

Or Zarua

IYAR/SIVAN/TAMMUZ 5770

NEWSLETTER/VOLUME 22:4

MAY/JUNE 2010

Lights...Camera...Action...ISRAEL!

Salute to Israel Day Parade, Sunday, May 23



Or Zarua members marching north up Fifth Avenue during the 2009 Salute to Israel Day Parade.

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

This year we salute Israel's creativity in drama, with "Lights...Camera...Action...ISRAEL!" as our theme. Save the date of Sunday, May 23, 2010. More details will be available in Or Zarua announcements and on the website.



Principal Ilana Burgess (third from left) and students from OZ's Hebrew School enjoying the 2009 parade.

PHOTOS BY GERRY SOLOMON

Going Green: A Jewish Response

Tikkun Leyl Shavuot, Tuesday night, May 18

Erev Shavuot will begin at Or Zarua with Minhah/Ma'ariv services on Tuesday, May 18 at 8:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Following the service, a panel of Or Zarua members, led by Rabbi Wechsler, will discuss "Going Green: A Jewish Response" in the Or Zarua library.

After the panel discussion, everyone is invited to Or Zarua's annual Dairy Delights in the social hall, where a feast of ice cream and cheesecake will be served in keeping with the tradition of eating dairy foods on Shavuot. (A brief discussion of some Shavuot traditions can be found on page 13).

ANNUAL MEETING, PICNIC DINNER AND MUSIC

MONDAY, MAY 10, 7:00 P.M.

Congregation Or Zarua's 21st Annual Meeting on Monday, May 10 will begin at 7:00 p.m. with a festive picnic on the roof of our synagogue and a performance by the Or Zarua Klezmer Band. The business meeting at 8:30 p.m. will include reports from Rabbi Harlan J. Wechsler, President Andrew Frackman and Treasurer Alan Nadel, as well as the election of officers and members of the Board of Trustees. Please make dinner reservations on www.orzarua.org or by calling the synagogue office at 212-452-2310, extension 39.

MEET, GREET AND SEAT Ushers are needed for Shabbat services throughout the year. Please email Janet Katz at jmktatz@nyc.rr.com to add your name to our list of volunteers. You will be contacted by email only. Your help is greatly appreciated.

ק"ק אור זרוע

Congregation



A CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE
FOUNDED 1989

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www.orzarua.org

DR. HARLAN J. WECHSLER, *Rabbi*

ANDREW J. FRACKMAN, *President*

HARVEY M. BRENNER, FTA, *Executive Director*

ILANA BURGESS, *Youth Education Director*

CHARLES SPIELHOLZ, *Newsletter Editor*

OZ Committee Chairs

ADMINISTRATION	<i>Alan Ilberman</i>
ART GALLERY	<i>Bobbi Collier</i>
AESTHETICS	<i>Aaron Shelden</i>
BOOK DISCUSSION	<i>Reed Schneider</i>
BUILDING	<i>Diane Okrent</i>
CEMETERY	<i>Aliza Kaplan</i> <i>Mort Schwartz</i>
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HEVRA KADISHA	<i>Vera Silver</i> <i>Gerry Solomon</i>
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MINYAN	<i>Sheldon Adler</i>
PROGRAMMING	<i>Sara Stone</i>
PUBLIC RELATIONS	<i>Aaron Shelden</i>
PURIM SPIEL	<i>Arthur Rosenbloom</i> <i>Bonnie Maslin</i> <i>Tibor Feldman</i> <i>Barbara Sassoon</i>
SCHOOL	<i>Betsy Dizengoff</i>
TORAH/HAFTARAH	<i>Yaakov Shechter</i>
WEBMASTER	<i>Jay Palmer</i>

If you are interested in serving on a synagogue committee, please contact the office for the committee chair's email address.

President's Message

by Andrew J. Frackman

As I begin my last year as president, I would like to share with you some of my goals for the next 12 months. By now you are familiar with my mantra. Or Zarua occupies an important and unusual position in the spectrum of Jewish communal life. We have remained true to our mission, and we should not hesitate to pursue it. We remain committed to Torah, Avodah, and G'milut Hasadim. We cannot be afraid of being different from your typical Conservative synagogue. Our founders intentionally created this institution because of the need to offer a different experience. The success of Or Zarua over the past 20 years confirms the insight of our founders.

Having said that, we should not hesitate to reexamine some of what we do in an effort to reinvigorate and improve it. I set out below what I view as the four top priorities or challenges for the community.

First, Rabbi Wechsler and I will be meeting in May with the leaders of our High Holiday Services to re-examine those services and consider ways to improve them. From this starting point, and with input from the Congregation, we should be able to develop a range of possibilities that will lead to the development of improved High Holiday Services. I also want us to reconsider the Alternate High Holiday Services that are held on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and on Kol Nidre. It is a wonderful service, as those of us who have attended know well. Years ago, I was one of the initial proponents of trying something different in a smaller minyan for the High Holidays, but, given the small number of participants, whether this is the best use of our leaders and of the available space, warrants discussion and evaluation.

Second, I have appointed a committee to review what we do in our wonderful Hebrew School, and to help Ilana Burgess, me and the Board prepare a strategic plan for the school's continued development over the next few years. Our Hebrew School is one of the best after-school programs I know of. But we need to expand

the number of students, increase our visibility in the external community, and find ways to improve our connection with post-b'nei mitzvah members of our Or Zarua community. Of course, new development and outreach will require additional financial resources.

Third, Rabbi Wechsler and I are looking at ways to bring greater joyfulness to our prayer and to improve the musicality of our Shabbat services. I firmly believe this is one of the keys to attracting new members; it is also important for our own spirituality. This has been a priority over the past two years. Although we have made some important strides on this front, we still have more to do. From my standpoint, all options are worth considering. Some of these are: 1) changing nothing, recognizing the importance to our community of Congregant-led davening and the high quality of our leaders; 2) hiring a full-time or part-time music director who could lead some services and continue to build on what we have started with Joey Weisenberg; or 3) hiring a hazzan for some of our Shabbatot (if only to introduce some variety into what can become rote). The latter two options both require additional financial support. I know that this is a topic that many Congregants feel strongly about. I see these strong feelings as providing an opportunity to develop new approaches to our Shabbat services.

Fourth, we are going to aggressively investigate the possibility of establishing an Or Zarua nursery and preschool program. Jewish nursery and preschool programs are attractive to young, committed Jewish families. The absence of a nursery and preschool puts Or Zarua at a competitive disadvantage to other congregations that offer such programs. Implementing a nursery and preschool at Or Zarua will involve renting or buying suitable space. Although it may not be something that we can achieve immediately, I believe that this is the time for us to begin a very serious investigation that will result in a strategic plan for the development of the Or Zarua Preschool.

continued on page 5

A Fantastic Year of Programming

by Sara Stone

Or Zarua was filled with exciting programs during the past year: old programs as well as many new ones. Both the depth and breadth of our programs have been awesome, with attendance at many events so overwhelming that some were sold out! We hope you attended at least one of these programs, while some of you were able to participate in many of them.

Most of Or Zarua's traditional programs continued. We began the year with our "Welcome Back" Kiddush in September. We had an evening of study with Rabbi Silber for the High Holidays. Sukkot was celebrated with meals in our beautiful rooftop sukkah. The annual membership party was hosted by the Glanterniks. There was a festive Hanukkah dinner.

Congregation Or Zarua's annual birthday party was highlighted by a discussion led by Dr. David Roskies, who presented the commemorative Lucy S. Dawidowicz Lecture. The annual Super Bowl Party raised funds for kosher food banks, as did the best-ever Purim Spiel. Our beautiful Second Seder was conducted by Rabbi Wechsler. There was a moving Yom Hashoah service with the participation of OZ Youth, musicians, and women of the Congregation. Observance of Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day, was followed by a joyous celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day.

In May there will be an Or Zarua panel discussion on the environment for Tikkun Leyl Shavuot. And, finally, our annual meeting will be preceded by the Tar Beach Picnic dinner on the rooftop of our synagogue. Dayenu!

Many on-going study programs were offered: Talmud class with Rabbi Wechsler; the Me'ah Graduate Study course; the OZ book club; Marc Ashley's Oral Law Course between Pesah and Shavuot; and Hebrew and Torah reading classes with Mark Somerstein.

There were also two very special Shabbatons. At the first one, Lucette Lagnado, author of *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, spoke movingly of her childhood in Cairo and subsequent life in the United States. During the same Shabbaton, Joey Weisenberg led our singing with many new melodies which he had taught to Congregants in a series of classes before the weekend. Our second special Shabbaton was devoted to inspirational study with Rabbis Elie Kaunfer and Ethan Tucker from Yeshivat Hadar.

Continuing our tradition of special art exhibits, the Art Gallery Committee put together "From Jaffa to Java." The exhibit opened in our social hall with a delicious Kiddush lunch. Special thanks to Bobbi Coller and her committee for all their hard

work in curating Or Zarua's art shows.

This year was also about new programs. First, there was our warm and wonderful Family and Friends Shabbat Dinners, which offered everyone a chance to use the synagogue as their "dining room." Congregants and their guests gathered informally to share a traditional Friday night dinner. Look for this event again next year!

Another exciting new program was Synaplex 2010 on Lag B'Omer, May 2. This cornucopia of events was designed to welcome the community to Or Zarua with a full day of activities showcasing all that our Congregation has to offer.

Next year our traditional programs will return. There will also be new and unique events to enliven our lives. We welcome the support you provide by sharing your ideas for programs and attending those of interest to you. Since none of our programs is self-supporting, we also need your financial support. We were fortunate this year to have many generous sponsors. We hope you too will become a sponsor so that we can continue offering such a broad array of activities.

The Program Committee has already begun planning for next year. Because the holidays are so early, there is lots of time for interesting and exciting programs in the fall. Please watch for announcements on the OZ website, via email, by special invitation, and in the Or Zarua newsletter. See you next fall!

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CONGREGATION OR ZARUA OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday
 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Friday
 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

The Or Zarua office is closed Saturday and Sunday as well as on Jewish and federal holidays.

Or Zarua Hebrew School Registration

School begins on Monday, September 13, 2010

Hebrew School Registration has begun. If you are a returning student, you will receive your registration in the mail. If you are new to the school or Congregation, please contact Ilana Burgess.

Second through sixth grades will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays; Kindergarten will meet on Tuesdays; and first grade will meet on Thursdays.

Seventh grade, which will meet on Mondays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., is designed

for students studying for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. They will also be involved in hesed activities. Students will learn the meaning of their Torah portion and haftarah as well as the meaning of the prayers recited on Shabbat. Once a month they will go to B'nai Jeshurun to help prepare meals for the homeless. This is an important activity that teaches the students to care about the less fortunate people in the community.

Please note that all children must be enrolled in our Hebrew School or attend

an accredited Jewish Day School up to the time of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Attendance at one of these programs will insure the child's Hebrew proficiency and provide them with a foundation of knowledge that is critical to their growth and development as lifelong Jews.

The first day of Hebrew School will be Monday, September 13. To register or for additional information, please contact Ilana Burgess at 212-452-2310, extension 15, or email iburgess@orzarua.org.

Or Zarua Youth Programs

Reflections on the past year

Or Zarua Youth had a fabulous year. Our children enjoyed our standard programming, including overnight stays in the rooftop sukkah, the burning of the hametz just before Pesah vacation, and a variety of Kadima and USY programs sponsored by Congregation Or Zarua.

A new and exciting program involved Or Zarua children in the service. Shabbat Hayaed was a weekend event dedicated to the children of OZ. Starting on Friday night, the service was performed by Sarah Klagsbrun using the melodies from Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. A large number of students participated in a very lively Kabbalat Shabbat service. The next morning, Shabbat services were mostly led by Or Zarua students enrolled in either our Hebrew School or one of the many Jewish Day Schools in our area. Torah portions were read by our post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah teens. Our beautiful sanctuary was full of families with children and many congregants.

During the Siddur Ceremony, we were all delighted to see the Or Zarua Hebrew School third graders receiving their first siddur and telling us why they are so proud to be Jewish.

I would like to describe one of our

many Kadima/USY programs that exemplified our children's dedication. You may recall the weekend of that horrible rain storm. Our Chocolate Seder was scheduled for that Saturday night, March 13. Considering the number of official announcements asking people to stay home during the storm, and seeing the large number of broken umbrellas littering the city's sidewalks on my way into Or Zarua, we thought the program was going to be a failure.

Fortunately, I was very wrong. Instead, we had many children show up for the Chocolate Seder on that stormy night. We studied the Haggadah, sang songs and discussed the Exodus from Egypt. Of course, since it was a Chocolate Seder, we ate strawberries instead of karpas. And those strawberries were dipped in chocolate instead of salt water. And the wine was chocolate milk. As you can image, the children had a great time.

We are planning another round of events and functions for Or Zarua's kids next year. We look forward to welcoming our returnees as well as the children of our new members.

Wishing you a healthy summer.

—ILANA BURGESS

RABBI WECHSLER TEACHES ON SIRIUS XM RADIO

Sundays at 3:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Rabbi Wechsler is on SIRIUS XM Stars Radio twice each Sunday.

Subscribers to SIRIUS Radio can access the program, "Rabbi Wechsler



Teaches," on Channel 102, and XM Radio subscribers can tune in to Channel 155. Non-subscribers to SIRIUS Radio can obtain a free, three-day trial at www.sirius.com.

HEBREW SCHOOL CALENDAR

May 2010

- Mon 17** B'nai Jeshurun, 6 p.m.
- Tue 18** Shavuot (no classes)
- Wed 19** Shavuot (no classes)
- Thu 20** Shavuot (no classes)
- Mon 24** Last week of classes

The 36th World Zionist Congress

OZ member Rabbi Robert R. Golub to represent MERCAZ USA

Congregation Or Zarua congratulates Rabbi Robert R. Golub, one of 145 American Jewish representatives who will be traveling to Israel in June to attend the quadrennial World Zionist Congress.

A member of Or Zarua since 2001, Bob has been elected a delegate on behalf of MERCAZ USA, the Zionist organization of the Conservative movement.

The 36th World Zionist Congress, set for mid-June, comes 113 years after Theodore Herzl, the founder of the modern Zionist movement, gathered about 200 Jewish leaders from around the world in Basel, Switzerland, to discuss the condi-



Bob Golub and his wife Judy at Mt. Meron, Israel.

tion of the Jewish people. The delegates at the meeting decided to create the World Zionist Organization, which led the campaign that culminated in the establish-

ment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Rabbi Golub has lived in Manhattan with his wife Judith since 2001. Ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary, he has been the professional director of MERCAZ USA since 1995.

MERCAZ USA is the Zionist organization of the Conservative movement, the voice of Conservative Jewry within the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Zionist Movement, and the Jewish National Fund. Founded nearly 30 years ago, MERCAZ's mission is to support religious pluralism in Israel and strengthen the connection between Israel and the Diaspora. For more information, go to www.mercazusa.org.

Family and Youth Activities

May

Monday, May 3 • 4:00-6:00 p.m.
HEBREW SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Wednesday, May 5 • 4:00-6:00 p.m.
HEBREW SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Monday, May 10 • 6:30 p.m.
USY AND KADIMA

Lecture and Discussion:
Jewish Ideas on Tattoos
and Body Piercings

Saturday, May 15 • 10:30 a.m.
JUNIOR CONGREGATION

for 2nd grade and older. Service led by students, teachers and parents.

Saturday, May 22 • 10:00 a.m.
OZY TEEN-LED SERVICE

Saturday, May 22 • TBA
USY AND KADIMA
Annual Casino Night

President's Message

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I have identified what I see as the four significant challenges that go to core characteristics of our community. The Board and I cannot address them without the support and participation of the entire Or Zarua community. By support, I do not mean only financial, although financial support is critical for some of these ideas. We will be reaching out to the community to elicit your views on these and other matters. I welcome and encourage constructive participation from Congregants who may have expertise in these areas.

I look forward to confronting these challenges with you over the remaining 12 months of my term.

WWW.ORZARUA.COM

- Listen to recordings of recent guest presentations at Or Zarua by Professor David Roskies of JTS, Rabbi David Silber of the Drisha Institute, Professor James Kugel of Bar Ilan University, and Professor Ruth Wisse of Harvard University.
- Hear Rabbi Wechsler's Selihot lectures on Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's teachings on teshuvah.
- Introduce yourself to the Or Zarua Hebrew School's programs and classes for children in kindergarten through high school.
- Download melodies for many of Or Zarua's prayer services.
- View descriptions and schedules for all Or Zarua events.
- RSVP for Shabbat and holiday lunches and dinners, classes, lectures, and programs
- Check service times
- Sign up for the daily minyan
- Tune into the OZ Klezmer Band

A Note from the Editor

An update on submissions

We have had a change in plans. The OZ newsletter will publish a summer issue covering July and August. The new deadline dates are as follows:

May 27	July/August
July 29	September/October
September 27	November/December
November 24	January/February
January 27	March/April

The *Or Zarua* Newsletter welcomes contributions from members of our community. Any contribution should relate to a synagogue program or function, the Conservative movement, or the life of our community. Publication guidelines are

based on interest to our community and, of course, space limitations. Articles are subject to editing. Significant editing changes will be discussed with the contributor. Please submit written material in doc, txt, or rtf form. Try to avoid docx. You may also submit written material in the body of the email message.

Photographs are always appreciated. High resolution photographs (4" x 5" at 300 dpi or 4 MB minimum) reproduce the best; therefore, you are strongly encouraged to submit high-resolution photographs. Please submit photographs as jpgs.

Submit all material via email to me at cssrs@earthlink.net.

—CHARLIE SPIELHOLZ

TALMUD CLASS

Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.
in the OZ Library

This year, we are studying the fourth chapter of *Baba Metzia*, which covers disputes over financial matters. The fourth chapter deals with fraud, from the subject of price fixing, to truth in advertising. As well, the use of language to mislead becomes, by association, a related issue that is discussed.

Classes are taught by
RABBI WECHSLER

No prior knowledge of Talmud, Hebrew or Aramaic is required.

OZ Cemetery

Gravesites for Members

The Or Zarua section of Beth El Cemetery is located in Washington Township (Bergen County), New Jersey, just ten miles away from the George Washington Bridge. Beth El Cemetery is well maintained and landscaped with trees and shrubs. The cemetery's design provides a serene and beautiful final resting place that reflects the



A view of the Or Zarua section of the cemetery beyond the stone threshold.

values and aesthetics of Congregation Or Zarua. Gravesites within the Or Zarua section are available for sale solely to members of our Congregation. Burial is limited to persons of the Jewish faith. If you are interested in buying gravesites in the Or Zarua section, please contact the synagogue office at 212-452-2310, ext. 14.

Or Zarua Diary

An occasional column

The fellow next to me on the Lexington Avenue No. 6 subway was leafing through the pictures in what seemed to be an informal wedding album. Of course, I couldn't resist looking and noticing that groom and all the men in the wedding party were wearing kilts. We chatted and I complimented him on his pictures (he was the groom) and how great he and his friends looked in kilts. When he spoke, his Scottish burr was obvious.

In one of the pictures, I thought I saw a kippa on the groom's head, but quickly decided I must be seeing things. He

turned the page. Now, the groom, still in the kilt outfit, had a tallis draped on his shoulders, and he and his very pretty bride were standing under a chuppah.

"Oh," I said, "A Jewish wedding. Who in the couple is Jewish?" "We both are," the man responded. He then introduced me to his wife, who was sitting next to him. "She's from New York and I'm from Glasgow. We were married recently and we made up this album to send to my grandparents in Scotland."

I wished them a mazal tov and smiled for the rest of the day.

—JOANNE FEIERMAN

OR ZARUA IS ON FACEBOOK!

Join our Facebook community! Follow us at www.facebook.com/orzarua for more events and news.

OZ in DC: AIPAC Policy Conference

by Arthur Rosenbloom

Congregation Or Zarua sent its first delegation to AIPAC's annual Policy Conference held in Washington, D.C., on March 21-23, 2010.

The Conference attracted a record-breaking 7,000 delegates from every state in the country, Western Europe and Israel, including 1,300 high school and college students of many races and faiths. The delegates heard from many speakers, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; former Prime Minister Tony Blair (who as the Quartet's representative, has been traveling both in and out of the Middle East in the service of promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process), and Professor Alan Dershowitz. Speakers from both sides of the aisle stressed that the divisiveness so evident in today's politics ends where Israel's security is concerned.

Also featured were breakout sessions with leading academics, journalists and others on topics ranging from threats to peace in the region to regional economic issues. AIPAC's Congressional Dinner was attended by more than 50% of the House and Senate as well as diplomats from around the world, bringing the total dinner group to around 7,500 people. Seated at OZ's table at the dinner was Congresswoman Yvette Clarke from Brooklyn who, having visited Israel,



Members of Congregation of Or Zarua who attended AIPAC's annual Policy Conference in Washington D.C., on March 21-23, 2010. First row (from left): Arthur Rosenbloom, Evelyn Kenvin, Terry Edelman, Susan Kopelowitz, Janet Katz and Rabbi Harlan Wechsler. Second row (from left): Roz Goldberg, Simon Katz, Alan Bandler and Edward Kopelowitz. Missing from the photo, but present at the Policy Conference, was Brett Cohen.

returned as a champion of its rights.

In traditional fashion, the Policy Conference culminated with lobbying trips by the delegates to Capital Hill, resulting in a record number of more than 500 lobbying visits. Armed by a preparatory session that described both lobbying techniques and the issues on which the members would be lobbied,

delegates spoke to members about foreign aid to Israel (a \$3.0 billion package this year for defense purposes), stronger sanctions on Iran and a declaration calling for the State Department to reaffirm the strong bonds between the U.S. and Israel.

And as for Or Zarua—let's be back at next year's Policy Conference in even greater numbers!

Or Zarua Crafts Club

Contribute to mitzvah projects or work on your own

Or Zarua Crafts Club members completed their second blanket for the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services' Sanctuary Stitcher's program, which was given to a child or teen living in a JBFC residential treatment facility. To learn more about the program, go to

www.sanctuarystitchers.org.

The next meetings of the Or Zarua Crafts Club will be held on Sunday, May 16 and Sunday, June 6 at 10:15 a.m. in the Or Zarua library.

Come add to the camaraderie as we knit individual squares for another joint OZ quilt for the Jewish Board's Sanctuary

Stitcher's program. We are looking to reinforce the ranks of our knitting circle. It's an opportunity to sit, share and create with good intent—plus bagels. For more information about the Crafts Club, email Terry Edelman at terryedelstein@aol.com.

—TERRY EDELMAN

Alisa Doctoroff Appointed Chair UJA Board

Leadership critical during these challenging times

Alisa Doctoroff, long-time member of Congregation Or Zarua and past president of the Board of Trustees, has been appointed chair of the Board of UJA-Federation of New York. She has been serving as chair of the UJA-Federation's Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal and was former chair of the philanthropy's Israel Task Force. Alisa was president of the Board of Trustees of Congregation Or Zarua from 1999 to 2002,



Alisa Doctoroff

during which time she oversaw the construction of our synagogue building. Immediate past president of the Board of Trustees of The Abraham Joshua Heschel School, she continues to serve on its Board.

Alisa's leadership skills and experience will be critical to the continued success of Federation programs, especially during a recession that presents particular challenges to the UJA leadership.

Mazal tov to Alisa on this prestigious honor.

OZ Book Discussions

A review of the year's reading

Our book selections in 2009-2010 have included fiction and nonfiction related to topics concerning the contemporary Jewish community in the United States and Israel. The books we read this year were: *One More Year* by Sana Krasikov, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* by Benny Morris,

Indignation by Philip Roth, *A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* by Ronald Radosh and Allis Radosh, and *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* by Saul Singer and Dan Senor.

Our next book discussion will be held in the fall on Sunday evening, October 17, at 7:30 p.m. in the Or Zarua library. All

Congregants and their guests are welcome to join us for any or all of our discussions during the year.

If you find a good Jewish book over the summer to recommend, please contact Reed Schneider, the synagogue office at 212-452-2310, ext. 12, or email dlink@orzarua.org with your suggestion.

—REED SCHNEIDER

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?

In addition to 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.

The Klagsbruns Honored

Presented with the Schechter Manhattan Vision in Leadership Award

Dr. Samuel and Francine Klagsbrun, founding members of Or Zarua, were honored by the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan. Rabbi Wechsler presented Sam and Fran with the school's Vision in Leadership Award at Schechter Manhattan's Annual Benefit Dinner on March 24. Sam and Fran have long provided inspirational leadership and tireless support to Schechter Manhattan as well as to Or Zarua. Sam is a founding member of Schechter Manhattan's Board of Trustees, and Sam and Fran are the proud grandparents of current Schechter Manhattan students Eliana and Benji Weinstein, and future Schechter Manhattan student Ari Weinstein.

Rabbi Larry Sebert, the spiritual leader of the Town and Village Synagogue, and Dr. Jane Davidson, daughter of Or Zarua members Pat and Dr. Alan Davidson, were also honored as the 2010 recipients of Schechter Manhattan's Vision in Jewish Education Award. Rabbi Sebert served on the Steering Committee that led to the founding of Schechter Manhattan and has chaired the school's Rabbinic Advisory



Rabbi Wechsler (center) presented Samuel and Francine Klagsbrun with the Vision in Leadership Award at the Schechter Manhattan Annual Benefit on March 24.

Committee since inception. Jane, the school psychologist at SAR Academy, chaired Schechter Manhattan's Education Committee for five years and has been actively involved with Camp Ramah in the Berkshires.

The Annual Benefit Dinner, co-chaired by Or Zarua member Sharon Seiler, raised funds for Schechter Manhattan and its students, many of whose families are members of Congregation Or Zarua.

Photos courtesy of Brett Deutsch of Deutsch Photography, New York City, www.deutschphoto.com, 212-810-2148.



Francine and Samuel Klagsbrun

PHOTOS BY BRETT DEUTSCH

Weekday Minyan

Your help is needed to strengthen the Or Zarua Minyan

Did you know that Or Zarua runs a daily minyan every weekday morning? Shoharit, the morning service, begins at 7:15 a.m., Monday through Friday, except on Rosh Hodesh and Hol Hamoed, when it begins at 7:00 a.m. On Sundays, Shoharit begins at 8:45 a.m. Each morning, Barkhu is said and the Amidah is recited with the Kedushah. The weekly Torah portion is read every Monday and Thursday. On Rosh Hodesh and during Hol Hamoed, the

appropriate Torah portions are read. Each morning, there are Congregants and guests who are reciting the Mourner's Kaddish. In order to accomplish these prayers, a minyan of 10 is needed. And to ensure a minyan at Or Zarua we need your help. If you want to be part of the minyan on any given morning, all you need to do is attend. If you want to help strengthen the Or Zarua minyan, please sign up for a morning or two each month by contacting Sheldon Adler at sadler@skadden.com.

LIFE EVENTS AT OZ

Members of our Congregation are sometimes faced with painful, and, in some cases, tragic events in their lives. If you know of a member of the Congregation who is coping with extended illness, hospitalization, or a death in their family, please contact the synagogue office at 212-452-2310 so that Rabbi Wechsler can be informed. Press extension 14 for the executive director or extension 12 for the rabbi's assistant.

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Plans for email distribution

Distribution of the *Or Zarua Newsletter* will be heading to cyberspace in the very near future. We will begin the process by distributing the newsletter using two methods: a printed issue by mail and an electronic version by email. Readers will then have the option of choosing to receive the electronic version only.

There are many advantages to distributing the newsletter electronically. In addition to a cost savings on printing and postage, an electronic version will allow the use of color photographs and typography, a more timely distribution, the inclusion of last-minute updates, and the possibility of providing links to register for events.

Please note that many of these advantages will be incorporated over time. For example, two separate layouts of the newsletter will need to be created in order to produce a black-and-white print version and a color electronic version.

In the meantime, keep your eyes on your computer inbox as *Or Zarua* organizes to modernize its communications.

—CHARLIE SPIELHOLZ

Grave Matters

by Gail Kraushar

Who could have guessed that a presentation to *Or Zarua's* Hevra Kadisha about the work of the Hebrew Free Burial Association would be so fascinating? Well, Rabbi Wechsler, for one. Having hosted Amy Koplow, HFBA's dynamic executive director, on his Sunday morning SIRIUS Radio program, he knew that her message was not only meaningful and moving, but also gripping and sometimes even amusing.

Addressing *Or Zarua* members at the Zayin Adar brunch on February 21, Ms. Koplow opened by tracing Jewish burial societies in the U.S. back to the original 23 Jews who settled in New York following their expulsion from Brazil in the mid-1600s. To them, as well as to successive waves of Jewish immigrants, the ultimate expression of their connection to their faith was a proper Jewish burial. But the high cost of dying, in addition to factors such as assimilation and indifference, have meant that many Jews end up under the auspices of the HFBA—more than 60,000 since its founding in 1888, over 325 in 2009, and 40 this past January alone.

On occasion the HFBA has to weed out unqualified families seeking to take advantage of their low-cost burials. Much more frequently, however, the Association

is approached by Jewish families—many of them today immigrants from the former Soviet Union—who cannot afford the costs of a private cemetery. A large part of their mission is also to reclaim the bodies of Jews—mostly elderly and alone—who end up in morgues destined for Potter's Field, or wind up as cadavers in medical schools. Finally, Koplow sometimes finds herself in negotiations worthy of "Let's Make a Deal" as she tries to convince families to give their deceased a Halakhic burial rather than have them cremated.

To keep costs down at their Mount Richmond cemetery in Staten Island as well as at the filled Sliver Lake Cemetery there, the HFBA relies on groups of Jewish volunteers including schoolchildren to perform routine maintenance such as weeding or raking leaves; small grave monuments are provided through donations to its "Leave Your Mark" campaign. Mitzvot such as these which are associated with burying the dead, Koplow points out, are considered "Hesed shel emet," the ultimate good deeds because they cannot be reciprocated. After all, as she says in a video which can be viewed on the Association's website, www.hebrewfreeburial.org, "Everybody deserves to be buried with dignity, no matter what their life was like."

Twilight in the Garden of Good and Evil

A gathering of Conservative synagogue members at JTS, Tuesday evening, May 11

An historic evening of conversation, learning and fun! On Tuesday, May 11, four East Side Conservative congregations—Congregation Or Zarua, the 55th Street Conservative Congregation, Park Avenue Synagogue and Sutton Place Synagogue—will join together as a community to examine the nature of good and evil at twilight in the garden of the Jewish Theological Seminary at 3080 Broadway.

We will start the evening at 6:30 p.m.

with a sumptuous buffet as we stroll through the garden engaging in conversation with and meeting members of the four congregations. Then a panel of the rabbis from each of the participating congregations—Rabbi Harlan Wechsler of Congregation Or Zarua, Rabbi Jan Urbach of the East 55th Street Conservative Synagogue, Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove of Park Avenue Synagogue and Rabbi Alan Schranz of the Sutton Place Synagogue, joined by Arnold M. Eisen, Chancellor of

the Jewish Theological Seminary—will discuss their views on the nature of good and evil. Following the panel discussion there will be an opportunity for further study in small groups with the learned faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

You will not want to miss this wonderful evening. RSVP by Monday, May 3. There is a charge of \$100 per person.

For more information, please contact Bonnie Gitlin Biondi at 212-678-8056 or bobiondi@jtsa.edu. —SARA STONE

The Vonce Who Stole Purim

A Slick Shtick

On Sunday, February 28, 2010, the OZ Players topped off Congregation Or Zarua's Purim celebration with Bonnie Maslin's comedic romp, *The Vonce Who Stole Purim*, a lekvar-laced spoof in the style of Sholom Aleichem's portrayal of the narischkeits of Chelm. With parodies drawn from Broadway ("What Do the Simple Folk Do") to the

musical riches of the shtetl, ("Mein Shtetele Belz"), a cast of 34 players ranging in age from single digits to septugenarians, accompanied by a three-piece band, commanded the stage.

The plot features Sidelock Homes f/k/a Payas Bayas (Harry Trattner) and his faithful sidekick Dr. Vatsun (Julia Blumenthal), who arrive in Chelm to find its hamantaschen bakery pillaged, threat-

ening the town's ability to produce hamantaschen for the broader community. In its fevered imagination, (and supreme dim-wittedness), the community fears that the problem may lead to no Purim and its redemptive ability to free Jews from Haman's depredations.

The crime is solved by mixing two parts of farce with one part of morality play, resulting in a tuneful truffle enjoyed by all.



The OZ Players, a cast of 34 ranging in age from single digits to septugenarians, accompanied by a three-piece band, topped off Congregation Or Zarua's Purim celebration with Bonnie Maslin's comedic romp, *The Vonce Who Stole Purim*, on February 28.

WELCOMING GUESTS It is important for us as a community to greet guests and new members at our services to make them feel comfortable and welcome. Let's all make more of an effort in this regard. If you are seated next to someone whom you do not know, please reach out and introduce yourself. We should be sure to do the same at our kiddushim. Making this effort is consistent with our culture and will repay dividends.

May/June Checklist

Remember these dates and deadlines

- Synaplex 2010 is on Lag B'Omer, Sunday, May 2.
- Marc Ashley's course, "We Are But of Yesterday: Yosef Yerushalmi on Jewish History, Memory and Meaning," concludes on Sunday, May 2 during Synaplex 2010.
- Learn about Or Zarua's Hebrew School by attending an Open House on Monday, May 3 or Wednesday, May 5, 4 p.m. Contact Ilana Burgess (iburgess@orzarua.org or 212-452-2310, ext. 15.)
- USY/Kadima Lecture and Discussion: Jewish Ideas on Tattoos and Body Piercing, Monday, May 10, 6:30 p.m.
- RSVP for Or Zarua's Annual Meeting and Rooftop Picnic, Monday, May 10, 7:00 p.m., featuring music by Or Zarua's very own Klezmer Band.
- Attend the gathering of Conservative Synagogue members at JTS's Party in the Garden, Tuesday, May 11, 6:30 p.m. by responding to your invitation.
- On Erev Shavuot, Tuesday, May 18, our Tikkun Leyl Shavuot panel discussion, "Going Green: A Jewish Response," will begin following Minhah/Ma'ariv, which starts at 8:00 p.m. A feast of Dairy Delights will cap off the evening.
- Come to the OZY Teen-led Service on Saturday, May 22, 10:00 a.m.
- Kadima/USY's Annual Casino Night is Saturday, May 22.
- Join us for the Salute to Israel Day Parade on Sunday, May 23. Watch for details.
- Register for Hebrew School. Contact Ilana Burgess at 212-452-2310, ext. 15 or email iburgess@orzarua.org.
- The OZ Crafts Club will meet on May 16 and June 6.
- The year's final Talmud Class with Rabbi Wechsler will convene on Wednesday, May 12, 8:00 p.m.
- Sign up for the morning minyan.
- Join Or Zarua on Facebook.
- Call the Or Zarua office (212-452-2310) if you have questions about or wish to sponsor any OZ program or event.
- Have an idea or article for the OZ Newsletter? If so, please contact Charlie Spielholz (cssrs@earthlink.net). The deadline for the July/August issue is Thursday, May 27.



CONGREGATION OR ZARUA

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