



# KESHER ISRAEL - 100 YEARS

A C E N T E N N I A L C E L E B R A T I O N

## ORTHODOXY AT A TURNING POINT, A NATIONAL CONVERSATION

GUEST PANELISTS:

RABBI DR. DAVID BERGER

DR. MOSHE HALBERTAL

RABBI DR. DAVID NOVAK

MODERATED BY

RABBI DR. BARRY FREUNDEL

SUNDAY EVENING

OCTOBER 10, 2010

7:30PM

## KESHER ISRAEL: A HISTORY

In the winter of 1910, six merchants living in Georgetown, met to discuss the “possibility of forming a Hebrew society for worship and other communal activities.” Joseph Bremmer, Joseph Scher, Max Whitkin, L. Brenner, Mr. Rakysen, and Mr. Gamzy founded the Georgetown Hebrew Benevolent Society, based out of the home of Harris Levy on 28th and M Streets, NW, with “about 25 persons.” Their first president was a man named Abe Mostow. We don’t know much about Mr. Mostow and the other founding families, but we do know that thanks to their efforts, we enjoy a wonderful Modern Orthodox shul and can celebrate the seeds of community that they planted a century ago.

That autumn, for their first High Holidays together, they moved to 3062 M Street, NW, borrowed a *sefer Torah*, hired a cantor, sold tickets for \$3 each, and began holding religious services. Over time, their numbers increased, and “out of a small *kebbe* grew a large *farein*”—from a small group of 25 people, they became united as one community. In 1915, the community purchased a small house at 2801 N Street NW, converted it into a shul, and renamed themselves “Keshet Israel Congregation.” Over time, they outgrew the small house and the need to expand became apparent. With a membership of 150 people, and a Ladies Auxiliary that raised \$10,000 (a lot of money in those days!) for the building, the cornerstone of the new building was laid on February 1, 1931, and a new chapter began to unfold. On September 6, just in time for *Rosh Hashanah*, the new **Keshet Israel Synagogue of Georgetown** formally opened its doors....

*To mark the special occasion of our Centennial Celebration, and to enhance the intellectual and spiritual life of our community in Washington D.C., Keshet Israel is hosting a year-long salute called “Keshet100: Celebration and Reflection.”*

The centerpiece of this endeavor is a four-part series called “**Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation.**” These panel discussions, which will take place over the course of the anniversary year, will explore the major themes and pressures surrounding Orthodoxy -- the historical, social, textual, and halakhic dimension of what we live and practice. The topics will include Orthodoxy and Innovation, Women and the Future of Judaism, Spirituality and the Future of Institutions, and The Denominations: The Ways We Believe Now.

## TONIGHT’S PROGRAM

### Orthodoxy at a Turning Point, A National Conversation: Panel #1: Orthodoxy and Innovation

*How, when, and why does Jewish law change? In a time of extraordinary social and technological ferment, a blind faith in continuity is not enough. Jewish history shows again and again that the Jewish legal tradition was flexible and ingenious in meeting the evolving needs of the community. Can it be so again, and in what circumstances, and by which methods?*

**Rabbi Dr. David Berger** is Ruth and I. Lewis Gordon Professor of Jewish History and Dean at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University. He serves on the Council of the World Union of Jewish Studies and the editorial board of *Tradition*. He is the author of *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages*, which was awarded the John Nicholas Brown Prize by the Medieval Academy of America, and of *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, winner of the 2003-2004 Samuel Belkin Literary Award. He is a Fellow of the Annenberg Research Institute and a Visiting Professor at Yale University and Harvard University.

**Dr. Moshe Halbertal** teaches Jewish Thought and Philosophy at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and is a professor at NYU School of Law. Among his books are *Idolatry* (co-authored with Avishai Margalit) and *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority*, both published by Harvard University Press. His latest book, *Concealment and Revelation*, was published last year by Princeton University Press.

**Rabbi Dr. David Novak** holds the J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff Chair of Jewish Studies as Professor Religion and Philosophy at the University of Toronto since 1997. He has been involved with Keshet Israel since he was a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 1992-93, and he grew up on the same street in Chicago as Keshet Israel’s president, Alfred Altschul.

**Rabbi Dr. Barry Freundel**, rabbi of Keshet Israel for the last 24 years, is an Assistant Professor of Rabbinics at Baltimore Hebrew University and is head of the conversion committee of the Rabbinical Council of America. He is the author of *Contemporary Orthodox Judaism’s Response to Modernity* and of the forthcoming book, *Why We Pray What We Pray: The Remarkable History of Jewish Prayer*.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Kesher Israel begins its 100<sup>th</sup> year in September 2010. Events honoring the Centennial are scheduled between September 2010 and December 2011, with something for everyone in mind. From lectures to social gatherings, from walking tours to cultural events, activities have been planned to celebrate and honor the unique and rich history of our synagogue. This is just a taste of what is to come!

- Sept 13, 2010** *Orthodox Judaism: What it Was, What it Is*  
*Kickoff Lecture by Rabbi Dr. Barry Freundel*
- Oct 10, 2010** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*  
*Panel #1: Orthodoxy and Innovation*
- Nov 7, 2010** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*  
*Panel #2: Women and the Future of Judaism*
- Dec 11, 2010** *Kesher Israel Celebrates! A Night in Monte Carlo*
- Dec 12, 2010** *Tzvi Daremblum Memorial Lecture:*  
*Jonathan Safran Foer and Leon Wieseltier in Conversation*
- Feb 2011** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*  
*Panel #3: Spirituality and the Future of Institutions*
- Mar 13, 2011** *Kesher Israel Celebrates! A Gala Dinner*
- May 15, 2011** *Israel and the Jewish Soul:*  
*A Discussion of the Place of Israel in our Lives and our Beliefs with Elie Wiesel*
- June 2011** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*  
*Panel #4: The Denominations – the Way We Believe Now*

*And this is just the beginning...*

### **Kesher Israel: The Georgetown Synagogue**

2801 N Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 333-2337  
info@kesher.org

centennial@kesher.org  
http://centennial.kesher.org  
facebook.com/kesheraisrael  
twitter.com/kesheraisrael