

What an amazing occasion, the time of your Bar Mitzvah! It seems like only yesterday that you were just a dream in the imaginations of a few people. Can you believe it? They say it all began at a meeting in late 2002 and then in May 2003, Rabbi Analia and Rabbi Mario were hired and you were given your name, Congregation Or Hadash, meaning a new light. And later that year, you held your first Servicio de Shabbat with over 300 people in attendance, singing and celebrating your birth. My how far you have come in these 13 years.

In your early years, your office was in the Rabbis' home and services were enjoyed at the Sandy Springs United Methodist Church. High Holiday services and B'nai Mitzvah were held at what was then called the Greenfield Hebrew Academy. And oh how you grew--in just four years, over 300 families joined and you moved to a temporary home within the Weber School. And, as you continued to grow you, you explored new opportunities. It was just 9 years ago when the first High Holiday services were held here at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta and you had about 1,000 people with you.

But it didn't stop there. In March 2010, the more than 350 members and families realized that you needed a place to call your own home. A contract was signed to purchase property for your permanent home at 7460 Trowbridge Road. After an amazingly successful capital campaign, a groundbreaking was held in March 2012 and construction of your building was completed in February 2013. What a great day it was marching from the Weber school to the new building, where you proudly welcomed the Torahs into your new home.

Today, as we begin the celebration of your Bar Mitzvah, it is a good time to pause and ask, "Where do you come from Congregation Or Hadash?" You have a very special name- Or Hadash stems from the verse found in our daily morning tefilah, אור חדש על ציון תאיר, (*Or Hadash Al Tzion Ta'ir*), *Shine a new light upon Zion*. While there are several interpretations of what the "new light" is meant to be, here in our קהילה קדושה, (*kehillah kedosha*), our holy community, we have come to understand it as meaning 'Illuminate the Light from Within,' that it is an internal light, a holy light, and a sacred light. It is the light found within each of us that can shine brightly on its own, but as you have certainly seen over the years, the light is at its brightest when we come together as a community. And shining this light upon Zion creates a bond between all of us here today and the land of Israel, the people of Israel and the worldwide Jewish community.

As you have matured over the years, Or Hadash, you have remained true to your core values, the values with which you were born and the values that you strive to pass on to each generation. Zionism, love of Israel, *tikkun olam*, inclusivity, music and education are all jewels in the crown of your good name. Our founding families infused you with these values and you have served well as the vessel for so many who have come together over the years to turn these ideals into actions. It is because of you that we have dedicated Men's Club and *Or Nashim* groups who work to enrich everyone's involvement; it is because of you that we have so many incredible volunteers who serve on the Board, and lead the *chesed*, membership, special events and high holiday committees to name but a few. These dedicated individuals assume leadership roles and make so many things, like these High Holiday services, possible; it is because of you that we have a dedicated and talented staff who work tirelessly to provide educational programs, youth activities, and keep you running smoothly and efficiently; it is because of you that we have two wonderful rabbis who are our spiritual leaders, our teachers and our friends. Together, they work with our staff and lay leadership to inspire us all to work together to make our world a better place, and it is because of you that we are here to celebrate your Bar Mitzvah year.

You have reached an incredible milestone in your life. In these 13 years, you have enabled us to create a קהילה קדושה, (*kehillah kedosha*), a holy community that is like no other and is one that all who have come to know and love it so deeply appreciate. Your Bar Mitzvah year is an opportunity for our community to celebrate all that we have accomplished and to reaffirm all of the values which we hold dear. It is also a unique moment in time where the past, present and future will converge, where we will honor and embrace our past, celebrate the present and dream together for the future. Rav Abraham Kook, wrote, הישן יתחדש והחדש יתקדש (*ha-yashan yithadesh, v'he-hadash yitkadesh*) the old shall be made new and the new shall be made sacred. We are all Congregation Or Hadash and we are all celebrating our Bar Mitzvah year. Together, we will make the old, our

rich, storied history, new again and then together, we will make that which is new something holy for all of us as we celebrate together.

We are planning many wonderful ways to come together to demonstrate just how special Or Hadash is to us and we have designed a save the date brochure which is available in the lobby. In honor of your Bar Mitzvah, we are planning 13 signature events (not to mention so many regular and other events that will also take place) this year. Some highlights of our celebratory year will include the dedication of a PrayGround on Simhat Torah morning, a space inside your sanctuary where our littlest ones, and their parents, will be able to play together and be a part of our service; in November, we will fill the kitchen and social hall with a family challah bake and potluck Shabbat dinners; we will welcome back Dr. Adolfo Roitman, our very first scholar in residence, as a scholar in residence again this year; we will learn with Dr. Ken Stein about seminal moments in Israeli history as 2017 marks significant anniversaries; we will partner with the Atlanta Jewish Music Festival and welcome a musical artist to your sanctuary; we will welcome Mordechai Rosenstein as an artist in residence to create beauty within us; we will invite the larger community to celebrate Israeli Independence day in Or Hadash style, with camels!) and of course, we will hold a wonderful Bar Mitzvah celebration at the end of this year in your honor. It will be an exciting year and I know that you join in my hope that everyone sitting here today will come together multiple times to celebrate this milestone.

In addition to these wonderful events, we invite everyone to join together in celebration and affirmation of our Or Hadash community, our קהילה קדושה (*kehillah kedosha*), in a game that will span across the year. Also, on the table in the lobby, everyone will find Or Hadash Bingo cards and on the back of the cards are 36 ways for you to do something fun, special and meaningful, with your families and with others, to engage with our Or Hadash family. We want you to capture your experiences and help us to chronicle this Bar Mitzvah year, so we hope you will take a lot of pictures and share them with us.

I would now like to ask Rabbi Mario and Rabbi Analia to come forward to sanctify this Bar Mitzvah celebration, as they bless each Bar and Bat Mitzvah child, by blessing our beloved Congregation Or Hadash with the priestly blessing.

בְּרַכָּהּ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

May God bless you and all who are here with you today

יְאֵר ה' פְּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי וְיִחַנֶּךָ

May God shine light upon you as you have shine a new light with us, and may the light continue to be a beacon for all that we do

יְשֵׂא ה' פְּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי, וְיִשֵּׂם לָךְ שְׁלוֹם

May God look favorably upon you and grant you *shalem*, wholeness, as we look forward to a year of celebration, as we complete our Strength to Strength Campaign to pay off the construction loan and as conduct our Kol Nidre appeal, both of which when successfully completed, will afford us the opportunities to do the amazing things that we do.

On behalf of my fellow officers and the Board of Directors, and on behalf of my family, Karen, Tali, Shira, Ilan and Bandit, I wish you all a Shana Tova. May 5777 be a year of great joy and celebration for us here at Or Hadash and may it be a year of greater peace in Israel and throughout the world. And for all our families and friends, here, in Israel and around the world may it be a sweet, happy new year.