

# KEREN OR

Keren Or is a publication of Or Shalom Synagogue

## Chanukah 5771 Edition



Please bring light and heat this season to Vancouver's homeless.  
Place an item of warm clothing in the box in the Or Shalom lobby.

Or Shalom Synagogue is a Jewish spiritual community affiliated with the ALEPH Alliance for Jewish Renewal. We are creative, egalitarian, traditional and participatory.

You are welcome to join us any Shabbat beginning at 10 a.m.  
at our synagogue at 10th and Fraser.

For more information about Or Shalom, see our web page

[www.orshalom.ca](http://www.orshalom.ca)

or call the Or Shalom Office

604.872.1614

# Update from the Board of Directors

By Adele Ritch and Laura Rosenthal, co-chairs

## Presenting the 2010-2011 Board

We wish a warm welcome and a hearty mazal tov to our new board members who were elected at the October 24, 2010 annual general meeting. Here are the newbies with their related committees in brackets: Avi Dolgin (adult education), Leora Zalik (children, youth & families) and Esther Zapf (tikkun olam).

They join returning board members: Benje Bondar (YAC), Ron Einblau (bayit), Robin Friedlander (membership), Martin Gotfrit (security), Dave Kauffman (communications), Tim Oberlander (strategic financial planning), Linda Peritz (finance), Adele Ritch (co-chair, governance), Laura Rosenthal (co-chair, retreat, high holidays) and Rabbi Laura (too many roles to mention!)



## We Want You!

As we say with every chance we get: our committees need your help. They don't meet that often and we don't want to rely on the same people all the time. Being on a committee is a great way to get involved in Or Shalom and make new friends. Please email the office ([orshalom@telus.net](mailto:orshalom@telus.net)) if you'd like to join a committee. Lily will put you in touch.

## Board Priorities

For the year ahead, the board has identified three main priorities on which to focus: fundraising and stewardship, membership engagement, and children, youth and family programming. Of course, numerous other things come up, keeping us busy.

In closing, we sincerely thank our board members whose terms have ended: Barbara Buchanan, Lenore Rosen, and Mark Weintraub. Their contributions were much appreciated by the community.



Reb Zalman with Eve Ilsen

## Weekend Shabbaton with Reb Zalman & Eve Ilsen Purim for Grown-Ups

Learn the lessons embedded within the holiday and its application to our lives

March 11-13, 2011 at Havurah Shir Hadash in Ashland, Oregon

Information and Registration: [www.havurahshirhadash.org](http://www.havurahshirhadash.org)  
Questions: [ashlandhavurah@yahoo.com](mailto:ashlandhavurah@yahoo.com)

# Gifts of the Camel

Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan

*Presented at the Or Shalom Annual General Meeting,  
October 24, 2010.*

In honor of our Board and key volunteers who go the distance, I introduce you to the camel.

Camels have the physical and emotional ability to adapt to quick changes in their environment. They have strong immune systems that keep them healthy under stress. Socially, they are not territorial. When they have a shared goal, small groups join together into large herds of several hundred animals.

Camels have the very qualities we need to create and maintain Or Shalom.

The Talmud teaches that even these amazing animals need care and feeding. Rabbi Eliezer says, “As a camel, so is its load,” reminding us that a healthy camel can carry a greater load. An anonymous teacher says, “One must not stuff a camel with food, but one may put food into its mouth.” Meaning: a camel is proudly independent, and wise enough to know what it needs. Don’t smother it, but do offer it help!

The history of the Hebrew word for camel gives a sense of the respect that camels commanded in the ancient world. The Hebrew word for camel is *gamal*. In the early books of Torah, the noun *gamal* refers to an animal, and the verb *gamal* means “to become independent.” A bit later in Jewish history, the word *gamal* refers to a measure of wealth. A *gamal* is the amount of precious goods a single camel can carry. Specifically, it’s a gift one noble would give another. In the sophisticated spiritual poetry of *Tehillim* (Psalms), the verb *gamal* refers to God’s act of giving gifts to human beings. In Tanakh, the camel is a strong, independent animal, who carries gifts both material and spiritual.

Torah teaches that after the death of our ancestral mother Sarah, Avraham decides he would like his son Yitzchak to marry a relative. So Avraham sends his trusted servant Eliezer to their hometown. Eliezer travels with a caravan of 10 camels loaded with gifts. At the town well, Eliezer prays for the

ability to discern the right wife. He decides that any young woman who says, “Drink, and I will water your camels, too” will be the right one. Rivkah says the magic words, cares for the camels, and receives the gifts.

The cycle of giving and receiving – all expressed in the little Hebrew word, *gamal*.

You may know that the prophet Yechezkel describes the revitalization of the Jewish people after the Babylonian exile as a valley of dry bones coming to life. Jewish tradition has borrowed from this story to teach that at the time of Mashiach, all human beings who have ever died will be resurrected. The *Zohar* borrows from the story of Eliezer, Rivkah and the camels to offer a teaching about the qualities that lead to a resurrected spirit.

Imagine it’s the time of the coming of the Mashiach, and the time of the resurrection. God recruits the gifted matchmaker Eliezer to match souls with newly resurrected bodies. How does Eliezer approach this massive task of discernment? He makes use of a caravan of ten camels – that is, ten noble gifts that come from God, the ten sefirot. Ten divine attributes, including a good head, wisdom, understanding, compassion, judgment, balance, endurance, gratitude, groundedness, and spirit. Using these attributes, Eliezer discerns that the first to be resurrected will be people whose jugs are filled with the spirit of Torah. Like Rivkah, these holy people will be able to revitalize others.

Now imagine that it’s not the time of Mashiach, but just an ordinary day, a day of breathing life into this project that we call Or Shalom. We’ll have to rely on our camels: volunteers and staff who can adapt to change, stay healthy under stress, and form groups with shared goals. We’ll have to offer our gentle help. And we’ll all have to ride our inner spiritual camels: understanding, compassion, judgment, gratitude and more. If we do this, we will be sharing our noble gifts with one another, and truly experiencing God’s *gemilut chesed*, gifts of love.

## TIKKUN OLAM COMMITTEE: “WITH EARTH AND EACH OTHER” E-RALLY



The morning of Sunday, November 14 approximately 55 people gathered at Or Shalom to participate in a fantastic Internet e-rally. “*With Earth and Each Other*” was produced by Friends of the [Arava Institute](#). The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies is an Israeli graduate institute which brings together Arabs, Israelis, Jordanians, Palestinians, Jews and North Americans to find solutions for the region’s environmental challenges.

The broadcast was hosted by actor Mandy Patinkin and featured musical performances by Israeli, Arabic and other musicians. Among them were David Broza and Tuck and Patty. To our delight, the iconic folk singer and civil rights activist, Pete Seeger, was featured. We sang, clapped and laughed along with thousands of other viewers in this cyberspace rally to support of the ongoing work and achievements of the Arava Institute students.

The program concluded with a panel discussion facilitated by Reena Lazar of [Peace it Together](#). *Peace it Together* is an organization which uses multimedia and filmmaking to promote Middle East peace. Panelists included environmental educator Noam Dolgin and Robin Friedlander who participated in the institute’s annual fund-raising desert bike ride. Great questions were posed and even better answers were given! The discussion was lively, informative and infused with cautious hope.

The fabulous music and inspiring testimonies brought together people of many ages in support of Arava. Our own B’nei Mitzvah group discussed the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the nature of modern Israel including its need for environmental protection. They spoke of own their experiences of Israel, the importance of music (including some great interpretations of the songs in the video), and the importance of musicians conveying political inspiration.

The Tikkun Olam committee would like to thank Valerie Lev Dolgin, Vancouver rally organizer, the panelists, the participants and many others who made this a successful event.



**Save The Date:**  
**Jan 14-16, 2011**  
**Or Shalom YAC Shabbaton**

with guest leader rabbinic student  
David Fainsilber

## ISRAEL

The Or Shalom bnei mitzvah class wrote this group poem after participating in the Arava Institute's "With Earth and Each Other" concert and rally broadcast from Israel.

Israel is  
beautiful and mystical,  
you never know until you've been.  
You might find connections  
through family, nature, or passions.

Israel is  
a community.  
Like on a kibbutz,  
people work together,  
help each other out,  
love the earth.

All in unison,  
that is the goal.  
As long as there is peace,  
the world is a safe place.

Israel and Palestine  
should make peace.  
People risk their lives,  
go to war over land,  
when they could make an agreement.

The world is changing  
it doesn't have to be bad.  
We can all come together  
and take away what's sad.  
If we all combine, we can love each other  
like we love our own mother.  
If we can agree on what we believe,  
there is no limit to what we can achieve.

-- Jordan Bowman, Artemis Cohen, Caleb Cohen, Aria Druker, Joshua Friedman, Jesse Rose, Jody Schwarzfeld



## News from the Program Director

Asaf Pomerantz

Greetings Or Shalom Family,

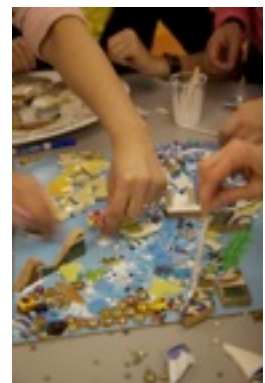
Well, it certainly has been an exciting start to 5771 for Or Shalom's Youth and Family Programming! After welcoming in the New Year (and its myriad of holiday celebrations) we got down to work preparing for our first family Shabbat. This event took place in October, on Shabbat Vayera.

As you may know, Parashat Vayera begins in Abraham and Sarah's tent, and so that is where we began: in a (more or less) life sized version of the famous pavilion. The younger children sat together under the canopy and discussed the main themes of the parashah -- namely, how to make people laugh and why it's so important to be friendly.

The B'yachad bnei mitzvah group put on their troubadour caps and began preparations for a new Parasha Play that was written by our very own Or Shalom writing staff. Under the always dependable direction of House Director Hillary Kaplan, our young Bnei Mitzvah students dazzled us with their passion and excitement for storytelling. We had a great community discussion which involved questions and comments from all age groups. Teens Eli Kaplan and Hillel Neiman provided expert leyning for the more traditional side of the storytelling, which beautifully rounded out the entire experience.

In the end, it was a rousing success, and Or Shalom Family and Youth Programs especially wants to thank you all, and hope that you will continue to support quality programming at Or Shalom!

Save the Date!  
Or Shalom Retreat  
May 20 - 23, 2011 (Victoria Day Weekend)  
Camp Hope, near Hope, BC



The guest rabbi will be R' David Seidenberg. Rabbi David is known for combining the "old" and the "new." He teaches text and music, Jewish thought and spirituality, in their own right and in relation to ecology and the environment. Read more about him at [www.neohasid.org/about/teaching](http://www.neohasid.org/about/teaching)

Tell all your friends! Make new friends! Give yourself a break.

Registration information will be available in March 2011.

*A Gift for Someone Who has Everything:*

*Remember a Yahrzeit*

*Honour a Special Occasion*

## Celebrate by Donating

Have you thought about making donations to Or Shalom to mark special occasions or milestones in your life? For example, you can honour a friend's birthday, honour someone's memory on the date of their Yahrzeit, honour the birth of a baby, or congratulate someone on a new position at work or a school graduation. A donation to Or Shalom is a great gift for the person who has everything! Donations are tax deductible.

We have recently updated our office procedures and it's easy to make donations. Just email Lily, our office manager, at [orshalom@telus.net](mailto:orshalom@telus.net) or call her at (604) 872-1614. Be sure to provide your name, your full address, and phone number and the name and email address of the person you are honouring along with a description of the occasion.

The person you are honouring will receive a letter by email telling them about the tribute donation. (Canada Post can be used if you prefer. Provide the person's full address.) An acknowledgement letter will be sent to you by email, and tax receipts are sent once per year.

Three ways to pay:

1. By credit card. NOTE: No more surcharges on donations paid by credit card to our office (There is still a surcharge on membership fees paid by credit card.)
2. By cheque.
3. Via [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) (Canada Helps surcharge of 3.9% applies. Or Shalom has no control over that charge).



**Your donations are appreciated and will allow Or Shalom to continue to thrive.**

**Your tribute will be acknowledged periodically in the Doar Shalom (the e-newsletter), and in Keren Or.**

**Please let us know if you would prefer your donation to be anonymous.**



*Chanukah invites us to follow the example of those who restored the Temple:  
we redefine how much we consider to be enough. (Arnold Eisen)*

## Embrace the Need for Gemilut Chesed In Our Community

Or Shalom's Gemilut Chesed Committee is dedicated to reaching out to our community's members with acts of lovingkindness, when they find themselves in times of need. These quiet tasks, such as visiting the sick or bringing a homebound person groceries, insure that all members are noticed, understood, and cared for. These actions are just as vital to the strength of our community as our celebrations in times of joy.

The notion of attending to our shared vulnerabilities is expressed in this well-known Hasidic story:

A rebbe approached a factory owner in the midst of a frigid Russian winter to solicit funds for charity. Despite the severe cold, the rebbe insisted that the factory owner come to the outside gate to meet him. As they discussed the rebbe's requests, the owner became more and more uncomfortable. Finally, he violated his own rules of respect for this great rabbi by demanding that they go inside where it was warm to discuss the matter further. The rebbe hastened to explain why he had insisted on meeting outside in the cold. "The poor suffer greatly in the winter because they lack warm clothing and firewood. If we met inside, you would, of course, be generous. If we stand outside, however, you will feel the cold, and understanding the pain of the poor, will be even more generous."\*

The sharing of care for each other with acts of lovingkindness reminds us that we are all potentially living on the edge. We act not simply because we ourselves may fall ill or into misfortune and would want others to come visit us: it is part of the shared vulnerability of the human condition; it reminds us of our own mortality, our own finitude.

The Gemilut Chesed Committee welcomes men and women: we welcome your warmth, your presence, your skills and talents. Gemilut Chesed is an opportunity for opening to and creating sacred relationships, celebrating and supporting the needs of individuals and families, and developing a spirit and sense of community that celebrates life's joys and supports in life's sadness.

What are the benefits in giving, with Gemilut Chesed, acts of lovingkindness? Finding the ability to let go of the fear of reaching out, taking the opportunity for new personal growth, and contributing to the growth of our Kehillat Chesed, our Caring Congregation.

\*Adapted from Jewish Paths Towards Healing and Wholeness by Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky



*The first two letters of the word Chanukah spell chen, one of the eight synonyms in Hebrew for beauty. The miracle of Chanukah represents the ability to revive the Divine spark of light which resides hidden within every person's soul. (Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh)*



## The Mystical Shabbat: Shabbaton with Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg

“*Shalom* is one of God’s names. As *Shabbat* is the practice of *Shalom*, so *Shabbat* is one of God’s names.”  
 “Friendship can also bring *shalom* into your life. When you make a friend who can keep you calm, then you arrive in a place where your heart opens.” “But no one can stand on one rung forever; everyone is constantly going up and down in their connection with God. Sometimes the descent makes it possible to ascend.” “The ascent takes us through many different levels of feeling and cognition, involving all parts of our being in weaving a renewed, altered self.”

During the *Mystical Shabbat* weekend (October 16-17), Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg wove these and many other teachings into a weekend filled with learning and community. Reb Elliot drew us together using discussion, lecture, meditation, and more, at four different events. He opened our hearts and minds to Hassidic and midrashic texts spanning fifteen centuries. From the largest group of 100 for the Shabbat morning service, to the smallest group of 20 for the Sunday morning text study, everyone came home enriched.

Thank you to Reb Elliot, to the anonymous donor, to all who cooked and brought delicious food to event after event, to Lily Salja and Eric Spalding for the Shabbat Kiddush lunch.

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### *Sustained and Longing*

*Sustained and longing  
 When the quality of love  
 Surpasses the loss  
 It allows you to go on  
 Though your yearning heart does cry*

Kymn Goodman  
 October 2010  
 Tanka Poem

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*The dreidel, says Reb Nachman of Breslov, is a symbol of Creation itself. All existence is like a rotating wheel: dynamic and oscillating, never static.  
 (Rabbi Marcia Prager)*

## What Helps When You're Grieving

by Kymn Goodman and the Writing Bereavement Group 2010

Having the courage to share scary thoughts with others  
 Frequent lunch and dinner dates with friends  
 Exercise and anything where I can be moving my body  
 Writing disturbing thoughts down  
 Sobbing hard in long hot showers  
 Being in the company of other widows  
 Keeping in touch with people through email  
 Not answering the phone  
 Reclaiming your home in a way that works for you now, by reorganizing, painting, giving away  
 Going to a shopping mall and walking, sitting, window-shopping  
 Buying new things that help define who I am now  
 Reading books about other people's journeys through grief  
 Writing my own book/journal about my journey  
 Looking at pictures and videos of loved ones  
 Printing & framing special photos  
 Seeing a psychologist  
 Listening to soothing, peaceful music  
 Getting really good seats at concerts that I want to go to  
 Talking to friends who are good listeners  
 Leaving time to cry  
 Creating rituals to mark significant dates  
 Prayer, meditation and listening to my still, small voice  
 Writing poetry  
 Spending time in Natural Beauty  
 Reading what others have written about our universal experiences  
 Making plans in advance so there is something to look forward to  
 Singing in a choir, where I can concentrate on the music & not think about my life for awhile  
 Making art with various mediums such as with pastels, paint, charcoal or clay  
 Playing an instrument, reading from sheet music  
 Attending or renting movies to lose oneself in another world  
 Something to physically hold on to or cuddle in bed that reminds you of your loved one  
 A monthly massage to continue being touched  
 Staying open to pleasure  
 Yoga, aerobics, paddling, hiking, dancing, whatever keeps me moving and alive  
 Laughter yoga ([www.laughteryoga.ca](http://www.laughteryoga.ca))

*Walking with the Bereavement Walking Group (Sharon Harowitz <[sharowitz@shaw.ca](mailto:sharowitz@shaw.ca)> for more info)*

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*Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.*

## Ma Tovv -- August 2010

### by Jenny Wright

I remember the Shabbat walk from my childhood home to the synagogue on Ryhope Road in Sunderland, England. We would dilly dally, and peer through glass into sweet shops, wishing we had pennies to spend. But money was forbidden on Shabbat.

We cut through beautiful Backhouse Park. The park was notorious for attracting strange people so we had to be accompanied.

Now, 45 years later, I retrace those steps. I begin at the top of my street and head through the park.

There is little evidence of the Jewish community that had once thrived here. The Mezuzot announcing the presence of Jewish homes are gone. I find myself unable to identify, precisely, the houses of friends and family where I had played.

Surprised, I notice one Mezuzah on a door. The home's owner is heading to his car. He looks at me wondering why his house is attracting my attention. I explain and he tells me that the beautiful wood Mezuzah had been designed by a local artist. He cherished it as art. This small trace from the past was comforting.

I continue through the park. Between the trees I glimpse the red brick arches of the Ryhope Road Synagogue. The arch beneath the roof reads, "Ma Tovv Oheleycha Yaacov, Mishcanatecha Yisrael." "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!" This prayer expressed our joy in gathering. Excitedly, I phone my sister. We say a Jewish prayer together.

The gates at the front are locked but there are gardeners working in back. I peep through the gates and am filled with memories of childhood. Next door is the Cheder building, the Hebrew school where I studied.

The gardeners allow me to take photographs but forbid entry to the property. I push my camera through the gates for better shots.

Though I've visited several times before I have not stepped inside since my teens. I had watched the decline of the synagogue and its dwindling membership with waned interest. Now, I find I care. Maybe it's age. Maybe it is because my religion and beliefs have become more central to my life.

I find myself yearning to go inside the building.

A man walks by. We talk. I explain that I only have a few hours and wish so desperately to go inside the synagogue. He knows the new owner and suggests we try to reach him by phone. "If you sweet talk him and listen to him, perhaps he will let you inside the building."

We call and within 30 minutes a short, middle aged, gruff man arrives. He introduces himself as George and tells me about his recent purchase. He reminds me of my late uncle Leon, a wonderful man with a loud bark and no bite.

I listen quietly to appalling stories. Though George's intent was to convert the synagogue to a recreation centre for handicapped children hooligans had vandalized the synagogue. Drug addicts had squatted inside, leaving used needles behind. Pieces of stained glass were broken and valuable iron pieces had been removed. The damage was so extreme that George was doubtful if he would ever be able to accomplish his goal.

When the police failed to act George took matters into his own hands. He installed security lights, alarms and hired someone to live in the small flat adjacent to the synagogue.

I asked if we could go inside. George cautioned that it was hazardous. I gently cajoled, promising to be cautious. He was persuaded!

We entered the synagogue community hall downstairs. It looked like a construction site. The stage where my friends and I had performed stood now empty and damaged.

I remembered helping with the afternoon teas that my mother and other synagogue members prepared and served there for the seniors from the Jewish aged home.

## Ma Tovu -- August 2010 (continued from page 11)

George pointed out the steps to the woman's mikvah. The walls, ceiling and floor were ruined.

The sanctuary stunned me. That holy place was destroyed. Drug addicts had sabotaged the walls, floors and windows. Black swastikas violated the walls.

Thankfully the Bima still stood. George assured me that the Torah scrolls had been safely donated to another community. I looked up at the woman's section recalling countless childhood Sabbaths spent alongside my mother and sister.

As I wiped away tears George handed me a prayer book saying, "Here is a souvenir for you." He was kind. The synagogue had fallen into worthy hands.

My little shule is an important fragment of Jewish history. Though its community is gone, the beautiful brick architecture with its welcoming "Ma Tovu" remains for future visitors. It is, I hope, testimony that this tent will provide comfort and protection for many more years.

## Upcoming Talmud Class with Reb Laura: Explore the Ethics of Speech

Some years ago, I asked my children, then aged 7 and 9, to tell me some of the rules they would follow if they wanted to speak nicely, in a way that was not hurtful or impolite. Here is their list of rules:

- (1) Say "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome."
- (2) Do not call people a mean name, like "ugly" or "picklehead."
- (3) Do not talk while other people are talking.
- (4) Do not say "I hate you." Instead, say "I love you."
- (5) Try to say nice things instead of mean things.
- (6) Do not talk behind people's backs, especially if what you have to say is mean.
- (7) Do not brag.
- (8) If you do not have something nice to say, do not say anything.
- (9) Do not sing rude songs in front of your elders, unless they taught you the song.

At various points in our interview, however, they made annoying noises while their parents were speaking, they looked away to indicate disinterest, and they interrupted one another constantly.

This little story hints at several important points about the ethics of speech. A child could tell you some of

these points: Careless speech can be hurtful, even between friends or family members. Much hurtful speech can be avoided by the observance of a few simple rules. But for the other points, adult self-consciousness is needed. Knowing the rules is not enough to ensure that we follow them. We also have to make some unconscious processes conscious, becoming aware of the hidden moment between a thought and its articulation in speech. These points, illustrated so nonchalantly by my own children, are precisely the ones we will explore in the Talmud class.

We will study a *sugya* (section) of Talmud known as "The Oven of Akhnai." It begins with an analytical essay in which our sages review several cases of verbal oppression, and generalize some important rules about avoiding hurtful speech. It continues with a complex and moving story about a group of rabbis who disregard all of those rules, thinking they are only advancing the cause of scholarship. And it leaves us with the tools to become more aware of our own practices.

Please join us and add your wisdom to the discussion. Wednesdays Feb 2, 9, 16 and 23, 7:30-9:00 pm at Or Shalom. Pre-register by January 16 to [orshalom@telus.net](mailto:orshalom@telus.net), with "Talmud class" in the subject line.

-- Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan