

# Temple Or Olam Receives Handmade Torah Mantels

Look at Temple Or Olam's new Torah mantels and you will see powerful images. But you will not see the typical ones. Not the Ten Commandments. Not a menorah. Not a Magen David.



The new handmade Torah mantels.

Instead, we chose to depict the Song at the Sea and remind our congregation: *az yashir*. They sang. We chose to recall Mt. Sinai and the description of our people found in Torah — not only descendants of Abraham, but an *erev rav*, a mixed multitude — all of whom went up to Sinai to receive the gift of Torah.

Why those images? Why those scenes?

*Az yashir*: Think of the story—a flight from Egypt (which means “narrow place”). Anxiety by day and terror by night—mitigated only by God's presence leading the people in the form of a pillar of fire or a pillar of smoke.

It takes courage to cross a sea of any kind. As human beings we cross over seas of our own making — perhaps of self-doubt or uncertainty, perhaps a sea of repressed rage. Some seas rage beyond our control, the result of a tempestuous economic storm for example that takes our jobs and challenges our ability to take care of house and home.

Yet, we sing. For more than two and a half millennia we have sung our way into exile and out of one home after another to places we have yet to know. Like Abraham, we have traveled many times to many places. We have been frequently enslaved and oppressed; our stories are not simply a thing of an ancient past. We celebrate like Miryam again and again; each simcha we mark, from a bar or bat mitzvah to a festival rich with meaning, is an acknowledgment of a certain kind of triumph, a reminder of our freedom and how dearly we have paid to

have it. *Az yashir*.

*Erev rav alah*—a mixed multitude went up. For our congregation, acknowledging the rich diversity among our families has been central to our mission from the get-go. Making sure that we understand how to honor each other has been critical to defining who we are.

Mt. Sinai is a critical juncture in our narrative. Exodus 19:8: The Israelites commit: *N'aseh v'nishma*. “We will do and we will understand.” Every time you act on the basis of ethical mandates, you understand their purpose on a new and higher level. A single act becomes a practice, a way of life. We must all go up. We must all

do. We must all understand.

Or Olam's Torah mantels were almost a year in the making. They remind us who we are and what we do. A community blessed by its richness and depth.

A community willing to sing. ✪

## Rabbi Rick Jacobs to Visit Temple Emanuel of Gastonia

Temple Emanuel of Gastonia, NC, proudly celebrating its 100th Anniversary, will welcome URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs to Shabbat morning services, Saturday, November 9, 10:30 AM, followed by a luncheon and study session. The Jewish community from throughout the region is invited, and the courtesy of an RSVP is requested (Marisa Marder, 704-460-533, marisamarder@att.net).

The honor of Rabbi Jacobs participating in Shabbat services and leading the study session is part of a series of cultural, social, and educational events commemorating Temple Emanuel's 1913 charter with leaders such as David Lebowitz (Lebo's), and the Schneider, Silverstein, Goldberg families, and many others.

Rabbi Jacobs was ordained in 1982 by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, then spent 20 years as spiritual leader at Westchester Reform Temple (WRT) in Scarsdale, NY. He was installed as President of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) in June 2012.

The Rabbi travels the country tirelessly and makes himself available to congregations large and small and is fast being recognized as one of the nation's most influential religious leaders. Temple Emanuel welcomes Rabbi Jacobs to its community as part of its 100th Anniversary.

The commemorative season has already seen

A Night of Jewish Music on October 13, featuring congregants Joel Horowich on viola, and Conny Thymius on flute, clarinet, and saxophone, and concluding with a raucous set from Charlotte's own Viva Klezmer.

The week following Rabbi Jacob's visit will be the Temple's 100th Anniversary Gala celebration, with dinner, dancing, honoring of past and current leadership, and bestowing to Marshall Rauch the Wisdom of Solomon Lifetime Achievement Award, the congregation's highest honor and one of the most coveted awards granted in Gaston County. Tickets are \$125 and available through Alan Nash, 617-510-1334, alanenash@gmail.com.

Temple Emanuel would like to thank the Union for Reform Judaism, especially Rabbi Jacob's capable and generous staff, our major partners the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, the Glenn Foundation, First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia, UNC-Charlotte Dept. of Religious Studies, Belmont Abbey College, and all of the individuals who made our commemorative season possible. ✪



Temple Emanuel

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