

March 12th, 2010

Dear Friends,

Shabbat Shalom! Tomorrow we will read the last two Torah portions of the Book of Shemot (Exodus)-Vayakel, and Pekudei. While the book of Genesis focuses mostly on individuals and their families, Shemot, focuses on the Jewish people as a nation that is born. This week Parashat Vayakel, puts emphasis on the Jewish people as a holy community and congregation.

The idea of the Kehillah Kedoshah (a holy congregation) is something that one can never take for granted, and is something that must be worked hard for. Many times I receive lovely comments from readers of this newsletter who are amazed at how many activities we do here at Or Hadash each week. However, what I like most about our community is that we not only work hard for the Jewish people in Israel and abroad, but we do it with a sense of kehillah, as a sacred congregation, and an extended family, that is part of an eternal nation.

I am writing this very fast, because I have to run to do a group Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony for the children of the Einstein school in Haifa, so I would like to say many thanks to our Overseas Coordinator, Jessica Halfin, who week after week sends this newsletter out on my behalf. On this note, I would like to tell you all about this past week's events at Or Hadash:

1. Seminar at Kibbutz Hagoshrim

Last Shabbat myself, and 50 others, including: Or Hadash President Dr. Yuri Kilgerman; Or Hadash Executive Director, Ami Perelman; as well as many members of the Or Hadash board and congregation, attended a seminar on Jewish values at Kibbutz Hagoshrim in the northern Galilee. We had waited a long time for this seminar, and so were very excited to finally participate. To say the least, it was a great experience for all of us who were involved.

On the first day we talked about the study of Torah, prayer, and good deeds, as a base for our common work as a Jewish people. On the second day we focused on the meaning of prayer for the modern Israeli Jew, especially those who attend Israeli synagogues. And, on the third day, we talked about attitudes of Reform Judaism towards the kippah, talit, and other traditional Jewish symbols. Overall it was a fulfilling experience that allowed us to explore how Reform Judaism views itself in Israeli society.



2. Meeting with Rabbi Dov Haiyun and Student Rabbi Gabi Dagan

Last week I had the privilege to sit down and talk with Rabbi Dov Haiyun of the Conservative congregation in Haifa, "Moriah", and student Rabbi Gabi Dagan. While "Moriah" is very close to Or Hadash, it is not everyday that I get to interact with our conservative neighbors, and it was very interesting to learn about the similarities and differences between our two congregations.

Also at the meeting was student Rabbi Gabi Dagan from Congregation "Ohel Avraham" at the Leo Baeck School in Haifa. Gabi is becoming a very insightful rabbi, and is growing more everyday. Together, the three of us decided to work in closer cooperation in the future, to represent the liberal alternative for Judaism in the city of Haifa.

3. 2010 Wards of State Bar Mitzvah Program

Or Hadash and the Ahuzat Yeladim Boarding school are now starting preparations for the 2010 Wards of State Bar Mitzvah program. The Program, which has been running for ten consecutive years, helps children who have been taken from their parents and households by the State of Israel, to experience the important rite of passage in a young Jewish person's life- their Bar Mitzvah. Throughout the duration of the program, the participants learn with me and Or Hadash volunteers about Judaism, Tikkun Olam, and Torah. After several months, the participants will complete a group Bar Mitzvah, and will celebrate with the entire community of Or Hadash. I will keep you updated as this year's group grows closer to their big day.



4. Ross Baron Bar Mitzvah

Or Hadash would like to say a big mazal tov to Ross Baron, from our sister congregation, Temple Emanu-El of Westfield, NJ, on his recent Bar Mitzvah ceremony! Ross chanted the same Torah portion as his father Andrew did some 38 years ago, making this a very special event for the family. We wish the Baron family the very best on their happy occasion.

5. Guests arriving in just a few hours!

This weekend we are lucky and very excited to have many groups of visitors who are very important to the Or Hadash community, as partners and friends:

-Today, Or Hadash will welcome our good friend and my highly esteemed colleague, Rabbi Danny Zemel, leading a group of 32 members from our partner congregation-**Temple Micah, in Washington, D.C.**

-Today, we will also welcome a very important mission of 18 from the **CJP Boston-Haifa Partnership**, including: Danny Nishlis; Vered Yisraely; Ruth Kaplan; Nancy Kaufman; and Cheryl Aronson, and many other distinguished leaders.

-Also today, Or Hadash will welcome the students of the **University of Haifa Overseas Program**, lead by **Student Rabbi Steven Morris**, from our sister congregation- Temple Judea, in Tarzana, CA

6. Passover 2010 Visitors Other guests who will join us in Haifa for the Passover holiday are:
- **Allen and Lillian Menkin; Jessica Lenza; Spencer Meador; & Bekah Katz** of New York, NY, on
March 29th-31st

- Parents of Haifa University Ulpan student, **Amanda Herring** of Fairfax Station, VA

-& Many more congregants and guests! If you will be in Haifa for the holiday, and would also like to join us for the first night Passover seder, please contact me via email to make arrangements!

Wishing you all a Shabbat Shalom!
In Friendship,
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