



## *KTH Connections*

Kehilat Tzur-Hadassah news letter

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### *Letter from our new president- Ruth Trucks*

I hope that this edition of ***KTH connections*** finds you to be well, and in good health and that you have had a pleasant summer. As we approach Rosh Hashanah 5769, I wanted to share with you a few words about the exciting progress our congregation has made.



My name is Ruth Trucks and I have just taken over the reigns from Ilan Halperin, as the new president of Kehilat Tzur Hadassah . I have been a member of the congregation for nearly four years, and I see the kehillah as a second home and family. I hope to serve this community well and help it move forward.

The major goal that we are striving for at this very time is the establishment of our community center/synagogue building. At this stage we have been granted the delivery of a pre-fab temporary building from Israel's Ministry of Housing for use as a synagogue. This is actually a historical event, not only for our community but for Israel as a whole, because it will be the first time since the creation of the State of Israel, 60 years ago, that a

non-orthodox community will have received any kind of capital assistance – namely a building – from the government. We are extremely proud and excited to be among the first four Progressive congregations to receive this support. However, the goal has not yet been reached and the path that leads us there is still long and rough for we are only at the beginning. At this point we are now completing the preparation of the land and installation of the infrastructure and are still trying our best to raise the funds to cover these expenses. The piece of land this building will be placed upon is steep and rocky and had no water or electricity connections. Many more challenges lie ahead of us, but we are confident that with joint efforts we can conquer them and are looking forward to filling the premises of our campus with many members, friends and guests.

As a matter of fact the number of members of KTH has increased during the past two years, and now we are a medium size congregation in Israeli standards. Also the number of active volunteers has increased and with that the range of different activities. A

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Rabbi Ofer Sabath Beit Halachmi

President: Ruth Trucks



tighter net of connections and mutual support were created, to better meet the various needs and desires of different community members. A new weekly study group was created as was our “4-seasons” women’s group. Our kindergarten was engaged in a project of cooperation with a kindergarten from a neighboring Arab village – a project which I think is rare and special. In the spring we had a wonderful and successful garage-sale, which again was organized in cooperation with other groups and organizations.

At this time, the months before the beginning of a new Jewish year we take a deep and critical look inside of ourselves and ask ourselves what we did well and what we could have done better and based on that we set our goals for the next year. For the coming year I want to see the congregation establish itself further, to keep growing with our own campus, and to keep expanding and growing by reaching out and offering more services. But it is also my goal to preserve the family atmosphere and the personal warmth

and mutual respect and acceptance that are so significant and characterizing for our congregation. In our striving for growth and recognition we must not forget the beauty of simplicity and keep in mind that there are higher values and even dreams that lie behind all our doing.

Shalom and wishing you a happy and healthy new year!

### Letter from our out going president-

#### Ilan Halperin



This being the month of Elul, a month of retrospection, what a better time to look back, and now stepping down, to assess my term as president over these past 6 years. There is a well known saying that a leader ought to look back from time to time and make sure that someone is actually following, and as I look around me I see a wonderful group of women and men who are committed to our community’s values and who will continue to forge ahead and continue to build. I hope that my personal example will have left its mark, for as Albert Einstein said “to be an example to others is not the main way to influence; it is the only way”.

As you may know, Kehilat Tzur Hadassah (KTZH) was established from a grass roots need to create a liberal, pluralistic Jewish environment based on values and education, that fits the life style of many of the residents of our village. At the time the only way one could express his or her Jewish culture was with a representative of

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the ultra-Orthodox Chabad (Lubavitch) whose only purpose was, and remains till today, to save us sinners- this refers to us, our neighbors and our friends!! It was clear that without taking action we will be leaving our religion, culture, education and value system to the interpretation of outsiders who do not reflect our aspirations and beliefs. Thus a small group of families took upon ourselves to make a difference and today hundreds of families in our village identify with KTZH.

KTZH is supposed to be a safe place for those searching for belonging and a way to connect. But have we succeeded? Perhaps the question should be: are we on the right path? I believe that even now after 10 years, we are still on the way to create and build. We need to remember that when Noah built the ark it was before the first drop of rain fell, and we also have not waited for multitudes to join us but rather have established the infrastructure for a strong community life, determining together our shared vision and actions. One of our goals should be to create a place for those in our village who are “glad KTZH is on the map” to join us in building something that is strong and vibrant – we need to help create a space that invites passive supporters to be active participants. Truthfully, I do not have the answer of how to accomplish this- but I am certain that our actions need to be informed by our vision and thus one who comes to us will comprehend and sense to what s/he has arrived to. An ancient Japanese saying states it well that “vision without action is just a dream, but action without a vision is a nightmare”.

During my term as KTZH president we tried to set a vision and create an

atmosphere of action with a variety of experiences. There have been some undertakings that did not succeed to be fully integrated into our community life and we have much to do to assess these and determine our next steps. But other endeavors have proven to be exceptional and among these are our inspiring kabbalat Shabbat services that are spiritually uplifting, intellectually arousing and especially when we have music, just plain enjoyable to one’s soul. Our Bat-Bar Mitzvah workshops have made their mark in our village as have our efforts to build a place to be partners in building a more just society through Tikun Olam. We have an active women’s group and have created a system to help those in need in our community. Of course our holiday celebrations and not only Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but also Tu Bishvat and Purim, attract hundreds of otherwise self-identified “secular” Israelis who see KTZH as their home where they can freely and without judgment express and live their heritage and culture. So clearly there is a grass roots demand and we have been there to influence and be an important factor in people’s lives.

I have not mentioned the most significant achievement and that is the establishment of the KTZH community campus that is being built these very days. This campus is significant and reflects our long term aspiration and dream to expand our community in the coming years. It places KTZH not only physically in the middle of our village but has the potential to be a lasting fixture of social action, and Jewish cultural relevance. Will we be wise enough to use this resource appropriately? With what content will we infuse our new home? These and other questions are the

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challenge and responsibility of the new leadership now taking on the reigns.

As president I was fully aware of the strength of my peers in leading the community these past six years. Firstly of course is our rabbi Ofer who continues to lead us professionally and of course spiritually. Ofer inspires us with a clear community vision with a view to the future. Galit our community coordinator has been working tirelessly to strengthen the fiber of volunteerism that motivates us all. But, my fellow volunteers over the years who have served with me on our many committees, Irit Horowitz, Yael Schweid, Zion Gabi, Oded Avisar, Noam Levy, Mira Hovav, Shira Sapuner, Deb Housen-Couriel, David Krieger, Bentzi Zagerson, Ido Cna'an, Akiva Greenboim, Cary Jacoby, Ari Marom, Ori Resheff, and of course my successor as new president, Ruth Trucks- all of you are dear to me and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your dedication and for allowing me to be with you over these years in leading KTZH

In conclusion if I return to the saying about leaders and followers- to me it is clear we have created a wonderful place that fills a vital role in the lives of hundreds of families in our village and the entire region. We have done it ourselves. As the well known anthropologist and author Margret Mead noted "Do not doubt that a small group of dedicated and thinking citizens can change the world- in fact that is the only thing that has ever had any influence". So again thank you for allowing me to be your president- it has been an amazing and significant experience for me- despite the challenges and constraints we have faced, I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment in creating and strengthening the vibrant, dynamic and inspiring community - Kehilat Tzur Hadassah for Progressive Judaism.

Ilan Halperin, *immediate past president*

### Mourning and loss- a volunteer outreach team, Irit Horowitz

"If I had one known then, when I was alone and lost, that there was a door that I could knock on and find someone who would listen, and was ready to help...just knowing it was there would have been an emotional support to me. Today I am ready to give of myself to others and am waiting for someone to knock at my door- to be there for them in their time of need" Thus, described one of our kehillah members her reason for joining our volunteer team to reach out to someone facing a death in the family or the community.



Death always catches us unaware and unprepared. Psychologists, Sociologists and other professionals have written extensively on the humane approach Judaism takes in dealing with death and mourning. The 7 days of

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of the Shiva, followed by 30 days and then into the next 11 months reflect the stages ones actually goes through in coping with the loss of a loved one. In the past when we lived among traditional extended multi-generational families the “clan” was able to care for its members. Today we find ourselves in more isolated communities and the Kehillah, the synagogue community can fill this important role.

For the vast majority of residents in Tzur Hadassah who do not attend synagogue on any regular basis and even the thought brings up the Orthodox-Secular rift and tensions, even joining a liberal, progressive kehillah is outside of their mind set and when faced with the loss and pain may find themselves alone and vulnerable. KTZH has decided to establish a volunteer team to build a support structure that can reach out to village residents even if they do not “belong” to the synagogue. “We believe” says Irit Horowitz one of our board members and among those spearheading this initiative, “that thus we can meet a real need and be a bridge between the secular society we all live in and the Jewish traditions that are a source of strength and resilience”.

### *Community Havdalah- Ari and Marla Marom*

I am pleasantly surprised each time again at how much I enjoy the monthly congregational havdalah ceremonies that have become a new addition to our regular activities in the past year and a half. I am surprised because I was never a great fan of the havdallah ceremony itself. There's something about standing around a darkened room with a twisted candle held in the middle, passing around spices that everyone is encouraged to smell and finally a kiddush cup full of wine passed around for everyone to sip that always made me think more of a séance or some other kind of "dark" ceremony than of the Jewish way of ending the shabbat and the week and ushering in a new week. But our monthly gatherings in private homes, sharing a potluck dinner and shmoozing with old friends and new acquaintances that has made me look at the havdalah ceremony in a new light - no pun intended. The havdalah ceremony held in our home on August 30 was a case in point. We began with a text study and discussion led by our illustrious program director, Galit, moved on to the havdalah ceremony itself led by Rabbi Ofer and finished with the potluck dinner and much anticipated shmoozing. This was the end of the summer, so some faces were seen after a long summer vacation absence. It was the beginning of the new school year, which for parents of school-aged children is in itself a cause for celebration. And it was also the beginning of the Hebrew month of Elul, signaling the approaching High Holiday period beginning just one month away. But more than anything, this gathering renewed our sense of "kehilla", of congregation. This gathering of people from different professional backgrounds, different family circumstances and different interests came together as friends, as neighbors, as Jews and as Israelis, to celebrate the beginning of a new week, a new year and new period of activity for our congregation. I was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed the evening and how much I enjoyed that there are still gatherings and activities that can surprise me. Shavua Tov to all of us and Shana Tova.



Ari Marom

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*Rosh Hashanah message from our Rabbi, Ofer Sabath Beit Halachmi*

Happy new year to our friends and supporters overseas!



As each year also now we find ourselves in a time of self-reflection as the new year comes around. Here in the land of Israel we are towards the end of the “shmita” year when the land lays fallow. According the ancient texts of our people, we learned this year a lot about the things that do not totally belong to us like our homes and the land, as well as the fruits of the field and the fruits of the interest we pay the banks. All these are supposed to belong equally to all the people of Israel. So every 7th year we find ourselves to be very big “sinners” since the economic life of our modern society do not really allow us to fulfill the mitzvot of the “shmita” year as it explained in our sources. These sources also tell us that we will be punished for not treating the land in an ethical manner. Accordingly in our kehillah we have invested a lot of thought in two areas- the first is how we will translate these values into the actual building we are establishing and the land it will sit upon- so that it will belong to all the people of Israel and not only to our community. To that end we are inviting our partners who wish to partake

with us in the building of our spiritual “physical-center”. We thus invite you to join a dialogue with individuals and communities abroad with us and so we can learn together about building a holy house of worship, and to see how we can enhance the connections between us by doing this.

The second area that we learned from the Shmita year is how we should use the natural resources we received as part of the creation of our world so that we can be partners in “tilling and keeping” the land (Genesis 2:15), in a way that is efficient and modest. And so, we decided to build our spiritual center in a manner that will take into account the ecological handprint and build it to be environmentally friendly. In the groundbreaking ceremony we committed ourselves as a community to be cautious and try our best not to harm the balance with nature around us and to intelligently use the resources that have left to us for the future generations.

As we conclude this year and begin a new one we find ourselves looking at our deeds in the past and into the future. We generally are focused on our “sins” and asking forgiveness, but to repent is really only whole if we can learn from our past mistakes- but can we also learn from the successes of this past year and find a way to repeat them again this year?

Shana Tova, Rabbi Ofer

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