

THE
CHRONICLE

A PUBLICATION OF CONGREGATION NEVEH SHALOM

EXPLORING
TIKKUN
OLAM



OUR WORK IN THE WORLD

Church Organs, *Tikkun Olam*, and the Return to Jewish Kindness

Rabbi's Corner

By Rabbi David Kosak

Minority groups often face the challenge of preserving their unique cultural identities while navigating acceptance in dominant cultures. Jews, among the world's earliest cosmopolitan peoples, have long exemplified this balancing act.

In this article, I want to explore what this *Chronicle's* theme of *tikkun olam* has in common with the adaptation of church organs in Jewish prayer services while urging that it is time for American Jews to return to the underlying values embedded in *tikkun olam*, which are *chesed* and *gemilut chasidim*, or acts of loving kindness.

When Solomon's Temple still stood, instrumental music was an essential part of ancient Jewish ritual. From the Book of Psalms, we understand that lyres, harps, trumpets, and cymbals provided musical accompaniment to Jewish prayer.

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Jewish authorities needed to give expression to the deep sense of mourning our ancestors experienced. To do so, they prohibited the use of musical instruments in synagogue worship; this ban persisted for centuries, especially when Jews couldn't readily integrate into the larger society.

With the collapse of ghetto walls and increased assimilation, Jews began incorporating the organ into religious services. The first recorded use of an organ in a synagogue was in the 16th century in Italy. While it was then a rare occurrence, by the 19th century the German Reform Movement, which was influ-

enced by Protestant worship practices, sought to modernize Jewish liturgy to appeal to assimilated Jews.

The Orthodox world largely resisted this practice and maintained the ban, while unsurprisingly, the Conservative movement took a middle stance: some synagogues used organs to create a certain aesthetic appeal, while many others clung to a two-thousand-year-old practice. Indeed, behind the ark in Neveh Shalom's Main Sanctuary is the now-defunct choir loft, which once housed an organ. Over time, as tastes changed in both the Jewish and larger world, organs fell out of favor.

At first glance, the adoption of the organ and the evolution of *tikkun olam* may seem unrelated. Yet both reflect similar sociological forces: a desire to align Jewish identity with the values of the surrounding society, as is exemplified by Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionist thought.

First, *tikkun olam* is a very old term. It is found in the Mishnah (200 CE), but there it refers to social order and was applied to laws of marriage and divorce. By the 16th century, the Kabbalists, or Jewish mystics, applied it to spiritual practices meant to restore cosmic harmony. Eventually, this carried over into ethical concerns that were grounded in Jewish theology.

It wasn't until the middle of the 20th century, when American Jews enjoyed relative safety, that we began to emphasize the universal aspects of our religion. Sociologically, this move allowed us to feel part of the larger society that had been so hospitable to us. This ac-



ceptance was also accompanied by a rise in Jewish secularization, when Jews left behind much of our Jewish religious identity while seeking to better find Jewish textual support for our political connection to American liberal values. For Jews who had stopped participating in Jewish ritual life, *tikkun olam* became an anchor that preserved our group identity without the need for religion.

For the past few decades, a change has been underfoot in both the Jewish and the larger American world. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks argues in his masterful work, *Not in God's Name...*, that the liberal world order replaced religion with science, democracy, and capitalism. Indeed, if you go back to that era, it is easy to find the many proclamations of well-meaning individuals that religion was both dead and unnecessary.

While Enlightenment tools like science, democracy, and capitalism brought tremendous gains, they failed to answer

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A Small Change

Rabbi's Corner

By Rabbi Eve Posen

There are moments of inspiration that stick with you in your *kishkes*. Those are moments when you might not remember the exact event or circumstances, but you certainly remember what was said that left a profound mark on you, perhaps a teaching that changed your perspective. Many years ago, I had one of those moments with **Rabbi Stampfer z"l**. He was giving a talk as part of a speaker series, and he reminded us of the power of the prayer we recite towards the end of services. *Aleinu l'shabeach l'adon hakol*. "It is upon us to offer praise to the Master of all." Rabbi Stampfer then added, "Yes, it is our obligation as Jews to remember to praise God who is the creator of all, and we must not forget the second paragraph 'I'taken olam b'malchut shadai.' We are to offer a *tikkun*, a fix to the world, to create it as the place God intended it to be."

That comment has stuck with me all these years, and you've likely heard me use it as the introduction to the *Aleinu* prayer. Rabbi Stampfer, calling to mind the instruction in *Pirkei Avot*, the Wisdom of Our Ancestors, reminded us of the work we have to do in our world. It

isn't upon us to do all the work, but we must do something to make the world a more perfect place.

We often think of the Hebrew term *tikkun olam* as a catch-all for social justice. In the broadest sense you could say that is true. However, the Hebrew word *tikkun* has a much more nuanced meaning than we often ascribe to it. In the Bible, the word is translated as "to straighten the path, to correct." In other words, *tikkun olam* isn't necessarily the broad category of social justice in general, but instead small, specific acts, tiny corrections that together create larger changes.

For many years I have been blessed to learn at the feet of Ruth Messinger, the former CEO of American Jewish World Service. Learning with Ruth and AJWS has been transformative in my understanding of what it means to have "moral courage" and how to actively work to create a world that I will leave better than how I found it. One of her famous teachings is "We cannot retreat to the luxury of being overwhelmed." When our world view might lead us to become overwhelmed by the work needed to create a more just society, I find it helps to reframe the word *tikkun* back to its



core meaning, one small change.

Every day presents us with an opportunity to make one course correction, one small change that can do a world of good. In keeping with our theme for the year, I'll share with you a blessing, written by Jewish singer/songwriter Dan Nichols: *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haOlam, sh'natan lanu hizdamnut l'takein et haOlam*. "Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Master of the universe, who gives us this opportunity to change the world." Amen.

Rabbi Kosak Continued from previous page

humanity's deeper need for meaning. Science explains how the world works, but not why, and humans are inherently seekers of meaning.

As a result of this vacuum, we have seen people gravitate back to religion. Sometimes this return is expressed in fundamentalist forms, which poses tremendous risks to society, yet this revival touches all parts of society.

Simultaneously, October 7th has highlighted for many Jews that classical American liberalism is waning, replaced by political forms on the left and right that are deeply hostile to Jews. If this is the case, I predict that the role of *tikkun olam* will also begin to wane, precisely because its American form was not essentially Jewish, but sociologically conditioned. *Tikkun olam* was a church organ, and for a while, it made beautiful music. It is, however, beginning to jar the ears.

Despite that, let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. Even if the utility of *tikkun olam* is fading, we must preserve the underlying Jewish values that shaped it: *chesed* (kindness), *tzedekah* (charity), and *k'vod habriot* (human dignity). When we ground these perennial values in their connection to divinity, rather than transient political ideologies, we can recover the foundation of meaning we seek and require for the fullest of human lives.

Why *Tikkun Olam* Worries Me

By Cantor Eyal Bitton

Until I moved to the States in 2017, I had barely even heard of *Tikkun Olam*. Here, I discovered that it has become the dominant Jewish value within American Conservative and Reform Judaism. For many, it is almost synonymous with Judaism itself, and their practice of Judaism is expressed almost entirely through *Tikkun Olam*.

In essence, *Tikkun Olam* is what we refer to as “social justice,” i.e., a political and social ideology. Classic Jewish literature speaks about *tzedakah* (charity), *chesed* (kindness), *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness), and other values, but it does not speak of an overarching ideology encompassing all these values. Today, *Tikkun Olam* is virtually indistinguishable from the American progressive left’s social justice movement. I worry when Judaism becomes indistinct from a non-Jewish political or social ideology.

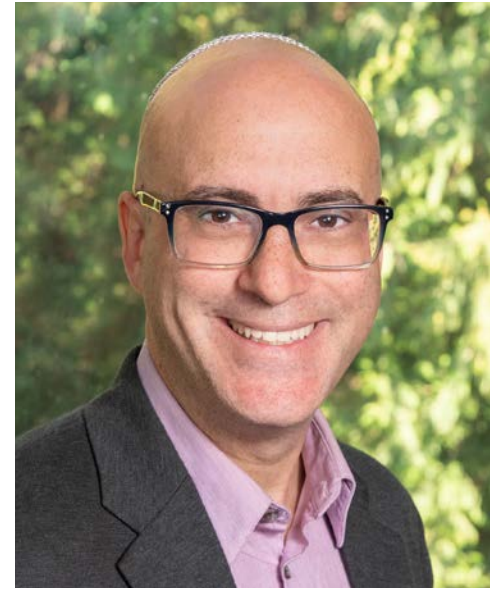
The roots of *Tikkun Olam* are scant in traditional Judaism; the historical mentions of it bear little resemblance to how it is understood today. Jonathan Neumann, author of *To Heal the World?*, argues that *Tikkun Olam* was “heavily influenced by

the Social Gospel, a major liberal Christian movement that began a hundred years ago in the US. Christians had an idea of establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth. The Reform Movement and Mordechai Kaplan, the co-founder of the Reconstructionist Movement, were quite enamored of this idea. Neumann notes that “Kaplan... saw in *Aleinu* this idea of ‘perfecting the world under the Kingdom of God’ – *l’takein olam b’malchut shaddai*.”

The Prophet Isaiah calls upon us to be a “light of the nations” not by erasing our distinctiveness but by embracing it. We are chosen, set apart to bring a unique moral and spiritual perspective to the world. The truth is, we can maintain our distinctiveness and still contribute meaningfully to the world around us.

The Mishnah teaches us: “One sustains poor gentiles along with poor Jews, and one visits sick gentiles along with sick Jews, and one buries dead gentiles along with dead Jews. All this is done on account of the ways of peace, to foster peaceful relations between Jews and gentiles” (Gittin 61a.).

Isaiah does not charge us to imitate the



nations but to inspire them. We sustain others, not instead of sustaining ourselves, but alongside it. Judaism’s strength lies in its balance of universal principles and its unique, distinct traditions, a dynamic that has sustained it through millennia. If we allow our distinctiveness to fade away under the guise of universalism, we risk losing the very light that Isaiah calls on us to shine. We must protect Judaism’s distinctiveness so that it remains a light, not only to the nations but also to itself.

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Ezra Jacob Zeitzer | January 11

Ezra is the son of Mindy and Mark Zeitzer, grandson of Tricia and Gary Friedlander and Evelyn and Leon Zeitzer, and youngest brother to Noah and Ari. He is a 7th grader at Portland Jewish Academy and attends Camp Solomon Schechter. Ezra is a ray of sunshine, always happy and positive. He loves running, basketball, and everything social.



Amit Michael Rosenfeld | January 18

Amit Michael Rosenfeld is the son of Merav and Yoni Rosenfeld, brother to Alaska and Blaze, grandson of Evgeniya and Yafim Rosenfeld and Shulamit and Ilan Sendowski. Amit is a 7th grader at the International School of Beaverton. He is a golfer, US military history buff, RC airplane flyer, baseball/hockey enthusiast, and loves a good windy day out on the water.



Iris Lauren Simpson | March 8

Iris Lauren Simpson is the daughter of Dana and Eric Simpson, sister to Ronen Simpson, and granddaughter of Tony and Priscilla Kostiner, and Leonard and Lenore (z"l) Simpson. She is a 7th grader at the Portland Jewish Academy. Iris has a festive and creative spirit: she goes "all in" on holiday decorations, theme parties, costumes, and fun desserts. She enjoys cheer, volleyball, travel, working at our family dog daycare business, playing with our Husky, hanging out with friends, and keeping Starbucks in business! *See page 12 to learn about her Bat Mitzvah project.*



Adira Miriam Letts | March 15

Adira is the daughter of Leah and Matthew Letts, granddaughter of Julie and Steven Pentelnic, and Laurie Raymond and Peter Letts. Adira is a 7th grader at Five Oaks MS. Adira is a lover of books and can usually be found curled up with her Kindle and a family cat or spending time with her sisters and friends.



Shaina Leslie Franco | March 22

Shaina Leslie Franco is the daughter of Alta and Omri Franco, granddaughter of Leslie Provence (z"l), Michael Kelly, and Galia and Jacques Franco. Shaina is a 7th grader at LOJH who is usually found grappling in JiuJitsu, eating homemade sourdough, and spending time with her family and best Dobergirl. When she is not selling lemonade with her best friends from preschool, you can find her kayaking on the lake or at Camp Solomon Schechter. *See page 12 to learn about her Bat Mitzvah project.*

My Volunteer Experiences

By Mark Kalenscher, CNS President

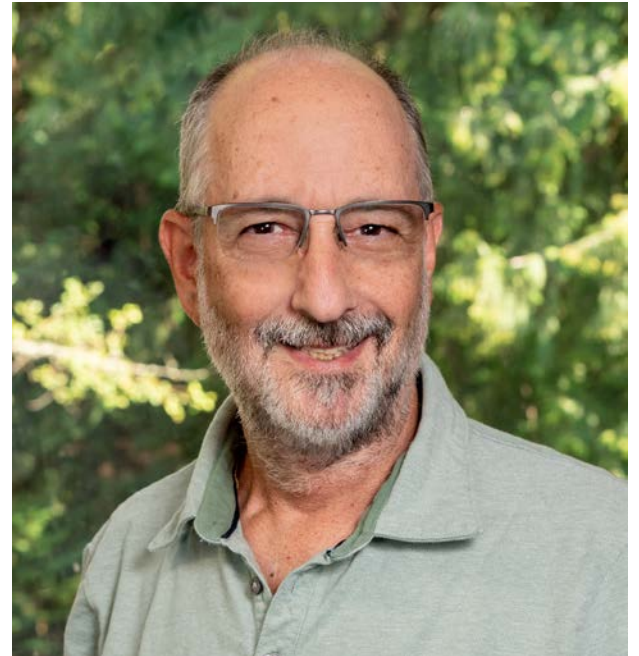
In keeping with our theme for this issue of *The Chronicle*, please allow me to share my volunteer experiences to demonstrate how we gain a deeper understanding of Tikkun Olam through doing, and how the sometimes-messy trial-and-error nature of getting involved can ultimately help us find our work in the world. My initial foray into this commitment was volunteering at an environmental organization, where my job was locating reported sightings of endangered bird species on a topographical map of Oregon. While I didn't find this experience particularly engaging, it sparked a journey that led me to diverse and impactful opportunities.

Next, I joined the United Way Grant Allocations Committee to try something different and more aligned with my interests. This experience exposed me to the needs of the Portland community and the agencies addressing those needs. Inspired by the work of professionals and volunteers in these social service agencies, I joined local attorneys and business leaders starting a group dedicated to providing capital to underserved local businesses. While this work was some-

times challenging, providing low-interest financing for small businesses struggling to qualify for bank loans was gratifying.

Eventually, my volunteer work brought me to Jewish institutions, including Camp Solomon Schechter and Neveh Shalom. My earlier experiences enriched my understanding of Jewish values and fostered a deep commitment to practicing these values in our *kehillah*. Exposure to various volunteer jobs and responsibilities is critical for acquiring the skills to assume diverse roles serving our communities while it also helps us feel connected and a part of something bigger.

My experiences have taught me that our talents and passions can lead us to unexpected and fulfilling paths. No matter how seemingly insignificant, each step contributes to a broader impact. Your unique talents and passions can make a significant difference in our community.



I hope your next step will be taking advantage of the myriad volunteer opportunities at Neveh Shalom. Whether you join a committee, assist our clergy and staff with developing and implementing programs, or help teachers in the Foundation School or ALIYAH, your contribution will be invaluable!

Wishing you all the best and a very Happy (secular) New Year!

Interested in volunteering to support your Neveh Shalom Kehillah?

Please reach out to the office at 503.246.8831, or fill out the Member Interest Survey at: <https://members.nevehshalom.org/form/member-interest>



Tikkun Olam, Chanukah, and ALIYAH

By Mel Berwin, Director of Congregational Learning

Our 6th Grade/Kitah Vav ALIYAH curriculum is really special. While they are the youngest students in their middle school careers, they are the oldest in our K-6 programming, and “leadership” is the theme of their year. Our 6th graders learn about leadership in the context of their b’nai mitzvah preparation, in social circles, by facilitating the younger kids in our Chanukah, Purim, and Lag Ba’Omer programming, and by studying Jewish texts, *tefilah*, *tzedakah*, and Jewish concepts of justice.



ALIYAH 6th graders and parents at a recent family program

In addition, several times during the year we invite 6th grade parents to join us for family programming. These gatherings offer families a chance to get to know each other and to learn together on the themes of the Kitah Vav year. One of these family programs focuses on *tzedakah* and helps 6th grade families consider how to incorporate a “mitzvah project” into their bar/bat/brit mitzvah.

In this family program, we study a text from the Talmud about lending money, which just as easily relates to giving money for *tzedakah*. It says that in a choice between lending first to your own people or to others, you should prioritize your own people, and that between the poor of your own town or the poor of another town, those closer to you have prior rights.

There is often rigorous debate about this text. After all, many Jews identify with causes outside of or tangential to the Jewish community and hold up our historical role in causes such as civil rights, LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights, etc., as a model for Jewish values. On the other hand, we can ask: how does it look if you are supporting “others” when your own family is in need? Whom do you expect to support your community while

you support someone else’s?

Pirkei Avot teaches: If I am not for myself, who am I? If I am only for myself, what am I?

These questions always feel relevant, possibly even more so during times like these when the Jewish community feels the extra pressures of antisemitism. In another recent 6th grade family program, we played out the “true” story of Chanukah, a more historically accurate version of the story, in which we explore the various Jewish factions and their roles in the war against the Syrian-Greek empire. We pause the story several times to ask: who do you relate to in this story? The Greeks? The Hellenists (Jews who assimilated to Greek culture)? The Chasidim (Jews who stuck to Jewish culture and religion)? Or the Maccabees (Jews who fought in resistance)?

This year’s discussion of the Chanukah story and our own identities in relationship to these historical groups felt especially poignant. The overwhelming majority of our preteens and parents began by identifying with the Jews who enjoyed Greek culture—after all, most of us are

modern American Jews who enjoy our extra-curriculars like theater and gymnastics! But as the Greeks in the story began enforcing their own religion and outlawing Jewish practice, every single participant shifted to identifying more with the “in-group” of Jews. In all the years of leading this exercise, I’ve never seen that happen, and it was clear that the room connected this story to the pervasive threat facing our Jewish people today.

How does all of this relate to our concept of *tikkun olam*? That phrase, in global Jewish conversations, has come to represent a rather fierce polemic about whether Jews should prioritize financial and political support primarily for organizations and causes within the Jewish community, or those outside or more tangential to the Jewish community. Our 6th grade family conversations have, to some extent, reflected that discussion.

How do you think about giving *tzedakah* or prioritizing support? As you gather with friends and family this year, it might be an interesting conversation to discuss: between “your people” or “others,” how do you prioritize? And has that shifted at all in the past year?

Celebrating Bare Trees

By Ronit Scheyer, Director of Early Childhood Education

Tu Bishvat, or the 15th of the Hebrew month of Shvat, is just one of four “New Years” throughout the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah is for counting years, e.g., for calculating the *shmita* year (a year of rest for the land every seven years), and the new year in the spring actually marks the first month of the year, Nisan. Tu Bishvat is the New Year for trees, and historically and halachically, it marked a division of time: fruit borne by a certain tree after this date was tithed with the following year’s produce. Although we no longer bring tithes from our fruit trees to the temple in Jerusalem, we retain the celebratory aspects of the holiday as the trees’ birthday, if you will.

I think for many of us it feels odd holding a celebration for trees when most are still dormant, their limbs bare of the foliage that makes them so beautiful in the warmer months, no flowers inviting the bees, no fruit weighing down their branches. It may be helpful to think in terms of celebrating the whole spectrum of growth – from everything that went right in the previous year to allow the trees to grow and store nourishment, to cycles of turning inward when things are not at their prettiest ex-

ternally. As with many of our holidays, the timing is tied to the ecology of the Land of Israel. Tu Bishvat is traditionally the date by which the early-rising almond tree (*shaqed* in Hebrew) begins to bud. Hebrew retains an echo of this land knowledge: the root *sh-q-d* means to be awake or watchful (see Jeremiah 1.11-12 for a great prophetic word-play).

After the winter solstice, the days begin lengthening, gently signaling to the trees that soon it will

be time to start making leaves again. Before the tree starts budding, all the nutrients it has stored over the long winter have to be sent upwards, what we call the sap rising. This is what Tu Bishvat marks, the beginning of new growth, before you can even see it coming.

It can be difficult to tell whether what we’re trying to do in the world is having its desired effects, but for those of us who work in raising the next generation, we have the privilege of seeing cycles of creation, potential, and growth over and over in rapid succession. When children are learning a new skill or working on grasping a concept, it’s rarely possible to see what is happening at the very moment when it starts – it’s hidden from our eyes until it becomes more coordinated and habitual. Often the first sign of a



new skill on the horizon is a sleep regression, or a change in appetite, or a new behavior pattern. Then, over time, their ‘sap’ – emotional and behavioral building blocks and previously mastered skills – rises and they push out new growth and you can see what they were working on in all its glory.

The truth is, raising children is not always pretty and glorious and fun. Those moments of triumph and joy certainly exist, and over the long term, there really is nothing like seeing the little ones in our care grow from a sack of potatoes into an independent person. But some days are really hard. Some days it is almost impossible to see the growth and the fruit of all our careful, heartfelt work. Our children are always beautiful, and some days appreciating their beauty is more of a challenge (our problem, not theirs). I would offer that on those days, it’s even more important to celebrate them exactly where they’re at, with the certainty that soon enough, they and we will enter a new phase of growth, and we’ll have new fruits to celebrate.



Sweeping Up the Shards

By Simone Heymann

An old Jewish legend, as told by Rabbi Wayne Dosik in *Living Judaism*, speaks of a time before the beginning of time, when God's light filled the entire universe. To create space for the world as we know it—filled with butterflies, lions, sea otters, and the like—God breathed some of that light back in, depositing it into heavenly vessels. However, these vessels, crafted by God Himself, could not contain such immense light and thus shattered into a billion sparks. These sparks transformed into the souls of the Jewish people, each one a fragment of God's divine light. But what of the broken vessels? Their remnants fell to Earth, becoming the evils that plague our world. The mission of each light-filled soul is to reclaim these broken pieces and restore the world to wholeness.

For me this story was not just a legend: it was the foundational ethos of my upbringing. Like many American Jews, I grew up with a deep sense of responsibility to heal the world, despite my sec-



ular lifestyle. I was committed to social justice, championed the marginalized, voted Democrat, and donated to causes that aligned with my values. Yet, for all my work toward mending a fractured world, I remained blissfully unaware of my own marginalization. It never occurred to me that there were people—here in America and other Western countries—who would seek to destroy us simply because of our Jewish identity. Like so many others, I truly believed antisemitism was a thing of the past.

Then, on October 7, 2023, everything changed for me. I woke to a world that deemed me unworthy of defense simply because I was Jewish. We were dehumanized, reduced to a slur, a lie, a libel, a hook-nosed rat caricature, a red inverted triangle, a colonizer, a baby killer, a target, a scapegoat. The violence and hatred that followed made me realize a painful truth: fighting alongside others to heal their world did not guarantee they would care to heal mine.

My desire to heal the world remains, but the question that haunts me now is: How could I stand alongside those who felt comfortable calling for my death? And not just mine, but the death of an entire nation? The horrifying truth, as Dara Horn chillingly puts it in her book, is that *People Love Dead Jews*. I cannot.

Raised secular, without a Jewish education, and without the traditional rites of passage such as a bat mitzvah, I began to question whether I could even claim to be a Jew. Jerry Seinfeld might have called me “Jew-ish,” a term that aptly encapsulated my experience. To the eyes of the world, this was irrelevant. I was the thing. And if the world was going to persecute me for being something, I had



better understand what that something was. I had to understand what it meant “to be a Jew” so that my 1,200 brothers and sisters who perished would not have died in vain. So that Hersch and Eden, Almog and Alex, Amit and Shani, Samer, Yotam, Elia, and so many others had not paid with their lives while I remained ignorant. I wanted to understand what it was to be a part of a people. My people. Because the rest of the world had an opinion about me, but I didn't agree with it.

This marked the beginning of my journey toward Neveh Shalom and the turning away of my particular light from those who seek our annihilation. Toward *Am Y'Israel*, toward Hebrew lessons, and God willing, a bat mitzvah; toward learning Torah, toward prayer, and to spend what time I have left in service of healing our world—the Jewish world.

If the mission of every light-filled soul is to make the world a little less broken, I have chosen to sweep up the shards a little closer to home.

First of Many with Many Firsts: State Treasurer Talks *Tikkun*

By Jenn Director Knudsen

For an elected official whose legislative success hinges on collaboration, it makes sense that **Dr. Elizabeth Steiner** views *tikkun olam* as a human-divine partnership. “I am taken with the idea of humans in partnership with *Hashem*,” says Steiner, who this January took the oath of office as Oregon’s State Treasurer. She is one with many firsts.

Her Nov. 5, 2024, victory over opponent and former fellow state senator, Brian Boquist (R), means Steiner is Oregon’s first female, first physician, first openly LGBTQ+, and first Jewish treasurer since statehood was declared in 1859, confirmed Kerry Tymchuk, executive director of the Oregon Historical Society and a personal friend of Steiner’s. During the Civil War, Louis Fleischner, born in the present-day Czech Republic, became Oregon’s first Jewish treasurer during the Civil War—so it’s been a minute....

Steiner further explained that *tikkun olam* is “one of the most important parts of being Jewish, how we interact with the world and make it better.” **Associate Rabbi Eve Posen** said, “*Tikkun olam* can be viewed as a partnership, either between a human being and God, meaning the work we do in the world is in honor of, or service to, a higher power, or between human beings working together to do this work for one another.” She added, “And, sometimes, it can represent both.”



Oregon State Treasurer—and CNS Member—
Dr. Elizabeth Steiner

Says Steiner: “It’s not on us, it’s not on *Hashem*, it’s on us both: That model speaks to me a lot.” She said she believes this model “teed her up” to enter the state legislature and, years later, win the position as treasurer. In that role, Steiner is the state’s banker, chief investment officer, and the one responsible for issuing bonds and a variety of savings programs.

Steiner entered politics in December 2011, when she was tapped to fill the state senate seat vacated by Suzanne Bonamici, a Democrat, then headed to Washington, D.C., after her election to the U.S. Congress. Steiner won reelection four times, serving thirteen

years as an Oregon senator representing District 17, before resigning her seat the day after Election Day 2024.

“I felt strongly before entering politics that I could use my skills to be in service to people in a different way than I did when primarily practicing and teaching medicine,” says Steiner, 61, who has been a family physician for almost 35 years. She says that many of her legislative victories include “introducing, championing, and building a coalition for” bills that became law in the name of *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life.

These bills include protecting young people from cancer and heart and lung disease by ensuring no one under 21 can legally purchase tobacco products or e-cigarettes, implementing a voluntary Universal Home

Visiting program for new parents, and safeguarding reproductive rights and gender-affirming care for all Oregonians. She says these and other pieces of legislation, which were ultimately supported by a large coalition of lawmakers in Salem “are completely congruent with Torah values” that reflect *tikkun olam*.

Does her work in partnership with *Hashem* always lead to what she wants? No. But, as the saying goes, God works in mysterious ways. For example, two years ago Steiner ran for, and did not win, the Senate presidency, so she

Continued on next page

was dispirited for a time. “I worked my *tuches* off to be appointed (to the presidency). Sometimes I get what I go for, sometimes I don’t. Ultimately, the decision is not mine,” she said, referencing God.

Yet if she had become Senate president, colleague Tobias Read “never would have come to me to run for treasurer,” she said. Read, who was State Treasurer through 2024, also ran for elected office this cycle; in January 2025 he became Oregon’s new secretary of state. “Treasurer is a much better position for me than the Senate at this point in my career,” Steiner says, implying a higher power also knew this to be so.

In her new four-year position, her big-picture plans include implementing a child savings account that young adults

can access upon their 18th birthday; working to reduce the carbon footprint of Oregon’s investment portfolio by 50 percent; and launching a plan

transformative.”

Similarly, this upcoming term will be filled with firsts and a record of impressive results.

“It’s not on us, it’s not on Hashem, it’s on us both: That model speaks to me a lot.”

“It’s clear to me that Elizabeth entered the public-service arena for the same reason she became a physician – and that’s a total commitment to helping people and improving their lives,” said Tymchuk, the Oregon Historical Society executive director, whose institution played host to Steiner’s inauguration.

“The only way we’re able to do our part is because *Hashem* gave us skills or resources: time, treasure, talent, and then the opportunity to use them.” Steiner added, “It’s how I’ve always understood *tikkun olam*.”

to help every family in Oregon build at least \$1000 in an emergency savings account. “It’s an ambitious goal, but I think it’s doable,” she said. “It would be

Steiner Supports Strikers on the Picket Line



In November 2024, shortly after the election that made Elizabeth Steiner our state’s first female treasurer (among other firsts!), she attended two strikes in one day to support the strikers’ causes. Why? “To me, one of the important parts of *tikkun olam* is helping others directly in a variety of ways. In the case of striking workers, that means showing up to acknowledge their bravery in going on strike and to demonstrate support.”

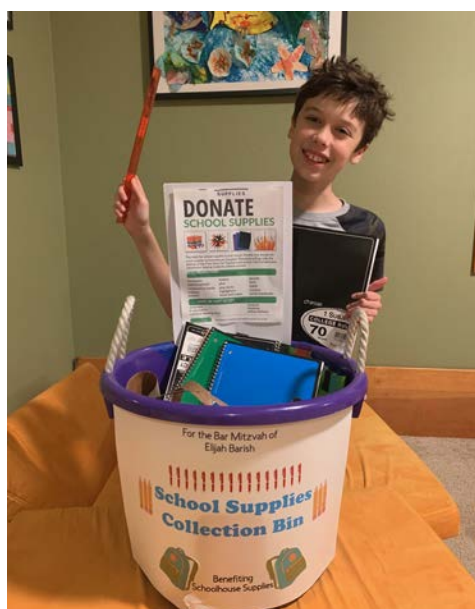
Elizabeth explained that teachers in Albany went on strike to bring more attention to school safety issues, overly large class sizes, and desires for salary increases. A little further south, workers from Benton County walked the picket line to protest the wage hike county commissioners gave themselves, the number of vacancies in local government, and their own “minimal wage increases,” as Elizabeth described them.

Our Work in the World: *Tikkun Olam* and the Impact of Our B'nai Mitzvah Students

By Michelle Caplan, Assistant Executive Director

At Congregation Neveh Shalom, our B'nai Mitzvah students embody the spirit of *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world, through meaningful projects that reflect their values and passions. These young leaders are making a real difference in the community and beyond, and we are proud to celebrate their inspiring work.

Elijah Barish is championing education through his school supplies donation drives for the local nonprofit, *Schoolhouse Supplies*. This organization equips lower-income children and teachers with essential tools for success, ensuring that learning can thrive despite financial barriers. Elijah's project, inspired by the belief in the power of education, is a reminder that something as simple as a pencil can transform a student's journey. He encourages everyone to participate in his upcoming drive at Neveh Shalom to support this vital cause.



Elijah Barish



Madeleine Sheff

Shaina Franco is bringing comfort to families during life's most tender moments. She is creating handmade blankets for new parents and children in need, which are being delivered to the labor and delivery unit at OHSU. These beautiful, heartfelt gifts provide warmth and support to families welcoming new life, demonstrating care and kindness during a significant chapter in their lives.

Madeleine Sheff turned her creativity and sewing skills into a project that supports animals affected by disasters. She crafted quilts for *Kennel Quilts*, an organization providing comfort to pets in shelters during challenging times. Madeleine's effort not only offers physical warmth but also compassion for creatures who often go unseen in times of crisis.

Iris Simpson addresses a critical need within our community by collecting and providing toiletries and personal care items for people living in shelters or on the streets. Her project emphasizes the importance of dignity and self-care for all individuals and highlights her commitment to helping those who are most vulnerable.

We are so proud of our next generation of young leaders who exemplify the Jewish values of compassion, responsibility, and community care. Their projects not only make a direct impact but also inspire us all to reflect on how we can contribute to the greater good.

Through their work, Elijah, Shaina, Madeleine, and Iris are examples of our B'nai Mitzvah students showing that small acts of kindness can ripple outward, helping to repair the world one thoughtful gesture at a time. Mazel Tov to these remarkable students for their dedication and impact!



Iris Simpson

How Much Does Language Shape Us

By Emily Silverman

How much does language shape us? What gets lost in translation when we decode a word from one cultural, ethnic, or geopolitical background to another? And how might the language we use shift not only our perspectives, but also our actions?

I moved to the States from Israel a decade ago. In settling into a new Jewish community, it was reassuring and comforting to find that many of the typical activities that I participated in back home that are a hallmark of a vibrant Jewish community, existed here as well. These included opportunities to volunteer; help the needy; cook for the hungry; advocate for human rights; pursue justice, and perpetuate kindness. What fascinates me is how different the language is in the States around these activities than in the Hebrew lexicon I am used to. As I continue to integrate here, I sometimes wonder if the language is a reflection of the culture, or if the cultural norm is informed by the language.

For example, the word “to volunteer” in English is a straightforward active verb. The Hebrew equivalent, *hitnadvut*, is a reflexive verb that literally means “drawing out generosity from oneself.” Not a huge difference, but a subtle nod to the mutually beneficial and self-reflective nature of community work.

I often hear my children parroting back to me an English phrase they hear at school: “be kind.” In Hebrew, there is no such thing as being kind. Kindness is a thing you do. In fact, it’s a thing you provide. It is not an adjective, or even a verb. It is a noun that is always accompanied by the verb “to do” (*la’asot chesed*). One “does a kindness.” One cannot “be kind” or even “act kind”—you do it. Or you don’t do it. There is no “be.” This is

something I find particularly powerful, as the message I hear from the language the children are bringing home is twofold. First, kindness is measured by action. You cannot *be* kind without *doing* kindness. And second, you don’t *have* to be kind to do kindness. Your kindness is an action, not a feeling. You do not—in fact you must not—wait for your heart, or your intention, or your goodwill, to take the righteous action; you just *do* the kindness, regardless of how you are feeling on the inside.

And then there is *tikkun olam*. In our texts, the first time this phrase arises is in the Mishnah (Gittin 4:2), where Raban Gamliel remarks that a divorce paper should include all relevant information regarding both husband and wife for *tikkun olam*, so that no one in another town will be able to claim that the woman’s divorce is illegitimate. In *The Zohar*, the phrase portrays an esoteric contrast to the concept of *shvirat ha-kelim* (a world of chaos), where *tikkun olam* offers a path to bring godliness back into the world through ritual and prayer. As we know, this concept evolved over time to encompass any work being done for the betterment of the world and has even gone on to inhabit a post-modern existence in the realm of politics and social justice.

We are a people of language *and* a people of action. Our tradition values both the *mitzvah* and the *kavanah*, the



Daughters Alma and Shira, preparing a Thanksgiving meal for a family with a new baby in the community

theory and the application. I roll these different words around on my tongue and in my heart and think, how might the language we use inform the good we do? How might I use *doing chesed* to drive me to action and *being* kind to reflect on deepening my empathy? When I think about “fixing the world,” do I unintentionally put on glasses that see all around me as broken, and me the savior? Might I reconnect to the empathy and generosity within me through *hitnadvut*?

The space between the words allows us to self-reflect, to recalibrate, to check ourselves and reconnect. Where might I *do* more? Where might I *be* more? What, today, is my *tikkun* in this world?

Why It Matters

By Sara Safdie

When I was growing up, my family always had a *pushke* (a small box into which we could drop coins); when it was full, we'd bring all the coins to our synagogue for them to distribute to various Jewish charities. My mother always noted how important it was to help others who were less fortunate than we, no matter how strained our own circumstances were. I believe that that was my foray into understanding the importance of *tikkun olam*. Although I wasn't familiar with that term until more than ten years ago, that little tin box showed me the importance of helping to heal the world, no matter how small the way.

When we moved to Portland a few years ago, we began to look for a synagogue to join. Based on my growing knowledge of *tikkun olam*, I was pleased to see that among the several congregations we checked out, Neveh Shalom had such a group. The shuls where we had previously lived didn't have these opportunities, so I looked forward to participating in such activities.

It turned out that Neveh Shalom became the gateway for me to become involved within the Portland Jewish community. I became a member of the newly-formed JCRC's Climate Action Committee. When I was a college professor, my classes focused on the connections between the food we consume and its effects on climate change, so it seemed natural for me to join that committee. Now more than ever, it is of paramount importance to address the coming/all-too-present challenges we face to keep the beautiful planet with which we have been bestowed in balance.

Some of you might remember that I led the Neveh Shalom Circle, members

who brought a Ukrainian family here, enabling them to escape the bombing of their homes in Kharkiv. Rabbi Kosak constantly provided support for our group in ways too numerous to list here. The Federation also provided much needed help, including very generous financial support for the family. What was truly amazing was the engagement of our *kehillah*, both financially and through the donation of various items, including beds, linen, and cookware for the family. The Community Warehouse also gifted furniture and delivered large, donated items. Being part of this effort opened my eyes to the goodness possible when a community comes together to literally help others heal. To this day, Eduard thanks me for our efforts, especially now that he and Daria have a baby daughter whom they know will grow up in safety, with opportunities that would have been impossible in Ukraine.

Most recently, I have joined, alongside several CNS members, the JCRC's Legislative Advocacy Committee; it meets with state legislators and lobbies for Jewish community concerns, including addressing antisemitism, security issues, and climate change. Outside of Portland's Jewish community, I am a member of the executive board of the Hillsdale Farmers' Market, which supports local, inclusive farming. Also, I recently began working with an Oregon gun safety group. Considering the perils the incoming administration presents, I feel compelled by the urgency of the situation to get more involved than previously to ensure that Oregon remains a



bastion of democracy, including all the freedoms that that encompasses.

Why get involved in any of this? Why not just let things follow their course, wherever that may lead? I have never been that kind of person, and I hope that as a member of our *kehillah*, you are not that kind of person either. I have never been one to stay on the sidelines, assuming others will look after our larger community, our environment, our freedom and democracy, and others in need around the world. I receive so much more than I give by knowing that our community is strong and open-hearted, keeping our air and water clean, providing comfort to those whose homelands have been destroyed, preventing another senseless gun tragedy, and keeping our local farmers strong only gives me more hope as well as the energy to strive to do good and help repair an imperfect world.

Neveh Shalom Happenings

Please enjoy this sampling of what is being offered at Neveh Shalom. The best way to get the latest information is through our weekly eblasts. You can sign up at: news@nevehshalom.org. Please visit the website for links at: nevehshalom.org/calendar.

DID JEW KNOW

- **The Jewish Lifecycle w/ Rabbi Posen** - Sun: 9:15-10:30am: Jan 12, 19, 26
- **Liturgy with Cantor Bitton** - Mon: 7:00-8:15pm: Jan 13, 20, 27

PJ Havdallah (0-3rd grade) Saturday, January 4, 5:30pm

Join families as we say goodbye to Shabbat in PJs.

Tikkun Olam: Project Lemonade Sunday, January 5, 10-12pm

Help get our donations ready for foster youth in the Project Lemonade store.

Spirited Sisters Women's Happy Hour Tues, January 7, 4-5:30pm, Casa Colima

All are invited to join women of CNS Sisterhood for Taco Tuesday.

Drop-in Grief Group

Wed, January 8, Feb. 5, March 5, 7-8pm

A place for you to be with, share, and learn about your grief in warm and supportive community.

In-Person Book Club: *The Women* Thursday, January 9, 10am

Stew on This: A Cholent Workshop Thursday, January 9, 23, 25, 6-8pm

Join Rabbi Kosak for this 3-part workshop, where we'll learn, cook, and taste this one-pot Shabbat Dish. nevehshalom.org/cholent25

Cooking for Outside In

Sun, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 9, 12-2pm

Cook a meal to feed homeless teens.

Sisterhood Coffee Connections

Tue, Jan. 14, Feb. 11, Mar 11, 11:30pm, MJCC
Drop in for a warm and welcoming morning.

Wondering Jews: Writing Your Ethical Will Wed, January 15, 22, 29, 10-11:30am

Deepen your connection to the meaningful tradition of creating an ethical will in this three-part workshop. nevehshalom.org/eth25

Wise Women

Thursday, Jan. 16, Feb. 20, Mar 20, 12-1pm

Pack a lunch and join this friendly group of women to schmooze and empower one another.

Art, Heart, and Soul Workshop

Thurs, Jan. 16, Mar. 27, 6:30-8:30pm

Earn a new artistic skill with wine, snacks, and friends! nevehshalom.org/art25

Krav Maga Seminar

Sunday, January 19, 10-11:30am

Discover the essentials of Krav Maga, the renowned Israeli self-defense system. nevehshalom.org/kmmc24

6th-8th grade Youth Activities Service Project Monday, January 20

Israel360 ALYN Pediatric Rehabilitation Hospital Wednesday, January 22, 7-8:30pm

Explore the first culturally competent hospital in Israel treating children and employing staff, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, or gender. nevehshalom.org/I360ALYN

Tikkun Olam: Red Cross Blood Drive Thursday, January 23, 12-5pm

Women's Torah Study w/ Mel Berwin Saturday, January 25, 12:30-1:30pm

Sisterhood Book Club

Monday, Jan. 27, Feb. 24, March 24, 7:00pm

Join on Zoom to discuss a new book.

Men's Club Beer & Bible

Thurs., Jan. 30, Feb. 27, Mar. 20, 6:30pm

Come together with old friends and meet new ones. First appetizer is on us!

Challah Bake for Hostages

Thursday, January 30, 7-9pm

Interfaith Sisters in Unity

Wed, Feb. 5 and Mar 5, 7-9pm, Zoom

Men's Club Brunch and Learn

Sunday, February 16, 9am-12pm

Rabbi Elihu Gevirtz discusses his new book, *Sacred Insignia: The Spiritual Significance of Brit Milah*.

Services, Dinner, and Speaker

Friday, February 21, 6:15-8:15pm

A dinner will follow Kabbalat Shabbat services with speaker Yizhar Hess, Vice Chair of the World Zionist Organization.

Israel360: Neveh Shalom in Israel

Sunday, March 9, 10-11:30am

Zoom in to hear from Neveh Shalom congregants currently living in Israel.

CNS Purim Celebration

Thursday, March 13, 6:00-8:00pm

Morning Minyan and Shabbat Services

Please visit the website for more info

Morning Minyan

Monday-Friday, 7:15am (7:00am Jewish holidays and Rosh Chodesh; 9:00am US holidays); Sundays, 8:45am

Kabbalat Shabbat Service Fridays, 6:15pm

Simcha Shabbat

Friday, January 3, Feb. 7, March 7, 6:15pm
Celebrate your birthday or anniversary month with your community!

Shishi Shabbat Israeli-American Dinner Friday, January 17, 7-9pm

Shabbat Dinner in Birnbach Hall Friday, January 31, 5:15-6:15pm

Enjoy a complimentary light dinner and drinks prior to Kabbalat Shabbat services.

ALIYAH K-6 Shabbat Service Friday, February 7, 6:15pm

Sisterhood Shabbat Friday, February 14, 6:15pm

Kol Shabbat 2nd Fridays, 7:15pm

Lay-led, voices-only service.

4th Friday Shabbat w/Rabbi Eve 4th Fridays, 5:15pm

Rabbi Eve Posen leads Shabbat for families (ages 0-10), with singing, a story, and blessings.

Saturday Morning Shabbat Service Saturdays, 9:30am

Downstairs Minyan Shabbat Service 2nd, 4th, 5th Saturdays, 9:30am

Tot Shabbat (Ages 0-5)

1st and 3rd Saturdays, 10:30am

Join young families as we gather together for some Tot Shabbat fun.

Kiddush Club (K-3rd Grade)

1st and 3rd Saturdays, 10:30am

Morah Sarah Rohr and Moreh Gershon Liberman alternate leading Kiddush Club.

Member News



Thank you to everyone who volunteered for Veterans Day flag planting. We are grateful for your support in honoring Veterans buried at Neveh Zedek and Ahavai Shalom.

Mazel Tov to **Laurie Fendel, Brian and Sarah Rohr, Eddy Shuldman, Sharon Siegel, and Leora Troper** on having their art featured in *Mayim Hayim: Waters of Life and Peace – The Mikvah Project* at the MJCC.

Mazel tov to CNS Staff **Marg Everett** on the engagement of her granddaughter Emily Marcum to Dacoda Gustafson.

Mazel tov to **Cantor Linda Shivers and Avraham's Closet** on a featured article in *50Plus Magazine*. Click here to read: <https://50plusmagazine.net/2024/09/26/free-durable-medical-equipment-for-everyone/>



Mazel tov to CNS member **Simone Heymann**, whose essay was included in *Tablet Magazine* about why she is participating in the Simchat Torah Challenge. Read here: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/belief/articles/year-reading-parsha-simchat-torah-challenge>

***Yihi Zichram Baruch* – Our condolences to CNS members who have recently lost loved ones.**



We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of longtime congregant **Chuck Saxe, z"l**, at the age of 72. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, **Harriet**; his children, Andrea Gilbreth (John) and Wayne Saxe (Karen); and his grandchildren, Adele and Teddy Saxe.

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of **Gary Weinstein, z"l**, a third-generation Neveh Shalom congregant, on Wednesday, October 30, 2024, at the age of 89. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, **Carolyn Weinstein**; his children, Robin Weinstein and Jeff (Erika Stohl) Weinstein; and his brother Stuart (Lee) Weinstein. Gary's family legacy with Neveh Shalom stretches back to his great-great uncle who founded Neveh Zedek. Donations can be made to the Gary Weinstein Beautification Fund.

The congregation gratefully acknowledges the following contributions:

ADULT EDUCATION FUND

in memory of

Alexander Raskin from Elisa Weger
Augusta "Guggie" Raskin from Elisa Weger

Becky Menashe Bookshelf Fund in memory of

Sol Ezra Menashe from Sanford Menashe

CAMP SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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CANTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND in appreciation of

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Itskhok Khotyanov from Alisa & Bentsian Prosmushkin
Lillie Kugel from Beverly Eastern
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Pavel Golberg from Peter & Alla Tolchinsky

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Joe Gold from Elizabeth Gold

Bernard Goldhammer from Robert

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Dorothy Shore from Robert Shore

Jack Israel from Francine Frisch

Max Jolosky from Richard Jolosky

Dora Jolosky from Richard Jolosky

Daniel Joseph Peizner from Richard

& Mary Peizner

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Abram Mikhlin from Ida Mikhlin

Ann Miller from Ralph Miller

Lillian Montrose from Myra Jackson

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Moraru

Diana Pereplyotchik from Leonid

Pereplyotchik

Braina Pereplyotchik from Leonid

Pereplyotchik

Flora Perkel from Robert & Harriet

Perkel

William Perkel from Robert &

Harriet Perkel

Isaak Premysler from Raisa

Premysler

Nisl Rabovitser from Gregory &

Nelly Altotsky

Anne Seltzer from Joanne Rogovoy

Semen Smetana from Grigoriy

Milman & Marina Mekhanik

Semen Smetana from Yakov &

Anna Smetana

Shelli Stern from Myra Jackson

Sharon Straus from Michael &

Gloria Olds

Albert Weinstock from Marvin

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Please recycle *The Chronicle* when finished

Tikkun Olam in Our Kehillah



Sheri Cordova

My work with Neveh Shalom's Hesed Committee has been the perfect way for me to express my Jewish values. While I can't repair the whole world, I can help care for my community and provide opportunities for others to join me in these efforts. I believe that *tikkun olam* is the heart of Judaism, a way to honor our covenant with all of creation by offering our time and energy attending to the needs of our fellow beings. The privilege of sharing in this work continues to support my Jewish identity. *Today Rabah and Kol Tuv.*

Richard Botney

As the lead chef for Cooking for Outside In, I start with the belief that it is imperative that we help feed those who are hungry. Our dedicated volunteers cook every month, knowing that hunger never takes a vacation. We strive to provide good-quality, tasty meals, food of the same quality as we would want to eat ourselves. How does this happen? Each month, from our library of recipes, we select an entree, salad, side dish, and a dessert. Fresh ingredients are purchased and brought to Neveh Shalom's kitchen where, along with dry goods from our pantry, a meal is prepared and then delivered to Outside In, where it is served that night, hot and fresh.