

KEREN OR

OR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, VANCOUVER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008

What Shape is Your Teshuvah?

Literally, *teshuvah* means “return.” Figuratively, it means “repentance” -- the yearly process of self-examination and relationship-repair that we are called to each Rosh Hashanah. Just as no two years of a person’s life are the same, so no two processes of *teshuvah* are the same.

Some years, your *teshuvah* might have the shape of a circle. You might mentally retrace your steps through the year, coming back around with the wisdom of hindsight. In the process, you might compile a list of choices you would like to re-make. And, with the energy of Rosh Hashanah motivating you, you might reach out to others and make amends for your mistakes.

Some years, your *teshuvah* might have the shape of a straight line. You might choose one or two personal qualities that need development. And you might work on moving forwards in those areas, along a straight line of improvement. You might meditate on what it could mean to become stronger in your *rachamim* (compassion), *shalom* (peace) or *tzedek* (justice). And you might begin taking those steps forwards.

And some years, your *teshuvah* might have the shape of a spiral. You might take the opportunity for a long-term life assessment. You might articulate to yourself the deep inner and outer changes that have made it possible for you to be a better person. You might remind yourself of the kinds of deep work a person can do in order to spiral upwards in growth. And thus you might notice that you have learned a lot over the years about how to facilitate your own long-lasting *teshuvah*.

Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of a new year, and thus it marks our movement through time. How does time feel to you this year? Are you comforted by recurring seasonal cycles? Dismayed by the inexorable process of maturing and wanting to be sure that “getting older” means “getting better”? Energized by

the experience of living your life more effectively each year?

From the perspective of *teshuvah*, it doesn’t matter. You can circle, push forward, or gradually spiral upward. As long as individuals are taking one of these routes, all will eventually converge at the “end,” i.e., the goal, of time: a healed world.

May 5769 be a year of time well spent!

-- Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan

Visioning Plan Update

The Or Shalom Board has worked diligently to bring to fruition the community Visioning Plan. The Plan is based on the Community Vision Survey, the Community Visioning Day and the Board Visioning Retreat which were all held in 2007. The process was expertly guided by Harriett Lemer. The new Or Shalom Mission and Values Statement were published in a previous issue of Keren Or and today we are pleased to publish the Visioning Plan Goals and Objectives. We have much to accomplish by 2010 and have already initiated plans toward some of our goals and objectives.

Those of you who attended the Community Visioning Day in May 2007 will remember the excitement in the room as we projected ahead to 2017 and envisioned Or Shalom in 10 years time. With that same excitement, we are working towards the future and want to celebrate our vision and our wonderful Or Shalom community.

Join us in Celebrating our Vision on Saturday night, November 1st for a combined AGM, Visioning Party and 30th Anniversary! (Or Shalom first began in the fall of 1978!)

Myrna Rabinowitz and Maurice Bloch, Co-Chairs

Or Shalom Involvement Opportunity!

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? Well here is an opportunity! In the fall, members will be sent out the new *Or Shalom Involvement Survey*. This will offer you another chance to get involved! Many of us want to become more engaged in our community. At the same time, committees often need help. This survey will help build these valuable connections. Once you have identified your areas of interest on the survey, you may be contacted in the future, when the need arises. We hope that you will take a few minutes to fill it out and encourage others in your household to do the same. Our hope and intention is to increase participation on a spiritual and community level. We look forward to receiving your responses!

Gillian Berson for the membership committee

GALA Thanks!!!

In addition to wanting to thank all of the community who came to the gala this year to make it a wonderful and successful event and to the many dedicated volunteers who worked tirelessly to put it on without too many obvious gaffs, the Jewish Independent Newspaper also deserves a big thank you for their generous donation of advertising space. They are offering new Or Shalom subscribers a 20% discount.

*Please call the Jewish Independent
Todah Raba, Lenore Rosen, Gala Chair*

Or Shalom Joins the Drive to Provide Housing

The Tikun Olam Community Involvement sub-committee is supporting two organizations in the Jewish community that are working hard to provide subsidized and supportive housing in Vancouver.

One organization is the Vancouver Yaffa Housing Society, which provides a home for adults living with mental illness and the other is the Tikva Housing Society, which provides subsidized housing for people in financial need.

Homelessness is a serious problem in Vancouver, and these two organizations are working hard to raise awareness and funding to provide as much appropriate housing as possible. Although these are

Jewish organizations, the people who benefit from these efforts come from all backgrounds.

What can you do to help? Volunteer! Tikva housing, with a staff of one half-time administrator, is in particular need of people to do the little tasks that have big impact, from checking on how the laundry room is running to checking on how the residents are doing. And Yaffa House always welcomes volunteers to cook a meal, play a game of cards with residents, or lead a Kabbalat Shabbat. Please contact the office for more information.

At this time of year, the month of Elul, balance is foremost in importance. Balance of personal fulfillment with community mindedness goes a long way as we approach the Gates of the New Year. L'shana Tova!

Susan Katz and the Tikun Olam community sub-committee

Kol Nidre

I'm not sure where in our Holy Books we can find info on forgiveness for typos... but I do ask you to forgive me for the typo on the Kol Nidre Reservation form that was mailed. The form says that Kol Nidre is on Thursday, October 8, 2008, when it's actually WEDNESDAY, October 8. I hope this hasn't caused too much confusion out there.

Laura Rosenthal

Greeters at Schul !

As you may have noticed, there has been a friendly face to meet and greet each Shabbat at Or Shalom. There is a very faithful team of "greeters" who have signed on for this weekly service and I would like to publicly thank them, one and all, for their participation.

Bette

Machzor

Make a New Year's resolution to bring your own machzor (prayer book) to shul this Yom Tov! As you may know, Or Shalom brings a very limited supply to the JCC for the high holidays and we ask that people bring their own. We use the Rabbinical Assembly's version. **Buy yours today directly from Or Shalom for \$30.00**

Contact: Carlos at (604) 872-1614
orshalom@telus.net

The Power of Forgiveness

Rabbi Abba (the scribe of the Zohar) once sat at the gateway of the Town of Lud. He saw a traveler sit down on a pile of rocks at the edge of a mountain overlooking a cliff. The man was exhausted for his journey and immediately fell asleep. R. Abba watched this innocuous scene for a bit until to his dismay he watched as a deadly snake slithered out of the rocks making its way towards to the sleeping man.

[R. Abba, who for some reason was immobilized and transfixed by this unfolding drama,] suddenly watched as a new turn of events happened. A giant lizard jumped out between the rocks and killed the serpent.

R. Abba continued watching and saw that the man stood up and was perplexed to see a beheaded snake lying in front of him. He quickly gathered his possessions and rose to continue his journey. At that instant the pile of rocks he was sitting on collapsed and fell into the ravine below.

The man was about to wander off when R. Abba ran after him and recounted everything he had witnessed. R. Abba asked the man, "My friend to what do you attribute all these miracles that just transpired?"

The traveler at first did not want to be bothered but felt the sincerity of R. Abba's question and confided in him. "Throughout my life I have never let a person harm me, and where I did not pacify him. Never have I gone to sleep without forgiving someone for hurting me in any way. Anyone who would hurt me would I endeavor, with all my heart, to resolve whatever animosity was between us. And lastly, I would turn the hateful situation to doing acts of kindness for the person involved in the misunderstanding."

When R. Abba heard this he burst into tears. This person's actions were greater than Joseph. For Joseph had to deal with his brothers; of course he was going to forgive his brothers. But this man forgives anyone and everyone who has harmed him. It is no surprise that God performs miracles on a daily basis for this blessed man.

Maasiyot HaZohar Vol. 1 P.169 Miktetz P. 201B

From the Depths of the Heart

I have heard from my father the Holy Komarna. One time a Jewish peasant boy came to the big town to celebrate Rosh Hashanah. He didn't know how to pray. He could not even read the letter Alef. He only saw that everyone was traveling to the synagogues to participate in the holy prayers. He thought, "If everybody is going to town I must go too!" He arrived at the town synagogue with his father and watched the congregants crying and singing together swaying to and fro. He turned to his father and asked, "Father, what is this all about?"

His father turned to him and said, "The Holy One blessed be sits enthroned in the heavens and we pray all year long to Him. We especially pray during these two days of Rosh Hashanah when the whole world is being judged and each person is being judged for the rest of the year."

The son responded, "Father, what am I to do since I do not know how to pray?"

His father quickly said to him condescendingly, "All you have to do is be quiet and listen to the other Jews praying. That is enough for you."

"But Father, if I don't know what these people are saying how is that going to effect God's decision? How is being silent going to help me?"

His father became unnerved and blurted out, "Listen, you should be quiet so no one will know you're an ignorant peasant!"

The son stood still for a couple of minutes as his father and the rest of the congregation continued praying and then - the young boy stood up and spoke loudly. "I am going to pray to God in the way I know best. I will whistle to God as I whistle to my flock of sheep."

He began whistling the sweet calling as most shepherds know. His father was enraged. The boy continued whistling with all his might not caring what other people thought. Now, it happened to be, that this particular Rosh Hashanah, all the heavenly gates were shut and suddenly because of this pure whistling of the heart, all the gates burst open. The prayers of Israel were finally heard. *Nachlei Binah P. 317 #632 Tehillim Ben Beiti, Rabbi Eliezer of Komarn*

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL'S NEW EDUCATIONAL LEADER

Or Shalom is pleased to announce that Barbara Halparin has joined our staff as Educational Leader. In this part-time role, she will fulfill many of the duties of a principal for our Hebrew school -- supporting staff, parents and students while developing a strong Jewish Renewal curriculum. Barbara is known to many of you as an outstanding and creative teacher in the Melton Adult Jewish Studies Program.

Barbara brings to her work at Or Shalom a varied educational, professional, and volunteer background. She is a registered nurse and a scholar of religious studies. She has worked with children at Camp Goodtimes and led teen parenting support groups. She has volunteered at BI, Temple Sholom and more. As if that didn't keep her busy enough, she is the mother of three grown daughters and has been proprietor of her own balloon art business for 20 years!

Barbara has already brought her flair to the opening of the school year: welcoming children with a party and communicating with parents about our curriculum. With enthusiasm, warmth, and kindness, she is energizing our team of teachers: Bat-Ami Segal, Maya Goldstein, Orith Fogel, and Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan. Welcome, Barbara!

Tzedka

This year please consider making a gift to the CJA. If you are a first time donor, you may designate up to 75% of your gift to Or Shalom. If you have donated in the past, you can allocate to our congregation 75% of the increase over your last donation.

Electronic Keren Or

The Board is considering an electronic Keren Or in the interests of Tikkun Olam. This will be emailed to all who currently receive Keren Or. Please remember to give your email address when you return your membership renewal or dues payment form.

If you have already sent either of these forms in please call the office manager.

If you do not wish an electronic Keren Or please contact the office manager.

TAG - WE'RE IT!

You may know that TAG is an educational and social program for Jewish teens that promotes experiential learning and critical thinking. But you may not know yet that TAG is Or Shalom's program for Jewish teens!

For many years, Temple Sholom hosted and administered TAG. Thank you, Temple Sholom! Now, three other synagogues (Or Shalom, Beth Israel, and Beth Tikvah) have joined the party, and formed a new steering committee. The committee's first innovation was to relocate the program to the amazing King David High School building, a great space for hands-on learning. And best of all, Or Shalom member Jordana Corenblum is the new director of TAG, and Or Shalom Board Member Lu Winters is one of the core teachers.

TAG meets on Monday evenings from 6:00 - 8:45 pm. Students take 3 elective courses and socialize in between. Students can join the group at any time during the school year. Or Shalom member and TAG student Hillary Kaplan says, "Come to TAG! You'll meet friends."

For more information, contact the office

Notice of AGM

Or Shalom members are invited to the 2008 Annual General Meeting Saturday November 1, 2008 at the bayit, 710 East 10th Ave, Vancouver at 7:30 pm.

Refreshments following.
Havdalah will begin at 7 pm.

AGENDA

Approval of minutes AGM 2007
Report from the Chair
Approval of financial statements year end 2007
Nominations and election for the Board
New business
Adjournment

For further information: 604-872-1614

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