

December 2016 Message from Rabbi Dubin

On Tuesday, November 22, prolonged periods of high temperature, parched conditions, and severe winds resulted in a series of wildfires throughout the northern half of Israel. As the week unfolded, well over a hundred different fires ignited in what observers are calling the most extreme series of fires the country of Israel has ever seen.

Indeed, the devastation has been overwhelming. For instance, as reported by ARZA ([Association of Reform Zionists of America](#)), "In Haifa alone, over 1000 homes were destroyed and over 60,000 people were displaced." Among those who were displaced in Haifa is the Reform congregation, Or Hadash.

On Friday, November 25, Rabbi Oshrat Morag of Or Hadash, penned the following note:

I am writing to you with mixed feelings, to share the experiences of my family, and our "Or Hadash" community from the past few days in Haifa, the city I grew up in and the city where I have chosen to raise my children.

It was shocking to see my city burning. Buildings in flames, the Carmel Mountain blackened and the sky grey from smoke.

It is striking to see the helplessness of humanity facing nature's rage, and it left me speechless.

My young daughter's gaze said it all: 'Mommy what will become of us?!?' " I hugged my four children as I told them: 'We shall overcome. Let us pray that the rains will wash the black and bring renewed growth, fresh foliage and new life will arise from this pain and sorrow.'

Tongues of fire also lapped the edges of our humble sanctuary. The surroundings blackened, and all entrances were blocked. My family, among many of my community members had to evacuate from their homes. For 24 hours, we were not sure whether we will have a home to return to.

Now we all have to roll up our sleeves in order to rebuild the spirits of our members and start healing our emotional, as well as physical, wounds that the fire left on our souls and our building.

I call you to join me, to the members of my community and all of the members of the Reform movement in Israel, to repair the damage that was caused by these unexpected fires. To help us reconstruct a building of love from the inside so we can continue to build a community of love and worship.

Sending you wishes for a peaceful Shabbat and always feeling thankful for what we have,
Oshrat

So what can we, the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey, do? Well, here's an idea...

On Sunday, December 11, a group of dedicated volunteers will gather at the JCNWJ to commence planning our congregational trip to Israel. In preparing for this first meeting, I've come up with a number of topics for discussion. After reading Rabbi Morag's words, however, I decided to add one more: My hope is that when we do finally travel to Israel as the Reform community of Washington, NJ, we will have opportunity to visit and pray with the Reform community of Haifa.

Until then, anyone wishing to offer financial support for the rebuilding effort can submit donations through ARZA at www.arza.org. I am told that if you wish to earmark your donation for Or Hadash, you can do so by writing to Alex Langer at malanger@arza.org.

With warm embrace for our sisters and brothers in Israel,
Rabbi Dubin

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