

# KEREN OR

THE NEWSLETTER OF OR SHALOM קרן אור

Or Shalom Jewish Spiritual Community, Vancouver, B.C. orshalom.bc.ca Adar II/Iyar/Nissan 5760 April/May 2000

**Adar II/Iyar/Nissan 5760  
April/May 2000**

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## SABBATICAL MY TIME FOR RENEWAL

By Rabbi David Mivasair

*“Six days shall you labour and do all your work and on the seventh shall you rest.”*

*“Six years sow your field, prune your vineyard and gather the harvest; the seventh year is a sabbatical, a year of Shabbat.”*

The pause at the end of each breath, the rest between two beats of the heart, the nighttime quiet after the rush of every day, the eternal rhythmic flux of Shabbat following each week of productive effort — all are woven deeply into our being. So, too, our Torah offers an ideal vision of years of work and outer productivity woven through now and again with times for inner renewal.

For 16 years and more, since I began preparing for rabbinical school, I have been constantly engaged with plans and projects — the world of *asiya* — producing and doing that which I love and for which I am very grateful. A true abundance of rich relationships has also filled my life. Now, however, I am laying plans for a different kind of time. Beginning in August, I hope to experience more of the quiet, inward side of life on a sabbatical in Yerushalayim with my beloved Michal, Sophie, Yehuda and — *be-ezrat ha-Shem* — a brand new neshamah whose birth into this world we are expecting in early May.

During our sabbatical, I may learn most from the baby. The slow, gentle knitting together of sinew and bone to prepare a tiny body as the vessel for the earthly journey of a neshamah is so different from the way I am used to doing things. It simply happens without any conscious effort — and is far greater than anything I will ever accomplish through all my exertions.

### THE REB SITE

During our quiet time, I hope to learn once again the simple dailiness of life.

To take the kids to school. Change diapers. Do the laundry. Plan dinner. Go to the shuk for vegetables and bread. Touch the divine sparks garbed in the everyday *seder*(order) of life.

I relish learning traditional texts with gifted teachers and finding time between *shiurim*, *be-ezrat ha-Shem* to absorb the lessons. Living again in Yerushalayim, *Ir ha-Shalom*, the City of Peace, I hope also to help build shalom between Jews and Palestinians and among us Jews as well.



While I'm away, it will be a time for Or Shalom to grow as well. It will refresh the community's memory of what it means to pull together, to serve each other and the Holy One, to be renewed as a community of caring and devotion. I am deeply grateful to the leadership of the Or Shalom community for sharing this Torah-based vision of a time of renewal woven into the years of productivity and for enabling me and my family to have this opportunity. The board's sabbatical planning committee of Pam Ratner, Bat-Ami Segal, Fran Ritch and Kevin Solomons has been a pleasure to work with: creative, co-operative and clear-thinking.

I am grateful beyond words to Reb Hillel Goelman, who has graciously agreed to offer his invaluable rabbinic leadership to the community while I am away, and to Sheryl Sorokin, who will draw on her years of experience to guide and co-ordinate all the *nei mitzvah* families.

Hillel and Sheryl both bring great *hochmah*, *binah ve-da'at* — wisdom, understanding and knowledge — to our community. Each is truly an “*ish asher ruah bo* — a person of spirit.” I am confident

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that our community will be in good hands.

While I'm away, I want to share my experiences with the Or Shalom community. At the very least, I'll write. Perhaps some of you will come to Yerushalayim and share the experience first hand. I truly wish that every one of us could have the opportunity for a sabbatical, a time of inner growth.

During my time away, if I am truly blessed, I will come to know myself better and will come back to Or Shalom, *be-ezrat ba-Shem*, not only with new knowledge to share but, more importantly, with deeper wisdom as well.

## **'WHERE ARE THE KIDS?' TO BE THEME OF APRIL 9 COMMUNITY MEETING**

*By Dodie Katzenstein*

Improving programs for children and youth will be the theme of a community meeting scheduled for Sunday, April 9, at 7 p.m. at Or Shalom. The event is the second in a series of community discussions planned by the Board of Directors.

A need to strengthen programs for families, children and youth was a top priority identified in last year's membership survey and at the first community meeting, "Renewing Our Vision," held in January.

Since that time, a planning group has met to discuss opportunities for programs that will attract and retain younger members of the Or Shalom community. Some of the group's considerations will be presented at the meeting.

The format for the April 9 meeting includes brief presentations and general discussion on Or Shalom's current children's activities and ideas for building stronger programs for the future.

In addition, several young people who are or have been involved with Or Shalom will present their views. Current activities include Shabbat children's activities, the Hebrew school, Family Education Program, Family Shabbat services and Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation.

Or Shalom members whose families include children and teenagers are particularly encouraged to participate in this important meeting. Those who are unable to attend on April 9 can forward comments to Azima Buell by e-mail at [azimab@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:azimab@vcn.bc.ca)

Coffee and dessert will be provided by members of the Board.

## **MARK APRIL 2 ON CALENDAR TO HELP SPRUCE UP BAYIT**

*By Bat-Ami Segal for the House Committee*

Set aside Sunday, April 2 for helping out to clean, scrub, repair, shine and generally fix up our Shul. The Bayit is in great need of a major mass attack on cleaning and fixing it up.

Since we don't have a custodian, there are many jobs of maintenance that never get done. This is the time to do it. So, please mark your calendar, April 2 at 10 a.m., bring your hammer, screwdriver, pails, etc. or any other equipment that you have. Please label all these items.

This is your Shul, let's keep it sparkling, and inviting for all of us. We need all of you to come and help out. If all of us contribute a few hours of our time, on that morning we can get the job done quickly.

For more information, contact Bat-Ami Segal at 875-6560.

### **KASHERING KITCHEN APRIL 12**

Another date to set aside is Wednesday, April 12, at 10 a.m. We will be kashering our kitchen for Pesah. We need a few people to help us do it. If it you would like to help out in this way, please call Fran Ritch at 738-3487.

### **ADOPT A PART OF BAYIT GARDEN**

*By Helen Aqua*

Gardening anyone? Wouldn't it be great to have just a small garden area to weed and plant some annuals?

Now that we've had our Shul yard landscaped, we need to take care of it. The whole yard can be overwhelming, but if those of us who no longer have a garden of our own adopt just a small section of the yard gardens, the whole yard will look terrific!

If you're interested, walk around the Shul yard and pick an area you'd like to adopt this spring. I've made up a small map, so please call me and let me know your choice. Larger areas will accommodate more than one "parent", so find a buddy to share the opportunity.

Personally, I'm taking on the morning glory and overgrown blackberry branches — my pet peeves!

Give me a call at 430-5046, talk to me at Shul, or send an e-mail to [haqua@ultranet.ca](mailto:haqua@ultranet.ca)

## EXPERIENCE THE WARMTH, SPIRIT & HUMOUR OF R' DAVID ZASLOW

By Joe Markovitch and Marty Puterman

Camp Hope is the “place to be” this May long weekend, May 19-22, for Or Shalom’s 10th annual “Get Away and Get Together”. The Or Shalom Retreat has always been a great community gathering and this year will be no exception. As always, it will provide a wonderful place for davvening, learning, relaxation and just having fun.

Reb David Zaslow of Havurah Shir Hadash, a Jewish Renewal community in Ashland, Ore., will lead this year’s programs. He combines storytelling, humour and music in his teaching style. Reb David was ordained by Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and was influenced deeply by his teachers Reb Shlomo Carlebach and Rabbi Aryeh Hirschfield. But more than his credentials, the following quote from Roy Wood summarizes Reb David’s appeal.

“I was in a group led by Reb David Zaslow last July at the Kallah and had a wonderful time. He was challenging and insightful, warm and compassionate and at times had us rolling in the aisles with his humorous stories. With a guitar usually slung over his shoulder, he would break into song at the slightest opportunity and lead us in a never-ending selection of niggunim.”

This year’s theme “*Ma nora hamakom hazeh*” means “How awesome is this place!” We’ll be exploring this theme in relation to “our place” within the Jewish community, with each other and the world around us.

The Get Away and Get Together has something for everyone in the Or Shalom community. Whether you are a new member or a “sage” you will have a great time. The program has been designed to appeal to families, singles, seniors, couples and teens.

A fun-filled children’s program is also in the works and will be led by experienced teachers and counsellors. Your children are sure to come home with lots of great memories and new friendships. A stunning mountain setting with lots of safe space to run, bike and play. What’s not to like?

Camp Hope is nestled in the woods beneath awesome snow-capped mountains. There are numerous hiking trails to explore. Relax in the hot tub. Shmooze by the fireplace. Enjoy the wildlife (from a distance). Saturday night there will be a wonderful “Havdalah by the campfire”. Sunday night is always a blast when the amazing talent from within Or Shalom comes out to do their stuff. The Or Shalom Talent Show is definitely not to be missed.

Of course, no Jewish get-together would be complete without great food. Last year everyone raved about the food, even the kids, who can be a tough crowd to please. It’s all vegetarian and there’s lots of it. Wonderful breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Lots of variety, very tasty and filling.

One of the great things about this retreat is the wonderful feeling of being in this spectacular place with other creative, knowledgeable, warm and fun people. If you’re looking for a way to deepen your connection with the Or Shalom community you must come to Camp Hope. It’s a great opportunity for new members to get to know others in the community.

As always we have tried to keep the cost as low as possible. If cost is a factor, you may consider tenting or coming for only one or two days. The tent sites are very comfortable and convenient as well as a great way to economize. Also, financial assistance will be available to a limited number of members who would like to attend this event and may need a little financial help.

A registration form and a list of Frequently Asked Questions (and answers) is included with your Keren Or and is also available on the Or Shalom website ([orshalom.bc.ca](http://orshalom.bc.ca)) and at the shul.

So mark a place down on your calendar for Camp Hope this May long weekend. You’ll be glad you did. If you want more information, or just want to talk about the retreat, call Joe Markovitch at 874-8649, Marty Puterman at 224-6754 or Lorne Greenberg at 732-1403.



**Rabbi David Zaslow** is our guest teacher at this year’s Or Shalom Getaway. *Avi Dolgin* remembers him well from last summer’s Kallah: “I was entranced by David Zaslow’s davvening and warmth. But I was amazed by his handling of a Jewish/Christian dialogue group. He succeeded in getting us Jews to actually LISTEN before we argued. This is a person I want to learn from!”

## GEMILUT CHESED COMMITTEE IS REACHING OUT

By Miriam Caplan

According to Kabbalistic teaching, when Chesed, or acts of kindness and Gevurah, or strength, are in balance we have Tiferet — harmony. A corollary of this is that if we want our community to be thriving, healthy and harmonious we must all take responsibility for creating a balance between Chesed and Gevurah within ourselves.

We of the Gemilut Chesed Committee have been learning about creating this balance. Gevurah means there are times when one just has to say no. It's when you get that tight feeling in the stomach that says, "I'm really not comfortable with that today," or when you find your mind is racing so fast about everything you have to do that you just need to slow down or stop. These are times when we as individuals are happy to remember that we are part of a committee and part of a community, to know that if I just can't do something that needs doing, hopefully there is someone else who may be happy to do it.

On the other hand, there are times when the "No, I can't" thought is just an old habit. You may think you can't attend another meeting, or that cooking and sharing that course for a meal is beyond your capacity. But when you try it out you find it actually feels kind of good. That you thought your energy was depleted but you actually get more energy from reaching out, connecting with others, contributing to making the world a better place. That as you give whatever it is you are offering you notice your heart is feeling a bit bigger in a pleasant kind of way, or that you just feel a bit happier.

We on the Gemilut Chesed Committee have been organizing baskets for shiva support, speaking with people who have been ill or bereaved, and co-ordinating meals for members of our community who are undergoing health challenges. We meet once monthly in order to share support and co-ordinate tasks with one another and are in touch with each other between meetings when something new comes up. We have been in touch with the Gemilut Chesed Committee of Shaarey Tefilah Synagogue

and will be meeting with them to look at planning joint ventures.

So what does this have to do with you? We would like to contribute to building a thriving, harmonious community at Or Shalom by encouraging each member to consider their own Chesed-Gevurah balance. There are some who habitually overextend and others who hold back where there would be benefit from giving more. If you can extend a little we would be very happy to have your involvement.

Here are some things you can do:

**1.** Bat-Ami Segal has been co-ordinating weekly Shabbos meals for one of our families who have been dealing with illness. If you can make an extra few helpings of something to contribute to the meal, call Bat-Ami at 875-6560.

**2.** Can you make room for one (or even two?) more at your Shabbos meal? Are you having a Seder? Can you invite a guest (or two) who may be single people or far from their own family? Contact Rory Richards (by e-mail if you can — roryrichards@hotmail.com) and she will arrange matching.

**3.** Do you have other interests or skills that may be of benefit to someone? For example, helping with income tax returns, child care, yard work or visiting the sick. Let us know.

**4.** In order to continue to give baskets to people who are sitting shiva away from Vancouver and the support of the community here we will need more money. Donations may be sent to the synagogue and directed to the Gemilut Chesed Committee.

**5.** Do you know anyone who is bereaved, ill, or having a particularly difficult time who would benefit from community support? Please let us know and we will contact them to see what support would be appropriate.

**6.** Come to a meeting and join our committee. We meet the last Thursday of the month 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

For more information call Miriam Caplan at 875-6807 or Carol Pearlstone at 669-5173.



### Can you invite an extra guest or two to your Seder?

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# OR SHALOM'S FINANCIAL SITUATION CAUSE FOR CONCERN

By *Dodie Katzenstein*

Responding to an expected budget shortfall, the Board of Directors is looking for ways to improve Or Shalom's financial situation. At its February meeting, the Board received a treasurer's report predicting a \$25,000 deficit by the end of the fiscal year on June 30. As a result, several initiatives are underway, with the hope of starting the new year in better financial health.

Several factors have contributed to the current problems, including:

- More than \$170,000 is still owed on our mortgage; interest and principal payments add up to nearly \$30,000 a year.
- Fund-raising activities, which depend on volunteer commitment and time, have not met expectations for generating revenues in the past two years.
- Ongoing expenses, including staffing costs and building maintenance, have slowly increased.

Board co-chair Micha Menczer says, "We felt that it was important to share our concerns with the rest of the community. While we know that these problems do not result from careless or extravagant spending, we must make sure that this situation doesn't happen again."

Several steps are being taken to deal with the concerns. A letter mailed in March encourages members and friends of the community to make a significant contribution towards dealing with immediate financial problems. A major fundraising event is already being planned for next year, with a strong committee in place. In addition, a strategy has been developed to seek new opportunities for grants, to identify potential major donors from within and outside Or Shalom and to review any possibility of cutting costs in an already-lean operating budget. A key goal is to find ways to pay off the mortgage as quickly as possible. Members are also being urged to renew memberships early to boost cash flow during the summer months, when donations usually fall.

The letter states a commitment to retain the community's inclusive principles: "From Or Shalom's beginnings over 20 years ago, we have taken pride in creating an open and participatory environment. Or Shalom currently has over 200 member households, but each year we serve a much larger population, especially on the High Holidays. Throughout the year, we welcome all who wish to join us, regardless of an individual's financial standing. While we have strengthened our efforts to encourage payment of



*More than \$170,000 is still owed on our mortgage.*

membership fees, building fund contributions and donations, we do not turn away those who are unable to pay."

The letter asks families and individuals to consider contributing in one of these ways: "If have not paid your annual membership and one-time building fees, we encourage you do so as soon as possible in addition to making a special contribution. If you have paid your fees in full, we ask that you consider an extra contribution for this year. If you are not a member but attend for the High Holidays or use other Or Shalom services – or simply because you support our efforts – we hope that you will make a donation.

The Board also welcomes volunteers to participate in fund-raising activities and to offer suggestions for improving Or Shalom's financial status. Questions or comments can be directed to Micha Menczer by telephone at 877-1208 or by e-mail at [menczer@bc.sympatico.ca](mailto:menczer@bc.sympatico.ca)

## YOUTH OFFERED SUBSIDY FOR ISRAEL

Think that Israel summer programs for young people are too expensive? Well, think again. A once in a lifetime opportunity awaits you this summer. The Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, Or Shalom and other local organizations, in partnership with Birthright Israel North America are providing a \$1,500 subsidy towards a recognized Israel summer program. To qualify you must be a Jewish high school student living in the Greater Vancouver area and a first-time participant in a recognized Israel summer program. For more information and a complete list of qualifying programs please call Tracy Ames or Batik Haimovitch at the Israel

## GAVEL FALLS ON CYBER AUCTION

By Shlomi Steve Lipari

The Or Shalom Cyber Auction concluded on March 6 with nearly 50 items going to the highest bidders. Or Shalom's first venture into e-commerce netted over \$2,000 but, more importantly, we have learned how to use the Internet to raise even more money for the next time.

We also scored major successes in publicity, with a feature article in The Province and an interview on CBC Radio.

The cyber team included Alan Morinis, Shlomi Steve Lipari, Ellen Hamer, Yonah Al Pasternak, Bat-Ami Segal, Fran Ritch and Michelle Pante. Extra support came from Lorne Mallin, Avi Dolgin and Ruth Tovim.

Generous donations came from the following folks:

Norm Levi  
Marty Puterman  
Larry Weitzman  
Micha Menczer  
Claudia Casper  
Avi Dolgin  
Rabbi David Mivasair  
Sam Hamer  
Aviva Lazar  
Al Pasternak  
Steve Barer  
Linda Dayan Frimer  
Mary Adlersberg  
Evelyn Neaman  
Fran Ritch  
Rabbi Dina-Hasida Mercy  
Joe & Leah Markovitch  
Simon Wosk  
Marilyn Magid  
Rabbi Itzhak Marmorstein  
Mike Katz  
Laurie Farlinger and Andrea Goldsmith

Thanks to everyone who bid on and donated items and helped out with the cyber auction. See you next time in cyber space!

## LOUIS BRIER KABBALAT SHABBAT

Or Shalom members who joined in Kabbalat Shabbat at the Louis Brier Home, Vancouver's Jewish home for the elderly and infirm, before our Tu b'Shvat seder were so delighted with the experi-

ence: the singing was strong, harmonious and beautiful; the davvening was deep. We've made plans to go again!

We will gather at Louis Brier, 41st and Oak, on Friday, April 7, at 4 p.m. for a very spirited Kabbalat Shabbat davvening with the residents of the home. We'll have our own vegetarian Shabbat dinner with more singing at 6 pm. Following dinner, at 7 p.m. we'll have a kumsitz — a sing-along — led in part by Moshe Denberg and conversation with the residents.

Everyone is welcome to come to any part of the evening. Dinner will cost \$10-\$15. A prepaid reservation in advance (no later than Tuesday, April 4) is necessary for dinner. Please call Frank at 872-1614 to reserve and find out the exact cost.

### AN INVITATION TO ALL WOMEN BAT MITZVAH AGE AND OLDER

#### MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW FOR A WOMEN'S SHAVUOT EXPERIENCE

WHEN: Sunday, June 4

TIME: 1 p.m.

WHERE: To Be Announced

PROGRAM: Still being worked on and promises to be thought-provoking and full of spirit, laughter, learning, music and heart with something good to eat!

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? There will be announcements in shul, on the Or Shalom website and e-mail list as well as through posters and handbills.

We look forward to seeing you on June 4 and hope you will also want to join in some of the preparatory committee work.

Mary Adlersberg, Nomi Fenson, Carol Ann Fried, Jane Heyman, Gloria Levi, Michal Mivasair, Sandi Moussadji, Myrna Rabinowitz, Pam Ratner, Vicki Robinson, Bat-Ami Segal, Sheryl Sorokin, Hana Wosk.

## BAYIT SECURITY

By Bat-Ami Segal  
for the House Committee

**NEWSFLASH!** Or Shalom Synagogue at E. 10th Ave. and Fraser was broken into and vandalized last night. Windows were smashed and pews overturned and sacred Torah Scrolls removed. The extent of the damage is not completely known yet.

This could have been a real news article, given the neighbourhood. In recent weeks, doors and windows have been left open three times causing the alarm to go off and the security company to report this to us. This means that the next time this happens we will have to pay an additional \$250.

The people who are current key holders, and have the responsibility of opening up for an event, must also take

responsibility for making sure that the Bayit is closed properly.

That involves a thorough check of the whole building before leaving.

We all need to be more aware of this security issue and, if you are the last person left in the Shul, please take the extra time it needs to make sure that our Bayit is closed properly.

## MORE HELP NEEDED FOR RANKO

By Sandy Berman

The Or Shalom Board, in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee, gave its approval to sponsor Ranko Sladojevic in November 1999.

As a direct result of the sponsorship partnership, we were able to prevent Ranko from being evicted from Germany and sent back to Bosnia. The social, cultural and political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still tense and as a result his safety would have been at risk. Ranko's arrival date will be confirmed as soon as his application has finished being processed.



Ranko Sladojevic was born in Bosnia-Herzegovina on Dec. 28, 1951. He has a PhD in German literature and has written and translated several books, including "Justice, not Revenge" by Simon Weisenthal. During the time he was in Sarajevo he was involved with the Jewish Cultural Society and it was through their efforts that he was able to escape from Sarajevo.

A sponsorship group has been formed and we are looking for additional financial help to support Ranko for a period of one year. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact Sandy Berman. Phone 873-8545 or e-mail at sberman@idmail.com

## SCREENING CLINIC FOR TAY-SACHS

For the first time in almost 30 years, there will be a clinic for Tay-Sachs disease carrier screening, targeted to Jewish people of childbearing age.

Free screening tests will be held at the Jewish Community Centre on Sunday, April 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., under the direction of Dr. Hilary Vallance, a biochemical geneticist at B.C.'s Children's Hospital. Participants will also be offered the opportunity to have carrier testing for Canavan disease.

Tay-Sachs and Canavan disease are two severe hereditary degenerative brain diseases that more commonly occur in the Jewish community. Onset of these disorders occurs in infancy and death occurs in early childhood.

About one in 30 Ashkenazi Jews are carriers of the Tay-

Sachs gene and one in 40 Ashkenazi Jews are carriers of the Canavan gene, according to U.S. and Israeli studies.

Although carriers themselves are healthy, if both partners are carriers there is a one in four chance of having a child with one of these diseases.

Since screening began in the 1970s, the incidence of Tay-Sachs disease in the Jewish community has dramatically dropped. "However, we are concerned that a new generation of Jewish couples are not aware that this testing is available," said Dr. Vallance. "It involves taking a small blood sample which is sent to Children's Hospital for testing. This is a small price to pay for peace of mind. All actual screening costs are covered by the B.C. Medical Plan."

This test is offered to all Ashkenazi Jewish individuals, including couples in which only one partner is of Ashkenazi Jewish descent, said Dr. Vallance. Although far less common, non-Jewish partners can carry the Tay-Sachs gene.

Dr. Vallance stressed that all Jewish individuals of childbearing age who have a partner known to be a carrier should consider retesting because new evidence has shown that a small percentage of individuals who were previously thought to be non-carriers may indeed be carriers.

The free screening is co-sponsored by Children's and Women's Health Centre of British Columbia, of which Children's Hospital is part, the National Council of Jewish Women and the Jewish Community Centre. Please remember to bring your B.C. Care Card.

For more information, call the Tay-Sachs carrier testing program at 875-2307.

## WOMEN'S GROUP HELPS SPONSOR SCREENING

The National Council of Jewish Women, Vancouver Section, wants to remind the community that its members hold discussion group, book club and project meetings throughout the year.

Their current projects include the community Tay-Sachs and Canavan screening, HIPPIE (Home Instruction Program for Pre-School Youngsters in conjunction with SFU and Britannia Community Centre), Operation Dressup (distribution of children's clothing through Vancouver inner-city schools), Books for Keeps (distribution of books to needy Vancouver schoolchildren), proposed Jewish Community Volunteer Bureau and our annual Friends and Angels event — this year a theatre night on May 4, The Bachelor Brothers on Tour. You can learn more about the group from any NCJW member or leave a message at the office at 257-5180.

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# CAN JEWISH RENEWAL BE ROOTED IN A SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE?

Part 1 of 2

By Leonard Yebuda Angel

Jewish Renewal can be seen as a fusion of western scientific rationalism enlightenment – the *Haskalah* movement beginning in the 17th and 18th century in Jewish circles – and Hasidism and the Hasidic take on Kabbalah – the joyous infusion of mysticism and enthusiasm into the ritual life of Judaism.

The impact of Haskalah on Judaism is seen very strongly in both Reform and Reconstruction movements. Enlightenment ideas led many to question the literal truth of Orthodox teachings, including that Moshe received the Torah literally from God by verbal instruction, and that the Torah was given at the time of the Exodus exactly as we have it now. Historical and philosophical investigation suggests that such Orthodox ideas cannot be easily integrated with a scientific and modern philosophical perspective.

In Reform Judaism, this led to the doubting of the binding authority of traditional halachic rulings. However much Reform theology subscribes to the idea of God as a Person. In Reconstruction Judaism, the very notion of a Personal God (a God who is a conscious being, willing, planning, creating, knowing, judging) came under intense scrutiny. The founder of Reconstruction Judaism, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, rejected the notion of God as a Conscious Willing Mind, and instead favoured the idea that God is our highest values, and God is that aspect of nature that makes human fulfillment possible.

Although this concept of God of Reconstruction Judaism integrates well with modern science and philosophy, it may seem to many to be a little shy on enthusiasm, and quite unaccommodating to mysticism. What of the flights of mystical fancy? And what would it mean to have a direct experience of God when the God concept is as given in standard Reconstruction theology?

Accordingly, Jewish Renewal thinkers have incorporated the enthusiasm, passion, *hitlabavut* of Hasidism, and have also revived and incorporated the Kabbalistic mysticism in non-Orthodox Judaism.

There is, of course, a problem. Kabbalistic mysticism in much of its central and closely associated manifestations does not integrate well with modern science, nor modern philosophy's emphasis on critical examination of sources of belief. The Kabbalistic texts confirm reincarnation (*gilgul*) But from the modern philosophical perspective, one must ask: How do the authors of

these texts know there is *gilgul*? Do they remember their past lives? If so, could it be their imagination? The authors of the Kabbalistic texts affirm *gilgul* with the same confidence that they affirm that the earth is the centre of the universe, and other such now rejected views. Can we really trust their confidence in the one case (*gilgul*) and dismiss as insignificant their equal confidence about other matters which seem merely quaint to us?

Similarly, if there's to be reincarnation, what is it that reincarnates? Is there a *neshama* (soul) separable from the physical brain? From a modern scientific perspective, the law of mass-energy conservation is a very important law, much confirmed, and not to be jettisoned lightly. But the belief in a separable soul that causally affects the physical brain cannot be readily integrated with the modern scientific perspective. It would involve violations of the law of mass-energy conservation. Also, it is not easily to integrate the belief in a separate *neshama*-soul with the idea of a gradual evolution of conscious beings over millenia, starting with tiny, tiny organizations of molecules into biological units, and then gradually developing more and

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The belief in a separable soul that causally affects the physical brain cannot be readily integrated with the modern scientific perspective.

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more complex units which only differ with regard to their consciousness by small degrees. When does the *neshama*-soul — a separate entity — suddenly pop into existence? What would it mean for it to gradually come to exist as a sort of entity? Can an organism such as a fish or a lizard “sort of have a soul”? Were the human souls just hanging around waiting for human beings to evolve? Or what?

Similarly, Jewish Renewal reliance on Kabbalah is rather on the credulous side (from the modern scientific perspective) in regard to existence of souls in other realms, guidance by angels, many levels of invisible but influencing orders of being, the acceptability of some recent studies on prayer efficacy and vision at a distance, belief in what philosopher's call ‘contra-causal free will’, which is a belief that the mind is not embodied in the brain, and is therefore able to overturn the natural workings of the brain machinery to get what it wants done, etc etc.

So we in Jewish Renewal have what might be called A Philosophical Problem on our hands. Now a philosophical problem is not something that many people – other than philosophers – lose sleep over. But anyone of somewhat philosophical bent wants to at least have some feel for the belief system that is being invoked in their ritual life, shiur-discussions, etc.

**IN THE NEXT KEREN OR:** What are our options in approaching this philosophical problem?

## Or Shalom Hebrew School Page

By Nurit Fox, Principal

Let me tell you about a number of special activities that have taken place in the past few months.

During the month of January we conducted beautiful Tu B'Shevat seders at the school. The holiday provided an opportunity to raise the children's awareness of our environment and accelerate the practice of the *Mitzvah Bal Tashchit*— protecting our environment.

Most of our students visited The Great Jewish Children EXPO that was hosted by Schara Tzedek Synagogue. We walked through a maze of animated exhibits displaying various moments in Jewish history, such as our forefathers in Egypt and their joy of redemption, the construction of the Temple by King David, and Jewish prisoners conducting a secret Seder during the Holocaust. The children engaged in an arts project, giving them a hands-on opportunity to create a permanent memorabilia of their experience. Educational games concluded this most enjoyable and instructional event.

In February our children participated in a Shabbat morning service, Shabbat Teruma, and while the younger students related to the congregation the kind of acts of Gemilut Chasadim — loving kindness — they would have done on Shabbat had they been living in a Shtetl, Grade 6 students Rachel Snarch and Zachary Shoom raised questions from the Torah portion such as: Where does G-d dwell? And what makes a place holy? It generated an interesting discussion. Our Grade 7 students presented a skit about the portion and all the students lead the congregation in prayer and inspired everyone.

A beautiful Havdalah service and a musical evening with Alana Brief on the violin and Michael Corber on the accordion taught us about the various styles of Jewish music and its multifaceted origins and influences. We learned several dances and songs and danced through the evening. Many, many deep thanks to Alana and Michael whose beautiful music still resonates in our hearts.

As a preparation for the evening, our children made Havdalah candles by dipping wicks in colourful molten wax. This wonderful project was conducted by Claudi Snarch, who deserves many thanks for kindly donating her time and talent to our children.

Keeping in mind that during the month of Adar we are commanded to increase our happiness, we planned to participate with songs, costumes and a presentation in the Purim Megillah reading. Some of



*Making Havdalah candles at the school are, from left, Michael Garfinkel, Sidi Schaffer, Karen Segal, Emma Hassall, Fay Hassall and Ben Ross.*



*Havdalah service at Or Shalom includes, from left, Joel Fox, Nurit Fox, Jacob Maddison and Rami Katz.*

the Purim projects at the school include making masks and groggers, all of which will be useful on Purim.

A family Kabbalat Shabbat service and potluck dinner is scheduled for May 12. Please RSVP if you are planning to come.

### NEXT YEAR'S BAR AND BAT MITZVAH PLANS ARE BEGINNING NOW

Reb David and Sheryl Sorokin, our Bar and Bat Mitzvah co-ordinator next year, have begun to schedule dates for kids born in 1988. Parents whose child will be 13 and who would like a Bar or Bat Mitzvah next year at Or Shalom should contact Reb David as soon as possible.

### SHABBAT AFTERNOON LEARNING IN APRIL

What could be better than sticking together on Shabbat afternoon for singing, bentching and deeper learning? On the Shabbat right before Pesah and the Shabbat right after Pesah, April 15 and 29, from about

1:30-3, Reb David will share some teaching from traditional texts about deeper levels of meaning of Pesah and the journey from Mitzrayim to Sinai.

### COACHING FOR DAVVENING LEADERS

It has been a great joy for many of us to begin the day davvening together on Wednesday mornings. So that more of us will be able to lead the davvening, Reb David will lead a coaching session for future davvening leaders after the service on Wednesday, April 12, 9 to 11 a.m., for everyone who is interested. We'll go over all the weekday davvening, look at the differences from Shabbat davvening, and give attention to what we want to keep the same and where the leader can be flexible.

### LEARN TO LEYN TORAH

Reb David will begin a daytime class to teach Torah chanting. The class is open to everyone who is interested and who can read Hebrew. The class is tentatively planned for Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m., beginning April 12. The schedule may be arranged to fit those who are in the class. If you are interested, call Reb David.

### NEW TERM OF ADULT HEBREW CLASSES

A new term of Adult Hebrew classes will begin in April. We are once again very fortunate to have Rahel Halabe instructing these classes. Learning Hebrew opens the gateway to so many areas of our Hebrew heritage, including prayer, learning, literature and, of course, travel in Israel.

• INTERMEDIATE LEVEL April 21-June 23 (10 lessons) Thursdays 7:30-9 p.m. — requires the ability to read, write and speak Hebrew (however imperfectly).

• BEGINNER LEVEL April 23-June 25 (10 lessons) Sundays 4-5:30 p.m. — this will be a continuation of the class begun in January. Requires the ability to read the aleph-bet.

Tuition fee is \$10 per class or less (depending on number of students).

In the Fall we are planning to add a course in BIBLICAL HEBREW. Joining a class in April will get you ready for that exciting new opportunity.

For further information, contact Alan Morinis at 732-0822 or amorinis@home.com

### YESHIVAH PROGRAM CONTINUES

Or Shalom Yeshivah (Meditation School) Program: "Silence is a fence for wisdom" — Pirkei Avot. For further information call Leonard Yehuda Angel at 876-6925. All events are at 865 Durward Ave.

- April 1: Silent Meditation Shabbaton, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- April 15: Meditation Shabbaton, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- May 6: Silent Meditation Shabbaton, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- May 20: Meditation Shabbaton, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- April and May Sundays 9 a.m. to 12 noon, Mondays 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.: meditation, discussion, one-to-one instruction.

### NEWS AND SHMOOZE

**THANK YOU** I would like to thank everyone who joined in the welcoming and naming of my granddaughter Ivy "Tziporah." She is already an avid shul-goer. — *Rabbi Dina-Hasida Mercy*

### SUMMER MINI-ULPAN AT OR SHALOM

Give your Hebrew a big boost without going all the way to Israel. A week-long Summer Mini-Ulpan is being planned for Aug. 13 to 19 at Or Shalom.

The intensive program will include about five hours a day, five days a week of conversation, reading, writing, music, film, field trips and optional spiritual studies. Targeted at an intermediate level (Ulpan level Beit), it will be taught by Rahel Halabe. More teachers may be brought in and other levels offered if numbers warrant. Cost will be about \$250. We are also open to your ideas for the program. Call Lorne Mallin at 222-3379 or e-mail [lmallin@telus.net](mailto:lmallin@telus.net)

**IN APPRECIATION** I would like to express my sincere thanks to all members of the Or Shalom community who gave their much needed love and support to me and my family at the time of the passing of my brother, Mark Rabinowitz, z"l, in Israel in January. — *Barry Rabinowitz*

**DEAR FRIENDS** Thank you so much for your love and support following the death of my dear mother. Your kindness comforted us during our time of distress. — *Ron Laye*

### HORNBY ISLAND IN SUMMER

Several Or Shalom families have places on Hornby Island which are rented out when we are not using them ourselves. If you are

looking for a relaxing setting with nice beaches, good walks, artists studios and yummy pizza, Hornby might be your vacation. To explore O.S. options, contact Avi at 879-4466 or [adolgin@wimsey.com](mailto:adolgin@wimsey.com) — *Avi Dolgin*

**BAR MITZVAH** We'd like to invite the Or Shalom community to attend Ilan's Bar Mitzvah on May 13. Kiddush follows. — *Steve and Jenny Wright*

**MEDITATION BEFORE SERVICES** I'd like to invite members/visitors to do sitting meditation from 9:30 to 10 a.m. before services on April 8 and May 6. I'll be there at 9:15 for anyone who would like meditation instruction. — *Marianne Rev*

**POINT GREY SHABBAT IN THE HOOD** The next Point Grey Shabbat in the 'Hood will be held on Friday, April 7, at 6:30 p.m. The monthly events are aimed at building community in the neighbourhood. Everyone in Point Grey is invited to attend for a family-oriented evening of songs, Shabbat candle-lighting and a veggie/dairy potluck dinner. The place is 4411 W. 5th Ave., home of Lorne Mallin and daughter Lisa. Please RSVP to 222-3379 or e-mail [lmallin@telus.net](mailto:lmallin@telus.net).

**HEBREW SINGALONG** The other week I dug out my old Israel songbook and sang wistful and nostalgic Israeli tunes from the '50s and '60s. So, on Sunday, May 7, from 7:30 p.m. I'll be hosting an informal *Shira Butsibur* (Hebrew Singalong) at my house, 2830 West 37th Ave, Vancouver. Bring your voices, dumbeks, etc. Songsheets and tea provided. Phone 266-3644.

— *Jenny Wright*

**JEWISH PHONE DIRECTORY** The Jewish Community Phone Directory, a fund-raising project for the Talmud Torah school, is a 250-page listing of members of the Greater Vancouver Jewish community. To be included in the 2000-2002 edition due out in September, fax your name, address including postal code, and phone number to Carole Fader at 279-0660.

**VISITOR NEEDED** A female Jewish visitor is needed by an intelligent 52 year old woman in Riverview. A weekly visitor is preferred. Bus fare/mileage reimbursed. Please call Ann Neill, co-ordinator of volunteers at Riverview, 524-7604.

**JEWISH SINGLE MOMS SUPPORT GROUP** The Jewish Family Service Agency together with the Jewish Community Centre and the YWCA are sponsoring a support group for single mothers where women can share support, information and resources. Opportunities to enjoy physical fitness activities are also provided. This is a facilitated group and childcare is provided. There is no charge for the group, although donations are welcome. Please contact Azima Buell at 257-5151 for more information.

**GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP** Bereavement and loss can be a profoundly painful experience. Share with others who have also experienced a loss. Jewish Family Services provides a facilitated grief support group every other Tuesday. There is no charge for the group, although donations are welcome. Please contact Azima Buell at 257-5151 for more information.

**SHIRON SINGERS 18TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT** Celebrating 18 years of inspiring music, the Shiron Singers will be in concert 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 14, (Mothers Day) at Temple Sholom. The singers are directed by Elizabeth Wolak and accompanied by

## RECENT DONATIONS

### Community Fund

- In memory of Sylvia Katz, z"l
- In memory of Pola Kleinman, z"l
- In memory of Grete Bayerthal, z"l
- In Honour of Mary Adlersberg & Sally Thorne
- In memory of Mark Rabinowitz, z"l
- In honour of Fran Ritch on the birth of her grandson, Alec

### East Side Food Fund

- In honour of Mary Adlersberg

### Book Fund

- In memory of Sylvia Katz, z"l
- In memory of Sol Malkin, z"l

### Building Fund

- In memory of Pola Kleinman, z"l
- In memory of Mark Rabinowitz, z"l

### Len Ryant Or Shalom Children's Fund

- In memory of Pola Kleinman, z"l
- In memory of Abe Bloch, z"l
- In memory of Mark Rabinowitz, z"l

### Rabbi's Fund

- In memory of Abe Bloch, z"l

### Lisa Nemetz Or Shalom School Education Fund

- In memory of Pola Kleinman, z"l

Acknowledge a birthday, graduation, any auspicious occasion. Celebrate a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, anniversary, marriage, birth, etc. Honour a Yahrtzeit by donating to any of the following Or Shalom funds:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| * Book Fund                  | * Torah Fund                                  |
| * Building Fund              | * Tzedaka Fund                                |
| * Education Fund             | * Len Ryant Or Shalom Children's Fund         |
| * Community Fund             | * Lisa Nemetz Or Shalom School Education Fund |
| * Rabbi's Discretionary Fund |   |

While donors' names will not be published, the name of the person being honoured will be acknowledged

Muriel Morris and will be featuring their own soloists. (Or Shalomniks Gail Hawton, Miriam Caplan and Nancy Newman will be singing.) The program includes classical Hebrew, Yiddish and Broadway songs. Refreshments will be served following the concert. Tickets are \$10 adults and \$8 seniors and students, available from 875-9890.

**NORTHWEST JEWISH MEN'S GATHERING** Rabbi David Zaslow will lead a three-day (Friday through Monday) men's retreat Aug. 25-28 at a high desert retreat centre near Sisters, Ore. Cost of the event,

called "A Celebration of the Great Mother-Shechinah," will cost \$210 including meals and room. Experience a Shabbat filled with drumming, dancing, leaping at the moon, song and poetry with 50 other men from around the Northwest. To register or request a flyer with more details call Heather Marr at (541) 488-7716.

**R' ZASLOW'S SIDDIR AVAILABLE AT BAYIT** A small quantity of Reb David Zaslow's "Siddur for Spiritual Renewal" are available from Or Shalom's Reb David for \$24 each. "Ivdu Et Hashem B'Simcha" (Serve the Holy One with Joy) is a 230-page collection of songs — including Kymn Ryant's "Shechina" — prayers and teachings that open the depths of meaning and feeling in davvening.

## NEW MEMBERS

**Myer Grinshpan** has lived in Vancouver for almost three years. He arrived in Montreal from Europe as a child survivor of the Holocaust. For most of his life he lived in Montreal, and for several periods, lived in Israel.

Born into an Orthodox/Conservative home in Calgary, **Frances Horowitz** was the first in her community to have a Bat Mitzvah. However, when she left Calgary to follow a non-traditional path, she could no longer find a place for herself within a Jewish community. Now, 31 years later, Frances is grateful for Or Shalom where she feels she is being nourished in her return to Judaism.

## KIDDUSH CORNER

By Helen Aqua

**H**ope you've all noticed the copies of the Keren Or calendar posted on the wall by the Shul front doors and on the wall outside the kitchen. I'll be highlighting the dates when the Shabbat Kiddush is potluck so that those of you not receiving Or Shalom e-mail will still know in advance when to bring food to share.

The potlucks have been fabulous! Even with no co'ordination of who's bringing what, we always man-

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age to have a good assortment of food and enough for everyone. Todah raba!

We're getting pretty good at clearing the dishes and tidying up the kitchen prior to Birkat Hamazon and then enjoying some learning with Reb David. Please continue remembering to help with cleanup — it's not working" on Shabbat, it's simply doing what always has to be done following a meal. Now that the weather is getting nicer, we'll be needing to remember to bring dishes in from the yard as well.

The "open" kiddush dates for April and May are: April 1, 8 and 22. Note: The 22nd is during Pesah & the Or Shalom kitchen will be Kosher L'Pesah.

The "open" kiddush dates for May are the 6th, 20th & 27th. Note: The 20th is the May Long Weekend & the Or Shalom retreat. Shabbat davvening still happens at Shul with a smaller group of folks than usual. Its a nice opportunity to host a volunteer kiddush or take part in a potluck.

I'll post an reminder on the Or Shalom e-mail about potluck Shabbats prior to each one in order to give everyone an opportunity to make "a little bit more" for the Friday night meal to share after Shabbat services.

If you'd like to volunteer to host a kiddush, on your own or with others, please let me know. I can be reached at 430-5046 or at haqua@ultranet.ca

## PRACTISE COMMON SCENTS

At this time of year I want to remind shul-goers that there are lots of folks with allergies to flower scents and perfume scents. Please remember that beautiful fragrant flowers and popular perfumes and aftershave can be quite overwhelming for anyone coming to services who has allergies to these scents. Lets enjoy these flowers outside as they grow and use a light touch when applying perfume or aftershave.

## KEREN OR קרן אור

(Beam of Light)

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