



Rabbi Susan Shamash

Born in North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Raised in Edmonton, Alberta.

Eldest of four siblings, born to Al and Rony

Polsky.

Married to Yom-Tov Shamash.

Grandmother of four.

A founder of Or Shalom in 1978.

Held many, many administrative positions on

the Or Shalom Board and various committees over the years including Co-Chair, Treasurer, and Chair of the Ritual and Governance Committees. Current member of the Cemetery Committee. Regular davvenen leader, leyner, sometime D'var Torah giver and teacher of Talmud.

1. What is the trait that best describes you?

This is a hard question because what I think is the trait that best describes me and what others think aren't necessarily the same. I like to think that I'm kind and thoughtful, also analytical and a critical thinker. I'm a good, dedicated, responsible person, Jew, sister and friend.

2. What is your idea of happiness?

Spending time with friends and family, especially if good scotch or wine and food are involved. Learning new things and deep study also make me happy. And then, of course, there's walking in the forest or by the water.

3. From where do you seek inspiration?

I seek inspiration from our holy texts: the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings, from the Rabbinic Sages, the Medieval Commentators, the Kabbalists, the Ba'al Shem Tov and his descendants, Reb Zalman, my teachers, colleagues, students and chevrotot. I also seek inspiration from/through prayer, both spontaneous and "scheduled" and nature.

4. What is something most people don't know about you?

I sometimes think that everyone in Or Shalom knows everything about me since I've been around for so long. So, yet another difficult question to answer. People probably don't know that I love country music and square dancing.

5. What's your favourite Jewish food?

Anything my Aunt Fanny made. She was the quintessential cook of Eastern European delicacies, including prakes/holishkes (cabbage rolls), kishke, borscht (both meat and dairy), knishes, kreplach and, most especially, petchah/kholodets (don't ask). I'm sure there's more, but those are what stick in my memory the most.

6. If you could invite anyone to your home for Shabbat who would you invite?

Madame Justice Rosalee Abella.

7. Of what accomplishment are you most proud?

Becoming a Rabbi.

8. Complete this sentence: God put me on this earth to...

perform interfaith lifecycle events, particularly marriages. It took me decades to discern that as my deployment. I feel so blessed to be able to marry interfaith couples, with the support of the Vancouver Unitarians who licensed me as their religious representative. It enables me to be part of widening the Jewish tent that I think is so important to our continued survival as a people. God put me on this earth to say "yes"!!

9. If you had a wish, prayer or favour granted by God, what would it be?

To remember every single minute of every single day that this precious life on this precious planet is a gift from God, and that I should forever be grateful for that gift.

10. What mitzvah have you done recently? Or... What mitzvah has somebody done for you recently? Or... What mitzvah will you do in the coming weeks?

For me, the most important mitzvah is Shabbat. I love lighting the candles, blessing the wine and the challah (especially if I've made it) and enjoying a special meal with my beloved, family and friends (when we were able to invite guests to our table and when we will again).

As for a mitzvah that someone has done for me, I am beyond grateful to the Gemilut Chesed Committee whose members and volunteers have held me and my family members during surgeries, recoveries, and the recent pandemic. It is difficult to ask for help, but they make it safe and easy.