

## Quake kills Israelis, destroys Chabad house

Israeli backpackers Ofeh Mizrahi and Gabi Ingle, both 22, were among those killed in the Christchurch earthquake on February 22.

The Israeli Consul, Teddy Polinger has confirmed they have been positively identified and arrangements are being made to send their bodies to Israel for burial. Two other Israelis are still unaccounted for and grave fears are held for them, the embassy says. The city's Chabad house was destroyed in the quake and the Christchurch synagogue has suffered some damage.

Wellington's David Zwartz, former president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, said Bettina Wallace, immediate past president of Canterbury Hebrew Congregation, had told him the synagogue was damaged but fixable.

Beth Shalom is working on a plan to support the Christchurch community. Financial donations can be made through the B'nai Akiva appeal, Beth Shalom president Rob Bernstein said.

## Huge rock added to biblical garden



The latest addition to Beth Shalom's biblical garden is the enormous, very old rock, which Ted Scott and Rabbi Dean Shapiro are sitting on (at right).

"The rock has been dated as 20-30 million years old," said Ted Scott, who donated the rock to Beth Shalom. The rock comes from the volcanic activity forming Great Barrier Island where Ted lives. He says it has been dated by Allan Gray, a quarryman and amateur geologist on the island.

"When Terry Haffern talked about needing some rocks for the biblical garden, I thought I'd bring a large one over," Ted said. It was no easy task. The rock is more than one metre long and 60 cms wide. "Hopefully it will become a talking point for the Hebrew School children because of its age," he said.

## Rabbi Dean writes on Spiritual imagination

My son, two-and-a-bit, has a great imagination. "Jacob kiwi!" he declares, and scratches around for grubs, calling out "kiwi! kiwi!" "Jacob walrus!" he informs us, and makes his hands into bristles under his chin. "Jacob octopus!" he insists, and wiggles his arms and legs like tentacles. When he's pretending, he's certain that he's become an animal, and loves to eat, talk and sleep as the animal would. I remember the power of my own imagination as a child, and how it transformed the world around me into one fantastical place after another.

In his book *The Work of the Imagination*, Paul Harris, professor of psychology at Oxford and Harvard, wonders whether imagination isn't the key element in our humanity. He notes that "cave painting, the diversification and stylization of tools, the manufacture of bodily ornaments and new burial practices" all distinguish early *homo sapiens* from the Neanderthals with whom they co-existed—and to whom we are genetically similar. "In a nutshell, the material record testifies to a new power of the imagination." Could it have been the factor that led to our flourishing?

Imagination is alive in children, and it is present for adults as well. How many of us day dream about the vacations we'll take, or think through how we'll spend our lottery winnings—even if we never buy a ticket?

Imagination is integral to prayer. The images of the liturgy are like hands beckoning us deeper into the experience. They engage our imagination, and we summon up a world in response:

*"Let the sea and all within it thunder, the world and its inhabitants; let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains sing joyously together at the presence of the Eternal One" (Psalm 99)*

*"A fountain of blessing—Awake, awake, your light has come!" (L'cha Dodi)*

*"Who speaks the evening into being, whose wisdom opens heaven's gates..." (Ma'ariv Aravim)*

*"Holy, holy, holy is YHVH of Hosts! God's presence fills the whole earth. Source of our strength, Sovereign One,*

*how majestic is Your presence in all the earth!" (K'dushah)*

Standing in our shul some times, the walls fall away and the bimah disappears. They are replaced with towers of water and the sound of thunder, with a glorious light that emanates from within me, with a vision of the cosmos in all its array, and with the rumbling vibration of God permeating the fabric of existence. It certainly doesn't happen every time I pray, but it's an awesome experience when it does.

We human beings have spectacular powers for imagination. Let us not leave them in the car as we sit in traffic, or at our desk as we gaze out the window. Rather, let us bring them with us like a canvas to shul, unroll them and paint on them with the all colours we have inside us. Prayer flexes our mental muscles. It is a time for dreaming.

Prayer can engage all of us—our emotions, our memories, our actions. And it can spark our imaginations to take us to new, powerful, bold and intimate places within. Prayer is sublime and intimate, and, sometimes, it is glorious.

## Noa Wittenberg's Tzedakah Project Endangered dolphins and whales



March 12 is a big day for me as I become bat mitzvah and read the *Vayikra* Torah portion. Ofek, Hadas, Ilan and I really hope that you too will join us for this special occasion at Beth Shalom.

Our family is lucky to live on the North Shore, close to the sea and this has made me very aware of the marine life on the verge of extinction. My tzedakah project is to raise awareness of the threats to marine life. I am presenting articles to schools, newspapers and to our community on the subject. As people, we have been fascinated with whales and dolphins since early days but we are also their only real enemy and in some cases have caused the extinction of some types.

Here are a few tips that we can all adopt:

- \* Reduce - Reuse - Recycle. If you must buy disposables, buy paper products instead of plastic and styrofoam. The manufacture of styrofoam consumes the ozone layer. Landfills are filling up with discarded items and hazardous waste thrown in the garbage ends up in landfills where it drains into the soil and ground water causing contamination.

- \* Conserve water, and fix leaks. Why? Because people use up our planet's fresh water faster than it

can naturally be replenished, animals and humans need water to survive.

- \* Use biodegradable less harmful chemicals and dispose of them properly. Pollutants such as motor oil, detergents, litter, paint, pesticides and pet waste are flushed off streets and into storm drains which lead straight to rivers, creeks, and the oceans. This can harm dolphins, whales and every other living creature in the sea!

- \* Buy products that are environmentally friendly, support organic farming and buy only dolphin-safe tuna.

- \* Choose seafood that's good for you but isn't the food for whales and dolphins.

- \* Volunteer your time to conservation projects. Participate in stream and beach cleaning programs.

- \* Become more involved in marine environmental issues.

Pick up trash while walking in your neighbourhoods. Did you know that one of the most common sources of beach pollution is cigarette butts, taking up to seven years to break down? Last year, over one million butts were removed by volunteers during National Coastal Clean-up Day.

Thanks for joining my project, Noa Wittenberg.

## Berman's Buzz

To new members, **Natan Karon** and **Roni Neeley**, we say welcome to our Beth Shalom "Family". We hope you will enjoy a long and happy association with our community.

This month we have another happy event for **Linda Kaye**, with the arrival in Israel of a grand daughter, **Yael**, a daughter for **Sophie** and **Arik** and sister for **Oren**. Mazeltov to you all.

And talking of Israel, new member **Roni Neeley** comes from the north of Israel near Haifa. She met her husband **Rob** underwater and fell in love when they were both on a dive. The couple first lived in China, where Roni added to her law degree studying Chinese, and Rob built boats. She had no idea she would ever live in New Zealand but 10 years ago the couple moved here, where they continue to love the outdoors. They have two sons, **Daniel** (6) and **Guy** (3) and when Daniel was a year-old they sailed around the islands, including Fiji and Vanuatu in their boat. These days they are happy living in Sandringham and Roni is busy studying acupuncture. However love of the outdoors continues. Although she is expecting her third child, last weekend Roni took part in the women's duathlon in South Auckland, running, walking and cycling.

What a treat for all of us who attended the b'nei mitzvah of **Hannah** and **Jonathan Jensen** in Te Kowhai last month. In spite of the high temperatures and humidity, both of them kept their cool and gave us a very thoughtful drash.

(continued on Page 3)

**Gail Haffern** The Beth Shalom congregation is sad to record the passing of Gail Haffern, beloved wife of Terry, mother of Kerry Ann and Justin. Gail was 65 years old. We wish the family long life.

## Bermans Buzz (continued from Page 2)

Special congratulations go to **Clare Galambos Winter**, mother of Beth Shalom member **Peter Winter**. Her biography, *The Violinist*, by Sarah Gaitanos tells of her life. As a 20 year-old violin student in Budapest, she was transported to Auschwitz and then selected among 1000 Hungarian women for slave labour. In 1948 she came to New Zealand and joined the fledgling national orchestra and became a long standing member of NZSO. Her story has just been published by the Victoria University Press and was launched with great fanfare and beautiful music at Parliament recently, coinciding with UNESCO's Holocaust Memorial Day.

Congratulations to **Adi Rothman Berman** for attaining her Touch NZ level 1 referee's badge. This means she can referee at regional tournaments and the secondary schools national tournament. And good luck also to **Adi** as she represents North Harbour Touch at the Under 15 Under 17 National Tournament in Palmerston North this month.

Northcote Shopping Centre is a place to visit this month. Until 1 April, **Helen Schamroth** has a new exhibition there entitled *Tracing*. We wish you good luck, Helen.

Refuah Shlema to **Gordon Stern, David and Maxine Apple, Maurice Hunt, Paul Buetow, Gabriel Dekel, Anne Scott and Janet Allen**. Anne is recovering from a bad bout of flu while Janet writes from Tauranga that she ruptured her achilles tendon – she would like to say she was playing squash - but she wasn't. Janet says just call her hop-along-Cassidy.

February was a sad month for our community with the passing of **Gail Haffern** and **Chas Levin**. We send our heartfelt condolences to **Terry, Kerry Ann and Justin Haffern** and also to **Chas Levin's** family, with the traditional wish of "Long Life".

It's no longer Bermans Buzz and it won't be quite the same. How could it be without Chris Berman's input?

A big thanks to Chris and Arthur for the last six years of making the Buzz such an important part of Teruah.

Debbie Swiatek will be taking over the Buzz from the next issue and wants to hear your news about births, weddings, members who have travelled overseas etc. Please contact her on [swiatek@xtra.co.nz](mailto:swiatek@xtra.co.nz)

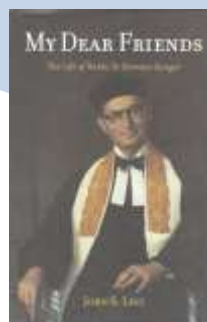
Our hearts also go out to all who live in Christchurch and especially to the families of the young Israelis who were killed.

I was quite astounded to notice in my computer Buzz files that I have been writing this column for nearly six years - something about time flying when you're having fun. So really and truly it's time for a change in columnist, to have a different perspective on things, so watch out for a new signature next month.

Just to say in farewell that I have very much enjoyed sharing community news with you and would like to close with some "advice" for people using the kitchen.

"Will ladies kindly empty teapots, rinse around and before leaving please stand upside down in the sink."

(With thanks to *Life in NZ* column).



### Book Review *My Dear Friends, the Life of Dr Herman Sanger*

By Rabbi Dr John  
S. Levi

This is a comprehensive and informative biography of Herman Sanger who was rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, St Kilda for many years and who was responsible for putting Progressive Judaism on the map in Australia and New Zealand. The author, Rabbi Dr John Levi, now Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth Israel, was a former pupil of Rabbi Sanger and knew him well.

Herman Sanger came from a rabbinic family (Orthodox, later Reform) from Breslau, Germany, and decided to follow his father's calling. In the German-Jewish tradition, he was highly educated, not only professionally, but also in the secular humanities. He held a doctorate from the University of Wurzburg and had spent time at Cambridge University.

The times, however, were out of joint. He had not finished his training when the Nazis took power in Germany. Rabbinic jobs outside the country were scarce and Rabbi Sanger found himself, rather reluctantly, in Melbourne, heading a small congregation of Reform Jews with previous experience of unsuitable leaders and an uncertain future.

The book is especially interesting to Australians who knew and admired him and also to English Jews who knew the famous "Thee M's" of the Progressive movement in England – Hon. Lily Montagu, Sir Claude Montefiore and Rabbi Israel Mattock.

The three were regular visitors to South London Liberal Synagogue which was established in 1929 in Streatham when I was a child of three. My uncle Samuel Rich was our lay minister and my parents and other family were

Continued on page 5

## Bequests benefit Beth Shalom community

Rudi Byttiner came to New Zealand in 1933 from Austria. For a time, he made shirts and then worked at Farmers in the Menswear Department. He was a meticulous dresser.

When he first arrived, he attended the Auckland Hebrew Congregation but after Beth Shalom was established he became a "regular" at the progressive synagogue's Shabbat services. Rudi very much enjoyed being part of the Beth Shalom community.

When he died in 1994, he left \$15,000 to Beth Shalom to benefit the Hebrew School. This bequest, together with a \$20,000 bequest from Alice Erman has ensured that many people have benefited.

At the time the bequests were received, a community meeting was held to agree on a framework under which this fund would operate. It was agreed that only the interest in any year would be spent.

From its conception until late 2009, \$30,000 had been awarded to Beth Shalom members from the interest on these two bequests. The Education Bequest Fund is administered by a committee, currently made up of Jude Berman, John Pezaro, David Robinson and Claire Bruell.

Money from Rudi Byttiner's bequest for the Hebrew School

has been used to buy books and resources, assist in sending teachers to Limmud Oz and on other courses of learning for professional development and for costs associated with seniors' trips to Wellington.

"Only by working together can we promise that Beth Shalom will be there for future generations.

"A bequest can be used for the general benefit of the congregation or dedication to a specific project such as the Hebrew School as with Rudi Byttiner's bequest or refurbishment of the interior of the synagogue building," Beth Shalom president Rob Bernstein said.

He said a will lets people decide how an estate, no matter how small, is distributed after death.

An estate also includes property, money, bonds as well as shares, jewellery and works of art.

Rudi Byttiner's second wife was Selma Han, a medical doctor from Czechoslovakia who he married in the late 1950s. She was a survivor of the Nazi camps, coming to New Zealand after the war where she re-qualified in medicine before practising here. Selma's beautiful engraved candlesticks were donated to Beth Shalom when Rudi died and are used from time to time.

"A bequest to the synagogue is a gift that will guarantee the traditions and practices of Jewish life will remain vibrant and relevant for generations to come," Rob Bernstein said.

## Financing refurbishment, security among issues to be discussed at annual general meeting

Beth Shalom's annual general meeting will be held on March 20 at 7.30pm this year. The burial and benevolent society annual meeting will be held immediately preceding this at 6.15 pm.

President Rob Bernstein urges all members to attend as a number of very important matters will be discussed.

"At the meeting, a major financial proposal will be made to the community to ratify the sanctuary refurbishment project," he said.

He said the presence and departure of Rabbi Dean would also be discussed and how the community would also deal with his absence.

The audited accounts and 2011 budgets will be presented and discussed.

Another major issue is the security at Beth Shalom.

"And of course we have the board elections. At least three board members, Roger Reynolds, Alison Dyson and Jude Berman have indicated they will not be standing. Please consider standing for the board and fill in the nomination form you should have received recently," he said.



**Don't forget to remember Beth Shalom in your will.** President Rob is happy to discuss this with you. Next month column on wills by Juliet Moses will discuss challenges to wills.

### Thanks

Thank you to everyone in the Beth Shalom community who came down to Te Kowhai to help us celebrate our b'nei mitzvah. It was a fabulous day and wouldn't have been the same without you.

**Hannah and Jonathan Jensen**

### Happy Birthday to:

Nicholas Buetow and Sivan Blumgart.

### Happy special birthday to:

Rachel Campbell, Viv Josephs, Ruth Thomas, Ruth Van Eden and Jude Wicks.

## Chai programme supported by teaching theory

Last year Beth Shalom introduced the Chai curriculum for Jewish Learning into our Hebrew School. For some this was surprising and new, but for those who have studied teaching and psychology it is a refreshing return to professional standards. The Chai programme addresses Jewish Studies (not Hebrew), divided into three streams Torah, Avodah and G'milut Chasadim. It is strong on Jewish concepts, but does not address the annual cycle. Its strength is its application of professional teaching standards to deliver a structure particularly helpful for a volunteer teaching staff.

There are three major schools of thought on teaching theory. Two of these are based on rigorous study with large volumes of research and well-understood strengths and weaknesses. The third is based on pop-culture opinions and has largely been promoted by the American religious right as a platform to push their world view in place of academic standards. The only publications on it are reviews of the damage and psychoses caused by this "alternative".

Early teaching was based on behavioural theory. Essentially, good performance is rewarded and the teacher pours knowledge into the student seen as an "empty vessel". This was good for passing tests but created a society fundamentally unprepared to figure things out for themselves. It utterly failed to prepare people for the challenges of the rapidly changing world post-World War II.

In the 1970s, the cognitive approach based on the work of such educationalists as Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner and Kohlberg became established. It teaches that it is not the facts but the ability to

process them that is important.

Often called "student centric" or "preparation based", it focuses on making learning opportunities available to the student and inspiring them to take it up. Students build from experience and grow when the mind is challenged, so teachers expose students to information in ways that challenge thinking to inspire learning in a safe environment.

The pop-culture "alternative" has no formal name and no supporting literature and twists the above work to say teaching is very subjective and each teacher may do what he or she thinks best. It teaches a fantasy of age-based stages of development that must be protected from challenging ideas where challenges (e.g., winning / losing or new ideas) are dangerous. Much has been written about the psychological damage caused by this approach of concealing challenging information and failing to provide safe opportunities to experience losing. It does, however, provide a platform to argue that you don't have to teach evolution (or whatever you are uncomfortable with), which makes it popular.

As an example, cognitive method teaches that a three-year-old regularly encounters people who behave badly and hurt others, so they have a contextual framework to understand the Holocaust where someone behaved very badly and hurt a lot of people. The "alternative" teaches that you should not teach about the Holocaust until students reach the "age of readiness". The resulting decline in teaching the Holocaust has resulted in a rise in denial and an increase in trauma when students inevitably discover the chilling facts.

The Chai programme is firmly based in cognitive theory. The challenge of the topics (often challenging for both students and teachers) is offset by releasing teachers from the burden of inventing a professional quality lesson every week. It also provides significant guidance and teaching activities to present challenges in an age-appropriate manner with well researched age-appropriate materials. This makes it possible for a group of amateur volunteer teachers to deliver professional quality lessons and insures that our children receive a meaningful Jewish education.

- **Leonard Bloksberg, Ph.D.**

### ***My Dear Friends,***

Continued from page 3.

among the founder members which consisted of four or five families in South West London, whose descendants are still members of the congregation today.

Once you read this interesting biography you will be captivated. Everyone who is interested in this account of the growth of Progressive Judaism in Australasia owes much to Rabbi Sanger. He achieved what the founding members of Temple Beth Israel wanted – the establishment of modern Judaism not only in Australia but also in New Zealand and beyond. This book is a must-read.

Thanks to David Robinson who donated this book to Beth Shalom's library.

**Rachel Rich-Dennyss**

**Chas Levin** The Beth Shalom congregation is sad to record the passing of Charles Levin, father of David and Julie. He was 88 years old. We wish the family long life.

## Back to the old country – a trip to Lithuania

It has taken me more than a year to get my heart and mind around the very moving experience of my trip to Lithuania, an experience permeated by the killing forests of the Shoah but also by sounds, smells and food from my childhood.

My cousin had invited me to join him on this trip going north from the capital Vilnius to the shtetl of Žagarė. My family had come from there but left in the 1880s but the impact of that time still seems present.

Walking the curving cobbled streets of the old capital, I had a surreal sense that only a gauzy film separated me from another world, the world of the 1940s Nazi-occupied Vilnius. It was some days later in the same area I found a plaque and deciphering the Yiddish with difficulty, learnt that I was walking in the streets of the old Vilnius Nazi ghetto.

A guide took me to Trakai where we visited the castle on an island in Galves Lake and then looked at Karaites homes and their kenessa, the equivalent of a synagogue. The Karaites are an old Jewish sect who do not accept the Oral Law and who broke with rabbinic Judaism in eighth century Baghdad.

We visited the original site of the Vilna Gaon's grave and also visited the market where one could easily procure all the ingredients for the type of food my grandmother would have been most comfortable making.

After that we travelled to Paneriu (Ponary in Yiddish) in the woods where about 100,000 Jews were shot by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators, and their bodies piled into par-

tially completed Russian aviation fuel pits.

Next we travelled to Kaunas where we visited the Sugihara Museum. Sugihara, the Japanese Consul to Lithuania, disobeyed his government and issued many transit visas to Jews desperately trying to escape from the Nazis. What is less well known is at the same time the then Dutch Consul to Lithuania provided the necessary visas for entry to the Dutch Indies.

We went up to the notorious Ninth Fort where many Jews from the Kaunas ghetto were shot. We drove through the ghetto area and then on to Kėdainiai (Keydan in Yiddish) where the scraps of Jewish heritage are very well preserved although no Jews now reside there. Kėdainiai is curious because Scottish Protestants settled there in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Then on to Biržai where, stopping at a roadside café, we ate borsch, latkes, pickled herring and black bread – standard Lithuania fare. We met and visited with the last surviving Jew in Biržai, Seftal Melamed.

The next day we toured the town, visiting the ghetto site and then on to my family's place of origin Žagarė. Žagarė is divided by the River Švėtė into Old Žagarė and New Žagarė. My Ber family ancestors came from the former which was the poorer but reputed to be the more learned section. The law was such that dead bodies were not permitted to cross the river and so each community had its own cemetery as well as its own synagogue.

Crossing the river we sought the remains of the old synagogue, now, it seems, a farm

shed. Looking for the Jewish cemetery we kept being directed to different Christian cemeteries. We finally found it, but amongst the gravestones could find no evidence of my ancestors. We also visited the burial site, in the woods of Naryshkin Park, of Jews shot in Žagarė by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators.

We started our journey back to Vilnius, to arrive in time for a traditional Shabbos meal at the home of the chazzan at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius. The next day I had time to attend the morning service at the synagogue before catching my flight.

As I said at the outset it has taken me over a year to even start to assimilate this experience. That having been said I would encourage anyone with roots there having the chance to visit Lithuania to do so.

- Chris Milton



Chris Milton at entrance to what was the shul in Old Žagarė



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## Haka boys start Australian Carnival

The highlight of the opening ceremony of the recent Maccabi Junior Carnival was a stirring New Zealand haka. Pictured at right Ron Haver, Sam Hart, Joshua Katz, Dylan de Jong and Nate Flacks enjoy performing.

Eighteen children aged 12 to almost 17 from around New Zealand had a wonderful experience of flying to Melbourne for the week-long carnival. They joined more than eight hundred others from Australia and Hong Kong and participated in varied sports including basketball, netball, volley ball, cricket, soccer and golf. Next January the carnival will be in Queensland and whole families are being encouraged to attend. For more details, please contact Esther Haver on [esther@defsec.co.nz](mailto:esther@defsec.co.nz)



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Burial & Benevolent Society  
President, Ian Morrison, 575 3223  
For burial or benevolent emergencies, please call  
Stephanie Markson (524 5647) or Helen Levin (278 7756).

### Save this date: Pesach

- Communal Seder
  - Tuesday 19 April.
  - 6pm
- All invited for storytelling, feasting, and singing.

### INTERESTED IN JUDAISM?

Beth Shalom is considering launching an Introduction to Judaism course—a year-long study of the fundamentals of Jewish culture, thought and worship. The course is ideal for anyone considering conversion to Judaism, for the partners of Jews, or for Jews seeking a better understanding of the fundamentals of their people.

Sufficient numbers are required; please let us know whether you (or a friend!) are interested in learning with us.

The Introduction to Judaism Course is a requirement for anyone planning to convert to Judaism under Progressive auspices. If you know anyone who might be considering Judaism, please put them in touch with Sally Natan, chairperson of Beth Shalom's conversion committee, via the shul office.

No prior knowledge of Hebrew or Judaism is required. All are welcome. Introduction to Judaism is free to all members of Beth Shalom and their partners; there is a fee for non-members.

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ISSN 1177-2352