

CONTEMPORARY

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2022



EGALITARIANISM

Egalitarianism at OT

Explore the changing roles of women throughout OT's history.

Easy Purim Mitzvot

An OT tradition makes fulfilling one of the mitzvot easy and delicious.

CONTENTS

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2022



4 **Egalitarianism: The OT Journey**
Explore the changing roles of women throughout OT's history

7 **Reading Torah Together**
The Lieberman family on the tradition of reading Torah together

8 **OT Traditions: Mishloach Manot**
An OT tradition makes fulfilling one of the mitzvot easy and delicious

9 **Mishpacha: OT Family**
Celebrating together

13 **Kehilla: Our Community**
Spotlight on the OT Preschool

14 **D'Var: Teaching**
The Power of Jewish Women



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This year is the 100th anniversary of the first Bat Mitzvah (Reconstructionist denomination) in the United States. What a journey American Jews have had to respect all of our members, both as leaders in the boardroom and on the bima. This issue we dive into our own journey's timeline and effects here at OT.

On the cover and in the lead story, we honor our first female OT presidents, Roberta Wulf and Brenda Klemow.

As always, a lot of work has gone into the issue of the Contemporary. Thank you to the following people for all their contributions:

Editors: Marnie Fienberg, Erin Dreyfuss, Barbara Finkel

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Special thanks to Rabbi Viki Bedo.

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Marnie Fienberg,
Communications Chair

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EGALITARIANISM: THE OT JOURNEY

BY MARNIE FIENBERG, BARBARA FINKEL
AND MICHAEL SULTAN

Congregation Olam Tikvah is proudly egalitarian. Each member can live a traditionally Jewish life, participating in all the roles of a Jewish adult. From leadership to reading and learning Torah, families pray side-by-side. *But it wasn't always this way.* When OT was founded in the 1960s, women were not allowed to participate in Jewish public ritual life. There was no ritual voice for half of our congregation.

While the Reform Movement embraced egalitarianism early on, the Conservative Movement took longer to open the doors for women. This officially happened in the 1970s, yet, OT, like many Conservative congregations, struggled with the balance of traditional vs. modern. Our rabbi at that time, Rabbi Klirs, was Orthodox. "I think the best thing Rabbi Klirs did for the congregation and egalitarianism was to allow women to be counted in the minyan,"

recalls Shelly Palley. "The story goes, when Gloria Brissman's husband died in 1976, there were nine men at minyan and Gloria. He counted her in the minyan so she could say Kaddish." While there were no women on the bima, they were hard at work in the boardroom. The first OT woman President, Roberta Wulf, began her term in 1986, immediately followed by the second female president, Brenda Klemow. Sarah Elpern, was the first female co-chair of the Ritual Committee (1993-95). Egalitarian changes at OT took place on Friday night and then over time worked their way into Saturday morning. For example, Sisterhood Shabbat, originally held on Friday nights, moved in 1997 to Saturday morning, at the encouragement of Rabbi Glazer. Women were exhilarated to learn the service, reading Torah, having an Aliyah, and taking part for the first time in other ways. Using these skills, many

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



(Top) Ronnie Rodriguez and Barbara Finkel read Torah. PHOTO BY JIM FINKEL (Bottom) Roberta Wulf, right, and Brenda Klemow were the first and second female presidents of Congregation Olam Tikvah.

Links for a Deeper Dive



Read: New York Times article from 1973: "Conservative Jews Vote for Women in Minyan"



Watch: Video of Former President Roberta Wulf recall this transition. olamtikvah.org/contemporaryvideo ▶ See the D'Var on the last page from our second female OT President, Brenda Klemow.



If you have remembrances about this Journey, please login to our OT Wall padlet.com/dbeland/othistory

Olam Tikvah Timeline

1960s Bat Mitzvah Haftorah on Friday nights	1976 First OT woman participates as part of a minyan - Gloria Brissman	1980s Bat Mitzvah Haftorah on Saturday morning	1986-1988 First OT Female President - Roberta Wulf	Early 1990s Sisterhood Shabbat begins	Late 1990s Bat Mitzvah at the Torah on Saturday morning	2010-2015 First OT Female Rabbi - Rabbi Ita Paskind	2021 B'nai Mitzvah class includes first non-binary readers
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Judaism in the United States

1973 First Female Rabbi - Rabbi Sally Priesand Conservative Movement allows women to be part of a minyan	1976 Some Conservative women allowed to bear witness on a religious legal document such as a Ketubah	1985 First Female Rabbi in Conservative Movement - Rabbi Amy Eilberg	2001 All Conservative women allowed to bear witness on a religious legal document
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

women started participating in Shabbat services throughout the year and became integral to the service.

B’not mitzvah were introduced gradually: first on Friday night, then Shabbat mincha, then finally by the early ‘80s on Saturday morning. Even then, the bat mitzvah at first was only permitted to read the Haftarah; eventually by the early 1990s she could have the honor of reciting the blessings before and after the Maftir Torah reading, as well as read the Maftir Torah reading.

By January 1996, women joined the rotation to read all Torah aliyot. The first women readers included Alice Marion, Annie Schwartz, Mindy Cohen, and Shula Friedman who learned Trope from tutor Irv Jacobs and remember his warm encouragement; Shelly Palley “picked up” Torah trope when her husband Joel took a class; and Barbara Finkel studied with Rabbi

Glazer’s son Ilan. “I was very proud to be part of it,” says Mindy Cohen. “I have a letter and certificate from the Women’s League dated April 8, 1996, welcoming me to Kolot BiK’dushah as a Torah Reader.”

Our first female Rabbi, Rabbi Ita Paskind, deeply enriched our community during her 2010-2015 tenure.

Today, egalitarianism is mostly baked into OT’s DNA. “On the average Saturday morning we now have more women than men reading,” says Rabbi Kalender. “Our ongoing classes are open to anyone who wants to learn to read. Building those skills means that we all can stand proudly on the bima.” Our current B’nai Mitzvah class has almost an even number of bar and bat mitzvahs, with two non-binary Smachot Mitzvah. At these simchas, family members; moms, dads, sisters and brothers, honored this milestone by blessing and/or reading from the Torah.



PHOTO BY DAN NOBLE
Rabbi Ita Paskind, who joined the Olam Tikvah community in 2010, was our congregation’s first female rabbi.

READING TORAH TOGETHER

BY JUDIE AND BRIAN LIEBERMAN

Our house is never quiet. Often that is because someone is singing Torah, not always in tune or perfectly chanted. We are granted this pleasure because Congregation Olam Tikvah, a peer-led synagogue, encourages families to engage in the mitzvah of reading and studying Torah together. Our family, Judie, Brian and Liat Lieberman, reads Torah together.

Judie grew up in the ‘70s in an observant family. She went to Hebrew school and Jewish camp. But when it was time to become a Bat Mitzvah she was only allowed a Rosh Chodesh haftarah while her brother chanted Torah right by her side. It did not seem fair. She would have to wait many years to chant trope.

Brian did not grow up in an observant family and did not have the opportunity to read Torah or even learn Hebrew. With a daughter approaching bat mitzvah age, Brian joined the 2019 Adult B’nei Mitzvah group led by Joanne Stryer and learned Hebrew, trope, read Torah and became a Bar Mitzvah alongside a class of both men and women. Brian’s journey continues as a regular Torah reader.

Our daughter Liat began connecting to her Jewish identity as a preschooler and enthusiastically embraced it ever since. She became a Bat Mitzvah in 2021. The OT religious school did their job well because Liat learns the Torah trope easily and Fred Cooper, her amazing tutor, made her a pro. Liat continues to read in the Torah rotation in between dance and crew team commitments. She is so proficient that she often helps her parents practice trope with new Torah portions!

Liat is on a special path to the



(Above) Brian, Liat and Judie Lieberman enjoy chanting Torah trope as a family. PHOTO BY DAN NOBLE



(Left) Jessica Finkel, shown here ahead of her Bat Mitzvah in 1999, was the first recipient of the Yad award. PHOTO BY HOWARD KAYE

mitzvah in December 2003,” said Barbara Finkel, Jessica’s mom. Liat looks forward to earning her own Yad, adding to our new family collection.

Reading Torah together has provided a way to start a new family tradition. We bond together because we learn together. Reading, singing, chanting, and practicing have brought us to a deeper understanding of our family and our Jewish identities. OT has given us, and many other families this chance to reconnect by standing side-by-side as equals in the synagogue while we chant the most sacred words from the Torah scrolls while holding our family Yad.

Yad Award. This is an OT group for teens, established in 2001, who read Torah 18 times between their B’nei Mitzvah and their high school graduation. They are honored by the congregation, and receive their name on a plaque plus a handmade Yad. The first recipient to receive the Yad award was Jessica Finkel.

“Jessi and I had a wonderful time teaching my husband to read, as well, so that all four of us read Torah at my younger daughter Shana’s bat

**Mazel Tov to our
B’nei Mitzvahs!!**

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Natalie Stone Lobel Jan 8
Lauren Helfant Jan 15
Miles Nevid Feb 19

**FROM THE 5782
OLAM TIKVAH
B’NEI MITZVAH CLASS**

**Olam Tikvah
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Join your friends and help
secure OT's future!

Thank you to the members* who have already
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Mimi & Len Levine	Karen Tovey & Edward Weiss
Elizabeth & Peter Maer	Brittanie & Dan Werbel
Susanne & Stacy Oshry	Roberta & Henry Wulf
Rachelle & Joel Palley	

*List as of December 15, 2021



Volunteers are essential for making and delivering the mishloach manot to the OT community for Purim.

MISHLOACH MANOT

BY JOANNE STRYER

Purim is a unique story in the Tanakh, because at its center stands a heroine, not a hero: Queen Esther. The narrative of her bravery and courage also becomes the source for four mitzvot Jews are commanded to do throughout history on this special day: Reading the Megillah, sending mishloach manot (gift baskets), celebrating Purim with a Seudah (festive meal), and Matanot L'evyonim (giving to the poor). Mishloach manot is found at the end of the Book of Esther, where we are told to celebrate not only feasting ourselves, but helping others fulfill their mitzvah by giving portions of food to our friends, and sending gifts to those who otherwise could not afford to have a meal (Matanot L'evyonim).

Today, mishloach manot is usually celebrated as a bag of sweet treats traditionally sent to family and friends. Our annual OT tradition of sending mishloach manot to friends in our OT community began 18 years ago, allowing our community to celebrate together, while raising

funds for the synagogue. Our congregation signs up online to send greetings to friends and family in our community and volunteers stuff reusable bags to the brim with sweets and treats.

“The hamantaschen are delicious,” remarked Allen & Lori Zobler.

“The reusable bags always come in handy,” said Joel Miller.

“I didn’t realize I had so many friends at OT!” declared Karen Hemmerdinger.

Last year with the dedicated help of OT’s main office, more than 60 volunteers shopped, stuffed and personally delivered more than 500 bags of treats, along with a personalized “scroll” with Purim greetings from their friends. In addition to raising more than \$25,000 for OT, last year for the first time we sent a donation to Capital Caring Health (a local hospice) fulfilling a second mitzvah of Matanot L’evyonim.

Participation is easy. Choose one OT family for \$20 and add each

Kick off for Mishloach Manot

First week of February
By snail mail and email, you will receive instructions on how to send greetings to your OT friends.

March 1
Orders are due to OT Office

March 13, 14, 15
Treats will be delivered to most homes or in some cases available for pick-up.

additional family for just \$2. Each family will receive one bag of sweets and other snacks.

Purim is a time of joy and fun! Be a part of it! Let your OT friends know you are thinking of them!!

Questions? Volunteer? Contact Joanne Stryer at tjstryer@verizon.net

MISHPACHA

We are OT mishpacha (family) and we celebrate the good times and remember together. Here’s where you can find out who from our congregation is celebrating over the next two months. Keep in touch with us on Facebook at facebook.com/OlamTikvah.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Anniversary donations support Shabbat Kiddush lunch at Olam Tikvah. The following people made donations in honor of their anniversaries:

December Anniversaries

December 1 – 2: Melissa & Bruce Albert; Lauren & Samuel Stollar; Mishelle Miller & David Weiner
December 3 – 9: Lauren & Nelson France (5); Linda Recht & Bob Watts
December 10 – 16: Rachel & Philip Blumenthal; Anne & David Hone; Davida & Alan Kashdan; Nadine & Irwin Rosen; Joanne & Tom Stryer
December 17 – 23: Betsey & Joseph Goldberg

December 24 – 30: Barbara & Jordan Baker; Karen & Barry Hemmerdinger; Susan & Bill Kristol; Linda & Walter Meyer (55); Ellen & Stephen Rubenstein; Judy & Stan Schretter (55)

January Anniversaries

January 1 – 6: Rebecca & Jonathan Cohen; Anna & Lenny Gottesman (20)
January 7 – 13: Rochelle & David Salzman; Barbara & Carl Villarruel
January 14 – 20: Michelle & Michael Horowitz; Lori & David Jacobs; Joan & Howard Katz; Nancy & Jeffrey Klain; Bonnie & David Massarik (30); Cynthia & Mark Rutzick; Paula & Mitchell Weiss
January 28 – 31: Rita & Howard Schlossberg (55)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Rachel & Joshua Ratafia-Levine
Crystal Teed

MAZAL TOV TO

Jill Bayder & Peter Just, on their marriage
Lauren Hahn & Mark Quist, on the birth of their daughter, Ella Miriam
Carol Gordon & Steven Rosenthal, on the birth of their granddaughter, Rory Leigh Kaplan, daughter of Sara Rosenthal & Scott Kaplan
Lauren & Eric Shapiro and Patricia & Paul Gibberman, on the birth of their son and grandson, Samuel

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



PHOTOS BY DEBRA BELAND ACKERMAN
Members of OT USY painted a mural in the youth lounge in December.

MISHPACHA CON'T

Rochelle & David Salzman and Charlotte & Eric Salzman, on the marriage of their son and brother, Andrew Salzman to Rachel Stahl
Annie & Alan Schwartz, on the birth of their grandson, Luca Riley Schwartz, son of Rachel & Chad

IN MEMORY OF

Norman H. Berkowitz, father of Felice Berkowitz
Helen Ducoff, mother of Miriam Smolen
Melvin Garber, father of Elissa Kon
Linda Klein, grandmother of Lauren Breslaw
Ann LaBree, mother of John MacCarthy
Edith Metz, mother of Barbara Brand
Henry Nash, father of Janice Litt
Irwin Schneider, father of Andrea Rozner
Ivan Siebert, father of Ron Siebert
Marilyn W. Simon, mother of Maurine

Simon Harry Ray Sussman, father of Raena Close
Esther Tuchman, mother of Paula Weiss
Mark Zobler, brother of Allen Zobler



Thank you from Allen Zobler
On behalf of the Zobler family, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Olam Tikvah community for the support and love demonstrated after the passing of my brother Mark. Each night of shiva was

attended by numerous “OT Family” to learn more about Mark and to offer comfort.
The generosity shown by the OT community by the generous donations made to tzedakah, is a truly humbling experience. Additionally, the time taken by Rabbi Kalender and Rabbi Bedo to sit with me to extend words of condolence as well as words of strength was extremely appreciated. My brother never had the opportunity to attend a service at OT or to meet any congregants, but I am positive he would have found the same caring and loving family as we have here at Olam Tikvah.

Celebrate with us! Help us expand the Mishpacha section for a variety of simchas—all ages, all experiences. Send your ideas or announcements to communications@olamtikvah.org.

B'NEI MITZVAH



JANUARY 8, 2022 Parshat: Bo

NATALIE STONE LOBEL

Natalie Stone Lobel, daughter of Lauren & Scott, older sister of Gregory, is a seventh grader at Congressional School. Natalie enjoys hanging out with friends, listening to music, doing crafts, reading and playing sports including basketball, field hockey and soccer. She has been a member of the Olam Tikvah family for four years. She looks forward to celebrating her bat mitzvah day with her family and friends.
Bat Mitzvah Project: Natalie assembled and delivered 100 winter-themed gifts to Fairfax Nursing Center to brighten residents’ rooms during the holiday season. This project was in memory of her late grandmother who stayed at Fairfax Nursing Center in 2020 and was always cheered up by crafts and a bit of chocolate.



JANUARY 15, 2022 Parshat: Beshalach

LAUREN HELFANT

Lauren Helfant is the daughter of Nogah & Rob Helfant, and younger sister to Zach and Jake. She is a seventh grader at Kilmer Middle School. Lauren loves to play basketball and field hockey, and especially enjoys horseback riding. She competes in equestrian events throughout the DC area. Lauren can’t wait to share her special day with family, friends, and the OT community.
Bat Mitzvah Project: Lauren volunteers with the Lost Dog & Cat Rescue Foundation. Both of her dogs, Ranger and Cocoa, are rescues and this is her way of helping other pets and people rescue each other.



FEBRUARY 19, 2022 Parshat: Ki Tisa

MILES NEVID

Son of Steven Nevid & Pamela Weinberg and brother to Elias Nevid and one quarter owner of Heidi, Bonita (pictured) and Coco, Miles Nevid is an eighth grader at Geshar Jewish Day School. He enjoys playing soccer and basketball for Geshar, board games and of course video games and has been a member of the Olam Tikvah family for five years.

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PHOTO BY JOSHUA STERN

THE MOST ANTICIPATED CONFIRMATION

BY LIA HANDLER

March 12, 2020, marked the last day of normalcy. For everyone our age, this meant secular school would no longer be in person. But for our Confirmation class, this also meant an abrupt end to our confirmation year. After dedicating a large amount of time to religious school, beginning in our kindergarten years, this was a crushing disappointment. Meetings

together with the people we had grown up with turned into zoom calls. Despite all of this, we knew that we wanted to make our confirmation happen. It was important to have the confirmation ceremony in person. COVID took over our high school year(s) and we wanted to do something “normal”. After many, many months, we finally began the process of preparing for the most anticipated confirmation ceremony to

happen at OT yet. Despite it being a year and a half later than planned, our class wanted to be together one final time to honor our dedication to religious school and to our future as Jewish adults. Each one of us had the opportunity to share with our family, friends, and teachers how the religious school and the Olam Tikvah community had impacted our lives. The best part is that our class picture will finally be up on the wall.

PRESCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

BY CINDI DRAKE,
PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

The snow fell on what was to be our first day back from winter break. We were all ready — children, teachers, parents, and me! Unexpected occurrences, like snow, are at the heart of schools. It is the source of the expression “teachable moment,” when the unexpected sends our day in a new direction. Our teachers put much time and effort into their daily lesson plans, and those plans can turn on a dime when one child just unexpectedly asks, “but why?”

For example, while charting the eye color of each child in a class — four blue, five brown, one hazel — a child asks “but why do we have different color eyes?” This is an easy question to answer for older children. But preschoolers? A preschool teacher answers that question with words and concepts understandable to a preschool age child. That is the magic of preschool teachers, and our OT teachers in particular.

Preschool children come to the OT Preschool surrounded by the unknown. There are colors and shapes, numbers and letters, Hebrew words and English words and so many social cues to unravel! Our teachers sort out the chaos and



unravel the information so that it all makes sense to our children. These unexpected lessons and new directions are an important and magical part of every day at the preschool.

If we are lucky, that magic is infused into our children who will use it to make sense of the unknown, to roll with the unexpected, and to make the world a better place with each question they ask.

TU B’SHEVAT CELEBRATION

Olam Tikvah’s Membership Committee hosted a Tu B’Shevat Israeli kosher wine tasting paired with Tu B’Shevat seder snacks. Pictured, left to right, Melinda Roth, Julie Akawie, Jennifer Scher, and Mala Hod.

PHOTOS BY DAN NOBLE





PHOTO BY DAN NOBLE

Laura and Abigail Strouse with George Billinson honoring Queen Esther by reading the Megillah (pre-Covid).

THE POWER OF JEWISH WOMEN

BY BRENDA KLEMOW
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY RABBI BEDO

Esther's prominence as a Jewish female not only appears in the Bible, but also makes a fascinating appearance in the Talmud, in a tractate dedicated to the Megillah. On Megillah 7a the sages discuss how and why the holiday of Purim became customary and even required for the Jewish people, and how the book of Esther became canonized into the Bible.

Apparently, the rabbis were reluctant to include the book in the Tanakh because they were afraid that non-Jews would be unhappy with a story of Jews defeating their non-Jewish enemies. But Queen Esther insisted: "Establish be more future generations" — meaning, put me and my story in the Bible! After Esther makes a clever argument to the sages, they eventually yield to her logical request. This Talmudic narrative expands Esther's power as a woman and a queen of the Jewish people beyond her own time and place, endowing her with authority even over the very rabbis who wrote the Talmud.

This Talmudic tale of Esther comes

to show what happens when Jewish women demand to be part of the larger Jewish story. According to the second woman president of OT, Brenda Klemow, that is exactly what happened at our shul.

"In the beginning" at Olam Tikvah women had no role in any of the ritual activities or in the top leadership positions. Women did serve on committees and the Board of Directors, but the committees were all labeled, according to Roberta Wulf, the "feminine" committees: education, fine arts, nursery school and the "dreaded" kitchen committee. There were no women in the top executive positions.

When I became the second woman President of OT in 1988, our Board, supported by many members, was ready to make significant changes that would affect the future role of women in all aspects of OT activities, especially in Torah services.

Several people raised the issue with Rabbi Klirs (z"l). As a traditional Orthodox rabbi trained in Israel,

Rabbi Klirs at first was reluctant to make the changes, but to his credit he fully realized that allowing women to participate in Torah service would help OT grow.

As the second woman President at OT, I had the honor of overseeing and implementing the changes in Torah services. An eighth Aliyah was added to the service for women. Bat Mitzvahs could now take place on Saturday morning and women began to recite Haftorah. Couples came forward for their joint Aliyot (see our lead story for our egalitarian timeline). As a past President, I was honored to carry a Torah during multiple Kol Nidre services.

I recall a humorous remark made during an OT Sabbath morning service. One of two "Gabbais" was a woman. Two Aliyahs in a row were women. The Haftorah was chanted by a woman. Another woman tied the Torah. A voice was heard saying "What is that man doing up there on the Bimah?"

If true, it was music to my ears.

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OLAM TIKVAH CONNECTIONS

OT is a dynamic community, with multiple events for every age group throughout the month. We stay in touch with you in the following ways:



On-Demand at Olamtikvah.org

Go to our website for our calendar and the latest from committees and the OT Religious School. Sign up to participate in virtual and in-person events, adult education classes and our online directory in the members-only section.

In Your Inbox Twice a Week

This Week at OT – OT-wide announcements every Sunday morning
Shabbat Shalom! – Shabbat announcements every Friday morning

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Holiday announcements & Baruch Dayan Ha'Emet (Condolences)

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