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Closing Remarks — Meredith Wolf Schizer

It has been a real privilege to co-chair this dinner in honor of Ramath Orah's 75th anniversary. I loved delving into the history of this remarkable institution, and the people and narratives behind it.

The best part, though, has been the stories many of you have sent in through the Connections form on our website. I learned so much about our history.

Did you know, for example, that there have always been CRO Simchat Torah traditions? Back in the 1950s, each child would receive a gift bag and a flag and then collect more donations of candy from both men and women as they paraded behind the men carrying the sifrei Torah. But, in the 1980s, things got a little more raucous, when the kids would tie up the baal musaf and throw all sorts of toys on him as he davened, and when he davened Geshem, they'd sprinkle water from organ loft. In the last decade, as the number of families grew again, Ramath Orah reinstated the gift bags for children, and a major highlight is when all the children in the congregation gather under tallesim for Kol Ha-Nearim.

People's recollections of Rabbi Serebrenik were the most vivid, though... of him dressed elegantly in black—or white on the high holidays. He was described as "like Dracula," "like G-d, almost supernatural," and one person said that the "Rabbi would simply look at anyone who had the nerve to speak to a neighbor—and like a tractor beam—they would be silenced." (exactly like it is nowadays, right?!)

In Facebook posts and web and email submissions, we received pictures from s'machot as far back as 1948, and from as far afield as the Netherlands and Israel, and showing women speaking from the bimah dating back a quarter of a century, showing Ramath Orah to be at the forefront of feminist Modern Orthodoxy through the years.

We received good wishes for our online journal from members and friends throughout the generations of Ramath Orah.

ramath orah

75
years

Please, keep the submissions of your memories coming. And please, keep the connections alive. There is much to be done in order for us to thrive for the next 75 years and beyond.

In addition to thanking all of you for being here, I also need to thank some other important people, without whom tonight would not have been possible. First our honorees—Raymond, Stella, Tibor, and Mendy. Thank you again for your contributions through the generations!

Thank you to the entire dinner committee, listed in your program. Special thanks are needed for Debbie Kerzhner for conceiving of and implementing the unique postcard invitations you all received, as well as all the other graphic design throughout! Jessica Morgan Richter implemented all the details of tonight's program flawlessly, and professionally directed the video you just watched. Elana Fishman took care of the honoree gifts and favors—be sure to get yours as you leave this evening! Orah Burack handled all the delicious food details.

Thanks to President Ann Goldhirsch for her clear head, and last but not least, a huge thank you to my co-chair and friend, Jane, for sharing the load and keeping me calm, and without whom this dinner could not have been the success that it is.

Thank you again for joining us from near and far to celebrate our Diamond anniversary and to honor those who founded, built, maintained, and have grown our shul from a little outpost of the Old World to a bustling destination in Morningside Heights.