

# HOLIDAY ARRIVALS: *Temple Beth Tikvah to unveil unique work of Judaic art*



Ralph Uri and Rabbi Johanna Hershenson show off Temple Beth Tikvah's new ark. When complete, the ark will be finished with a clear, matt sealer that will bring out the natural deep rich brown color of the Black Walnut front panel and cabinet sides and the ceramic Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) created by Ceci Capen will be mounted above the doors. Photos by Lester Dober

By Polina Olsen

Founded in Bend five years ago, Temple Beth Tikvah has grown in quantity and spirit. The synagogue started with 40 member families and now has almost 70. They've affiliated with the Union of Reform Judaism, provided social, cultural and educational opportunities for their close-knit community and look forward to working with Johanna Hershenson, their first resident rabbi (*see story next page*). And, thanks to a few members' vision and contributions from the congregation, they are creating a stunning new addition to Oregon's Judaic treasures.

"My friend of 50 years, Ted Rosen, is the trustee of an estate with many Jewish artifacts," says Gerald Greenbach, who was among the temple's founding members. "He lent us a magnificent Torah from the old country. We were sitting in a coffee shop one day and thought, 'We need a beautiful ark for our Torah.'" After consulting with the synagogue board, Gerald searched online, but the examples he found left him cold. Instead, he asked architect and fellow congregant, Lawrence

Schechter, to design a Torah ark just for the temple. "I grew up in San Francisco where there were some beautiful arks," Gerald says. "This will not take a back seat to anything in this land. Every member of the congregation will be proud."

Lawrence Schechter understood that a stock design wouldn't work. "I realized we needed something that reflected the culture of our own community," he says. "I meditated and the symbols became clear." His design and fabrication document explains: "The overall shape of the ark follows the natural form of the 80-year-old Black Walnut tree that was sustainably harvested ... The design incorporates straight lines that spring from a braided border as a stylized Tree of Life. The lines merge and spread upward to form the outer upper arms of the Star of David and become branches that sprout leaves of light, lit from within the ark. Two additional branches imply the nine flames of the Hanukkah menorah."

Lawrence's wife, Lorraine, directs a committee that is creating banners to position behind the ark so the congregation isn't distracted by the stained glass windows in the United Methodist Church in Bend where they rent space.

Ceci Capen, a talented local potter, designed and donated a Ner Tamid, the eternal light that hangs above the ark. "I made seven different pieces," she says. "It was trial and error. I wanted it to be perfect." As of this writing, two local cabinet shops are completing the project. Rabbi Hershenson was set to dedicate the Torah ark during her first Friday Shabbat service at Temple Beth Tikvah on July 26, 2013.

"It is gorgeous, and the design is both simple and profound," Rabbi Hershenson says. "It has the designer's interpretation of the Tree of Life, which becomes almost hands holding the Star of David. The lines symbolize this kabbalistic notion of the need for balance. Wherever people gather, they come with different experiences, and they intersect and build a community. The Tree of Life reaching up represents that." 