



OTRS: A School Year Like No Other

by Debra Beland Ackerman

On May 16 we said *l'hitraot* to an Olam Tikvah Religious School (OTRS) year like no other. And while I don't think anyone is looking to recreate the 2020-21 school year ever again, there is no question that we have a lot about which to be grateful, thankful, and proud.

In July of 2020, we made the decision to offer our Sunday programming in-person, with an online option for those families who requested it. It wasn't a decision we came to lightly or easily. It took many hours of planning, measuring, consulting with the OT Reopening Taskforce, training our staff, meeting with parents, and restructuring when and how our program met. By the time we opened our doors (and turned on our screens) on October 18, we felt confident we had built the best program we could, one that was guided by our goals of creating a safe learning environment for all of our learners.



Kindergarteners sitting spaced apart for an outdoor lesson.

From the start we were in awe of our students. Inside the building we watched as they embraced what they **COULD** do rather than focus on what they couldn't do. All of our worries about masking and distancing fell away, because our students understood that those things were no big deal when it meant they could be together. Our online students fully engaged with the in-person classes, rarely needing reminders to turn on their cameras or to add their voices to discussions.

Of course, our teachers were amazing! I can't say enough about them. They rolled up their sleeves and dove into a totally new teaching environment with enthusiasm and energy. They figured out how to teach to a screen and



Teaching students in-person and online at the same time.

students in the room at the same time. How to create active and engaging learning experiences while still being mindful of best practices in terms of how we shared space. Our teachers were unstoppable!

During the week we also met with 120 students in 2nd-7th grade online for our Self-Paced Hebrew at Home program. An army of teachers, ranging from adults to 10th graders, spent 45 minutes each week working with students in small groups as they mastered the alef bet and a long list of prayers.



Having fun with the Brain Show at our end of year celebration.

This was my 11th school year at OT and every May I find myself reflecting on what an amazing year we've had, but this year has truly been unique. Thank you to everyone who made it possible! May that energy, enthusiasm, and creativity carry into next year in the best possible ways.

Little Jewish Library

by Debra Beland Ackerman

In May, we were thrilled to officially open the doors of our Little Jewish Library, designed and built by our very own Ari Tapper! Ari designs and crafts each individual yad for our yad award recipients, so this project was just a bit bigger than his usual work for us. Ari, Marvin Kon, and Rick Neifeld installed the library near the playground; you can't miss it as you drive into the parking lot.

We've begun filling the shelves with great Jewish children's books for kids of all ages. We hope you'll choose one (or more) to take home. If you'd like to add to our collection, we ask that you limit your donations to "curl up with a good Jewish story" books, like PJ Library books your children have outgrown (this isn't the place for prayer books, textbooks, or magazines). So come on down to OT and check out our Little Jewish Library!



Ari Tapper delivering the library to OT. Rabbi Kalender and Debra Beland Ackerman couldn't wait to fill it up! Photo by Erin Dreyfuss.



Ari Tapper, Marvin Kon, and Rick Neifeld digging holes to install the library. Photo by Erin Dreyfuss.



Ari with his completed library ready to fill with books! Photo by Marvin Kon.



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Preschool in the Time of Covid

by Cindi Drake

The Olam Tikvah Preschool (OTPS) 2019-2020 school year began like any other. The two-year-olds cried on their first day. The older children greeted with delight the friends they had not seen over the summer. We were all happy to be together again after summer break. The school year progressed with the familiar rhythm we had come to expect. Then in February there were rumblings of a flu-like virus and we asked each other who had gotten their flu shot. March arrived and with it, new words – Covid-19 and coronavirus. Along with every other school and business, OTPS closed for what we thought would be an unheard-of amount of time – two months. Little did we know Covid would be with us even to today.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2020, we worked on how to open OTPS for the 2020-2021 school year, within the stringent guidelines set down by the **VDSS for Early Childhood programs**. And there were many! HVAC upgrades, air filter systems for classrooms, gloves and masks for everyone. Even new toilet seats

with covers! Classrooms could no longer have all the soft, cuddly toys and blankets preschools take for granted. Every toy and book had to be sanitized each time it was used.

The most difficult requirement was the “bubbles.” Each class was its own bubble and could not interact or share space with the other class. Separate entrances for drop off and pick up. No parents in the building. No music or sports specialists.

A Leap of Faith

Parents took a leap of faith with us. They believed we were all in this together and we all had to keep each other safe. The teachers went the extra 100 miles to make this year work: sanitizing classrooms and children all day was just a small piece of their extra workload. So how has this year gone? The pictures speak for themselves!





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B'nei Mitzvah

Support our 5781 B'nei Mitzvah students and their Mitzvah Projects. Visit www.olamtikvah.org/bneimitzvah#projects to see the good work and passions of our newest Jewish adults.

Jack Aaron Isaac Smith June 5 Parashat Shelach Lecha

Jack, son of Dawn & Joseph Smith, brother of Maddie, Ava, and Olivia, is a 7th grader at Lake Braddock Secondary School. Jack is very interested in science, reading, gardening and bike riding. After living in England for six years, he loves traveling, languages, and learning about different cultures. Jack is especially excited about returning to Camp Ramah this summer. Jack is combining his love of gardening and Tikkun Olam by creating a community garden that will produce hundreds of pounds of vegetables for the area food bank.



Isaac James Gantsoudes June 12 Parashat Korach

Isaac, son of Alexis & Geordy, and brother to Zachary, is a 7th grader at Kilmer Middle School. Isaac plays tennis and baseball, but is most passionate about fencing. When not playing sports, Isaac enjoys reading, Legos and playing the piano and the cello. In the summer, Isaac attends Ramah Sports Academy. Isaac has selected JSSA as the recipient of his mitzvah project. He is collecting art supplies for low-income seniors. This project means a lot to him because he understands that being alone in COVID is hard, and he wants to make life a little happier for the elderly in his community. To donate, please visit the **JSSA Amazon Wishlist** [tinyurl.com/isaacJSSA](https://www.tinyurl.com/isaacJSSA) or, you can drop off supplies at Olam Tikvah. Isaac is excited to share his special day with his close friends and family in person and virtually.



Liat Zoe Lieberman June 19 Parashat Chukat

Liat, daughter of Judith & Brian Lieberman, is so excited to finally celebrate her Bat Mitzvah on June 19, 2021 after her original date April 4, 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19. Liat is an 8th grader at Robinson Middle School. She enjoys art, digital animation, skateboarding, literature, snowboarding, and ballet. Check out her tallit to see her passions transformed onto her handmade tallit. Liat is awaiting the day to standing with her family to say the Shehecheyanu both in person and virtually. Her mitzvah projects are multifaceted; all aimed at helping to cope with anxiety and depression. Liat created calming kits filled with art supplies available to children and individuals in need of a way to distress. Materials were donated to the **Katherine Hanley Family Shelter** and to her school. During her actual celebration, her family and friends are invited to help create dog toys and treats, blankets, cards for seniors, and construct blender bikes which can be used to make smoothies and milkshakes. These blender bikes will be available to rent and proceeds will all go to charity. Liat is excited to share her simcha with her friends, family, and her Olam Tikvah community.



Cat Brooke Boyett June 26 Parashat Balak

Cat, daughter of Shari & Graeme (z"l), and sibling to Jacob and Lauren, is a 7th grader at Frost Middle School. Cat likes baking, theater, singing, and anime. Cat dances at Perfect Pointe Dance, takes ice skating and voice lessons, and has a black belt in tae kwon do. For their simchat mitzvah project, Cat Cares, Cat is collecting monetary and food donations for **Food for Others**. Cat will be keeping their father, Grandma Elaine, and older sister, Rachael (z"l), close in thought. Cat is looking forward to celebrating with family, friends, and the OT community via livestream and in-person.



Tzedakah

Thank you for your donations, which were received by April 30, 2021. To make a donation, [CLICK HERE.](#)

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 kindness during Sandy's illness & funeral, by
 Ralph Rosenthal

Thank you to the OT community and the office
 for their kindness and assistance with Melvin's
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Olam Tikvah and Rabbi Kalender, by Helen Leiner
 Our aliyot, by Cheryl & Murray Bloom

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Our grandson, Andrew Baker, leading services on
 April 17, by Sandra & Richard Slutzah

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*OT Chorale, Fine Arts, and Social Action Committee
 contributions are listed in the Tzedakah Fund.*

Olam Tikvah Community Connections

The Olam Tikvah community is here to celebrate with you and support you during lifecycle events.

Mazal Tov

Ilisa & Andrew Calderon, on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter, Elana Rebecca & Jonathan Cohen, on the birth of their son, Lev
Bobbie Ebert on the birth of her eighth great grandchild, grandson of Joseph Ebert, and the birth of her ninth great grandchild, Matar, granddaughter of Andrea Ebert Matlaw
Marnie & Howard Fienberg, on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter, Sophie
Beth and Steven Helman, on the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Adam
Marcy & Indy Indyk and Nadina Indyk, on the birth of their son and grandson, James Jonah Indyk
Marie & Glenn Taubman, Helen Taubman, and great-grandma Elaine Taubman, on the birth of their granddaughter and niece, Hannah Ruth Taubman, daughter of Marla & Joel
Robyn & Jeff Toppall, on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter, Samantha
Shira Underwood, on receiving her Yad award

In Memory

Irwin Stuart Feldman, father of Seth Feldman
Ron Goldberg, husband of Bev Goldberg
Ronald Massarik, father of David Massarik
Lisa St. Pierre, mother of Stephen St. Pierre

Anniversaries

Thank you for your donations to Olam Tikvah in honor of your anniversaries. Special thank you to our anniversary callers this month: Jane Behrmann and Linda Meyer.

May 1-6

Beth & Daniel Felsen; Sharon & Jerome Vitner

May 7-13

Malka & Brian Doninger; Martha & Paul Hill; Debra & Herman Stein

May 14-20


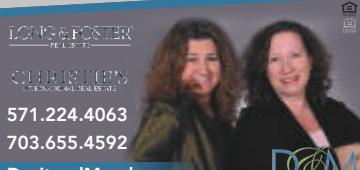
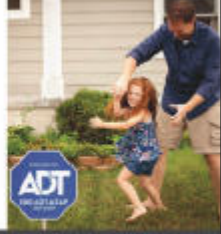

Cheryl & Murray Bloom

May 21-27

Ilisa & Andrew Calderon; Annie & Alan Schwartz;
Amy & Steve Tursky; Caroline & Richard Warren (30)

May 28-31

Marian & Ari Diamond-Tapper; Karen Rabin & Jeff Handler;
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