

OR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, VANCOUVER SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

<http://www.orshalom.ca>

## Invitation to Dialogue about Israel

“The topic is so difficult, I don’t know where to begin.”  
“I feel paralyzed when someone asks where I stand.”  
“My best friend and I argue, so it’s better to avoid the topic altogether.” “My mixed feelings make me feel like a traitor to both my Zionist and socialist values.”  
So, how do we begin?

The U.S. based Public Conversations Project (PCP) suggests that we begin with respectful living room dialogue. On the PCP model, six to eight people agree to meet regularly over time to discuss a controversial issue, following a two-hour format for structured dialogue, facilitated by a member of the group. PCP offers detailed guidelines and manuals for creating questions, speaking compassionately, and listening carefully.

Some weeks ago, I began to attend a living room dialogue group, discussing issues related to Israel and Palestine. Although I knew everyone in the group very well, at the first dialogue I was surprised to learn that no one held the views I had imaginatively stereotyped them as holding. And, as soon as our formal dialogue time ended, we reverted to our usual social behaviors, and all tried to talk at once! Until that happened, we had not even realized how powerfully we had been drawn into the dialogue format.

On Sunday evening April 19, from 7:00-9:30 pm, I will offer an evening’s introduction to the PCP dialogue format, at Or Shalom. We will discuss the format, formally dialogue for 1.5 hours, and address questions about facilitation. This event can accommodate a maximum of 8 participants. To register, you must be a formal member of Or Shalom, and have organized a group of 5-7 others who would like to join you in several sessions of living room dialogue (but *not* at the April 19 training session). If you would like to sign up, please contact me at [reblaura@telus.net](mailto:reblaura@telus.net) **no later than March 27**, with the names and email addresses of those who have agreed to join your dialogue group.

*Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan*

## עץ חיים היא

### *Etz chayim Hee – She is a Tree of Life*

On Shabbat, January 26, 2009 we were blessed to welcome a *Sefer Torah*, originally written 100 years ago by an Ashkenazi scribe in a beautifully formed, easy-to-read block script and donated in loving memory of Kela Guincher by the Guincher and Micner families.

The weekend was dedicated to celebration and study of this new member of our Aron Kodesh. On Shabbat, visiting Sofer Neil Yerman, who had restored the scroll, told us about its history and gave a humorous presentation about scribal rules. Luis Guincher gave a moving talk about his late wife Kela, a lifelong lover of learning.

On Sunday, Sofer Neil displayed the tools of his trade, unrolled two Torah scrolls, and invited children and teens for a close up look. After lunch, he mesmerized adults with a talk about the mystical meanings of the handwritten letters that add up to a Torah.



### **No cost mitzvah: Give the gift of blood!**

In this time of economic downturn, this is a mitzvah that doesn't take \$'s. It's in you to give! And if you haven't yet become a blood donor, the time is now!! Explore the website to find out more [http://www.blood.ca/CentreApps/Internet/UW\\_V502\\_MainEngine.nsf/page/Join\\_Partners\\_for\\_Life-Member?OpenDocument&CloseMenu](http://www.blood.ca/CentreApps/Internet/UW_V502_MainEngine.nsf/page/Join_Partners_for_Life-Member?OpenDocument&CloseMenu) And if you're one of our regular Or Shalom donors, please remember to register on line at the above noted site. Our organization's ID is ORSH008548

Canadian Blood Services has refined their questionnaire and I am told it is shorter now.

*Ruth Hess Dolgin (on behalf of the Tikkun Olam committee)*

## **Outreach: Jewish and Mount Pleasant Communities**

Did you know that Or Shalom is now involved in outreach endeavours both within the Jewish community and with our Mount Pleasant communities? Two offshoots of the Tikkun Olam Committee is doing this work.

One sub-committee, chaired by Bat Ami Segal, advocates for better social housing for people with disabilities and mental health issues within the Jewish community. It supports the two local housing facilities, Yaffa House and the Tikva Housing Society's Dany Guincher House, by attending monthly Kabbalat Shabbat held at Yaffa House, and reaching out to people served by the Tikva Housing Society. From time to time, the committee attends relevant meetings at city hall. Kabbalat Shabbatot at Yaffa House are community affairs with up to 30 people attending. They are joyous evenings as residents and other community members join together for delicious food, Shabbat songs and friendly schmoozing. *You are cordially invited to attend.*

The second outreach committee is looking at ways to become involved with our neighbour, Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House at 800 East Broadway. We had one activity in the fall, a Global Warming Café, held at Or Shalom. Now we are looking at ways that we can further partner with them and support their activities in our neighbourhood. Stay tuned to volunteer opportunities this Spring! For information about the neighbourhood house go to [www.anhgv.org](http://www.anhgv.org)

### **Wondering How Your Tzedakah Helped?**

As our new editor launches a re-expanded version of Keren Or, your Tikkun Olam Committee is stepping forward to communicate more actively on activities undertaken by and for the Or Shalom community.

We begin with this update from Vicki Robinson whose personal encounter with the Tibetan nuns led her to recommend that Or Shalom include that organization among the causes its supports through your Tzedakah.

In 1990, a small group of refugee women who had crossed the Himalayas to escape Chinese domination banded together with no place to go. Their fledgling efforts at sustaining themselves and their culture has led to a well-established organization that provides for the well-being and education of nearly 700 nuns. The foundational programs of the Project make possible for the nuns to practice their faith, advance in their studies, and move toward self-sufficiency according to their

personal capacities.

In 2008 the Project celebrated several milestones. In May, 65 nuns were able to move into the new Shugsep Nunnery. While construction is not completely finished, the nuns are now in clean, dry housing.

Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute is well-advanced on two major projects: a solar heated shower block and a new debate courtyard. The nuns enjoyed their first winter with hot showers! And in the next monsoon, their outdoor debate sessions can continue even through the rain.

Work for 2009 includes plans to turn the old Shugsep buildings into housing for older nuns currently living on their own. The goal is to establish a facility where they can live in proximity to each other, with the security of a safe, dry room and access to medical care.

All those involved in the Tibetan Nuns Project sincerely appreciate Or Shalom's interest in and support of their ongoing work.

### **Kabbalat Shabbat: YAC and ALL**

Kabbalat Shabbat services are held at Or Shalom the last Friday night of each month at 7 pm, followed by a dairy-vegetarian potluck dinner. Members of YAC (Or Shalom's Young Adult Community) join the regulars, and all of us sing, socialize, and eat together. A lively, intimate, song-filled service lasts approximately one hour, and dinner lasts as long as there is food and energy. The Ritual Committee purchased a small number of special Kabbalat Shabbat siddurim with poetry and songs that make the service more accessible. Reb Laura and Charles, Motti Lis, and Alycia Fridkin are among those who take turns leading. Join us!!!

#### **Passover Seder Outreach**

If you would like to join a Seder, or have room for extra Seder guests, please contact Rory Richards, our Seder Shadchan. Please leave a message for Rory at the Or Shalom office.

**(604) 872-1614**

## Hebrew School Update

Under the leadership of Barabara Halparin, Or Shalom School's Educational Leader, we have purchased several grades of the Chai curriculum from the URJ. The fantastic curriculum promotes active learning, as it focuses on Torah, Prayer, and Mitzvot. It educates teachers as well as students. Teachers also had the opportunity to attend three different Pro-D trainings sponsored by Temple Shalom, the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, and Or Shalom, on topics as diverse as storytelling, God, and helping students with ADD.

The grade K-2 class enjoyed a wonderful Tu BeShevat Seder, co-led by Orith Fogel, Bat-Ami Segal, Reb Laura and Charles. Students shared their appreciation for trees, heard and discussed Shel Silverstein's book *The Giving Tree*, creatively explained how they are like different kinds of fruits, sang & danced, planted herbs, and of course tasted many satisfying treats that do grow on trees!

The bnei mitzvah students participated in the February interfaith youth "Feed the Hungry" project in the Downtown East Side. In May, they will experience JFSA's Canes Enable workshop, raising awareness about many kinds of disability. These tikkun olam activities supplement their regular curriculum of active and intellectual learning in preparation for their synagogue ceremony.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Or Shalom is now a sponsor of TAG, Vancouver's Monday evening teen program! Our own Jordana Corenblum is the director, our Board co-chair Lu Winters is a teacher, four Or Shalom teens are weekly regulars, and many more attend special events. "TAG" stands for *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Chasadim* – Torah, service, and deeds of lovingkindness. Students explore these topics through active learning: games, discussions, and hands-on projects. "Dinner and Discussion" events on emerging topics of interest to teens are also open to parents. Recent topics have included Peace it Together dialogue camp, internet safety, and a screening of the film *Hineini: Coming out in a Jewish High School*.

## Or Shalomnik volunteering with Abayudaya Jews of Uganda

By Lorne Mallin

For years I've had the dream of giving back by volunteering in the developing world. Two years ago I took early retirement from my newspaper job to see

what might open up post-9-to-5. Recently I found the right match – working as a volunteer for a U.S. non-profit called Kulanu (All of Us) with the Abayudaya, the Jews of eastern Uganda in East Africa.

I leave Vancouver April 7 – stopping in Ottawa for Passover with my daughter Lisa – and have made an initial six-month commitment as part of an intention to be of service abroad for two years. Kulanu, a volunteer-run organization, works with lost and dispersed Jewish communities. The Abayudaya (People of Judah in the Luganda language) first embraced Judaism around 1919. Today they number about 800 people, basically subsistence farmers, in villages in the Mbale area.

*The Moses Synagogue at Nabugoye Hill is the Abayudaya's main shul. Services are held Friday night, Shabbat morning, Monday and Thursday mornings and all holidays.*



It won't be clear until I get settled exactly what I'll be doing. Among the possibilities is tutoring in their primary and high schools, teaching computer skills and adult literacy, assisting Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, helping promote their eco-tourism ventures and writing grant proposals. To be more useful as a volunteer I'm currently taking English teacher training.



*Abayudaya students at the Hadassah Primaries School. The boy on the left is wearing one of their distinctive pillbox-style kippot.*

I would love my Or Shalom community to join me in supporting the Abayudaya. I've met with Tikkun Olam Committee co-chairs Helen Waldstein and Ruth Hess-Dolgin to discuss taking tzedakkah with me to support worthy projects.

We held an Abayudaya Fundraiser Cafe downstairs in the bayit on March 15. We served coffee from the Abayudaya-initiated multifaith coffee co-op, Mirembe Kawomera (Delicious Peace), which includes Muslim and Christian growers. It's kosher, organic and fair-trade certified.

We brought coffee – dark, light and decaf – to sell.

We could join a growing movement of shuls, mosques, churches, schools, service clubs, and offices, by importing wholesale amounts for sale to. The coffee is roasted and distributed by Thanksgiving Coffee, in Ft. Bragg, Calif., a family-run business whose slogan is "Not just a cup but a just cup." In Western Canada, the distributor is Global A.P.E. in Airdrie, Alberta, which also has a fair-trade focus.

Once I am in the Abayudaya community I would like to identify a possible tikkun olam project for the Or Shalom community to support at least for the duration of the time I am there – such as a borehole well, micro-credit for businesses, textbooks for the schools, an adult literacy program, hot meals for the school children.

For Bnei Mitzvah projects, a Bar or Bat Mitzvah candidate or group can help support Kulanu's work with the Abayudaya in various ways, such as by bringing in their kippot to sell, setting up an exhibit on the day of the simcha, collecting money to support the schools and other projects. Kulanu suggests one easy and powerful way to raise money is to write a personal letter about Kulanu and include it with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah invitation.

I will be keeping in touch either by blogging or an e-mail newsletter.

More information and photos at:  
[www.kulanu.org/abayudaya](http://www.kulanu.org/abayudaya) and [www.mirembekawomera.com](http://www.mirembekawomera.com)

## Member Involvement Survey

You may have often asked yourself the following questions: How can I become more involved in Or Shalom? How can I contribute more to this community that I love? Many of us want to become more engaged in our community. At the same time, committees often need help.

A few months ago you may remember reading about the Involvement Survey. This survey, which has been sent to you by email, will not only offer you the opportunity to get involved but also help build these valuable connections in our community.

When you receive the survey in your email, please take a few minutes to fill it out and encourage others in your household to do the same. Once you have identified your areas of interest on the survey, you may be contacted in the future, when the need arises. Our hope and intention is to increase participation on a spiritual and community level. We look forward to receiving your responses!

## Purim 2009

Kids' Magic Show, All-ages Megillah Reading, Adult Drumming Circle. It was an evening that couldn't be beat!



*Orith as ' Spring'*



*Princess Eli*



*Party Time!*



*Gentlemen Scholars*

## Upcoming Adult Education Courses

*For more information, go to [www.orshalom.ca/AdultEd2009.pdf](http://www.orshalom.ca/AdultEd2009.pdf) or pick up a brochure in the Or Shalom lobby.*

**The Hassidic Tale and Its Genres**, led by Gloria Levi (Weds. March 11, 18, 25; April 1, 12:00– 1:30 pm)

**Seder Songs**, led by Dr. Charles Kaplan (Wednesday March 25, 7:30 – 9:00 pm)

**Spiritual Preparation for Passover**, led by Dr. Mordehai Wosk (Wednesday April 1, 7:30 –9:00 pm)

**Book Discussion: *Betraying Spinoza***, led by Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan (Weds. April 29 & May 6, 7:30-9:00 pm)

**Universal Questions, Jewish Answers**, led by Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan (Weds. May 27, June 3, June 10, 7:30-9:30 pm)

**Men's Torah Study at the Grind**, led by Frank Segal (alternate Friday mornings, 8:00 am at the Grind, 4125 Main Street; for exact dates contact [franksegal@gmail.com](mailto:franksegal@gmail.com))