

# KEREN OR

ב"ה

THE NEWSLETTER OF OR SHALOM קרן אור

Or Shalom Jewish Spiritual Community, Vancouver, B.C. orshalom.ca Kislev/Tevet/Shvat 5761 December 2000/January 2001

**Kislev/Tevet/Shvat 5761  
December 2000/January 2001**

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## LOOKING FOR A SIGN OF THE LIGHT

By Rabbi Hillel Goelman

A glass is broken under the huppah, a bride and groom embrace and we all shout "Mazel tov!"

In the classic Jewish story, the guy with mazel is the waiter who picks up a huge tip from one table, while at the same time spilling the soup on the poor guy without mazel — the shlamazal — at another table. An expression that has come down to us in our folklore (shared by Jackie Mason and other borsht-belt comedians) is the dour and self-deprecating saying, "Ain mazel l'Yisrael," which literally means something like, "Us Jews, we just got no luck." Is this the core belief in our theology — good luck and bad luck? Where do these terms come from, anyhow?

The word mazel means "a sign," and, more specifically, an astrological sign. In the Talmud, the rabbis debate the Jewish attitude towards astrology. On the one hand, the rabbis were unanimous in their view that Jews were forbidden from engaging in what was called "Avodat Kochavim U'mazalot (A.K.U.M.) that is "worshippers of stars and (astrological) signs." While Jewish names were given to the astrological signs (an interesting story in itself), we never bowed down to, prayed to or asked for the help of any of the astrological signs, for those particular constellations of stars held no divine qualities that could influence our lives. In the Talmud, the original phrase "ain mazel l'Yisrael" does not mean that "the Jews got not luck") but, rather, "Our lives are not determined by the movement of the stars." We believe that the stars and astrological signs themselves can no more determine our fate than can any of God's other creations: cows, trees, clouds, etc.

On the other hand, like many ancient mariners and

### THE REB SITE

travellers, our ancestors knew that the lights in the night sky could provide guidance and direction in our journeys over land and

sea. In wishing someone the best possible circumstances in navigating their way through the chaos and confusion of a geographical journey, we would wish that they be guided by a "mazel tov," that is, by a clear, bright and good sign in the heavens that could tell them north from south and east from west. Similarly, when someone marks a turning point in one's life direction — the birth of a baby, a bar or bat mitzvah, a wedding — we wish that the person will receive the proper spiritual direction in continuing that journey. This direction doesn't come from the stars but from the

combination of parenting, mentoring, friends and community. And more: When we are witness to a great simha we declare that the simha itself should serve as a mazel tov, a good sign, for the family celebrating the simha, for the community in which the simha is celebrated and for the endless concentric circles — *lanu ulchol Yisrael* — for us and for all fellow God wrestlers in the world. In other words, not only are we not controlled by the signs in the starry skies, but we can create our own constellations of joy and peace by living our lives in the light of the Torah, a light that is far brighter than any collection of stars we could imagine. And so, when we celebrate a holy day or a simha, we must ask ourselves: How can this wonderful day serve as a sign, a direction, a beacon of light to others?



— David Mivasair

*The Mivasairs in Israel: "Vast acres of swamp and wetland make the Hula nature preserve in northern Israel a unique spot. Once nearly destroyed by agricultural development, it has recently been partially restored. We went during the Sukkot holiday when flocks of storks were stopping by on their annual migration from Scandinavia to east Africa." More, Pages 6-7*

I write this during a time of both physical and spiritual darkness, a time in which we are badly in need of great light. The days are increasingly shorter and darkness covers us more than light. The world is experiencing a continuing darkness of pain, hunger, poverty

## HANUKA PARTY

7 p.m., Saturday,  
December 23  
at Or Shalom –  
all ages  
Potluck deserts  
and drinks,  
Bring a menorah,  
Come dance a hora!



and war. Our brothers and sisters in Israel continue to be locked into cycles of violence with our cousins, the Palestinians. We look to our own ancient ways of telling time and we see coming, soon, in the darkest of winter's darkness, a small light of Hanuka on the horizon. First one light, than another. But the light of Hanuka is not the light of a shooting star streaking across the night sky. The light of Hanuka is the light that we each must find and create and lift up. In the darkest season of the year we look to create our own mazel tov, a sign that we are headed toward a destination of peace. We can create and nourish this light by being proactive in our Jewish practice and in our actions to help create a better world. The stars won't bring the light of redemption, but we can. We are reminded in the Haftora on Hanuka that peace will come, "Not by power and not by might, but by the spirit of God."

### THANKS FOR HIGH HOLY DAYS CONTRIBUTIONS

My mind still echoes with the davening of the High Holy Days and I'm not sure that I've thanked everyone who contributed so much to every aspect of the davening. Many of these people you saw leading services, reading Torah, giving Divrei Torah, etc. You probably didn't see Mary Adlersberg, Fran Ritch, Pam Ratner, Elaine Cuttler and their cast of thousands working behind the scenes to transform the JCC into our davening space. You might have missed Hal Siden, Anne Gorsuch, Caren Monastersky, Nadav Goelman, Jason Ryant and Anna Paperny who led the children's services. Thanks to Lorne Mallin we had a newly revised, re-formatted and user-friendly supplement of prayers and meditations. The many meeters and greeters ensured that everyone who came in felt welcomed and comfortable and the break-fast providers made sure that we all felt nourished and sustained after our day of fasting. A big, BIG, word of thanks to Sam Albrecht who made sure that the sukkah was erected (and taken down) in record time and to Avi Dolgin for organizing and running the wonderful program we had in the Sukkah.

— Hillel Goelman

## A WORLD OF JEWISH MUSIC JAN. 21

By Helen Waldstein

**A** is for the Arts Club, chosen as the site

**W** is for when, January 21st is the night.

**O** is for Or Shalom, your community and your shul

**R** is for rhythmic richness that's way beyond cool

**L** is for listening and letting your spirit rise

**D** is for diversity, a program that will please and surprise

**O** is for organizers, busy working for you

**F** is for food, for fun, for fund-raiser, too.

**J** is for jewels, both vocal and instrumental

**E** is for ear-pleasing, a range that's intercontinental

**W** is for wishing you'd brought all your friends

**I** is for I-wanna-be-there till the last song ends

**S** is for Stuart, Wendy and Ron's artistic coordination

**H** is for heritage, our pride in this rich compilation

**M** is for melodies you'll be humming for days

**U** is for understatement when this evening you'll praise

**S** is for sing-a-long which sometimes you'll want to do

**I** is for impressive, this program planned for you

**C** is for C U, 'cause we'll all be there, too.

What does it spell? The event of the year. The one you don't want to miss: A WORLD OF JEWISH MUSIC, on Sunday, Jan. 21, at 7:30 p.m. at the Arts Club Theatre on Granville Island.

The entertainment includes Michael Braverman, Nomi Fenson, Martin Fisk, Harold Micay, Olam, Claire Klein Osipov, Myrna Rabinowitz, Wendy Rubin, Wendy Bross Stuart, Tzimmes and comedian Adam Growe. Artistic co-ordination is by Wendy and Ron Stuart.

Tickets are \$72 (\$50 tax receipts will be issued). Call 738-3487.

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# GEMILUT HESED ALIVE AND WELL AT OR SHALOM

By *Miriam Caplan*

We are well into the new year now, and I am happy to say that Gemilut Hesed is alive and well at Or Shalom. We have a healthy committee this year, consisting of Carol Pearlstone, Rory Richards, Patricia Gill, Harriet Frost, myself and at least one other new person is expected to join us in the near future.

Co-ordinating this committee has been an interesting growth experience for me. I have had to overcome some of my insularity and resistance to reach out. Interestingly, once I do send that card or make that phone call or visit I always feel better afterwards.

Also, I had this niggling feeling that there was something wrong here. Having spent too much of my life as a professional social worker I felt uncomfortable being a part of this committee that seemed to be responsible for co-ordinating the good deeds at Or Shalom. I think I was close to giving it all up, and still a bit perplexed about exactly what was bugging me, when things turned around, thanks to a number of Or Shalom people.

I put out an e-mail in the late summer inviting comments and volunteers, and was heartened by the response I received. Then Hillel Goelman and Micha Menczer both openly expressed appreciation and encouragement for others to come forth.

And they did. Helen Waldstein and Fran Ritch took on organizing a cooking bee. Five of us got together one evening and made "comfort foods" — several soups and lots of macaroni and cheese — and also had a good time doing it. We have given food already to sev-

eral people in our community who are receiving medical treatment. And there is lots more in the freezer.

So I realized that what was bugging me is that Gemilut Hesed is not just a committee thing at Or Shalom and never has been. We have always been a community where people connect and help each other out. We need a Gemilut Hesed committee so that if someone you know is unwell and in need of visitors, food or other support, there is someone you can call to get the ball rolling.



I think it's great that Carol has been able to click down resources across the country so people sitting shiva out of town receive gifts from Or Shalom and feel, in a tangible way, the support they are geographically separated from.

It's also wonderful that Rory conscientiously matched so many people on Pesach and Rosh HaShana so that many people who might have been alone were welcomed into and enriched festival meals, often with others they had never met. As well, Binky Segal co-ordinated and delivered meals every shabbat last year to the family of one of our members while he was receiving treatment.

So why am I writing this? One, to let you know that one of our directions this year is connecting with the whole community. Rory has already talked to Noam Dolgin and begun initial exploration of doing joint programs with the youth group. And, secondly, to let you know that there is lots of soup and macaroni in the freezer, so if you or someone you know needs some call me at 875-6807 or Helen Waldstein at 224-8080.

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## OUR WEBSITE HAS CHANGED ITS ADDRESS TO ORSHALOM.CA

By *Avi Dolgin*

Because of changes in the way website domain names are registered in Canada, our URL (web address) has gotten shorter. It is now [orshalom.ca](http://orshalom.ca)

There are several good reasons to visit the site. For one, it is an up-to-date listing of what's going on. We regularly update information such as:

- who is teaching what and when?
- when are the Bnei Mitzvah scheduled?
- who is leading Shacharit or giving Divrei Torah this month?
- where are those women's book circles, seders, etc.

- when is Purim, first candle, first seder, yizkor, etc?
- As well, the site has a large resource of general Or Shalom info such as:
- the stories behind our artwork, ritual objects and donations
  - the transcript of the patrilineal discussion and Board position
  - current and back issues of Keren Or — in colour
  - Hillel Goelman on the Kaddish, Tom Northcott on the Ten Commandments, Dina-Hasida Mercy on the Shma, and other teachings.

So come visit. And change the bookmarks and favourites in your web browsers to <http://orshalom.ca>

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## POETRY

*My brother-law was a loving and much-loved man and the father of three children. On Jan. 25, 2000, he died suddenly and tragically by committing suicide. He was a casualty of a common and much misunderstood illness — depression. I wrote this the night he died.*

### TO DAVID — JANUARY 26, 2000

I have stood on the borders  
of that grim bleak landscape  
where you crossed last night.  
heard the vague, seductive whispers  
peace. rest. sleep. no pain.

I've been yanked back by my own hands  
the same hands that threatened my life  
took my life back  
and with those same hands  
I donned my jester's mask  
my masquerade  
put one aching foot ahead of the other  
to live, to love to blink  
at small everyday miracles

I would have sent you an angel,  
to show you a world without you  
to tell you had a wonderful life

sent you a shooting star  
the first flower struggling through the snow  
kryptonite to give you strength  
x-ray vision to cut the fog

tonight I am raging at your patience  
your goodness  
and your deadly silence

wishing you had raged

complained  
about the tangled net that was suffocating you  
not gone gentle into that good night  
while you were trapped in that shrunken world  
where only you and your pain existed

I know that place  
where you no longer see the faces  
of those who love you  
or why they love you  
where your pain is greater  
than the pain you will cause

when poppy dust is more alluring  
than the yellow brick road

How can I blame you  
for not resisting  
the gray killer  
who moved your hands  
your carpenter hands  
your baker's hands  
your fatherly hands  
turning them into executioners

I will not ask you "why"  
if you had answers  
you would not have done it

you take your secrets with you  
locked in that terrible logic  
only suicides understand  
no time to bargain  
or break the deadly contract  
no last minute pardons

I'll try not to be angry  
because you went gentle into that good night  
hope the sleep is as sweet as you hoped  
I hope in the country where you now travel  
you carry some memory of our love.

— *Pauline Rankin aka Leah*

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## HOW THE EAST SIDE FUND IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*By Michael Corber*

I thought you may be interested in the letter I received from Sueann Tourand, office manager of Sheway, a community project for women: "Last week we received a number of meal voucher tickets for the Redway Café from Or Shalom East Side Fund as a donations to the families here at Sheway Project. We would like to express our thanks to everyone who made this donation possible as it is greatly appreciated. As you may already know, some of our clients access our meal program every day and often this is their only source of food. Thank you again, and best wishes for a great fall season from all of us at Sheway project."

Since 1996, The Or Shalom East Side Fund has provided thousands of meals for clients of Downtown East Side social service agencies. Besides the Sheway Project, the Fund has provided meals to the Provincial Health Clinic, The Native Health Clinic, The Interministerial Project, The Door Is Open (centre operated by Catholic Charities), First Baptist Church, Union Gospel Mission, Youth Action Centre, DEYAS (detox and needle-exchange), and Seniors Drop-In Centre.

The coupons are redeemable for one hearty meal worth \$5 at the Redway Café from their regular menu.

The feedback I have received from various parties associated with this project has been totally positive. Donors

support this fund with the knowledge that every dollar donated goes to buy food for hungry people. This may not be so with other organizations with administration costs, such as The Food Bank or United Way. Because donations are deductible for tax purposes, every \$100 donated



can buy up to \$200 worth of food. By the way, these donations are towards the top of the hierarchy of Tzedaka as proposed by Maimonides since both the donors and recipients are anonymous.

My contacts at the various agencies appreciate the food coupons as one more way they can assist their clients to achieve a better quality of life. I am told that the clients are extremely appreciative to be able to sit down and order a meal in a restaurant from time to time. The rest of the time most of their clients must stand in long lines, sing hymns to Jesus, or jump through some other hoop to get some basic food. Incidentally, my inspiration to begin this project was when I saw a man eating Kraft Dinner out of the box (crunchy-style) on the street. I realized then that not everyone has cooking facilities for groceries received from The Food Bank. When I looked into it, I found that there were a lot of people who fell through the cracks, or who just could not jump through all the hoops required to get food from the institutions. The program is especially important now as winter approaches when those who have no home need more calorie intake just to their maintain body heat.

Since the inception of the East Side Fund, I have worked with three different owners of the restaurant — and they all have been great. They treat all their customers, especially coupon holders, very respectfully. The food is wholesome, hearty and of a consistent quality -- although management has changed three times, the cook is the same.

If you are moved to support this important project, please send a cheque payable to: Or Shalom East End Fund, 710 East 10th Ave., Vancouver BC V5T 2A7. All donations are gratefully received. Every \$100 buys 20 meals.

A big thank you to Or Shalom and the Board for the continuing support, and to Frank Segal for keeping up with the administration of the Fund in addition to his many other duties.

Any feedback you have for me will be appreciated. Call 681-7775, fax 681-9907 or e-mail instanet@istar.ca

## MICHA MENCZER, KEVIN SOLOMONS CO-CHAIRS FOR 2000-2001

The Or Shalom Board of Directors re-elected Micha Menczer as its chair for the 2000-2001 year at the October meeting. Kevin Solomons was elected co-chair while John Fuerst was named treasurer and Dodie Katzenstein is secretary. The board wants to remind members that monthly board meetings are open and are scheduled for: Dec. 7, Jan. 4, Feb. 1, March 1, April 5, May 3 and June 7. Meetings start at 7 p.m. and are at the shul.

### BOARD MEMBERS 2000-2001

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### POLICY BOOK AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

Over several years, the Boards of Directors of Or Shalom have approved policies on various aspects of community life. These have now been compiled into a binder and are available for reference in the office. Members are invited to consult the binder to review policies related to use of Or Shalom's facilities for events, guidelines for food, use of the kitchen, the donations policy and other matters.

## A TIME TO SEEK, A TIME TO LOSE

By Rabbi David Mivasair

**B**akesh shalom ve-radfeihu-- seek peace and pursue it." I have held this teaching from Psalm 34 as one of the guiding principles of my life ever since I was a teen confronted with the U.S. war in Vietnam. Our rabbis teach — and I believe — that becoming a partner with the Holy One in making Shalom is a mitzvah unlike all others. The mitzvah of Shalom is so important that we can't passively wait for an opportunity to fulfill it. With the words "bakesh" and "redof" Torah calls upon us to "kum ve-aseh," to take the initiative, actively going out of our way to seek and pursue Shalom.

Living here in Yerushalayim, with a maelstrom of deadly conflict swirling around me daily, the mitzvah to seek and pursue Shalom places great demands on me. Yet, because of the complexity and fluidity of the current situation, I'm finding it very difficult to know how to "bakesh shalom ve-radfeihu" precisely at this time when it is so immediately urgent.

Out of not knowing how to act for Shalom in the present situation, I believe I've begun to understand a different teaching, one that I've never seriously considered before. Kohelet, in the scroll of Ecclesiastes, offered the wisdom he gained over a long and full life. Using the very same word as did the Psalm, Kohelet observed, "Eit le-vakesh; eit le-abed — a time to seek; a time to lose". I understand this now to mean that — *eit le-vakesh*— there are times to actively seek to fulfill a goal or a vision. When the way is clear, or at least clear enough, we indeed must seek and pursue it. However, Kohelet is teaching that there are also times of *eit le-abed* when we lose the way of seeking itself. The situation changes beyond recognition. Once-realistic aspirations dissolve into confusion. We are wise to accept, at least for the time being, that we are lost in our seeking.

Kohelet's wisdom, I believe, is to hold on to both poles of this dichotomy at the same time. We must not allow

the experience of being lost to negate our commitment to seek nevertheless. Religious seekers engaged with this world must keep faith in their vision even when the way to seek and pursue it is obscured.

Appallingly, I cannot see any realistic, near-term way out of the current tragic violence. During the first two shocking weeks of the conflict, I went to demonstrations and meetings to end it. Now I don't know what to do. I think it will go on for quite some time.



*With Or Shalom's David Mivasair and several other Jewish peace activists nearby, Muhammad Dawood of Harres village was able to pick some of the olives his family's trees produced this year. For days during the critical harvest season, armed Jewish settlers had stopped Muhammad and others from Harres from entering their own olive groves. Settlers recently cut down olive trees which had sustained the Dawood family for generations.*

Still I know that one day all this fighting will end. Both we and our Palestinian neighbours will be here together for generations to come. Sooner or later, we will find a way to acknowledge each other's humanity and live together in true Shalom. It is the only way. That is why, after the horrible violence on Yom Kippur, I went with Rabbis for Human Rights to Rambam Hospital in Haifa to do *bikkur holim* with people — Jews and Arabs — wounded in the fighting. Later we travelled to the lower Gallilee village of Arrabe to support a bereaved Arab Israeli family whose 17-year-old peace-activist son was shot and killed by an

Israeli border guard. I've participated in dialogues and am involved with the Center for Jewish-Arab Education. In mid-November, when olives needed to be harvested or they would drop out of the trees and rot on the ground, I spent a day in Harres, a besieged West Bank Palestinian village, to help protect the local people from Jewish settler violence and enable them to pick at least a part of their crop. More significant than the olives we picked were the conversations we had and the simple human respect and decency that we shared.

Despite the present time being an "eit le-abed" when the next moves toward peace are lost and so hard to identify, we cannot give up the vision. We are still called upon to "bakesh shalom ve-radfeihu" and to seek and pursue the Shalom that the future holds in store for us all.

## A VIEW FROM JERUSALEM

### OR SHALOM SCHOOL TZEDAKA STRENGTHENS JEWISH-ARAB SCHOOLS

Last year the Or Shalom School's K-1-2 class decided to donate all the tzedaka money they collected to the Israeli Centre for Jewish-Arab Education after learning about the work of the centre from teachers Bat-Ami Segal and Nomi Fenson.

Two weeks ago, Reb David and daughter Miriam delivered the funds, which were matched by an anonymous Or Shalom adult and reached over \$100, to Centre director Amin Khalaf at the Jerusalem school, one of only four in the country where Jewish and Arab children learn together.

Amin, who spoke in Vancouver last year during a visit initiated by Or Shalom members, was grateful for the support from children abroad and said he would be sure to tell the children in his school about it. The current period of intense daily conflict between Jews and Palestinians has only deepened the commitment of the parents of the 63 Jewish and Arab children in grades K-3 to learning and living together.

Or Shalomnik Alisa Rothman has been involved with the centre for more than a year and is a volunteer music and yoga teacher in the Jerusalem school.



*Miriam Mivasair poses with grade-2ers Musa, Salih and Noor on a recent visit to Jerusalem's only school for Jewish-Arab education.*

Further contributions can be made through the New Israel Fund of Canada.

— David Mivasair



### YEHUDA RECYCLES

*One of the many positive changes we found here since we lived here 10 years ago is the growing popularity of recycling. A country with very few natural resources, Israel stands to benefit from efforts such as this streetside recycling station, now common in Jerusalem.*

### LINKS TO MIDEAST SOURCES

An article by Or Shalom's Gabor Maté entitled "A Lament for 'Them and Us'" was published in the Globe and Mail on Nov. 1. To receive an e-mailed copy, please contact Gabor at [gmate@intouch.bc.ca](mailto:gmate@intouch.bc.ca)

Other sources suggested by subscribers to the Or Shalom e-mail list:

- [www.egroups.com/group/Encounter-EMEM](http://www.egroups.com/group/Encounter-EMEM)
  - [www.iris.org.il/hotsites.htm](http://www.iris.org.il/hotsites.htm)
  - [www.jewishworldreview.com/0900/absc.html](http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0900/absc.html)
  - [www.mideastweb.org/mewnews.htm](http://www.mideastweb.org/mewnews.htm)
  - [www.israelnationalnews.com/english/radio/ram/](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/english/radio/ram/)
  - [www.palestine-info.net/](http://www.palestine-info.net/)
  - [www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/listervform.asp](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/listervform.asp)
  - [www3.haaretz.co.il/eng/htmls/1\\_1.htm](http://www3.haaretz.co.il/eng/htmls/1_1.htm)
  - [ajr.newslink.org/news.html](http://ajr.newslink.org/news.html)
- This site is general but follow the links to Israel for access to all the Israeli newspapers.*

By Ben Cooperstone

## PARASHAT PINHAS: JULY 22, 2000

This Torah reading first talks about Pinhas who, because of his swift actions, is granted a friendship pact with God. Pinhas was the son of Eleazar who succeeded his father, Aaron, who was the first high priest. Some very important changes happened to the Israelite people as a result of Pinhas' swift actions.

A long, long time ago while the the Israelites were still wandering the desert during their 40 years' journey, they were having some difficulty in listening to their leader and prophet Moses, and ultimately listening and obeying their God:

- They were having affairs with Moabite women.
- They were worshipping other gods.
- They were not respecting or following by their society's rules.

God decided to punish the Israelites for straying and disobeying the rules of their religion and a plague was sent to give them a strong message.

One day Moses was speaking to a group of Israelites in front of the meeting tent, which was considered a very holy place. Along came another Israelite named Zimri who was the prince of the tribe of Simon, in otherwords a big shot. And with him was a another big shot — I mean, Cozbi — who was a Midianite princess. They both went into the holy tent and were having relations in this very holy place. And by doing this they were defying Moses and the rules of the Israelite community.

A young man named Pinhas saw this unholy act and became outraged that Zimri was defying Moses and God Himself. So swiftly he grabbed a spear and plunged it through the unholy couple, ending their arrogant and ungodly act. With this single act, order was restored and leadership was re-established within the Israelite community. But most important, Pinhas reinstated the covenant between God and Israel. God says, "You have turned back my wrath!"

God recognized this deed by stopping the plagues and giving Pinhas his covenant of friendship. Today, would Pinhas' acts be acceptable? Absolutely NOT! So, we must look at these events through the eyes of centuries long ago.

At first glance Pinhas might look like he was against interfaith relationships, that is, an Israelite man with a

Maobite woman. However that is not the case. No one is supposed to have intimate relations in the Israelites' holy place — it wasn't that kind of religion. The Israelites had a new kind of religion that didn't involve causal relations as did some of the other religions at that time. You will find in other parts of the Torah, God says, "Don't worship me the way other people worship their gods." God wanted the Israelites to worship in a new way. Eventually the Jews even stopped offering animal sacrifices — now we only offer prayer.

To be a leader at this time in history was like being a mouse at a snake convention — you have to think fast in order to survive. Moses had basically lost control of the Israelites and things were going from bad to worst or from bitten to poisoned. This situation was the last straw that broke the line between disaster and complete destruction of the Israelites.

Could this incident have been diverted? No, because Pinhas' act made the other Israelites realise that if they continued they might have to pay some consequences, perhaps even as drastic as Zimri and Cozbi did in the end.

Unfortunately two lives had to be sacrificed in order to save hundreds of thousands of people. Sometimes things must get worse before they can get better — so I believe that Pinhas' act was justified.

There are many analogies we can draw from this story of Pinhas. In a steak you've got to cut away at the fat to get to the meat. Pinhas took away the fat, being Zimri and Cozbi, and by doing that he got to the tender part of the meat, being the Israelites who understood and could follow the rules of their society.

Without laws the world would fall apart. Laws are the marble columns of society and without them it would collapse, burying the citizens. People have to know that they need to follow the rules or guidelines of life itself. Some laws appear to make no sense at all but their purpose is to be impartial and help guide people to make responsible decisions.

A candle is like a law. A flame can go wild and burn a house down. But if you put it on a candle it will stay contained and give you light. Pinhas was the candle that took control of the flame. By doing this Pinhas succeed in taking the Israelites out from the darkness and guiding them towards the bright light.



By Noa Albanese

## PARASHAT PINHAS: JULY 17, 2000

*Editor's note: Noa Albanese became Bat Mitzvah on the Tayellet in Jerusalem during a Monday morning Shabbarit service. Here is an excerpt from her Dvar Torah.*

This parasha is very interesting and raises some inspiring questions. There are many hidden messages that I found fascinating to discover and analyze.

Tzelafchad, son of Joseph, belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. When Tzelafchad died, he left five daughters behind and no sons. In those times daughters were not entitled to receive any of their parents' inheritance; only the sons had this right. If a family had no sons the inheritance would go to a male relative such as an uncle or a brother of the father. Since Tzelafchad had no sons, all of his inheritance, including his land, which was a very important asset even in Biblical times, would have to be divided among his relatives. Tzelafchad's land would not be in the control of the immediate family.

The five daughters — Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah — found this outrageous and took their plight to Moses as well as all the heads of the tribes, the priests and the entire community. They demanded that their case be heard and justly dealt with. It was unclear to Moses how to proceed with this matter, so he brought it to G-d.

Why did Moses bring it to G-d? Why was he uncertain? G-d had said earlier that when a family member dies all of his possessions and his estate go to a male heir. Shouldn't Moses have dismissed the case promptly because G-d had already made a rule concerning that issue. I believe that Moses was convinced that the women's concerns had merit, that they made sense. Moses didn't have the authority to alter the law of G-d himself but by bringing it to G-d the issue could be debated and possibly resolved.

Even more puzzling is that G-d agreed with the daughters' argument. This contradicted the original law. Does this mean that the will of G-d is changeable? If G-d thought it necessary could a Commandment be reversed? Perhaps it's situational ethics. It was permissible for women to be discriminated against at one point in time but not in another. As the world progresses, can rules be broken and changed?

I personally believe that G-d was just waiting for someone to question the law. If women deserved to be given

land, they would have to prove themselves worthy. Tzelafchad's daughters were very courageous. They brought their demands out to the entire community. They were as articulate, righteous, strong and wise as any male. Upon demonstrating these qualities, G-d found it appropriate to change the laws of inheritance in Jewish law. The action that Noa, Milcah, Tirzah, Hoglah and Mahlah took was an enormous step towards more equal rights for Jewish women.

Rashi says, "This informs us their eye saw what the eye of Moses did not see." The daughters of Tzelafchad saw that they had the right to inherit their father's estate, but Moses was not able to. Rashi also says that "G-d had it written in his notebook but did not give it to Moses."



This could mean that it was intended all along for women to be able to inherit from their parents. I think that G-d had written it down but Moses could not see it. Perhaps he didn't want to see it or maybe his eyes were incapable of grasping that concept. I speculate that Tzelafchad's daughters were chosen by God to see that hidden law.

Maybe some Jewish laws can be changed. They are just waiting to be questioned. That brings us to the topic of women's rights in the Modern Jewish world. Rules and regulations are constantly being tampered with. At present Judaism has taken on many forms. There are Lubavitch, Hasidic, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Renewal, Reconstructionist congregations where women's roles differ from group to group. In Orthodox, Lubavitch and Hasidic synagogues women remain in their traditional roles. Whereas in Conservative, Reform, Renewal and Reconstructionist synagogues women of the past and present are being recognized and are taking on more responsibilities. In some synagogues our foremothers names Sara, Rifka, Rachel and Leah have been added to the Amidah after the names of our forefathers Avraham Itzhak and Jacob. I believe that Tzelafchad's daughters — Hoglah, Milcah, Mahlah, Tirzah and Noa — should be added to the consciousness of Jewish women everywhere because they took a stand and questioned the law.

One of the reasons this parasha is so special to me is because I am named after one of the daughters in the story. I find it very wonderful that on my Bat Mitzvah, my initiation into adult Jewish life, my parasha includes the story of Noa and her sisters. Now everyone should know I am not named after the man with all the animals.

## GO AND STUDY

### HEBREW SCHOOL UPDATE

By Bat-Ami Segal, Hebrew School Coordinator

These past few months have been very busy and productive at the Or Shalom Hebrew School. There are a total of 28 students in four classes that meet each week on Tuesdays and Wednesday afternoons. Naomi Fenson teaches Grades 1-2, Sidi Schaeffer Grades 3-4, Fay Hassall Grade 5, and Sidi Grade 6-7. Sharona Beck is the tutor and substitute.

Since the school year started in the middle of September the students have been involved in many activities besides the regular classes. For the High Holy Days, we had a "shofar-making factory" where members of Chabad, lead by Rabbi Beitelman, came in and taught the kids how to make a shofar from scratch — complete with "Eyal," a model of a mountain goat's head. The



Students listen to Noam Dolgin of Adam Ve'Adamah.



Chabad brings shofar-making factory to the school.

school is now the proud owner of two such shofarim.

We also started a four-week series of learning with different resource people in our community. These studies are based on Torah and Tefillah. Rabbi Tzvi Freeman and his wife Naomi worked with the students. A lively session with Noam Dolgin, from Adam Ve'Adamah, was enjoyed during Sukkot. The class discussed the parasha Bereishit and discussed it in terms of what science tells us and what the Torah says. Reena Lazar came in to speak about her trip to Israel and being involved in the Compassionate Listening Project. Many questions arose around the current Mideast crisis.

The students went to the Jewish Book Fair, the younger grades to hear the author Ellen Schwartz, and the older grades to hear Rabbi Myerowitz read from his poetry, "Something from Nothing". That same day, the older grades visited the Holocaust Education Centre to see the photographic exhibit, "Portraits of our Past, Greece and the Holocaust." The loss of Jewish life in Greece during the Holocaust is little known. More than 55,000 Jews were sent to the death camps in a period of three months. The students also took part in "The Young Authors tea." Students were invited to write on the theme "I remember" and submit their entries for the tea. These entries were then compiled into a booklet and sold at the book fair. The young authors were also invited to read from their works at the tea. The book can be found in the rabbi's office on the first desk, in a blue binder. It is very worthwhile to take a peek if you want an uplift, if you want to shed a tear or if you just want to read what children write. Here is an example of one of our students' writing.

#### I REMEMBER

A few weeks ago my uncle Jerry passed away. He was a kind and sweet man. I remember when I used to sit on his lap and he would tell me stories that would make me laugh and cry. He spent his last few days in his house in Southern California where he was surrounded by loved ones. I visited him in July before he passed on, but that visit I will remember forever because he told me all about his adventures from the world. I hope today that he is in a better place and I loved him very much. He was a great uncle to have had.

— Joel Kausbansky, Grade 7

### DAVENOLOGY 101: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE

A new program, the Davenology 101 class/discussion group, is being launched Jan. 16 to focus on Jewish prayer with particular reference to the Shabbat morning service.

We wish to explore different facets and aspects of Jewish prayer. We hope that the participants in this course/discussion group will benefit in a number of

ways including, but not limited to:

- learning about the history and structure of the Shabbat morning service;
- gaining a deeper understanding of and appreciation for specific prayers;
- learning different melodies that can be used to enhance the davening experience;
- learning about Hasidic approaches to prayer;

- exploring issues of gender in prayer, in the language of the siddur and leadership roles in the service.

The class/discussion group will be a success if at the end people are getting more out of the Shabbat morning service, and if they are asking more and different questions about the prayer service in general and about their own personal prayer experiences in particular.

We will draw upon both classic Jewish texts including the Bible and Talmud as well as excerpts from modern references such as The Sabbath Service by B.S. Jacobson, Your Word Is Fire, by Arthur Green and Barry Holtz and Hasidic Prayer by Louis Jacobs.

The class will be co-taught by Rabbi Ross Singer of Shaarey Tefilah and Rabbi Hillel Goelman of Or Shalom.

The first class will meet on at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 16, and then alternate with Or Shalom. Please call 872-1614 for exact dates.

## NEWS AND SCHMOOZE

**BELLINGHAM HANUKA PARTY** Bellingham klezmer band "What the Chelm?" will hold its annual Hanuka party together with Fourth Corner Folkdancers on Thursday, Dec. 21, (first night of Hanuka) from 7-10 p.m. at the Fairhaven Public Library, 1117 12th St. in Bellingham's Fairhaven section of town (take exit 250 from I-5). Everyone is welcome to this all-ages event, which will include folk dancing to Israeli and Klezmer music, Hanuka treats, and activities for children. Donations (\$5 suggested) will be collected at the door. This year we are celebrating the recent release of our new CD "Oy! They're Back!" For more information contact Denise at (360) 733-2044 or dodd.guren@juno.com.

— Denise Guren

**HANUKA GIFTS** Need some creative gift ideas for Hanuka? Rae Maté will be selling her art cards, fridge magnets, framed prints, and small original paintings at the Farmer's Market Annual Winter Market (Dec. 9, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., and Dec. 10, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.), at the Heritage Hall, 15th and Main. For information, Rae can be reached at 736-1772.

**THANKS FOR TOYS** A big thank you and Yasher Koach to Mark Ryant for lending so many of his toys, games and puzzles for everyone to enjoy during the High Holy Days Services, and to Mark, Benjamin and Amichai Barer for donating some toys to the Shabbat Children's collection. We are always looking to add more games, so please think of us if you have any your kids have outgrown. Thank you.

## RECENT DONATIONS

### Community Fund

- In honour of Aimee Promislow and Fred Tischler
  - In memory of Dena Wosk, z"l
- In honour of Sally Thorne & Mary Adlersberg on becoming legally acknowledged parents of Leah Carey
- In memory of Denise Guren's grandmother, z"l
- In memory of Barry Goodman's stepfather, z"l
  - To purchase a printer for the Admin. office
  - In memory of Annie Klein, z"l
  - In honour of Micha Menczer

### East Side Food Fund

- In memory of Myrtle M., z"l
- In honour of Reb Hillel who has taken us to new spiritual heights
- In honour of Michael Corber for the good work he does on behalf of the fund
  - In memory of Annie Klein, z"l
  - In memory of Chiel Weinbaum
  - In honour of Micha Menczer

### Book Fund

- In memory of Dena Wosk, z"l

### School Fund

- In honour of Leah Carey, Mary Adlersberg, Sally Thorne

### Rabbi's Fund

- In memory of Dena Wosk, z"l
- With thanks for the support from Or Shalom

### Lisa Nemetz Or Shalom School Education Fund

- In memory of Dena Wosk, z"l
- In memory of Yaffa Scheidner, z"l

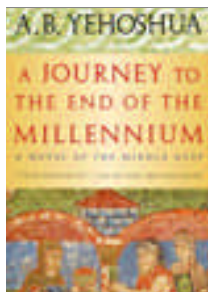
### Len Ryant Or Shalom Children's Fund

- In honour of Kymn & Barry
- In memory of Len Ryant, z"l

**ENGAGEMENT** Trevor and Fay Hassall are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Nicole, to Cory, son of Debbie and Albert Krygier of Calgary.

**TU B'SHVAT 5761** Adam Ve'Adamah will again organize a Four World's seder for Tu b'Shvat at the Louis Brier Home and Hospital beginning at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 7. It was very successful last year, supported by Louis Brier, Or Shalom, Shaarey Tefilah, UBC Hillel, the Endswell Foundation and JFGV. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring joy to the residents and to share stories. If you are interested in helping plan this event, please call Lorne Greenberg 732-1403.

**WOMEN'S BOOK CIRCLE** The next book circle date is Tuesday, Dec. 12, at 7:30 p.m., at Fran Ritch's home: 3447 West 1st Ave., led by Helen Waldstein. We will be discussing the book: Journey to the End of the Millennium, by A.B. Yehoshua. For information, call Sheryl Sorokin at 876-9790.



**DANIEL MATÉ CD** Daniel Maté, son of Rae and Gabor, is proud to release his self-produced debut CD, "Through These Parts Alone" — original songs from upbeat folk to something approaching acoustic heavy metal. CDs are currently available from Daniel at a flexible price. Call him at 254-4436, or drop a line to mrdanielmate@yahoo.com for more information. And look out for news of a release party and upcoming gigs.

**POVERTY FORUM** On Sunday, Jan. 28, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. a forum at the Jewish Community Centre will look at poverty in the Jewish community. The keynote speaker will be Danny Siegel, the noted poet and social activist. (No, not THAT Daniel Siegel who started Or Shalom with his wife Hannah. This is a DIFFERENT Danny Siegel). The goal is to articulate specific action plans to attack the problem of poverty in our community and to mobilize the community to implement the action plan. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Jewish Federation office (257-5100) to pre-register. The Federation staff person co-ordinating the forum is David Berson. Registration is needed to ensure that there are sufficient seats and sufficient numbers of kosher box lunches. The forum is free, the lunch costs are minimal. Call Federation for more details.

## Oy! They're Back!

The new CD by **What the Chelm** is now available.

\$18 U.S., includes tax and shipping

Send orders to:

**What the Chelm**

P.O. Box 5184

Bellingham, WA 98227-5184



## KIDDUSH CORNER

By Ellen Frank

The kiddush torch is once again passing on. Now there are two kiddush women — Leah Markovitch and me, a past kiddush woman. Helen Aqua is resting from the role but she is leaving us with inspiration and great written "how-to" material on everything you'd want to know about sponsoring a kiddush.

The kiddush women's role is not difficult. We keep track of who is doing what and when (and encouraging when necessary). Those of you who remember me from before might remember that I nag a lot. I'm not that fond of potlucks and like to see a filled-up kiddush schedule.

You can sponsor a kiddush on your own or call in some friends to bring things. The sponsoree needs to be that day's organizer (i.e.; bring the food, put it out, clean it up). We do not have to have elaborate lunches every week — we just need a kiddush, light lunch or big snack.

Basically, there are three options:

- 1) The no-work option. Hire someone do it.
- 2) The minimum-work option. Get a list of standard kiddush fare that we will compile soon. Call a store, such as Omnitsky, Kaplan or Solly's. Pick up your order, bring it to shul, put it on a table and organize a clean-up.
- 3) The do-it-yourself option: Buy stuff and cook stuff and make your own creative spread.

There is now a Guide to Kiddush, Kitchen & Kashrut — a how-to document that covers virtually every aspect of food at Or Shalom. You find it on the website from the Foods section of the Assiya page on the website: orshalom.ca. My thanks to Helen for the great work involved in compiling this information.

For information, call me at 524-4641 (not before 9 a.m. or after 9 p.m., please) or e-mail efrank@sfu.ca.

## KEREN OR קרן אור

(Beam of Light)

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