



Congregation OR ZARUA

NEWSLETTER / VOLUME 20:5

NISAN / IYAR / SIVAN 5768

MAY / JUNE 2008

Five Ways to Celebrate Israel at 60

Congregation Or Zarua will celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary with five programs—a presentation from AIPAC, our own Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration, a Lag B'Omer lecture by Rivkah Duker Fishman, a Shabbaton about Jerusalem led by Rabbi Reuven Hammer, and the Salute to Israel Parade.

Sunday, May 4, after minyan, Eli Lake, senior foreign affairs reporter for *The New York Sun*, will speak on behalf of AIPAC. The topic will be "Nuclear Standoff: The Movement to Block an Iranian Bomb." Eli Lake's work focuses on national security, diplomacy, the Middle East, and intelligence.

Wednesday, May 7, we will observe Yom Hazikaron with a service in our sanctuary followed by our own Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration in the social hall.

Wednesday, May 21, Rivkah Duker Fishman, lecturer in

Jewish History, Rothberg International School, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, will deliver a Lag B'Omer lecture on "Recent Views of Ancient Jewish History and Their Implications."

Friday, May 30 and Saturday, May 31, we will host a Shabbaton with Rabbi Reuven Hammer, who has been recognized as "arguably the most important religious leader in the (Conservative) Movement." At dinner Friday night Rabbi Hammer will explore how, where and why Jerusalem is mentioned in our prayers with a talk entitled "Yearning for Zion: The Amidah Before and After 70 C.E." He will speak during services Saturday morning on "Jerusalem: History and Mystery," touching on the history of Jerusalem and its present problems.

Sunday, June 1, we will march in the Salute to Israel Parade (see page 12).

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Joey Weisenberg's Spontaneous Jewish Choir: MELODIES FOR MUSAF

Wednesdays, June 4, 18 and 25 • 8:00 p.m.

Join Joey Weisenberg, songleader, musician, danceband captain, and teacher extraordinaire, on three Wednesdays in June as he brings Or Zarua Congregants together in Jewish song. In group sessions, Joey will teach us the melodies, rhythms and styles that have made Jewish music exciting and accessible for many generations.

Participants in Joey's singing sessions will gain a sense of community from the effect of many voices working together; connect to Jewish culture by singing melodies that reflect the depth of the Jewish experience; feel moments of Jewish spirituality that open up passageways to new ideas; and internalize melodies that will enliven our musaf davening.

Primarily teaching the beautiful old nigunim, or melodies without words, Joey forges a feeling of continuity with Jewish tradition while renewing the spirit that first created them. Everybody is invited to participate, whether they have extensive Jewish music training or none at all. Joey's lively teaching style gets people moving and involved, forming a spontaneous Jewish choir that we expect will keep singing long after the class ends.

SHABBAT USHERS NEEDED Please email Janet Katz at jmkatz@nyc.rr.com.

ק"ק אור זרוע
CONGREGATION

**OR
ZARUA**

A CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE
FOUNDED 1989

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YOUTH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

By Ilana Burgess

During the month of May we will have three wonderful celebrations:

● **Israel Independence Day.** To mark Israel's 60th birthday, Hebrew School students learned about the history of Israel. We created a timeline by selecting the most important events of every decade. On Wednesday, May 7 at 5:00 p.m., we will celebrate Israel Independence Day with a formal opening of the school exhibition, "Israeli History in the Eyes of our Children." Everyone is invited.

● **Siddur Ceremony.** Each year our

third graders celebrate the occasion of receiving their own Siddur. The students studied the Shabbat service, practiced reading Hebrew, and each one wrote a paragraph about being Jewish. This year 15 of our young students will be honored on Wednesday, May 28 at 5:00 p.m. Join us for this wonderful event.

● **Hebrew School Shabbat Class.** On Saturday, May 17 we will hold our last Hebrew School Shabbat Class and will honor all of our scholars, both students and teachers, in the sanctuary.



Author Francine Medoff (left) tells the story of "The Mouse in the Matzah Factory" to teacher Nicole Levy and kindergartners Lauren Abelow, Gabriel Cohen and Nathan Wolf Smith.

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/HAFOTARAH	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.

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 last Hebrew School Shabbat Class for this year will take place on Saturday, May 17.

Panim el Panim: Face to Face

By Alex Bromberg, 11th Grade

Panim el Panim is one of the many programs offered by Panim: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values. The four-day trip to Washington, D.C. focused on Jewish involvement in politics, specifically through lobbying.

Over the course of the four days, a rigorous schedule included meeting with a representative from AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, as well as with representatives from other lobbying firms. My group met with a representative from the NRA. The program culminated with a meeting with your congressional district's representative, where you let the representative know about issues important to you. The program aims to teach Jews how to have a voice and an impact on politics.

One of the great things about Panim

el Panim was meeting Jews from all over the country. While some of the 10th-through 12th-grade students came from the usual places, such as New York or Florida, others were from Kansas and Oklahoma. The diversity of the group made it something special.

We also participated in an interesting activity which Panim called Street Torah. We had come on the trip with clothes for the homeless and, with these clothes in hand, we were sent off to a local park to talk with the homeless there and offer them the clothing we had brought. While not lobbying, this activity felt in line with Panim's goal of teaching social action. It was a very interesting, eye-opening experience and definitely unlike anything I had done before.

Shabbaton, Friday, May 30 and Saturday, May 31 RABBI REUVEN HAMMER



Our Shabbaton will feature Rabbi Reuven Hammer as Scholar-in-Residence. At dinner Friday night, May 30, he will explore how, where and why Jerusalem is mentioned in our prayers with a talk entitled "Yearning for Zion: The Amidah Before and After 70 C.E." During services Saturday morning, May 31, in "Jerusalem: History and Mystery," he will touch on the history of Jerusalem and its present problems.

A former president of the International Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbi Hammer is one of the founders of the Masorti Movement in Israel and a prolific writer. In 2003 he was recognized for Lifetime Achievement in the Rabbinate and included in the "Forward 50," a list of the most influential members of the American Jewish community.

ROOFTOP PICNIC AND ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 20 • 7:00 p.m. Picnic • 8:15 p.m. Meeting

The election of new Officers and Board Members will highlight the agenda for Congregation Or Zarua's 19th Annual Meeting, to be held Tuesday, May 20 at 8:15 p.m. The meeting will be preceded by a rooftop picnic dinner at 7:00 p.m. Reservations for dinner are essential. Please make your reservation by using the OZ website or by calling the synagogue office at 212-452-2310, extension 39.

Youth Education Calendar

MAY 2008

- Sun 4** Kadima Meeting, 5 p.m.
Dinner, 6 p.m.
USY Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- Wed 7** Israel Independence Day celebration
- Thu 8** Israel Independence Day celebration
- Mon 12** Cooking at BJ, 6 p.m.
- Sat 17** Shabbat Class, 10 a.m.
- Sun 18** Salute to Israel Parade decorations, 10:00 a.m.
Kadima/USY Event, 5 p.m.
- Tue 27** Last day of kindergarten
- Wed 28** Last day of school
Siddur Ceremony, 5 p.m.
- Thu 29** Last day of school

JUNE 2008

- Sun 1** Salute to Israel Parade

Hebrew School Registration

Registration for Hebrew School has begun. Classes will meet as follows:

Kindergarten: Tuesday

1st Grade: Thursday

2nd Grade
Monday and Wednesday

3rd Grade
Monday and Wednesday

4th Grade
Monday and Wednesday

5th Grade
Monday and Wednesday

6th Grade
Tuesday and Thursday

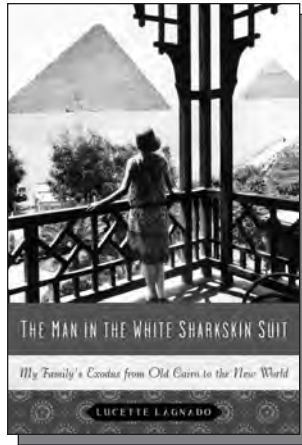
7th-12th Grades
Mondays, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

For information on registering both returning and new students, please contact Ilana Burgess at 212-452-2310, extension 15, or ilana@orzarua.org.

Or Zarua Book Discussions

Please join us in the Or Zarua library on Sunday, May 18 at 7:30 p.m. when Said and Ellen Hawa will lead our discussion of *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, Lucette Lagnado's poignant memoir of her family's privileged life among a prosperous Jewish community in cosmopolitan Cairo under King Farouk.

The author's father, Leon, a boulevardier, conducted business on the terrace of Shephard's Hotel and in the bar of the Nile Hilton, sporting his signature white sharkskin. With Nasser's nationalization of Egyptian industry, Leon and his family, along with the rest of the Jewish community, lost everything and needed to escape. With their belongings packed into twenty-six suitcases, including some valuables hidden in sealed tins



of marmalade, the Lagnados departed for any land that would take them. The poverty and hardships of dislocation they faced in their flight from Cairo to Paris and eventually to Brooklyn, contrasted strikingly with the comforts of the lives they left behind.

Ms. Lagnado currently lives in Manhattan and has received numerous prizes for her work as an investigative reporter at *The Wall Street Journal*.

Information about our next book discussion on September 14 will appear in the September/October Newsletter, as well as in the weekly Or Zarua email bulletins during August.

If you have any questions about our programs or have a book suggestion, please contact Reed Schneider at 212-860-8611 or arlm1199@aol.com.

TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT

On Erev Shavuot, Sunday, June 8, Minhah/Ma'ariv will begin at 8:15 p.m. Following the service, a panel of Or Zarua members will discuss "The Second Commandment: Can There be a Jewish Art?" Watch for further announcements.

LAG B'OMER LECTURE

Rivkah Duker Fishman

will speak on

Recent Views of Ancient Jewish History and Their Implications

Wednesday, May 21, 8:00 p.m.

Rivkah Duker Fishman is a lecturer in Jewish History at the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the Israel School of Tourism, Archeological Seminars and Yad Vashem. She has published widely on Jews and Jewish history in Byzantine literature.

BLINTZES AND BRANCHES ON SHAVUOT

WHY IS IT CUSTOMARY TO EAT DAIRY FOODS ON THE FIRST DAY OF SHAVUOT?

Among the many explanations is that the custom derives from a verse in the Song of Songs, "Honey and milk shall be under your tongue...." This is considered a reference to the sweet and nourishing Torah, which we received on Shavuot. A practical explanation is that the Israelites at Sinai, having just received the Torah, realized that any meat they had already prepared was not kosher, so they had to eat whatever dairy foods they had on hand. A symbolic explanation is that consumption of meat represents indulgence while consumption of dairy foods represents restraint, and the Torah is more accessible to those who exercise restraint and self-control.

WHY IS IT CUSTOMARY TO DECORATE THE SYNAGOGUE WITH FOLIAGE ON SHAVUOT?

Aside from its association with receiving the Torah, Shavuot is an agricultural festival—the end of the wheat harvest (and the end of the counting of the omer) and the beginning of the fruit harvest. The Torah itself refers to the holiday in terms of the first fruits that grow in the Land of Israel. During Temple times, Shavuot was a pilgrimage festival, and bikkurim—first fruits—were brought to the Temple as offerings. Bringing the fields into the synagogue recalls these ancient customs.

IYAR: Celebrating the Land of Israel

By Ron Meyers

The month of Iyar is entirely contained within the period of the omer, when we count the forty-nine days between Pesah and Shavuot. The omer is a time of probation and apprehension, as we wait for the spring crops to mature and pray for a good result. It is a curious coincidence, then, that this month when we are so concerned with the fruit of the land is also the time when we observe three holidays concerned with the sovereignty of the land of Israel.

Lag B'Omer (falling on May 23 this year) is the brief respite from the season of apprehension, occurring a little more than halfway through the omer, on the

thirty-third day. This small holiday is associated with an uptick in the fortunes of the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans in the time of Rabbi Akiva. It stands as a bright moment during a period of tension.

Before and after Lag B'Omer come Yom Ha'atzmaut (May 8) and Yom Yerushalayim (June 2), our modern-day holidays celebrating the establishment of the State of Israel and the restoration of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem during the Six-Day War. These holidays date from 1948 and 1967, respectively, but they shine as towering fulfillments of the two-thousand-year aspiration of our dis-

tant ancestors and even our recent forebears. It is amazing to think that many of us alive today bore witness to these resounding historic events. Like Lag B'Omer, these days are specks of light in a very stormy history. The age-old hope remains that this time of great light will not be an island surrounded by darkness, though each day's headlines remind us that its longevity is hardly assured. As we revel in the sixtieth anniversary of the modern State of Israel this Iyar (and especially at the Israel Day Parade on June 1), we are privileged to continue the struggle to sustain and build upon these historic accomplishments.

ME'AH GRADUATION

Congregation Or Zarua's second Me'ah class will graduate this spring. On Sunday, May 18, certificates will be conferred at the Northeast regional Me'ah graduation ceremony to be held at Central Synagogue.

Then, on Saturday, May 31, the class will be honored along with other Or Zarua scholars during Shabbat services and at a Kiddush lunch following services.

Me'ah is a two-year intensive adult Jewish learning program of Hebrew College and Combined Jewish Philanthropies' Commission on Jewish Continuity and Education. Students are immersed in reading core Jewish texts, grappling with concepts representing the historical, cultural and political movements from four eras—biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern. For approximately 100 hours of class time (Me'ah means "100" in Hebrew) over the past two years, the class has had the chance to read, think about and discuss new ideas and perspectives on Jewish history and life.

This graduating class has had four wonderful semesters, studying Bible with Regina Stein, Rabbinics with Eliezer Diamond, Medieval with Arnold Franklin, and the Modern period with Hasia Diner. Each semester was fascinating and invigorating.

Or Zarua's first Me'ah class has continued to study in the Me'ah Graduate Institute. The class has met each semester since their graduation two years ago. This year's graduating class looks forward to continued learning in the Me'ah Graduate Institute.

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.

Sixth Annual Or Zarua Blood Drive

By Robin Blumenthal

Or Zarua's sixth annual blood drive, held on Sunday, March 2, was a success. Twenty-nine people registered to donate, resulting in 20 pints of blood. Although some Or Zarua members were precluded from donating because of travel or health history, our ranks were augmented by a number of people from the neighborhood who were notified about our event by the New York Blood Center.

For many, the event started after attending morning minyan and partaking of a delicious brunch. While the grown-ups were donating blood, the children were busy upstairs with their own hesed activities which included preparing 100 bag lunches and supplies of toiletries for the Coalition for the Homeless and making hesed art projects.

Many people helped to make this event successful, most importantly those

who donated or attempted to donate blood and lent their support. Special thanks also to those who helped in the

adorable and energetic grandchildren.

While the 20 pints fell far short of the 50 pints that has been our unattainable goal for years, our efforts were well appreciated by the New York Blood Center, which had recently issued an emergency appeal.

It has been suggested that to improve participation in the future we should partner with another institution, such as

Solomon Schechter Day School. If you are interested in planning this event next year, please contact Robin Blumenthal, 212-420-2942 or rblument@chpnet.org. Your support of future hesed activities by contributing to the Hesed Fund and volunteering to help with activities is vitally important.



GERRY SOLOMON

Jay Palmer (on cot) was one of the 29 blood donors offered refreshments by Julia Blumenthal (left) and Robin Blumenthal. Julia and Theodore Solomon took photos at the event.

planning and the activities on the day of the event: Gerry and Phyllis Solomon, Jay Palmer for the cheese donation from Park East, Ilana Burgess, Yael Goren, Ethan and Allyn Maultasch, Susan Lorin and Marty Kupferberg, and a special mention to Julia Blumenthal for entertaining Gerry and Phyllis Solomon's

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.**

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.

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.

GOING BACK TO ZAYDEH'S SHUL

By Barry Yood

On Sunday, June 22, in conjunction with our exhibit on the Yiddish theater, "From Yankel to Yankee," I will lead Congregation Or Zarua on a tour of the Eldridge Street Synagogue, many of whose members were involved in the Yiddish theater. We will meet in front of the synagogue at 12 Eldridge Street on the Lower East Side at 10:30 a.m. Following the tour we will have lunch at Noah's Ark on Grand Street.

The Eldridge Street Synagogue was



The facade of the Eldridge Street Synagogue combines Gothic, Moorish and Romanesque architectural elements.

the first great house of worship built on the Lower East Side by immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe. Since its opening in 1887, the building has been a symbol of the religious freedom and economic opportunity sought by so many immigrants coming to America. It is the most significant remaining marker of the huge Jewish community that flourished on New York's Lower East Side from the 1850's to the 1940's. Members included Eddie Cantor, Paul Muni, and Edward G. Robinson.

From the 1950's to the 1970's, the synagogue fell into disrepair, but in the last twenty years, it has been restored to its previous glory. Today it is an inspiration to visitors of all cultural backgrounds from around the city, the nation and the globe. In recognition of the building's architectural magnificence and its role in the American Jewish immigrant experience, Eldridge was designated a national historic landmark in 1996.

As a docent at the Museum at Eldridge Street, I was personally drawn to the synagogue because my great-grandfather, Rav Avroham Aaron Yudelovitch, was the rabbi there from 1918 until his death in 1930. He is buried in the synagogue's cemetery.



The Eldridge Street Synagogue has been restored to its original grandeur while preserving traces of its century-long existence.



The Holy Ark, made of hand-carved walnut, is large enough to hold 24 Torah scrolls.

DINA LINSK, *New Administrative Staff*

Please welcome Dina Linsk, who recently joined the OZ administrative staff. Dina grew up in Brooklyn and is a graduate of Hunter College. She lived in Jerusalem for nine years and worked for the late Mayor Teddy Kollek. She now resides in Manhattan, where she most recently worked as an administrator at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. You can reach Dina at 212-452-2310, extension 12 or dlinsk@orzarua.org. Stop by the fifth floor office next time you are in the building and introduce yourself to Dina.

OZ CRAFTS CLUB Our next meeting will be in the social hall on Sunday, June 8 at 10:00-11:30 a.m. Please contact Carrie Fox at cfox@aya.yale.edu for more information.

**KIDDUSH LUNCH
HONORING
THE SCHOLARS OF OZ**

Saturday, May 31

after services, which begin at 9:00 a.m.

The Congregation will celebrate the accomplishments of those who have completed a course of study and those who are continuing their studies.

HONOREES INCLUDE:

**Hebrew School Students
Me'ah Program Graduates
Adult Learners of the Community**

All are welcome to congratulate those who are dedicated to Jewish learning.

Upcoming Programs

Sunday, May 4
AIPAC speaker Eli Lake

Wednesday, May 7
Yom Hazikaron
Israel Remembrance Day
Yom Ha'atzmaut
Israel's 60th Anniversary

Sunday, May 18
Make Israel Parade Decorations

Tuesday, May 20
Annual Meeting and Rooftop Picnic

Wednesday, May 21
Lag B'Omer Lecture
by Rivkah Duker Fishman

Friday, May 30
Shabbaton with Rabbi Reuven
Hammer at Shabbat Dinner

Saturday, May 31
Shabbaton with Rabbi Reuven
Hammer during Shabbat services

Saturday, May 31
Kiddush Lunch honoring the
Scholars of Or Zarua

Sunday, June 1
Salute to Israel Parade

Wednesdays, June 4, 18 and 25
Joey Weisenberg's Spontaneous
Jewish Choir

Sunday, June 8
Tikkun Leyl Shavuot Discussion on
"The Second Commandment:
Can There be a Jewish Art?"

Sunday, June 22
Eldridge Street Synagogue Tour
with Barry Yood

Salute to Israel Parade, Sunday, June 1

By Aliza Kaplan

This year we will celebrate Israel's 60th birthday with the theme "Stories of 60" as Congregation Or Zarua marches up Fifth Avenue in the Salute to Israel Parade on Sunday, June 1.

Everyone is welcome, including elementary school students. Children in third grade and above marching without their parents need a permission slip from Ilana Burgess (ilana@orzarua.org). We will assemble at 53rd Street between Madison and Park Avenues at 1:00 p.m.

Please also join us at the synagogue on Sunday, May 18 from 10:00 a.m. to noon to help create themed banners and signs for the day of the parade.

Participation in the parade on June 1 will mark our seventh year demonstrating the strength of our support for Israel.



OZ's brightly colored decorations received special recognition at the 2007 Salute to Israel Parade.

CONGREGATION OR ZARUA

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