

## Portland, Oregon Winter-Spring 2017 Activity Report



By Elad Vazana



Between January 2017 until June 2017, my family resided in Portland, Oregon. My wife, Iris, was invited by the [Schusterman Foundation](#) as a performing arts teacher of Dance at Reed College.

**While in Oregon, I offered to conduct workshops and speaking engagements in Portland and the**

**Pacific Northwest.**

Read the full introductory message I sent to friends in the USA before arriving:  
<http://www.tour4change.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Elad-to-Portland-Intro.pdf>

### **Activity list:**

**January 29<sup>th</sup>** - Eastrose Fellowship Unitarian Universalist, Portland

**February 10<sup>th</sup>** - Congregation Beth Israel, Portland

**March 18<sup>th</sup>** - Temple Beth Tikvah, Bend

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Middle East anthropology class, Reed College, Portland

**April 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>** - St Norbert, Wisconsin

**April 22<sup>nd</sup>** - **Havurah Shalom, Portland**

**May 5<sup>th</sup>** - Compassionate Listening group, Portland

**May 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Milwaukie Elementary School, Portland

**May 24<sup>th</sup>** - PJA School, Portland

**May 25<sup>th</sup>** - Neveh Shalom Synagogue, Portland

**May 25<sup>th</sup>** - Portland Waldorf School

**May 27<sup>th</sup>** - Growing Seeds Preschool, Portland

**May 29<sup>th</sup>** - P'nai Or Community, Portland

**March, May, June 2017** - Tivnu: BUILDING JUSTICE, Portland

**June 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Tabor space, Post-Tragedy Community-Building Dialogue, Portland

**Here is a summary of some of the activities I facilitated during our short time in Oregon:**

## January 29<sup>th</sup> - Eastrose Unitarian Universalist, Portland



Speaking engagement – Shared my life story and talked about the importance of meeting our "others" in order to see them as humans.

## February 10<sup>th</sup> - Congregation Beth Israel, Portland



Speaking engagement – Shared my life story and discussed how life in Israel is both complex and magical.

*"I would like to tell you about my friend and a leader in the pursuit of peace, Elad Vazana. He articulately explores the complicated nature of what it takes to bridge differences between people who have enough reasons to hate each other. During Elad's six months in Portland, I had the honor of organizing an event at Congregation Beth Israel in which he showcased his talents. What I particularly enjoyed about Elad's presentation was a relentless honesty about himself, his experiences, frailties, biases, strengths that moved me more than all the policy discussions, maps, and demographic charts combined. Elad brings forth the story of a man living his life by his deepest principles that I found both entertaining and transformative.*

*I give my highest recommendation, especially for Jewish groups considering programming about Israel." Eric Flamm*

## March 18<sup>th</sup> - Temple Beth Tikvah, Bend



A 3-hour workshop for the Jewish community in Bend, OR. It was a great success, with more than 50 people in attendance. At the end of the workshop, we all held hands and envisioned their community communicating better and better by

repeating this kind of work. Afterwards, many participants said to the group,

to me, and to the leaders that they want and need to continue this work of listening, both inside and outside their community.

During their follow-up meeting to plan the future of the community, some community members shared the following about the workshop:

*"Stupendous success"*

*"I left my time with Elad feeling inspired to listen more than to talk. I was also further inspired to seek out those in my community and my country who have differing views, differing experiences, and differing backgrounds than myself. I was inspired to see their humanity and to seek out our similarities."*

*The energy of the room completely shifted during the session with Elad. People came in with chatty, superficial connection, mostly from their head. During the workshop, the community grounded themselves and became present. At the end, the energy was heartfelt connection with people feeling truly heard. Or I could just say God walked into the room."*

**Upon following up with the community six months after, I learned that the Beth Tikva community has been continuing their listening work within the community.**

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>** Middle East anthropology class, Reed College, Portland



Brainstormed with 13 students of Middle East anthropology about how life in Jaffa is reflected in Art, Architecture, and Media.

**April 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>** - St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wisconsin



**Speaking engagements and meetings with:** International Scholars, class on Israel/Palestine: The Roots of the Israeli-Arab Conflict,

Human Rights and Responsibilities course, classroom visit.

*"We at the Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice & Public Understanding were very pleased to welcome Elad Vazana to St. Norbert College this spring. We first met Elad through his wonderful work with Mejdí Tours, as he was our principal guide on the trip we led to Israel and the West Bank last summer. Elad is a gifted speaker and facilitator, and our students greatly enjoyed his work with them in the classroom as he talked about conflict, peace, and human rights. As we expected he would, Elad connected with our students in an unusual way, drawing them out and getting them involved in the conversation. He also gave generously of his time to meet with smaller groups of students and community members, refreshing their hopes and encouraging their good work for peace. Elad has become a treasured friend, and we look forward to working with him in the months and years to come."*

**Robert Pyne**

**senior director of community engagement,**

**The Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice and Public Understanding**

*"Your guest lecture in my class HIST 340 (History of the Israel/Palestine Conflict) was extremely important and useful for my students. You brought a perspective that they would never have been exposed to: that of an Israeli, of North African origin, who had served in the IDF and become a peace activist. I know (from conversations with students) that they especially enjoyed hearing about the experiences of your family as they migrated from Morocco to Israel in the 1950s, as well as hearing how you came to become a peace activist, and what that means for your outlook on Israeli-Palestinian co-existence. It is one thing for students to study a subject from books and other materials, but especially in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is vitally important that students have a chance to interact with articulate Israelis and Palestinians. I could only wish that every time I teach this course (every other spring semester), you would be available to meet with my students to share your experiences and nuanced and sensitive perspectives. So I am very grateful for your visit to my class, and I know that my students are as well."*

**Robert S. Kramer**

**Professor of History**

**St. Norbert College**

## April 22<sup>nd</sup> - Shabbat School - Havurah Shalom, Portland



Shared my life story and about life in Israel to a group of children and their parents.

## May 5<sup>th</sup> - Compassionate Listening group, Portland



### ***The invitation:***

*"NEXT SESSION is Friday, May 5th - SPECIAL GUEST  
FACILITATOR: ELAD VAZANA*

*Elad was the first person we interviewed on our Compassionate Listening Delegation to Israel and Palestine, along with his Palestinian story partner. His work includes people sharing their stories. He and his wife Iris, a guest dance instructor at Reed College this term, are living in Portland for about six months. He has been touring around the states leading sessions on hot topics in communities. Please come! I am including a few basics people and former special guests on this list in the hopes that we have a good crowd for this special event."*

<http://www.compassionatelistening.org/>

## May 23<sup>rd</sup> - Milwaukie Elementary School, Portland



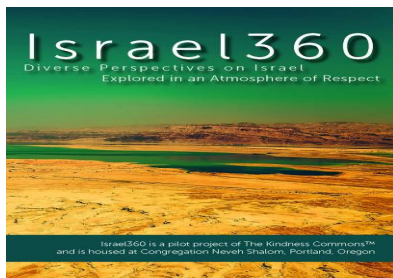
With twenty 5th grade students, I shared my life story and encouraged listening to each other

## May 24<sup>th</sup> - PJA School, Portland



Shared my life story and created conversation about life in Israel for 8th grade students

## May 25<sup>th</sup> - Neveh Shalom Synagogue, Portland



**Israel360: Sharing Life Stories: Bridging Our Perspectives on Israel, Facilitated by Elad Vazana**

See the invitation to the event:

[https://www.jewishportland.org/young-adults/israel-360-231081/2017-05-25\\_19:00:00](https://www.jewishportland.org/young-adults/israel-360-231081/2017-05-25_19:00:00)

*"This evening's program at Neveh Shalom was very special and very powerful. I am so grateful that you were able to facilitate this meaningful encounter, I am happy to have met and connected with someone I would never have spoken with had it not been for this event. Thank you."*

**Gail Sherman**

*"Mr. Elad Vazana led a provocative and moving evening at our congregation as part of our Israel360 program. This program is dedicated to exposing Americans to diverse perspectives on Israel in an atmosphere of tolerant and real engagement. Mr. Vazana's program fit the goals of our program by focusing on deeper communication skills. He achieved this by sharing his own story, engaging people in movement exercises that helped them pair off with a work buddy, and then providing those pairs with questions and activities. The combined approach really opened people up so that they could connect with one another emotionally. Individuals felt deeply heard. Some participants were overheard saying, "I thought this evening would be too touch-feely for me, but I am so glad I came."*

*Elad is a skilled facilitator, and his years working with Palestinian and Israeli youth and adults was a profound contributor to his abilities. I would recommend his services to your organization."*

***Rabbi David Kosak, Congregation Neveh Shalom***

### May 25<sup>th</sup> - Portland Waldorf School



Shared my life story with sixth grade students and encouraged them to meet their "other" and listen to their stories

### May 27<sup>th</sup> - Growing Seeds Preschool, Portland



Conducted an interactive outdoor training for better team building and friendship

### May 29<sup>th</sup> - P'nai Or Community, Portland (2 gatherings)



#### **The invitation:**

"CONNECT, LISTEN, & SHARE with ELAD VAZANA at Early Shavuot Picnic & Fire Circle on Memorial Day.

*Our new friend, Elad Vazana, multi-culturist guide and facilitator of compassionate dialogue from Israel/Palestine, along with his wife and 2 young children, will be joining us for our Pre Erev Shavuot picnic and fire*

circle tomorrow, In the early evening around the fire, Elad will **facilitate a circle "to Connect, Listen, and Share" in the aftermath of Friday evening's tragedy at the Portland Max station.**

Friday evening was Erev Ramadan, the month of Mercy, Gratitude, and Generosity observed by our Muslim neighbors.

Below is an excerpt from a letter that Elad has written and will give you a sense of who he is and what we will be sharing together with him, so appropriate, I believe, to the theme of Shavuot for thousands of years -- which has been "coming together".

### March, May, June 2017 - Tivnu: BUILDING JUSTICE, Portland



<http://tivnu.org>

**Successful Leadership training, mediation, and conflict resolution workshops and seminars** for the members of the Gap Year program in their common house.

And Series of training meetings for the staff members to help them develop leadership skills, communication skills, team building, and more:

We collectively decided on the following goals before the training started:

1. Learning from the past
2. Team building
3. Learning skills
4. Designing structures and how to work/live together
5. Developing staff-staff-students communication

*"Elad led two very successful and meaningful workshops for Tivnu: Building Justice: a 3-part workshop with our participants who are 18-21 years old and a 3-day staff retreat. The participants really enjoyed their time with Elad, his story, and the way he modeled speaking from the heart. They gained valuable skills in managing conflicts within the group and sharing one's story. The staff also gained practical skills not only in managing conflicts but in training future participants to do the same. We used different modalities and structures, learned new ways to build a sense of community, clarified our organizational mission and priorities, and incorporated movement, games, music, and fun into our toolboxes. We only wish Elad were here longer so we and our participants could have continued to benefit from his sharp intellect, incisive assessment of our organization, and warm heart."*



**Steve Eisenbach-Budner**  
**Executive Director**  
**Tivnu: Building Justice**

June 2<sup>nd</sup> - Tabor Space, Post-Tragedy Community-Building Dialogue,  
Portland



"Listen Deeply Portland" event – inviting people from diverse background living in Portland to listen deeply to each other **after the attack at the Max train.**

Read full report by Len Traubman:  
<http://traubman.igc.org/portlanddialogue.pdf>

*"I left feeling so much better...re-connected to community, lighter, and deeply appreciative. Also now have a few new ideas for tough times. Thank you all so much for making this happens -- balm for the soul." **Participant***

**The invitation:**

**"Thursday evening, June 1<sup>st</sup> at Tabor Space in Portland.**  
5441 SE Belmont St, Portland, Oregon 97215  
**6MP sharp - 8:30PM**

*As with the MAX stabbings,  
The best way we know to deal with community tragedy as a society is to first come into a circle of listening together, listening to **everyone**. It is a step toward expressing our human selves on our path towards a culture of connection that lifts one another up.*

*I am here visiting from Israel-Palestine and would like to put my 16 years of dialogue facilitation to good work with Portlanders. Please extend our invitation to all of your community and surrounding communities. We will **share and we will listen, deeply.** Everyone is welcome."*

*"We need so much to connect like this, especially in these days." **Participant***

**Thanks to :**

Iris Erez, Marge Goldwater, Schusterman Family Foundation, Gail Sherman, Len and Libby Traubman, Joanie Levine, Yehuda Winter, Eric Flamm, Harriet Cooke, Sylvia Frankel, Ed Kraus, Robert Pyne, Robert Kramer, Mejdî tours, Scott Cooper, Hadas Karmon, Steve Eisenbach-Budner, David Kosak, Melila Eshed Helner, Beth Hirschfield, Deborah Eisenbach-Budner, Abby Schwalb, Sarah sterling, Susan Tibbles, Keith Tibbles, Adinah Miller, Carol Knox, David Sherman, Florence Beier, Henrik Bothe, Jeanne Freeman, Marlis Beier, Eleyna Fugman, Nissa Rost-Rothman, Tolga Yenilmez, Aziz Abu Sarah, Marc Gopin, Lee Gordon, Brian Rohr, Shahar Eden, Iris Erez, Lisa Schirch, Jenny Souders **and many more!**

Inspired by the work of [Len and Libby Traubman](#).



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**"It always seems impossible until it's done" - Nelson Mandela**