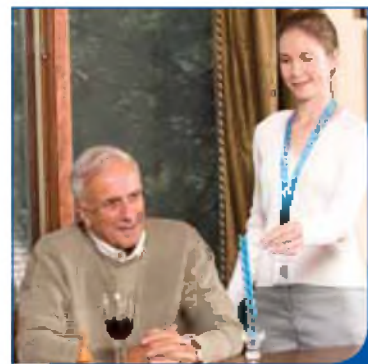


Celebrating Our Torah

Our Torah is worth celebrating. When Temple Emanu-El of Weldon, NC, closed its doors in 2004, their Torah scroll came to Concord to become the heart of a newly formed congregation. Our Torah was, at some point in the twentieth century, pieced



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together from the scrolls of many European communities. Its parchments date from the late 1800s and their origins are in Moravia, Macedonia, and Eastern Europe. Our first communal task was to have the Torah restored and beautified. So we had it done. Our Torah was a gift to us those many years ago, and continues to be today.

This year at Simchat Torah, we'll do all the things we usually do to celebrate our Torah. We'll dance the dances of joy and love and tradition, passing the Torah—bedecked in all its finery — from one to the other until all who want to have led the procession. We'll unroll the scroll, and stretch it

across the room into the waiting hands of our congregation. Rabbi Barbara Thiede will chant the end and the beginning in both an Ashkenazi and Baghdadi trope. We will go from Deuteronomy back to Genesis, illustrating the wonderful, cyclical nature of our tradition and our lives.

Then, just at the moment when we begin to be aware that ours is a living Torah, it will become even more so. We'll lay the scroll down on tables that stretch across the room. Then, in a tremendous act of willingness and wonder, adults and children will come forward and stand before a portion of the Torah that "calls" to them. Down the line of beloved congregants and beloved stories, the rabbi will read for either plot or nuance, applying what the text says to the life of the person before her. It is an amazing gift to hear our own stories read back to us from Torah; in that moment the universe of creation explodes into vivid reality all around us, and we feel simultaneously huge and small.

We'll also implement a new tradition for our congregation this year, along with all the old ones—

a special aliyah, *kol hane'arin* (all the children). With a Tree of Life on the chuppah over their heads and one in their midst, we'll say the blessings with the children, and then read a text from Gen 48:16: "In them may my name be recalled, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth."

The Torah scroll is the heart of our community, reflecting, in its parchment, different communities across Europe — many, we suspect, no longer exist. But the Torah remains to make the memory of those Jewish communities a blessing — and the life of ours one, too.

Temple Or Olam is a Jewish Renewal community that serves Cabarrus county and parts of Mecklenburg county (including University City, Davidson, and Huntersville). We encourage heartfelt, easy access to all things Jewish. For more information about our congregation, please visit our website at www.or-olam.org and subscribe to our mailing list. You can also email us at info@or-olam.org, or call 704-720-7577. ☆

Schools

Creating Traditions

By Dedee Goldsmith, Director, Jewish Preschool on Sardis

The autumn is always a time of year I that I look forward to. The days get shorter. The nights grow a bit longer. The children and teachers are back in school. And for those who are Jewish, we have several holidays that cause us to reflect and allow us to socialize. These holidays mean different things to different people but for us at The Jewish Preschool on Sardis, it is a time for learning about and creating traditions. I recently read that Jewish lessons for a child are caught and not taught. Think about that. This notion embodies what we know about child development. Children learn through doing, through playing and not by watching. They are active in the knowledge they gain.

At JPS we are constantly trying to find more and better ways to help our children learn a love of their religion, a love for a culture and to embrace traditions they can take home and carry on in life. Our fantastic teachers prepare classrooms, lessons, and learning opportunities that are planned and spontaneous. Some planned activities we've enjoyed so far this school year is having a local beekeeper come to school to help us learn where honey comes from. Why have a beekeeper come to school and what does this have to do with traditions? This ties into our fall harvest and Rosh Hashanah theme. Learning about where our food comes from, why is honey significant during this time of year, all create memories and learning opportunities.

Judaica is an important part of each day here at JPS. Baking challah is a special treat that we hope becomes a tradition for the kids at



Jonah tries on the beekeeper outfit with help from Mr. Randall of Cloister Honey

school. I know one of my favorite childhood memories around Rosh Hashanah was helping my mom make the challah dough and eagerly waiting for it to rise. She would then give me and my siblings small pieces to create our own challah. So much of Judaism is learning about customs, traditions, and stories.

By giving Tzedakah and learning to respect for the Torah, the children are on their way to a life of giving of their hearts and beyond.



Alise, Ms. Terri, and Justin giving Tzedakah at Shabbat send-off

Traditions can begin at any time. We are so thankful to our JPS families for allowing us to be a part in continuing family traditions and in helping to create new traditions at school and at home. Wishing each of you a happy and healthy new year. L'Shanah Tovah. ☆

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