

THEVoice

Kol Dorot: A Reform Jewish Community

March 2019 Volume 1, Issue 2



Empty Nest? Join K'sharim

How will you feel when your children have gone off to college and your house is empty? This is a unique experience for every parent and family, but whether you are jumping for joy with your newfound freedom or feeling sad and lonely, the adjustment can be difficult to anticipate. There are obvious differences you can expect to notice, like how truly quiet your house is. But it is the small changes like setting the table for one less person at dinner, not hearing constant singing in the house or a bedroom that never gets messy that hit you the hardest. Suddenly you can plan your schedule around what only you want to do – ALL of the time! No more planning around your children's games, dance competitions or whatever filled their lives when they were still at home.

(Continued on Page 6.)

Family Promise Comes to Kol Dorot



In March, Kol Dorot: A Reform Jewish Community will host its very first week-long social action program.

Family Promise is a program that helps Bergen County families transition out of homelessness.

(Continued on Page 8.)

THEVoice

The Voice is a newsletter for members of Kol Dorot: A Reform Jewish Community.

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Visit us at www.koldorot.org

Inside this issue

Rabbi Fabricant on Purim	2
Rabbi Widzer on Passover	3
From the Leaders	4
Getting to Know Anat Katzir	5
Kol Dorot Couples Community	7

Purim and Jewish Solidarity by Rabbi Noah Fabricant



Purim is the only ancient Jewish holiday that commemorates events in the Diaspora—that is, in the Jewish community living outside the Land of Israel. The Book of Esther takes place in Shushan, a city on the western edge of present-day Iran, near the Tigris River.

Aspects of the Purim story have always had special resonance for Diaspora Jews like us: Jews are a small minority in Shushan, and though they seem prosperous when the story begins, Mordecai is wary. As Esther enters the contest to become queen, she changes her name and keeps her background a secret. It only takes the provocation of a single high-placed anti-Semite (Haman) to suddenly threaten the wellbeing of the whole Jewish community. The fate of the Jewish community rests on the relationship of a

prominent representative (Esther) to the non-Jewish powers (the King).

These themes have recurred so often in Jewish history that many Jewish communities have declared new “minor Purims” to commemorate local events. In 1428, when a plot to turn the King of Aragon against the Jews was foiled, “Purim of Saragossa” was born. In Turkey they celebrate the “Purim of Bandits,” remembering the events of 1786, when a fortified town was invaded by brigands, and though the Jews were blamed at first, they proved themselves innocent. The special Purim celebrated by the Jews of Tripoli even features its own 18th-century “Queen Esther,” who gained influence with the Pasha who ruled the city.



The American Jewish community is unique in the history of the Diaspora. We are more secure and more prosperous than Jews have been anywhere else in the world. And so it can be difficult for us to relate to the real fear and danger—and the miracle—at the heart of the Purim story.

But there’s an opportunity here for us. If we try to hear—really hear—the story of Purim, we are reminded of the importance of Jewish solidarity. We are reminded that Jews are responsible for one another. Purim can awaken

our awareness of Jewish communal identity. All that, and we get to eat hamantaschen. Happy Purim to all!

— *Rabbi Noah Fabricant*, Temple Beth Or

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Making a Meaningful Passover by Rabbi David Widzer



As spring approaches, Passover will soon be here. (First Seder is Friday night, April 19.) It's the festival of freedom, the season of redemption. But it's not just about enacting ancient customs and telling the story of what happened long ago. We can update how we celebrate the holiday to ensure it has particular meaning for us today.

In the Talmud (Pesachim 116b), Jewish tradition teaches that, in every generation, we are supposed to look at ourselves as if we, personally, had gone free from Egypt. That means we have to re-tell and re-live the Exodus story, remembering what happened to our ancestors while also finding ourselves in that narrative. The best way to do it is to re-enact the experience. That's where the Seder comes in.

At the Seder, we have a table full of symbols to remind us of the story. The maror (bitter herb) represents the bitterness of slavery. The salt water is the tears of the Israelites. The charoset is the mortar used to make bricks. The shankbone stands for the ancient sacrifices in the Temple. The parsley is a symbol of spring. The egg represents renewal. The matzah is the flatbread of the poor, baked in haste when we had to flee quickly from slavery.

But Passover should also be about freedom and redemption in today's world. And so there are creative additions to the Seder table that we can choose to add to our celebration. Some add an orange to represent the inclusion of all who have been marginalized, including LGBTQ Jews. Or a Miriam's cup, symbolizing the role women have played in sustaining the Jewish people. Some include an olive as a symbol of the hope for peace, especially between Israelis and Palestinians. I have friends who include a tomato, representing migrant farm workers in need of fair working conditions. Or coffee or cocoa beans for fair trade produce.

Whatever you might choose to add, Passover provides the opportunity to tell again the story of redemption and to celebrate freedom, with new symbols and old. May it be a meaningful, festive, joyful Passover for us all! — *Rabbi David Widzer*, Temple Beth El



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

MEGILLAH READING & SCHPIEL - 6:30 PM

DESSERT RECEPTION - 7:30 PM

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From the Leaders

There is so much going on with Kol Dorot, and we wanted to bring you up to speed on a few of the many moving parts of our integration and merger. Your Integration Team has been working diligently to bring together all the various pieces for a successful start to Kol Dorot.

We had our initial hearing on January 23 to approve our plans for 660 Kinderkamack Road at the Oradell Zoning Board of Adjustment. Working in our favor is the notion that houses of worship are considered “inherently beneficial” to the community, which means that the cons of our variance requests must significantly outweigh the pros for us to be denied. Our team presented very strongly, but the meeting went long and our application was carried over to the February 20 meeting when we planned to complete our testimony. Unfortunately, the weather wasn’t our friend on February 20, and the snow that night postponed the remainder of our presentation until March 18. We remain optimistic that the board will approve our application and that our project timeline remains solidly on schedule for a fall opening.

Our ritual committee has been working with the rabbis to plan our joint Purim celebration, and lay the groundwork for a meaningful and collaborative High Holy Days worship experience for all of us next fall. And our education committee has also been working with the rabbis and our educator, Anat

Katzir, to develop our religious school program for next year. The new program promises to be innovative, flexible and impactful as our children continue their Jewish education.

Finally, please be on the lookout for our March congregational update, which will provide additional details about our merger progress. Your leadership team continues to work hard during this transition, and we’re thrilled that you’ll be part of the first founders of Kol Dorot. It’s an exciting time to be part of our community!

L’shalom,

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Getting to Know Morah Anat by Marlys Lehmann



Madhim. Amazing. It is not possible to watch Morah Anat Katzir interact with children, with the temples' students, without thinking, *madhim* (Hebrew for amazing). She is one with them, as active and as engaged as they are. Anat is the Religious School Director of both Temple Beth El and Temple Beth Or. She has had a long history of working with children, first, for many years, with summer camps and now with religious schools.

Anat is Israeli, through and through. But she was born in California, when her father, an aeronautical engineer, was working with NASA. She made "aliyah" at one and a half, growing up in Haifa until after she completed her military obligation.

Anat's life in Israel and experiences with other Jewish communities allowed her to relate to different Jewish denominations. Having grown up next to an Orthodox synagogue, she was able to spend many Shabbatot and holidays playing with the children and engaging in their traditions. Living

in Haifa, she felt comfortable studying for Bat Mitzvah at a Reform Synagogue, the only girl to do so from her whole school. A girl reading from the Torah, which she did, was unique, she said. Israelis' relationship with prayer or the synagogue was very different from what it is in the United States, she said. "Here you have to choose to be Jewish. There you don't always realize how Jewish you are."

After her service in the IDF, Anat joined the Jewish Agency summer programs and was sent as a counselor to URJ-Camp Harlam in Pennsylvania. This opened the door to the camp experiences and engagements that would continue over the next 17 years. Anat studied law at Tel Aviv University, continuing to go back to Jewish summer camps every summer and engage in Jewish education. After school she worked with the Jewish Agency, which placed personnel in Jewish camps throughout the world. She has worked with camps and educational programs in North America, South Africa, Australia, Russia, and Hungary, among others (Didn't know there were Jewish summer camps all over the world, did you?)

Seven years ago, after spending the summer working at Camp Harlam, she came to stay. She worked as the youth advisor at Temple Sinai (Tenaflly) and a teacher at Temple Avodat Shalom (River Edge) and Temple Beth Or for several years. When the position was opened, became the Religious School director at Temple Beth Or. Once the decision was made to merge temples Beth El and Beth Or as Kol Dorot—she became the religious school director for both, simultaneously. The hope is that this will allow for a better understanding of the makeup of each school and community and a more thoughtful transition, meeting the needs of all of Kol Dorot's students and families.

Anat lives in Tenaflly with her husband, Ophir, a computer engineer and patent advisor, and their two sons, Yoel (age 10), and Yinon (age 7). They are expecting a third son to be born in July.

It is not enough to read about Anat. Parents of religious school children get to see her terrific involvement with their kids. Adults without children in our religious schools can attend Friday night family services, where Anat leads and fits in with our children beautifully.

K'Sharim (Continued from page 1)

K'sharim is a new group for Kol Dorot empty nesters interested in building a new community. The primary purpose of K'sharim is to make new friends and enjoy new activities together as we adjust to our empty nests. Kol Dorot's K'sharim has held only a few events so far and hope to grow as the new Kol Dorot community solidifies in our future together. In October 2018 we had a lively cocktail party at a member's home in and we enjoyed an evening of comedy and Italian food at Andiamo's restaurant in February, 2019.

Looking ahead, we're considering various activities that may include walking tours in the city, viewing museum and art exhibits, taking or hosting cooking classes, forming a book club, joining together to do volunteer work, seeing shows and more! Our goal is to offer a variety of options, so that all Kol Dorot's empty nesters will find something that interests them. We hope if you are an empty nester reading this that you will join our group – all of the time or just some of the time – whatever works for you!

— K'sharim Founders,
Melanie Anagnos and Ilisa Lansey



Learn more about K'sharim at
koldorot.org/ksharim

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The Voice Interviews @kdcouplescommunity

The Voice interviewed Jess Ford and Abby Killian, who are innovating a new community social group for committed couples in their 20s and 30s with at least one Jewish partner. Both Jess and Abby grew up at Temple Beth El, having attended the nursery school, religious school and becoming bat mitzvah. Jess served as madrichah and was confirmed, and Abby was the youth group adviser at Temple Beth El. Both are recently married. Jess and her husband, Daniel co-own Peppercorn Events, a local catering business. Abby and her husband, Gordon, work together for a footwear design and manufacturing company.



The Voice: What is the name of your group? Abby & Jess: We decided to call it the Couples Community of Kol Dorot. We are not thinking of this as a religious group. Instead, it is more of a social networking, support, and friends' group that also does Jewish things together.

Who is your target constituency? We are inviting couples in 20s in 30s with at least one Jewish partner to join us. You do not have to be a member of Temple Beth El or Temple Beth Or to join; in fact, there are very few requirements. Our hope is to appeal to young couples who are looking for a way to celebrate their Jewish identity with other young couples. The group is for younger couples but it is not a parenting group. Basically, we are looking for newlyweds or committed couples who want to socialize and celebrate Jewish life with peers.

What is your main objective? Our intention is to create a community of young people in committed relationships with at least one Jewish partner, and create a support system for everything that may entail. We'd like to celebrate holidays together, enjoy Jewish cooking and do Jewish activities together. We know there are a lot of these groups in New York City, and we'd like to start a community using this model for Northern New Jersey. Another goal for us, since we both grew up and spent our entire lives as part of the Temple Beth El community, is to help Kol Dorot: Reform Jewish Community to be vital and appealing to young people as they begin committed relationships and look to identify with a Jewish community.

How are you reaching out to build this new group? We have spent the past several weeks talking with the offices of both Temple Beth El and Temple Beth Or to identify potential members who may be grown children of temple members. We are doing personal, one-to-one outreach by making phone calls and using Facebook messaging. We have gotten a great response so far!

Do you have any specific activities programmed yet? We do! On Friday March 21, which is the Shabbat after Purim, we are holding a cocktails and appetizer event at Peppercorn Events in Cliffside Park. We'll have Purim themed foods, and Rabbi Noah will join us and lead us in Shabbat blessings and talk about Purim, drinks, relaxed evening. Our hope is to eventually have regularly scheduled events, but for now we are taking it one step at a time.

What do you see yourselves doing in three to five years? Well, this is a fluid and dynamic thing, so we're not exactly sure where it will go. Perhaps some of us might branch out into a Havurah, or maybe it will stay a social group for years to come without morphing into something different. For now, we want to roll with it and see what happens within this first year.

Learn more about the Kol Dorot Couple's Community at koldorot.org/couples and follow our social accounts on facebook.com/kdcouplescommunity and [@kdcouplescommunity](https://instagram.com/kdcouplescommunity).

Family Promise (Continued from Page 1.)

The organization of the same name provides services and assistance in many forms to help them achieve a goal of self-sufficiency. By hosting, families can concentrate on work, school and secure a place to live.

Both Temple Beth El and Temple Beth Or have served as week-long Family Promise hosts for years, providing food and shelter for deserving guest families in transition. Now, Kol Dorot – A Reform Jewish Community is blessed to participate in Family Promise. We will join together at Temple Beth Or's current facility in Washington Township during the week of March 31 to do a tremendous mitzvah for two deserving families. Nancy Gross, one of this year's co-chairs, comments, "Family Promise is a great way to participate in social action with friends, both old and new."

Year after year, TBE and TBO Family Promise volunteers find their involvement to be a truly rewarding experience as they touch the lives of others in our larger community. Jessica Gomperts, now a fifth-year Family Promise volunteer, says of her experience, "The first year, I didn't know what to expect. I was initially a little hesitant. However, I soon learned how special it felt to take part in this social action opportunity. I volunteered by preparing a meal and serving it to our guests. We all ate together, which was lovely, and then played board games for a few hours. Each year, it is a wonderful, rewarding experience for me — but that is secondary to the mitzvah we do for these amazing families."

Other volunteers like Jamie Gladstein want to be a social action model for her family. "As someone with young children, I personally feel it is important to show them how we can and should always help people. Her explanation is a



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simple one: "There are families who need some help, and we are going to keep them company." Melanie Harada has participated in Family Promise for nearly a decade and comments, "While we have a core group of volunteers, we always can always use more." Over the years, volunteers have said to her that not only did their involvement with Family Promise make them feel good for doing good, but it also opened them up to the vulnerability that we each face. Circumstances can change quickly and life is fragile. We are lucky our Kol Dorot community remains dedicated to hosting Family Promise.

For members of the Kol Dorot community who have not yet signed up as a Family Promise volunteer, Lauren Bernstein's words are convincing. "I promise you, you and your family will get more out of this experience than you'd EVER imagine. Please join me and other members of our community as we open our doors and welcome some new friends."

This week-long program relies entirely on volunteers, so please join us in whatever way you can. Our Family Promise sign-up sheet, available on koldorot.org, lists the various ways you can help. Family Promise co-chair Wendy Weiss says, "Whether you can cook/serve dinner, engage in activities with the adults and/or children, help set up beds, shop for supplies or serve as an overnight chaperone for a night or two, all volunteer opportunities help assure that our guests feel welcome, safe and comfortable."

Visit koldorot.org/familypromise for more information and to volunteer.



Family Promise
of Bergen County

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