

KEREN OR

OR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, VANCOUVER

JUNE/JULY 2006

SEVENTY FACES OF TORAH

The rituals of Judaism's three "pilgrimage festivals" remind us of dramatic moments in early Israelite history. On Sukkot we build the temporary shelters of wilderness wanderers; at

Pesach we reflect on the exodus from Egypt; and at Shavuot we receive the Torah as if we were on the original vigil at Mount Sinai.

Last year just before Shavuot, a group of fifteen Or Shalomniks gathered to visualize ourselves at the foot of Mount Sinai, watching the thunderstorm and hearing the words of revelation. Each of us reported having a unique experience. One of us was awed; another frightened; one was reflective; another was skeptical. Each of us learned something about how we process our relationship with God and Torah. Each of us received a different teaching.

Together we calculated, based on the Torah's census numbers, that 1,206,000 adult Israelites were present on Mount Sinai. Because each person brought a unique set of thoughts and feelings to Sinai, it was likely that 1,206,000 different teachings were received that day! Thus, we concluded, began the long Jewish tradition of reading Torah creatively and seeing multiple meanings in every passage.

This tradition is affirmed explicitly in the Talmud. "There are seventy faces to Torah" our sages teach. "These and these are the words of the living God." "The Torah is not heaven." Our acts of interpretation reveal the seventy faces. Our good faith debates about Judaism express our commitment to a spiritual life. Our thoughts, feelings, and conclusions are where the Torah lives. Each time we study and debate, we stand symbolically at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Each time a bar or bat mitzvah prepares a *d'var Torah*, he or she also stands symbolically at the foot of Mount

Sinai and is initiated into the Jewish tradition of interpreting Torah. Each youth brings a unique set of questions, thoughts, and feelings to learning about our tradition. Some are moved to learn about our history, and ask, "How did people think about their bodies and souls three thousand years ago?" Some use Torah study as an opportunity to develop their own consciences, asking, "How do my views on these important ethical issues compare to the Torah's view?" Others want to update the approaches offered in Torah, asking, "How can I, living in the 21st century, achieve the goals described here?" Each question yields a new and unique interpretation, revealing another face of Torah, another statement from the living God.

Perhaps this Shavuot each of us can join our b'nei mitzvah at the mountain of revelation and make a commitment for the coming year: to read, listen, reflect and discuss, so that a new face of Torah is revealed.

--Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan

**TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT, Thursday evening
June 1, 9:00 p.m. – 12:00 midnight at Or Shalom.**
A powerful teaching by Mordechai Wosk on "Mass Conversion at Sinai," followed by a healing potluck dessert snack and contemplative prayer.

HIGH HOLIDAY PLANNING

The Ritual Committee will begin HH planning at its June 7 meeting. If you are interested in helping to create the high holiday experience – by leading prayers, leyning, offering children's programming, serving on a logistical subcommittee – please let Reb Laura know by June 6. Email her at reblaura@telus.net



Calling All Past B'nei Mitzvah: Please join us at Or Shalom on Saturday June 3 for Shabbat Shavuot services at 10:00 a.m. We would like to honour you with a special group aliyah. What better way to celebrate the festival of receiving Torah than by remembering the day you were first called to the Torah? Erin Chang, who is celebrating her bat mitzvah that day, would be honored if you would come. If you can join us, please contact Or Shalom Program Director David Fainsilber by June 1 at orshalomprograms@telus.net

**HASSIDIC REBBES
COME TO HORNBY
August 25 – 27, 2006**

Cost: \$160 Can.
(includes four meals)

Sign-up: Cecil or Ruth
hershler@shaw.ca

Engage yourself in conversation with many of the teachings of Hassidic rebbes from the past as they come to life in a joyous Shabbaton on Hornby Island in beautiful British Columbia. **Rabbi Daniel Siegel**

will share the wisdom and insight of these teachings in four sessions - Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. **Rabbi Hanna Tiferet Siegel** will join with Reb Daniel to craft our davvenen experiences.

REMEMBER THESE DATES

June 13: The talk to be given by *Rabbi Mordechai (Marc) Gafni* is CANCELLED.

June 14: *Marcia Prager's* The Path of Blessing: A Book Discussion. Wednesday evenings, June 14 & 21, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. at Or Shalom. Join us for a study of the many layers of spiritual meaning in the simple blessing formula “Barukh Ata ...” Rabbi Prager’s book is available at amazon.ca. The first meeting will focus on ideas from pages 1-69.

August 2: *Tisha B’Av* will be observed Wednesday evening August 2 at 7:30 p.m with the reading of the heartbreaking biblical book of Eichah/Lamentations, followed by a lecture and discussion. Details TBA.

From the Membership Committee

Thank you to all who joined us in welcoming our new members at the New Members Shabbat in April. We are thrilled to have so many wonderful newcomers to Or Shalom!

In order to improve the ways in which we serve the community, the membership committee is looking for it own new members. If our work appeals to **you**, please give us a call! Here is what we are up to: It is our mandate to reach out and warmly welcome visitors as well as new members. We are also responsible for overseeing the application process. Our current aims include redesigning and improving the printed materials related to membership. We are embarking on creating and developing a data base and a computer program that will help us keep track of all members’ interests and skills. We do need help with this project. Call any of us (604-872-1614) to discuss your ideas and potential involvement with our committee.

--- Hana Wosk, Martha Barker, Fran Ritch

The response to the Maccabi games has been overwhelming.

HOSTS NEEDED!!!

mattresses provided

More host families are needed to accommodate visiting athletes, August 13 – 18.

For further information contact Linda Tenenbaum 604-257-5147 maccabi@vancouvermaccabi.org

A MESSAGE FROM HANNA TIFERET

It was an awesome gift for Daniel and I to be your guests at the Or Shalom Retreat this year. Thank you for inviting us to share in all that you have become since we first began together almost thirty years ago. --Love and Blessings, Hanna Tiferet

To learn more about Hanna and Daniel please visit HannaTiferet.com and Aleph.org

RETREAT INDEX

- *number of participants* 152
- *number of first timers* 63
- *oldest retreaters* 70+
- *youngest retreaters* 8 months
- *number of homeruns* 2