

# KEREN OR

ב"ד

THE NEWSLETTER OF OR SHALOM קרן אור

Or Shalom Jewish Spiritual Community, Vancouver, B.C. orshalom.ca Shevat/Adar/Nisan 5762 February/March 2002

Shevat/Adar/Nisan 5762  
February/March 2002

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## DESPAIR IS THE GREATEST PHAROAH

By Rabbi David Mivasair

As our great green Earth swings through the arc of springtime in these northern climes, winter opens up allowing in more light, greater warmth and hopeful new growth. Every year at this time, we Jews go from the first tickle of new sprouts cracking out of their shells at Tu b'Shvat to the riotous outburst of Purim finally to emerge into purposeful freedom at Pesah.

Pesah is the beginning of a journey not only to freedom but to clarity and commitment as well. After Pesah, the seven weeks of counting the Omer provide a path from the first jubilant but bewildering steps out of slavery to conscious acceptance of commitment at Shavuot and then beyond. Each year the Pesah journey is just as necessary as the year before. Every year at the seder, we strive to know ourselves as going forth from Mitzrayim, from the narrow places that hold us confined, captives to the Pharaohs of our hearts, minds and souls.

This year more than most, I believe we need to crack open the shells that hold us confined so that we too can move once again into freedom and hopeful commitment. In our present Mitzrayim, many among us are being drawn down into a descent through 49 gates of confusion and despair. The Pharaohs of this world constantly deploy their magicians to create an illusion that threatens to convince us all that there is no alternative to ever-continuing war, to the eternal suffering of the poor, to mindless plunder of the Earth's riches. Like our ancestors in the original Mitzrayim, many today see no way out and consequently give up searching. The prophet Isaiah's vision of a "Pesah shel atid" -- a universal Pesah of the future -- a time when all the world will be free from the House of Bondage, from war,

### THE REB SITE

from hunger, from hatred, seems a mere dream, all the more painful to contemplate because of its seeming impossibility. This despair itself is the greatest Pharaoh of them all.



The Baal Shem Tov taught that "Remembrance brings redemption." Each year we travel the sacred path through time and recall our people's steps toward redemption in the past. Our Jewish spiritual practice is intended to change us and to enable us to change the world around us. This spring, as greater physical light re-enters our region of the Earth, may our journey on the Jewish sacred path bring us clarity and rededication to completing the promise of universal redemption in the future. May the lessons of the past -- our people's ability, with the Help of Heaven, to overcome our own tormentors at Purim and at Pesah -- provide us all with faith and inspiration to seek anew the signs pointing the way out of the Mitzrayim of our times.

### NEW IDEAS, NEW QUESTIONS

Each year, the Haggadah guides us to see how we ourselves have gone forth from Mitzrayim. The Haggadah invites us to search anew for how we can further exit from servitude to unworthy masters and be free to fully serve the Holy One. This year, on March 23, the Shabbat afternoon before the seder, Reb David will "dig deeper" to share new insights and ideas for making the seder come alive and invites everyone to bring their own favourite parts of the seder to share. Anyone with questions about the seder -- pragmatic or philosophical -- is invited to ask Reb David or Reb Hillel in the weeks leading up to Pesah.

*PESAH SEDERS, Page 6*

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## EAST SIDE FUND NEEDS CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONTINUE

By Michael Corber

The East Side Fund had a very active "Holiday" season in December. Generous donations helped fund 250 special meals, including all the clients of Sheway Project for women.

This letter was received recently from Karen Bogle, Outreach Worker at Union Gospel Mission in Vancouver's Downtown East Side: "Thank you so much for the generous donation of \$5 meal coupons. At Union Gospel Mission we work with many homeless, hungry and hurting people every day and try to help any way we can. Your gift is of great use to us!

"We have recently been praying for a way to help our clients in a more effective way. Many of them are seriously addicted to hard drugs, infected with HIV and come from backgrounds where they were abused sexually, physically and emotionally. They have no hope in their life and are very hard to reach.

"When the coupons came, we had the idea to invite them out for a meal, so that we can talk to them individually and see what kind of help they may need, and make them aware of the available programs. We know that these people want a way out of the destructive lifestyle that they have become chained to. The meal coupons have proved to be an excellent way to get closer to them so that they can hear of the resources available to help get them off drugs.

"Your kind gift really goes a long way towards making people's lives better. Thank you to the generous friends at Or Shalom."

Your donation to the East Side Fund can be directed to the Administrator at the Or Shalom office.

## THE YAHRZEIT PROJECT

The Or Shalom Yahrzeit Project is constructing a list of names and dates of those whose memories we wish to honour. We will be sending out a list every month of upcoming yahrzeits and we can also send you the yahrzeit dates for the next five years. If you wish to participate you can send the information to R' Hillel Goelman by snail mail (494 East 18th

Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5V 1G1) or e-mail (hillel.goelman@ubc.ca). The information we need:

- 1) Your name, snail mail address, e-mail address and phone number.
- 2) The name(s) of those you wish to honour and your relationships to them. If you have the Hebrew name of the person, please add that as well. The names of non-Jews whom you wish to honour can also be included.
- 3) Include the civil date on which the death occurred and indicate whether or not the death took place before or after sunset on that day.
- 4) If you have the Hebrew date, include that as well, but be sure to include the civil date also.

## OR SHALOM RETREAT MAY 17-20

Camp Hope will again be the setting for the annual Or Shalom retreat. This year it will be held beginning Friday May 17. Mark your calendar!

It promises to be filled with laughter, fun, good food and a wonderful program. For those who wish to celebrate Shavuot at Camp Hope, arrangements have been made for early arrival on Thursday, May 16. If you are interested in helping to plan the upcoming retreat please contact Azima Buell at 731-0572 or email: abuell@jfsa.ca.

## NEW MEMBERS KIDDUSH MARCH 23

The New Members Kiddush is March 23. The Membership committee is sponsoring the kiddush, however donations of baking, salads and beverages are most welcome.

*New members and those interested in Or Shalom are encouraged to phone Carol Pearlstone at 604-669-5173 or Martha Barker at 604 986-6309.*

## CHUTZPAH! IS BACK FEB.23-MARCH 10

Chutzpah!, the second annual Lisa Nemetz Showcase of Jewish Performing Arts, runs from Feb. 23 to March 10, featuring 14 days of music, theatre and dance at the Norman Rothstein Theatre. Tickets and info are available from 604-257-5111. Some of the events with Or Shalom connections include:

- **Shongololo** : Two former South Africans merge music, dance and storytelling to explore universal stories of triumph and loss. With Jo-Anne Pezarro, Cecil Hershler and Wendy Stuart.
- **Leah and Paul, For Example** : Adapting Matt Cohen's translation of Monique Proulx's short story, this play points to the fine line between reality and illusion in the world two lovers create. Starring Chad Hershler and Anna Chatterton.
- **It's All in the Song** : Wendy Stuart, Alisa Kort, Stephen Aberle and friends showcase the work of Vancouver-based composer/lyricist Joan Beckow.
- **Tzimmes** : Their songs range from European Klezmer to Mid-Eastern Sephardi to North American Folk.
- **OLAM Concert** : Local Klezmer-fusion band mixes some old favourites with their latest creations.

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# MIMI FEIGELSON LEADING SHABBATON FEBRUARY 15-17

By Barry Goodman

Or Shalom is pleased, proud and honoured to have Mimi Feigelson join us for a Shabbaton on the weekend of Feb. 15 to 17.

Mimi lives and teaches in Jerusalem. However, she is spending a year teaching at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. The wonderful opportunity of a visit presented itself and we very lucky to have her accept our invitation.

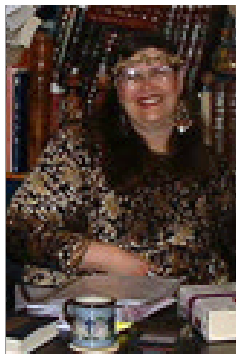
She received her MA in Jewish Thought from the Hebrew University and studied for many years under Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

An expert in Hassidut, she has previously served as Director of the Women's Beit Midrash at Yakar ([www.yakar.org](http://www.yakar.org)) and now teaches Jewish spirituality throughout Israel and the U.S., as well as in India. Several of our own Or Shalomniks have studied with her in Israel.

The weekend begins with Kabbalat Shabbat at shul on Friday at 6 p.m. followed by a potluck and an informal talk with Mimi about her life and work in erez Israel.

The following day (Shabbos), Mimi will give a post-kiddush teaching at shul, and that evening we will have Melave Malka at 8 p.m. — BRING YOUR INSTRUMENTS and a dessert to share. There will also be a women's seudah shlishi at Michal Mivasair's from 5 to 7 p.m.

The weekend concludes with a full-day workshop on the theme of Forgiveness and Compassion. Mimi's outline of the workshop is as follows:



Mimi Feigelson

"R' Zaira merited longevity for never calling any one a name" (The Babalonian Talmud)

"What are the things that we need to ask for forgiveness for? Only things that we are totally aware of? Maybe things that lurk on the border of our consciousness? Is forgiveness only in regard to what we have done or what we have said? What about all those thoughts that roam around in our mind that no one else knows about? Is asking for forgiveness a private act or a public act? How would you want to ask for forgiveness? How would you want to be asked for forgiveness? And what will it take for both of those moments to occur?"

"Are these some of the questions that you think of when you hear the words 'Forgiveness' and 'Compassion'? How do these two major elements of our tradition reveal themselves in our attempt to transform our heart into a temple where the Divine resides?"

"Together we will engage in the learning of traditional texts (Is the Rambam Maimonides the pure intellectual you always held him to be?) and Hassidic teachings that will assist us on this path of revealing some of the ways to incorporate these practices into our everyday life."

Perhaps it is no surprise that Mimi's visit coincides with Parshat Terumah (the offering)!

Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbos events and Malave Malka are free and everyone is welcome. The suggested donation for the Sunday workshop is \$72 (which is very inexpensive compared to the cost of a plane ticket to Israel). Please contact me to register at 604-876-1492 or at [bgood@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:bgood@vcn.bc.ca).

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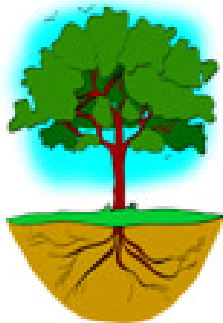
## JOIN THE COMMUNITY IN CELEBRATION FOR TU B'SHVAT AT LOUIS BRIER

". . . God took man and put him into the Garden to work it and guard it."

– *Genesis 1:15*

Tu B'Shvat – the New Year of the trees – is a time when we express our appreciation for the beauty and utility of trees, and also for what they symbolize – growth and renewal!

Come to Louis Brier Home & Hospital, 1055 West 41st Avenue at Oak Street, on Sunday, Jan. 27, at 7 p.m. People of all ages are invited to join Rabbi Ross Singer and the elders of our com-



munity in a traditional Tu B'Shvat seder as created by the mystical Kabbalists of medieval times. Eating the traditional fruits and nuts on this day has symbolic, ritual, spiritual and ecological dimensions that will be explored.

This event is sponsored by Adam va-Adamah Environmental Society, B.C.'s Jewish voice for the environment. Adam va-Adamah is the regional affiliate of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). For more information, visit Adam va-Adamah's website at [www.av-a.org](http://www.av-a.org). or call 604-872-7380.

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## POETRY

### The Word

We came into a room  
where we learned nothing  
but that water washes the ground  
and fire is born.

And so it is for  
the Word

which is given by the  
mother and father  
to the child  
to the  
mother and father  
again  
until all but memory is gone.

— *Zadok*

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### Shaharit — A personal approach to prayer for starting the day

Baruch atta Adonai Eloheynu, Brucha at Shechina,  
Ruah ha-Olam, Ayn ha-Haim, Aym v'Av Kol Hai, Imi Avi,  
You have made me an animal  
with sensual appetites and a body that responds to natural rhythms;  
for all the sweet sensuality of my life, thank You.  
(I recall particularly powerful embodied experiences, an unrequested kiss  
from my child, an impossibly crisp, sweet apple, a movie that brought  
tears, a thundering orgasm — anything that reminds me how good it is to be a  
living creature.)

You are blessed, Shechinah, You are blessed, Adonai my God, Breath of the  
World, Source of Life,  
Imi, Avi, I breathe you in, you breathe me out; I am Yours.  
You have made me in your image for holiness . . . for wholeness.  
For the wholeness of my body, thank You.  
For the wholeness of my spirit, thank You.  
With these tools, help me to make this day holy.  
(I focus on self image, remembering that I am a perfect piece of creation  
and seeing the day ahead of me as holy, if I make it so.)

Baruch atta, Adonai Eloheynu, Brucha at, Shechina,  
Ruah ha-Olam, Ayn ha-Haim, Aym v'Av kol Hai,  
Imi Avi,  
You open the eyes of the blind; help me to see with clarity and  
understanding today.  
You have made me a Jew and shared with me responsibility for the repair of  
the world. Help me to make something better today.  
(I think through the day's challenges and consider opportunities to make a  
difference.)

You are blessed, Adonai my God, You are blessed, Shechinah, Breath of the  
World, Source of Life, Mother/Father of all that lives,  
You uplift the fallen . . . lift me up.  
You give strength and grace to your people, Israel.  
Make me strong . . . lend me grace so that I can move through people's lives  
and do no harm.

For this day and all its gifts, thank You.

— *Micah Waskow*

*I am indebted to Rabbi D. Mivasair for teaching me the traditional Shaharit.  
and to the Or Shalom community for teaching me to pray creatively.*

### On Tu B'Shevat . . .

One day set aside  
to give praise for the trees,  
to see and  
to feel  
the connection between us,  
our roots come together to  
touch gently the earth,  
oh gentle earth  
such abundance to  
hold.

One day set aside  
for that which is offered,  
fruits of the trees  
in colours  
of wind.

Fruits to  
nourish the body,  
and awaken the soul,  
to anchor the spirit  
and uncover a  
joy  
in the sweetness of  
life,  
how fleeting, how fleeting,  
but the offerings  
are there,  
listen, listen,  
the offerings of the  
heart.

One day set aside  
to learn the language  
of wind upon leaves,  
leaves that spill treasures  
back to the earth  
at the end of a season.  
Freely, freely,  
all that is held  
is softly let go,  
in the lives of  
the trees.  
Can I do the same,  
might I do the same,  
will I give  
freely  
what I need  
most?

— *Lisa Shatzky, 2002*

## BOARD SEEKS FEEDBACK ON CONTRACT RENEWAL

The board is busily involved setting in motion mechanisms to get feedback to guide us in our decision on the Reb David's contract renewal. We are putting a questionnaire together for circulation to the community, and will also be looking at additional ways of soliciting feedback from the community. This is proving to be a delicate process but we are confident that everyone will have an opportunity to provide us with feedback and contribute to the decision.

This is in addition to the regular work of the board, which includes fundraising, managing our finances, and other challenges. By the way, anyone interested in helping with fundraising this year should contact Rory Richards at 604-669-0664 as we need tons of help with this.

The Jan. 17 board worked on finalising the rabbi survey and looking at a new decision-making process, among other agenda items. The next two board meetings are at 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 21 and March 21. All are welcome.

— *Kevin Solomons, co-chair*

## GO AND STUDY

### EXPLORING DAVENOLOGY: A COURSE ON TEACHINGS OF REB AHRELE ROTH

*By Rabbi Yair Hillel Goelman*

As a child, adolescent and young adult in Hungary, Reb Ahrele Roth (1896-1947) grew up in a very strict Orthodox community. Like many of us, however, he was deeply troubled by what he saw as a lack of spiritual feeling in the davening in the shuls that he attended. Like many of us, he yearned for a Judaism in which the soul would be awakened and could soar to the highest of heights. In his own attempt to revive — renew — the Judaism of his age, he advocated an intensity of practice based on personal devotion and belief.

I have had the good fortune of being introduced to his work through Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, who began to translate Reb Ahrele's work many years ago. For the past 5 years I have worked with Reb Zalman on these translations, to which I have added commentaries and translations of my own. God willing, this work will be published some time in the next 12 months.

It would be a great honour and privilege to share this material and I will do so in a short course at Or Shalom.

## RECENT DONATIONS

### Bnei Mitzvah Endowment Fund

In memory of Leib Arbetov, z"l

### Community Fund

- In appreciation of David Landsberg
- In memory of Roslyn Kunin's mother, Lola Susser, z"l
  - In honour of Pat Gill joining the Jewish faith
  - In memory of Barbara Bluman, z"l
- In memory of Gabor Mate's mother, Judith, z"l
  - In honour of Sally Thorne's new position as Head of Nursing
- In honour of Bat-Ami and Frank Segal

### East Side Fund

- In honour of Dianne Liscumb's birthday
- In honour of Michael Corber's continuing efforts
  - In memory of Rudeil Tannenbaum, z"l

### Len Ryant Or Shalom Children's Fund

- In appreciation of Lisa Tomlinson

### Rabbi's Fund

- In memory of Leib Arbetov, z"l
- In appreciation of David and Hillel

### Refugee Fund

- In memory of Mindel Minuk, z"l
- In memory of Ida Kozak, z"l

### Tzedaka Fund

- In appreciation of Sue Ackerman

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

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| * Bnei Mitzvah Endowment Fund | * Len Ryant Or Shalom Children's Fund         |
| * Book Fund                   | * Lisa Nemetz Or Shalom School Education Fund |
| * Building Fund               | * Refugee Fund                                |
| * Community Fund              | * Torah Fund                                  |
| * Education Fund              | * Tzedaka Fund                                |
| * East Side Fund              |   |
| * Rabbi's Fund                |   |

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

We will read and discuss aspects of the book and will also investigate some of the meditational practices that Reb Ahrele describes. All are invited to participate in this class. Meeting days and times are:  
Wednesday, Feb. 13, 7:30 p.m.  
Shabbat morning, Feb 23, (9-10 a.m.)  
Wednesday, Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m.  
Wednesday, March 20, 7:30 p.m.



## HEBREW SCHOOL UPDATE

By Bat-Ami Segal, Hebrew School Co-ordinator

More than 50 parents and children attended the Or Shalom annual Chanukah potluck dinner and celebration. Students also attended an Olive Press Workshop presented by Lubavitch, where students were able to extract pure olive oil from olives. This oil was later used in lighting a chanukia.

This Tu B'Shvat, students will participate in an environmental celebration led by Susanna Haas of Adam va-Adamah. They will plant parsley seeds and hope to harvest the parsley to be used at their Pesah seders. They will also have class Tu B'Shvat and Pesah model seders.

As a Tzedaka project, children will be collecting used clothing and it will be brought to Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House for distribution to the needy.

The Hebrew school is currently looking for some Hebrew tutors (possibly two), mostly for tutoring beginning Hebrew, alphabet, vowels and their sounds, and some beginning reading. Tutors could be post-Bnai Mitzvah age. This is a volunteer position, but volunteers will experience a delight in teaching these students and it will certainly be considered a great mitzvah. If you are interested in this please let me know.

## PESAH SEDER: ALL WHO NEED, COME AND JOIN IN

By Rabbi David Mivasair

At every Pesah seder, we open the door, raise a piece of matzah and call out: "*Kol ditzrach, yetei ve-yifshu*" — All who need, come make Pesah. Certainly, we in the Or Shalom community want to "walk the talk" and make this ideal of generosity a reality, not merely unfulfilled words.

Each year, a number of Or Shalom chevra would deeply appreciate an invitation to a home seder. As you plan your seder, please think about chevra who would not be at a seder otherwise. As in past years, Rory Richards (bless her!) has offered to co-ordinate invitations for "kol ditzrach," all who need. If you can offer a place at your seder table or if you would like to receive an invitation, please be in touch with Rory at 604-669-0664 or roryrichards@hotmail.com. Remember what Arie Chark's mother Bryna, z"l, used to say, "If we have room in our heart, we have room at our table."

In addition, some years we have a community seder at Or Shalom. A community seder is a wonderful way for a large group of people to celebrate together. It can provide a warm open door for newcomers to enter our very special community. We can have a community

seder only if several members of the community offer to organize it. I will be happy to help with planning but will need someone else to do all the actual organizing. If you would like to be one of the Or Shalom community seder organizers, contact Reb David at 604-872-1614 or mivasair@aol.com before Purim.

## WEEKDAY SPIRITUAL BEGINNINGS

"*Asader shvahn tsafrā ve-ramsha* — I offer praise morning and evening," sang Rabbi Israel Najara in his classic *Yah Ribon*. Lifting our voices and spirits together in prayer and praise is an amazing way to begin a weekday. Or Shalom's Wednesday morning minyan has met for more than two years. Effron Esseiva leads us most weeks, sweetly and gently opening a melodic path for our davvening and meditation. Most weeks, those who want to say the mourners' kaddish can rely on the community to make a minyan. Some weeks, though, they can't. For your own sake as well as theirs, please consider joining us on Wednesdays 8 to 8:30 a.m.

## NEWS AND SCHMOOZE

**BENJAMIN BARER BAR MITZVAH** Steve, Susan, Benjamin and Ami would like to invite the Or Shalom community to join them as they celebrate Benjamin's Bar Mitzvah. There will be a special Kabbalat Shabbat service at 7 p.m. (not the usual 6 o'clock.) on March 8. Tea, coffee and desserts served following, hosted by the Bar Mitzvah family. On March 9, please join Benjamin as he reads from the Torah and shares his thoughts on the week's parsha at Shabbat services. Everyone is invited to join us for kiddush lunch afterwards.

**VAGINA MONOLOGUES** A reading of the "Vagina Monologues" by Eve Ensler will be held in late February or early March. Please watch the e-mail list and our website for details. If you're interested in reading a part or attending, please contact Janet Esseiva, 604-469-6981, or janetann@sprint.ca.

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(Beam of Light)

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The authors, 2002

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