

The History of Ohr HaTorah: A Journey of Growth and Dedication



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Top Photo: A view of Ohr HaTorah when in rented space in the Kemp Mill shopping center (above CVS) while the kehillah was building the Kersey Road building.

Below: Rav Malkiel Kotler, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha (BMG), graciously traveled to deliver heartfelt and inspiring remarks at the hachtarah of Rav Michoel Frank (installation ceremony), celebrating a milestone moment for the community.

The First Ohr HaTorah

Shabbos in the Towers

In 2011, a group of passionate former talmidim came together with a shared vision: to build a shul that would radiate warmth, energy, and a deep sense of community for the alumni of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington. That vision took shape on November 3, 2012, when Ohr HaTorah held its inaugural Shabbos morning minyan in the Towers Party Room.

The rented space, available for just three short hours each Shabbos morning, may have been modest, but the atmosphere was electric. On the very first Shabbos, which coincided with Hurricane Sandy, over 75 displaced families came to daven. Jews from all over began filling the room. The sense of togetherness and purpose was palpable, setting the stage for what would grow into a thriving and enduring kehillah.

Following that memorable beginning, the congregation settled into a core group of a several dozen regulars, primarily young couples, many of whom were alumni of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington. Around 20 couples had married locally in the year leading up to Ohr HaTorah's founding, marking the start of a growing trend of Yeshiva alumni establishing roots in Kemp Mill.

In August 2014, Rav Michoel Frank was appointed as Rav and Mara D'Asra, bringing leadership and spiritual guidance that propelled the shul and the entire community forward. On May 12, 2017, Ohr HaTorah moved into its current building, a permanent home that could support its growing membership.

Today, Ohr HaTorah is a thriving kehillah, serving 190 families and standing as a central makom for Torah, tefillah, and community life. From its humble beginnings, the shul has grown into a center of growth, connection, and community unity in the heart of Kemp Mill.

Modular Miracles: How Ohr HaTorah's Shul Made Its Way to Silver Spring

Ohr HaTorah's journey to its permanent home wasn't without drama. The modular units, preassembled in Birmingham, Alabama, arrived in Silver Spring on massive trucks that navigated past the Kemp Mill Shopping Center. To avoid the steep incline of Kersey Road, part of the Silver Spring Jewish Center's playground fence was temporarily removed so that the trucks could turn directly off of Arcola. The first three trucks made it through without issue, but the fourth stole the show when its axle cracked, blocking traffic for three hours. Once resolved, construction carried on smoothly, leaving a story that still brings laughs at Kiddush tables.

The first three trucks navigated the route successfully, but the fourth, carrying the final piece of the shul, hit a snag when its axle cracked. Here's a photo of the shul blocking Arcola Avenue for three unforgettable hours.

