

KEREN OR

ב"ה

THE NEWSLETTER OF OR SHALOM קרן אור

Or Shalom Jewish Spiritual Community, Vancouver, B.C.

orshalom.ca

Sivan/Tammuz/Av 5762 June/July 2002

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SEE YOU AT THE GALA JUNE 2

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LOOK WITHIN FOR CAUSE OF OUR SUFFERING

By Rabbi David Mivasair

The summer months — Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul — arc through the hottest, driest time of year. In the Land of Israel, the grasses and brush fade brown, waiting for the renewing rains that will come with Sukkot in the autumn. Insects, birds and four-footed animals retreat into the shade or the cool of night to escape the searing heat of the sun. In our Jewish cycle of living and learning, these months lead us into the burning glare of Tisha b'Av, the anniversary of the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, and then beyond.

Tisha b'Av, which begins the evening of July 17 this year, marks the beginning of our Exile. It is the time *par excellence* to reflect on our relationship to the brokenness in our world. The three weeks that begin with the 17th of Tammuz and end on Tisha b'Av guide us to move into and through mourning and then beyond to a stronger sense of empowerment and engagement with the world. The summer arc of the sacred cycle provides those who walk the Jewish path with a time to enter into an inner encounter with the forces that make it so difficult for us all to maintain the Mikdash, the Holy Structure, which is the dwelling place of the Shechina in this world.

The causes of brokenness and destruction, of alienation and exile are many. It is always possible and often very easy to identify others as the cause of our suffering. However, if we are trying to deepen our understanding of our relationship to the brokenness, one of the consistent messages that I hear in the

THE REB SITE

words of our prophets and in our Torah and prayer traditions is the importance of looking within. To approach Tisha b'Av in the spirit of "*Mipnei hatoteinu galinu mi-artseinu* . . . — because of our sins we were driven from our land," as we say in our Musaf davening, is most consistent with the teachings of the prophets and our holy texts.



An artist's concept of the seven-branched menorah from the Second Temple.

To relax our psychological and emotional defences and look at ourselves at the time of Tisha b'Av is far from "blaming the victim." Instead, it is to focus our attention on the only part of the vastly complex web of causes that we can hope to have any control over at all — ourselves. When Isaiah and Jeremiah urged their people to focus on their own deeds in response to the destruction of the First Temple and when the Sages of the Talmud did the same after the destruction of the Second Temple, they were giving our people the direction they needed to fully engage in the *tikkun* necessary for correcting the situation.

Midrash teaches that the *mashia h* will be born on Tisha b'Av. The haftarot for each of the seven Shabbatot between Tisha b'Av and Rosh Ha-Shanah are messages of encouragement and support. By allowing ourselves to enter into the place of grief and by looking at our own relationship to the causes of that grief, our tradition teaches that we can then begin once again on the journey toward wholeness and harmony that we seek. May we use this time in our yearly cycle to draw strength from each other and from our people's teachings.

OR SHALOM GALA JUNE 2

Or Shalom's World Fusion Festival is going to be great fun on Sunday, June 2, at the Vancouver Rowing Club in Stanley Park. Beginning at 7 p.m., the international event features music, food and dance from more than 18 countries. For singles, every hour on the hour there will be optional Schmooze Sessions. This hilarious spin on the now-famous seven-minute dating rituals of the Orthodox Jewish community is sure to have hearts pounding.

Tickets are \$72 and \$36 for students, etc. The event is a fundraiser and tax receipts will be issued for ticket purchases. Call now and book your tickets by phone at 604-603-9262.

SYLVIA BOORSTEIN AT BAYIT JUNE 13

Sylvia Boorstein, one of the most sought-after teachers of Buddhist meditation in North America and a committed practising Jew, will give an evening talk at Or Shalom on Thursday, June 13, at 7 p.m. Sylvia is the author of several best-selling books, including "That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist." She is also a co-founding teacher at the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Marin, Calif., a senior teacher at the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Mass., and a psychotherapist. She has taught as well at Elat Chayyim, the Jewish Renewal movement's retreat centre in New York state.

Tickets to Sylvia's talk at Or Shalom cost \$15 and are available at the door or from Banyen Books. Discount tickets are available on request in advance from Reb David.

Sylvia will be a keynote speaker at the Interfaith Meditation Conference: Inner Peace for Global Peace to be held at the Vancouver School of Theology, UBC, June 14 to 16. The conference will be largely participatory with workshops and presenters representing Buddhist, Christian, First Nations, Jewish, Sufi and Yoga traditions. For more information call Judith Ince at 604-731-8141.



"When I say, 'I take refuge in the sangha (community)' I am encouraged by thinking of people all over the world, members of religious communities or not religious communities, whose lives are dedicated to making sure that their heart stays peaceful and that the world becomes peaceful."

— Sylvia Boorstein

POETRY

... IS THE DREAM OF THE HOLY LAND

When I look into my children's eyes
I see the longing of Israel,
to live in peace
to live in hope
is the dream of the Holy Land.

Though we travel through different pathways
in our wanting to understand,
every day, with each other,
we are crying for the Holy Land.
When she calls to us in the dark of night
like a child of the earth from HaShem
let us go to her with
the best that we have
of the light we carry
from within.

In all our footsteps we are guided
by those who came before,
as we go walking
with our children watching,
let their tears
open the door . . .
To the words of our prophets and the way of love,
to the song of the earth and the power of the
dream,
for these are the gifts
our hearts must defend
and hold in the
highest esteem.

As I look into my children's eyes
I see the longing of Israel,
to live in peace
to live in hope
is the dream of the Holy Land,
is the dream,
is the dream of the Holy Land.

— Alizah Shatzky, 2002

LOVE

Love is so powerful
not even death could pierce its rays of beauty.
Love can't be touched,
a sword would not end its strength and grace.

Love soars above and beyond
until even the angels are touched by its warmth
Even sorrow could not end love.

— Naomi Buell, 1996

SOFT-SPOKEN VOICE OF THOUGHTFUL CONCERN AND STRONG CONVICTIONS

Ed. Note: About a month before Len Wexler died April 6 at age 49, Reb David sent a message to the Or Shalom e-mail list: "Len and Ineke have been thinking that they'd like to receive written messages about our sense of him as a person and our connections with him and compile them as a testimony for their daughter Annalise." Avi Dolgin was among those who responded:

Dear Len, Ineke and Annalise,

It's very hard to put into words the images which I now hold in my mind of Len. As life moves through us in a collection of minutes and hours, we fail to file away those experiences we have with others in order to retrieve them at a later time. Partly it's because we refuse to face the reality that at some point these memories of experiences are all that we will hold. And we never want to be so bold as to guess which of us will be gone and which of us left holding the memories.

Len, it's your voice more than anything that comes to me. That soft-spoken voice of thoughtful concern and strong convictions. Always that moderate speech, looking for the right way to say things, not wishing to be hard on others but needing to be clear in your own mind. Of course much of it comes to me from conversations around the Or Shalom bayit, that labour of love where you wrestled with the reality of an old building and a young congregation. How to get the building to mirror your idea of light? And how to do it within budget? It wasn't just a question of space and materials. It was a values issue — a shower in the basement because we ought to be a refuge for persecuted immigrants, a dome of copper or a menorah of flame because we need to send light into the world. All of these you explained to me in that soft but convinced voice.

Your voice was heard many times in the community on a range of issues. And I know you were always listened to with respect — valued as one who chose his words carefully. But one time especially echoes with your thoughts. The Or Shalom discussion on Patrilineal

Descent. Driven by the personal need to fix things for Annalise, you transcended the personal and became the most clear-headed and eloquent spokesperson for change. Some of that was in public community meetings. But even more so, the discussion on the e-mail list was fueled by your passion and logic. The decision didn't go the way you wanted but, even so, the change in people's thinking that you furthered has made its mark on many of us. I'm very glad that that discussion has been preserved on the website. It's at <http://orshalom.ca/patlin.debate.html> May I suggest that you print it out so that Annalise can appreciate the strength of your mind and feelings.



Lenny Wexler

In February, Len wrote a letter to the editor of the Vancouver Courier pointing out how the values of the provincial Liberal government were at odds with society's core values. Those core values clearly reflected Len's own:

- Be kind to the poor, weak and helpless.
- Respect Mother Nature (Beautiful B.C.).
- Good health is everything.
- Share with others.
- Money isn't everything.
- Equal justice for all.
- Be honest.
- Be humble.
- Take responsibility for your actions.
- Take counsel wisely. Listen to what others have to say.

Ruth, who is reading over my shoulder, agrees with me. And she wants to send a small personal thank you for a piece of professional help. For years we cursed our leaky garage and were finally on the verge of tearing it down. You were at the house, went and looked at the garage, and came back to inform us that some fairly straightforward renovations would extend its life for years. We did them. It worked. We only wish we could offer you the same.

Avi and Ruth

THANK YOU

To all of our friends at Or Shalom,

We'd like to express our gratitude for all the love, care and prayers you have offered to Lenny and our family throughout his illness. The visits, the cards and the e-mails you sent were a wonderful way for Lenny to know how much he was appreciated and loved. Much thanks also for allowing Lenny to be at Or Shalom amongst us, one final time, in such a meaningful and consoling service. We are slowly taking our first steps on a new and yet fragile path. Thank you for walking with us, some of the way.

With love and appreciation,
*Ineke, Annalise
and our extended family*

By Anna Migicovsky

PARASHAT KI TISSAH: MARCH 2, 2002

When I read through the Torah I am sometimes distressed about some aspects of Judaism that are negative. For example, they treated people who were not in their religion badly. Also the violence was unbelievable.

I have some different possible ways to look at the golden calf story in my parsha. When I first started thinking about my Dvar Torah I was very critical. I questioned everything!

For instance, if God is so violent, how can God expect us to be good? God has often been unpredictable in violence. God has hurt more than enough people in different processes. God sent the 10 plagues, killed the first son and killed people who did not believe in the Hebrew God. And this He said to us, the Israelites, "If I were in your midst for one moment I would destroy you" (33:5 Exodus). Which leads us into the next question:

Can we trust this God? After all, as our reading begins, Moses is missing, gone; they don't know if he's coming back. So why not the golden calf? At least the Israelites were familiar with idols (they just came from Egypt where they had them.) The Israelites knew that God has a very short temper; God could blow up the world in one second. How could they be sure that Moses didn't get into an argument with God and God killed Moses? Anything could happen. If God had killed Moses, what then would happen to the Israelites?

On the other hand, why shouldn't they trust God? God just finished helping the Jews out of Egypt and now was keeping them from dying in the desert. If you look at it, God does so much for them but then again God's responsible for them, too. God was the One who made them in the first place. Why didn't the Israelites have faith that God wouldn't abandon them?

If Moses were dead, would the golden calf have been a good replacement? Well, let's say Moses was dead, so they made another god because there was a chance that Moses wouldn't come back. They felt they needed a symbol, right then and there! They made the golden calf just in case. Example: if you lost your homework on the weekend, you still have

a chance on finding it. But you'd rather take that chance and do your homework again. Even if you did find your homework before Monday it would be all right. You'd look at both versions of your homework and hand the best one into the teacher. So the Israelites took that chance but when Moses came back, the golden calf was definitely out. They went back to the Hebrew God.

Aside from the questions for the golden calf, I came up with some general questions, which I kept asking myself.

Is it harder for Jews to be believers in God now as compared to ancient times? I wouldn't really know but I still have some thoughts on this. Can you imagine having direct words with God? Direct as in you can actually see God or the object that God goes down to Earth in, which in the case of my Torah reading was a column of cloud. In my part that I read, all the Israelites actually see God talking to Moses! In this day and age we only have a Torah, which a person could think was fiction. Boy, were they lucky back then.



As I've been preparing for my Bat Mitzvah, I've also had an assignment from school to analyze Paul Simon's song "The Sounds of Silence." There was a point when I realized that the children of Israel and the people in "The Sounds of Silence" have a lot in common. They both don't seem to have a spiritual rudder. Rather, they are both worshipping the god of wealth.

The children of Israel opt quickly for a golden calf when their leader Moses doesn't return on time. In "The Sounds of Silence," the words of the prophets are written on the subway walls. What really are written on subway wall are advertisements. The message of advertisements are "Buy this product and you will be happy, safe and secure." That is exactly what the children of Israel wanted from the golden calf. Both groups substituted material objects for spiritual connection.

I'd like to leave you with this take-home message from today's Torah portion. Material objects are no substitute for spiritual anchors. For some, the spiritual anchor is prayer and the belief in God. For others, it is knowing, from the inside out, the difference between right and wrong.

GO AND STUDY

SUMMER MINI-ULPAN EXPANDS COURSES

The Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver is expanding immersion courses in Modern Hebrew at the Vancouver Summer Mini-Ulpan, which was launched two years ago at Or Shalom. This year, a beginners course has been added. Students in the program at the JCC learn through talking, listening, videos, games, songs, reading, writing and optional field trips.



The course dates are: Level Aleph (reading Hebrew required) Aug.12-16; Level Aleph Plus (Beginners plus) Aug. 20-24; Level Beit (Low Intermediate) Aug. 27-31. Instructors are Rahel Halabe and Shoshana Hofman, both Israelis with many years of experience teaching Hebrew in the Lower Mainland.

Hours of study are 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, at the JCC. Cost per course is \$315; after July 14 \$360. JCC members get a \$25 discount. Materials cost about \$25.

Please contact Rahel or Shoshana for evaluation of your level before registering. Rahel Halabe 604-879-2677 or rahel@telus.net; Shoshana Hofman 604-273-0424 or Hofmans@shaw.ca.

For information, contact Annica Carlsson Hyman, seniors @jccgv.bc.ca, 604-257-5111. Websites: www.jccgv.com/adult/mini_ulpan.htm, www.hebrew-with-halabe.com.

LOOKING AHEAD TO LEARNING IN THE FALL

The vast treasure of Jewish spiritual learning is sometimes referred to as a "sea." One can enter anywhere and swim to anywhere else. I would love to get together with others in the Or Shalom community who are interested in learning beyond the basics to talk over what kind of learning we want next fall. For example, I would love to take a deep look into the Book of Job. It addresses very contemporary questions of faith in the face of undeserved suffering and the apparent chaotic nature of this world.

Are there others in the community who would like to join in an exploration of the text and the issues? Are there other texts, other sources that would draw a group together? Are there thematic issues that we'd like to pursue? If you'd like to help shape our learning in the new Jewish year, please be in touch.

— *David Mivasair*

RECENT DONATIONS

Building Fund

- In honour of Benjamin Barer's Bar Mitzvah
- In appreciation of Reb David's warm honouring of Annalise Ballin
 - In memory of Len Wexler, z"l
 - In memory of Morris Wosk, z"l

Community Fund

- In honour of Lena Arbetov's birthday
- In honour of Benjamin Barer's Bar Mitzvah
- In honour of Jacob Sweedler's Bar Mitzvah

East Side Food Fund

- On the occasion of the yahrtzeit of Regina Menczer

Rabbi's Fund

- In appreciation of Rory Richards
- In appreciation of Rabbi David

Refugee Fund

- In memory of Paula Cohen, z"l
- In honour of the Bat Mitzvah of Nomi Mate
- In memory of Clara Kaufman, 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 Or Shalom funds.

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

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

NEXT YEAR'S BNEI MITZVAH MEET JUNE 23

Kids looking forward to becoming bnei mitzvah next year at Or Shalom will meet with Reb David on Sunday evening, June 23, from 7:30 to 9 p.m., at the home of Catherine Berris and Grant Chernick to talk over the year ahead.

We're considering adding to the current BiYahad program of five Sunday morning sessions more learning of Jewish traditions and might add a special day for the girls to meet with their moms and other women and for the boys to meet with their dads and other men to explore the beauties of being Jewish women and Jewish men. Anyone who has not contacted Reb David to schedule a bar or bat mitzvah next year should do so.

MILESTONES

CONDOLENCES Our community extends heart-felt sympathies to Mordehai and Hana Wosk and sons on the passing of Mordehai's father, Morris J. Wosk, a generous benefactor of Jewry everywhere and humanity in general. He and his late wife Dena and family donated a Sefer Torah and crown to Or Shalom, as well as the Aron Kodesh and chandelier.

CONGRATULATIONS Our community delights in the birth of Malka, a new daughter to Tim Oberlander and Julie Martz, new sister to Ariel and Shubby (Talia), and new niece to Wendy and Judy Oberlander and Mark Wexler.

NEWS AND SCHMOOZE

THANK YOU Jen, Steve, Daniel and Ilan Wright wish to thank all of you very much for the support, care, messages, hugs, visits, etc., you have shown for us after Daniel's accident. We are very thankful to have a community like Or Shalom!

NEW TO OR SHALOM? 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.

JEWISH FOOD BANK DONATIONS BOX Or Shalom has become a permanent site to accept donations for the Food Bank. There are boxes set out in the front entrance for donations of non-perishable items. Consider bringing an item for the food bank when coming to the shul. Donations are delivered from Or Shalom for distribution twice monthly. Remember the food need not be kosher. As long as the food does not contain any meat, shellfish or their by-products (gelatine, rennet, unspecified fats etc.), it is fine for our food bank. Occasional shleppers with strong backs are needed to take the boxes over to the Peretz Centre. E-mail: jennwright@telus.net if interested.

SYMPOSIUM FOR SINGLE PARENTS Many agencies and synagogues have come together to support our children by caring for their parents. On Sunday, June 23, there will be a day-long symposium at the JCC, The Joys and Challenges of Parenting Soul-O, from 10 to 3. It will include workshops on parenting, raising kids Jewish, financial planning, self-care and relationship building. There will be childcare, lunch and an opportunity to end the symposium by relaxing in the JCC facilities. The symposium, including childcare and lunch, will be free to those who register before June 12. After that there will be a \$10 fee. If you would like to register, please call Jewish Family Services at 257-5151. For information, call Azima Buell at the same number.

ADAM VA-ADAMAH WILDERNESS SHABBATON JUNE 7-9 IN THE ELAHO

By Shlomi Lipari

Adam va-Adamah Environmental Society will hold its annual Wilderness Shabbaton in the Elaho Valley on June 7-9. This shabbaton, held in conjunction with the Witness Program, gives urban Jews an opportunity to experience the beauty of this wilderness region, the effects of logging practices and the rich traditions of the Squamish Nation, while honouring Shabbat.



The Wilderness Shabbaton will show the effects of logging

Car pools plan to depart from the church parking lot at the corner of Taylor Way and Highway 1 in

West Vancouver on Friday, June 7, at 3 p.m., in order to make the four-hour drive and set up in time for Shabbat. The shabbaton ends around noon on Sunday.

Participants bring their own tents, sleeping bags, food and water. Feel free to bring siddurim, chumashim, candles and other items to celebrate Shabbat.

For more information and to register, contact Michael Barkusky at 604-874-4118, mb@mbcga.bc. Website: www.av-a.org

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(Beam of Light)

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