

KEREN OR

Rosh Hashanah 5779 - September 2018 Edition

A publication of Or Shalom Synagogue

Dear *Kehilah Kedosha* – Dear Holy Community,

As I write to you, counting down to the *Yamim Noraim* – the Days of Awe, we are immersed in *Elul*, the last month of the Jewish year. It is a month of contrition and forgiveness, and our tradition teaches that *Elul* is also an *et ratzon* – a “time of [heightened] desire,” during which God longs for us, the prodigal children, on our way home for the holidays.

Soon, we’ll gather in community, returning to the fold to unburden ourselves of our adventures and misadventures, to check in, to be counted amongst our kin, and drink deeply of what sustains us.



I like to think that as the year comes 'round we're not just circling, but spiraling upward, or inward, each year's return a step toward our very best selves. Our tradition offers the story of Reb Zusia of Hanipol, a great *tsaddik* of the 18th century, who, in the moments before death, wept uncontrollably. His students tried to comfort him telling him he was almost as wise as Moses and as kind as Abraham. But the *rebbe* replied: “When I get to Heaven, I will not be asked, ‘Why weren’t you like Moses?’, or ‘Why weren’t you like Abraham?’ I will be asked, ‘Why weren’t you like Zusia?’ Why did I not live up to my own potential?” This is always the question of the High and Holy Days: how can we become more and more of who we long to be? The Days of Awe are an *et ratzon* – a time of heightened desire.

There are many ways home to our best selves. This year, in 5779, Or Shalom offers a new path, an experiment we're calling *Zusia: the Bet Midrash at Or Shalom*. Our *Zusia* will be a house of study offering opportunity for deeper engagement in Jewish history, text, culture, and custom. Our sessions will begin and end in song practice or meditation, and initial offerings may include a weekly year-long course in Jewish history; five-week commitments to *chevruta*-style (partnered pairs) study of Psalms, Hassidic text, and Talmud; heart-centered Torah study; a class in Seder prep; and seven weeks of Omer practice. It is my hope that adding this new portal to the avenues already provided by Or Shalom – prayer and chant, care for one another in times of need, social activism, multi-faith sharing, education of our children, holiday celebrations, and community building – will open space for those of us drawn to *study* as our expression of involvement in Jewish life. *Zusia* will be open to the community at large, an invitation to profound learning in a liberal context.

May this be a year in which we elevate ourselves and the world in which we live.

Shana Tova!

Rabbi Hannah Dresner

Update from the Co-Chairs

Michelle Koski and Allyson Rayner

Or Shalom is growing and thriving. In the past year, we have welcomed 30 new members to our community! It's through programs such as Exploring Judaism, Chanting & Chocolate, and More Talmud that we are drawing new families, spiritual seekers, interfaith families, and LGBTQ people to our wonderful shul!

Or Shalom is at an inflection point; all this growth and excitement around our programming is placing new demands on our very committed, and in some cases, very tired volunteers as well as on our beloved rabbi. Or Shalom will need to look at new ways of managing and governing beyond its traditional volunteer and lay-led structures. Being able to know our community...to really understand our needs is critical in order to offer a full range of life cycle programming and spiritual activities. With this exciting but challenging context in mind, our top Board priorities include:

- Improving our communications within the Or Shalom community and expanding our ability to reach out and beyond Or Shalom. This means an increased budget to engage professional communications and marketing services.

- Increasing and deepening the lay participation in davening and other activities. This means developing programs that foster the development of new davening leaders as well as enriching current leaders.

- Professionalising aspects of Or Shalom's management and governance structures. Ultimately this looks like hiring staff to do jobs that have been traditionally done by volunteers at Or Shalom.

- Continuing to offer unique and comprehensive programs aimed at all life cycles. This means an increased budget to allow for the creation and curation of events, programs, teachers, speakers, and retreats.

Finally, as we will be stepping down in November, as are several other Board members, please consider joining the Or Shalom Board. Please speak to one of us or Linda Peritz if you have any questions or are interested!



Keren Or - Rosh Hashanah 5779



Young Families Delight in Shabbat Sheli

Yael Heffer

This past year we continued to grow and develop our monthly program for young families at Or Shalom: Shabbat Sheli. Through story time, song, and interactive elements, children came together to learn about the Torah and Shabbat, holidays like Passover and Shavuot, and about values such as kindness and gratitude. Each gathering culminated in the Torah procession, which, now going on three years, has become a beloved Or Shalom tradition for children and adults alike.

At Or Shalom we want to enrich families with spiritual education that is experiential, fun, accessible, and participatory. This spring parents attended a special meeting with Rabbi Hannah; our program coordinator, Shelley Stein-Wotten; and myself to give their feedback and tell us about their wishes and dreams for the future so that we can co-create family programming that fosters a sense of community and Jewish spiritual enrichment. Our brainstorming was inspiring and insightful! We have already created a special listserv platform for Or Shalom families to communicate among themselves and are also supporting opportunities for families to get together in between Shabbat Sheli, such as for potluck Friday night dinners.

This upcoming year, we will be offering a monthly three-to-six-year-old Shabbat Sheli program, which will build on its past strengths. We will focus on introducing new songs as well as blessings and practices that can be incorporated into daily family life. We will encourage wonder and discovery and appreciation of our world, our tradition, and our

community, and we will continue to find ways to integrate young families into the broader Or Shalom community as part of our collective wish to flourish as a vibrant, intergenerational congregation.



If you would like to know more about or become part of our Shabbat Sheli cohort, please email Shelley at programs@orshalom.ca.



We Could Not Do It Without You

Ros Kunin, Chair, Strategic Financial Planning Committee

Or Shalom is special. One unique feature that makes us different from many other shuls is that we are a participatory community. Whether it is leading davening, teaching Talmud, offering chanting, or cooking for our weekly potluck kiddushes (which we hear are quite unique in Vancouver), we the members do it. In other respects, we are very much like other congregations. We still need money for a rabbi, for our hardworking staff, for our programs, and to keep our building safe and functional. Being inclusive, members can pay the level of fees they can afford, and most do pay the suggested amount. However, this covers only half of our regular operating budget. Here is where Or Shalom's participatory practices come to the rescue. Almost everyone contributes what they can to the annual campaign that keeps us financially afloat. Unless they told us otherwise, their names are listed here*. A big *toda raba* to everyone for your support and for the ideas and issues you shared with us. We could not do it without you!

2018/5778 Donors

Ineke Aardema
Dale Adams & Zelik Segal
Mary Adlersberg & Sally Thorne
Susan Albersheim & Steven Barer
Sandi Asch
Shirley & Peter Ballin
Tamar & Gabriel Bandel
Martha & John Barker
Cathie Best & Richard Menkis
Susan & Maurice Bloch
Eleanor Boyle & Harley Rothstein
Esther Chetner
Claire Cohen
Sandra & Charles Cohen
Michael Corber
Aur Danzig
Ann Daskal
Emet Davis & Jill Beamish
Robbie Chesick & Yoni Gordis
Jacqueline Day
Val & Noam Dolgin
Erna Dominey
Rabbi Hannah Dresner & Ross Andelman
Miriam Eguchi
Janet & Effron Esseiva
Robert Ezzy
Zelda Fedder
Abigail Fitch-Wvong & Russil Wvong
Lynn & Michal Fox
Carol Ann Fried
Robin Friedlander
Sally & Michael Geller
Patricia Gill & John Fuerst
Mary Gillis & David Berson

Earl Goldstein & Brian Kirk
Anne Gorsuch & Hal Siden
Lorne Greenberg
Patricia Gruben & Martin Gotfrit
Ellen Hamer
Sandy & Michael Hayden
Yael Heffer
Ruth & Cecil Hershler
Jane Heyman & Lionel Johnston
Amanda Hill & Barry Segal
Dodie Katzenstein & Martin Puterman
Daniel Kauffman
Rozanne Kipnes & Geoffrey Druker
Michelle Koski
Roslyn & Jack Kunin
Glen Leader
Harriett Lemer & Ron Einblau
Gloria Levi
Jacqueline Levitin
Shira Macklin
Maria Maldonado & Philippe Tortell
Reva Malkin
Lorne Mallin
Josh Malt & Gordon Fitt
Heidi Mannis
Dalia Margalit-Faircloth
Dani & George Mate
Tammy & Paul McCurry
Rabbi Dina-Hasida Mercy
Anton Miller
Phillip Moses
Julie Martz & Tim Oberlander
Anna Negrin & Samantha Simpson
Judy Oberlander & Mark Wexler
Wendy Oberlander
Mira Oreck & Stepan Vdovine

Avril Orloff
 Clo Ostrove & Judy Globerman
 Sandy & Ian Penn
 Linda Peritz
 Karen Rabinovitch & Motti Lis
 Myrna & Barry Rabinowitz
 Arayana Rayne & Louis Klein
 Adele Ritch & Dianne Liscumb
 Fran Ritch
 Vicki Robinson
 Deborah Ross-Grayman & Henry Grayman
 Wendy Rubin & Andrew Jordan
 Karen Rudner-Zetler & Peter Zetler
 Tilly Schalkwyk & David Kauffman
 Rabbi Susan Shamash
 Ezra Shanken
 Jack Sniderman
 Sheryl Sorokin & Hillel Goelman
 Ruth Stewart & David Hsu
 Esther Tennenhouse & Ron Klassen
 Deborah Tobias & Kevin Solomons
 Jennie Virtue
 Lezlie Wagman
 Helen Waldstein
 Richard Wassersug
 Shira Weidenbaum
 Twilla & Mark Welch
 Rima Wilkes
 Jaydeen & Rachel Williams Rabinovitch
 Mark Winston
 Hana & Mordechai Wosk
 Leora Zalik
 Katheryn Zemliya
 Sam Znaimer

*This donor list was compiled on June 30, 2018, as of the newsletter printing deadline. If we have inadvertently omitted your name, please accept our sincere apologies for the oversight. Thanks.

Nechama

Lorne Prupas and Ross Andelman

Grieving for the loss of a close relative extends beyond the Shiva, but, after the community has reached out during that initial period, the bereaved often feels forgotten. Nechama, meaning comfort, is composed of members of the Gemilut Chesed Committee (see page 8 for more), and its mandate is to extend the comfort offered by the congregation through the traditional 11 months of saying Kaddish.

“And what would someone be offering?” you might ask. The short and simple answer is, “support.” The

support might take many forms. The first, though, is the simple act of reaching out done by a member of Nechama to the bereaved letting them know that, in addition to family and close friends, their Or Shalom family also cares for and about them. Frankly, often that is sufficient. Many people contacted by Nechama express gratitude for the expression of care and concern for them, and that is sufficient. Others, however, are grateful for a little more attention, a listening ear, as they navigate the first year of mourning. The Nechama member might offer to take the bereaved out for coffee occasionally. They may join the bereaved in shul when they are saying *kaddish*. Or they may simply have the occasional chat in shul or over the phone as the bereaved comes to terms with their loss. The offer and acceptance of Nechama can foster an unexpected long-term bond – you reached out; you also lost your mom a few years ago.

No one offering Nechama is expected to be a trained mental health professional. In fact, the opposite might be more valuable to the bereaved following the *shiva*. Comfort and caring come in many forms and can be offered by everyone in our community. Even asking to accompany the bereaved on a walk can be of great comfort. That too, we think, would be a great gift from someone of Nechama to one who is bereaved.

We do have several members, but we are always looking for more. And sometimes, we might even call a non-member if we think you might be an especially good fit for someone with a recent loss. If you would like to join and be considered to be a listener for someone in their time of loss, or if you just want to learn more about it, please contact one of us, or let Tracey at the Or Shalom office know and she will be sure to pass your name on to us. Really, there is little training needed to join Nechama, save a desire to be openhearted, and a willingness to offer care and compassion to someone who is bereft. B'shalom.



Our Women's Heart-Centred Torah Study

Dael Adams Segal

*"She is a tree of life
More precious than gold
Hold her in your heart and you will understand"
Eitz Chaim Hi*



In the spring of 2016, I approached Rabbi Hannah with a request – that we create and offer a women's Torah study group: no fees, registrations, experience, nor prerequisite – just the welcome invitation to come together and

open the pages of our Torah to see what might come into the Torah of our lives. We envisioned together a heart-centred study. Together we created a container of time and of shape: two hours, downstairs in the shul, out of the world into a holy quiet space, a *niggun*, a meditation, a dedication, a blessing, an offering, a responsive writing, then a sharing accompanied by, "I have spoken," and an answer, "I have heard you." We end with a hands-held song of *Kaddish d'Rabannan* (a Prayer for Peace for our teacher and their students and the world), our return as we re-enter the upstairs-outside-world.

What arrived for us over the next two years was page upon page of meaning, story, tears, questions, hugs, sighs, and wonder in discovering what we found. I reached out to our group, asking them to share what had been most meaningful for them. Here are excerpts:

**I owned the Hertz, Hirsch, Plaut, Friedman, Rashi, and Nehama Leibowitz. Lots of rabbis and teachers to consult, but I never felt any significant connection or ease with the weekly study of the Torah. Discussing the Torah during services was an exercise of intellect. Studying here with my sisters allows me to express deeper thoughts I would not feel comfortable expressing in a congregational setting. Most exciting for me is the writing. Writing helps me find my soul. I am grateful. In class I hear poetry, laughter, cries, blessings, and curses. Each story that is shared throws holy sparks. And there, in this space, I catch them.*

**The strength of our group discussions begins with the peaceful contemplative atmosphere in which we place ourselves at the beginning. Our sense of a shared engagement, a free flow of ideas from the literal Torah text to the broad metaphysical and human dimensions it inspires; it's very specific resonances in our personal lives are all made possible by the feeling of support and care among us all.*

**It is the time given to writing that gives each of us a space to connect deeply with ourselves and the Torah. The sharing then comes from a deep place within; I find that really engaging.*

**For me it was the intimacy and safety of the circle that allowed for inner feelings to come forth and be able to see the beauty of the Torah, how it touches our lives.*

**What does it mean when the Torah, for the first time, becomes a living text filled with thoughts that have meaning in the context of your life? This women's group brings me great joy, sometimes tears, and definitely an understanding of the text that I had never considered possible. My life is better for being there.*

**It is about the richness of the book of books, about the study, the encounter, and the inner reflections. It is a journey where we walk from Pshat/Simple to Drash/ Interpretation of the Torah and of our lives – a journey where we explore the meaning of the text and learn where it meets each one of us.*

Through the last two years, we have begun to marry prayer, music, study, introspection, and application. The Torah is being held by all of us in our collective hearts; our little community has become an extraordinary light.

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has written that the Torah is G-d's gift to us, that within it is a blueprint of the entire universe. All the wisdom there is available to us if we take the time and space to enter it. We are and have been so blessed to do so.

Chanting & Chocolate

Martin Gotfrit

One of Vancouver's little known musical and spiritual treasures is the gathering on the last Sunday of each month for the transcendent experience of chanting with Hebrew texts. Founded 14 years ago by Lorne Mallin, Chanting & Chocolate, as it is fondly known, is now under the guidance of Rabbi Hannah Dresner and musician Charles Kaplan and resides at Vancouver's East Side Shul, Or Shalom. For a couple of hours on a Sunday evening participants experience the chanting of beautiful melodies with simple Hebrew words, punctuated by moments of silent contemplation as the music resonates in the sanctuary. All who come to the evening sing, and the resulting spontaneous harmonies are deeply moving. Many of the chants are simple call and response – no musical training is required – and there is a chant sheet to remind one of the few words. Dancing and singing during the up-tempo chants has been known to occur.

The "Chocolate" part of the name refers to the brownies (and tea) enjoyed at the close of the evening. In the spirit of *tikkun olam*, there is a suggested \$10 donation (for those who can) to support the education of five orphans in the Abayudaya Jewish community in Uganda, where Chanting & Chocolate founder Lorne Mallin lived from 2009 to 2010.

The accomplished band leading the chants includes Rabbi Hannah Dresner, Charles Kaplan, Wendy Rubin, Charles Cohen, Eric Brown, Martin Gotfrit, and occasional special guests.

"For me, nothing creates a space for connecting with the Divine like chanting. The chants combine short sacred texts, beautiful melodies, and deep spiritual intention."

Lorne Mallin, 2014

Or Shalom Through 5778

A year at a glance



Keren Or - Rosh Hashanah 5779

One Small Act at a Time

Pat Gill and Harriet Lemer

More than two years ago the Gemilut Chesed group began to evaluate how the Or Shalom community could better serve our members in need. We sought to answer these questions:

1. What can we realistically offer to do for members?
2. Who will provide the help?
3. How will we organize the support?

Our objectives were to increase our capacity, give members opportunities to participate in the *mitzvot* of *gemilut chesed*, and create an environment in which members felt comfortable receiving help, as well as giving it.

Through an online survey, we developed lists of more than 100 members (and non-members) willing to provide “on the ground” direct assistance in these areas: meals, visits and phone calls, transportation, errands and shopping, and emergency help (including pet care).

We also recruited a group of coordinators to organize the volunteers who would support each individual in need of assistance.

Some of the ways we’ve helped have included rides to medical appointments, meals following the birth of a child or during an illness, companionship after surgery, and shopping during recovery from treatments. As well, several committee members are dedicated to supporting the bereaved with a *seudat-havra’ah* (meal of consolation), a homecoming meal if the funeral is out of town, and *shiva* and *shloshim* facilitation.

Perhaps you responded positively to our survey and are wondering why you haven’t been called. That’s a good thing! It means we’ve had more offers of help than we’ve needed – but it doesn’t mean we’ve forgotten you. Thank you for standing by.

On the other hand, if you are new to Or Shalom and missed the chance to complete the survey, don’t be left out! Please contact me (patgill@telus.net) to be included among our generous, willing workers. If you are in need, or know someone who is, contact Fran Ritch (franritch@shaw.ca) or Harriett Lemer (hlemer@einblau.com).

Our sages teach that the world stands on three things: Torah, service, and acts of loving kindness. In the new year, may we all commit to *gemilut chesed*, in whatever way we are able, to help hold up the world with one small act at a time.

Stay Stimulated and Read More!
Visit orshalom.ca

40 Years and Counting
1978-2018

A four-part retrospective from the early beginnings to the celebrations and spiritual practices that make up Or Shalom

Read the stories and view the curated photos:
wp.me/p9ltdk-2zo

Celebrate Or Shalom’s 40th with a Comfy Cotton Hat

Do you have yours?

Limited stock. Proceeds support youth programming at Or Shalom.

Order online:
www.orshalom.ca/product/40th-anniversary-caps/



Around Or Shalom

Don't miss these events...

August

Sun., Aug. 26 – Chanting for Teshuva, 7:30 p.m.
Fri., Aug. 31 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano
on Main, 8 a.m.

September

Sat., Sept. 1 – Wayward Wandering & Return: A
Selichot Story Slam, 8 p.m.
Sun., Sept. 9 – Erev Rosh Hashanah, 5:15 p.m.
Mon., Sept. 10 – Rosh Hashanah, JCC, 9 a.m.
Tashlich, Queen Elizabeth Park, 4 p.m.
Tues., Sept. 11 – Rosh Hashanah, JCC, 9 a.m.
Fri., Sept. 14 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano
on Main, 8 a.m.
Sat., Sept. 15 – Shabbat Shuva, 10 a.m.
Tues., Sept. 18 – Erev Yom Kippur, JCC, 6:20 p.m.
Wed., Sept. 19 – Yom Kippur, JCC, 9 a.m.
Sun., Sept. 23 – Sukkah building, decoration, and
meal from our garden, 3 p.m.
Chanting & Chocolate, 7:30 p.m.
Tues., Sept. 25 – Sharing Our Stories, Hannah and
Ross's sukkah, 8 p.m.
Thurs., Sept. 27 – Women's Torah Study in the sukkah,
11:30 a.m.
Sharing Our Stories, Hannah and Ross's
sukkah, 8 p.m.
Fri., Sept. 28 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano
on Main, 8 a.m.
Sun., Sept. 30 – Schmooze & Brews for Young
Adults, 7 p.m.

October

Mon., Oct. 1 – Erev Simchat Torah Service &
Celebration, 7:30 p.m., Yizkor, 6:45 p.m.
Thurs., Oct. 4 – Women's Torah Study, 11:30 a.m.
Sat., Oct. 6 – Shabbat Sheli, 10:15 a.m.
Tues., Oct. 9 – Zusia (Adult Bet Midrash), 7 p.m.
Fri., Oct. 12 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano
on Main, 8 a.m.
Sun., Oct. 14 – More Talmud, 11:30 a.m.
B'yachad, 3 p.m.
Tues., Oct. 16 – Zusia, 7 p.m.
Thurs., Oct. 18 – Women's Torah Study, 11:30 a.m.

Mon., Oct. 22 – Exploring Judaism, 7 p.m.
Tues., Oct. 23 – Zusia, 7 p.m.
Fri., Oct. 26 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano
on Main, 8 a.m.
Sat., Oct. 27 – B'yachad, 10 a.m.
Sun., Oct. 28 – Chanting & Chocolate, 7:30 p.m.
Tues., Oct. 30 – Zusia, 7 p.m.

November

Sat., Nov. 3 – Shabbat Sheli, 10:15 a.m.
Tues., Nov. 6 – Zusia, 7 p.m.
Thurs., Nov. 1 – Women's Torah Study, 11:30 a.m.
Fri., Nov. 9 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano on
Main, 8 a.m.
Shabbat Soul, 6 p.m.
Tues., Nov. 13 – Zusia, 7 p.m.
Thurs., Nov. 15 – Women's Torah Study, 11:30 a.m.
Sat., Nov. 17 – Koreh: Writers in the Sanctuary,
8 p.m.
Sun., Nov. 18 – More Talmud, 11:30 a.m.
B'yachad, 3 p.m.
Mon., Nov. 19 – Exploring Judaism, 7 p.m.
Tues., Nov. 20 – Zusia, 7 p.m.
Fri., Nov. 23 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano
on Main, 8 a.m.
Sun., Nov. 25 – Chanting & Chocolate, 7:30 p.m.
Tues., Nov. 27 – Zusia, 7 p.m.

December

Sat., Dec. 1 – Shabbat Sheli, 10:15 a.m.
Torah Chironomy, 1 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 2 – B'yachad, 3 p.m.
Tues., Dec. 4 – Zusia, 7 p.m.
Thurs., Dec. 6 – Women's Torah Study, 11:30 a.m.
Fri., Dec. 7 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano on
Main, 8 a.m.
Fri., Dec. 7 – Shabbat Soul Latke Dinner, 6 p.m.
Mon., Dec. 10 – Exploring Judaism, 7 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 16 – More Talmud, 11:30 a.m.
Thurs., Dec. 20 – Women's Torah Study, 11:30 a.m.
Fri., Dec. 21 – Men's Torah Study, Caffè Artigiano on
Main, 8 a.m.

Crossing

Exploring Judaism: A Reflection

Alex Leslie

For the past two years, I've been part of the Exploring Judaism group at Or Shalom. I came to the group with little sense of what to expect – whether this group would be focussed on religious practice, cultural beliefs, or simply on creating a space for discussion and getting to know one another. I found it to be a combination of the three, with a lot of grey in between. A friend of mine from work (we both work in the health system) joined me in the group after the first couple months, and we both continued for the two years. Another friend of mine, from the writing community in Vancouver, joined later on. I found myself telling other secular Jewish friends of mine that they should consider coming to the group – it was interesting and nurturing to be part of a monthly group that discussed Jewish texts and traditions, in an open and non-prescriptive way. My family is a mix of observant and non-observant Jews, which I've come to realize is typical of diasporic Jewish families. Jewish knowledge and tradition in my family has been disrupted, rerouted, and preserved in equal parts by the effects of persecution in Eastern Europe, immigration, intermarriage, conversion, and persistence of certain customs and ways of being, creating a mass of contradictions and also a rich history.

I would recommend Exploring Judaism to anyone who wants to spend time with core texts and traditions among friends. Something I hugely enjoyed about the group was the diversity, especially the members who were converting to Judaism from conservative streams of Christianity. I had never had the opportunity to hear about this very process from people raised in a Christian tradition. I found it particularly interesting to learn from my fellow group members about the guilt and shame in Christian communities around the experiences suffered by Jewish people. Coming from a family where our Jewish origins are deeply inflected by the pogroms, I had never heard this side, or continuation, of the story before. Because of these conversations, I've gained more respect for the learning

and self-work that is part of the conversion process.

I also learned from the presence of Israeli and Brazilian Jewish knowledge in our group. A night that stands out in my memory is the time we spent together in the sukkah, inviting members of our families and communities to be guests, whether past or present figures in our lives or traditions. Many histories were able to sit peacefully around the same table.



Growing Spiritually

Deborah and Henry Ross-Grayman

A couple of years after getting involved with Jewish meditation, Henry and I became aware that our spiritual needs had evolved and we were looking for a spiritual home. We were intrigued by Jewish mysticism and spirituality and longed for a place where members were heart-connected to the words said while davening, rather than seemingly repeating them by rote. At times we felt an urge to express a connection to the Divine through dance and song and wanted to be in an environment where this might be possible. The Renewal movement and a smaller congregation appealed to us as a way to meet these

Thresholds

needs and facilitate a more intimate connection to a more inclusive community.

After a year or so of participating at Or Shalom we decided to make the move and have felt welcomed and included in the warm and vibrant community. We have particularly enjoyed the multi-generational activities such as the members welcoming event, the garden, and Shabbat Sheli.

We continue to be on a journey, deepening our understanding about the Renewal movement and about Judaism in general as neither of us grew up within a Jewish community or had a formal Jewish education. At times, as members of the Second Generation, we have struggled to find a meaningful concept of G-d after the Shoah. The spirituality at Or Shalom provides us with another doorway to enter into relationship with the Divine. We look forward to the years ahead as we continue to grow with Or Shalom.



Journey to Judaism

Jane Wyllychuk

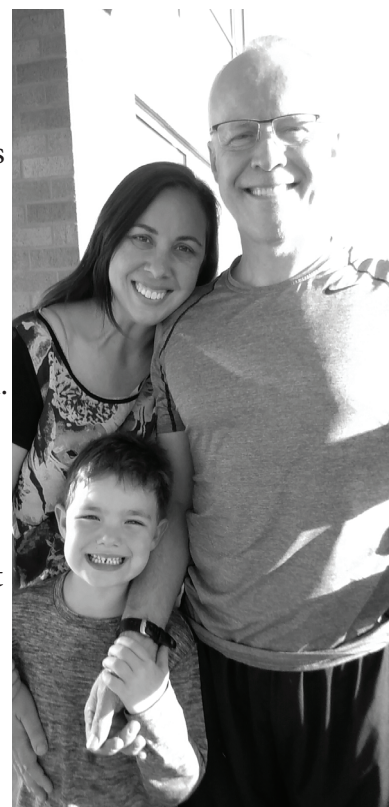
I feel that I am very fortunate in life. One of the ways that I feel especially grateful is my journey to Judaism. Born of Protestant parents, when I was 15 they chose to send me to Habonim Dror Camp Miriam with some of the other kids on the block. I credit them with a very open-minded decision, one that changed my path in life. I spent years in Habonim,

first as a camper then as a counsellor and then a year on Kibbutz Urim in Israel. I am grateful for all of these incredible experiences and the lifelong friends I made as a result.

I have a beautiful community of people whom I've known for decades. I have seen most of them get married, have kids, and now we are raising our children in community. It became important to me to celebrate Passover every year, and lighting Shabbat candles has special meaning to me. At some point along the way, celebrating and engaging in Jewish culture and spirituality became part of who I am.

This year I took the Exploring Judaism class with Rabbi Hannah. A large group of us met monthly to have enriching discussions. I love the G-d wrestling aspect of Judaism, the questioning, and the dialogue. Thank you, Rabbi Hannah, for the learning and the fun, inclusive environment you created!

My husband, Neil, and I have been married for 11 years this August. Fundamental to our belief system as a couple is the notion of choice. We believe we have a choice in how we see and experience the world. Neil and I wanted a child very much and then Adrien came on the scene! My choice to convert became clear to me. I want our son to have the rich cultural and spiritual experiences I've had as a part of the Jewish community. I whole-heartedly choose a Jewish life for myself, but the reason I am converting is for our son. I like to imagine that in years to come, my great-grandchildren will be sitting at Shabbat dinner and will be talking about a choice their great-grandma made.



Crossing

Why I Love Or Shalom

Karen-Marie Elah Perry (KM)

I recently rejoined Or Shalom after being away for five years. In that five-year interval I had the opportunity to live and work in Victoria and Ottawa while I completed my doctoral research. I also spent a lot of time traveling for my research. This took me from Toronto, to Edmonton and Chicago. While these experiences were enriching, I missed East Van terribly while I was away.

Or Shalom is a big part of my East Van family. Where else could I study radical Talmud with a Queer rabbi? Dance to Geoff Burner's klezmer punk beats? Or belong to a synagogue that responded so quickly to the urgent needs of Syrian refugees by sponsoring families so that they could come to Canada? Talking about *tikkun olam* is one thing, doing it is another.

In the wake of the Trump administration, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and hate crimes against LGBTQ2 people and People of Colour have intensified. Last summer Or Shalomniks said "NO" and turned out en masse to shut down hate groups meeting at Vancouver's City Hall. It worked! Or Shalomniks were among the 4,000 people who showed up in a counter demonstration.

Our congregation is full of engaged critical thinkers and empathetic leaders and communicators. I get to experience something that not everyone gets to experience. I get to *daven* next to my heroes.

Interested in joining our growing congregation? Come talk to me at services. I'll be wearing my Membership Committee nametag.



Keren Or - Rosh Hashanah 5779

Kamti Ani

Tammy McCurry

I met Paul in 1983 at McNicoll Park Junior High in Penticton. We were both 13. He was already fully grown with a five-o' clock shadow and a deep, steady voice. I was a late bloomer to say the very least – 80 pounds of nervous energy still wearing buster browns because my feet were so small. Four years later, we were a proper couple and we've been together ever since.

We have had so many big years since we coupled up. We have been lucky and we are very grateful. Twenty eighteen is one of those very big years. In March, we joined the Jewish people by choice; this fall our oldest daughter, Annah, will leave our nest to attend Quest University; shortly thereafter our firstborn and only son, Noah, will head east to establish a homestead in PEI; and in August, Paul and I will celebrate 25 years of marriage. To honour all the milestones we have and will accomplish this year, we decided to plan a Jewish wedding celebration.

The ceremony was for our family. The first time we were married, we were just two and the ceremony was fraught with tension and disappointment for our parents. Paul and I were from two different religious traditions and so our parents couldn't fully approve. This time we wanted to stand under the *chuppah* with our kids – the six of us, a new family unit distinct and yet connected. We wanted our kids to experience the rituals with us. And so they stood like little soldiers uncomfortable with so many eyes on them (the apples don't fall far from the trees), but they did it and we are so proud of them.

The party was for our communities, old and new. It was intended as a thank you. We chose to invite 10 families from our past, pre-Jewish life to honour their tangible support in the formation of our nascent family. From our new Jewish community, we chose 10 individuals to form our *minyan* and we invited many others who have welcomed us so warmly and who have collectively evolved into a community of teachers for our family.

Thresholds

The day was exhausting and also very beautiful. *Toda raba* to all those who were able to attend. And a special thank you to Rabbi Hannah for performing our ceremony with grace, to our *minyan* (you know who you are) for holding us up, and to Sulam for creating an atmosphere of pure joy. Our *chuppah* will soon hang above our bed as a constant reminder of our Jewish (re)marriage and all that signifies for us as we continue our journey together as a Jewish family.



Or Shalom Synagogue is a Jewish spiritual community affiliated with ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal. We are creative, egalitarian, traditional, and participatory.

Please join us any Shabbat morning, from 10 a.m., at our synagogue at 710 E 10th Avenue at Fraser Street in Vancouver.

For more information about Or Shalom, see our website, www.orshalom.ca, or call the Or Shalom office at 604-872-1614.

Or Shalom Buddies

Shalom Chevre,

Our Membership Committee would like to initiate a buddy system for new or “newish” members and others who would like to feel more at home at Or Shalom so they may meet members of the community with ease and develop a sense of belonging.

Being a Buddy

The Membership Committee aims to match members for a one-year period. Matching will take into consideration factors such as family constellation, age(s), location, how much or how little you would like to be contacted, what you or your family like to do, how you like to spend your time, and other areas of interest.

The membership committee will put you in touch with a new family or person to see if it feels like a good match all around. While we want connections and friendships to evolve organically, to help integrate our newer members and others, buddies might like to connect with their matched newcomers every few weeks via email/phone/text; offer to sit together at services/kiddush lunch; introduce new members to other Or Shalomniks; and encourage them to contact you with questions about Or Shalom, community events, holiday practices, etc.

Having a Buddy

Are you new or new-ish to Or Shalom (joined from 2016 to 2018)? Have you been a member for awhile and would like to feel more connected? Would you like to have a buddy as described above? If so, kindly email me with the following information: family constellation, age(s), location, how much or how little you would like to be contacted, what you or your family like to do, how you like to spend your time, and any other information that would help us find just the right buddy for you.

If you would like to do the *mitzvah* of being a buddy or you would like a buddy, kindly email me at carolann@freedom.ca. We will be in touch with you once our buddy system is up and running.

OSSRI Says Thank You to Our Community

David Berson

Wow – what a year it has been.

More correctly, it has been a journey of nearly three years.

In September 2015, OSSRI (Or Shalom Syrian Resettlement Initiative) was born, inspired, and informed by the experience and expertise developed of the Momo Minyan who sponsored two Tibetans from Northwestern India in 2012. OSSRI set out to sponsor two families and evolved into an initiative to sponsor four families, three from Syria and one from Iraq. In the shadow of the tragic deaths of refugees fleeing Syria and the fanfare of those government sponsored refugees who were fortunate enough to be rescued and reach Canada (being met by Prime Minister Trudeau in December 2015) our community's initiative took an additional year to 15 months to be realized.

The rapid response of Or Shalom's community and friends was awe inspiring. While others debated the merits of sponsoring refugees from Syria, Or Shalom acted decisively by supporting OSSRI and its creation of a steering committee with resettlement coordinators and teams of volunteers. More than 100 volunteers attended a major information and orientation event in early 2016 at the bayit. In a matter of months, we successfully raised more than the \$160,000 which later grew to \$224,000, including in-kind donations and our Month 13 campaign.

We quickly learned what the Or Shalom community was made of. Our members and friends swiftly and quietly demonstrated, through our actions, that this was part of Or Shalom's DNA, our humanitarian fabric.

For the first year our energies were directed to advocating for our families who were in a dire situation in UN and non-UN refugee camps in Northern Iraq, Turkey, and in Lebanon. Then, in the fall of 2016, our first resettlement team sprang into action when we welcomed Ali and Ali who arrived from Beirut.

OSSRI volunteers participated in rallies, appeared on the radio, in the newspapers – all to advocate and pressure the Canadian government to accelerate the safe and speedy arrival of our families. We did this in collaboration with 16 other faith groups in the Metro Vancouver area with whom we held a press conference

and rally at Or Shalom in December 2016.

It would be more than six months in March of 2017 before we welcomed the AbdulRahim and Bazariy families, who would arrive from Northern Iraq, and the Omar family from Turkey. Our teams were ready to go with apartments, supplies, resources, and plans of action.

On Canada Day 2017, we welcomed our families with a delicious picnic and ceremony at Or Shalom where certificates were presented to them by Members of Parliament from our region.

OSSRI has provided countless opportunities for members of the Or Shalom community to step up and engage in *tikkun olam*, social action, and building community. The daily deeds of loving-kindness have abounded and there are so many stories of human compassion and love that remain to be shared.

In total, OSSRI sponsored 16 refugees. We collaborated with the United Church of Canada as our Sponsorship Agreement Holders and partnered with Rainbow Refugees (the Or Shalom community expressed the desire to sponsor an LGBTQ family).

The Or Shalom Syrian Resettlement Initiative continues to stay involved with the four families that were sponsored through Or Shalom.

OSSRI, through its steering committee, will continue to play a role in helping other refugee families from Syria to apply to resettle in Canada. One of these families is directly connected to one of the four families we sponsored. Stay tuned to learn how you may be able to help.

A big *toda raba* to our entire community for being the container for this wonderful humanitarian initiative whose story will continue to be told for years to come.

Canada Day 2018 Celebration with our Sponsored Families

Photos by David Kauffman



Wayward Wandering and Return

A Selichot Story Slam

Saturday, Sept. 1
8 p.m.

Sign up for a five-minute spot
orshalom.ca/selichot-story-slam
Slam limited to six stories

MC'd by Alex Leslie
Featuring an autobiographical
work by Cecil Hershler
Kol Nidre improvisation by
Dave Kauffman & Martin Gotfrit

Savories and sweets served



Or Shalom Synagogue 710 E 10th Ave