



In This Issue

- 1 Female Scribes
- 2 From Jenny
- 2 A Message from the President of the James Bay Community Project
- 3 Rabbi Jane Writes
- 4 Chai
- 4 Torah Study
- 5 Hadassah-WIZO Channukah Party
- 6 Wandering Jews
- 6 VVIJ Burial Society
- 7 Hadassah-WIZO Annual Channukah Raffle
- 7 Extra Extra Read All About It
- 8 Tzedekah – A Way of Life
- 8 Those We Remember
- 11 Calendar
- 11 Havdallah
- 12 Reform Movement Responds to Homophobic Bullying
- 12 Have a Voice in the future of Reform Judaism
- 12 JCCV Cookbook – A Resounding Success
- 12 JCCV food for Thought Luncheon

Female Scribes finish writing Torah Scroll

By [Sue Fishkoff](#)

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) -- It took seven years to write and just a few days to sew together, but on Oct. 15 the first Torah scroll written entirely by a group of women was attached to its wooden poles and declared complete. The ceremony was held at Seattle's Kadima Reconstructionist Community, which sponsored the project.

"We had the idea 10 years ago, but when we looked around for women scribes, we realized there weren't any," said Kadima member Wendy Graff, one of the volunteers who shepherded the project from its inception. To remedy the dilemma, Kadima supported two women as they trained to be scribes. Four others trained on their own. Ultimately the six female scribes, or sofrot, worked on the scroll in four countries: two in Israel, two in the United States, and one each in Brazil and Canada. The panels were checked by experts in Jerusalem and New York, who made the minor tikkunim, or corrections, permitted by Jewish law. Major errors require a complete redo of the page.

Last week the panels were flown to Seattle, where another group of women sewed them together. The Torah mantle, including wooden poles, or atzei chayim, and other traditional accoutrements were created by seven local artists.

The scribes were paid, but the others who worked on the project donated their time.

According to Orthodox tradition, women are not permitted to be Torah scribes.

Over the last decade, however, a handful of women have trained as scribes. It's an exacting process. Torahs must be written by hand on parchment made from the skins of kosher animals, and scribes must state their intentions out loud each time they prepare to write God's name.

In September 2007, Jen Taylor Friedman of New York completed the first Torah scroll known to have been written by a woman, for the United Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis, Mo. Friedman

[Continued on page 2](#)

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Apologies, dear friends. Moving office has been so all-consuming of my time, that I have not been able to write a message this month. By next month, my life should be back to normal.

Jenny

A Message from the President of the James Bay Community Project

As Chair of the Board of Directors, I wish to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your support of the Project. So many people lend their support selflessly to us in so many ways each and every year, whether through financial, [food or clothing](#) contributions, volunteer services and more. You are all deeply appreciated.

I thank you in advance for your ongoing generous support. We are hoping that you will give a little more this year if you are able to do so, as every extra dollar makes a significant difference!

Sincerely,

John Vickers, Chair

Editor's Note: this letter was addressed to our Social Action Chair, [Reva Hutkin](#), care of the JCCV, because he really wanted us to know how much they appreciate our continuous donations of food and clothing. Thank you to everyone who regularly contributes. Please keep the donations coming.

[Scribes, Continued from page 1.](#) advised the Women's Torah Project and was one of the experts who checked for small errors. She is among a number of women at work on other Torah scrolls, including Julie Seltzer of San Francisco, one of the six scribes on the Seattle project.

Seltzer wrote four of the Seattle Torah's 62 panels in the summer of 2009, when she was living in New York. Since October 2009, she has been writing a Torah scroll at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco as part of the yearlong exhibition, "As it is Written: Project 304,805."

Seltzer began the year doing all her writing in public at the museum, so visitors could watch and ask questions. She soon [Continued on page 4.](#)

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Ask about advertising in The Voice. Contact Julie Elizabeth at madrona623@telus.net.

Rabbi Jane Writes

Apocalypse Not Now

As we approach the end of 2010, it's interesting to note that it was not a particularly active year in terms of geological activity. Experts say it's about average. Though it seems as if every week there was a major disaster – and I certainly don't want to minimize the suffering of the people of Haiti and Chile and Iceland – this perception is the result of changes in the dissemination of information rather than a fundamental geologic change. Both the international news media and the fiction producing movie industry feed on the perception of impending doom.



Though disaster hysteria is on the rise, it's nothing new. Some people think the first signs of the Apocalypse were seen in the year 2800 BCE. That's the date of an Assyrian tablet that proclaims the end of civilization as they knew it, due to degenerating morality. But the Jewish Apocalypse - the one adopted by Christianity, the one that is so dear to certain parts of North American culture - didn't emerge until after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586BCE. It was after this event that the prophet Ezekiel foretold of the future return of the Jewish people to Israel, and the violent destruction of their enemies. The prophet Isaiah built on this tradition with details about the resurrection of the dead and the cosmic significance of the end of time. Later Jewish books such as Enoch and Daniel fleshed out the revolutionary eschatology with visions of wild monsters and great beasts, cataclysms and uprisings that mark the Apocalypse.

From Ezekial until today, I imagine that in every generation some people have asked, "Is it now? Is this the end?" So far, the answer is no. There have been plagues and wars, famines and deluges, but up until now, no Apocalypse. That doesn't mean it won't happen, just that we want to be a bit skeptical about its immediacy. The Jewish historical experience of survival - even survival of horrific tragedy - tempered eschatological yearnings. Rabbinic Judaism became increasingly pragmatic: sooner or later the end of days will be here, but it's important to take care of matters on earth now. We pray for the Messianic Era to come "speedily and in our days," BUT according to our Sages, "If you are planting a sapling and you hear the Messiah has come, first finish planting the sapling, then go to greet the Messiah." (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 8:31)

I was watching the Daily Show and John Stewart implied that this year's natural upheavals could be seen as the hand of God, a harbinger of the last days. I think he was mostly kidding, but his humor reflects not only the ancient Jewish tradition, but also the contemporary belief system of many fundamentalists, replete with bestselling books featuring life after the "Rapture." Many people believe the world is coming to its end, and soon. They point to world events, to supposed Mayan prophecies, to the situation in the Middle East, the fall of Communism and even the establishment of Israel, as signs of the Apocalypse.

Normative Judaism has rejected Apocalyptic ideology because it is a form of denial of reality. The reality is that even in the very worst of times, life goes on. This is a challenging time for Canada and the world. The war, the economy, the environment, the moral fabric of our society are important issues that we must engage positively and pragmatically. They don't have easy solutions, and they aren't going away. It is sometimes tempting to throw up our hands and say,

[Continued on page 3.](#)

Rabbi Jane, continued from p.2

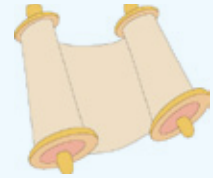
"Civilization as we know it is ending - the ethics of our society are unsustainable." But that didn't help in Assyria five thousand years ago, and it doesn't help now. Rather the Jewish wisdom is anti-Apocalyptic: "It is not up to you to finish the task, neither are you free from engaging in it." and For Jews, change is a gradual apocalyptic one. It comes about step by step, through unceasing engagement with moral values. So though we continue to pray for the coming of the Messianic Age, it's more important to plant the saplings in our hands.

Jane

Scribes, continued from page 2. realized, however, that she would never complete the scroll by her December 2010 deadline, so Seltzer writes mainly at home now and spends several days a week at the museum talking to the public.

"Jewish learning and text was my entryway to Jewish practice and spirituality, and continues to be one of the primary ways I connect," Seltzer told JTA, saying she feels honored to be able to write a Torah scroll. "To be this close to the text, on the elemental level of the letters, is extraordinary." [Conclusion page 5.](#)

Torah Study



Torah Study continues at 11:00 am every Saturday at the home of Julie Elizabeth and Reva Hutkin, 2222A Arbutus Road, at Gordon Head.

If you would like to sponsor an issue of The Voice, please contact **Julie Elizabeth** at 250-388-4161 or email her at <madrona623@telus.net>.

Chai חַי

Did you know that we have provided you with an opportunity to commemorate important events in the lives of your family and friends? Our Chai Fund appears in the Newsletter every month and contains the names of the donor and the occasion. These can be "Thank Yous," messages of condolence, good wishes for weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, anniversaries, birthdays, appreciation or anything you find noteworthy. A card will be sent by us on your behalf to the person(s) you wish to honour. Chai Fund donations are a great way to raise much needed funds for our Congregation, and are tax deductible.

All you have to do is send a cheque to the Treasurer, made payable to Kolot Mayim Reform Temple. It may be left in the Kolot Mayim folder at the JCC, or mailed to Kolot Mayim Reform Temple at the JCC of Victoria, 3636 Shelbourne Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8P 4H2.

Donations received during the past month:

- Arline Parrish
- Carole Sterling of the CRJ, Toronto
- Jacqueline and Sheldon Seigel made a donation to buy materials for our new Sukkah.

Hadassah-WIZO Annual Chanukah Party

Our not-to-be-missed
"Festival of Lights" celebration
will start at
6pm on
Saturday December 4, 2010
at the home of
Ana and Alex Porzecanski,
2391 Beach Drive.

Please bring either a salad or a dessert to share.
If you are unable to bring a dish,
we ask that you make a contribution
to cover our costs for paper goods, beverages, etc.

You are welcome to bring your menorah and candles.
(8th night, so bring 9 candles!)

Come and share the warmth of Chanukah - bring your spouses.
Prospective members are invited to join us.

Please RSVP to Celia at (250) 995-1414 or morcel@shaw.ca
so we know how many to cook for. Ana's latkes are legend in Victoria!

[Scribes](#), continued from [page 4](#). Seltzer says she doesn't feel that her experience writing a Torah is any different from a male scribe. But the fact that her Torah, and the one completed by the Women's Torah Project, were written by women means they will not be accepted for use in Orthodox congregations. On her website, Hasoferet.com, Friedman tells female scribes they need to be upfront about that when they are commissioned to work on a Torah.

"Why is a soferet like a swordfish?" she writes. Swordfish, she says, is not considered kosher by most Orthodox Jews, although Conservative Jews will eat it. "If I repair a Torah and then let Orthodox congregations use it," she wrote, it's "an appalling desecration of trust. If we want respect, as Jews or as human beings, we have to give respect, and part of that is accepting that other Jews' rule systems are valid despite being different from ours."

[Sue Fishkoff](#) writes about Jewish life for the JTA and is the author of the 2010 book "Kosher Nation." Reprinted from <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2010/10/15/2741314/an-all-women-torah-is-completed-in-seattle>



Wandering Jews

Reva and I travelled to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal in September/October to visit friends and relatives on both sides. The only complaint we had was not enough time! Too many friends and too many relatives! We had lunch and dinner with different people every day! We most certainly left without wearing out our welcome, but we will definitely have to plan a longer trip next time!

A couple of things we did were of Jewish relevance —one in Toronto, and one in Montreal, and I thought I would tell you a bit about them here. In both cases, we just happened to be in the right place at the right time!

In Toronto, we were invited to a concert and reading at one of the oldest shuls in the city - the Beaches Hebrew Institute. It is in a beautiful, real wood panelled building very close - as the name implies - to the beach. Unfortunately, we did not get to see the Ark, as that area of the shul had been closed off due to the secular nature of the event we attended. But the sanctuary was beautiful, and a very warm and welcoming space.



Semmy Stahlhammer, a renowned Swedish violinist, and his wife, an equally accomplished cellist, treated us to a beautiful concert, punctuated by Semmy's readings from his book, **Codename Barber**, the biographical tribute he has written about his father's experiences during the Holocaust. Following the concert, Semmy signed copies of his book, and gave each purchaser a CD of Swedish music as well. Mr. Stahlhammer seemed very gentle and soft spoken man, who put his entire soul into his music, and I'm sure, into his writing as well. Reva reports that it was a good read.

After a brief stay in Ottawa, we found ourselves in Montreal in time for Simchas Torah. We were invited to the local reconstructionist temple there independently by Reva's friends,

[Continued on page 8.](#)

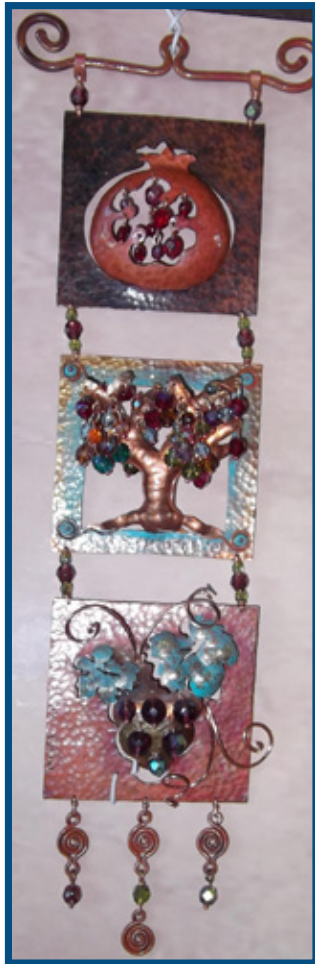
The Victoria and Vancouver Island Jewish Burial Society

The Jewish Burial Society of Victoria and Vancouver Island is a service organization founded to assist all Jews with end of life requirements. We administer four totally separate and distinct sections in the Hatley Memorial Gardens and provide space for all persuasions of Jewish life from orthodox to secular, complete with cremation if specified.

The Society works with the Victoria Chevrah Kadisha in preparation of the body for burial, and works with the family in all ways to ensure that the bereaved person feels the embrace and concern of the entire community.

While we are a non profit Society, regretfully, end of life does not respect one's pocketbook, and costs are dear. There is a small membership charge that must be paid to become a member of our Society, and arrangements for this, and for burial requirements may be made at any time. We recommend dealing with one's self and saving the pain and expense of the survivors at a very stressful time.

For additional information on a highly confidential basis, call Joel Fagan (250 477-2006), Jack Shalinsky (250 477-1012), or Michael Goldberg (250 598-9094).



Grand Prize:

Beautiful original
Israeli



**Hadassah-WIZO
Annual Channukah Raffle!**

Tickets – \$5.00 each or three for \$10.00!

Drawing December 4th at Channukah Party.
You do not have to be present to win.

Tickets may be purchased at the Channukah party or by
contacting Ana Porzecanski at 250-595-2687 or [rifkaporze@
gmail.com](mailto:rifkaporze@gmail.com).



Hand-carved
dolphin



White ceramic
teapot
with cosy with

**Other
Great**

EXTRA EXTRA READ ALL ABOUT IT.

Your Congregational Development Team would like to warn you that over the forthcoming months you will be inundated with messages in the weekly updates, and we would really appreciate it if you would take the time to read them. You'll only be inundated with phone calls if you don't :):).

We are in the process of putting together dates and venues for a number of pretty big events which will only be successful if we have all of you on board. There will be a multitude of ways to help and we expect to be able to use all your talents.

Thank you all in advance - **Watch this space!**

Kolot Mayim Supports Food Bank

Please bring food donations for the James Bay Community Project Food Bank to the JCC on Friday nights. We have a beautiful box for your contributions, which are deeply appreciated. Packaged goods as well as produce are welcomed.

Donations of cans of beans and soup are especially needed.

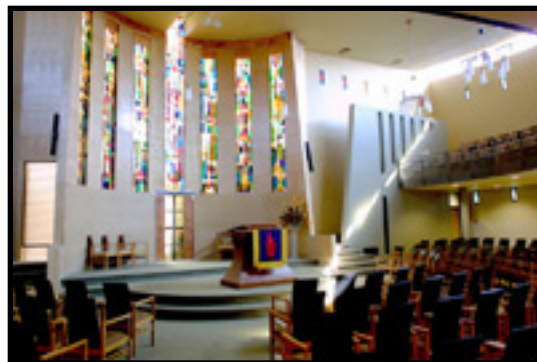
For more information, please contact Reva Hutkin, 388-4161, or Ann Gougeon-Ryant, 384-9351.

Kolot Mayim's **WEBSITE** is now under the domain name <http://www.kolotmayimreformtemple.com>

[Wandering Jews](#), Continued from page 6. and by a friend of mine, as well. We were very surprised to discover that they knew each other as all are members of Dorshei Emet.

I was expecting to find a very small shul, as until meeting Rabbi Jane, I had never even heard of the Reconstructionist movement. But it's obviously been around for quite a while, at least in the East. This shul was quite large, with a beautiful sanctuary and at least six Torahs – all of which were paraded and danced around the sanctuary with such nachas. I have never witnessed such a sight, let alone been part of such a joyous ritual.

There were Torahs of kidding! - but the "star" of Torat Imeinu which had been Emet as a women's Torah, smaller and lighter, and scribe (Soferet). Not only raffle with the winners being the actual Torah: either hand over the soferet's or would hold the quill with The experience was further explaining the significance of the letter written to each winning participant.



every size and shape – no the evening was the new commissioned for Dorshei Emet which would be (I think) was written by a woman that, but the shul held a allowed to write a letter in the winner would place her hand as she wrote a letter, the soferet guiding her hand, enriched by the soferet

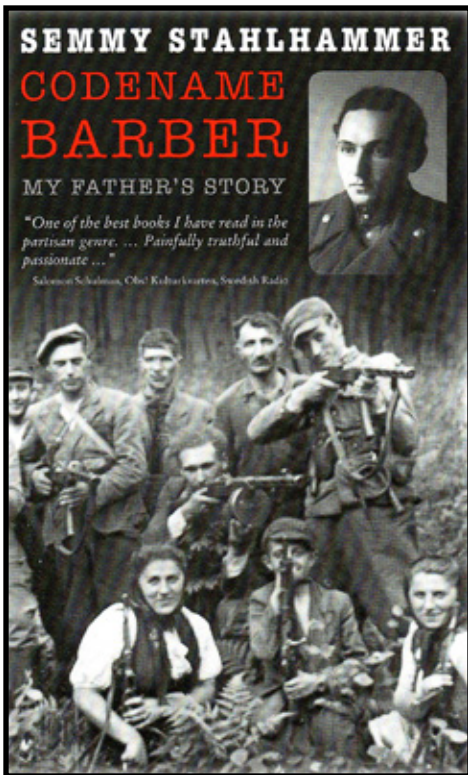
It was from this Torah that the last verses in the yearly cycle were read. It was this Torah that was ritually rewound, and it was from this Torah that the first verses of the cycle were then read. Everything was accompanied by great ceremony, ritual, and of course, honours. It was definitely a gift to behold, and to be a part of this momentous occasion.

There were musicians and dancing, and the torahs were passed around. Even I got to dance with one of them! This was an event such as I have only ever heard about. Following this wonderful ceremony, there was a dinner in the community hall, and yet more music!

Two wonderful evenings of yiddishkeit. Thank you Beaches, and thank you Dorshei Emet, and to our friends who invited us. We hope that some day, you will come and join us for a service or an event at Kolot Mayim.

Julie

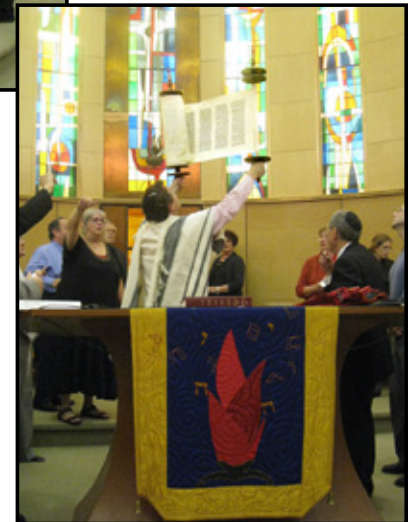
Photos: Beaches Hebrew Institute (p. 6), and Dorshei Emet (p. 8) web sites.



The cover of Semmy Stahlhammer's book.



Dorshei Emet photos:
Mia Swartzman



Torah scribes Linda Coppleson, Rabbi Chana Klebansky and Rachel Reichardt, l-r, discuss the placement of text on a panel before it is sewn onto the rest of the scroll, Oct. 13, 2010 in Seattle. (Joel Magalnick)



More information about [the Beaches Hebrew Institute in Toronto](http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/TorontoSynagogues/index.html) can be found at <http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/TorontoSynagogues/index.html>. More info about [Montreal's Dorshei Emmet](https://www.dorshei-emet.org/) can be found at <https://www.dorshei-emet.org/>

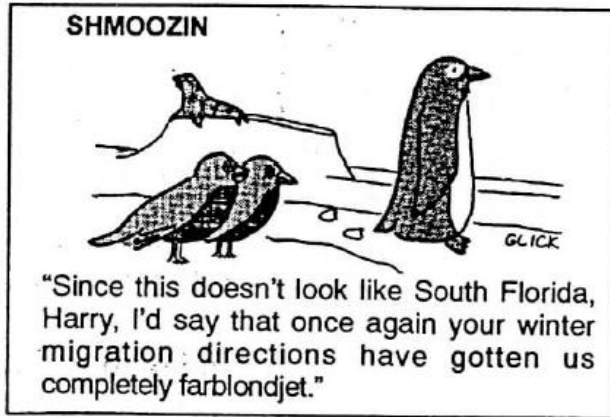


Avodah was invited to speak to the Rotary Club of Saanich at the University Club on August 30 about its work "Avodah: Helping People through Hard Times".

Suzanne Cole, right in picture, executive director, Burnside Gorge Community Association, co-presented with Penny Tennenhouse. Burnside Gorge is the organization Avodah partners with to provide the Rent Supplement to people in need. Jordan Stanger-Ross, centre, a member of Avodah, produced a wonderful Powerpoint presentation to complement the talk and handled the Powerpoint, which was much appreciated. Dr. Joel Fagan, program chair of the Rotary Club, is between Jordan and Suzanne. Suzanne, Jordan and Penny were warmly, graciously and attentively received at a wonderful evening.

Those We Remember ...

Dates			Name	Relationship	Rememberd By
Observed	Civil	Hebrew			
11.1	11.1975	Unknown	Sharon Yacowar-Frohlinger	Sister	Hal Yacowar
11.1	11.1991	Unknown	Eugene Molina	Grandfather	Grace Sandell
11.8	11.8.1950	28 Cheshvan 5711	Sara Miller	Grandmother	Don Sher
11.12	11.12.1996	1 Kislev 5757	Edith Brodtkin	Sister	Joe Gougeon-Ryant
11.13	11.13.2009	25 Cheshvan 5770	Eric Blitstein	Brother	Paula Blitstein
11.16	11.16	Unknown	Benjamin Sharpe	Father	Arline Leshner
11.21	12.17. 2009	30 Kislev 5770	Margot Cummings	Cousin	Rennie Parrish
11.18	11.18.2001	3 Kislev 5762	Ann Knight McChesney	Grandmother	Heather Gatland
11.19	11.19.2009	2 Kislev 5770	José Mario Ferreira	Brother	Eva Katz
11.20	11.20.2003	25 Cheshvan 5764	Margaret Gatland	Grandmother	Heather Gatland
11.25	11.25.1996	14 Kislev 5756	Godfrey Sandell	Father	David Sandell
11.25	11.25.1995	18 Cheshvan 5756	George Dinning	Father-in-Law	Julie Elizabeth
11.2	11.26.2007	16 Kislev 5768	David Marks	Brother	Gerald Marks
11.28	11.28.2005	26 Cheshvan 5766	Ethel Barnett	Mother	Fran Rothman



Havdallah

and Pot Luck Dessert Get-Together
Saturday November 6th at 6:30 p.m.
at Reva and Julie's
2222A Arbutus Road at Gordon Head
All are welcome.

November 2010

Cheshvan-Kislev 5771

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 24	2 25	3 26	4 27	5 28 7:30 Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Toldot 6 29 6:30 Havdallah*
10:00 7 Rel. Sch. 30 Fam. Ed.	Rosh Chodesh 8 1 Kislev	9 2	10 3	11 4	12 5 7:30 Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Vayetzei 13 6
10:00 14 Rel. Sch. 7	15 8	16 9	17 10	18 11	19 12 7:30 Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Vayishlach 20 13
10:00 21 Rel. Sch. 14 Cultural Arts	22 15	23 16	24 17	25 18	26 19 7:30 Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Vayeshev 27 20
10:00 28 Rel. Sch. 21	29 22	30 23				

Rabbi Jane will not be with us in November.

Parshas are in red type.

* **Havdallah** on Saturday November 6th, will be at the home of Reva Hutkin and Julie Elizabeth, 2222A Arbutus Road near Gordon Head. Please bring a dessert to share.

Reform Movement Responds to Homophobic Bullying

The Union's resources on bullying about all issues, harassment and sexuality - created for congregations, teens and parents - are already being used by congregations throughout North America. It is grounded in Jewish texts and tradition and includes information on dealing with virtual and viral bullying, a primer for LGBT inclusion in Jewish communities, an anti-bullying pledge, information on Help Lines, programmatic resources, advocacy initiatives and more.

Take Action: Visit the URJ's resource page and spread the word using Facebook and Twitter! Encourage parents of teens everywhere to visit this page and help save lives.

<http://urj.org/>

JCCV Cookbook — a resounding success!



Photo Reva Hutkin

On October 17th, a sizeable crowd came to the JCC to launch their new cookbook, *Nosh...by Gosh!* People were treated to delicious samples prepared from some of the actual recipes in the book. The event was beautifully coordinated by Assistant Editor, Diana Shnider, who was aided by a very hard-working crew of volunteers.

The cookbook project was spearheaded by JCCV Treasurer, Ethel Chochinov as a fundraiser for the Centre in the hopes of replacing some of the funds lost when the BC Gaming Commission withdrew their support. It was designed by Julie Elizabeth.

300 copies were printed, and before the first week was up, they were all but sold out! A second printing will make more books available in time for Channukah giving. Don't miss out on getting your copy!

Have a Voice in the Future of Reform Judaism

The URJ, CCAR and HUC-JIR are convening a Think Tank to address important issues facing the future of Reform Judaism and they need your input! Save the date of Nov. 21 at 4 pm PT / 7 pm ET to participate in an online public forum. Register now to be a part of this critical conversation. Read more <http://urj.org/thinktank/index.cfm?>

Food for Thought Luncheon

**Mon. Nov. 22nd
12:00 noon
at the JCC**

Topic: Forgiveness

Speaker:

Ms. Jessica Rourke

Dept. of Psychology

Fac. of Social Sciences

UVic

Jessica is working on her PhD at Uvic. She has studied forgiveness for 8 years and it continues to be her primary research focus.

The talk will include such topics as: definitional issues regarding forgiveness and also debunk some myths about it. A debate about whether or not there are unforgivable events. Vengeance vs. forgiveness and self-forgiveness. Difference between forgiveness and reconciliation.

Disorienta (n.) When Aunt Doris gets lost in a department store and strikes up a conversation with everyone she passes.