



Zusia

The Bet Midrash at Or Shalom

Open yourself to exploration at Vancouver's Spiritual Playground

Or Shalom's new house of study is your chance to deeply engage in Jewish history, text, and custom. Open to the community at large, Zusia is an invitation to profound learning in a **liberal context – non-dogmatic, egalitarian, and inclusive**. Zusia is serious but playful study and is for all learners who are interested in examining the multi-faceted nature of Torah and Jewish culture.

Each course is taught by an instructor with specialized knowledge and a passion for expressive and deep thought. Our *bet midrash*, literally "house of learning," takes place at Or Shalom in East Van. On a given night, more than one circle of study runs at once, to give a true sense of a school buzzing with activity and discussion. At the beginning and end of each class, students from all courses join together for meditation or singing.

In keeping with the bet midrash tradition, Zusia embraces non-frontal learning, with study often taking place in chevrotot - pairs.

Courses range from four to 10 weeks in length. Most courses are perfect for the curious beginner as well as intermediate learners while others offer an opportunity for more advanced knowledge seekers to dig a little deeper.

Why Zusia?

Our school's name is a nod to Reb Zusia of Hanipol, a great *tsaddik* of the 18th century, who, in the moments before death, wept uncontrollably. His students tried to comfort him telling him he was almost as wise as Moses and as kind as Abraham. But the rebbe replied: "When I get to Heaven, I will not be asked, 'Why weren't you like Moses?', or 'Why weren't you like Abraham?' I will be asked, 'Why weren't you like Zusia?' Why did I not live up to my own potential?"

The Bet Midrash at Or Shalom offers a path home to our best selves.

About Or Shalom

Or Shalom Synagogue is a creative, egalitarian, traditional, and participatory community founded in 1978 and affiliated with Aleph, the umbrella organization of Jewish Renewal communities. We welcome unaffiliated and interfaith individuals and families to our programs, events, and services, which include children's programs, Torah study, chanting, concerts, Saturday morning services, Kabbalat Shabbat gatherings, and holiday celebrations. While every Jewish Renewal community is unique, we all have the common values of a willingness to explore and experiment with our traditions in an effort to draw closer to God and the Jewish soul.

Easily register for courses at
orshalom.ca/zusia





The Bet Midrash at Or Shalom

Courses

Zusia runs over three trimesters, beginning October 2018 and ending June 2019. Please see each course description for details on suggested prerequisites or required materials. Registration closes one week prior to the beginning of the first class. **Register online at orshalom.ca/zusia. More courses to be announced for 2019.**

Trail of Text: 3,400 Years of Jewish History Through Our Great Books

This three-part course goes back to the beginning (*b'reishit*) and traces Jewish history from ancient Israel through the creation of the Jewish diaspora and up to the modern period. We will anchor our narrative and discussions in a piece of text from the time periods, which we will read and discuss together *bet midrash* style.

Instructor: Matthew Gindin

Prerequisites: No prerequisites or background. Course runs over three trimesters; students may enrol for all or one.

Materials: None; notes will be provided.

Cost: See pricing under each individual course. Students who enrol for all three courses pay \$500 (\$80 savings).

Trail of Text Part I: From Mesopotamia and Back

The period spanning from Abraham's arrival in Canaan from Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) through the creation of the Babylonian Talmud as a result of exile from Israel (also in modern day Iraq). The rise and fall of ancient Israel and the creation of the Hebrew Bible, Mishna, and Talmud, as well as the birth of Christianity, Islam, and Rabbinic Judaism.

Dates: Tuesdays, Oct. 9 to Dec. 4

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$180

Trail of Text Part II: The Rise of Jewish Philosophy and Mysticism, and the Creation of the Global Jewish Diaspora

The rich period of the development of Jewish theology and law as we know it, as well as the development of diverse Jewish cultures in many parts of the world. The era of Rashi and Maimonides and the birth of Kabbalah, as well as the standardization of Jewish law and the bold and shocking mysticism of the Zohar.

Dates: Tuesdays, Jan. 8 to March 12

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$200

Trail of Text Part III: The Creation of the Kaleidoscope of Modern Judaism

The period of the split of pre-modern Orthodoxy into Hasidic and non-Hasidic Orthodoxy; the Maskilim (Jewish Enlightenment); the Reform movement; Zionists, Jewish Socialists, and others which underlie the rich tapestry of "Judaisms" in the modern world. The era in which Jewish radicals and intellectuals helped build the modern world, Yiddish civilization was largely destroyed, and the state of Israel was built.

Dates: Tuesdays, March 26 to June 4

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$200

Stay up-to-date on all Or Shalom programs and events: sign up for our weekly newsletter, the Doar Shalom, at orshalom.ca



The Bet Midrash at Or Shalom

Nine Psalms for Shabbat Morning

The cycle of nine psalms in our Sabbath morning *pesukei dezimra* begins with our wonder at the natural world. It then takes us from the Torah and *mitzvot* that connect us to that world, to deeply personal and universal human fears and concerns, to God's saving power, to our history as the people of Israel, to the joy of Shabbat, and finally returns us to the overwhelming nature of God's creation and the power of God's order. We will study seven of these psalms: Psalms 19, 34, 90, 135 and 136, and 92 and 93.

Instructor: John Fuerst

Prerequisites: None

Materials: A siddur with the full cycle in the traditional order will be useful to bring. Course handouts will include each psalm in Hebrew and in contrasting English translations.

Dates: Tuesdays, Oct. 9 to Nov. 6

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$100

Hasidic Texts on Prayer

Favourite texts on the nature of prayer, its purpose, and its effect on human consciousness. Through class discussion and multi-level *chevruta*-paired study in Hebrew or English (or both), we'll unpack teachings on "breaking through" the words of liturgy, allowing the soul to "sing for herself," praying for the health of God, and the power of a broken heart. Each class will include primary source study, questions for deepening, and collaborative integration of the material into our own experience.

Instructor: Rabbi Hannah Dresner

Prerequisites: None

Dates: Tuesdays, Nov. 13 to Dec. 4

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$100

Dignity Beyond Death

This course will cover the history of the *Chevra Kadisha* (the Holy Society), the holy task of *tahara* (the ritual which purifies the body), and the meaning of *tahor* (purity). The instructor will share her experience of the past 30 years with the *Chevra Kadisha* and students will study the prayers said during and after the *tahara*, the history of the ritual, and discuss some unusual situations as well as what happens to the soul of the *met*. The course will also include a demonstration of the *tahara*.

Instructor: Sheryl Sorokin

Prerequisites: None

Materials: All reading will be provided by the instructor.

Dates: Tuesdays, Jan. 8 to Feb. 5

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$100

Jewish Stories: A Writing Workshop with Award-Winning Author Karen X. Tulchinsky

Do you have family stories you've always wanted to write about, but don't know where to start or how to finish? Whether you are writing memoir, or taking family memories and turning the stories into fiction, there are creative writing techniques that will help you start and finish your project. Through lessons, discussion, and in-class writing exercises, learn basic creative writing skills, such as developing story, an ear for dialogue, writing action, and creating lifelike characters.

Instructor: Karen X. Tulchinsky

Prerequisites: None

Materials: Bring a notebook and pen for in-class writing exercises.

Dates: Tuesdays, Feb. 12 to March 12

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$100



The Bet Midrash at Or Shalom

Passover Prep

This class will prepare us for innovative, learned, and deep Seder evenings. *Chevruta*-paired text study will focus on the *Haggadah*, commentaries on the *Haggadah*, potential supplementary texts, and teachings on the themes of *Pesach*. The course will include an egalitarian sharing of best Seder strategies, and will build the beginning of a loose-leaf resource book for future reference. Finally, attention will be paid to *Sefirat haOmer*, introducing some thoughts on numbering seven weeks of days, and brainstorming creative ways to enter mindful practice during that period, beginning on the second day of Passover.

Instructor: Rabbi Hannah Dresner

Prerequisites: None

Materials: Please bring a loose-leaf binder.

Dates: Tuesdays, April 2 to April 23

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$100

Fasting, Rain, and Three Magicians: Magic in the Talmud

Although witchcraft was forbidden in *Leviticus/Vayikra*, magic was widely practiced in the late Second Temple period. The rabbis of the Talmud believed that magic was real and legitimate when performed by sages who used the power of Torah. This course will explore the lives and magical abilities of three famous Talmudic magicians: Honi HaMa'agel, Nachtimon ben Gurion and Nachum Ish Gamzu. We will also learn something about the efficacy of fasting and wonder about how publicly demanding of God we can be.

Instructor: Rabbi Susan Shamash

Prerequisites: Ability to decode the Hebrew alphabet an asset.

Dates: Tuesdays, April 30 to June 4

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Cost: \$100

Did you know? You'll receive a charitable donation receipt for course fees.

Easily register for courses at
orshalom.ca/zusia

Contact Us

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The Bet Midrash at Or Shalom

Meet Our Instructors

Meet your instructors, including Or Shalom's rabbi and active members of this participatory community.



Rabbi Hannah Dresner is rabbi of Or Shalom Synagogue. She believes that Judaism is a toolbox for human flourishing.



John Fuerst has been studying the nine Sabbath psalms and including them in his Shabbat morning *davening* for five years now. Recently he had the opportunity to study three of these psalms under the direction of Rabbi Shia Held of Hadar.



Rabbi Susan Shamash is an independent rabbi and active member of Or Shalom, Vancouver's Spiritual Playground. Rabbi Susan believes that the only way to change the world is through the serious study of Talmud as a spiritual practice and wants to share her passion with you!



Sheryl Sorokin has been a member of the Chevra Kadisha Vancouver for many years. It has been a profound experience and she looks forward to sharing her experience with others. Now retired, her professional life included working as a social worker and therapist with children and families with mental health concerns.



Matthew Gindin is a journalist, educator, and meditation instructor who has been facilitating group learning about Jewish culture and history for over a decade.



Karen X. Tulchinsky (a.k.a. Aren), is a writer, director, and video editor. Tulchinsky's novel, *The Five Books Of Moses Lapinsky*, was a Toronto Book Award Finalist and won the 2008 One Book One Vancouver Prize. Tulchinsky's short film, *Ms. Thing*, has screened at 55 film festivals internationally and won Audience Choice Award at QueerFruits Australia.