

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 5.20.2020

It's natural to sit and reflect upon all the disruptions to our lives right now—all the things we can't do, the places we can't go and, most importantly, the people we can't see. It's also a time of many transitions—kids graduating without ceremonies as they step into the next phases of their lives, jobs being redefined, “family time” taking on a whole new meaning, and we are easing back into our day to day with masks, social distancing, and a lot of unknowns.

Given this backdrop, and all of our synagogue's leadership transitions, I am very honored and excited to have been handed the proverbial baton from Ben Nadler to start my term as Or Hadash's next president. We are in an incredible time and space to write the next chapter for our community.

With our new reality, I gain great comfort knowing that there are still constants in my life and that they continue on without interruption. Or Hadash provides a major source for continuity. The weekly rhythm, music and rituals of Shabbat; lighting candles with our Zoom community; sharing in b'nai mitzvahs and welcoming our amazing young adults into our community; learning sessions with Analia and Mario---all help us maintain a sense of normalcy and community.

If I had to distill down my goal as president to a single word, it would be **connection**. I want us to create, maintain and enhance our Or Hadash connectedness. Connecting to each other through study, music, spirituality, community engagement, and Israel. Connecting by gathering together (virtually for now) to uplift ourselves and each other.

I know we aren't together in our building, but please be assured that we are operating at full power. I invite each of you to plug in and join in, especially if you haven't been Zooming with us—it's a perfect time to re-engage. It's often hard to know what's happening behind the scenes, so let me pull back the curtain and let you see a sampling of things where we are hard at work:

- The Gala on July 12 will be an amazing virtual event to Celebrate Rabbis Mario and Analia.
- Our Transition team will be welcoming Rabbi Lauren and Joel next month with lots of southern hospitality. We are setting up meet and greets so all of you will have an opportunity for a small group virtual gathering with them.
- The Re-Opening Guidance Task Force is navigating the health and safety of our congregation.
- The High Holiday Committee will be exploring all our options to create meaningful service experiences for all of us.
- Dr. Amy Robertson will be joining us next month and is already poised to lead Machon Hadash and the B'nai Mitzvah program, which are being passed lovingly on to her and Rabbi Lauren.

My vision for this year, despite our physical separation, is for a year of renewed connections. It might look a little different, but that's OK. Next week is Shavuot, where we all unite as if each of us were standing at Mt. Sinai, receiving the Torah, together, as one community. We connect to the land, to God, to the Torah and especially to each other. May the light that emanates from the Torah and its teachings continue to shine brightly on all of us in this special Or Hadash community.

My virtual door is always open and I look forward to connecting with you,

B'shalom,

Gail