



**BRIT TZEDEK V'SHALOM**  
**Jewish Alliance for Justice & Peace**

**Fall 2007 Newsletter**

PRO-ISRAEL

PRO-PEACE

DC CHAPTER

**Inside this edition**

**WHO WE ARE**

[A Note from the Steering Committee](#) -1-

[Spotlight on Leadership: Lee Diamond](#) -1-

**RECENT EVENTS**

[Israeli & Palestinian Students Collaborate with DC Chapter on Peace Strategies](#) -2-

[Ascherman & Diamond Lecture: Nonviolence Strategies to Heal Israel and Palestine](#) -2-

[National Training & Advocacy Days 2007](#) -3-

**JEWISH COMMENTARY**

[Kingian Nonviolence Training](#) -4-

[Reflecting Upon Rabbi Heschel's Philosophy of Nonviolence](#) -5-

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

[Washington Rep Rob Levy to Speak at Agudas Achim Synagogue](#) -6-

[One Million Voices Rally](#) -6-

**GET INVOLVED**

[Join Brit Tzedek](#) -7-

[Contribute Your Skills, Talents and Passion: Ways to Work for Peace](#) -7-

**CONTACT US**

[Update Your Information](#) -7-

**WHO WE ARE**

Dear DC Chapter Member,

This is truly an exciting time for the Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter! With abundant fresh energy in the chapter, we focus now on goals to advance peace and justice in Israel and Palestine. As the only chapter situated in the political pulse of the country, it is imperative that we take advantage of our unique access to the doorsteps of Congress. We hope that this newsletter and the editions that follow will inspire you to join us as we mobilize our American Jewish community in the pursuit of peace and justice.

L'Shalom,

**DC Chapter Co-Chairs:**

Lee Diamond & Deepa Domansky

**Steering Committee Members:** David Wittenberg, Jennifer Russell, Judith Lelchook, Malca Gottlieb, Marc Greidinger

**Spotlight on Leadership: Lee Diamond**

In each newsletter, we will spotlight one member of the DC leadership. In this edition, we introduce Lee Diamond, DC Chapter Co-Chair.



Lee Diamond is an experienced organizer with an academic background in political science and history. He has worked on many electoral and issue based campaigns. During the 2006 election cycle, Lee played a central role in the creation of a grassroots campaign urging now Senator James Webb to seek

the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate and challenge George Felix "Macacawitz" Allen. He was one of the founders of Jews United for Justice, a local DC based organization working on community issues. Lee also works to build genuine relationships and create meaningful dialogue with members of the Palestinian community. Lee recently attended a program for nonviolence trainers at the University of Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies during the summer. There, Lee earned certification to lead two day workshops on the philosophy and methodology of Kingian Nonviolence.

## RECENT EVENTS

### Israeli & Palestinian Students Collaborate with DC Chapter on Peace Strategies

On September 9<sup>th</sup> at Skewer's Restaurant in Washington, DC, the Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter and a delegation from the One Voice Movement held a workshop to discuss creating and implementing peace strategies for Israel and Palestine. The workshop was sponsored by the Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter and was organized and facilitated by leaders from both groups.

It was a dynamic session in which native Israelis and Palestinians shared personal stories and discussed why they remain hopeful and work so energetically for a peaceful solution. Miriam Asnes, national organizer for the One Voice Movement, introduced the group and spoke about the organizing strategies that the One Voice Movement has led to bring together Israelis and Palestinians, from across the political spectrum, to the discussion table.

Next, Palestinian student, Shavha Musallam, spoke briefly about the difficulties she has faced living within the occupied territories, her experiences in interfaith peace movements, and the reasons she joined the peace movement. Thereafter, Yaniv Rivlin, an Israeli student, described his life as a young Israeli boy growing up in the Golan Heights. He witnessed atrocities suffered by his friends and struggled to come to terms with the anger this caused him. Nevertheless, he confidently spoke of his work in the peace movement and his belief that peace and justice for both groups are not only a moral/ethical solution, but also a practical solution.

A vibrant and encouraging discussion ensued. The audience was very appreciative of the speakers and was enthusiastic to hear about future events in which both the Brit

Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter and the One Voice Movement will work together. On October 18, 2007, the One Voice Movement will be organizing a momentous demonstration in Washington, DC called the One Million Voices event. The Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter will be organizing along with the One Voice Movement. Israelis, American Jews, Palestinians, and international supporters in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, will gather together and, with one voice, demand peace in Israel and Palestine. Please join us.

For more information on the upcoming One Million Voices event, please see page 6 of this newsletter. For questions, contact the Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter at [btvshalomdc@gmail.com](mailto:btvshalomdc@gmail.com) or visit the One Million Voices website at [www.onemillionvoices.org](http://www.onemillionvoices.org).

### Ascherman and Diamond Lecture: Nonviolence Strategies to Heal Israel and Palestine

by Deepa Domansky

***"I want the Jewish community to understand that there are Palestinians over there who are using nonviolent strategies. And for those who may be upset by some of the actions of the Jewish state, I want to offer something more constructive. Instead of attacking Israel, help us solve the conflict."***

Lee Diamond, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter Chair, offered these words of hope to an eager audience at Busboys and Poets in Washington, DC. on August 5, 2007. A group of over 50 people attended the Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter-sponsored seminar at which both Lee Diamond and Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Executive Director of Rabbis for Human Rights and Brit Tzedek v'Shalom Rabbinic Council Member, spoke on the topic of

“Nonviolence Strategies to Heal Israel and Palestine.”

Rabbi Ascherman, who made *aliyah* to Israel in 1994, is an internationally renowned figure recognized for his work to bring Israeli Jews and Arabs together for positive interaction in the name of peace. He has practiced civil disobedience in numerous occasions, defying Israeli policies, such as Palestinian home demolitions. Rabbi Ascherman has been attacked and beaten by both Israeli settlers and Palestinian stone-throwers, but refuses to relinquish his efforts. During the seminar, he admitted that nonviolence strategies can be frustrating especially, “when you're getting hit and you know you could take [the] guy.” Rabbi Ascherman recognizes that nonviolence alone cannot solve the Israeli/Palestinian problem as advocacy and political change are essential components also. Nevertheless, he strongly believes that nonviolence can change the conflict's dynamics and can provide a positive context that is conducive to peace-building between the two communities; he considers nonviolence a strategy that can diffuse violence and clear the path for genuine dialogue.

Lee Diamond, a certified Nonviolence Trainer and peace activist, said he hoped that the seminar would bring together people who are interested in working towards peaceful solutions to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Alongside Rabbi Ascherman, Lee echoed his contention that nonviolence strategies could have a significant impact on advancing the peace process.

Rabbi Ascherman and Lee Diamond both claim to be driven by two central elements: a love for Israel and an undying commitment to the principle of *tikkun olam*, or “repairing the world.” Rabbi Ascherman acknowledged that the situation can often look dire and hopeless. Nevertheless, in times of despair, he reflects on the lesson of Chanukah: all can be dark, but one candle of

hope that is lit can bring illumination, which can change the world.

### **National Grassroots Leadership Training Institute and Advocacy Days 2007**

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom held its first National Grassroots Leadership Training Institute in conjunction with the annual Advocacy Days here in Washington, DC during June. From June 16-17, members from chapters across the country joined together to further develop their skills to organize local chapters, connect with other members, reach out to Jewish synagogues, communicate strategically and coordinate with media.

The training days offered three tracks: Media and Communications, Grassroots Organizing, and Building a Chapter. These workshops provided helpful training in organizing and communicating more effectively, such as staying on message when being interviewed, as well as making non-affiliated Jews feel welcome in synagogues.

Our time together in June also provided an opportunity to honor special champions who have served Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, to the benefit of us all. Marcia Freedman, outgoing Brit Tzedek v'Shalom President, and Carinne Luck, then Director of Chapter and Grassroots Development, attended their final Advocacy Days in an official Brit Tzedek capacity. Both women received best wishes from the group and promised to continue their support of Brit Tzedek's mission.

The Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter says *yasher koach* to Marcia and Carinne, and welcomes President-Elect Steve Masters, and now Director of Chapter and Grassroots Development Jessica Gorelick.

### Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace Jewish Group on the Verge of Legislative Victory

by David Wittenberg

No, I didn't lift an article from *The Onion*. And this is no joke. Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, a relative neophyte in the lobbying field, sent over 100 of its members to Capitol Hill on June 19 to advocate for the passage of the Feinstein/Lugar Resolution (S. Res. 224). This resolution calls for active U.S. engagement to resolve the Israel/Palestinian conflict. It calls on the Bush Administration to make a two-state solution a "top priority," urges the president to appoint a Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, and welcomes the Arab League Peace Initiative. A companion resolution, H. Res. 143, was introduced in the House by Congresswoman Susan Davis of California.

The representatives of your local chapter, 10 strong, made up two delegations, one each for Maryland and Virginia. The groups met either personally with their respective senators or representatives, or with their legislative staff. The Maryland group visited the offices of Senators Barbara Mikulski and Benjamin Cardin, and of Representatives Chris Van Hollen, Rick Sarbanes and Steny Hoyer. The Virginia delegation visited the offices of Senators James Webb and John Warner, as well as those of Representatives James Moran and Tom Davis.

During each visit, we were given a respectful reception. Some of our listeners were surprised to learn of the depth of support for a two-state solution on the part of American Jews. Some indicated that they found our voice to be a refreshing one. With each visit, our confidence and enthusiasm grew. Like our colleagues from around the country, we were energized that we were advocating positive policy measures rather than opposing legislation that would hinder the peace process.

And, lo and behold, our informed message paid off. By the end of the Advocacy Days, we had added several new co-sponsors to the original eleven of Feinstein/Lugar. We went home content, but we didn't stop there. All across the country, we bombarded congressional offices with faxes, phone calls, and e-mails encouraging more co-sponsors of the legislation.

Result: There are now 36 co-sponsors of the Feinstein/Lugar Resolution. With 1/3 of the Senate on board, the resolution was hotlined, meaning that it was likely to receive a kind of fast track passage. However, with only a few days until Congress adjourned for recess, the vote on the resolution was postponed.

What does that mean? It means that the resolution will go to the floor after the Senate convenes again in September. And it means that Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the "Little Advocacy Group That Could," will be there, too. We'll be there to make more telephone calls, write more e-mails, and pay more visits to congressional offices until we achieve our goal. Won't you join your Washington, DC Chapter as we work towards final success?

For more information about S. Res. 224 and H. Res. 143, including updates, please go to our website, [www.btvshalom.org](http://www.btvshalom.org), or e-mail us at [btvshalomdc@gmail.com](mailto:btvshalomdc@gmail.com).

#### JEWISH COMMENTARY

### Kingian Nonviolence Training

by Lee Diamond

The two-week nonviolent training certification course I attended this summer taught Kingian Nonviolence. This approach is based on the philosophy and methodology of nonviolent action developed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The certification class prepared us to lead a two-day workshop (as well as shorter sessions) in Kingian Nonviolence. The training took the

participants through a dynamic and interactive process of learning the application of nonviolent principles to problems at all levels of society while also providing an atmosphere in which we could form friendships and learn from the other attendees.

We discussed the key thinkers who influenced Dr. King, the campaigns he led, and how nonviolence was applied in those campaigns, as well as specific tools developed over many years for approaching and understanding conflict. While the focus of these techniques is on addressing social problems, the goal of the training was to learn how to manage conflict in all situations.

There was discussion of Dr. King's philosophy and the history of the Civil Rights Movement, but the training's emphasis was on practical application. The Kingian approach draws directly from Dr. King's writings to teach the six central principles of nonviolence. We also learned the six steps involved in taking nonviolent action, from information gathering to direct action and reconciliation. Role-plays and other similar exercises were a valuable part of the training experience.

Seven Palestinians from different areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem attended the training. They are all young professionals active with the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Civil Rights Activation (PYALARA, <http://www.pyalara.org>), an organization that builds leadership skills in the next generation of Palestinian youth. During the training, we held a forum about the conflict in which the Palestinians spoke from their perspective as citizens of Palestine, while I spoke from the perspective as an American Jew who believes in Israel and in the proud Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*, or "repairing the world."

I look forward to sharing this experience in workshops for people from all backgrounds, but I am particularly excited about spreading the word that there is hope among Palestinians and Israelis. Nonviolence is grounded in the principles of justice and peace, and we must pursue both simultaneously and passionately.

### Reflecting Upon Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's Philosophy of Nonviolence by Deepa Domansky

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel certainly understood the significance of these words as he uttered them; his life reflected one of deep compassion, love, and undying hope. He was one of the most influential Jewish thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is known for his commitment to social activism, which he understood to be intrinsically connected to the essential precepts of Judaism. He believed strongly that humankind must never forget that man and woman are the very image of God and not merely numbers to be manipulated.

It was this central belief that prompted him to embrace nonviolence strategies. It was this belief that prompted him to reject racism and renounce it publicly through a number of collective methods, including marching with Rev. Martin Luther King and other civil rights activists. This same belief prompted him to denounce the Vietnam War and any policy that he believed to be soulless and demeaning to humanity.

Rabbi Heschel was one of so many Jews throughout history who have been a voice for compassion and justice. An impressive number of Jewish activists worked alongside Black Americans in their struggle to obtain civil rights and achieve greater equality.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> About 50 percent of the civil rights attorneys in the South during the 1960s were Jews, as were over 50 percent of the whites who went to Mississippi in 1964 to challenge the Jim Crow Laws. [From Swastika to Jim Crow.](#)

They rallied around civil rights/liberties activists who employed nonviolence strategies to demand justice for marginalized and oppressed communities throughout the world.

In this present day, the call for compassion and justice remains as poignant as ever. As we consider the violence in Israel and Palestine, we must once again ask ourselves what it means to be Jewish, both religious and secular. To be Jewish is to be part of a people that has suffered extensively throughout history. This history of persecution is what mandates all Jewish people to speak out for every woman, man, and child who are persecuted; this includes speaking out for Palestinians and all who suffer as a result of the ongoing injustice and violence in the Holy Land.

Let us remember Rabbi Heschel who practiced nonviolence to fight injustice and advocate righteousness. Nonviolence is grounded in the principle that each person is the very image of God and that violence defiles the very soul of both perpetrator and victim. Let us advocate compassion, practice justice, and live in righteousness by recognizing the divine image in all humankind and strive for a world in which all will beat swords into ploughshares and in which there shall be war no more.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Washington Representative Rob Levy to Speak at Agudas Achim Synagogue

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom's Washington Representative, Rob Levy, will speak at the Agudas Achim Synagogue on October 10th from 6:15-7:15 p.m. to discuss the prospects of peace for Israel and Palestine, especially:

- Shifts and trends in the Palestinian political structure

- President Bush's upcoming Middle East peace conference in November 2007: An opportunity for genuine diplomacy?
- What should we ask of the next U.S. president in terms of building real peace in Israel and Palestine?

There will be a time for questions and discussion following the presentation.

This event is sponsored by the [Brit Tzedek v'Shalom DC Chapter](#). We hope you will join us for this exciting event as it is the first in our chapter's synagogue outreach program. If you have any questions, please contact us at [btvshalomdc@gmail.com](mailto:btvshalomdc@gmail.com).

[Agudas Achim](#) is affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. It is located at 2908 Valley Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.

#### One Million Voices Rally: October 18

The Washington, DC Chapter of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom proudly declares our commitment to "One Million Voices to end the Conflict," an unprecedented global event to call for a negotiated two-state solution

and an end to violence.

*Imagine if one million people demanded an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with one voice. Let's unite with other peace activists to heal Israel and Palestine!*

For forty years, the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have waited for their leaders to implement a lasting peace. Now it is time for the moderate Palestinian and Israeli majorities, along with international supporters from

around the world, to unite demanding peace, stability, and a real hope for prosperity for all in the region.

Lee Diamond announced this exciting initiative at the August 5 seminar with Rabbi Ascherman, and now we formally invite you to participate with us in this historic event as we unite across the world in an outcry of one million voices uplifted for peace. With events starting in Israel, join the Brit Tzedek DC Chapter on October 18 from 12 noon to 3:00 p.m. on Capitol Hill (West Front Grassy Area).

If you can help coordinate, please contact us at [btvshalomdc@gmail.com](mailto:btvshalomdc@gmail.com). We also invite you to contact us with any questions or for more information about this exciting event.

## GET INVOLVED

### Join Brit Tzedek v'Shalom!

Not a current member of Brit Tzedek? Join online at <http://btvshalom.org/join> and become a member of the largest American Jewish grassroots organization in the country. We are Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace!

### Contribute Your Skills, Talents and Passion: Ways to Work for Peace

The DC Chapter of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom works in many ways to mobilize American Jews. Whether you already have expertise

in an area, or are simply interested in gaining professional development while working for peace, we have opportunities in:

- Advocacy on Capitol Hill
- Community Organizing
- Event Planning
- Educational Outreach
- Media Outreach
- Recruitment

The DC Chapter invites you to participate. Be a part of the movement to advance peace and justice in the Israel and Palestine.

## CONTACT US

### Update Your Contact Information

As we work to coordinate educational workshops/seminars, reach out to synagogues, and prepare advocacy initiatives on Capitol Hill, we want to ensure that we have as much input from you as possible! We have tremendous opportunity in the national capital region, and we want to make sure that we take full advantage of it.

In order to keep you fully informed, we need our records to be accurate. We ask that you contact us at [btvshalomdc@gmail.com](mailto:btvshalomdc@gmail.com) with any change in mailing address, telephone number (and/or cell phone number, if relevant), and e-mail address.

*L'Shanah Tovah!*

September						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9	10	11	Rosh Hashanah 12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	Yom Kippur 21	22
23	24	25	Sukkot 26	27	28	29
30						
October						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	Simchat Torah 4	5	6
7	8	9	Rob Levy at Agudas Achim 10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	One Million Voices 18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			