

Hebrew School News

‘May you live in interesting times.’ Yes, indeed, we are. This is truly a challenging time for all of us, and yet I see many things to appreciate. Each time I open up a Zoom meeting for Sunday’s Junior Congregation and Wednesday’s music and our Community Share to the faces and sounds of our Hebrew School kids it does my heart good. Their energy manages to traverse all the fiber optic cables and land in my living room. Parents, who are already juggling so much, have been very understanding and patient with all the glitches and shortcomings of online learning. Teachers have been amazing in their quick grasp of how to adapt their teaching and figure out new technology. We are resilient.

The timing of the pandemic strikes me. Springtime brings us a plethora of Jewish holidays beginning with Purim, which is the last time we all came together at the OZ Purim party on March 11. There was much laughter, sharing, food and fun.

And then we went home.

And we’ve been there ever since.

At what the experts considered the apex of the pandemic here in Vermont, we celebrated Passover. We shared the story of the Exodus with those around the table and maybe, for some, with others via Zoom, Google Hangout, FaceTime or WhatsApp. Talking about plagues really hit home for me as I’m sure it did for others and the concept of freedom took on a new meaning.

And now we look towards Shavuot at the end of May. A time when we celebrate the receiving of the Torah at Sinai and the third agricultural holiday when we historically harvested wheat in the Land of Israel. From now until then, we are counting the Omer, the days in between Passover and Shavuot. 49 days, 7 times 7. And we are also counting the days until we can cross our thresholds again and be together face to face. Will that happen come the end of the month? We can’t answer that question.

Despite our distance, our OZHS community has remained connected through our weekly classes. Kids and parents alike have had the opportunity to share their challenges and successes. ‘Attendance’ at our online sessions has been steady and parents have shared their appreciation of our consistency. With the idea of continuing to offer connection and help with a daily framework for families, I am creating an optional curriculum unit that will run for 4 weeks, extended after our original end date of May 10. It will be a stand-alone unit including themes related to the holiday of Shavuot with games, music, crafts and more. Please look for more information on this in the coming weeks.

Currently, I am trying to figure out how to honor our graduates on May 10. We have 13 students, three in our regular OZHS classes and 10 in our Makom l’Mishpacha class that deserve to be recognized for their good work at our Hebrew School. Challenging but not insurmountable.

I miss you all terribly. Interacting with kids and parents is what charges my batteries. Know that I am thinking of you and can’t wait to see you again in person. Until then, stay safe, stay healthy.

~ Naomi Barell