

שלהבת

SHALHEVET: *Passing the torch from generation to generation*



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND THEIR PARENTS

SHALHEVET BET (2006)

Q: What is Shalhevet and why was it created?

A: Shalhevet ("flame" in Hebrew) is a once-in-a-lifetime experiential learning opportunity for Bay Area Jewish High School Juniors and Seniors that includes a 2-week trip to Poland and Israel. Inspired by the international March of the Living (MOTL) program, Shalhevet was started in 2004 so that local youth could participate in a program tailored to the educational and cultural environment of the Bay Area and so that students would not have to arrange alternative dates for their Advanced Placement exams. The program immediately established itself as a wonderful opportunity for students to reestablish relationships with local Jewish peers, to intimately reexamine their Jewish identities and to strengthen their understanding of Israel - all just before they start the transition from home to college for real!

The goals of this year's program, Shalhevet Bet, are:

- To understand the Mitzvah of Zachor (remembrance/awareness) and our responsibility to act as witnesses
- To experience/learn about the vibrancy and nature of the pre holocaust centers of Jewish life in Europe
- To recognize the historical and social context of the Shoah (Holocaust), its connection to the establishment of the state of Israel and the revitalization of Eastern European Jewry today,
- To build or strength emotional connection to and factual knowledge of the complexities of the modern State of Israel and its relationship to us as American Jews
- To learn and demonstrate supportive behaviors with each other throughout the Shalhevet experience.

Q: What am I signing up for?

A: Shalhevet is divided into 3 phases.

Phase 1: Before the trip, the students will participate in a special course offered from January to May 2006 at Peninsula Havurah High School, local midrashot, Congregation Emanuel, and other institutions/venues to be determined. The course consists of 8 sessions, including one or two Sunday programs. Shalhevet students will learn about the vibrancy, diversity and vulnerability of Jewish life in Europe prior to and during the Holocaust. They will also learn about post-Holocaust Jewry, the role Israel played in the post-Holocaust world and Israel's importance to world Jewry today. A superb staff comprised of leading Bay Area Jewish educators will collaborate to prepare the kids for this



experience including Avi Spodek of Kehillah Jewish High School, Ariana Estoque, and other experts on Holocaust-related subjects. Holocaust survivors will speak to students and play a significant role in the educational process.

Phase 2: During the trip students spend approximately one week each in Poland and Israel on a fully supervised itinerary, which takes them to Polish neighborhoods, ghettos and concentration camps, Israeli points of immigration and modern places of interest in Israel. They will visit Krakow, Lublin, Warsaw, Auschwitz/Birkenau, Majdanek (and more) in Poland, and Jerusalem, Atlit, Tzfat, the Gallilee and Golan (and more) in Israel. Take a look at last year's itinerary for a good idea of what an exciting program this is. The group is accompanied by a Holocaust survivor, an educator, a rabbi and a doctor. In addition, a security guard travels with the group at all times.

Phase 3: After the trip, students will be supported in processing their experience and begin to serve as witnesses by preparing group presentation(s) about the experience. Later in the spring, students will play important roles in community commemorations and learning experiences related to observance of Yom Hashoah v'Hagevurah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). Shalhevet Bet participants will also be invited to help plan and promote Shalhevet Gimel (next year's program). In so doing, they will proudly "pass the torch" and the responsibility to bear witness to future generations.

Q: What are the dates of the trip and can I (or my child) really afford to take this kind of time off from school?

A: The 2 week trip will be March 8-22, 2006.

Considerable effort went into the selection of the trip's dates. This year, spring break for most schools extends into Passover (April 12-20). Further, many seniors need spring break to visit and select among colleges to which they have been admitted. The Shalhevet Steering Committee consulted many organizations and individuals who have organized these trips for many years to 'pick their brains' and learn from them. We also spent significant time with parents, kids, educators and community members to analyze last year's trip. The dates picked avoid being in Poland at the very height of winter, enable families to have Seders together, and get students back in time to prepare for and take AP exams in May. While the "cost" of missing 2 weeks of classes may seem high to new parents, the opinion of past participants, their parents and educators is that the "benefit" of Shalhevet is much higher.

Keep in mind that this is 2nd semester of senior year for most of the participants, when they have already completed college applications and SATs. Many seniors have lighter workloads in the 2nd semester of their senior year and welcome this intense experiential learning as they begin to mentally take leave of their high school years. Shalhevet encourages students to work with teachers to integrate their Shalhevet experience into the senior projects, reports, etc that characterize this final semester in many high schools. Past participants and their parents report that Shalhevet was a life-changing opportunity and altered – for the better! – the way students approached their final months in high school. Shalhevet is not "a trip" but an educational program *designed for seniors* within an *academic* framework.

Last year, schools in our area responded very favorably because Shalhevet is both a rich curriculum and experiential educational experience. A letter will be sent to the principal of each student participant's school well in advance of departure, detailing the program's goals, curriculum outline and itinerary, and asking that all of the student's teachers be informed of the student's planned absence.



SHALHEVET: *Passing the torch from generation to generation*

Shalhevet encourages students to work with teachers to integrate their Shalhevet experience into their studies (senior projects, reports, etc) as much as possible. Students and families are urged to communicate in advance with their teachers and schools to make sure they knew what they were missing and what they were expected to deliver upon their return and to make sure that they are signed up for AP exams before they leave.

Q: How many kids will participate? From where?

A: Last year, 20 seniors from the Peninsula and San Francisco participated in Shalhevet Aleph. Our goal this year is to expand to a maximum of 28 students (one busload) from the Peninsula, SF and Marin.

Q: How much does Shalhevet cost? Is there financial aid?

A: Our community is committed to the principle that every teen who wishes to participate should not be prevented from doing so by financial concerns. The full cost of the travel portion of Shalhevet is \$4400. We are planning to offer a subsidy of \$2200 for each family, with the hope that families who do not need it, will opt to pay the full cost. In addition, we have paved the way for families for whom \$2200 represents a hurdle to take advantage of financial aid available from the BJE and Hebrew Free Loan. We hope that Gift of Israel funds will be available too, for families who participated in that program.

Q: How is this trip different from “March of the Living” or other teen trips to Poland and Israel?

A: There are several major differences between Shalhevet and similar programs:

- **Program:** Shalhevet provides an educationally sound experience offering pre-travel preparation through education, travel designed to carry the learning forward and post-travel reflection and integration into students' behaviors and skills. Other programs have only a pre-trip orientation before the travel, and only one meeting after the experience to debrief.
- **Size:** The Shalhevet experience is designed to build relationships among a small, intimate group that will provide mutual support during any emotionally challenging times on the trip.
- **Flexibility:** Because this is a small group, we are able to revise plans with relatively short advanced warning due to things like weather, politics or even special unexpected opportunities that avail themselves to the group.
- **Unique Programming:** Working with the Tad Taube Foundation, Shalhevet will include special features such as meetings with Polish and Israeli youth, Poland and Israel-based community service projects to demonstrate and put *tikkun olam* into practice, and an educational and experiential program tailored to local Bay Area needs and concerns.
- **Holocaust survivor chaperone:** A Holocaust survivor accompanies Shalhevet for the Poland portion of the trip. This special person enriches the experience of each participant by sharing his/her own personal stories. The Survivor travel companion was cited as the best part of the trip by several of last year's participants.
- **Dates:** The dates of this trip were selected so as not to conflict with AP exams or with summer employment plans. Participants travel in one cohesive group and take full advantage of the



SHALHEVET: *Passing the torch from generation to generation*

ability to experience and to interpret this intense experience within a close network of peers and teachers.

- **Price:** The local 2006 March of the Living program cost to participants is \$4200. This includes three pre-trip meetings and orientation. The full price for Shalhevet participation is similar but includes a twelve week educational journey before and after the trip to Poland and Israel. These classes mean students are much better prepared for and supported in processing, reflecting and integrating their travel experience. Further, each year the Shalhevet Steering Committee seeks community funds in order to make the experience available at a subsidized cost.

Q: Who should we thank for the existence of Shalhevet?

A: Like the Shalhevet experience itself, this program epitomizes the unique vibrancy of Jewish community - with a small c. It began with the vision and initiative of 2 Palo Alto based parents-of-seniors who first met a decade ago when they were first emerging as leaders within their Jewish day school community. They quickly found a home and a partner for their idea in the Bureau of Jewish Education of San Francisco, the Peninsula Marin and Sonoma Counties ("BJE") and in the BJE's 8 year old Peninsula Havurah High program. The Holocaust Center of Northern California leapt at the opportunity to lend its resources to the design and conduct of a new venture at the heart of its mission. (see www.holocaust-sf.org). Professionals from each of these formal sponsors of the program joined the Shalhevet Steering Committee, a volunteer-led group of community leaders, parents and educators that is the organizing "engine" of the venture, now in its second year. Almost every local synagogue, youth group, day school and JCC is represented and involved.

Shalhevet is financially supported by Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties ("Federation") and by individual donors who recognize that the cost of such a program can be prohibitive to many families, particularly on the eve of college tuitions, while the benefit will accrue as much to our local community as to the participants, beginning immediately with the students' visible roles on Yom HaShoah. This year's Shalhevet Steering Committee sees its mission as implementing the programmatic improvements learned during Shalhevet Aleph while laying a sustaining foundation for the program for years to come. If you are interested in joining the Steering Committee or helping to fund that foundation, please call Toby Rubin at the BJE 415-751-6983 ext.116 or email Steering Committee member orli_rinat@yahoo.com .

Q: What is the application process?

A. "Save My Space!" and Application forms are available now from Claire Mikowski at the Bureau of Jewish Education cmikowski@bjesf.org. Here's what to do:

- Fill out the quick "Save My Space" form and provide \$250 (refundable in full until 11/30/05). This deposit will be counted toward the total cost of participation
- Make sure you register for spring semester at your local Bay Area Shalhevet host (Peninsula Havurah High, Congregation Emanuel in SF, etc), if not already registered.
- Complete and submit the formal application, with medical form.
- Schedule and successfully complete an interview by a staff member.



See the summary of important dates below for application and cancellation deadlines.

Q: What if I (or my child) don't know anyone that's going?

A: Don't worry. A series of information meetings are planned for the fall, giving kids lots of time to both rediscover old friends/classmates and convince more recent ones to join. By the time the trip leaves, members of the Shalhevet group will be well acquainted with each other due to the communal preparatory work beginning in January.

Q: My child has already been to Israel and/or Poland with a group. Why would I want to send him/her on this trip? What makes it different or special?

A: Visiting the vibrant, alive Israel following a trip to post-Holocaust Poland, students will experience a deeper appreciation for the State of Israel than on their previous visit(s). Shalhevet prepares the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the historical, social and political context of the Holocaust, the importance of the establishment and continued existence of the state of Israel and Jewish life in both places today in a way that other trips, without the semester long academic context, can not. Experience shows that Israelis and other frequent visitors to Israel will see Israel with an entirely different perspective than in the past. All Shalhevet participants gain new insights into the interconnectedness of the Jewish people.

Q: Will participation in this trip preclude my child from taking advantage of the "Birthright" program since they will be visiting Israel?

A: No. Your child will still be eligible for Birthright Israel. Birthright participation is disallowed if a student has spent more than 5 nights and 7 days in Israel. The first and last days are considered travel days and are exempted from the 5/7 rule. Shalhevet's itinerary is carefully planned to adhere to this rule, so your child will be able to participate on a Birthright Israel trip. When your child applies for Birthright, he/she must state that he/she participated in March of the Living. Since both Shalhevet and MOTL both fall with the 5/7ruling, your student may still participate in Birthright Israel.

Q: Regarding the trip itself, what adults will be on the trip and what are the precise travel arrangements?

A: There will be 6 adult chaperones accompanying Shalhevet Bet:

- Teacher Ariana Estoque
- A Holocaust survivor
- A medical doctor
- A rabbi
- The tour provider will send an educator and a security escort to accompany the group at all times in both countries.

All participants will travel together as a group (no itinerary changes will be allowed). Blocks of airline tickets have been reserved while other travel details are still being worked out at this time. Note that



organized travel to Poland and Israel and from Israel to Poland is a flourishing segment of the travel market. Shalhevet works with one of the leaders in Jewish student travel packages, Ramah Tours.

Q: What if the security situation in Israel deteriorates?

A: The Steering Committee in conjunction with travel package provider Ramah Tours will evaluate the security situation prior to and during the trip and make a decision if the trip will proceed as planned. In the event that a re-plan is recommended, options to be considered are extending the Poland stay, meeting Israeli kids in Poland, etc.

Q: Sounds great! What are the next steps and key dates?

A: Remember, space is limited to 28 students. Registration is first come, first served. So keep the following dates in mind.

KEY DATES:

- September 11, 2005 - "Save My Space!" forms available and deposits accepted
- September 25 - Application forms available for submission
- November 30, 2005 – Last day for full refund of “Save My Space!” deposit
- December 1 - Financial aid forms due
- January 9, 2006 – Last day to submit Shalhevet application
- January 11, 2006 – Peninsula Havurah High Shalhevet classes begin
- March 8-22, 2006 – POLAND/ISRAEL TRIP
- April 25, 2006 – Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

CONTACT: Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma

- **Claire Mikowski**, Principal, San Francisco and Peninsula Havurot (415) 751-6983 x 128
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- **Toby Rubin**, Director of Program Development & Teen Services, 415-751-6983 x116
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SPREAD THE WORD, TELL YOUR FRIENDS!