

# KEREN OR

Keren Or is a publication of Or Shalom Synagogue

## HIGH HOLYDAYS 5772 EDITION

### Self-Forgiveness as a Prelude to Prayer

A few days ago, I tried to save a spider trapped in my car, but I did not succeed. Feeling sad and guilty, I atoned in the only way that came to me at the time.

"*Ribbono Shel Olam*," I whispered, "you know I tried to save one of your creatures because I know that even the littlest embodied spark is still a spark, but I failed. Please carry his soul safely."

An inner voice replied: "But you're not completely consistent. You eat meat sometimes."

What?? I work really hard at my animal commitments. No one can take that away from me. Not even my most accusing inner critic.

For the first time, I really grasped the insanity of this inner voice.

Hasidic tradition calls it the *yetzer hara*, the evil formation within us. No matter how hard I try to improve morally and spiritually, this voice tells me that I am not good enough to succeed.

The psychologist Sandra Maitri calls it a leftover "superego voice." Sure, this voice helped create boundaries for my adolescent self. When I first stepped out into the world, believing I knew and could do anything, this voice grounded me. But now, decades later, my life has been constructed within cautious internal boundaries. A voice pressing me to narrow the boundaries of effective action even further is not a helpful voice.

I remember how I learned to pray for the soul of an animal.

Ten years ago, I was a Sunday morning guest preacher at a liberal Christian church. I took a risk and spoke about spiritual topic new to me at the time: the kinship of all life. I asked the question: how

do we deal ritually with grief over the loss of an animal when our religious tradition is so human-focused?

An older woman stood up to speak. "There are things you can do," she said, "You can pray to raise up the soul of the animal."

Perhaps she was just nervous, but it seemed to me she spoke scornfully. Perhaps I was just insecure, but I received a scolding subtext: *This is so elementary, I can't believe you didn't say it yourself. How dare you speak about this topic when I know so much more about it than you?*

Despite the sting of her tone, I always weave the prayer she suggested in with my own heart-themes.

For a long time, I've known that judgmental people judge themselves harshly. Their inner sound tracks play certain themes of self-criticism, and these themes become raw material for social conversation.

Perhaps the woman at church had nervously told herself many times, "You can't give a speech about something if anyone out there knows more than you. What if they ask a question you can't answer?"

This inner admonition expresses so much yearning. A yearning to be perfect, a yearning to please all possible critics, a yearning to meet an impossible standard.

Like the standard set by my inner critic: "Do you dare to pray before you have perfected yourself?"

For once, I had the courage to answer, "Yes, I dare!"

No wonder we begin the Kol Nidre service with these words: *The Holy One and the congregation both know: we may pray with sinners in our midst.*

-- Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan



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

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  
 email: [office@orshalom.ca](mailto:office@orshalom.ca)

# ADULT EDUCATION

## WITH OR SHALOM

Art, History and Philosophy await you this fall as part of the Or Shalom Adult Education opportunities. Reb Laura will immerse us in contemporary issues that will get us thinking (and probably arguing). Two guest speakers in November will provide opportunities for new learning. Preregister by November 10 to [office@orshalom.ca](mailto:office@orshalom.ca); no registration fee. Tzedakah will be collected for the Or Shalom Tikkun Olam fund; please feel empowered to fulfill this mitzvah.

### **“Modern Jewish Thought: Theological Debates”**

**Reb Laura**

**Wednesdays, November 16 to December 7.**

In what sense is the Torah true? What does it mean to feel commanded by mitzvot? Who or what is God? What will the time of mashiach look like? Modern Jewish movements answer these questions differently. How they answer the questions helps them define themselves theologically, and distinguish themselves from one another. In this class, we will sample debates about these four questions. We will discuss different ways of answering them, as we reflect on which answers speak to us and why.

Suggested relevant readings (not required):

- Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew by Neil Gillman
- Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition by Arthur Green
- Jewish With Feeling by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

### **Papercuts – a little-studied Jewish folk art**

**Roberta Kremer**

**Thursday, November 10**

Roberta Kremer will present an illustrated evening on papercuts. Today, many artists in Israel are producing papercuts (often computer assisted) for galleries and tourists – but what is the origin of this art? How did it evolve and migrate? Roberta, a historian and art maven, will offer a talk with a range of slides presenting the beauty of these works and the culture they represent.

### **Eastern European Jewish Immigrants**

**Seema Berson**

**Tuesday, November 15**

Seema Berson introduces us to the Eastern European Jewish immigrants living in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The stories encompass their travels and travails on leaving home and their struggles in the sweatshops and factories of the garment industry in Canada. Based on extensive interviews, these histories form the basis of Seema's recent book "I Have A Story To Tell You."



The real sin begins at the time when it is possible  
for a person to do teshuvah, and he or she does not.

– *Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Pshis'cha*

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*List compiled as of Aug 30, 2011. Donations after that date may not be included, Every effort has been made to ensure the donor list is correct; however in all human endeavors, mistakes sometimes occur. If your name has been omitted, please accept our sincere apologies and let us know immediately.*

## FAMILY, YOUTH, AND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS FALL AND EARLY WINTER, 2011

### Personnel

Between now and December, many of our children's programs will be led by a group of talented, experienced and creative group of Camp Miriam counselors. Our new Shabbat child-minder is Eli Kaplan. Eli has worked as a C.I.T. at the JCC, and a camp counselor at the ALEPH Kallah. Welcome, Eli! This fall, we will be recruiting a new full-time staff member who will help plan and implement many programs, including family programs. Watch for the job posting!

### Family Shabbat

Family Shabbat for ages 3-13: Sept 17, Oct 29, Nov 26

10:00 am, meet in the downstairs social hall at Or Shalom. Younger children will enjoy a Jewish-themed program. Older youth will enjoy preparing a short play.

We will join the grownups in the Sanctuary upstairs during the Torah service. Children will participate in the Torah procession, watch the play, and participate in an all-ages discussion about the ideas in the play, facilitated by Reb Laura.

### Teens and Pre-teens

TAG: Or Shalom is a partner in TAG, Vancouver's Jewish teen program. TAG meets Monday evenings at King David High School. Grade 8, 9, 10 programs this year focus on Jewish ritual, life in Israel, and Jews in Canada. New programs for grades 11/12 on Social Justice and Filmmaking. TAG's director is Or Shalom's lively and creative Noam Dolgin. For info, visit [www.tagbc.ca](http://www.tagbc.ca)

BYACHAD BNEI MITZVAH PROGRAM: Open for business! Students planning a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony at Or Shalom in spring or fall 2012 gather with Reb Laura for eight Sundays and six Shabbat mornings of fun learning activities. For information, contact [reblaura@orshalom.ca](mailto:reblaura@orshalom.ca)

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE October 30, 10 am until 12 noon. VHEC is offering a special Sunday morning program about their "Wartime Escape" exhibit for synagogue youth, grades 6-12. Meet at VHEC.

### Fall Holiday Programs

ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR:

RH Day One (Sept 29) and YK (Oct 8): 10:30-11:30 am. Programs for preschoolers through teens led by Or Shalom members and Camp Miriam counselors. Signs in the JCC lobby will direct you to the appropriate rooms.

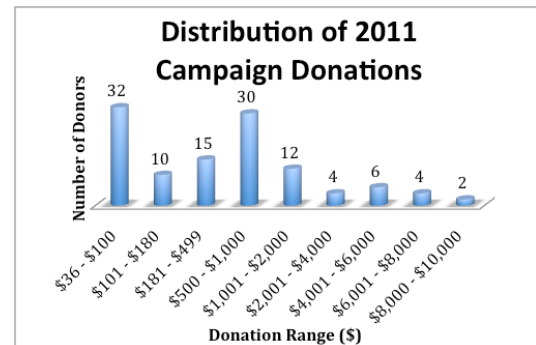
RH Day Two (Sept 30): 10:30 am in the Sanctuary. All-ages Torah service, including a children's story, shofar blowing, and a Torah fully unrolled around the room.

## UPDATE FROM THE BOARD

The main focus of the last “semester” of the board session was to develop, kick-off and support our first Annual Or Shalom Campaign. The campaign was a remarkable success thanks to your generous donations and the wonderful campaign team of Mary Adlersberg, co-chair, Maurice Bloch, co-chair, John Fuerst, Tim Oberlander, Marty Puterman, Hana Wosk and David Berson as fundraising consultant extraordinaire!

The hours of dedicated commitments made by the 25 people who canvassed for the campaign was also key to making it all happen along with Lily’s help in the office and Jennie Virtue’s work as campaign coordinator.

More than two-thirds of us participated. More than \$135,000 was raised for this year, with many committing to donations for 3-years. As you can see from the chart, Or Shalom members were very generous.



This was more than a fundraising campaign. It was also a community-building event. We reached most of our community and gave members an opportunity to talk about their satisfaction and concerns with Or Shalom. The feedback is being passed on to the Board with appropriate action to be taken.

Or Shalom can now move confidently toward implementing the vision expressed in our strategic plan. In the near future you will experience enhanced staffing and programs. And, money raised during the campaign allows Or Shalom to confidently apply Building Fund monies where needed to sustain our Bayit. We will continue to grow in our pursuit of learning, our creation of rich davening experiences, and our enactment of community together. From strength to strength we will pursue our collective journey of spiritual discovery.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors and committee volunteers for all they do for our community. We are grateful for the multitude of roles played by our Rabbi, Laura Duhan Kaplan, and her partner, Charles Kaplan. We also thank Lily Salja for her strong, steady hand as our office administrator.

As we look to the new year, 5772, we encourage everyone to get even more involved at Or Shalom this fall. Say hello to a person you’ve never met before. Learn a prayer you don’t know. Attend an adult education event. Bring your children to a Family Shabbat. Clear some plates from the Kiddush lunch.

Some say that trying new things will keep you energized! May you take this good energy into your hearts, your families and your communities.

L’Shanah Tovah.

*Adele Ritch and Laura Rosenthal, co-chairs*

### Family, Youth and Children Committee Report

The Family, Youth and Children Committee is looking forward to the anticipated hiring of an individual who will be responsible for programming at Or Shalom. We excitedly await the opportunity of working with to enrich and increase our children’s programs and resources. Keep posted!

# JUNIOR KEREN OR

## Easy Rosh Hashanah Caramel Apples

### Ingredients:

6 apples  
 6 popsicle sticks  
 1 (14 ounce) package individually wrapped caramels, unwrapped  
 2 tablespoons milk  
 An assortment of toppings for rolling the caramel coated apples (optional).  
 Examples: crushed Oreo cookies, crushed graham crackers, chocolate sprinkles, M&Ms.



### Preparation:

Put the apples in the fridge at least one hour before getting started. This will help the caramel stick to the apples. Line a section of your counter with parchment paper - this is where you are going to put the apples right after they've been dipped. (You can also use paper plates.)

Make caramel sauce in a double boiler

Note: You can make a double boiler by placing a medium-sized metal bowl over a pot of simmering water.

Add caramels and milk to metal bowl. Stir constantly over medium heat until caramels have melted.

Remove double boiler from heat. Keep pot of caramel sauce over the hot water so it doesn't cool down too quickly.

Remove stems from apples and press one popsicle stick into the top of each one.

Roll each apple in caramel sauce, holding it over the bowl for a moment afterward to let extra caramel drip off.

Roll apple in toppings if desired.

Place apples in your prepared area to cool or place in fridge to speed up cooling.

## SELICHA-O-GRAMS

Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are a special time for asking selicha (forgiveness).

As you complete this activity, think about how asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness can help make the Yamim Noraim (high holidays) true festivals of joy.

1. ORGANIZE. You will need to create selicha card(s) and arrange to sell them. Gather materials to make the cards and decide to whom you will sell them. The Selicha-O-Grams must be delivered, before Yom Kippur.

2. CREATE. Cut out the shape of Jewish stars, shofars, and open books (or another shapes of your choice) from pieces of construction paper. Be sure to include these parts:

- "From"
- "To"
- "Please forgive me for..."

3. SELL. Set the price at which you will sell the selichah-o-grams. Deliver them, with envelopes, to your customer(s) and have them fill out the requested information ("From," "To," etc.) on the form, pay for it and return the completed selicha-o-grams to you in the sealed envelope with the recipient's name printed on it. You will assemble and deliver the cards.

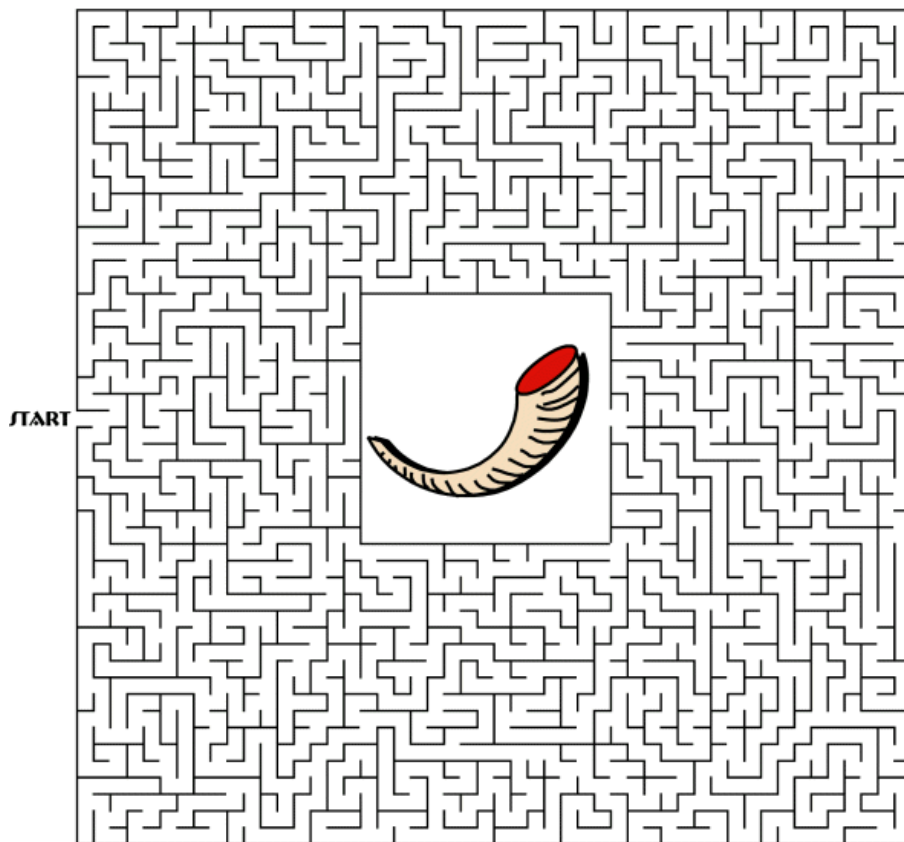
4. ASSEMBLE. Punch a hole in a corner top of the selicha-o-gram envelope. Use a string to attach a small bag of candy or chocolate to the paper.

5. DELIVER. Deliver the selicha-o-grams to their recipients.

6. DONATE. Give the money from sales to your favorite tzedakah. Tzedakah is one method of repentance in the High Holidays.

# JUNIOR KEREN OR

## FIND YOUR WAY TO THE SHOFAR





## Or Shalom Retreat 2011: Spirituality & Chocolate

At the retreat in May, we spent the last Sunday evening immersing ourselves in “spirituality,” through a workshop designed by Carol Ann Fried, Martin Gotfrit, and Reb Laura.

We began with a text study, in which we read and discussed four short texts about four different ways into spirituality: nature, social justice, love, and suffering. Next we broke into small groups to explore ideas and create artistic performances to share with one another. One group presented the “Spirituality Idol” contest show, offering three skits and inviting the audience to vote on which character was most spiritual. Another group presented a humorous dance exploring the idea of God behind the veils. A third group sang an original song about God. And a few participants chose to create solo.

Below are two products of the workshop.

### Sung to “I am the Captain of the Pinafore”

(With apologies to Gilbert & Sullivan)

*I am the God of the universe  
And a just and fair God too.  
But then I let you fall  
And when you hit the wall  
We no longer believe in you.  
Boo hoo hoo hoo!*

*I may be God but it's not my job  
To do your work for you.  
I'm not in the sky,  
I'm not on high  
Perhaps what you say is true.*

*We've lost so many, we have so few  
It's hard to be a Jew  
When our children look up to an empty sky  
What are we to do?  
There is no God but you.*



- John Fuerst, Judy Shane, Deborah Wolfe, Leora Zalik  
- Or Shalom Retreat, May 2011





## Spirituality: A Recipe

This dessert can be made in any moment with some effort but will take more than one lifetime to perfect. However, it can be enjoyed individually, served up for a group where all know each other, or created for harmony for all things and beings in the world.

### Ingredients:

*2 cups of awe (natural beauty is best)*

*1 cup faith*

*2 Tbsp humility*

*1 G-dly soul*

*1 animal soul that continues to wrestle with God and has impure thoughts*

*1 tsp love*

*a pinch of doubt (use disbelief if easier to get)*

*a sprinkle of anger*

First sift awe and faith in larger bowl, adding humility gradually. Then in a small pot over medium heat melt animal soul, doubt and anger, and set aside to cool. Pour this mixture into smaller bowl and whip in G-dly soul until combined. Pour smaller bowl contents into larger bowl and fold gently, just until combined. Spread love on top.

This is best served on the oldest plate in your family, preferably one passed down by your grandmother, which holds the memory of your family's happiest occasions and most cherished traditions and customs. Best if shared or given to others with love.

Yields one "G dash d" or "Hashem" or "YWVH" – too holy to utter – and a sense of belonging.

Tanya Paz

Or Shalom Retreat, May 2011



## FORGIVING ONESELF: SOME THOUGHTS

Over the past while as I prepare to offer a series of workshops on forgiveness, I have come across so many inspiring ideas that may help deepen our understanding of this life-enhancing process. I offer up some “nuggets” for your consideration with apologies to the many people who I have quoted without credit.

- The facts are that people hurt people and that people are inherently social and can't flourish in isolation. People either forgive one another or else they wither as persons; they reconcile or perish.
- We must be able to recognize and accept our imperfections and forgive ourselves for having them and for sometimes acting wrongly.
- Self-forgiving individuals need not let themselves off the hook. They can feel guilt, shame, anger, deep disappointment with themselves and judge themselves worthy of punishment. But these do not become corrosive and enduring features of their way of being toward themselves.
- All forgiveness is self-forgiveness.
- Forgiveness means that even though you are wounded you choose to hurt and suffer less.
- Self-forgiveness is a shift from self-estrangement to feelings of being at home with the self. It means placing the transgression in a larger perspective and realizing that one is merely human.
- To rehabilitate ourselves is to regain our self-confidence; we need to accept that we have erred; acknowledge whatever flaws let us astray and seek to improve, if we can.
- Self-forgiveness doesn't erase the past but only alters its power of meaning for us and never precludes a decent future.
- Self – forgiveness facilitates our ability to forgive others. We see the other not just as a mere offender or aggressor, but as a fellow human who like yourself must struggle, sometimes with limited success to overcome imperfections.

This business of forgiveness requires a great deal of inner strength. It is often a long and arduous path that requires much self-examination and discomfort. May we continue our journey with gentleness and step by step.

*Pam Atnikov is a long-time Or Shalomnick and Vancouver-based psychotherapist. Her blog on forgiveness can be accessed through her website: [www.pamatnikov.com](http://www.pamatnikov.com)*



In the month of Elul, we examine the mistakes of the past year in order not to repeat them. In particular, this means taking an honest look at what is trapping us and preventing us from truly moving forward.

- Rabbi Simon Jacobson

## “TODAY I AM A MAN” (A 40-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE)

When I first spoke those words, some 40 years ago, as I stood on the bimah at Beth Shalom synagogue in Edmonton, I knew even then it was a lie. Not completely untrue of course; signs of peach fuzz growing in my upper lip, and the experience of a wonderful first kiss with the prettiest girl in Grade 7 a month before were good indicators, but it would be many years before I truly learned enough to be able to say with confidence that I achieved man-hood.

As I grew, my interest in science and math grew as well, and I discovered the appreciation of “elegance” in the sense of solving equations, and the satisfaction of proofs, where something can be determined to be “true” in a deep, absolute sense. I came to think that the universe itself might have the kind of elegance of design that Einstein sought when he said he wanted to “know God’s thoughts.” I was intrigued by the idea that if the universe is an elegant creation of God, then perhaps its truth can be found in the critical facts that determine this universe’s uniqueness -- facts, such as the mass of an electron, the speed of light, and the universal constant of gravitation. What I discovered is that while these facts are indeed unique, they are the fragile and unique combination that creates a universe capable of the wonders we see around us - liquid water, clouds, ice, air, and life.

From physics, I was led to undergrad metaphysics, in the search for deeper truths. In time, this took me to mystical teachings, and eventually to Kabbalah. Now I believe that the most important numbers are two of the simplest: the number One and the number Two.

Kabbalah teaches us that before the world was created, there was only the Ein Sof - existence without beginning or end; the universal One. The One is complete, unified, and undifferentiated. For

humans, it would be deathly boring. So to create this universe, Kabbalah teaches that God had to create a space, called Tzimtzum, that provided the potential to hold this universe, in essence creating two from One. Creating Two from One is, as I have learned through this life, the source of both the beauty and the tragedy of this world. Dividing One into Two is the essence of this world’s beauty: it is what enables evolution, mutation and adaptation. One dividing into Two accounts for worms, for birds, and for lions, whales, and geckos; it is the source of having millions of different kinds of insects, flowers, and clouds.

But we also know that the division of One into Two is tragic. It is the source of antagonism, hatred, and xenophobia. It always saddens me to see any group of humans find ways to create divisions, the us-vs.-them separations, splitting nations, families, and households. The beauty and tragedy of One dividing into Two is only countered by the opposite: Creating One from Two. Of course, the closeness of lovers is the universal instance of this re-unification, but there is another, one that for my wife and I, represent our life work: Tikkun Olam. Our work is to bring together the factions into a working whole, to discover and bring into the light the unifying vision behind disagreements, and tie the divergence back into unity. It’s difficult, when we know that entropy’s constant push on the universe must eventually win, but it is the work we choose to do.

So today, when I stand in front of you and say “I Am a Man” I can say it with the confidence I lacked at my Bar Mitzvah. I can say it because I know the beauty and tragedy of One becoming Two, and because I know the joy of, and never-ending work ahead, of the ongoing efforts to bring the Two together into the One.

*- David Kauffman, May 2011*

## Welcoming Naked Bills

*If at home you leave your wallet  
Remember to slip bills into your pocket.*

Before Kol Nidre, we prepare our souls by emptying our pockets, but we put cash back into those pockets to place in the Tzedakah box before the solemn notes of Kol Nidre are sounded.

This is our major Tzedakah collection as a spiritual community. It is the tangible expression of a key Or Shalom value:



### **We believe in Tikkun Olam and Tzedakah:**

Therefore we consciously grow in our ability to care for our environment and the people in it.

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### **Rabbis Without Borders**

Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan will be participating in the prestigious “Rabbis Without Borders” Fellowship program, sponsored by CLAL, the National Center for Leadership and Learning in New York City. This year, 23 fellows were selected from a pool of 91 applicants.

*The Fellowship Program brings together rabbis from across the ideological spectrum to study with leading thinkers in the fields of media, politics, public policy, North American religion, and contemporary spirituality. Rabbinic Fellows read selected materials, gather four times in New York City, continue conversations online, and are encouraged to integrate their learning with their rabbinic work.*



“Inscribe us for life.” There is a holy point in each person’s heart. This is the living soul, of which it says, “God has implanted eternal life within us.” But over the course of each year, as we become accustomed to sinning, the material self overpowers and hides that holy point. We then have to seek compassion from the blessed Holy One, asking that this imprint in our heart be renewed on Rosh Hashanah.

This is what we mean when we say, “Inscribe us for life.”

— *Sefat Emet (Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger)*