sometimes, however, a moment of such holy and awesome presence comes upon us without any apparent provocation at all.” Dr. Green goes on to say, “For me God is not an intellectual proposition but rather the ground of life itself. It is the name I give to the reality I encounter in the kind of moment I have been describing...and that these moments place us in contact with the elusive inner essence of being that I call ‘God’.”

As the congregation prepares for Rabbi Green’s visit, our religious school students are involved in their own search. They are participating in a scavenger hunt for commentary in our prayer book, *Kol Haneshamah*, written by AG (Art Green). I went on my own scavenger hunt this afternoon and found an AG comment that reads in part, “Whatever befalls us and wherever life may lead, we find ourselves still seeking. Each unique human situation calls upon us to find God’s presence and act upon it in a unique way.” (Page 183, below the line)

On December 25th (aka Christmas Day), I sat in a packed theater in Jenkintown and watched one of my favorite Broadway shows, *Les Misérables*, come to life on the big screen. There is a line in the show / movie, towards the end, that for me encapsulates the presence of God in the everyday, and always brings tears to my eyes. Jean Valjean sings as he is dying, “to love another person is see the face of God.” I believe that the love and connection amongst people can provide each of us with a sense of godliness – our own sense of God within, and make us feel as if we are standing in the presence of God. We can share that divine spark with others when we perform acts of kindness (*gemilut hasadim*) or charity (*tzedakah*). I invite each of us to look deeply at our seemingly ordinary interactions with those we love, with members of our community, and even possibly with strangers we encounter and find the presence of God in those interactions. Please join me March 15 – 16th to welcome Dr. Green to our community and examine these issues in depth.

B'Shalom,
Lani

B'NAI MITZVAH

March 2, 2013

Bar Mitzvah of **Jonathan Golden**, son of Vicki Marklew and Michael Golden

April 6, 2013

Bat Mitzvah of **Nicole Harris**, daughter of Jill and Jim Harris.

May 11, 2013

B'not Mitzvah of the Or Hadash Adult B'not Mitzvah class: **Sarah Kaplan, Warren Young, Charles Gardner, Elley Rosenberg and Debra Somers.**

May 18, 2013

Bat Mitzvah of **Eliana Berson**, daughter of Cheryl and Alan Berson.

June 1, 2013

B'nai Mitzvah of **Adina and Naomi Gewirtzman**, daughters of Amy and Steven Gewirtzman.

June 8, 2013

Bar Mitzvah of **Corey Bryton**, son of Cindy and David Bryton.

June 15, 2013

Bat Mitzvah of **Anneliese Israel**, daughter of Vivian and Ehud Israel.

June 22, 2013

Bat Mitzvah of **Hannah Crespy**, daughter of Gayle and Scott Crespy.

From the Education Director

By Barbara Weisman

Having just celebrated TuB'Shvat, the Birthday of Trees, I find myself daydreaming about spring and warmer weather, and am looking forward to March events to keep me happy until spring arrives. Here are some highlights of what we have to look forward to on our school calendar:

Our 10th grade students will participate in Panim Al Panim in Washington, D.C., where they will experience first-hand the meaningful connection between Judaism and advocacy. We look forward to hearing about their experiences upon their return and at Shabbat services on April 5th. We will celebrate their years of Jewish learning on Sunday, May 19th with the combination of school closing exercises and Confirmation.

Our 2nd-5th graders will enjoy a sleepover after Shabbat services on Friday, March 1st.

Enjoy more engaging family learning on Sunday, March 3rd as we continue to deepen our connection to the Transformative Text of the Burning Bush. Families will continue to study this piece of text and create lasting impressions from the words of Torah. On Sunday, May 19th, we will celebrate the culmination of this project in a meaningful way that will linger with us for generations.

We will bring smiles to the faces of residents at the Abramson Center for Jewish Life on Saturday, March 10th.

Our students are becoming more familiar with the writings of our Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Art Greene. They are combing the siddur for commentary written by Rabbi Greene that resonates with them. They will create posters illustrating those writings and we will vote on our favorites. Come and see these hanging in the sanctuary during our Scholar-in-Residence weekend, March 15th & 16th.

Our students will enjoy a chocolate seder on Sunday, March 17th and Biyur Chametz in Hebrew school on Tuesday, March 19th.

On Saturday, April 5th, we will honor our teachers in addition to hearing about our 10th graders experiences in Washington, DC at Panim.



On Sunday, April 21st, we will deepen our knowledge of Israel as we celebrate Israel's 65th Birthday with programming brought to us by Oded Marck, of Habonim Dror and Nir Inbar, Israeli Shaliach, Emissary. We will be treated to a taste of Israeli culture and engage in active learning Israeli style. There will be singing, Israeli dancing, games and more! Do not miss the fun for the whole family during school hours. Guests are welcome! Am Yisroel Chai! (The people of Israel live!)

And on Sunday, May 5th, we will join together as a kehillah (community) as we welcome our new Torah to Or Hadash from the Abramson Center for Jewish Life. All of Or Hadash will celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime experience as we sing, dance, and parade with our new Torah.

Finally, there will be a special service this spring when we will be visited by congregant Doug Smithman, who will lead a discussion on ecology as a Jewish value.

Here are some Religious School highlights:

GAN – an organic TuB'Shvat Seder

2nd & 3rd Grade studied the Jewish value, *Bal Taschit* (Not being Wasteful), created videos on the theme, held a mini TuB'Shvat seder and made placemats, wrote and illustrated their own Purim stories and with character studies.

4th & 5th Grade wrote and starred in a Purim Shpiel, made Pirke Avot quote posters, learned the prayer Or Hadash and made tee shirts illustrating the meaning of the prayer.

6th Grade created The Shoes of Tolerance based on their Holocaust studies.

7th Grade focused on a photo journaling project.

Join us to experience the vibrancy of the Or Hadash school community as we celebrate and learn.

Barbara

From the Program Coordinator

By Lori Rubin

Have you been pursuing your Jewish Journey? In my last Ha-Kesher article, I wrote about how my role at Jewish Learning Venture as Program Director for Family Engagement helps families take the next step on their Jewish Journey. Similarly, in my role as Program Coordinator at Or Hadash, I help families become more engaged in our community by taking one step further into the building, onto a committee, or into a friendship. So, I wonder, as it is the beginning of the secular New Year: What might your New Year's resolution be if it HAD to be about taking a step further into the community at Or Hadash?

Would it be trying out our new Outdoors Havurah? Would it be participating in A Night Out in Ambler? Would it be having another couple or family over for Shabbat dinner? What would be your next step? It wouldn't be fair of me to ask you to ponder this without pondering myself. I think if I were going to take my Jewish journey a step further, I'd find a family, or couple, that I hadn't been out with socially before and take the step to invite them out for dinner, dessert or drinks. That isn't part of the Jewish Journey you say? Well, I have learned that for me, going to services is healing; but for others, making a social connection IS part of their Jewish journey. For me, making soup on MLK Day of Service makes me feel good, but what is even better is delivering the soup to Aid For Friends – again, connecting with people is part of my journey. The really special aspect of our community is the people who belong to it. So, I resolve that I will try to make more time to be with the people who belong to our community both inside and outside Or Hadash. What will you do?

Need help? Want to start a group of your own? Did you know we have a book club, an empty-nester Havurah, and an outdoors Havurah? Interested in cooking? We have a cooking

Havurah, too! Contact me for help in finding your way! We can meet you for coffee.

Find your way at Or Hadash. It might be social action, getting involved in a committee, trying out a new service (perhaps our a meditation or healing service), or just meeting for coffee with someone new. I hope you will take the challenge, and take one step further on your Jewish journey!

Independence Sinfonia Orchestra



Performance by The Independence Sinfonia

Or Hadash member, Margery Hesney, would like to invite congregants to a performance by The Independence Sinfonia, under the direction of Jerome Rosen. The group will perform Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* on Sunday, March 3 at 4:00 PM. The concert will be held at the new Performing Arts Center at Upper Dublin High School, 800 Loch Alsh Avenue in Fort Washington. The orchestra will be joined by the Abington Choral Club directed by Peter Hilliard. Concert proceeds will go to the Upper Dublin Education Foundation. Ticket prices are: adults \$18, seniors/students \$12. To purchase tickets and for information: independence-sinfonia.org, or call 267-625-8534.

CONDOLENCES

- To **Michelle Smithman** on the passing of her father, Bob Ehrlich, father-in-law of Doug, and grandfather of Emily and Brian.
- To **Joe Aronson** on the passing of his brother, Richard Aronson.
- To **Ellen Steuerman** on the passing of her mother, Rose Wapnowitz and mother-in-law of Manny.
- To **Gyl Zelesnick** on the passing of her stepfather, Sylvan Schuster and step-grandfather of Alexis Kapoor.
- To **Sam Goldberg** on the passing of his mother, Arlene Goldberg and grandmother of Hannah.
- To **Greg Luce** on the passing of his mother, Alyce Luce, mother-in-law of Kristin, and grandmother of Henry and Benjamin.
- To **Marty Savitzky** on the passing of his mother, Gloria Fishman, mother-in-law of Carolyn, and grandmother of Robyn.

From the Administrator

By Laurie Albert

I love Passover! Of course it is a lot of work; there is the housecleaning (no excuses, it has to get done), and all the cooking of the special foods. But it is a special time to gather with family and friends to retell our history and experience the exodus from Egypt ourselves. We always make sure that there is room at our table for anyone who needs a place, and we often have college students from far away join us. One time my son joined the Seder by Skype! From my family to yours, wishing you a warm and meaningful Pesach and light, fluffy matzah balls!

MAZEL TOV

Mazel Tov to new members, **Lawrence Lempert & Jodi Levinthal**, on their wedding on December 12th.

Mazel Tov to **Veronica Beasley**, our Shamas, on her engagement to **Paul Wieckowski**.

Mazel Tov to **Michael and Lisa Oswald** on the birth their grandson, **Lucas Seth Davis**, son of **Emily** and **David Davis**.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Three Part Harmony and Tot Shabbat at 6 pm, dairy/vegetarian Pot Luck dinner at 6:30, and Intergenerational Family Service at 7:00 will be held. Please RSVP to office@orhadash.com for the dinner.

- **Friday, March 1st** – Celebration of all March birthdays

- **Friday, April 5th** – Teacher Appreciation Shabbat, also celebrating all April birthdays

- **Friday, May 3rd** – Open House and BBQ in honor of Lag B'Omer, also celebrating all May birthdays.
Please note that this service will be start at 7:30.

- **Friday, June 7th** – Open House and celebration of all June birthdays

• **Wednesday, March 6th** – Healing Service. All are welcome.

• **Friday, March 15th and Saturday, March 16th** – **SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE WEEKEND** with **Rabbi Art Green**

See details elsewhere in this issue and come for a fascinating weekend! Click here for the form to RSVP for the Shabbat dinner and/or Saturday morning bagels.

• **Friday, March 15, Friday, April 19, Friday, May 17 and Friday, June 21** – Services with the Choir

• **Friday, March 8th** – Shabbat ha-Lev, a meditation Shabbat

• **Wednesday, May 1st** – Healing Service. All are welcome.

• **Saturday, May 4th** – Shabbat in the Park

• **Sunday, May 5th** – Welcoming the new Torahs to Or Hadash

• **Saturday, May 11th** – The Or Hadash community is invited to the B'nai Mitzvah of our Adult B'nai Mitzvah class. Celebrate as Sarah Kaplan, Warren Young, Charles Gardner, Elley Rosenberg and Debra Somers read from the Torah; then stay for a special Kiddush lunch.

• **Friday, May 17th** – Join us for the annual Congregational dinner at 6:30, Congregational Meeting at 7:00 and 8:00 Shabbat service with choir. There is no charge for the dinner, but RSVPs requested to office@orhadash.com.

• **Friday, May 31st** – Shabbat Al Fresco

Join us on the patio for a 7:00 outdoor Shabbat service, weather permitting.

• **Monday, March 25** at sundown – Passover begins at sundown.

There will be no Hebrew school on March 26 or April 2, and no Sunday school on March 24 or March 31. The Or Hadash office will be closed on March 25, 26 and 27 and April 1 in observance of Passover.

• **Sunday, April 7th, 10:45 am** – Congregational Yom HaShoah presentation

• **Sunday, April 21 from 9 am to 1 pm** – **ISRAEL 65 CELEBRATION**

Experience an engaging, interactive family event. Celebrate with food and family fun Israeli style celebrating Yom Haazmaut. The program is free, and food will be available for sale starting at 11:30.

5th-Annual Limmudphilly

Dear Synagogue Staff,

We are writing to ask for your help in promoting the **5th-Annual Limmud-Philly** conference to your congregation. LimmudPhilly is a community-wide Jewish learningfest that helps to expand the meaning of Jewish education. It is a special opportunity to bring together the Jewish community in Philadelphia through cross-communal Jewish education designed to strengthen and develop Jewish identity.

Last year, over 450 people from all over the Greater Philadelphia area came to this event, and we are expecting even more this year. This is Jewish learning in the broadest sense you can imagine! Over 75 scholars, artists, and educators will present the vast landscape of Jewish history, text, art, culture, and life through a variety of dynamic learning approaches including lectures, workshops, group study, films, performance, and yoga. This unprecedented Jewish communal experience will engage both new and seasoned learners in an open environment inspired by wisdom, enthusiasm, and a love of learning.

LimmudPhilly 2013 is scheduled for **April 26-28 at Friends Select School** on 17th & the Parkway. In the past, we have had participants from every religious stripe and ranging in age from 1-95 - this conference really does have something for everyone. We hope that you will take a moment to add this date to your congregational calendar. This year, we're especially looking forward to celebrating Lag B'Omer together as a LimmudPhilly community (and still ending early enough for participants to go celebrate with their home communities).

In addition to adding this event to your calendar, we would love to have your congregation as an involved part of the LimmudPhilly family. This includes actively promoting the event to your congregation to bring in both new participants and new volunteers. To support you with this, we would love to provide you with a LimmudPhilly discount code unique to your congregation or one of our volunteers as a Shabbat guest to say a few words about the event from the bimah. We'd also love to hear about any presenter suggestions you may have. To truly make this an event for the whole community, we need support, manpower, and ideas from the whole community.

(continued on page 7)



SPONSORS:



(5th-Annual LimmudPhilly conference, *continued*)

Please note once again that LimmudPhilly is an event for all ages. In addition to the main conference sessions, which are open and targeted to both adults and teens, we also have our Young Limmud program for 3-10 year olds. This program is held concurrently to the main conference and is a dynamic Jewish learning experience for children. If your congregation has Sunday Hebrew school, we'd love to talk to you about ways to make this day-long program a one-time alternative to the educational program you typically offer. We also think that LimmudPhilly is a great suggestion for youth groups and other teen programs looking for additional educational or community service options for teens.

We are incredibly excited about the program we have to offer and the impact LimmudPhilly can have on the entire Philadelphia Jewish community. We would love the opportunity to speak with you about any of the issues above or any other ways we can work together with your congregation.

Sincerely,

Ilana Emmett

2013 Co-Chair

(215) 760-4632

iremnett@gmail.com

George Shotz

2013 Co-Chair

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Celebrate a Special Event

Did you know that you can sponsor an Oneg or Kiddush to celebrate a special event? Please contact Michelle Smithman by phone at 215-641-4646 or by email at michellesmithman@msn.com to make arrangements to sponsor either one.

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7:00-8:30 p.m.

Making Your Strengths Work for You; Setting Realistic Goals

Beth Sholom Congregation
8231 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA

Tuesday, April 9, 2013
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Creating Resumes and Cover Letters That Work

Congregation Adath Jeshurun
7763 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA

Tuesday, April 23, 2013
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Strategic Networking

Old York Road Temple-Beth Am
971 Old York Road, Abington, PA

Tuesday, May 7, 2013
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Social Networking

Congregation Kol Ami
8201 High School Road, Elkins Park, PA

Tuesday, May 21, 2013
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Interviewing to Land the Job

Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel
8339 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA

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Ha-Kesher Now Accepting Advertising

Thank you for your interest in advertising in our synagogue newsletter, Ha-Kesher. We have “gone green,” and Ha-Kesher is now accepting advertising for our online publication at, www.orhadash.com. We will be publishing quarter-page ads at a rate of \$40.00 per issue or reproducing business cards at a rate of \$30.00 per issue. Please contact me if you have general questions. If our terms are acceptable, please email photo-ready ads to debra.schaeffer@gmail.com for evaluation. If your ad is accepted for publication, we will invoice you through email and forward your ad to our printer. Please contact our printer, Guy Homer, at homer@homer-group.com, for more specific information regarding printing specifications.

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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.