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Newsletter of Or Hadash
A Reconstructionist Congregation
190 Camp Hill Road
Fort Washington, PA 19034
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office@orhadash.com
www.orhadash.com

SAVE THESE DATES:

Torah Study is held every
Shabbat morning at 9 a.m.
in the Board Room
Join us!

BLOOD DRIVE

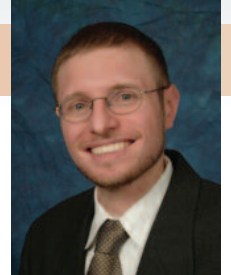
We don't want your sweat.
We don't want your tears.
Just step right up and
donate your life's blood.

Sunday January 24th, 2010
8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
at Or Hadash
190 Camp Hill Road
Ft. Washington, PA

HA-KESHER

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From Rabbi Josh



In early December, more than seventy people – congregants, guests, adults, children – gathered in our sanctuary to hear a program Dr. Tamar Kamionkowski, Academic Dean of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and I presented on the origins of the Bible and the implications this question raises for how read and understand the Bible. Dr. Kamionkowski's assertion – and one that finds support in Reconstructionist thought – is that the Bible is a humanly created document, written down over a long period of time and then compiled from separate sources into the final version we have today. For those whose beliefs depend on a conviction that the Bible is the literal word of God, this assertion would be both heretical and deeply upsetting. Most congregants in attendance, on the other hand, had no problem accepting the premises of Dr. Kamionkowski's presentation about Biblical origins – and yet still look to the Bible as a source of meaning, insight, and holiness. How can this be?

For my part, I have never been nearly as concerned with the question of origin as of meaning. The Bible, however it came to take on its present form, has been read, interpreted, and held as sacred in that form by countless generations of Jews (and others, of course) over the last two thousand years. The ancient rabbis engaged the Biblical text, entered into loving dialogue with it, in many cases disagreeing with the apparent meaning of what the text was trying to say. In reading and interpreting they found themselves within the text and made it their own. They argued, questioned, created midrash, and tried to uncover the deep truths the Bible contained.

As their heirs, we can engage in the same process of debating, searching for mean-

ing, wondering, engaging in dialogue with two thousand years of rabbinic interpretation ...and in the process finding ourselves in the text and in the spaces within the text – what the Talmud describes as the 'white fire' of Torah that forms the sacred backdrop against which the 'black fire' of the letters is inscribed. Whenever we bring ourselves close to that fire's light, warmth, and beauty, we engage in the same sacred process the ancient rabbis did and we too can draw out meaning, insight, and wisdom – even if our methods and conclusions may differ from theirs. As we search for truth and meaning in the Bible, I personally take comfort from the knowledge that our sacred text is made up of different voices with differing perspectives on how God functions in the world and how we are to live our lives as members of a covenant people. I believe that these varied perspectives combine to yield something far closer to Truth than any individual one could alone.

The ancient rabbis tell us the Torah has seventy faces, meaning that each person has the capacity to discern something different in Torah, yet each of these perspectives is authentic and true. In this sense, I believe the Bible is like a precious gem that refracts light and allows us to see differently depending how we choose to look through it. It is the process of engaging our precious, difficult, confusing, disturbing, dazzling, and deeply human sacred text that allows us to draw down holiness and live in the splendor of that refracted light.

B'shalom,

Rabbi. Josh

President's Message: Reflections for a New Year

By Rick Dzubow

“What has being President of Or Hadash taught me these past 3+ years? How has it changed me?”

When I was asked these questions at a Chanukah party a few days ago, my initial reaction was that I was struck silent. For those who know me, that is a rare reaction indeed. But these were two great questions, and these are my answers:

1. Being President has strengthened my faith in “humanity.” When we are “heads-down” involved in our daily routines, we sometimes don't see or don't look for all the small and not so small things that people do for people they know, and for people they will never meet. As President, I have seen and experienced how selfless and giving our community is, both collectively and individually. We come to the

assistance of those we know well, and we come to the assistance of those we hardly know at all. We come to offer our company and kindness to ease the pain of loss and illness, and we come to offer our friendship and support to those among us who are going through tough times. And we come to share the joyful times, because in greater numbers, joyful times can be strengthened and made more meaningful. This is what a community does. This is what our community does so well.

2. Being President has strengthened my faith in myself. All of us have fears, and all of us are confident in some areas, and less so in others. That is what helps define us as “human,” and this is what helps guide us as we try to become better than we are. Being President has helped me confront some of my fears and has given me ample opportunity to quite simply become a better person. My interactions with all of you and on behalf of all of you have opened my eyes and my heart to what is possible within myself. You have inspired me, you have taught me, and in some cases, you have challenged me to be better than what I was. And I will always be grateful.
3. I've learned that people are just human, and that's ok. We all have expectations. We have expectations of ourselves, and expectations of others. Accepting others ... really accepting others is not an easy thing. It is simply not an easy thing to accept that people are human, that people are fallible, and that people will not act the way you expect them to. And it is sometimes even more difficult to accept the fact that we ourselves are human and fallible. We are sometimes our harshest critics. When we expect perfection, of ourselves or others, we will be disappointed. I've learned to be more accepting, to laugh at my own imperfections — I

have plenty to laugh at. I've learned that people are just human, and that's ok.

I have been changed by my years as President of Or Hadash. I have become balder, what hair remains has become grayer, and I move a bit more slowly than I did when I first started. But I have been fundamentally changed for the better because of the opportunity to give back to this community, to become a small part of something much bigger than myself, and to volunteer on behalf of all of you. That same opportunity is open to all of you. I encourage you to consider stepping forward ... not just for me, and not just for us; but for yourself, too.

From the Administrator

By Laurie Albert

In November it was Or Hadash's turn to house families in transition as part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. Our Social Action/Tikun Olam committee headed by Alisa Belzer and Debbie Bernstein, and project coordinator Sharon Starr, moved into action early in the fall to ensure that we had volunteers lined up to stay overnight, to cook and have dinner with our guests, to help them move in and move out, to do their laundry and shopping, and to drive them to and from work or training programs. It is inspiring to see how many members of our congregation offer to help out every year.

We received a lovely thank-you note from Kim Coles and her son acknowledging the countless hours that our congregants gave to make them feel so comfortable and welcome.

I also want to add my thanks to all who volunteered. What you have done is truly a mitzvah.

B'NAI MITZVOT

JANUARY 16

Bar Mitzvah of **Joshua Hull**, son of Lora Metelits and Paul Hull

FEBRUARY 27

Bat Mitzvah of **Alexandra Poley**, daughter of David Poley

CONDOLENCES

- To **Ed Kashdan** on the passing of his mother, Florence Kashdan, grandmother of Daniel and Zachary
- To **Bob Glantz** on the passing of his father, Martin Glantz, father-in-law of Debi Ettinger, grandmother of Brian.
- To **Jennifer Hoagland** on the passing of her cousin, Katherine Mann

From the Education Director

By Lori Rubin

In November, I traveled to Chicago for the fourth bi-annual RENA conference. RENA stands for the Reconstructionist Educators of North America. I helped to found this organization in 2003. In fact, Or Hadash hosted two of those four conferences. This one, however, was held at JRC, the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston, Illinois, otherwise known as the “Green Synagogue.” Click here for more information on their greening techniques: <http://www.jrc-evanston.org/>. Visiting their new building was certainly interesting. Getting together with twenty-five other Reconstructionist educators is always fascinating, but the thing I really want to write about is the vision of Or Hadash’s religious school.

Through the Designated School Program, we were encouraged to look at our mission statement. You may not be familiar with it, so I have included it here: *We see our school as a place to help our children to learn through an interactive educational approach, and with critical, creative thinking. The children should discover their personal relationships with Judaism as a civilization, study the Torah as an expression of God’s relationship with humankind, and connect with Jews throughout the world.* At the conference, we looked at many mission statements to see similarities and differences. What struck me about ours is that while I believe it holds true, and I believe it is our mission, it made me want to rethink how our school functions. Of course, it didn’t hurt that I spent the summer at Camp JRF where we explored Judaism all day every day in a non-threatening camp atmosphere.

So I have had these visions for a while. I spoke of them at the beginning of the school year...thoughts of multi-aged groupings, experiential learning, peer teaching, and center-based learning. We

played with the idea of “switching classes” and practiced moving around in November during Parent Visiting Day. After the RENA conference, I was able to put my thoughts down on paper. I look forward to sharing them with you as the year progresses. I wonder, however, what is your vision? At the beginning of the DSP process, we asked three questions: 1) What would an “ideal” graduate of our school look like? 2) What would an “ideal” curriculum for our school look like? 3) What would the “ideal” school look like? Some of the data from 2006-2007 is interesting. Here are some examples:

Our school should be a place that shows students how to translate being Jewish into a way of being in the world. In other words, students will learn not just the content of the Torah, but they will learn to apply that learning to being a fully engaged, moral human being.

A student should have the tools (knowledge, values, etc.) to be a productive member of the Jewish community and be able to find meaning and fulfillment from activities that stem from Jewish values and traditions.

Our curriculum should include -how to live Jewishly, prayer, lifestyles, Torah, history, literature, arts and Israel. How does all of this relate to modern life in our society?

I believe we continue to strive to meet those goals. Together, we will move forward to take our school to the next level. In the meantime, if you have thoughts on what you would like to see in our school program, please share them with me. Whether you are a congregant with kids in our school or not, I would enjoy hearing from you. You can reach me via e-mail at school@orhadash.com or in the office at 215-283-0276.



UPCOMING EVENTS

January 8th (SECOND Friday of the month)

Three Part Harmony Services

6:00 – Tot Shabbat

6:30 – Dairy/Veggie Potluck Dinner

7:00 – Family Service

Friday, January 15

Shabbat Schmooze with a Kabbalat Shabbat service at 7:00 pm will be followed by a catered dinner. Reservations must be received no later than January 11.

Friday, January 22

Annual Service New Life Church

Worship with us and hear the choirs of both Or Hadash and New Life.

Sunday, January 24th

American Red Cross Blood Drive

at Or Hadash from 8:30 until 2:30. You can make your appointment on line at <http://www.membersforlife.org/pennj/schedule/login.php?sponsorcode=6291> or email Jon Shapiro at jshapmd@yahoo.com

Friday, January 29

Erev Service & Shabbat Zemirah

will feature special guest speaker, Liz Christy, and the music of Walt Beier.

February 5th

Tu B'Shevat

Friday, February 19

Erev Shabbat Service

will include our Choir and Joe Aronson's program "Songs of the Black American Experience."

Monday, February 1

Career Planning As A Lifelong Process: How to Transition your Career During a Recession

Presentation by Jewish Employment Vocational Services at 7:30 pm at Or Hadash

JANUARY 29, 2010

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR SPEAKS

"Tikkun Olam and Turtles: Creating Sustainable Environments in Gandoca, Costa Rica"

My name is Liz Christy and I am a senior Environmental Studies Major and Spanish Minor at Temple University. Over the summer I joined a program called International Student Volunteers. Our project was to work with WIDE-CAST, an international organization based mostly in Central and South America, focused on preserving the populations and habitats of all sea turtles native to the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans. Working with local Costa Rican families and volunteers from all over the globe, our goal was create a safe nesting site for leatherback sea turtles to increase their populations. Various aspects of the program include studying the habits of the turtles, working with local community to keep their environment clean, helping locals find ways to supplement their income without killing the turtles, and working with surrounding nations to understand why the turtles are dwindling in numbers. Environmental protection and Tikkun Olam go hand in hand. Come hear about my experience and learn how you can take similar action to see and save our planet.

Saturday evening, February 6

ONE BOOK, ONE JEWISH COMMUNITY

It will be a Movie Night with two short documentaries on Jews in the civil war and present day Jewish life in the south. Get your copy of Dara Horn's "All Other Nights" from Laurie Albert in the Or Hadash office NOW at only \$13 per copy

(list price \$24.95 – WHAT A BARGAIN!) and be ready for a fascinating evening.

Saturday evening, February 27

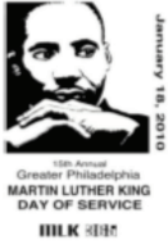
PURIMSHPIEL

Sunday, February 28

Purim Carnival

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 a bimonthly online publication available at our web site, www.orhadash.com. We will be publishing quarter-page ads at a rate of \$30.00 per issue or reproducing business cards at a rate of \$20.00 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.



**15TH ANNUAL
GREATER PHILADELPHIA
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OF SERVICE**
Pennsylvania . New Jersey . Delaware
Monday, January 18, 2010



Global Citizen
Think Globally. Act Locally.

It's time to make some soup! This year we've got two choices:

1. Make soup in your home just as you always have and deliver it to one of our freezer locations by Sun. 1/17 or Mon. 1/18
2. Attend a Soup Party!

What's a Soup Party?

Soup Parties will be gatherings in congregant's homes where soup will be made with friends. Parties will take place on Saturday, Sunday or Monday of MLK weekend and the times will vary. See the back of this flyer for details.

Can you host a Soup Party? Contact Debbie Bernstein and let her know your preferred date, time and location. Soup Party locations will be posted by January 8th.

DO YOU HAVE A FREEZER? We are desperately seeking freezer space. Please e-mail Debbie (debbie.bernstein@mac.com).

Our goal this year is 1200 pints of soup. Let's get chopping!!

The fine print:

Containers are available in the Community Room. Instructions are in each sleeve of containers. Please return all unused containers to Or Hadash.

The Host:

- ✓ Identifies the day and time (Sat 1/16; Sun 1/17 or Mon 1/18). Parties would generally be 2-3 hours in length but feel free to make a day or evening out of it!
- ✓ Determines the number of people and basic soup requirements (kosher, vegetarian, etc).
- ✓ Determine if you want people to bring ingredients for one type of soup or each attendee/family to bring ingredients for their own batch.
- ✓ Provides knives, cutting boards, pots and the stove for soup prep and cooking.

The Attendees:

- ✓ RSVP to your selected Soup Party
- ✓ Come prepared with the necessary ingredients
- ✓ Plan to have a good time
- ✓ At least one volunteer drives soup to one of the OH freezer location:

