

# SoCalJSS Newsletter

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Mid-May 2011

## COMMEMORATING YOM HASHOAH



On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Rabbi Drew joined the Fullerton Alpha Epsilon Pi chapter in "Walk to Remember", marching through California State University, Fullerton's campus in raising awareness about the Holocaust. For more information, visit <http://SoCalJSS.org/walk-to-remember-at-csuf>



## PROTESTING NETUREI KARTA AT UCI AND CSULB



Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, spokesman for Neturei Karta International, spoke at

University of California, Irvine on May 9<sup>th</sup> and at California State University, Long Beach on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and Rabbi Drew was there to protest with students, sending a message that Neturei Karta's views on Israel and Zionism are *not* representative of world Jewry.



## Beach Hillel End of Year Brunch

Beach Hillel held their year-end brunch, to look back at the year, and to celebrate the sending off of the first cohort of Birthright Israel participants in years from Beach Hillel in the beautiful backyard of Leon & Barbara Shoag on Sunday 1 May.

As Rachel Kaplan, the director of Beach Hillel was on maternity leave, Rabbi Drew mainly addressed those assembled, speaking on the highlights from the year, such as a whole week of activities for the students during Hanukah. There was something almost every day of the week, including a Hanukah party, a Hanukah dinner hangout, and Monster Menorah competition. Another week-long of events, Israel Week, was also announced to celebrate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Jewish state.

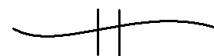
More recently was the Passover Seder that was held on the second night of Passover, which hosted over 35 people in attendance. On the Thursday of Passover, in the middle of the day, Beach Hillel hosted a matzah pizza-making at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB).

Also mentioned were various classes throughout the year, as well as the cornerstone to Beach Hillel's  
- Continued on page 3 -



Rabbi Drew with students on April 21<sup>st</sup> at CSULB for matzah pizza-making during Passover

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# Addressing ZBT Chapter

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Rabbi Drew spoke to the Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT) chapter at California State University, Long Beach on the historical conditions surrounding the founding of ZBT.

ZBT is the oldest Jewish fraternity in the country, having started in 1898. It removed its uniquely Jewish student acceptance policy in 1954.



**Rabbi Drew addressing the ZBT chapter at CSULB on the socio-historical circumstances surrounding ZBT's founding**

Rabbi Drew spoke of the growing numbers of Jews in the US toward the end of the 19th century, as well as both the growing anti-semitism generally and, more specifically, the exclusion of Jewish students from joining other Greek fraternities. Furthermore, he spoke of the literary context of the verse in Isaiah 1:27 that Zion shall be redeemed with judgment (ציון במשפט תפודה) that gave rise to the initial acronym for the fraternity.

Following his talk, Rabbi Drew opened up the discussion to field questions of any sort related to Jews, Jewish thought, and Jewish practice, as it was mentioned beforehand that many of the members had misconceptions about Judaism.

## Spring Events on YouTube

Video clips from spring events on SoCalJSS' YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/socaljss>) are now available for viewing, including a couple

from the inaugural Torah Winter Learning event, such as Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz speaking on Two Extremes of Consumption (<http://rebdre.ws/2extremesofconsumption>) and several from Jewlicious Festival 7.0, including havdallah (<http://rebdre.ws/jf7havdallah>) and a few from Moshav Band performing on the acoustic stage, such as "Lift Up Your Head" (<http://rebdre.ws/jf7moshavliftupyourhead>).

# Spirituality Interfaith Panel

Rabbi Drew spoke on Jewish views of spirituality as part of an interfaith panel discussion at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB).

As part of the events of CSULB's Associated Students Inc.'s Respect Week, the panel discussion on Spirituality in Daily Life was moderated by the director of CSULB's Multicultural Center, Dr. James Saucedo. Rabbi Drew was joined by Don Allen of the Navigators, representing a Christian view, and by Imam Mustafa Umar, representing a Muslim view.

Amongst his discussion (viewable at <http://rebdre.ws/spiritualitytalk>), Rabbi Drew said "Judaism isn't inherently spiritual, nor does it force people to be spiritual, but it allows people to be spiritual.

"A big component of Judaism is הלכה – Jewish Law



**Rabbi Drew speaking on the topic of spirituality on an interfaith panel on April 27<sup>th</sup> at CSULB, flanked by Don Allen and Imam Mustafa Umar**

- where there are certain actions that Jews are supposed to do. This הלכה is a framework or foundation for what we should be doing, but it doesn't necessarily include spirituality. And I feel that, from the ground up, people can inject spirituality, can include spirituality, and really animate their own lives through doing that."

After the three panelists spoke for 10-15 minutes on how their faith views spirituality, the floor was opened up for questions and answers from the student audience.





- Continued from page 1 -

programming, Shabbat dinners, which consistently brought together dozens of Jewish students from the area in a jovial environment.

Rabbi Drew also mentioned some bigger events, such as its involvement with the first ever Camp Jewlicious and, of course, Jewlicious Festival 7.0. He



Rabbi Drew with Long Beach AEPI members at the Beach Hillel year-end brunch

also spoke about student board development, which occurred out of a partnership between Beach Hillel, SoCalJSS,

Orange County Hillel and Desert &

Inland Empire Hillel: two area-wide Hillel leadership gatherings, which brought together board members from the different Hillels at the end of August and January.

Josh Kaplan, the president of Beach Hillel's Board of Directors opened up the brunch by saying, "I can't believe it's been a year since we were last here and Rabbi Drew and Rachel had just shown up six months earlier. It's been a year and a



Josh Kaplan, President of Beach Hillel's Board of Directors, speaking at the Year-End Brunch

half since they've come out and a lot's definitely changed." He continued by saying, one "thing that I think is really important in the last year is to see the growth in the partnership in this community."

The brunch was nicely attended and brought together Beach Hillel students, their parents, supporters of Beach Hillel, as well as other community leaders.

## Beach Hillel Birthright Israel Orientation Sessions

Rabbi Drew has been leading orientation sessions for Beach Hillel's upcoming Taglit-Birthright Israel trip this summer. With ten students selected to go on a bus with thirty students from northern California Hillels, Beach Hillel is running three orientation sessions to prepare our participants for the trip. Rabbi Drew has run two sessions thus far. The orientation sessions have focused on the history of the land of Israel, the founding of the modern State of Israel, as well as issues surrounding the culture in Israel. The students selected are very excited for the trip!



Rabbi Drew with Beach Hillel's Birthright Israel participants at the second orientation session

## Beach Hillel's Israel Week

Rabbi Drew celebrated with Beach Hillel in its Israel Week, which included tabling on campus, an Israeli movie viewing, and finishing off with a big Israeli-themed Shabbat dinner.



Rabbi Drew tabling at CSULB with Omer Yaakov, an Israeli officer, and Devora Ebriani, a CSULB student

## Last Rosh Hodesh Brunch



Rabbi Drew with students at Beach Hillel's CSULB office for the last Rosh Hodesh brunch of the spring on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Monthly on-campus Rosh Hodesh brunches were a new facet this spring semester for Beach Hillel

# Israeli Soldier Speaks at Poly Jewish Club

On 11 May, Rabbi Drew brought Omer Yaakov, an Israeli intelligence officer, courtesy of the Jewish Federation and Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Long Beach & West Orange County, to the Jewish Club at Long Beach Polytechnic High School to discuss Israel.

Omer described the perilous situation of the small Jewish state, "For me, as a child, you grow up in a place that it's not like it's obvious that you can stay there, that you can live there." He then showed how Israel has some dangerous neighbors

(see picture), whom he pointed out that "part of them don't want Israel to exist."



He described Israeli youth being conscripted into the army as a necessity: "Israel has the IDF - Israeli Defense Force - we do need to protect ourselves" because of Israel's neighbors. The students enjoyed a real-life Israeli soldier speaking to them and getting to ask him questions about what is going on in the Middle East.

# Fullerton Hillel Elects New Student Board

Fullerton Hillel elected a new student board to lead them for the upcoming academic year. Having had only a couple of programs in the spring of 2010, Fullerton Hillel has had at least a couple, if not more, programs per month this school year. Rabbi Drew has been leading discussion classes on Jewish subjects as well as working with them in an advisory role.



**Fullerton Hillel's new board following their election on May 9th: Ben Taitz, Eric Don, David Rosen and Joel Gary, along with Rabbi Drew**

# Upcoming Inaugural Tikkun Olam Institute

Working with students in the area, Rabbi Drew has been organizing an event for June to discuss and to take action in understanding Jewish angles on repairing the world. Entitled "Tikkun Olam Institute: Fixing the World through a Jewish Perspective", the event will begin on the afternoon of Wednesday 15 June and run through early afternoon on Friday 17 June. With a variety of speakers, activities, and text-studies, the Tikkun Olam Institute seeks to build off of the model from SoCalJSS' Torah Winter Learning Event that took place in January. For more information, please visit <http://SoCalJSS.org/toi2011>; for sponsorship opportunities, please contact Rabbi Drew at [RabbiDrew@SoCalJSS.org](mailto:RabbiDrew@SoCalJSS.org).



**Rabbi Drew with students at the second of several planning meetings for the inaugural Tikkun Olam Institute**

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SoCalJSS is an enterprise of Beth El Synagogue, a synagogue without walls, generously funded by Allen & Deanna Alevy. SoCalJSS's mission is to facilitate Jewish living and learning, and engaging with Jewish students in Southern California. SoCalJSS provides the only rabbi for Jewish students at California State University (CSU), Long Beach and for Long Beach Polytechnic High School's Jewish Club, as well as the primary rabbi with the Hillel at CSU-Fullerton. Other universities in Southern California served by SoCalJSS include Chapman University, CSU-San Bernardino, UC-Irvine, UC-Riverside, and University of Redlands as well as students at area community colleges.

Tax-deductible donations to support the work of SoCalJSS can be made out to 'Beth El Synagogue' and mailed to Rabbi Drew, 3801 E. Willow Street, Long Beach, CA 90815. Rabbi Drew Kaplan can be emailed at [RabbiDrew@SoCalJSS.org](mailto:RabbiDrew@SoCalJSS.org).