

What would thriving look like at Chochmat HaLev?

Your Chochmat HaLev Board of Directors, spiritual leaders, and staff are committed to ensuring that Chochmat HaLev is a sustainable, vibrant and thriving community – with your help. In the past two years we have started a B'nai Mitzvah program and a school for our children. Our moving baby naming ceremonies and well-attended Tot Shabbat services continue to bring young families into our community. With a generous donation from a Chochmat member, we have begun enhancing our holy space. Because of grassroots enthusiasm and effort, we now have our very own Chevra Kadisha to support mourners. Our Celebratory Kabbalat Shabbat services continue to attract well over a hundred people, and our Morning Blessing service on the third Saturday continues to grow. In addition, there are also Saturday services led by the Rabbi as well as two each month in a contemplative/meditation mode.

We do much, but we need to do more if we are to be the strong, thriving spiritual home so many of us yearn for.

Your generosity as a member of Chochmat HaLev will help us in key ways in the coming year. With your gift, together we can:

- Increase our ability to care for members in need around birth, illness, and death
- Provide for spiritual leaders, administrators, and staff in order to fully serve our values and mission
- Tend to our holy space through seismic and accessibility enhancements
- Strengthen our Jewish spiritual, educational, and meditation programs
- Foster opportunities for members to get to know each other and connect with the wider community

We Are Chochmat. Together we can make this happen. Together we can use the wisdom of our hearts to sustain this holy community and ensure it will be here for generations to come. Thank you!

Why are memberships important to Chochmat HaLev?

A formal pledge allows the Board, spiritual leaders and staff to manage Chochmat more effectively by planning ahead. While your annual pledge is not a binding commitment (you may change it at any time), the board, spiritual leaders, and staff can plan to invest in programs and services throughout the year because you have signaled your intention to give.

When does the membership commitment begin and end?

July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012 – the Chochmat HaLev fiscal year

Need more information?

Membership/Scholarship Information:

Board Member Janet Falk at Janet@chochmat.org

General Information:

Executive Director Larisa Blum at Larisa@chochmat.org / 510-704-9687

&

Board President Lainey Feingold at Lainey@chochmat.org

Reflect on ways that Chochmat HaLev has touched your life.

What does Chochmat mean to you?

How would you like to see

Chochmat HaLev

thrive?

Please return your membership pledge to Chochmat HaLev by **SHAVUOT, JUNE 8TH, 2011**



You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

(Psalms 145:16)



Welcome to the Manna Project, Chochmat HaLev's membership drive and community building campaign 2011/5771. Our community is at an important moment as we seek to move from just surviving financially to thriving - with enough resources to provide care and support to members, educate our children, offer meaningful programming and varied models of worship, and provide opportunities to celebrate and share the riches of Jewish Renewal. We invite you to use the weeks before Shavuot as a time to pray, study and discuss how you will give of your resources to be part of this important effort. The time before Shavuot is meant to help us prepare to celebrate receiving the Torah. In the spirit of that preparation, we

offer this booklet as a guide to some of the holy practices of generosity our tradition teaches. Since this time of preparation for Shavuot took place in the wilderness eating manna, we take manna as a teacher this season as well.

At the end of this period of preparation, we invite you to make an annual membership pledge to Chochmat HaLev by SHAVUOT, JUNE 8TH, 2011.

Thank you!



Chochmat HaLev

Chochmat HaLev
חכמת הלב

A Center for Jewish Spirituality
2215 Prince Street, Berkeley, CA 94705

What Manna Teaches

An Omer is a biblical measurement. In the Exodus story it is the amount of manna that the Divine promises will be available for each person every morning amidst the dew on the desert floor. Two weeks after the flight from Egypt, our ancestors ran out of matzoh. They began to grumble to Moses and Aaron that in Egypt they at least had food. Here in the desert they are in danger of starving. Initially, the Israelites don't recognize this bread from heaven as sustaining-- but over the next forty years, they learn to rely on it. They learn to take only one omer per person so as to savor it without hoarding so that there is enough for everyone. The Generous One teaches the Israelites that sustenance is not always as they planned and that it cannot be hoarded but must be shared. The Holy One provides.

Jewish wisdom is often learned through action, as in the Biblical quote, “we will do and we will understand” (“na’aseh v’nishma” Exodus 24:7). Outwardly, the manna story models for us the quality of sufficiency – enough for today. Inwardly, the lesson of trust is being taught, a ceasing from striving, a faith that one is always connected to Chai HaOlamim, the Source of Life. As we prepare for Shavuot, we can ask ourselves "what is manna for me? Where is the sustaining food that I first don't recognize? Can I trust that it will be there?"

Teaching From Our Tradition : Tzedakah & Terumah

Torah teaches that each person’s wholeness begins with trust. To the extent that we have no trust in the Divine or other people, we fall into the belief that we have only ourselves to depend on, that we have to pick ourselves up by our bootstraps. Naturally, if that is our only belief, then we come to live only for ourselves.

But this need not be the ethos we live by. The Jewish path invites us to walk as brothers and sisters with each other and with the Divine. The Jewish path provides practices, “holy habits” that connect us with each other and the Divine. One of the most important of these practices is **TZEDAKAH**. This word tzedakah comes from the root word for justice. It is an obligatory kind of giving that doesn’t require the heart to be moved in any way. Everyone is simply required to give tzedakah appropriate to his or her capacity.

What is at the heart of this practice? Midrash teaches: “When a person gives even a small coin, he or she is privileged to sense the Divine’s presence.” The habit of giving out of pure obligation somehow can work to bring our hearts along. As Alan Morinis writes in *Everyday Holiness* “By obligating ourselves to give according to rules and formula, we expose our hearts to repetitive acts of giving that leave their trace on our inner lives. The very act of giving itself ultimately makes us more charitable, merciful, and loving.” So, tzedakah itself is a gift, like manna, that teaches us to be more generous through the doing.

TERUMAH on the other hand, means “gift.” This is giving where the Holy One is the true model. The Divine gives to us abundantly and terumah giving is our response, from the heart. When our hearts are so moved that we are joyful in our giving (of time, of money, of particular gifts we share with someone), this is terumah giving.

This type of giving is first learned when the Israelites undertake to build a sanctuary so that the Divine might dwell among them.

“From every person whose heart moves them you should take My gift. . . And let them build Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst.” (Exodus 25:1-2, 8)

And indeed, the people do build the sanctuary and there are so many gifts brought that Moses must ask them to cease from bringing because there is enough.

Like the Israelites who gathered more than one omer of manna, most of us have a hard time becoming truly open-hearted in our giving of anything that feels scarce. The obligatory practice of generosity through tzedakah is often the “training” that leads us to a more open-hearted giving of terumah. As the 13th century text Sefer ha’Chinuch says, “Our hearts follow our deeds.” It is by giving that we become more generous and open-hearted.

Ideas for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 When did you first learn to give and from whom? (or if a child is answering, what was the best gift you ever gave someone? What was the best gift you ever received?)
- 2 How often do you engage in tzedakah giving? Does it make you pay attention to people and things you might otherwise ignore?
- 3 How often do you give in the spirit of terumah? How does it affect your measurement of where you are along the spectrum from scarcity to abundance?
- 4 Have you ever given a gift of something that felt like a sacrifice to you but also filled you with joy? Empowerment? A sense of belonging?

Determining Your Giving to Chochmat HaLev and Beyond

These practices and teachings are meant to help us become more generous people, modeled on the Divine’s generosity to us. For that reason, our reflections here are not simply about Chochmat HaLev and its needs. We offer this worksheet as a general guide to help you determine how you might like to give to Chochmat HaLev this year and to other worthy causes. This worksheet is for your own use. Membership pledges should be completed on the separate form, enclosed. Thank you.

Your Planning Worksheet *(private and for your use)*

Chochmat HaLev Gift for 2011-2012

Tzedakah / fair share focused membership gift
(Suggested: 2% of adjusted gross income per adult, with a minimum of \$360 per adult)

\$ _____

Terumah focused gift beyond obligation/fair share:

\$ _____

Total to Chochmat HaLev

\$ _____

Total to other charities and non-profits
(list organizations below for your records if you wish)

\$ _____

Please record your Chochmat HaLev giving on the enclosed membership form, which also has additional detail about scholarships and membership benefits. Thank you!

What is the blessing we receive by practicing generosity?

Kaballah teaches us that life is always operating on four inter-connected levels simultaneously:

On the physical level, our spiritual home is the place we congregate as a community. It gives each of us a setting in the world that we can count on for many of our needs.

On the emotional level, we experience a sense of belonging and participation in the creation of a loving, conscious and purposeful community. This makes the celebratory dancing and singing and the quiet meditation that we share on a regular basis resonate more deeply.

On the intellectual level, giving to our spiritual home is an avenue for direct application of our principles. We overcome the caustic effects of powerlessness and cynicism; instead, we feel genuine and a sense of integrity.

On the spiritual level, supporting our spiritual home brings us the blessing of yirah, of an on-going sense of awe that God is present in our lives. It is through the practice of tzedaka, through giving of our hard earned money, that we come to understand that all our wealth comes to us from the Divine.