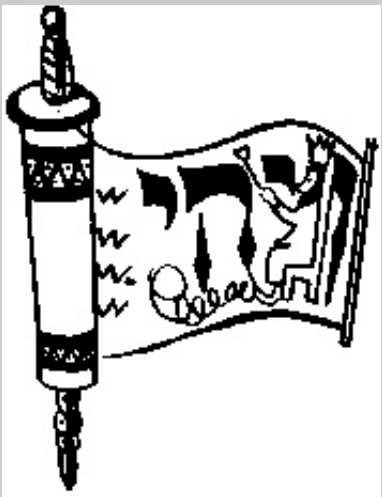
Tefilagram

"And they shall build for me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst." (Exodus 25:8)

December 2003 Kislev 5764

SHUL PAVES WAY WITH MEGILLAT ESTHER PROJECT

Congregation Shaarey Tefilah prides itself on balancing a serious commitment to Torah and Mitzvot with an openness to exploring the possibilities for greater inclusiveness within halakhah (Jewish law). Our community has always endeavored to broaden women's participation in synagogue ritual.



To this end, Shaarey Tefilah is excited to announce its commission of a new Megillat Esther (Scroll of Esther), which will be scribed by Aviel Barclay, believed to be the first woman to be certified as a soferet ([female] scribe) in modern history. Using special ink, quills and parchment, Aviel will write the Megillat Esther carefully adhering to the strict standards for scribing a sacred text, and will deliver the Megillat Esther in time to be read at Shaarey Tefilah for Purim 5764 (2004).

This is a monumental event for Orthodox Judaism! After meticulous and thoughtful research, Rabbi Singer determined that, indeed, there is room in halakhah for ritual use of a Megillah scribed by a woman. Rabbi Singer and Aviel, who is a member of Shaarey Tefilah, believe that this is the first time in history that an Orthodox synagogue has commissioned a woman to write a sacred text.

Throughout the process, Rabbi Singer will present classes and seminars on the halakhah, and the sources he used to make his decision. Rabbi Singer will be presenting a paper at the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) Conference in February, and a Shabbaton is in the works, as well.

We need your support in sponsoring this landmark endeavor. Purchase a chapter, a verse, even a word. Don't miss your opportunity to be part of this historic event; Chapter 10 has already been sponsored!

- If you know someone named Mordechai, sponsor an occurrence of Mordechai in their name.

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Chanukah party planned for Dec. 20

Shaarey Tefilah will hold its annual Chanukah party on Saturday, December 20 at 6:30 pm.

Latkes and sufganiyot will be served. For the kids, games, dreidls and music will be the highlight of the evening. For the adults, an evening of food, song and shmoozing is planned. Please bring musical instruments if you have them.

A donation of non-perishable food items for the Kosher Food Bank would be greatly appreciated.

The event is being organized by Michael Epstein. If you can help with the evening's festivities, please call him at 604-261-8823.

Chanukah's message especially valid today

By Rabbi Ross Singer

"And the King sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die." (I Maccabees 1:44-50)

This proclamation of King Antiochus against the Jewish religion was part of an attempt to homogenize culture in his time. The king had stated to "his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, and that each should give up his customs" (I Macc 1:41). The response of one man, Mattathias, his sons, chiefly Judah the Maccabee, and those gathered around them was to fight for the freedom to live Jewish lives. They were successful in their battle which lead not only to freedom to practice Judaism, but also to independence from the Seleucid Empire. Today, when Jews have autonomy once again in the land of Israel and the freedom to express our religion in Western democracies, we must remember that this was not always the case. We must make sure to appreciate the privileges we have that many of our ancestors did not. Furthermore, in a world of increasing anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment, we must be willing to fight for our religion and our people. This is one vital message of Chanukah.

A question that the story of Chanukah raises for me is about other religions. If we were in Antiochus's place, would we also try to homogenize culture and religion, for to some extent the Maccabees did just that. The book of Maccabees also includes stories of forced conversions of non-Jews. However, I think that Judaism is much more tolerant and affirms, to a large extent, the legitimacy of different religious traditions. We have a category called "chasidei umot Haolam," which translates as the pious among the nations of the world.

One need not be Jewish to be pious according to our tradition. Granted, we do expect humanity to live up to a certain standard of decency outlined in the seven Noachide laws. Yet, within that context, our tradition is not only tolerant but reverent of the other. We do not believe in homogenized humanity. In a world where religious extremism and polarization are growing, our message of pride in our own tradition mixed with healthy respect for other traditions is vital. An interesting new book that touches on some of these themes is Chief Rabbi of Great Britain Jonathan Sacks' new book, *The Dignity of Difference*. It is on my pre-Chanukah reading list and I recommend it for yours. Chag Urim Sameach - a joyous Festival of Lights to our community and all Am Yisrael.

Congregation Shaarey Tefilah

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• Phone: 604-873-2700 • Fax: 604-873-2732 • www.shaareytefilah.com • Email: office@shaareytefilah.com

Rabbi Ross Singer — Cliff Ungar, President

Services: Fridays 7:15 am & 6 pm; Saturdays, Sundays, Holidays 9 am

Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11:30 am to 4 pm

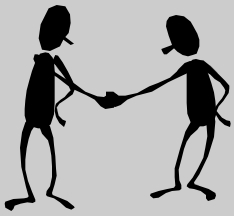
Wednesday: 9:30 am to 4 pm

Rabbi's Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 10 am to noon

Afternoons By Appointment

Welcome New Members



Shaarey Tefilah welcomes more new members into the fold.The following is a short bio on a new member, gleaned from information on their membership form. Please introduce yourself the next time you see someone new at services or at one of our events. We don't like anyone to be a stranger!

Sid Goldberg has recently joined Shaarey Tefilah. Sid was born in Winnipeg and began his career as a professional broadcaster at radio station CKY in that prairie city. He lived for 31 years in Minnesota, all the while doing on-air sales and filling in for other on-air hosts. Sid has lived for the last few years in Bellingham, WA but moved to Vancouver to be closer to his sister and nieces and nephews -- he is, by the way, the uncle of Deborah Youngson. Welcome, Sid!

Tsur Somerville and **Ariel Becker** have recently joined us as members. No strangers to Shaarey Tefilah, the couple are also members of Beth Hamidrash, but joined Shaarey Tefilah to show their strong support of our congregation. Tsur and Ariel moved to Vancouver from Boston in 1993. Tsur is originally from Berkeley and Ariel hails from Seattle. They met in Israel in 1983. Tsur and Ariel have two children, Tamir, age 6, and Ya'ira, age 3. Welcome!

Friday night services return to shul

Friday evening services are now at 6 p.m. for the rest of the winter. Due to the Singers' recent move, Friday night services will be held at Shaarey Tefilah until further notice.

Join a Class!

The following classes are held on an ongoing, drop-in basis. They are free of charge and require no pre-registration.

Tuesdays: Lunch-Hour Learning Class: "The Thoughts of Maimonides," 12:15 p.m.

Fridays: Mishnah Class, 8 a.m. Open to all

Fridays: Contemporary Halachic Issues, 9 a.m. Open to all.

Minyans

Fridays: Shaarey Tefilah Synagogue Friday Morning Minyan, now at 7:15 a.m. followed by freshly-baked bagels, juice and coffee. Open to all.

Sundays: Parashat Hashavuah. Minyan, breakfast. Open to all. 9 a.m.

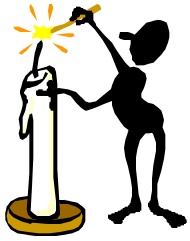
News we like to hear

Dennis and Naomi Frankenburg are now great-grandparents! Their grandson, Michael, and his wife, Yifat, who reside in Jerusalem, had a baby daughter, Tehila, on October 28. Tehila weighed 7.5 pounds. All are doing well.

Jay and Kim Zipursky are expecting a little Z in the Spring. Never one to sit home and knit baby socks, Mom continues to slug away at completing her Master's degree in statistics.

Brent James has recently returned from scaling the heights of Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. His goal is to complete six of the coveted Seven Summits – climbing Everest is not in the cards at this time.

News we'd rather not hear



Cindy Rejwan's father passed away in Toronto in early Fall.

Arthur Hayes suffered a mild stroke in mid-September. We are glad to report that he is now fully recovered and looking forward to the Spring to resume his golf game. His brief illness generated a ton of cards and we're sorry for the mailman who had to carry the heavy sack of cards from his many friends at Shaarey Tefilah to the Hayes house.

Shaarey Tefilah member Lorna Balinsky passed away Sept. 27. Our condolences to her daughter and family, Susan and Rob Hector and their children.

Carla Shore's grandmother passed away recently.

Three Rabbis provide memorable weekend

By Cigal Shene

Three inspirational Rabbis came together Nov. 7-8 to create a most memorable Shabbaton for Congregation Shaarey Tefilah.

The three amigos – Rabbi Friedfertig, Rabbi Singer, Rabbi Frank.

Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig of Buffalo, NY, Rabbi Aaron Frank of Baltimore, MD and our very own Rabbi Ross Singer brought together their deep love of Torah and Am Israel, as well as their very obvious mutual admiration, appreciation and respect for one another, to participate in the Three Rabbis Shabbaton. What a wonderful gift on the part of our members David Sacks and Randy Milner, who donated air miles to ensure the weekend could happen.

Never one to be upstaged, Rivital Singer gets into the shot as Art Hayes and Allan Posthuma smile for posterity.

One of Rabbi Singer's dreams for our shul came true on the Friday night. Just as he'd said he hoped for in his interview in the *Jewish Western Bulletin* a couple of weeks before the event, the shul's walls shook from the song of prayer. Because of the tremendous enthusiasm of the kehillah, the alarm went off in the middle of dancing and singing! After prayers, because we could have never all fit in our shul, everyone headed to Beth Hamidrash's social hall for a delicious dinner catered by our very own and very talented Bev Friedlander and Irit Sorokin. Our generous sponsors for the dinner were Mike Epstein for the food and an anonymous donor for the wine. Dinner and dessert were followed by lively singing and a thought-provoking drash by Rabbi Friedfertig about Rabbi-shopping and the halachic difficulties that we run into when we go from Rabbi to Rabbi to find the answer we're looking for.

The evening's youngest participant, Mordechai Wolfson, didn't manage to stay awake for the whole event, but dad Dan enjoyed it all.

Saturday services were beautifully led by the two visiting Rabbis, followed by a fabulous lunch headed and organized by Lisa Hartman, with help from some fellow congregants. Lunch was followed by singing and clapping and an interactive thought-provoking class, taught by Rabbi Frank, that focused on good and evil. Topics discussed were whether, for example, one can enjoy the music of Wagner, knowing he was a Nazi, or the music of Cat Stevens, knowing he has converted to become a fundamentalist Muslim.

In between noshing and singing, there was lots of time for shmoozing.

The culmination of this warm, haimish and inspirational weekend took place Saturday evening at "Chez ST," the nickname I gave

Shaarey Tefilah as I walked in after Shabbes for the Melaveh Malka and saw the absolutely amazing transformatio the shul with decorations and yummy desserts created by our dynamic duo: Sandra Ungar, decorations and Mich Dodek, desserts. Camille Joseph's double-chocolate cookies were mos welcome to the spread. For that night, the golden curtains, the colorfu tablecloths and the dim candle-lit room could have easily made ST pas a classy jazz bar.

Roman Raivich (left) has entertaining down to a fine Art – Art Dodek and Art Hayes, that is.

Morey Altman did a great job as MC for the night and Dr. Arthur Haye delivered a moving and touching speech about Rabbi Ross and Emily. C was entertaining and original once again, with his presentation to Rabb Singer of his new pal, a boxing Rabbi puppet. Very moving and inspirational, too, were Rabbi Frank's and Rabbi Friedfertig's speeches about Rabbi Ross. Rabbi Avi Weiss sent a telegram, which was read aloud, in honor of our Rabbi. The deep friendship and shared religious ideologie Rabbis Singer, Friedfertig and Frank was obvious and apparent through the entire weekend. Finally Rabbi Ross' very moving speech was said w a lot of love and deep emotion. I'm sure his mom, Joann, would have b glowing with pride. With drums, tambourines, a harmonica and Asaf E on guitar, the evening turned into a night of singing, harmonizing and lots of clapping and drumming, from Carleb to Shirey Eretz Israel, and we rocked the house yet again.

There are so many more people to thank who made this event possible. The Melaveh Malka was generously sponsored by Joann Singer. Gaynor Levin did a fantastic job on the invitations. Thank goodness for Asaf, who picked the rabbis up at SeaTac Airport and brought them to the Singer home on Friday afternoon. It was like a prophecy come true! The weekend clean up crew, headed by Eric Hartman, did an amazing job of staying late, cleaning up and making sure the social hall looked as beautiful as it did when we came in. Thanks to Jodi Lassner and her sound system, we were able to hear a few minutes of Bat Kol, our Rabbi's college band. Other types of music were played in the background until the live singing began. Helen Aqua, our new House Chair, went way above the call of duty and helped out all over the place.

The Rat Pack, they're not, but Rabbi Singer, As Erez and Rabbi Frank manage to keep a pretty good tune.

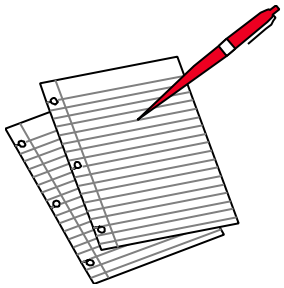
With glimmering gold curtains, brightly covered tables and a glowing candle-lit ambience, Shaarey Tefilah was transformed for the evening by decorating maven Sandra Ungar.

Last, but certainly not least is Emily, without whom which this entire weekend would not have hap pened. Our amazing "Remily", as Cliff has fondly nicknamed her, work long hours, made millions of phone calls, planned, cooked, cleaned, drove around, all in the name of honoring the man she loves. We are very blessed to be part of Rabbi Ross and Emily's congregation.

Yasher Koach to all who attended! It was wonderful to share our cele tion with other Rabbis and Rebbetzins from the community Undoubt this weekend will be etched into our fondest memories for a very lor time to come.

From the President's Pen.....

Looking back . . . and forward



By Cliff Ungar, President

Shalom again.

Many memorable moments have transpired since the last Tefilagram. Notably, and seemingly so long ago, we held our High Holiday Services at Schara Tzedeck. This is the second year in a row that we have spent Rosh Hashanah in their Wosk auditorium, and it is beginning to feel familiar to many of us. Through the hard work of Mike Epstein and his Ritual committee, and with assistance of many, many members (you know who you are!), we experienced the same haimish sort of atmosphere we do each week at Shaarey Tefilah. Many people remarked to me that this year's services were the best ever, in terms of comfort, meaningfulness and inspiration. Rabbi Singer's leadership and sermons were particularly moving.

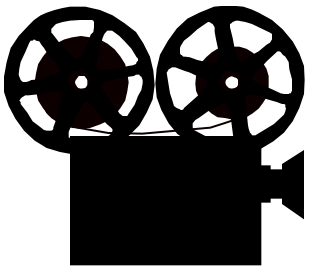
Many of you were introduced to my toy "Fuzz" at Yom Kippur. You'll be glad to know that Fuzz is well, continues to reside at our Shul, and remains a source of inspiration to me. The idea that our shul is Hip, Philosophical, and Cynical (T shirts, anyone?) seems to me to be a characteristic that is, in many ways, unique to our young, inquisitive and open synagogue. It signifies for me as well that our reputation in the community is becoming crystallized. I remember discussing public relations at the Vision meeting a few years ago when we strategized about how to raise our profile in the community. This is now much less of an issue, as we are becoming an established part of the Vancouver Jewish scene, known for our own particular outlook.

Rabbi Singer, as well, has a highly respected position in the Vancouver Jewish community. I have received many supportive comments and compliments about our Rabbi, and his serious and carefully-reasoned approach to Judaism has benefited us as a congregation greatly.

This was evidenced a few weeks ago at the Three Rabbis Shabbaton (see the review elsewhere in this edition). It was a thrill for me to see Rabbis and guests from congregations all over the Lower Mainland who came to pay their respects to Rabbi Ross. Our Rabbi has become known and well respected in Vancouver. So, too, is Shaarey Tefilah becoming known for its openness and independent stance.

Just as Shaarey Tefilah honors the precedent of Avraham Avinu by always being warm and welcoming, so have Sandra and I benefited many times from the hospitality of strangers. About 12 years ago, Sandra and I had the unique opportunity to ride our bicycles around the world unescorted. The rigors of riding our bikes all day every day, the challenges to establish lodging and adequate food each day, the rapid progression through different cultures and the countless brief or lasting friendships that we forged along the way all have stayed fresh in our minds and who we are today has been shaped by our experiences. We also experienced times of unspeakable beauty, and episodes of life-threatening adventure. We' will share our experiences with a travelogue and slide presentation at the shul on Sunday, Dec. 14, 7:30 pm. We'll supply stories and desserts. We hope you can make it.

Travels with Cliff and Sandra



Cliff and Sandra Ungar will share their experiences biking around the world with a slide show and talk on Sunday, Dec. 14, 7:30 pm at the shul. The couple spent a year traveling through many cultures and climates and had many unforgettable experiences in the process. Come hear about their adventures. Dessert will be served.

Brent James will present a slide show of his mountain-climbing experiences in South America, Russia and Africa in February.

RSVP: 604-873-2700

Office Muse

By Lynda Rosenberg, Office Coordinator

My title is Office Coordinator. At various times, I have been Shaarey Tefilah's janitor, plumber, shopper, bill collector, dog sitter (not my own, by the way!), tour guide and travel adviser, courier, banker, chauffeur, babysitter, cook, laundress . . well, you get the idea.

And now I add 'editor' to my list. It is with some trepidation that I step into the shoes of the editorship left vacant by Dr. Arthur Hayes. Dr. Hayes has been synonymous with the Tefilagram since its inception more than 10 years ago and he shaped the way the newsletter now appears. Although I have extensive media experience (17 years as a reporter for the San Francisco Examiner alone), I am conscious of my lack of a proper Jewish education and fearful that ignorance may come shining through. So let me say this at the outset. This will be a better newsletter with your input.

I want the Tefilagram to be more than just news about the next party or the time of Friday night services. While that news is undoubtedly important, it is equally important that the newsletter imparts the essence of who we are. If you'd like to write something philosophical or political, interview someone in the community, or just write a travelogue of your latest vacation (Hint: anyone been to Italy lately, Irit, or on a Panama Canal cruise, Marie, how about a joke or two, Michael E.), I'd love to run it. If you have seen an article you think should be shared with our community, let me know. Putting together the quarterly Tefilagram is just one of the many facets of my job and unfortunately, my hours have not increased as a result of my increasing responsibilities. If this newsletter is to flourish, it will be with the assistance of members like you who can write about the Jewish topics I cannot and the other topics about which I do not have time to write.

My numero uno job as Office Coordinator, as I see it, is as a representative of the shul. Mine is the first voice a newcomer often hears and it is from me that many will get their first impression of Shaarey Tefilah. A number of people have told me that my friendly voice and enthusiastic encouragement were most welcome after phoning a number of synagogues around town and speaking with disinterested, unengaged office personnel.

I tell you this not to pat myself on the back but because you, too, are vitally important to the way newcomers perceive Shaarey Tefilah. I was reminded of this fact by one of our newest members, Sid Goldberg. Sid told me that when he first attended services at Shaarey Tefilah, many members of the congregation came up to say hello and introduce themselves as soon as he walked in the door, something he says immediately convinced him that this was the place for him because of its' obviously haimishe atmosphere. It's important to recognize that we are often our own best advertisement and a quick hello to a stranger means that Shaarey Tefilah may gain a new member and you may gain a new friend. I am so proud of our members when I hear something like that because that is the kind of shul everyone wants to belong to and it is what makes Shaarey Tefilah truly 'family.' See you next month.

--Lynda

...continued from page 1

- Sponsor a special pasuk (verse) that relates to your Hebrew birthday; for example: chapter 2, verse 16.
- If you have a niece or nephew who loves horses, sponsor all instances of the word sus (horse) in their name.

The possibilities are endless!

With each donation over $324, you will receive a Megillah Memory Book, a printed copy of the actual scroll written by Aviel Barclay. Special pages in the book will list all our donors, dedications and sponsorships, photographs of the actual writing of the Megillat Esther, Rabbi's sources and more.

To make a donation, pick up a brochure at Shaarey Tefilah, or call 604-873-2700. Cheques should be made payable to Shaarey Tefilah. Visa is also welcome. As well, making a donation online at www.shaareytefilah.com will be possible in the very near future. Spread the word and get your friends involved in this remarkable event!

WHAT IF. . .
Microsoft was Jewish

- Your PC would shut down automatically on Friday evenings.
- Your "Start" button would be replaced with a "Let's go. I'm not getting any younger" button.
- ‘RETRY’ would be replaced with "You vant I should try again?"
- When disconnecting external devices from your PC, instructions would say ‘Remove from your PC's tuches the cable .’
- Your CD player would be labelled "Nu, so play my music already."
- You would hear Hava Nagila during startup.
- SCANDISK would prompt you with "You vant I should fix?" message.
- When your PC is multi-tasking, you would occasionally hear an ‘Oy Gevalt!
- Manischewitz would advertise that it’s "monitor cleaning solution" gets rid of the "schmutz" on your screen.
- After 20 minutes in an idle state, your PC would go ‘Schloffen.’
- All computer viruses would be cured with chicken soup.
- After your computer dies, you would have to dispose of it within 24 hours.
- Internet Explorer would have a spinning "Star of David" in the upper right corner.
- A screen saver for Chanukah would be ‘Flying Dreidls.’

candles	latkes
dreidel	miracle
eight	presents
festival	shamash
Judah	temple

Bagel Lovers Wanted!!

Order a dozen fresh Mount Royal bagels and $2 goes towards Shaarey Tefilah! Cost is $8 dozen. So far, Shaarey Tefilah has made more than $300 from the sale of the bagels. Keep those orders coming in! Bagels are available for pickup at the shul from 7:30 to noon on Fridays. Orders must be paid for at time of pickup – no exceptions! Mount Royal Bagels are baked fresh every day and are hand rolled, boiled and baked under supervision of the Rabbinical Council of B.C.

The following flavors are available:

**Sesame Seed (White, Whole Wheat)

**Poppy Seed (White, Whole Wheat)

**Plain (White, Whole Wheat)

**Onion and Caraway Seed are available on request.

**Cinnamon (White, Whole Wheat)

**Raisin (White)

**Cinnamon Raisin (White)

**Multigrain (Whole Wheat)

To order, call Allan Posthuma, 604-733-4321 by noon. The price per dozen is $8 (the same price you'll find in stores).