

YOUNG ISRAEL OF ORANGE COUNTY

בס"ד

5319 University Drive (#122)
Irvine, CA 92612



Hi, everyone.

Founded on Leap Day 2008, we now are half-way through our 11th year and still are charting fascinating new courses, undertaking new programs, reaching out to new demographics that have not been reached by others in Orange County, and still touching lives meaningfully.

We now embark on our eleventh annual High Holidays season together. Without a building of our own or all the “bricks-and-mortar” accoutrements that other temples and synagogues have, we continue energetically as a congregational family, warm and deeply loyal, year in and year out. New faces continue coming our way, somehow finding us — often by word of mouth or brought in by a friend who was excited to share something wonderful. We offer personal warmth, personal growth, personal attention, unique pastoral care. Access to a Rav and Rebbezin whom you intuitively recognize are there for you not because you are paying for their time but — *you just feel it* — because they and you are *family*. That means not only a special shul but a membership cultivated for the kindness and decency that we seek in family. We not only *welcome* good people; we *solicit* them — and they *join*.

We have found that we offer something special for many people of remarkably diverse backgrounds, ages, and spiritual concerns. **We likewise are uniquely flexible, able to perceive unaddressed needs in our community and to respond uniquely to them.** That flexibility allows us to be daring, to take chances and risks that others cannot. **This past year, for example, we cultivated the beginnings of a new Young Professionals Friday Night Shabbat Dinner Group.** Three Shabbatot out of every four, we host 15-20 people, most of them ages 28-38, for Shabbat dinner, with all catching up on the past week in their lives, then joining in singing *zemirot* (Shabbat melodies), text learning, and *bentsching*.

We dramatically expanded our annual High Holidays program as well. After many successful years of filling hotel guest rooms every *Yom Kippur*, we added a **Hotel Rosh Hashanah** program: three days of catered meals along with twenty people staying over at the hotel. That allows people to embrace Orthodox religious experience *in its totality* by staying over on-site, not having to drive on the High Holy Days. Others further appreciate being only moments away from an on-site place to rest privately during breaks. And the very setting affords a group camaraderie, relief, and spiritual escape from the static of the outside world on the Holy Days.

We also added to our annual shul calendar our **first-ever Banquet Event**, marking **YIOC's** Tenth Anniversary. We honored six wonderful women — Ruth Book, Linda Smith, Barbara Wolinsky, Nina Varkel, Hedy Sebag, and Rebbetzin Ellen. And a few weeks later we celebrated a wonderfully successful **Torah Dedication** Shabbat, welcoming the Lapin Torah into our shul.

We thus have expanded to *year-round* creative programming. From the *Yomim Nora'im* at the Hotel, with catered meals for Rosh Hashanah and plans for our **first-ever bagels-and-lox “Break the Fast” after Yom Kippur**, to our annual **Chanukah Sunday Party**, to our annual **Purim Megillah** night, including a festive buffet dinner and movie, to the following day's professionally catered **Purim Seudah**, now a fixture that we introduced to the county's Orthodox Jewish community. As with our other *expanding* programs, this year's *Seudah* grew so large that, for the first time, we had to move it to a larger facility to accommodate everyone.

Beyond our shul's *own direct* programs at **YIOC**, *all of Irvine and Orange County Jewry* is richer for what we have brought here. So we brought to Irvine the programming of **Public Community Sedarim** on **both consecutive nights** every Pesach. Again, we had major turnouts each night this year. *We are the originals*. Likewise, we introduced to Irvine the Shavuot night catered dinner, as a prelude to all-night Torah learning. Our **Omer Count** remains unique, impossible to copy. Like our annual **DR. STEPHEN BOOK MEMORIAL PASSOVER FUND**, the daily Omer Count also has emerged as a significant fundraiser for us, too.

And, of course, our extraordinary **Torah and General Judaic Learning offerings**. The classes we launch run for years and grow. Our weekly **Chumash-and-Rashi** class, now in its twelfth year. Our **Talmud Class** — now in its eighth year. Our **Sunday Morning Women's Class** typically attracts 15-20 regulars, who **travel from all over Orange County**, for two hours of solid text-based learning on the highest level. Your devotion to serious adult learning has shaped our shul demographic towards an **exceptionally bright, academically oriented, and intellectually curious congregational community of deeply intelligent people** who enjoy continued lifelong Judaic learning. Many drive 45 minutes and more throughout Orange County, just to learn with us.

As you saw first-hand at our Tenth Anniversary Banquet, we now touch more than 100 Orange County Jewish households with a warm *Boutique Shul, where it is the people who are the shul's "bricks and mortar."* A shul of highly established and accomplished people; others beginning life journeys at local campuses like UCI. We are a shul built around **personal growth** — Judaic learning, aspiring to be greater than we thought we could be. We are a shul **where people who could not daven a very few years ago now capably lead** Orthodox Shabbat services.

So we are a **learning/ teaching Boutique Shul**. Our *minyanim* on Friday evenings, Shabbat mornings, and Sunday mornings contribute to the integrity of our Shul, but our weeknight classes and our Shabbat evening experiences, **attended in the aggregate by one hundred Jews**, also define us. Likewise, we are a successful center — *the "magnet school" in Orange County* — for those who wish to **convert to Judaism** through the **RCC Gold Standard** for Orthodox conversion.

And, of course, we continue to be Orange County's strongest unapologetic voice for Israel, presenting and articulating Israel's rights and message of freedom and decency to opinion makers throughout our region, from political representatives to religious leaders of other faiths. **In the past five years alone, the sons of seven YIOC families have served or presently are serving in Tzahal, with most having made Aliyah**. We could not be prouder of them, knowing we played a role in their evolutions. We are the only shul that uniquely chants a special prayer every Shabbat for the State of Israel and a second prayer for *Tzahal*, and a third beseeching G-d to bless and watch over the armed forces of the United States of America. That is an integral part of our shul's identity.

Looking ahead, we are so hopeful for so much more, for **the opportunity to touch more lives** in the warm and loving way that we uniquely have evolved. That, too, is the power of our **Boutique Shul Without a Building (Yet)**. To be a voice of conscience and to stand for what is right — not because it is popular at its moment — but simply because it is right. So, please, kindly support our shul by renewing your membership dues at this time. Thank you so very much.

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