

# Congregation OR ZARUA

NEWSLETTER / VOLUME 21:5

IYAR / SIVAN / TAMMUZ / AV 5769

MAY / JUNE / JULY 2009

## SUNDAY, JUNE 7 OZ Cemetery Dedication Ceremony

By Gerry Solomon

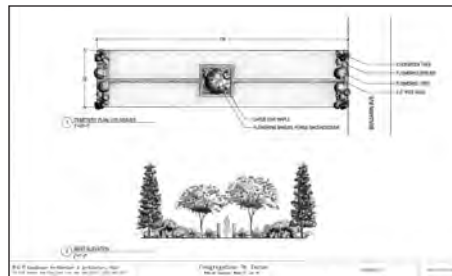
The dedication ceremony for the Or Zarua section of Beth El Cemetery in Washington Township, New Jersey, has been set for Sunday, June 7, at 11 a.m., following the regular morning minyan. After special prayers, we will bury the Or Zarua *genizah* that the synagogue has been collecting for 20 years.

The *genizah* (“storage” or “hiding place”) contains worn-out siddurim and other writings and objects such as worn tallitot, mezzuzot, and tefillin. Because these objects contain the Holy Name or are used in worship, Jewish tradition requires them to be buried.

The Or Zarua section of Beth El Cemetery was purchased three years ago from the Workmen’s Circle. The section has 276 gravesites available for sale only to current Or Zarua members for burial of persons of the Jewish faith. About half



*A view of the cemetery and surrounding trees taken just beyond the stone threshold marking the entry to the Or Zarua section.*



have already been sold. The cemetery is well maintained and is landscaped with trees and shrubbery at both ends and in the central area. A stone threshold marks the entry to the Or Zarua section. Landscaping is designed to provide a serene and beautiful final resting place in keeping with Or Zarua’s aesthetics and values.

Beth El cemetery is located in Bergen County, New Jersey, approximately ten miles north of the George Washington Bridge, near the town of Paramus.

All are welcome to attend the dedication ceremony. Please contact the Or Zarua office no later than noon on Tuesday, June 2, if you plan to attend so that we can coordinate transportation.

*The top half of the figure at left shows the layout of the whole cemetery area. The bottom half is a rendering of the landscaped entry not visible in the photograph above.*

### TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT

On Erev Shavuot, Thursday, May 28, Minhah/Ma’ariv will begin at 8:00 p.m. Following the service, a panel of Or Zarua members will discuss the topic “Greed: When is it Good, When is it Bad?” The evening will conclude with a feast of ice cream and cheesecake, in keeping with our tradition of eating dairy foods on Shavout (see box on page 9). Watch for further announcements.

### DINNER, MUSIC AND ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 12 • 7:00 p.m. Picnic • 8:15 p.m. Meeting

Congregation Or Zarua’s 20th Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12, preceded by a festive rooftop picnic and a special performance by our very own Klezmer band. The occasion will be the inaugural performance of the Or Zarua Klezmer Band organized in November under the direction of Joey Weisenberg. The business meeting will include reports from Treasurer Alan Nadel, President Andrew Frackman and Rabbi Harlan J. Wechsler, as well as the election of officers and members of the Board of Trustees. Reservations for dinner are essential. Please make your reservation on [www.orzarua.org](http://www.orzarua.org) or by calling the synagogue office at 212-452-2310, extension 39.

ק"ק אור זרוע  
CONGREGATION

# OR ZARUA

A CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE  
FOUNDED 1989

127 EAST 82ND STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10028  
phone: 212-452-2310 fax: 212-452-2103  
www.orzarua.org

DR. HARLAN J. WECHSLER, *Rabbi*  
ANDREW J. FRACKMAN, *President*  
VICKY A. STEIN, *Executive Director*  
ILANA BURGESS, *Youth Education Director*  
CHARLES SPIELHOLZ, *Newsletter Editor*

## Two Hebrew Classes at Or Zarua

On Wednesday nights beginning April 22 and concluding on June 10, Or Zarua's native son and rabbinic intern Joe Schwartz will be teaching two sections of Hebrew: Beginners' Hebrew from 7-8 p.m. and Hebrew of the Siddur from 8-9 p.m.

Beginners' Hebrew will build reading and pronunciation skills. Depending on the level and pace of the class, it will then venture into the fundamentals of Hebrew: basic vocabulary, syntax and grammar. No prior knowledge of Hebrew is required.

Hebrew of the Siddur will aim for understanding the language of the Shabbat and weekday prayers, and developing skills for deciphering the Hebrew prayers on one's own. We will learn essential vocabulary and roots, acquaint ourselves with different verb and noun

forms and, most importantly, learn skills for making sense of unfamiliar prayers.

While the class will assume participants can read and pronounce Hebrew and have some acquaintance with its basic vocabulary, everyone is invited to attend. Pace and progress will depend on the level of the class.

To register for either class, call the office at 212-452-2310, extension 39.

Joe Schwartz has been a congregant of Or Zarua since its inception. Inspired by his experiences at OZ, Joe began rabbinical school last year at HUC and will be transferring to the Ziegler School at AJU (formerly the University of Judaism) in Los Angeles in the fall. Prior to rabbinical school, Joe practiced law in New York City. Hebrew is one of Joe's great passions and he is excited to have the opportunity to share it with others.

### OZ Committee Chairs

ADMINISTRATION	Alan Ilberman
AESTHETICS	Aaron Shelden
BOOK DISCUSSION	Reed Schneider
BUILDING	Diane Okrent
CEMETERY	Aliza Kaplan Mort Schwartz
DEVELOPMENT	Mimi Alperin
EVENTS/ADULT ED	Helene Wolff
HESED	Stephanie Failla
HEVRA KADISHA	Vera Silver Gerry Solomon
HOUSE	Janet Katz
ISRAEL	Aliza Kaplan
LIBRARY	Barry Feldman
MEMBERSHIP	Brett Cohen
MINYAN	Sheldon Adler
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.



**Birkat HaHamah** After the morning minyan, and a siyyum—to permit the first born to refrain from fasting—congregants gathered on the roof of Or Zarua to say the Birkat HaHamah, the blessing of the sun. According to tradition, on the morning of April 8, 2009, for the first time in 28 years—and not for another 28 years—the sun was in the exact location it was when it was created on the fourth day. This April 8 began as a sunny morning, but quickly became overcast. Rabbi Wechsler affirmed that he had, indeed, seen the sun prior to 7 a.m.—and other congregants confirmed it—so, despite the cloud cover, we were able to proceed. The saying of this special blessing for the sun was followed by a Pesah breakfast.

**SHABBAT USHERS NEEDED** Please email Janet Katz at [jmkatz@nyc.rr.com](mailto:jmkatz@nyc.rr.com).

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Andrew J. Frackman

As I approach the end of my first year as president of this Congregation, I wanted to share with you some of our successes over the past year and some of the challenges that still exist for us. Many of these challenges can be solved through our own affirmative actions, and I ask for your assistance on those efforts.

Notwithstanding the external economic reality, we have been able to maintain our high level of services and programming over the past year. We approach the end of our fiscal year anticipating that we will end on June 30 with a deficit of under \$100,000 on a budget of approximately \$1.5 million—a remarkable achievement, in my view, considering that we did not meaningfully reduce our services or programming. Fortunately, we have had the benefit of a reserve that we had created over the past ten years. Our programming had such highlights as the annual Lucy Dawidowicz lecture, or in this case, interview, with the architect Daniel Libeskind, and the Yom Ha'atzmaut lecture by the renowned biblical scholar James Kugel. Our programming is of a very high level, and we intend to keep it that way, but to do so will require additional congregant support next year.

As you may recall, one of my goals was to bring new energy to our tefilah and to improve the musical component of our services. One of the defining characteristics of Or Zarua is that our congregants lead all of our services. Few non-Orthodox congregations can achieve this goal. To do so requires a cadre of highly educated, committed congregants. Fortunately, we have them. But it is obvious that when a variety of different congregants of differing backgrounds and skill sets lead services and read Torah, there is less consistency in what we do. To address this, we invested in having Joey Weisenberg teach nusah this autumn in eight weekly sessions. Those of us who attended those sessions learned much and found the experience spiritually

meaningful. We have been applying some of what we learned with Joey in our Shabbat musaf tefilah and have consciously tried to increase the consistency of that service by having fewer leaders, all of whom worked with Joey, lead Shabbat musaf services. We also chose to invite Joey to lead our Shabbaton, which was a tremendous success. Right now, we are considering how we can continue to address this need next year and to enhance the musical component of all of our services. We are looking for and must obtain additional funding for this effort. We also need to attract and train more Torah readers who can read fluently, accurately, and in a manner that inspires the kehillah. We have made great strides this past year while retaining our characteristic congregant-led services, but we have much still to do, including strategy for improving our High Holy Day services.

I focus on tefilah and programming because that is at the core of our *raison d'être*. Without satisfying and spiritual tefilah, and to a lesser but very significant extent programming, we cannot attract new congregants. And, the cost of programming is what stands between us and a balanced budget this year and undoubtedly next year as well. It is for this reason that I have been communicating to you on every opportunity our goal of developing congregant funding for all of our varied and wonderful programming. As I wrote in my letter of March 12, in order to close our budget deficit—that is, to avoid a reduction in programming—we need to have congregants specifically fund or endow our Shabbat dinners and speakers, our Shabbaton, and our other significant congregational programming next year. The opportunity to make a difference in the life of our congregation is in our hands.

Next year, we will be focusing more intensively on membership. Again, this is in our control. If each of us brought in one new member, we would increase our

membership substantially. New members are critical because they bring new ideas and energy—essential inputs to the continued health of any organization. We need all types of new members from different age-groups and different backgrounds. But the key to attracting new members is providing a spiritually compelling service, which is why I focus so much on the musical component of our tefilah. I am very optimistic about our ability to attract new members over the next few years from the entire spectrum of the Jewish community. Among other things, there was a time when young people involved in Jewish religious life were more likely to move to the Upper West Side. Now, the reality is that apartments in the new buildings on the Upper East Side are at least as, if not more, affordable, creating additional opportunity for us. But to avail ourselves of the opportunity will take effort and help from congregants.

Finally, we have successfully closed on the Rabbinic apartment, successfully obtained a mortgage at a very attractive rate, and successfully rented it at a rental sufficient to cover our carrying costs. This success is a tribute to the commitment of numerous members of the Board. Michael Schwartz, who as president pushed the initiative forward, oversaw the initial decision to purchase and led the initial fundraising effort; Alan Nadel, who led the team in obtaining a mortgage in a very tight credit market this past autumn; and Alan Ilberman and Dan Beller, who assisted in the final negotiations with our lessee when I was away on vacation in March. We owe our thanks to them and to the congregants who so generously provided the necessary funding to permit us to take this important step for the entire congregation.

I look forward to discussing these and other matters with you at the Congregation's Annual Meeting on May 12 and over the coming months.

# PURIM MINI-SPIEL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

By Meredith Katz

This year, Or Zarua added another exciting component to the Congregation's Purim programming. A very special celebration was held on Monday, March 9 for young children prior to the Congregation's Megillah reading. More than two dozen children and their parents gathered for a program of singing with Rob Silverbush, the OZ

music teacher; decorating Purim masks; and presenting a children's version of the Scroll of Esther.

The Scroll of Esther was illustrated by the first grade students during Hebrew school. Ilana Burgess unrolled the Megillah and called on the "big kids" to read it to the younger children. It was a great way to make everyone feel involved.

The children also had a fabulous time seeing each other's costumes, dancing and parading. And since there were several non-member families present, the program also functioned as a fun outreach effort.

Many thanks to all those who helped to make the program happen, and especially to Arthur Rosenbloom for arranging use of the Lycée Français cafeteria.



First graders from OZ's Hebrew School display the Megillah they prepared for the Mini-Spiel, while four boys model their Purim costumes.

## Youth Education Calendar

MAY 2009

- Sat 16 Junior Congregation and Special Kiddush to Honor Teachers and Students, 10:30 a.m.
- Sun 17 Kadima/USY Casino Night, 5-7 p.m.
- Mon 18 B'nai Jeshurun, 6 p.m.
- Mon 18 Last week of classes
- Wed 20 Siddur Ceremony
- Sun 31 Salute to Israel Parade

## KADIMA/USY LAS VEGAS CASINO NIGHT

Back by popular demand, Or Zarua's Second Annual Casino Night will be held on Sunday, May 17 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Party the night away Las Vegas-style with Kadima and USY. Join us for blackjack, poker, roulette, and other exciting games. Food and drinks will be provided. Please invite your Jewish friends from school to join us for this wonderful event.

## FOOD DRIVE

By Bruce Silverman

On Monday, March 9, in conjunction with the annual Purim Spiel, Or Zarua held a food drive for the benefit of the Yorkville Common Pantry, the largest community-based food pantry in New York City. Both the Purim Spiel and food drive were a great success. We are delighted to report that four boxes of food items and toiletries, as well as \$1,050 in funds, were collected.

Robyn and Bruce Silverman, along with Stephanie Failla, chairperson of the Hessed Committee, would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their generous donations. Particularly during these challenging economic times, it was heart-warming to see such an enthusiastic response from our members and their guests.

**Or Zarua Hebrew School Registration has begun.** Second through sixth grades will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays, kindergarten will meet on Tuesdays, and first grade will meet on Thursdays. The first day of Hebrew School will be Wednesday, September 9. To register or for additional information, please contact Ilana Burgess at 212-452-2310, extension 15 or email [iburgess@orzarua.org](mailto:iburgess@orzarua.org).



# Law and Disorder: Haman in Treatment



Congregation Or Zarua's 2009 Purim Spiel, "Law and Disorder: Haman in Treatment," was a rousing success. Every year, the talent of the cast continues to expand its reach along with Bonnie Maslin's genius for creating amazingly entertaining and original scripts. The children were so enthusiastic, energetic and adorable that the audience's approval stopped the show several times. The entire cast and crew want to thank the Congregation for their wholehearted support of their earnest endeavors.

## Or Zarua Parents' Reception

By Leslie Berger

Parents whose children attend either the Or Zarua Hebrew School, one of the various Jewish Day Schools, or who simply participate in Or Zarua's Youth Department Family Programs enjoyed a rare chance to relax, commiserate and kvell together, without interruption from their precious children. The event, the first of its kind at Or Zarua, was held Tuesday, March 3, 2009. About a dozen moms and dads sipped wine and sampled hand-passed hors d'oeuvres at the home of Ira and Betsy Dizengoff, parents of Hebrew School graduates Reuben and Sophie.

The goal for the parents' reception, developed by Or Zarua's Education Committee, was to build community among families with children who attend

a wide array of schools—public, private and religious.

In addition to getting to know one another, topics specific to Or Zarua children were discussed, including incorporating synagogue activities into overloaded schedules; maintaining Jewish friendships in a polyglot society; issues related to bar and bat mitzvahs; and keeping teens connected to Judaism.

Rabbi Wechsler was able to meet just about every parent who attended. And every parent was greeted by Ilana Burgess, the Congregation's intrepid youth education director, who always makes everyone feel welcome. The reception was such a success that another one is already scheduled for later this spring. Stay tuned for more details.

**OZ CRAFTS CLUB** Knit or crochet squares for a child's blanket, crochet kippot for a Hebrew school in S'derot, or work on a project of your own. All ages and skill levels are welcome. We meet the second Sunday of every month from 10:15-11:45 a.m. in the library. Our next meetings will take place on May 17, June 14 and July 12. For more information, contact Carrie Fox at cfox@aya.yale.edu.

## TALMUD CLASS

Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

First chapter of Masekhet Kiddushin, this year focusing on women and their mitzvot, as well as treatment of the elderly.

conducted by  
RABBI WECHSLER

Classes are taught in English; familiarity with Hebrew or Aramaic or previous study of Talmud is not necessary.

## WWW.ORZARUA.ORG

Use our award-winning website to:

- View calendar and service times
- Register for meals and events
- Make donations online
- Sign up for morning minyan
- Learn about educational programs

# Salute to Israel Parade, Sunday, May 31

Don't miss it this year! Imagine that it's springtime on Fifth Avenue and Congregation Or Zarua members are marching north as a group, carrying signs and singing out loud. It's the Salute to Israel Parade and you are there. Behind you is a sea of faces, signs and floats. Ahead of you are streamers, floats and people of all ages sporting color-coordinated T-shirts. It is awe inspiring to march in this crowd. We are all one, for a moment, each supporting Israel in our own way and yet together.

This year we salute Israel with "The 100 Year Anniversary of Tel Aviv" as our theme.

Save the date Sunday, May 31, 2009. More details will be available in the Or Zarua announcements and website.



"Stories of 60," the 2008 Salute to Israel Parade theme, celebrated Israel's 60th birthday.

## A THOUSAND UNSOLVED RIDDLES: *Searching for Reasons for the Commandments*

There is still time to attend Marc Ashley's Sunday morning class, "A Thousand Unsolved Riddles: Searching for Reasons for the Commandments." The last two classes of this three-session discussion will meet in the synagogue library on May 3 and May 17 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](http://www.orzarua.org).

### YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

Or Zarua's Hesed Fund provides a variety of services to those in need. Right now, with the economy on shaky ground, those services are in greater demand than ever. Please consider a donation to the Or Zarua Hesed Fund. You will be doing a true mitzvah by helping people in need.

## 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 beginning 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.

## Terry Krulwich Honored with Hinton Award from the American Society of Microbiology



Terry Krulwich, well known to Congregation Or Zarua as a founding member, Shabbat service leader and regular reader of the

Torah, has been honored with the William A. Hinton Research Training Award from the American Society of Microbiology.

Terry, who is Professor of Pharmacology and Biological Chemistry, and Program Director of the Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, was given this award for her outstanding contributions toward fostering the research training of underrepresented minorities in microbiology. Terry's contributions to this effort included the estab-

lishment and direction of the Medical Scientist Training Program while she was Dean of the Graduate School of Biological Sciences from 1981 to 2002.

During this time, she mentored over 100 underrepresented students. She also received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to establish the Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program which provides recent college graduates from underrepresented minorities with a mentored research program to help facilitate their pursuit of a Ph.D. or M.D./Ph.D. degree.

The award is given in memory of William A. Hinton, a physician-research scientist, who was among the first African Americans to join the American Society for Microbiology.

Mazel tov to Terry on this prestigious honor and mitzvah.

## THE STATE OF WORLD JEWRY

Wednesday, June 17

Announcing a special, end of the year presentation by



**DAVID HARRIS**  
Executive Director,  
American Jewish Committee

THE STATE OF WORLD JEWRY  
Wednesday, June 17

Details to follow.

## Or Zarua Book Discussion

Please join us for our next Or Zarua book discussion on Sunday, May 3 at 7:30 p.m. in Or Zarua's library. We will be discussing *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks, whose second novel, *March*, won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

*People of the Book*, her third novel, revolves around the true story of the world-famous Sarajevo Haggadah, one of the earliest illuminated Jewish texts from 14th-century Spain. The images in the Sarajevo Haggadah are so rich and beautiful that

it is now a priceless artifact, somehow surviving five centuries of hatred and destruction. From a real-life epic of heroism and chance, Brooks skillfully weaves an exciting historical thriller of uncanny



force from the perspective of Hanna, the Australian conservator, chosen to preserve and analyze the manuscript.

Jonathan Yardley in *The Washington Post* wrote, "This new novel is intelligent, thoughtful, gracefully written and original. Brooks has built upon her experience as a correspondent in Bosnia for *The Wall Street Journal* to construct a story around a book—small, rare and very old—and the people into whose hands it had fallen over five centuries."

If you would like more information on Or Zarua book discussions or have titles to suggest for future discussions, please contact Reed Schneider at arlm1199@aol.com.

## Editor's Note

You might have noticed that this issue of the Congregation Or Zarua Newsletter covers three months instead of two. That is because the summer issue of the newsletter, formerly dated July/August, has been merged into the surrounding issues. Therefore, the next newsletter issue will also cover three months—August, September and October. Issues for the remainder of the year will remain in a bimonthly format.

The deadline for submission of materials for the August/September/October issue of the Or Zarua Newsletter will be Wednesday, July 8, 2009. Please submit all articles as well as any questions or ideas that you may have, to Charlie Spielholz at [cssrs@earthlink.net](mailto:cssrs@earthlink.net).

If possible, digital images should be high resolution files at 300 dpi in order to print properly.

## MAY / JUNE / JULY 2009 CHECKLIST

- Sign up for Beginners' Hebrew or Siddur Hebrew at 212-452-2310, extension 39. Classes meet on Wednesdays through June 10.
- Make reservations for Or Zarua's rooftop picnic on Tuesday, May 12, 8:15 p.m., featuring music by Or Zarua's Klezmer Band, as well as our Annual Meeting.
- "A Thousand Unsolved Riddles: Searching for Reasons for the Commandments" meets on May 17 at 10 a.m. in the OZ library.
- Kadima and USY Casino Night, Sunday, May 17, 5-7 p.m.
- Final session of Talmud Class with Rabbi Wechsler, Wednesday, May 20, 8 p.m.
- Observe Tikkun Leyl Shavout on Erev Shavuot, Thursday, May 28. We will discuss "Greed: When is it Good, When is it Bad?" following Minhah/Ma'ariv, which starts at 8 p.m., followed by dairy desserts.
- Join the Salute to Israel Day Parade on Sunday, May 31. Watch for details.
- Attend the Or Zarua Cemetery dedication on Sunday, June 7, 11 a.m. Call the synagogue office by Tuesday, June 2 to arrange transportation.
- Hear David Harris on "The State of World Jewry," Wednesday, June 17.
- Register for Hebrew School at 212-452-2310, extension 15 or [iburgess@orzarua.org](mailto:iburgess@orzarua.org).
- Remember the OZ Hesed Fund and donate generously to this important cause.

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### END OF YEAR KIDDUSH

*Sponsored by David and Sara Stone*

Saturday, June 6

Congregation Or Zarua Social Hall

David and Sara Stone sponsor this Kiddush in grateful appreciation for the amazing support of the OZ congregation during David's illness in England and for his return to New York and to good health.