



## *To Learn and To Teach - ללמד וללמד*

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## Introducing our new publication

Congregation Rodfei Zedek aspires to be a congregation of learners. Always eager to embrace new opportunities for teaching and learning, we initiate this journal to supplement in-person experiences. Here we hope to introduce some of your fellow congregants and celebrate their interests and expertise. Here you'll find out more about the educational activities already flourishing in our community. Here, too, we'll publish recommendations to help you sort through the vast array of resources in the Jewish world around us, whether on paper or online.

Choose the style that's best for you. Whether you read this on paper or as a pdf on the Rodfei Zedek website, we hope you'll welcome and respond to this new publication. Please let us know your opinions. Criticisms, questions, and, especially, offers to contribute can be submitted in person or via email to [crzwritings@gmail.com](mailto:crzwritings@gmail.com).

Teaching and learning are central and essential in Jewish tradition. Every day we remind ourselves that one of the Torah's 613 mitzvot is the commandment to learn Torah and to teach it, a command that we recite in the sh'ma (from Deut. 6:7). In the bracha which introduces the

shema, we seek "to understand and elucidate, to listen, to learn, teach (ללמד וללמד), safeguard, perform, and fulfill" the words of Torah.

In the press of our daily lives, preoccupied with careers and family obligations, we can find it difficult to attend to our own needs. Learning, and Jewish learning in particular, can seem like a luxury to be postponed to another time of life. But Jewish learning needn't be viewed as competing with other aspects of life. Instead it can support and enrich them. The goal of this publication and of the rest of the congregation's educational offerings is to help us all realize that enrichment.

*To Learn and To Teach* is a biannual publication of the Adult Education Committee of Congregation Rodfei Zedek

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# Serving the Jews of the South Side

by Daniel Libenson

*Daniel Libenson is President of the Institute for the Next Jewish Future, a center for ideas and education dedicated to accelerating innovation in Jewish life, and Director of the new jU: Jewish U program at the University of Chicago. He previously served as Executive Director of the University of Chicago Hillel and as Director of New Initiatives at Harvard Hillel. Dan is a recipient of a 2009 AVI CHAI Fellowship. In 2010, he was named a Jewish Chicagoan of the Year by Chicago Jewish News. Prior to coming to Chicago in 2006, Dan was a law professor. Dan and his wife Beth Niestat have two children, Sam and Miriam. They have been members of Rodfei Zedek since 2006.*



A few months ago, in a conversation with another Hyde Park Jewish professional about what we might do to improve our organizations, I suddenly realized that I had been thinking about it all wrong.

In our conversation, my colleague and I were taking our current institutional structures and missions as givens, and we were thinking about what new things we could do or what changes we could make—perhaps some new programs or some better marketing—that might attract a few more Jews to our organizations, which we were interested in doing for reasons of both mission and financial stability.

But I came to see that there was an entirely different lens through which we could look at the reality of Jewish life on the South Side of Chicago. Rather than starting with institutions, we should be starting with Jews.

We should start by thinking about all the Jews that live on the South Side and what sorts of programs and institutions could best serve their needs and interests. Then, we should we look at the institutions we have. Finally, we should ask how we can get there from here.

A counterfactual example helps clarify this perspective. I am choosing to use a counterfactual in order to examine what this process could look like without the complication of applying (yet) it to the actual institutions we have today.

Imagine, then, that there was only a single Jewish institution in Hyde Park—an Orthodox synagogue that employed a rabbi, owned a building, conducted daily and weekly services, and provided educational programs from an Orthodox perspective. The problem is, however, that there are very few Orthodox Jews in Hyde Park; in fact, let us assume for the sake of this counterfactual that many secular Israeli families had moved to Hyde Park over the past decade or two. What should this Orthodox synagogue do?

One option—perhaps the most obvious one—would be to work to attract more Orthodox Jews to Hyde Park, for example by constructing an eruv; in principle, this might work, but the synagogue might not survive long enough to reap the benefits, as it takes time to build an eruv and then for a sufficient number of Orthodox Jews to move to the community. Another option would be to work

to attract the secular Israelis and other non-Orthodox South Siders to the (still-Orthodox) synagogue by offering more educational programs or perhaps Israeli-style holiday celebrations. Possibly, more singing could be incorporated into Shabbat services. But it just doesn't seem likely that many secular Israelis will become members of an Orthodox synagogue even if they did attend some programs.

These and other tactics, therefore, might be enough to avoid institutional collapse, but probably not enough to make a fundamentally non-thriving institution thrive. More significantly, they are not primarily designed to serve the needs and interests of the Jews who live on the South Side, but rather they are designed to try and keep an institution afloat.

There is a second option. Perhaps the synagogue would come to understand its primary mission as the maintenance of vibrant Jewish living on the South Side, with only a secondary purpose of maximizing the quality of specifically Orthodox life. Based on the overwhelmingly Israeli demographics of the community, the synagogue might decide to become the “Chicago Center for Israeli Life in America,” an institution that the Israelis could really get excited about. The Chicago Center for Israeli Life in America could continue to support Orthodox religious life in Hyde Park (which still fits its mission because Orthodox Judaism is a component of Israeli life for some Israelis), but its staffing structure and programming would be built around its new organizing principle.

By asking who the Jews are in the community and being willing to adjust its mission accordingly, the re-envisioned institution could help many more Jews to live rich Jewish lives as part of a Jewish community.

As we move from the counterfactual to the actual, we would do well to think about who the unserved or underserved Jews on the South Side are, the Jews whose Jewish needs and interests are not being addressed because the frameworks of our existing institutions do not comfortably encompass them. If we started

# Serving the Jews of the South Side - cont.

with Jews and not with institutions, what interesting possibilities might we discover?

Here are a few examples of the types of Jews who seem not to be well served by our existing institutions today:

**Jews who identify with liberal Judaism who are neither Conservative nor Reform.** This category includes people who identify with Reconstructionism, Jewish Renewal, and Humanistic Judaism, as well as the probably much larger category of people—especially younger people—who see themselves as spiritual but not committed to any particular religious denomination.

**Secular Israelis.** My sense is that the number of secular Israelis in Hyde Park is growing, perhaps due to the University of Chicago's rising international reputation. Many secular Israelis feel profoundly distant from anything they perceive as religious, and therefore even liberal Judaism is not attractive to many of them. These Jews are often desperate, however, to maintain a connection, and build a connection for their kids, to Israeli culture, Jewish holidays, the Hebrew language, and other Israelis.

**Secular American-Jewish intellectuals.** Hyde Park, like many college towns, attracts residents whose interests skew to the intellectual. Such people are often less interested in prayer and spiritual practices, but they are very interested in study and discussion. While the secular Jew who still lives a rich Jewish life is not uncommon in Israel, this concept is less well developed in the United States. As a result, many secular Jews feel profoundly alienated from the dominant Jewish institutions of even liberal American Judaism and develop a self-understanding of alienation from any kind of Jewish life. It doesn't have to be this way.

**Orthodox Jews.** While there are not very many Orthodox non-students in Hyde Park today, this is largely a factor of the lack of an eruv. In fact, especially thanks to the great day school in the neighborhood, Hyde Park has a substantial Orthodox community in potential, made up of Orthodox faculty,

graduate students, and doctors, among others. This potential could be realized by the construction of an eruv, which would be facilitated by a Jewish institution taking ownership of the challenge.

**University of Chicago faculty and administrators who do not live in Hyde Park.** There are hundreds of Jewish people who do not live in Hyde Park but who spend more waking hours here than they do in the communities where they sleep at night. These include University of Chicago faculty and administrators, doctors and other staff at the University of Chicago hospitals, teachers and staff at the Lab School, and others. For many reasons, many of these Jews are unlikely to build rich Jewish lives in the places where they live, but they may well value Jewish conversation and community with fellow Jews in or near their intellectual and work homes, which could take place at lunchtime or in the late afternoon, for example.

**Unmarried Young Adults.** As the University develops 53rd Street and Hyde Park in general, it is becoming more common for young alumni to stay in Hyde Park after graduation and for graduate students to live in Hyde Park. Young Jewish adults without spouses and families have profoundly different needs and interests from the age cohort that our institutions currently are built to serve.

There are many other segments of Jews that are not well served by our current institutions, but space does not permit a full examination of them here. The Talmud tells us that all Jews are responsible for the well being of one another. When the mission of any particular institution, and the combined mission of all of them, does not stretch to fit the totality of the Jews in our community, it is time to reevaluate whether there is another way and how to get there from here.

# An Interview with Karen Lewis

By Dalia Hoffman

*Dalia Hoffman is a certified high school English teacher at a Chicago Public Schools. In addition, she teaches English as a Second Language at Truman College. She holds an M.A. in English Literature (concentration on Medieval literature) and a dual B.A. in English and Judaic Studies. In recent years she has become involved in Rodfei Zedek via a vis her sister, Yael Hoffman (board member) and her family.*

I first happened upon Karen Lewis' name four years ago when I was in the midst of my mid-life career transition into teaching. I chose this field because I believe so strongly in education, and I was committed to working exclusively in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where urban students often don't have easy access to resources found in suburban or private schools. As a teacher, I wanted to offer my support to them as a role model and advocate.

In 2010 the race for a new president of the Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) went into high gear. I knew that I would soon become a member, so I grew extremely invested in the race and excited about the challenger, Karen Lewis, because Teachers for Social Justice (TSJ) had endorsed her. Given my affiliation with TSJ, I knew that its position was rooted firmly in the conviction that she would fight for economic and social justice for disenfranchised, disadvantaged kids in Chicago, their families, and their communities. Although I wasn't yet eligible to vote, I was elated by her election.

When I learned this year that Ms. Lewis is a member of Rodfei Zedek, I contemplated how her role with CTU, her personal and professional values, and her spiritual life might connect to one another. Coincidentally, just a few months later, Rodfei Zedek invited me to interview her about precisely these questions. I am very grateful to this community for offering me this opportunity, and I am, of course, indebted to Ms. Lewis for carving out time in her extremely busy schedule. What follows are the key questions I asked her about how she understands the interplay of her professional and personal paths.

\* \* \*

DH: What specifically about Judaism convinced you that it was your spiritual home?

KL: Having been raised a Lutheran, I was kicked out of confirmation class because I asked too many questions photo of about the nature of three gods in one. I could not reconcile what I felt comfortable with – a monotheistic religion with the teachings of a man as god. The more I wanted to learn, the more I was drawn to what my parents called “the Old Testament.” There, I found poetry, allegory and scary stories. I have to admit that the movie Yentl had a huge impact on me because of the portrayal of Judaism as a religion in which questions were encouraged. I went to Kol Nidre at Rodfei with



a friend and immediately knew this is where I needed to be spiritually.

DH: At the time that you ran for CTU President, TSJ endorsed you as their candidate. How does Judaism, its teachings of social justice in particular (any specific ones), intersect with your living philosophy?

KL: Judaism is clear. When you reap your fields, you leave something for people who don't have anything. It's all through Torah. You are commanded to treat those who have less than you as family.

DH: You have been courageous by insisting on a public discussion that confronts poverty, particularly urban poverty, and its impact on education. How, if at all, does this connect to your concept of Tzedakah?

KL: We are living in times in which people in poverty, especially children, are demonized, criminalized, and punished for being poor. Very wealthy people have taken the space in which we talk about education in this country. These are people who choose an education for their children that encourages creativity, wonder and freedom. On the other hand, they support policies for other people's children that emphasize conformity, punitive measures for children and adults and inexperienced teachers. These conditions would never be tolerated for their children, but they have no problem endorsing proscriptive, joyless places for black and brown

children. Righteousness does not condone this type of treatment for people who have less, especially children. This is unconscionable and must be brought to light.

DH: What can communities do to tie Jewish values, particularly Tzedakah, into their daily lives, perhaps through education? Or how do we teach this concept as a guiding force in our daily lives?



KL: If we think about what we want for our children, then we can begin to move in a direction of wanting that for other children. I believe that treating people with respect and loving kindness enriches one's life. I also think that working for fairness for those who are the most vulnerable in our society

## An Interview with Karen Lewis - cont.

forces us to consider the world through a different set of lenses. It means that which we take for granted must be a priority in our advocacy for others.

DH: In what ways does the Rodfei Zedek community enrich your life?

KL: Rodfei is one of the most welcoming places of worship I've ever experienced. It is diverse and encouraging. Women are extremely important in the life of the shul, and I appreciate that there are Black, Latino, and Asian Jews in our community. I love that Rodfei includes many Jews by choice and has a vibrant intellectual zeitgeist. I feel completely at home.

DH: Your Bat Mitzvah, of course, is coming up. What motivated you to decide to do this?

KL: I am ready to take my place as a Jewish woman committed to a Jewish life. I am about to celebrate my 20th year as a Jew, turn 60, and what better way than to study for my Bat Mitzvah?

DH: How did you choose the date? How, if at all, was it related to the Parasha?

KL: I didn't. I wanted to do this on the 11th of Elul, which is my 20th anniversary. I wanted Rabbi Gertel to officiate since he converted me, but because he's retiring, he chose the date. Then, when I read the Parasha (Shlach)—the two spies, I knew this was for me! I've been telling my friends a very colloquial version of it and everyone is excited. Basically, members of the 12 tribes get sent out (from Sinai) to check out the land of Canaan, which the Lord gave to the people. Ten came back and told Moses, "The people are giants, they're scary, and I don't know if we can handle it." But Joshua said, "We've got this. We met a woman of ill-repute who told us her people

knew about how powerful our god is. She'll protect us if we protect her family." (So) G-d punishes the ten by telling them they won't reach the promised land because they didn't trust his word. I love this parasha because we were told that there was nothing the Union could do to fight corporate school reform and that we should just allow it to be crammed down our throats. However, 75% (the minimum vote required by state law) of our membership voting for a strike (against these threats) was not a barrier; it was an incentive. (In fact, nearly 90% voted for educational justice.)

\* \* \*

Timing and serendipity have brought Ms. Lewis to a parasha that, though not her primary choice, ultimately resonates deeply with the work she does on behalf of Chicago's students, families, and communities. The messages of perseverance, solidarity, hope, and the pursuit of justice found in this parasha very much mirror the tenacity and commitment that Ms. Lewis champions in her daily work as President of the Chicago Teachers Union. In fact, Ms. Lewis became my hero this year—the first time I ever had one—through her inspiring leadership of teachers like me, her vision for educational and social justice and reform, and her relentless fight for Chicago's youth and their families to have a bright future. Clearly, symmetry exists between her personal and professional lives, and her upcoming Bat Mitzvah will be one of the brightly colored threads that weaves her tapestry together.

# About the Jewish Enrichment Center

By Rabbi Rebecca Milder

*Rabbi Rebecca Milder is Founding Director of the Jewish Enrichment Center, an innovative, community-based, new model for Sunday and after school Jewish enrichment. Her previous professional work also focused on innovative approaches to Jewish learning, including fostering collaboration among Jewish day schools, rebuilding synagogue schools, creating and leading family education initiatives, and as a Jewish environmental and experiential educator. Rebecca and her family, Ethan, Abe, and Hannah, came to Chicago in 2007, and were delighted to immediately find such a caring and involved community at Rodfei Zedek.*

What would a Jewish environment look like in which partnership with children was at the center?

It would be a Jewish environment in which children would be viewed as resourceful, capable, and imaginative; where children could build Jewish literacy while celebrating Jewish diversity; where children would engage their intellects, bodies, and senses, gain skills for participating in community, and connect with families and community around Jewish life.

A child would know, in this Jewish environment, I matter.

For children to embrace Judaism as their own, they must have a Jewish place where they feel comfortable, whole, and empowered. The Jewish Enrichment Center is such a place.

Right here at 5200 S. Hyde Park Boulevard, we have one of the most innovative new models of Sunday and after school Jewish enrichment in the country. The Jewish Enrichment Center opened in Fall 2011, with a wildly successful first year. We're now well on our way through a second year of exceptional Jewish enrichment. The Jewish Enrichment Center has earned several national grants, and educators throughout the Jewish world are turning to us to understand this compelling new way of engaging children and families in Jewish learning.

## Three Core Principles, or What We're All About

Judaism evolves. Every generation leaves its imprint on Judaism as we seek to make sense of our past in meaningful ways. The Jewish Enrichment Center aims to set children in the context of this evolving Judaism—growing children's skills and empowering them to take charge of their own ever-evolving relationship with Judaism. We do so by engaging with Jewish themes in a multi-layered, hands-on fashion. Each theme is explored through five lenses: Biblical, Rabbinic, Historical, Cultural, and Personal. By the end of sixth grade, not only will children be solidly grounded in Jewish concepts and history, but they will connect their own discussions with previous generations' ideas and draw conclusions for themselves about what it means to be Jewish.

The Jewish Enrichment Center celebrates varied approaches to living Jewishly. Families at the Jewish Enrichment Center hold different Jewish beliefs, have different Jewish practices, and come from different "home" communities (e.g.,



several synagogues, a day school, unaffiliated families). The kind of learning we do at the Jewish Enrichment Center values our diverse perspectives. We create a safe place for children to voice their ideas and dialogue with peers about being Jewish, and for families to feel positively about their own choices for Jewish life.

Finally, we are an enrichment center. We understand our work to be part of an essential network of experiences that's growing Jewish children. Lifelong Jewish engagement is not built on a single Jewish experience, or through a single Jewish institution, and so, the Jewish Enrichment Center strives to connect children and families with additional Jewish experiences. We intend a second meaning of enrichment, too. The Jewish Enrichment Center enriches the whole child. Because of their time at the Jewish Enrichment Center, children become better thinkers, ask tougher questions, are more caring friends, and feel more secure about themselves and their Jewish identity.

## Partnership at the Center, or How We Do It

At the core of our work is partnership with children. We partner with children in long-term, project-based, Jewish exploration. We strive to know each child as an individual: interests, friendships, what makes him laugh, what she does when tired or angry, what's happening at school and home, what the child wants to get better at. Educators take what they know about a child and figure out just the right environment—questions, materials, experiences, encouragement—for him/her to gain a new insight. Sometimes these insights are about Torah. Sometimes they're about managing emotions. Partnership means that educators, children, and Judaism are linked together in a triangle, each element influencing the other.

Our work proceeds over the long-term. Children need time to make sense of the Jewish concepts we explore together. For this reason, we might offer children a Jewish concept during the first week of a theme, then revisit the concept in a few weeks to discover how children's understanding has shifted. Every child will understand the concepts in his or her own way. I can read the story of Noah's ark to a child, but I can't tell a child how to understand it or how the story will be meaningful to him/her. It's the same with prayer, and Israel, and the benefits of making the effort to learn Hebrew, and everything else we explore at the Jewish Enrichment Center. For Judaism to grow to be a meaningful part of a child's life, we have to give the child the time and support to figure out what Judaism means to him or her.

We do project-based, Jewish exploration. When we begin a new theme, educators find out what children already know about the theme and what children are curious about. Based on

# About the Jewish Enrichment Center - cont.

children's questions and interests, and with both content and Hebrew language goals in mind, educators and children together develop projects that let children explore the theme on their own terms. In our fall theme, Keshet ("Rainbow"), for example, first- and second-graders' questions about the Flood story (Genesis 6-9) and their interests in painting and mixing colors, led to an extended exploration in which children mastered Hebrew vocabulary about color and weather through art and running games; children learned pointillism in order visually to express their ideas about the Flood story; children dialogued with peers about the Torah story and educators offered these transcripts back to children for further reflection; and children considered rabbinic commentary about their questions. In the end, we shared our final projects publicly through a large, colorful installation, and invited parents and grandparents to respond with their own ideas about the Flood story.

Project-based exploration doesn't simply emerge by reading Torah with children. Project-based exploration requires an intentional environment that supports children's engagement with material and peers. Educators at the Jewish Enrichment Center start with the belief that children are capable of crafting complex ideas. We listen carefully to children, and through our responses (or perhaps through our relentless, "What do you think?"), children know their opinions count, both about Torah and about next steps for a project. In addition, we set up a safe environment for children to share ideas with peers, by practicing with children language for friendship and problem-solving. Finally, we set up a rich physical environment that provokes children to ask their own questions and reflect on experiences: pictures of children in action, words from our tradition, children's artwork, and even our choice and arrangement of furniture. Walk into any of our rooms, and even without children nearby, our physical environment affirms children's right to explore materials and ideas and sets a foundation for safe community.

Hebrew language is a fundamental component of Jewish life. At the Jewish Enrichment Center, children build Hebrew vocabulary and grow comfortable with the language long before they encounter written text. Modern Hebrew is woven informally into every session. For example, at kibud (snack time), children sing a Hebrew song as they come to the shulchan (table), lead each other in a patterned Hebrew dialogue to discuss what we'll eat and what berakhot (blessings) we'll make, and use Hebrew as they eat ["Od rikeekem, bivakasha." ("More crackers, please.")] Rooms have a Pinat Ivrit, a Hebrew area in which children can explore Hebrew writing and reading alone or with friends, at their own pace, through a wide range of materials and games. Shirah/Tefillah (Singing/Prayer) concludes every session, and in a matter of

months, children as young as four or five learn the primary Jewish prayers through song. Parents join us for this special singing time, even at the end of a long workday.

## Community Partnership, or Why You're Important

A huge part of our Jewish Enrichment Center work is sharing what we do with others. After all, the Jewish Enrichment Center is but a portion of children's and families' Jewish lives, and we care that children experience themselves as part of a large, multi-faceted Jewish community. For this reason, we design all of our explorations to include interaction between children and Jewish grown-ups. When we explored the idea that the Shema connects Jews across space and time, we collected Shema stories from parents, grandparents, and community members and shared them upstairs in our building, where they remain today. When members of Rodfei's morning minyan (prayer group) wrote to thank our children for organizing donations of dried fruit before the late-spring holiday of Shavuot, children were ecstatic. We hope that by sharing our children's ideas publicly in words, in art, and in pictures, folks who engage with our children's perspective will find their own Jewish lives enriched.

Partnership with children is at the heart of our Jewish Enrichment Center work. You, as a grown-up who interacts with children and/or their work, are an integral part of this partnership, and affect how children make meaning out of their Jewish experiences. When grown-ups dialogue with a child with genuine consideration for a child's ideas, when grown-ups celebrate children's achievements, when grown-ups model language for positive relationships, the child knows s/he is seen and cared for.

Children know that in this Jewish environment, I matter.

And from this firm sense of belonging, achievement, and safety within a Jewish environment flows a child's lifelong attachment to Jewish life. You are an integral part of our children's lives. Your involvement in their Jewish experiences makes it possible for them to grow into thoughtful, caring, Jewishly committed adults. I, and all of the parents of our community, thank you. We feel privileged to be raising our children with you.

It takes a community to raise Jewish children. Since the Jewish Enrichment Center is a learning organization, committed to reflecting and growing alongside our children, your voice matters. Please respond to ideas you read here by writing [jewish.enrichment.center@gmail.com](mailto:jewish.enrichment.center@gmail.com), or by commenting on our blog at [jewishenrichment.org/blog/](http://jewishenrichment.org/blog/).

# Two Days in the Life of Rodfei Zedek

by Yael Hoffman

*Yael Hoffman is an independent consultant in the fields of public health and social work. Her work has focused on nonprofit grant writing and grants management; community-based participatory research; public health program design, implementation and evaluation; psychosocial interventions in disasters; and direct service with vulnerable populations. Recently Yael has worked with the American Institutes for Research, the Midwest Access Project, and the Heartland Alliance's Marjorie Kovler Center for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture. Yael has taught on the subject of human rights at the University of Chicago, has published and worked on disaster preparedness at the University of Michigan and the University of Miami, and worked with Save the Children on psychosocial interventions following Hurricane Katrina. Prior to that, she worked as a psychiatric emergency services social worker at the University of Michigan. Yael and her husband, Andrew Skol, joined Congregation Rodfei Zedek in 2007 and have two children, Yoni and Ezra.*

What happens at our synagogue other than religious services? You might be surprised. Here's a quick snapshot.

**Dateline:** Chicago, IL, Tuesday, January 15, 2013

**7:30am:** The daily minyan convenes in the Glick Chapel, enjoying a meditative start to the day before rushing off to work.

**8:30am:** Akiba Schechter Jewish Day School preschoolers fill rooms 101 and 102 for a morning of play, art, song and snacks.

**9am:** Braille Institute volunteers gather upstairs in room 207 to transcribe print copy into brailled text. The women have been performing this weekly mitzvah for over 20 years.

**9:30am:** The Hyde Park JCC Fit 'N' Senior class meets in the gym for muscular conditioning to increase range of motion.



**12:30pm:** The Mah Jongg group gathers around card tables in room 201 to preserve an ancient Jewish (ahem, Chinese) tradition.

**1:30pm:** Children ages 3-7 begin arriving for an afternoon at the Jewish Enrichment Center. Today they will explore the morning prayers through art, song, stories, and creative play, and finish the afternoon at 5:30pm singing and praying together with their parents.

**2pm:** The Nelson Judaica Gift Shop opens for business. Sisterhood volunteers are at hand to tempt you with jewelry, toys, Judaica and kosher snacks.

**3:30pm:** Children from Akiba Schechter Jewish Day School arrive for fencing practice in the Mandel Room. Dressed in full regalia, they can be seen sparring with impressive concentration.



# Two Days in the Life of Rodfei Zedek - cont.

**3:30pm:** A group of Israeli families with toddlers gathers in room 101 for Hebrew Playgroup, an attempt to reinforce their native language among their young children in the diaspora. Snacks are shared, stories are read, and adults converse in Hebrew to help the kids absorb the language.

**4pm:** Cantor Rosenberg tutors a bat mitzvah student in her office and meets with the family. She then offers some trop help to a nervous Torah reader preparing for the inaugural Na'aseh v'Nishmah service.

**4:15pm:** The Ancona School Aviators (JV, Varsity, and JV Girls basketball) face off against Waldorf in the gym. The lobby is filled with anxious parents, and Ancona enjoys wins all around.

**Dateline:** Chicago, IL, Sunday, January 27, 2013

**9am:** The daily minyan convenes in the Glick Chapel, giving members a spiritual start to the week and some the opportunity to say Kaddish.

**9am:** Children ages 3-7 meet at the Jewish Enrichment Center for more exploration of the morning prayers, including Modeh Ani. Parents join their children for the last 30 minutes to sing and pray with them.

**9am:** Fathers of Jewish Enrichment Center children and other Rodfei Zedek members face off against one another on the basketball court for two hours to relive their glory days on their respective JCC basketball teams.



**10am:** Approximately 40 CRZ members meet in the Mandel room for the congregational Annual Meeting. New officers are elected, a presidential report is delivered, and a robust discussion ensues regarding our rabbinical succession process.

**10am:** A lively lay-led discussion group meets in the Ringel Room to learn about the Book of Isaiah from religious, political and social points of view.

**10:30am:** Children from the Family Institute for Jewish Living and Learning meet for individualized Hebrew language and learning.

**10:30am:** An intermediate-advanced Hebrew class meets upstairs in the Sisterhood Room, followed by an advanced Hebrew class at 11:30am. Taught by Rivka Kahana, the class attracts students from throughout the community.



**10:45am:** The Oneness Spiritual Center gathers in the social hall for its The Power of Oneness church service.

**11:30am:** Another tip-off on the basketball court; this time, it's a women's basketball team that includes members of Rodfei Zedek.



## Rebel Without a Clue - cont.

who had had said the same prayers years ago—perhaps even as a young couple like Sarah and me—as the ones I was saying now.

And Judaism, to my surprise, did not judge me for doubting God. It encouraged me. I could question God, and the rabbi, and the Torah, and everything else. The history of Judaism is one of rebellion, wrestling with the truth, of finding strength, almost always through a community. And I have found mine.

Fourteen years after my first disastrous service at Rodfei Zedek, Sarah and I are integral members of the congregation. We're active Jews every day of the year. Some of the faces have changed, as have many of the rituals. But our children scamper through the halls of Rodfei; they say the Hamotzi on Shabbat. They shake the lulav at Sukkot and dress up for Purim. And so do I, having finally found a place where it all makes sense. As it turns out, that's all I ever needed to believe in.