



HA-KESHER

Volume 26, Issue 2 • November/December 2009 • Elul/Tishrei 5570



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Newsletter of Or Hadash
A Reconstructionist Congregation
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SAVE THESE DATES:

Adult Ed. Presents
DR. TAMAR KAMIONKOWSKI
Sunday, Dec. 6

HUMAN RIGHTS SHABBAT
with Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat
and Suad Mansour
Friday, Dec. 11 at 8 p.m.

**RICK RECHT CONCERT &
WINTER FUNDRAISER AT AFS**
Order tickets at
www.orhadash.com/rickrecht
Saturday, Dec. 12 at 7:30 p.m.

RRC SHABBAT
Dinner (RSVP required) and
Service with D'var Torah
Presentation at 8 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 18 at 7 p.m.

From Rabbi Josh



The festival of Chanukah recalls the oppression of the Jews at the hand of the Greeks when we were forbidden to practice our religion, the commitment of the Maccabees which led to their victory over the Greeks and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the celebration of that victory and the other miracles connected with the holiday. I offer this brief recap – Chanukah 101, if you will – because Or Hadash is offering programs over the course of the holiday that will pick up on all three themes of Chanukah – battling oppression, commitment and dedication and, of course, celebration.

On the first night of Chanukah, Or Hadash will be joining with other synagogues nationwide in observing Human Rights Shabbat, an opportunity for us to remember and act upon our mandate to work on behalf of freedom and justice for all people, created in God's image. The fighting in Darfur, in western Sudan, has raged for nearly seven years, as a genocidal campaign has led to the deaths of more than 400,000 Darfuri civilians and the displacement of an additional 2.8 million. Our Darfur Action Group is proud to bring brother and sister Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat and Suad Mansour to Or Hadash to speak at our Shabbat services. Shegifat is a Darfuri journalist who was arrested by Sudanese authorities and tortured for more than six months until the Darfur Alert Coalition was able to obtain his release last October. Mansour is a Darfuri activist who was forced to flee the country because of her work on behalf of development projects for women in Darfur's rural areas. Both will be on hand to share their stories, renew the ancient call for justice, and tell us how we can help bring the freedom our people enjoys to others who still live with the daily threat of oppression and violence.

On the eighth night, we highlight the theme of dedication and commitment as we celebrate our annual RRC Shabbat and the selection of the fifth George Goldman Or Hadash D'var Torah scholar. Join members of the RRC community, including students and faculty, for dinner as we renew the connection between Or Hadash and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College where our congregation was founded. Our service acknowledges the commitment of the rabbinical students who devote five or more years to study in preparation for a life of service to the Jewish people, and we celebrate their dedication as we hear the winning D'var Torah, always a highlight of the year.

And the second night is our time for joyous celebration! Jewish musical sensation Rick Recht will come to Abington Friends School to rock the house at Or Hadash's winter fundraiser event. Rick Recht is known throughout the Jewish world as a dynamic performer who has appeared at venues across the country, including in front of 30,000 fans at the Los Angeles Jewish Festival. Local events include concerts at Camp JRF, Bux-Mont Kehillah Community Fest, and Camp Pinemere. Ticket packages are still available that include CD's and an opportunity to meet Rick – see elsewhere in this newsletter for more information. This concert is the perfect way to experience the joy and celebration of Chanukah together with your Or Hadash community, so be sure to get tickets while they last.

I look forward to being together as Or Hadash celebrates the whole range of messages of one of our most joyous holidays!
B'shalom,

Rabbi Josh

President's Message: Random Thoughts for a New Year

By Rick Dzubow

The more things change, the more they stay the same ...

In the 1960's, Richie Allen swung a lot at the low and away slider and struck out many, many times. The fans booed, and yet he kept on chasing after that pitch that he could never quite reach. He couldn't help himself. But once in a while, the pitch wouldn't slide quite as much, and he would hit a mammoth home run. The fans would cheer.

In the 1970's and '80's, Mike Schmidt swung a lot at the low and away slider and struck out many, many times. The fans booed, and yet he kept on chasing after that pitch that he could never quite reach. He couldn't help himself. But once in a while, the pitch wouldn't slide quite as much, and he would hit a mammoth home run. The fans would cheer.

In our present day, Ryan Howard swings a lot at the low and outside slider, and strikes out a record amount of times. I hear a smattering of boos, and yet, he keeps on chasing after that pitch that he can never quite reach. He can't help himself. But once in a while, the pitch won't slide quite as much, and he'll hit a mammoth home run. The fans will cheer.

Richie Allen, Mike Schmidt, and Ryan Howard have a lot in common. They all swung a lot at the pitch they could never quite reach and struck out many, many times. They are also the three most talented power hitters the Phillies ever had in what's considered the modern era of baseball. While they could never stop themselves from chasing after the pitch they could never reach, they also never stopped swinging. We shouldn't either.

The more things change, the more they stay the same ...

My favorite cartoon as a child (and adult) was the Road Runner cartoon. The story line never changed. There would be this "Wily Coyote" who would endlessly chase this fast bird (the Road Runner). I'm assuming the Coyote chased the Road Runner because he was hungry, or because he couldn't help himself. The Coyote would plot and chase, get close, and fall off a cliff (literally) almost every time. Once in a while he wouldn't fall off a cliff. In those cases, he would get run over by a train, or flattened by a large boulder. In the end, the Road Runner was more wily than the wily Coyote, and a bit faster as well.

I'm assuming the Coyote knew he would never catch the Road Runner, but he kept trying anyway. He couldn't help himself. He kept on chasing the bird he could never quite reach. What would he have done if he ever caught the bird???? For that answer, I turn to my dog, Buddy.

The more things change, the more they stay the same ...

Back in the 1990's, I had a Springer Spaniel, Buddy. Buddy had boundless enthusiasm for life, and one of his favorite activities was running after squirrels in

the yard. I believe he considered it his sacred obligation to chase them. Morning or night, rain or shine, young or old, Buddy would run and try to catch them. Just as Buddy would get close, the squirrels would reach the safe haven of a tree. Years and years would pass, and Buddy would chase the squirrels that he could never quite reach. I assumed he did this because he was hungry, or like the wily Coyote, because he couldn't help himself. I think Buddy knew deep down in his "doggie brain" that he would never catch the squirrels, but he kept on chasing anyway ...

Yes, he kept on chasing until one day, a baby squirrel fell out of a nest. Buddy chased it, except in this case he caught the squirrel. As Buddy loomed over the squirrel, I wondered what he would do the one time he actually was successful. He nuzzled it gently with his snout, licked it a few times and kept looking over to me wondering what to do next. My daughter and I took the baby squirrel to a wildlife rehab. I guess it was the chase that Buddy loved ... maybe the chase itself was the home run.

It is in our nature to chase. Many of the things we chase after are things that are just out of our reach. And yet, we keep on chasing. Perhaps we do it because of a hunger that we have deep inside, or maybe we just can't help ourselves. What I do know is that it speaks volumes about our nature that we keep on chasing after those things that are just out of our reach.

May your new year be full of chasing, and may you all persevere until you hit a mammoth home run. Happy New Year everybody!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Or Hadash Adult Ed Presents

THE HEBREW BIBLE: WHAT IS TRUE, WHAT IS MYTH AND WHAT WE DON'T KNOW, AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO US AS JEWS?

Presented by

Dr. Tamar Kamionkowski,
Chair, Department of Biblical Civilization and Academic Dean of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Dr. Kamionkowski, a gifted teacher, will present the methodology and results of modern, critical Bible study, bringing us up to date with what we know of the historical versus mythical nature of the *Tanakh*. Were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob real people, or mythical characters? Did we ever live in or flee Egypt? Did Joshua invade Canaan? Did David really do all we attribute to him? Who wrote the Bible?

After this presentation we will have time to discuss, along with Rabbi Josh and Dr. Kamionkowski, what the apparent lack of historical basis for many of our Bible stories means to us in our practice of Judaism. For the first century of critical Bible study, Jews avoided any attempt at this endeavor, denying any explanation other than the "Word of God." If it isn't all true, what does this mean for our faith and practice?

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6
11:30 AM until 1:00 PM
In the Sanctuary

Refreshments will be served

No admission charge except your willingness to have an open mind!

Please email Richard Malkin at richmalk@verizon.net for any questions.

- "Jerusalem and Prayer," art by Debra Kapnek, continues on display in the Staircase Art Gallery.

• "GIVE ME YOUR HAND: CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY"

Tuesday evenings, Nov 3, 10, 17 and 24 at 7:30 p.m.

Adult Education presents a four-session program with Rabbi Elisa Goldberg. As a community we take pride in being able to care for one another in times of need. Helping individuals and families struggling with acute and long-term illnesses takes dedication, compassion, and organization. There is much to be done on the practical level, as well as a need for spiritual and emotional support, to overcome the fear and isolation that are often part of the experience. It is not always easy to know what to do or say, and sometimes people fall through the cracks. In this four-part class, we will explore what Judaism has to say about *Bikkur Holim* (Visiting the Sick), illness, and healing. We will read traditional texts, study several prayers, explore personal experiences, and develop practical strategies and skills. This class is open to anyone with an interest in bringing *refuat ha-nefesh* (healing of spirit) and *refuat ha-guf* (healing of body) to those living with illness and their loved ones.

No Charge for Or Hadash members; \$10/session or \$36 for all four sessions for non-members. Reserve your spot by emailing office@orhadash.com or calling Laurie at 215-283-0276.

• THE HEBREW BIBLE: WHAT IS TRUE, WHAT IS MYTH AND WHAT WE DON'T KNOW, AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO US AS JEWS?

Sunday, December 6, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., in the sanctuary

Adult Education will sponsor a presentation by Dr. Tamar Kamionkowski, Chair, of the Department of Biblical Civilization and Academic Dean of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Dr. Kamionkowski, a gifted teacher, will present the methodology and results of modern, critical Bible study, bringing us up to date with what we know of the historical versus mythical nature of the *Tanakh*. Were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob real people, or mythical characters? Did we ever live in or flee Egypt? Did Joshua invade Canaan? Did David really do all we attribute to him? Who wrote the Bible?

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- **Human Rights Shabbat — Friday, December 11** — We are proud that guest speaker, Suad Mansour of the Darfur Alert Coalition, will join us for services.

- **Rick Recht Concert — December 12th** at Abington Friends School — Please join us to celebrate Hanukkah at this major community event.

- **RRC Shabbat — December 18** — Hear the winner of the George Goldman Or Hadash D'var Torah Scholar competition at the Erev Shabbat Service. Reservations are required for dinner before the service. It will be a vegetarian dinner from La Pergola in Jenkintown, \$20 per adult, \$10 for children under 13.

B'NAI MITZVOT

NOVEMBER 7

Bar Mitzvah of **Brayden Greenwald**, son of Thomas and Lynda Greenwald

NOVEMBER 14

Bat Mitzvah of **Lauren Goldenberg**, daughter of Jon and Bari Goldenberg

NOVEMBER 21

Bar Mitzvah of **Joseph Mernyk**, son of Alisa Belzer

DECEMBER 5

Bar Mitzvah of **Julian Salzer**, son of Barbara Straussberg and William Salzer

DECEMBER 12

Bat Mitzvah of **Abigail Grossman**, daughter of Elisabeth and Laurence Grossman

Yashir Koach — And A Big Thank You

By *Ken Rosenberg*

Despite the most difficult economy most of us have experienced, the members of Or Hadash responded to the Yom Kippur appeal on behalf of Israel Bonds with record-setting results. Not only did more than 15% of our families make an investment in the State of Israel, they did so to the tune of more than \$50,000 — Or Hadash records in both participation and amount raised. Was it something I said?

Thank you to all who purchased a bond, and for those who were undecided, it is never too late to contact Israel Bonds at 215-545-8380. Just tell them “Or Hadash sent me”.

From the Education Director

By *Lori Rubin*

As I write this, the High Holidays have just passed. At our family services, I spoke about how we typically look, but do not see. Similarly, we listen, but do not hear. I urged those who attended those services to take the opportunity to pay attention to what they see and hear. Now that you are reading this, I am wondering what changes you might have made in your lives since the beginning of 5770. Have you noticed the foliage? Have you stopped to appreciate a pumpkin display? Have you heard the laughter of your child and thought that it was great to be together as a family? Perhaps you took the time to have an in-depth conversation with your teens about what is happening in their lives. Time passes quickly...the time we spend reflectively during the High Holidays is important; but taking the time to be reflective is important all year.

I tend to constantly reflect. What is happening that is good? How can we change our programs to make them better? On the last Tuesday of the month, the students in the third through sixth grades lead services from 5:30-6:00 p.m. It is an opportunity for our older students to model for our younger students what they **know** (the order of the service) and how to **be** (respectful and inclusive). This past Tuesday was the first of those services for the year. I wondered: Would the students want to participate? Would they remember the prayers from last year? Would the older students include the younger ones? The answer? YES! Our intent to have the students ready to lead the congregation in prayer by the end of sixth grade has been met.

But what about the students who don't wish to lead prayers? How do they get involved? Prayer means different things to different people. We strive at Or Hadash to make all we do meaningful to our congregants. Some find meaning in social action; some find meaning at our healing services; some find meaning in the music of the prayers. So, for those students who don't want to get up and lead us in prayer, they may want to write a poem about the prayer or draw a picture.

We are in the process of reformatting our High Holiday Family Service Machzor. With the help of Allison Moss, we have begun to make the family service machzor look more like the prayer packet that we use at Hebrew School. It uses texts from the Machzor Leyamim Nora'im, the prayer book for the Days of Awe that the adults use at Or Hadash. The words will be consistent with the adult version, yet we will supplement with easier translations, as well as students' poetry and artwork. It will surely be a successful, inclusive project. Also, we intend to retain some of the work of the B'nai Mitzvah students who created the original versions in 1996 and 2000. As they say, “From generation to generation.” We learn from our past as we create our future!

By the time you read this, Chanukah will be approaching! This seems hard to believe. May we all rededicate ourselves to be the best we can be. Come see Rick Recht on December 12th. He will amaze you with his lyrics and inspire you with his thoughts on peace. As always, if you have any thoughts, questions, or comments, I am always happy to hear from you.

MAZEL TOV!

- To **Stephanie and Len Zangwill** on the birth of their son, David Joshua Zangwill.

CONDOLENCES

- **Dodi Klimoff** on the passing of her stepfather, David W. Dishler, grandfather of Elizabeth and Gabriel.
- **David Raizman** on the passing of his brother, Richard Eric Raizman, brother-in-law of Lucy and uncle of Becca and Josh.
- **Emily Keshner** on the passing of her mother, Minnie Keshner.
- **Manny Rosenberg** on the passing of his aunt, Goldie Rosenberg.
- **Jim Hall-Morrison** on the passing of his father, Paul Hall, father-in-law of Gail Morrison-Hall.
- **Amy Gross** on the passing of her father, Abraham Gross, grandfather of Ezra Sacks.
- **Manny Rosenberg** on the passing of his father, Lipman Rosenberg, father-in-law of Ellie and grandfather of Lauren and Ira.
- **Debbie Karl** on the passing of her father, Leonard Rubenstein, father-in-law of Charlie and grandfather of Hannah.
- **Ed Schacht** on the passing of his father, Milton Schacht, father-in-law of Vivien Kane and grandfather of David and Sarah Schacht.

From the Social Action-Tikkun Olam (SATO) Committee

By Alisa Belzer and Debbie Bernstein SATO Committee Co-Chairs

The SATO committee has gotten off to a terrific start this fall! The first two projects have had a great response from the congregation and we thank all who have participated. For the high holidays we set a goal of collecting 250 jars of peanut butter for our food drive. We exceeded our expectations and actually collected 294. In combination with a Sukkah decorating party and Friday night family services on October 2nd, we had a pot luck meal assembly project for Aid for Friends, a meal delivery service for the homebound. Over 20 families participated and we assembled 36 meals. We feel happy that the congregation is working together to help decrease hunger among the needy in our area.

Looking ahead we have two more proj-

ects before the end of the calendar year and we hope to have wide participation in them both.

As always we will be hosting families in transition through the Interfaith Hospitality Network during the month of November. Volunteers are needed for many different kinds of tasks. Even if you are not reading this until November, there will probably still be things to do, so please contact Sharon Starr (sstarr1009@verizon.net) to find out how you can help.

In conjunction with the Rick Recht concert in December, we will be collecting musical instruments to donate to Musicopia. This is an organization that collects, repairs and distributes instruments to needy children through the Philadelphia School District. This is a great opportunity to make space in your closet and bring some joy to others all at the same time.

Please consider donating your time and needed materials for Tikkun Olam projects throughout the year.

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@homergruop.com, for more specific information regarding printing specifications.

From the Administrator

By Laurie Albert

As I write this, I am looking at the mounds of jars of peanut butter that were donated for the High Holiday food drive. Once again, we were able to exceed our goal because of your generosity.

This is a recurrent theme at Or Hadash. It applies to the Bloodmobile, the Martin Luther King Day soup project, the request to help area flood victims this summer, and more. I want to express my thanks to you all for your giving spirit.

Sharing Ramadan: An Evening Of Interaction With A Muslim Community

By Jeff Chebot

A warm summer farewell breeze caressed our faces as the sun slowly set at the Foundation for Islamic Education in Villanova on Sunday evening, September 6, 2009. We had arrived moments ago, six of us, as the unofficial delegates from Or Hadash, and were now seated on the back patio of an impressive white mansion. The mansion and outlying buildings, as well as the rolling Main Line grounds of over 20 acres upon which they are situated, formerly belonged to the Strawbridge family, but were converted to use as an Islamic educational center, following their purchase by Saudi businessmen. Our host contact, Iftekhar Hussein, whom you may recall as having taught our Islam 101 lecture series with Rabbi Josh last year, enthusiastically responded to questions posed by our members. For us, including David Toub, our Adult Education Committee chair and whose initiative in arranging this event must be commended, Guy and Shelly Homer, Beth Alper, Gerri Goldman, and me, it was a time to listen, to learn, and to open ourselves to experiences possibly outside our usual comfort zones.

Iftekhar patiently and good-naturedly responded to questions, some of which were pointed, from explanations about head coverings for women, to the effects upon Islamic charitable giving caused by federal anti-terrorism policies, to the practices and significance of Ramadan, to explaining the Islamic calendar. Particularly impressive was his understanding and explanation of varying mores in different Muslim communities worldwide. Joining the Or Hadashers as visiting guests was a contingent of about ten youth and adult members of a nearby Baptist church. Among the Muslim community members participating in our question and answer session were two scarved women. We noted that most, if not all, of the Muslim women wore head

coverings, generally scarves. One woman, with a round, kind, bespectacled face frequently interjected humorous nearly self-deprecating remarks about the Muslim community and practices. She was a veritable stand-up comic. These gentle barbs were very reminiscent of the jokes we Jews level at ourselves, and were actually quite comforting and disarming, lest anyone should subscribe to a stereotype that all Muslim people are austere, or to any negative stereotypes about any people. And, just as our month of Elul builds through Rosh Hashanah and the Ten Days of Repentance, culminating with the Yom Kippur observance, so too, as our hosts described, the intensity of Ramadan accelerates as the closing of the window on this period of concentrated repentance, self-improvement and charitable giving looms over the last ten days.

It was 7:15 p.m. Sunset had arrived and we were beginning to feel our hunger. We can only imagine how our hosts felt, having endured daily fasts over the past sixteen or so days, though those of us who fast on Yom Kippur, Tishah B'Av and minor fast days, have a sense and can, to an extent, sympathize. Question and answer was over and we were invited back into the main building for milk and figs, a snack plainly evoking the Middle East and Eretz Zavav Halav U'd'vash, a land flowing with milk and honey, as well as wishes for a sweet New Year in our Jewish community. We were also served savory pastries, crepe-like, filled with what I believe were lightly spiced potatoes, and reminiscent of samosas in taste, though resembling egg rolls.

Men and women were now segregated for separate evening worship services; the women retreated to an adjoining room, while the men were directed into an unadorned space of about fifty feet by twenty feet, to the side of the large hall

we had entered from the patio. There were no chairs and no tables. After removing our shoes, as is the custom in Islam, we non-Muslims walked to the rear of the worship room to observe and support our Muslim brethren in prayer. The worshippers gradually filed in, even after prayer had started, and, amazingly, in neat order, from left to right, front to back, one by one, until four or five full rows had formed. Men's heads were not covered. Some wore robes, while others wore street clothes. The floor was fully carpeted, facilitating the many prostrations, which characterized the service. I watched, in fascination, as each worshipper began his prayer by cupping his hands to his ears, as though to open his mind to funnel the word of G-d. The prayer service itself lasted about twenty minutes, and consisted of Quranic passages chanted over a loudspeaker, with responses in the form of bowing and full body prostrations. While our much longer Jewish service does contain some bowing, and there is no prostration, except once on Yom Kippur during the great Aleynu, and even then, generally, only by our rabbi, in the Muslim service the bowings and prostrations seemed more intrinsic. Every so often the congregated men responded with "amin", undoubtedly equivalent to "amen", in Hebrew, meaning, "it is true." There seemed to be several sets of these prayers, which contained a slightly longer period of silent or hushed individual meditation, where, we understand, the worshipper recites his or her own personally selected verses from the Quran. The private hushed recitation reminded me of our own Amidah, the Sh'moneh Esrei.

We understand that the women's prayer experience was similar, with the same leader's calls broadcast by loudspeaker and visible on a screen in their prayer quarters.

During the service, several young children,

Sharing Ramadan...

boys and girls, cavorted back and forth in the back of the prayer room, playing games and giggling, in the space between the Muslim worshippers and the non-Muslim visitors. Though the imam afterwards admonished parents to do a better job of controlling their kids, the children's playfulness, against the backdrop of the sincere focused worship, to me, injected the ritual with life, much as I've observed during Jewish High Holiday services in some Orthodox congregations.

Iftekhar told us that there were really no ground rules for the attending non-Muslims, except not to disturb the worshippers. For the most part, Guy, David and I stood near the back; but, out of respect, some of us bowed when the Muslim men were bowed and knelt when the Muslim men were prostrating. Somehow, it seemed strange to me and not sufficiently supportive of our hosts to be standing fully erect while they bowing or fully prostrated in sincere and devoted worship. I also kept my ears open for familiar sounding words, and found my extremely rusty and rudimentary colloquial Palestinian Arabic to be only marginally helpful in deciphering in the classical Arabic of the Quran, including the names of G-d – "Allah" (our "El" or "Elohim") and "Rahman" (the "Merciful," our "El rahum"), as well as "dinya", the "world," and a few others.

Then it was time for dinner. We were led outside, in the mild air, to the cafeteria facility. Two rows of food were set up on each side, one for the men and one for the women, who, generally, sat on opposite sides of the cafeteria. There were over three hundred people in attendance – really my greatest surprise of the evening, since I had fully expected an intimate affair,

with about sixty or so present. What did not surprise me at all was the warmth and openness that awaited us, since my limited experience in Muslim countries and what I had read informed me that hospitality was a treasured value. Every one with whom we spoke exuded kind and welcoming friendliness, doing honor to the patriarch Abraham, whom our Jewish tradition remembers as the archetypal host. Dinner included chicken biriyani and spinach with yogurt sauce. You see, the Islamic dietary rules, called halal, do not completely dovetail with kashrut, such that Muslims are permitted to mix milk and meat, but are forbidden to imbibe alcoholic beverages.

Some of the conversation was unexpected and even entertaining. The Or Hadash men sat across from an African American couple, the wife wearing hijab, a Muslim woman's head covering. The man related how difficult the fast was for him, as a prison guard, with all stresses of the penitentiary compounded by his assignment to the kitchen. His wife's story was even more remarkable. We learned that her son lives in Israel as an Orthodox Jew, studies in a yeshiva in Ma'alot and operates a tank in the Israel Defense Force. She chuckled about kosher shopkeepers on Castor Avenue taking some time to become accustomed to her

walking in wearing the hijab to order kosher food for her son when he visited. When I reunited with Gerri on the women's side of the cafeteria, I met two scarved women, one of whom was an American convert, and the other was from Kuwait. While both described how barriers among Muslims, Shiite and Sunni, have broken down somewhat in the U.S., nearly all attendees at this particular center subscribe to the Sunni beliefs, with some Shiites in the mix. The Kuwaiti woman, when she heard the convert describe how a friend of hers had converted to Islam and, after studying several religious texts, had chosen the Shiite path, expressed surprise and mild indignation that anyone could, in good conscience, select an ideology based on a "1,500 year old grudge." I thanked her for her candor and wished her "kul sane winti salmi", or "happy holiday" (literally, "every year and you are whole" or "at peace"). That brought a beaming smile to her face, and any rancor over a conversion to Shiite Islam disappeared. She remarked that she thought Jews were more knowledgeable than Christians about Islam.

On the ride back, among other things, we conjectured about the future effects of America's open culture upon Islam, a relatively new implant in this country in significant numbers. Will an organized

liberalizing expression, such as Reconstructionism, emerge? Only time will tell. In the meantime, we are ever so grateful for the experience of sharing Ramadan; and David and Iftekhar merit our appreciation. We look forward to welcoming members of the Muslim community to an Or Hadash event in the very near future. Kulanu b'nei Avraham – Kulna bani Ibrahim – We are all children of Abraham.

Still looking for work? JEVS can help!

If you are Jewish and live in the Delaware Valley, you may qualify for the *helpinghands* program — and it's **FREE!**

For more information, call 215-854-1834

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A Reconstructionist Congregation
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Fort Washington, PA 19034



STAIRCASE ART GALLERY AT OR HADASH

DEBRA KAPNEK

“Jerusalem and Prayer”

Displayed in “Jerusalem and Prayer” is a sampling of work by Debra Kapnek. Beginning with a portrait of Emtithal, which incorporates the young model’s poem scrawled in multiple layers over her face, the exhibit includes portrait, still life, Jerusalem landscape, and creative imagery using prayer as inspiration. Emtithal’s poem is positively prayer-like, and connects deeply to the image nearby of shattered vessels. The vessels depict the destruction in our world that we are obligated to repair, according to Kabbalah.

The Hebrew Letter Paintings, eight of which are currently being exhibited in Beth Sholom’s Bornstein auditorium, were created to express the meaning of the prayer within the imagery. For example, the Havdalah service is about the One who differentiates the Holy for the ordinary, day for

night, Israel from the other nations, and Shabbat from the other days of the week. For that reason, the painting moves from daylight at the top, to darkness at the bottom. In “Modeh Ani Lifanecha,” the word lifanecha means “before You.” The word is larger than “modeh ani” which translates to “I am thankful.” The “lifanecha” is translucent and encompasses heaven and earth. Each of the Hebrew prayer paintings is designed to inspire the viewer to reflect on the meaning of the words and prayers.

Jerusalem, religion capital of the world, city of stone and wild flower, is always in the heart of the artist. She has painted and sold several series of Jerusalem landscapes, as the “City of Prayer” is a source of great spiritual inspiration for her, as it is for millions worldwide.