

Congregation **OR ZARUA**

NEWSLETTER / VOLUME 20:4

ADAR I / ADAR II / NISAN 5768

MARCH / APRIL 2008

Shabbat Across America, March 7

Or Zarua is proud to participate again in the celebration of Shabbat Across America. On Friday night, March 7, we will join hundreds of congregations across the United States and Canada in welcoming Jews from the community to a traditional Friday night service and dinner. The National Jewish Outreach Program (NJOP) has reached thousands of “unaffiliated or alienated” Jews through its Shabbat Across America project, which turns 12 years old this year.

OZ members are our best advertisement for the event, so please help us make OZ's community outreach program a



success. Talk it up. Be creative. Invite someone you know who might be receptive. Recruit at least one person to attend services and then enjoy a delicious Shabbat dinner with joyful singing.

We welcome people who have never set foot in a synagogue and regular attendees alike. Learn about the prayers, the rituals, and the meaning of Shabbat. Act now. Space at dinner is limited. Please use the OZ website or call the

synagogue office at 212-452-2310, extension 39 to reserve a place. Services begin promptly at 5:35 p.m., followed by dinner.

SIYYUM HASHAS AND SHABBAT LUNCH



In late March, Rabbi Wechsler will complete a cycle of Talmud study that has taken nearly seven and a half years. Since October 2000, the rabbi has studied one page of Talmud every day. In Hebrew, the study is called *Daf Yomi*, meaning a page a day. With 2,711 pages in the Talmud, one cycle of study takes about seven years, five months.

The completion of the cycle is celebrated with an event known as Siyyum Hashas (“completion [of] the Shas”). Shas, an acronym for *shisha sidrei (mishnah)* or “Six Orders of the Mishnah” is another name for the Talmud.

We will celebrate with Rabbi Wechsler and his son, Rabbi Ezra Amichai, on Saturday, March 29 with a Siyyum Hashas and Shabbat lunch. Make reservations for lunch at 212-452-2310, extension 39 or www.orzarua.org.

PURIM SPIEL HELPERS NEEDED

We need volunteers at the dress rehearsal for the Purim Spiel and on Thursday, March 20, the night of the performance. If you can help usher, set up or clean up, please email Gerry Solomon at gsolomon2@aol.com.

PURIM CELEBRATIONS

THURSDAY, MARCH 20 • 5:45 P.M.

Lycée Français, 505 East 75th Street (just east of York Avenue)

Minhah and Megillah Reading

Break fast for those observing the Fast of Esther

Children's Costume Parade and Purim Spiel

Food following the Spiel

The OZ Players Present Our Best Spiel Yet!

Super JewZ

vs.

**The Zodiac Commanders
in
Revenge of the Amalekites**

Adults and children, come in costume!

RSVP 212-452-2310, extension 39

FRIDAY, MARCH 21 • 7:00 A.M.

Congregation Or Zarua, 127 East 82nd Street

Minyan and Megillah Reading in the Sanctuary

Refreshments in the Social Hall

ק"ק אור זרוע
CONGREGATION

**OR
ZARUA**

A CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE
FOUNDED 1989

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MICHAEL W. SCHWARTZ, *President*
VICKY A. STEIN, *Executive Director*
ILANA BURGESS, *Youth Education Director*
LYNN NACK, *Newsletter Editor*

Siddur Ceremony

By *Laura Fisher and Adi Raviv*

We wanted to share with the Or Zarua community and Hebrew School families what a wonderful experience we had surrounding our oldest daughter Micaela's siddur ceremony last year. The ceremony is not a show or performance, but rather a presentation of the students' knowledge of prayer. They learned about the Shabbat service—how it is divided, the logical order of the service, as well as the meaning and the tune of the prayers.

Third-grade Hebrew School classes spent time preparing for the ceremony. They learned songs and prayers and wrote their own personal narratives about Judaism and Israel. The service itself was

such a pleasure for the parents, siblings, and grandparents who attended. Each third-grade student participated by singing Hebrew songs, reciting prayers in English and Hebrew, and delivering their own short speeches. Rabbi Wechsler, Ilana, and the teachers helped run the ceremony. The children received their own personally decorated siddur at the culmination.

We look forward to celebrating our second daughter Jessica's siddur ceremony this year on Wednesday, May 28. We think that it will be a great opportunity for the community to join the parents for this uplifting ceremony and to enjoy how much our students learned in the Hebrew School.

OZ Committee Chairs

AESTHETICS	Aaron Shelden
BOOK DISCUSSION	Reed Schneider
BUILDING	Alan Ilberman
CEMETERY	Andrew Frackman Mort Schwartz
DEVELOPMENT	Mimi Alperin
EVENTS/ADULT ED	Diane Okrent
HESED	Robin Blumenthal Stephanie Failla
HEVRA KADISHA	Vera Silver Gerry Solomon
HOUSE	Janet Katz
ISRAEL	Aliza Kaplan
LIBRARY	Barry Feldman
MEMBERSHIP	Brett Cohen
MINYAN	Sheldon Adler
OROT	Ron Meyers
PLANNED GIVING	Jim Breznay
PUBLIC RELATIONS	Aaron Shelden
PURIM SPIEL	Arthur Rosenbloom Bonnie Maslin Tibor Feldman Barbara Sassoon
SCHOOL	Betsy Dizengoff
TORAH/HAFTARAH	Yaakov Shechter
WEBMASTER	Jay Palmer

If you would like to serve on a synagogue committee, please contact the office for the committee chair's email address.

Israeli Night at Ronald McDonald House



Volunteers from Or Zarua entertained the young patients of Ronald McDonald House and their families with a sumptuous mid-eastern buffet, lively Yiddish, Hebrew and American folk music, and good cheer at the annual OZ Israeli Night Event on Thursday, January 24. Many thanks to our caring OZ volunteers and to Crumbs Bakery for their generous donation of delicious and artistic desserts.

OZY SHABBAT CLASSES

Each Shabbat, four different grade-level classes will meet from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.:

Seventh Floor

- Class I:** Kindergarten (ages 4-5)
- Class II:** Grades 1 to 3
- Class III:** Grades 4 to 6

Sixth Floor

- Class IV:** Ages 2-3
(new program)

Each month during the school year, we have a special Hebrew School Shabbat Class, which all Hebrew School students in the third through sixth grades are expected to attend. Parents and students from other schools are welcome as well.

The next Hebrew School Shabbat Classes will take place on Saturday, March 8, April 12, and May 10.

KADIMA/USY EVENTS

USY (HIGH SCHOOL)

In December, Or Zarua's USY chapter held its first event, which was a great success. High school students spent an evening downtown at the Angelika Film Center for coffee and an independent film. We saw the highly acclaimed French film, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. The movie is based on a book by Jean-Dominique Bauby, who suffered a massive stroke which resulted in a rare condition known to neurologists as "locked-in syndrome." He was completely paralyzed except for the ability to blink one eye. Through hard work he learned how to blink in response to an interpreter who indicated letters to him in order to put together sentences and, finally, the thoughts for a book. The result was a surprising account of what was going on in his mind, which was totally unaffected by the disaster that had befallen him.

The film was extremely moving and conveyed the strength of the human spirit. From the movie we learned that the spirit is an important part of every human being; with a strong spirit, it is possible to achieve. This notion comes to us from many inspirational people, such as the Zionist Theodor Herzl, whose ideas made a Jewish homeland a reality.

The evening was a creative way to do something interesting and fun, as well as to meet new kids. We look forward to more people getting involved in USY and helping it grow in our community.

KADIMA (MIDDLE SCHOOL)

So far this school year, the Kadima (middle school) kids have had loads of fun at our events. We kicked off the season in October with a dance at the synagogue. In December, we decided to do something seasonal and go ice skating in Bryant Park. Just this past Sunday afternoon we all got together to play pool at a local billiards club and eat pizza. We have had a great time so far and are looking forward to more events this winter and the coming spring.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We are planning a variety of future activities, such as a party with food and live music, a day in the park, and laser tag. If you want to be part of the planning process, please join us at our meetings on Sunday, March 9, April 13, and May 4, at the following times:

- 5:00-6:00 p.m. Kadima
- 6:00-6:30 p.m. Dinner (both groups)
- 6:30-7:30 p.m. USY

Also, don't forget to mark your calendars for the events coming up on March 30, April 6, and May 25.

The two groups' events are usually separate from the planning meeting, but because of the many vacations, we will have a short meeting followed by an event on Sunday, April 13.

For more information, please email ilana@orzarua.org.

PURIM FOOD DRIVE

The Hessed Committee, with the help of USY teens, will be collecting non-perishable, healthy food items and monetary contributions for the needy on the night of the Purim Spiel, Thursday, March 20. Please bring dry or canned goods to donate. Boxes will be placed outside the auditorium. Tzedakah boxes will also be available for monetary contributions. If you have any questions, contact Robin Blumenthal at 212-420-2942 or rblument@chnpnet.org

Youth Education Calendar

MARCH 2008

- Sat 8 Shabbat Class with Lunch, 10 a.m.
- Sun 9 Kadima Meeting, 5 p.m.
Dinner, 6 p.m.
USY Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- Mon 10 Cooking at BJ, 6 p.m.
- Mon 17 Spring Break (no classes)
- Sun 30 Kadima/USY Event
- Mon 31 Back to school

APRIL 2008

- Fri 11 Service and dinner for K-Grade 3, 5:30 p.m.
- Sat 12 Shabbat Class, 10 a.m.
- Sun 13 Kadima/USY Meeting and Event, 5 p.m.
- Mon 14 Cooking at BJ, 6 p.m.
Biur Hametz
- Tue 15 Pesah game
- Wed 16 Pesah game
- Mon 21 Pesah Break (no classes)
- Mon 28 Back to school

MAY 2008

- Sun 4 Kadima Meeting, 5 p.m.
Dinner, 6 p.m.
USY Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- Wed 7 Independence Day celebration
- Thu 8 Independence Day celebration
- Sat 10 Shabbat Class, 10 a.m.
- Mon 12 Cooking at BJ, 6 p.m.
- Sun 18 Salute to Israel Parade decorations, 10:30 a.m.
Kadima/USY Event
- Tue 27 Last day of kindergarten
- Wed 28 Last day of school,
Siddur Ceremony
- Thu 29 Last day of school

JUNE 2008

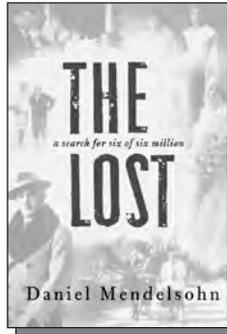
- Sun 11 Salute to Israel Parade

Or Zarua Book Discussions

Please join us in the Or Zarua library on Sunday evening, April 6 at 7:30 p.m. when Jonathan Kaplan will lead us in our discussion of *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* by Daniel Mendelsohn. The book is a powerful meditation on the Shoah and on the deaths, in particular, in 1943 in the village of Bolechow, Poland (now Ukraine) of six family members: his grandfather's brother Shmiel, his wife Ester, and their four daughters.

Mendelsohn, born in 1960 on Long Island, begins his account with his own childhood remembrances of gatherings of his family, among whom were survivors of the massacred Jewish community of Bolechow: certain older relatives would start to cry when he entered the room because of his startling resemblance to his great-uncle Shmiel. While researching the story of what actually happened to Shmiel and his family, Mendelsohn discovered a series of increasingly desperate letters Shmiel wrote in 1939 to relatives

in the United States, which drew him on a journey to a dozen countries on four continents.



Ron Rosenbaum in *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* praised Mendelsohn's ability to grapple with the difficult problem of telling the story of the Shoah in a meaningful, comprehensible way: "Mendelsohn attempts to rescue from oblivion a single family's fate. And in his quest for the details that endow them with life, he draws us more deeply into the experience of the larger catastrophe than we might have thought possible."

On Sunday evening, May 18, we will discuss *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, a memoir by Lucette Lagnado, about her father and growing up in Cairo, Egypt, before the monarchy ended with Nasser's take-over.

For further information, please contact Reed Schneider at 212-860-8611 or arlm1199@aol.com.

FROM THE OR ZARUA LIBRARIAN

By Barry R. Feldman

Librarian's Recommendations. Looking for a less-than-four-hundred page novel by a Pulitzer Prize-winning author? *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks is a historical treatment of the story of the Sarajevo Haggadah. Her exploration of concepts of Jewish identity and insight to the rich diversity of the Ottoman Empire further enrich this interesting book.

The OZ Book Discussion on February 24 featured *Jews and Power* by Ruth Wisse, a recognized authority on Yiddish literature and this year's Lucy Dawidowicz lecturer. A previous book, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*, explores the poetry of Mani Leib and Moishe Leib Halpern, participants in *di Yunge*, a group of Yiddish writers of the early twentieth century.

Among the forthcoming publications in the Schocken Encounter series are biographies of *Gluckel of Hamelen* by Daphne Merkin and *Abraham Cahan* by Seth Lipsky.

"From Yankel to Yankee." On opening night, January 27, at 6:30 p.m.

in the Or Zarua social hall, the Barry Sisters sang Yiddish songs, the pungent aroma of stuffed cabbage simmering in sauce filled the room, and vivid images of theater personalities lined the walls: a sensuous evocation of Yiddish theater and its derivatives. Kudos to Bobbi Coller and participating Or Zarua Congregants who produced "From Yankel to Yankee," an exhibit of Yiddish theater from its early European origins to the 1920's and its influence on American music. Information panels were written by participants as well as English translations of original Yiddish advertisements. Rudi Wolff, who designed and printed the 20 displays, is recognized for his contributions of expertise, time, and talent.

Stefan Kanfer, author of *Stardust Lost: The Triumph, Tragedy, and Mishugas of the Yiddish Theater in America*, related several theater anecdotes which recalled the vibrancy of the Yiddish theater and the period of immigrant settlement on the Lower East Side. Kanfer is also the

author of *A Summer World*, a history of the Jewish Catskills. (See also page 7.)

Tips for book collectors. Your books will remain attractive and may retain value if you care for them properly.

Never discard book jackets; even a rare first edition loses value without its jacket. Protect the jackets with high-quality, acid-free covers. Do not tape the covers to the jacket. Remove the jackets when reading books. Dust books frequently. Occasionally clean jackets with a damp paper towel lightly sprayed with Windex. Underlining also detracts from value. Use Post-Its for notes and reminders. Do not stuff papers, pencils, and paper clips between pages. This will weaken the spine.

Book collection is a subjective as well as academic activity. When you are ready to discard your books, including your favorites, do not be surprised if other book collectors are not interested or the books have no monetary value. Meanwhile, enjoy them.

PESAH: *Structure and Freedom*

By Ron Meyers

After we read of the exodus from Egypt, the book of Exodus moves on to the climactic giving of the Ten Commandments and then reaches a resolution in the construction of the tabernacle, the movable temple that our ancestors carried through the desert. Verse after verse in Parashat Pekude (read this year on March 8) recounts the myriad details of God's commands, and verse after verse recounts the fulfillment of every specification by the architect Bezalel and his craftsmen. It is a magnificent moment of perfect alignment between God's commands and our ancestors' actions.

When we celebrate the exodus from Egypt at Pesah (beginning this year at sundown on April 19), such unanimity is not exactly the spirit of the day. The seder starts off with questions, and then, rather than providing clear answers to each question, it then launches into a sprawling discussion of the many possible answers that the questions can lead to. The Haggadah recounts the rabbis' differing interpretations—it is largely a transcript of their seminar on the meanings and laws of the holiday—and we are implicitly invited to join in. And since the seder occurs in the home, rather than the synagogue, our familial customs and variations add to the

kaleidoscope of different results.

But if our symposium brings us the joy of convivial disagreement, such pleasure is possible only because of the deep commonality of the participants. The word "seder" means "order," after all, and it is only within its structure—an outgrowth, we might say, of the structures that Bezalel built—that we can engage in the open-ended exploration of ideas that our tradition serves up. The freedom to question and discuss is the crowning glory of a community that is confident in its cohesion and continuity. At Pesah, we celebrate both our freedom and the structure that makes it possible.

19th Birthday Celebrations

Congregation Or Zarua celebrated its 19th birthday in true COZ style—with prayer, learning, food, singing, and dancing. The celebrations started with Kabbalat Shabbat services on February 1, followed by Shabbat dinner. Nearly 70 people enjoyed a delicious meal, stimulating conversation, as well as singing and dancing with Kol Zimra, an *a cappella* group.

During his Dvar Torah on Saturday morning, Rabbi Wechsler recalled the origins of Or Zarua and some of the thinking that went into the establishment of the Congregation. For example, in 1989, most Conservative congregations were reading the Torah in a triennial cycle. That is, they would read one third of each parasha every week. In year one, they would read the first third of every parasha; in year two, the second third; and so on. The founders of Or Zarua decided that we should read the entire parasha every Shabbat, and we continue to do so.

Shabbat morning services on February 2 were followed by a Kiddush lunch at which Kol Zimra again led us in joyous singing and dancing.

Then, on Wednesday, February 6, we continued the celebrations by learning with Professor Ruth R. Wisse, the Martin Peretz Professor of Yiddish Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, who delivered the Lucy Dawidowicz Lecture.

We had three celebrations with birthday cake at each one to begin our 20th year in style!

ADULT EDUCATION COURSE

Four Sundays Between Pesah and Shavuot

Congregant Marc Ashley will again be offering a course exploring pivotal issues in classical Jewish thought on four Sundays between Pesah and Shavuot. In "**Leap of Faith: When History and Tradition Collide,**" we will discuss how historical investigations of our past can impinge upon our religious beliefs and practices in the present. Can our religious faith and observance survive the often troubling conclusions of historical research? In what ways would it matter to us, for example, if historians could prove definitively that the Exodus never occurred? In addressing issues at the core of modern Jewish denominational differences, we will focus on the tensions that frequently flare up between historiographical results and religious commitments, between what is known about history and what we aspire to believe about God, Torah and our religious tradition.

Classes will meet in the synagogue library on May 4 at 1 p.m., and on May 18, June 1, and June 8 at 10 a.m. All Congregants are welcome to attend, and no prior knowledge of any kind is required. Please join us for stimulating discussions of these crucial historical, theological, and practical issues in contemporary Jewish life. To register, please contact the synagogue at 212-452-2310, extension 39 or www.orzarua.org.

HESED COMMITTEE EVENTS

Hesed is the expression of loving kindness—*gemilut hasadim*. According to *Pirkei Avot*, it is one of the three pillars on which the world stands and it is incumbent upon every Jew to participate. The Or Zarua Hesed Committee works to promote hesed through various projects within the Or Zarua and local community, and to help provide for needs in Israel and around the world. **Please donate generously to the Hesed Fund so we can continue and expand our programs.**

HESED EVENT CALENDAR

This year's calendar includes our annual OZ Hesed events as well as some new projects. Keep an eye out for flyers, emails and announcements! Our events for the coming year include:

Give the Gift of Life! Or Zarua will again be partnering with the New York Blood Center to host its 6th Annual Blood Drive on Sunday, March 2. Volunteer an hour of your time to give blood. As in the past, there will be a sumptuous brunch provided, as well as additional hesed activities for children and teens.

Purim Food Drive. The Hesed Committee, with the help of USY teens, will be collecting non-perishable, healthy food items and monetary contributions for the needy on the night of the Purim Spiel, Thursday, March 20. Please put dry or canned goods in the donation boxes that will be placed outside the auditorium. Tzedakah boxes will also be available for monetary contributions. *If you have any questions, contact Robin Blumenthal at 212-420-2942 or rblument@chpnet.org*

DOROT Pesah Package Delivery. Share the spirit of the holidays by visiting with seniors in their homes and bringing

friendship along with small packages of holiday treats on Sunday, April 6. This is an excellent activity for the entire family and a wonderful way to introduce children to the joy and importance of hesed. *Contact Aaron Shelden at 212-734-2888 or email ashelden@aol.com.*

CURRENT AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

Monday Night Pizza Servers Needed. OZ volunteers serve pizza each Monday night at the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter Residence at 211 East 81st Street. If you are able to commit to one hour (6-7 p.m.) one Monday evening a month, you'll experience personally rewarding interactions with the residents while performing your own special mitzvah! *Contact Richard Stadin at 212-879-0448 or stadin1@aol.com.*

Computer Techies Needed! Volunteers are needed immediately to prepare computers for formerly homeless clients of the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter (NCS). We need your time and skills to delete data and refurbish donated laptops as well as teach NCS clients to operate them. School volunteer credits are available. *Contact Richard Stadin at 212-879-0448 or stadin1@aol.com.*

Donation Deliveries. The Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter needs volunteers to pick up donations and transport supplies to volunteer events in various locations in Manhattan. Volunteer drivers are notified in advance, and shifts are based on the volunteers' availability. Willingness to carry boxes is a plus, but is not required. This is a great opportunity for people who have very little free time but who want to volunteer. *For details, contact Millicent Cavanaugh, Director of Volunteer Services, at 212-861-0704 (option 1), x407 or mcavanaugh@ncsinc.org.*

OZ and DOROT: A Tradition Serving the East-Side Elderly

By Aaron Shelden

On Sunday, April 6, in anticipation of Pesah, Congregation Or Zarua will again join DOROT to help bring hearty and nutritious packages of food and the warmth of good company to elderly residents on the East Side of Manhattan. This is a memorable and rewarding experience for volunteers of all ages. But it is of even greater benefit to the many seniors who are alone and homebound and look forward to these visits.

OZ participants are invited to join

DOROT at the 92nd Street Y at 11 a.m. (Or you can first go to the Or Zarua minyan at 8:45 a.m. and do two mitzvot in the same day!) Following a brief orientation, volunteers will be assigned a senior to visit for up to an hour.

DOROT—the Hebrew word for “generations”—is a multi-service agency that serves the elderly through a partnership with volunteers and professionals, with the aim of fostering interaction among generations. Or Zarua spearheaded

the addition of the East Side to DOROT's West Side activities eight years ago and we have been a committed participant in this important Hesed activity ever since.

If you would like to participate on Sunday, April 6, please confirm your commitment in advance so DOROT will have sufficient time to match you with an elderly person to visit. You may contact Aaron Shelden at 212-734-2888, email ashelden@aol.com, or call the Or Zarua office at 212-452-2310, extension 39.

It Takes a Village...Or Is It a Shtetl?

By Bobbi Collier

By now, everyone knows that one of the things that distinguishes Or Zarua as a congregation is that the talented and dedicated members contribute and participate in many more ways than usual in the life of our synagogue. To name just a few, they lead the services in the place of



a professional cantor, read the Torah portions, and form an expert panel to discuss challenging topics at Shavuot programs. But I'm not sure that everyone knows that the current art exhibition, "From Yankel to Yankee," was conceived, organized, and researched by the members of the Or Zarua Gallery Committee.

"From Yankel to Yankee," like all our shows, had to meet the demands of our particular situation: we cannot borrow unique objects because we are not a gallery or museum, do not have full security, and use the room for a variety of purposes; we cannot put nails or pins in the wallpapered walls, so the hanging of the works is a challenge; we have decided to concentrate on topics that relate to either Jewish themes or the Or Zarua community; and we do not have a museum-sized budget.

Given our limitations, we originally thought that posters—Yiddish posters—would be colorful, nostalgic, and attractive. But we needed a focus within the

myriad possibilities. At one of our early meetings, Barry Feldman, clearly the most knowledgeable about Jewish New York and one of our Yiddish language translators, suggested "Americanization" as a theme. Gerry Solomon immediately coined the title "From Yankel to Yankee," and we were off!

Throughout the planning of this show, our secret weapon has been Rudi Wolff, the talented artist and graphic designer whose abstract prints based on the Biblical story of Creation have graced our walls since last year. Three families



have donated that series of ten works to Or Zarua, enabling us to display it again in the future. In addition to helping us track down Yiddish material, Rudi designed and printed the 20 panels to display both text and images in a clear, attractive and harmonious format. He donated his time and, in the process, has become a treasured friend of Or Zarua.

The individual text panels that provide the background information to the exhibition were all researched and written by Or Zarua members. Cynthia Brodsky, Barry Feldman, myself, Barbara Nadler, Diane Okrent, Gerry Solomon, and Marilyn Shapiro (in the order of our panels around the room) became experts in our topics and carefully crafted the panels. Our original texts were proofread by Joanne Feierman and Alice Geisler.

In addition, we had help with research material, the opening reception, music, and food from Shelley Binder, Diane Okrent, Laura Resnikoff, Mark Somerstein, Sara Stone, and Nora Yood. Executive Director Vicky Stein and her wonderful staff—Anthony Banfield, Lawrence Richards, Ronson Wilkenson, and Webster Ward—insured that the installation and food were perfect for the crowded opening. We are, of course, extremely grateful for the ongoing support and enthusiasm of President Michael Schwartz and Rabbi Wechsler. And our

speaker, the noted author Stefan Kanfer, who refused to take a fee from a synagogue, gave a lively and fascinating talk.

During the year that we were planning this exhibition, we had no idea that PBS television was



also making a documentary on Jewish-American identity. It was shown at the same time as our opening and turned out to overlap, and reinforce, many of the themes and ideas we had presented. It seems that the time is ripe to reexamine the histories of immigrant Jews in New York, their flavorful language, and the popular dramatic and musical culture that they created.

The Gallery Committee welcomes anyone who would like to help us with future shows. It really does take a village...

Guidelines for Passover

The guidelines below were prepared for the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards by Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz. They were accepted by the Committee on December 12, 1984 and are updated annually by Rabbi Wechsler. Remember that the kosher for Passover home is a unique and transcendent experience for adults as well as children. Pesah feels different to the extent that it is different, and special foods and practices are the source of the special experience.

The Torah prohibits the ownership of hametz (leaven) during Pesah. Therefore, we arrange for the sale of the hametz to a non-Jew. The sale—mekhirat hametz—is accomplished by appointing an agent, usually the rabbi, to handle the transfer. The transaction is a valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, the agent arranges for the reversion of ownership of the now-permitted hametz. If ownership of the hametz was not transferred before the holiday, the use of this hametz is prohibited even after the holiday (hametz she-aver alav ha-Pesah).

The Torah also prohibits the eating of hametz during Pesah. We often need guidance when shopping and preparing for the holiday because many common foods contain some admixture of hametz.

During the eight days of Pesah, hametz does not lose its identity, even in an admixture. Therefore, the minutest amount of hametz renders the whole admixture hametz, and its use on Pesah is prohibited.

Following are some general guidelines. Consult Rabbi Wechsler when there is any doubt about the status of a product. Examine the Kosher le-Pesah label: If it does not bear the name of a rabbi, does not contain one of the recognized symbols of rabbinic supervision, or is not integral to the package, check with the rabbi.

FOODS

● **Prohibited foods:** leavened bread, cake, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffee containing cereal derivatives, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye, and all liquids containing ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol.



Baking matzah for the Passover holiday.

According to Ashkenazic custom, the following foods—kitniyot—are added to the prohibited list: rice, corn, millet, and legumes (beans and peas; but string beans are permitted). The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has ruled unanimously that peanuts and peanut oil are permissible. In contrast, Sephardic authorities permit the use of *all* kitniyot on Pesah.

● **Permitted foods that DO NOT require a Kosher le-Pesah label:** fresh fruit, fresh vegetables (for legumes, see above), and eggs.

● **Permitted foods that DO require a Kosher le-Pesah label:** all baked products (matzah, cake, matzah flour, matzah farfel, matzah meal, and any

other products containing matzah), canned or bottled fruit juice (often clarified with kitniyot, which are not listed among the ingredients), canned tuna (often processed in vegetable broth and/or hydrolyzed protein, even when packed in water), wine, vinegar, liquor, oil, dried fruit, ice cream, yogurt, and soda.

The following processed foods (canned, bottled, or frozen) DO require a Kosher le-Pesah label *if purchased during Pesah*: milk and milk products, butter, juice, vegetables, fruit, spices, coffee, tea, fish, and meat.

NON-FOOD ITEMS

● **Detergent.** If permitted during the year, powdered and liquid detergents DO NOT require a Kosher le-Pesah label.

● **Medicine.** Because many pills are made with hametz binders, follow this guideline: If the medicine is required for life-sustaining therapy, it may be used on Pesah; if it is not for life-sustaining therapy, some authorities permit, while others prohibit the use of the medicine. Consult Rabbi Wechsler.

KASHERING

● **Utensils.** The process of kashering utensils depends on how the utensils are used. According to halakhah, leaven can be purged from a utensil by the same process through which it was absorbed into the utensil (*ke-voleo kakh polet*). Therefore, utensils used in cooking are kashered by boiling, those used in broiling are kashered by fire and heat, and those used only for cold food are kashered by rinsing.

● **Earthenware.** China, pottery, etc. may not be kashered. However, fine translucent chinaware that has not been used for over a year may be used for Pesah if scoured and cleaned in hot water.

● **Metal.** Utensils made entirely of metal and used in fire (such as a spit or broiler) must first be thoroughly scrubbed, cleaned, and then heated to the highest possible temperature. Utensils used for cooking or eating (such as silverware or pots) must be thoroughly scrubbed, cleaned, and then completely immersed in boiling water. These metal objects should not be used for a period of at least 24 hours between the cleaning and the immersion in boiling water. Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered for Pesah.

● **Ovens and ranges.** Every part that comes into contact with food must be thoroughly scrubbed, cleaned, and then heated to the highest possible temperature for a half hour. For ovens with no self-cleaning feature, use the broil setting; for self-cleaning ovens, use the self-cleaning feature to achieve the highest temperature. Continuous-cleaning ovens must be kashered in the same manner as regular ovens.

● **Microwave ovens.** These do not cook food by means of heat. After the interior is cleaned, place a cup of water inside. Keep the oven on until the water disappears. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be kashered for Pesah.

● **Glassware.** Drinking glasses and stemware require only a thorough cleaning, by hand or in a dishwasher, before Pesah.

● **Glass cookware.** There is a difference of opinion as to whether glass cookware should be kashered. One opinion is that it must be kashered—after a thorough cleaning, boil water in the cookware so that it overflows the rim. The other opinion is that only a thorough cleaning is required.

● **Glass bakeware.** Like metal bakeware, glass bakeware may not be kashered for Pesah.

● **Dishwashers.** Clean any food trap or filter and leave the dishwasher unused for 24 hours. Then, complete a full wash cycle with detergent.

● **Electrical appliances.** If parts that

come into contact with hametz are removable, they can be kashered in the appropriate way (if metal, follow the rule for metal utensils). If the parts are not removable, then the appliance cannot be kashered. However, all exposed parts should be thoroughly cleaned in either case.

● **Tables, closets, and countertops.** If they have come into contact with hametz, surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and covered before use.

● **Kitchen sinks.** Metal sinks must be thoroughly cleaned and then doused with boiling water. Porcelain sinks must be thoroughly cleaned and outfitted with

a sink rack. Items may be soaked in a basin placed inside a porcelain sink.

● **Hametz and non-Passover items.** In order to prevent accidental use, all non-Passover kitchen items and hametz whose ownership has been transferred should be separated from Passover items, marked, covered, and placed in a locked area.

An ever-increasing variety of Kosher le-Pesah products is available in local markets as well as in the specially dedicated Pesah stores that appear each year. Patronize these special Pesah stores, for they provide an important service to the Jewish community.

OMER BASICS

WHAT'S AN OMER? An omer is a unit of measure for cut sheaves of a grain crop. The 49-day period between the second day of Pesah and the day before Shavuot is referred to as the period of sefirat ha'omer—the counting of the omer.

WHY DO WE COUNT IT? The Torah tells us in Parashat Emor (Leviticus 23:15-16) that an omer of barley was brought to the Temple on the second day of Pesah as a “wave offering.” This omer of barley consisted of newly harvested grain, and new barley could not be eaten until the omer offering was brought. Starting on the second day of Pesah, 49 days were counted, at the end of which Shavuot was celebrated and an offering was brought to the Temple from the early summer's wheat harvest. The counting, sefirat ha'omer, is done at nightfall each day during the seven weeks. The counting of the omer connects the Exodus from Egypt with the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. In eagerness, we count the days of waiting for the revelation.

HOW DO WE OBSERVE IT? For a period of time during the counting of the omer it is traditional to observe certain semi-mourning customs, such as postponing weddings and foregoing haircuts. This tradition may have an agricultural origin in that the period leading up to the summer harvest is a time of concern for the continuing safety of the crop. But also during this time of year in the second century CE, some 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students perished—they were most likely killed by the Romans.

WHAT IS LAG B'OMER? Lag B'omer is the 33rd day of the counting—“lag” is an acronym made up of lamed (30) and gimel (3). The massive fatalities of Rabbi Akiva's students halted on that day, and the customs of semi-mourning are suspended. Lag B'omer is observed as the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, the person said to have authored the mystical book, *The Zohar*. This year Lag B'omer falls on the night of May 22.

PARTICIPATE IN OR ZARUA'S
Pesah Meal Match

First Seder Night, Saturday, April 19

Let us increase our joy in this z'man heirutinu—the season of our liberation—by hosting other Congregants or by joining a host family on the first seder night, Saturday, April 19.

If you would like to be a host or a guest, please complete the form on page 13 and send it to the synagogue office no later than Monday, April 14, 2008, or register online at www.orzarua.org.

Ma'ot Hittim Fund

The Hagaddah tells us that every Jew must experience the Exodus from Egypt, and the Mishnah tells us that a Jew should drink four cups of wine at the seder, even if they come from the public dole.

We therefore raise special funds each year to assist less fortunate Jews who cannot afford to prepare for Passover. We forward the funds, called ma'ot hittim (wheat money), to two communal organizations—the Joint Passover Appeal in New York and the New York Board of Rabbis—for distribution to needy Jews. Ma'ot hittim funds also enable Or Zarua to host at our Congregational Seder a number of Jews who would not otherwise be able to attend a seder that night.

Please give generously to the fund. Many will benefit from your kindness.

Sell Your Hametz

Before Passover, we are required to “sell” any hametz in the household to a non-Jew. The transaction is normally arranged by the rabbi to ensure compliance with the requirements of halakhah.

Please complete the form on page 13 and send it to the synagogue office by Wednesday, April 16, 2008. It is customary to enclose a contribution to Or Zarua's Ma'ot Hittim Fund with your authorization.

CONGREGATIONAL SEDER

**We invite you, your family and friends to share the
 Second Seder with us on Sunday, April 20.**

Services will start at 7:15 p.m.

*Our Congregational seder, led by Rabbi Wechsler,
 will begin at 8:30 p.m., immediately following services.*

Watch your mail for an invitation.

**SCHEDULE OF
 PASSOVER SERVICES
 5768/2008**

Thursday, April 17

Fast of the Firstborn / Bedikat Hametz
 Shahrut, Siyyum Bekhorim 7:15 a.m.

Saturday, April 19

Erev Pesah
 Candlelighting 8:39 p.m.
 First Seder

Sunday, April 20

First Day of Pesah
 Shahrut 9:00 a.m.
 Minhah-Ma'ariv 7:30 p.m.
 Second Seder 8:30 p.m.
 Candlelighting 8:40 p.m.

Monday, April 21

Second Day of Pesah
 Shahrut 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, April 22

Hol Hamoed
 Minyan 7:00 a.m.

Wednesday, April 23

Hol Hamoed
 Minyan 7:00 a.m.

Thursday, April 24

Hol Hamoed
 Minyan 7:00 a.m.

Friday, April 25

Hol Hamoed
 Minyan 7:00 a.m.
 Minhah/Ma'ariv 6:15 p.m.
 Candlelighting 7:26 p.m.

Saturday, April 26

Seventh Day of Pesah
 Shahrut 9:00 a.m.
 Minhah/Ma'ariv 7:40 p.m.
 Candlelighting 8:46 p.m.

Sunday, April 27

Eighth Day of Pesah / Yizkor
 Shahrut 9:00 a.m.
 Festival ends 8:33 p.m.

Pesah Meal Match

I would like to participate in a first-night seder as a:

(check one)

GUEST

Are you planning to bring children? _____ If yes, how many and what ages? _____

Are there any food restrictions? _____

HOST

How many people will you host? _____ How many children will be attending? _____

What are their ages? _____ Do you welcome children as guests? _____

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Best time to call _____

Please mail or fax completed form **by Monday, April 14, 2008**, to:

CONGREGATION OR ZARUA, 127 EAST 82ND STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10028, FAX: 212-452-2103

Authorization for the Sale of Hametz

Dear Rabbi Wechsler: In accordance with Jewish law, please sell all hametz in my possession at the locations listed below. Enclosed is my contribution to Or Zarua's Ma'ot Hittim Fund.

Name _____ Apt. No. _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Other Locations (vacation home, office, etc):

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Please complete and return this form **before Wednesday, April 16, 2008**, to:

DR. HARLAN J. WECHSLER, RABBI

CONGREGATION OR ZARUA, 127 EAST 82ND STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10028, FAX: 212-452-2103

Upcoming Programs

Sunday, March 2
6th Annual Blood Drive

Friday, March 7
Shabbat Across America
Dinner at Or Zarua

Wednesday, March 12
JTS Chancellor Arnold Eisen
Lecture and Reception

Thursday, March 13
Zayin Adar Dinner at Or Zarua

Thursday, March 20
Megillah Reading and Purim Spiel
at Lycée Français

Friday, March 21
Megillah Reading at Or Zarua

Saturday, March 29
Siyyum and Shabbat Lunch

Sunday, April 5
DOROT Pesah Package Delivery

Saturday, April 19
Pre-Pesah Seudah

Sunday, April 20
Pesah Second Seder at Or Zarua

Wednesday, April 30
Yom Hashoah Service

Sunday, May 4
AIPAC Speaker

Wednesday, May 7
Yom Hazikaron
Israel Remembrance Day

Thursday, May 8
Yom Ha'atzmaut
Israel's 60th Anniversary

Tuesday, May 20
Or Zarua Annual Meeting

Thursday, May 22
Lag B'Omer

Sunday, June 1
Salute to Israel Parade

OZ CRAFTS CLUB Do you like to knit or crochet? Would you like to learn? Join the OZ Crafts Club and knit blankets for children in hospitals, crochet kippot for a Hebrew school in S'derot or work on your own projects. Enjoy socializing while being creative and doing mitzvot. We meet on the second Sunday of every month from 10:00-11:45 a.m. in the library. Upcoming meetings are **March 9 and April 13**. Please contact Carrie Fox at carrie@foxshechter.com for more information.

ZAYIN ADAR DINNER: THURSDAY, MARCH 13

Annual Hevra Kadisha Celebration

By Vera Silver

Reserve now for the Hevra Kadisha Zayin Adar Dinner on March 13 at Or Zarua at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to celebrate the accomplishments of Hevra Kadisha during this very special evening, traditionally held on the seventh of Adar, the *yahrzeit* of Moses. Rabbi Wechsler will deliver a presentation entitled "Bet Hayyim (The House of Life): The Cemeteries of Tzfat, Prague, and Tel Aviv," including photography from these sites. Last year, the room was electric with excitement as Rabbi Wechsler taught about the psalms recited during a *tahara*. Reservations should be made at 212-452-2310, extension 39 or www.orzarua.org. Suggested donations to the Hevra Kadisha Fund are \$36 per person.

When you are in the synagogue, please visit the 5th floor to see the beautiful *sherblakh* container created especially for Or Zarua by Caroline Golden. It is now formally installed with a descriptive narrative about Caroline's sources of inspiration for creating the piece. Of course, please also add some broken

pottery or crockery to the container.

Hevra Kadisha booklets, available in the Or Zarua sanctuary, provide a good overview of the Jewish tradition after death as well as information about the work and responsibilities of the Hevra Kadisha.

The annual Hevra Kadisha Conference sponsored by Kavod v'Nichum will be held this year from June 1-3 in Edison, N.J. The conference includes workshops and text study appropriate for anyone working with death, bereavement, *bikkur cholim*, or *hevra kadisha*. You do not need to attend both days in order to participate. For further information, please contact David Zinner, executive director of Kavod v'Nichum, at davidzinner@comcast.net. Some Or Zarua Congregants attended the conference a few years ago when it was held in New York City. The quality of the course selection and the presentations was well-rounded, from community and historical study to text study to practical applications and discussion.

CONGREGATION OR ZARUA

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CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM: A VISION

Arnold M. Eisen, Chancellor
The Jewish Theological Seminary

Wednesday, March 12, 7:30 p.m.
Congregation Or Zarua Social Hall

This presentation by Chancellor Eisen, one of the world's foremost experts on American Judaism, will be followed by a reception.