



ALBERTA

# Jewish NEWS

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**May your Passover  
be filled with good  
health, happiness  
safety and solidarity**





## Chabad Edmonton hosted a fabulous Purim in the Jungle Party on March 10



This year's Chabad Purim party was amazing. It featured all of the usual Purim merriment and also a drum circle, a jungle animal presentation and more!

## Benny Gantz to join Netanyahu's coalition

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA: March 27, 2020) — One of the crazier weeks in Israeli politics in recent memory ended on a fittingly dramatic note: Benny Gantz, the former army chief who came close to unseating Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in three straight elections, laid down his proverbial arms.

Gantz will join a so-called unity government with his rival to prevent a possible fourth election and allow Israel to attack the coronavirus crisis as quickly as possible.

Before the coronavirus hit, Gantz was angling toward forming a “minority government” — a coalition that didn’t have enough seats in the parliament to claim an official majority. But it would have been pushed over the governing threshold by the support of the slate of mostly Arab parties (in the form of votes), which prefer to sit in the opposition on principle.

Obstacles abounded, however, and the pandemic heightened the urgency of striking a deal in order to optimize the government’s response.

Unsurprisingly, Gantz’s move to join Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud party and the other more right-wing parties that comprise the prime minister’s contribution to the coalition was a polarizing one. Some commentators and some of Gantz’s allies hailed the decision as the ultimate show of patriotism, putting one’s country over individual aspirations.

Others — including Gantz’s two main partners in his

Blue and White group, Yair Lapid and Moshe Yaalon, who disagreed with the move — called it political cowardice. Lapid and Yaalon packed up their respective party members and left Blue and White (the fourth party head in Blue and White, fellow former military chief Gabi Ashkenazi, stuck with Gantz and will enter the government with him).

The compromise is a complicated one, with several details and multiple possible outcomes. But here are the tangible takeaways from the deal being reported so far:

Gantz nominated himself and was elected speaker of the Knesset, Israel’s parliament — for now. That was a calculated move, backed by Likud, to block Meir Cohen, a member of Lapid’s party, from vying for the position. Cohen could have scuttled the Gantz-Netanyahu coalition deal if elected. The Times of Israel reports that once the government is officially formed, Likud Knesset member Yuli Edelstein — who shut down the government last week in historic and controversial fashion — could return to the position. Look for that to raise eyebrows.

Gantz will serve as defense minister, or possibly foreign minister, under Netanyahu as prime minister for 18 months. Then Gantz is scheduled to rotate into the top role — but that’s far from a certainty.

A Netanyahu ally will become finance minister, while a Gantz ally could become foreign minister (or defense minister, depending on which role Gantz takes).

The now center-left Labor Party, once Israel’s dominant

political force but currently commanding only a handful of Knesset seats, will join Gantz in the brokered coalition. The center-left Geshet party, whose leader recently threw a wrench in Gantz’s previous coalition hopes, also will join.

Avigdor Liberman, the right-wing hawk who has been calling for this kind of unity government for months, ironically will not join the coalition with his Yisrael Beiteinu party, sources close to him told the Hebrew media. Liberman said Gantz “hid things and behaved in an amateurish manner” throughout the process.

What it all means: Things could change, of course, as none of this is final. But Israel’s unprecedented political deadlock, which led to three elections in a year, looks to be resolved.

Gantz was the best hope that anti-Netanyahu Israelis had of unseating the man who has been prime minister for over a decade. His political future now appears uncertain.

Also, while Gantz was not a very liberal candidate — he is often labeled center-right, or at most a centrist — he and Netanyahu certainly have their disagreements over policy and how religious they think the state should be. It will be interesting to see how their disagreements play out in a unity government and if that kind of government can function as one to pass legislation.

The remaining wild card: Netanyahu does still have one big cloud hanging over him — his indictment for corruption. If he is convicted sometime in the future — his trial has been delayed due to the coronavirus — all deals would be off.

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# Why is this year different from all other years?

by Rabbi Steven Schwarzman



Rabbi Steven Schwarzman

This year, Jews all over the world, instead of gathering together for Pesach seders, will be staying home. For some, the seders will be the same as always, just smaller. For some, it will be unfamiliar territory as they find themselves leading a seder for the first time or the first time in a long time. And for some, there will be no seder, because there is no one in their household or facility who can put a seder together.

Community seders have been cancelled. And so, precisely when we most want to come together as a community, we can't, because to do what we normally do - to share the holiday meal with friends, family, and strangers - becomes a threat to public health, a very real danger to human life.

For most of us, this is completely different from any Pesach we have known. And so we have to think hard about Passover, what it really means, and how to do Pesach this year, different from all other years.

First, the preparations. We're all required to rid our homes of hametz before Pesach. (Note: dirt is not hametz. Clean as best as you can, especially in the kitchen, but know that biur hametz - getting rid of leaven - doesn't equal Spring Cleaning As If You Were Staging The House For Sale.) For some, it may be easier this year, since most of us are at home anyway. But for those who can't do this on their own, whether they live in a facility or simply don't have the physical ability to do this, it's important to do what you can and not despair over what you cannot do.

Centuries ago, in addition to everyone cleaning their homes of hametz, rabbis instituted the practice of selling one's hametz before the holiday starts. Why? Because it's impossible, even in the best of circumstances, to physically remove every molecule of leaven from our homes. So we

arrange a sale of all remaining hametz to someone who is not Jewish. We do this every year, and this year, it may be that a few more items will be included in that sale than usual.

How do you sell your hametz? Just contact your rabbi, who will do this for you. The rabbi collects authorizations from shul members (and anyone else who asks) to sell their hametz for them, and arranges a sale to a non-Jew. (Synagogue custodians often fill this role.) The hametz then belongs to the buyer, not to you, all through the eight days of Passover. A few minutes after the holiday is over, the rabbi arranges for the hametz to revert to its prior owners. And presto - you will have fulfilled the Torah's command to not possess any leaven through the holiday.

Second, the seders. If you have everything you need already, great. If you don't have a haggadah, the Rabbinical Assembly (the association of Conservative rabbis) has made their's available for free download this year - see [rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/FeastofFreedomPassoverHaggadah.pdf](http://rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/FeastofFreedomPassoverHaggadah.pdf), and you can find others online as well, for purchase or for free. Try to find a haggadah that you like and that contains more than the bare-shankbones text, so that you can deepen your understanding of the story and the rituals of the seder. Might as well make it interesting, no?

Okay, when do we eat? You'll need to get matzah and the items for the seder plate, plus whatever you're going to eat for the meal itself. The good news is that the supermarkets in Edmonton that carry significant varieties of kosher foods year-round have their Pesach foods in stock. But don't wait till the last minute.

## Purim at Beth Shalom



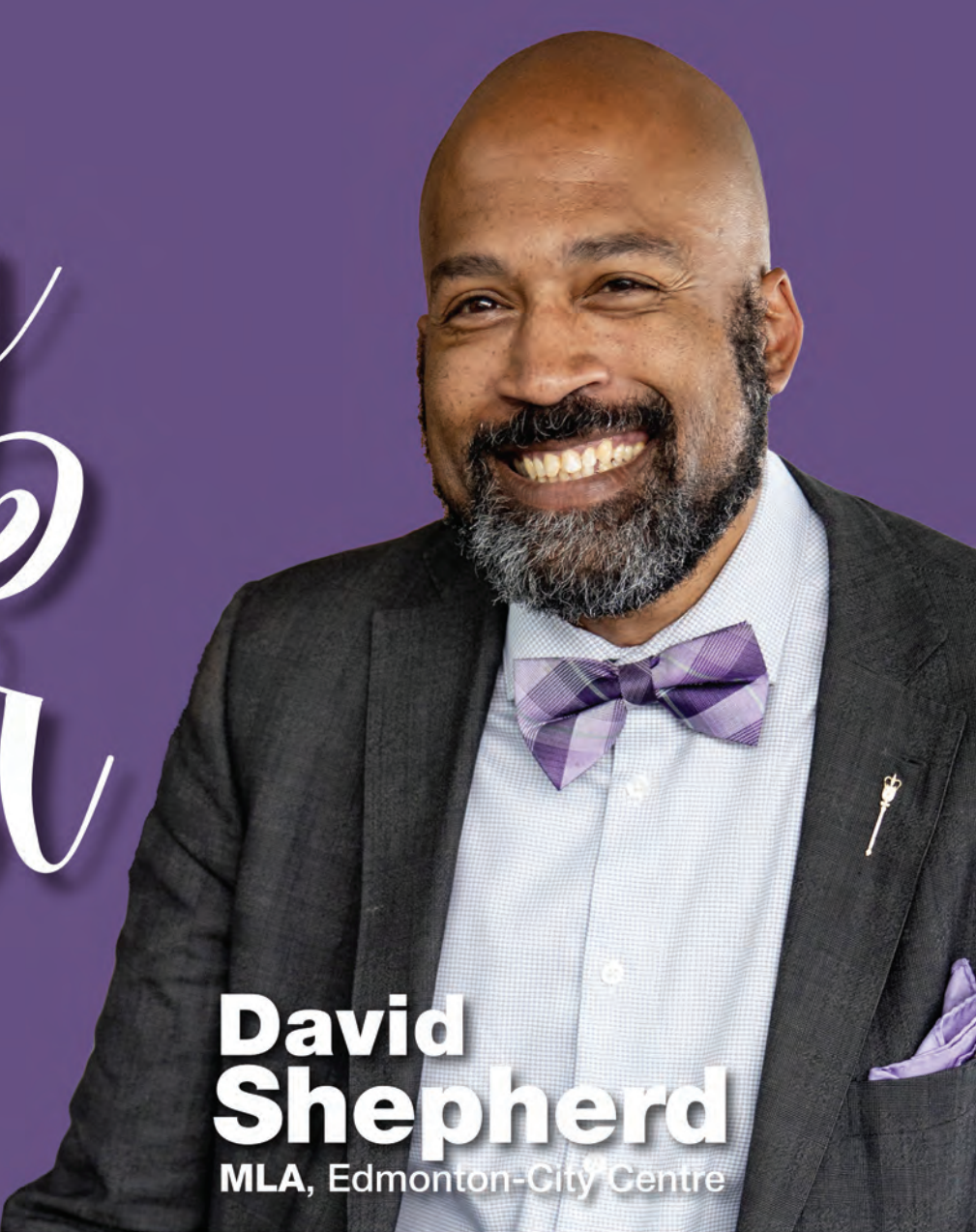
Beth Shalom performed their annual Purim Schpiel, which included a delicious meal, reading the megillah and a costume parade.

Finally, there are many people whose incomes have been drastically reduced as businesses have shut down. If you are able, please consider making a donation to the Edmonton Food Bank at [edmontonsfoodbank.com](http://edmontonsfoodbank.com) for local needs, and to Leket Israel, at [leket.org/en](http://leket.org/en), to support the hungry in Israel.

We all pray that the coronavirus will pass over us, our families, and the whole world. May this Passover, even with its unusual circumstances, bring us a renewed sense of freedom so that we may serve God and help the people around us.

*Rabbi Steven Schwarzman is the spiritual leader at Beth Shalom Synagogue, Edmonton's Conservative Egalitarian shul. For information visit [edmontonbethshalom.org](http://edmontonbethshalom.org)*

# Happy Passover



**David Shepherd**  
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# Large Donation Made to Edmonton Israel Project

A substantial donation has been made by a group of anonymous donors to a project in Edmonton's P2G region of the Northern Galilee in honour of Dr. Ivan Steiner's 70th birthday, and on the occasion of his stepping down as Chair of this program after 22 successful years.

The Madatzim Young Leadership Training project will be run by the Upper Galilee Regional Council and will train young leaders and create a young leadership training system which will serve as a reserve for the leadership of the community. The community believes that, "In order to raise an involved generation that takes responsibility for itself and others, it is necessary to locate suitable youth who will be able to take part in training and leadership." A significant number of youths who will be engaged in the program have been part of delegations to the partnership communities of Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver over the years.

Dr. Steiner, who is a Professor Emeritus with the University of Alberta Faculty of Medicine, has been working on the P2G project for the past 22 years. This project builds bridges between the youth of Edmonton and the youth of the Northern Galilee. A big part of this project

are the student exchanges between Emek Hahula school and our own Talmud Torah school, as well as other children in our community. It also has included teacher conferences, a computer-based pen-pal program, semi-annual meetings in Canada and Israel, and the funding of various projects in the region.

Ivan has chaired the local committee for many years, as well as the National Coast-to-Coast Committee of members from all the regional communities in Northern Israel, including Galil Elyon, Yesod Hamala, Metulla, Kiryat Shmona and Mevot Ha Hermon. The Canadian communities involved include Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Halifax and Ottawa. Ivan and his wife, Ruth, have travelled to Israel multiple times and have made long-lasting friendships with the people there, as have all the participants in the program. These programs are primarily funded by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton through the UJA campaign, the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, and private donations such as this one.

The Upper Galilee Regional Council consists of 29



Dr. Ivan Steiner, back left, and teens from the Northern Galilee at the last Mifgash in Edmonton.

kibbutzim. There are about 3100 children from grades 1-12. This program will train 80 leaders (madatzim) in the 10th-12th grade group, willing to take personal responsibility and connect to communities and settlements in the region. It will work on two levels:

It will locate involved and caring youth, who are willing to take responsibility to undergo professional training and to become professional youth leaders.

It will create a Youth Council Group which will meet every two weeks, receive professional guidance and build the future programs for youngsters in the kibbutzim. These two groups will receive training and professional guidance throughout the year in order to turn them into skilled and professional leaders.

Thanks to the funding of \$31,500 from local anonymous donors, this project honouring Ivan will hopefully begin soon. The Jewish Federation of Edmonton sincerely thanks all donors and volunteers involved in this project.

Visit [jewishedmonton.org](http://jewishedmonton.org) for more information on P2G, other projects, or how to get involved.

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# Asking the important questions



Jay Solomon

By Jay Solomon

(March 2020) - For centuries, Jews everywhere have gathered with family and friends around the Seder table to recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt, a narrative that has captured our attention for generations. It is an annual reminder that, even amid uncertainty, we can draw upon our traditions for guidance, for comfort, and for inspiration. It is a reminder that, despite hardship, and in the face of adversity, the faith and spirit of the Jewish people has always – and will always – endure.

No lesson could be more important today. These are profoundly challenging and uncertain times. The COVID-19 pandemic currently spreading throughout the world provides an important opportunity to pause and reflect on where we've been and and remind ourselves that we have persisted as a people for millennia despite incredible hardship. At a time of great stress, Jews know more than most that we should balance our legitimate concerns and challenges with hope about where our journey will take us in the future.

This year, my Seder will look, feel and be different than in the past. We will not be gathering in large numbers with extended family. We will not be going to my parents' house. And, we will certainly not sit across the table from my 95-year-old grandparents.

Instead, my wife, our three children, and I will read the Haggadah – while video conferencing with family near and far.

For me, the focal point of the Passover Seder has always been the **Four Questions** – an opportunity to pose difficult questions about our history and our future. This year, our community will be asking many questions. These are the ones that will characterize our Seder table.

**How can we support those on the front lines?** As we keep hearing from health care professionals and other essential front line service workers, the single most effective way to help is to heed the advice of public health authorities and stay home! If you are like me, you will find this very difficult as we are used to springing into action during times of need.

**What should we be doing to advocate for those most in need during these unsettling times?** Maybe it's raising money to ensure our Federations can continue to support the most vulnerable in our community or donating food staples to the local food bank. Perhaps it's donating to ensure there's enough personal protective equipment at our local hospital or urgent care clinic. And it's joining CIJA in our efforts to ensure all levels of government

provide charities, non-profits, and social services agencies with the the resources they desperately need to continue doing their vital work during these challenging times.

**What will life look like after COVID-19?** Like all things, this pandemic will pass, and with some luck, life will return to something resembling what we used to call normal. But, what will that mean? History has shown that times of great hardship often create opportunities for innovation. Will this pandemic spur the next generation of scientists and doctors to new breakthroughs? Will medical companies produce new technologies to better protect citizens from future viruses like COVID-19? Will corporations continue to encourage flexible workspaces? Will places of worship continue to make their services available online for greater participation?

**And – finally – what lessons can we teach our children and ourselves?** Much of the Jewish diaspora has been fortunate, of late, to live during times of prosperity in a world of relative safety, security, freedom, and good health. But, as COVID-19 is teaching us, things can change quickly. Each of us has a responsibility to do our part: to take care of each other, and to contribute to repairing our society. My wife and I are using this time to reinforce the concepts of tzedakah and tikkun olam with our children, to imbue them with empathy, humility, and gratitude. And to teach them that we are all – Jews and non-Jews, young and old, near and far – in this together.

Wishing you all good health.  
L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim.

Jay Solomon is Associate Director, Campus, The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)

# Seder plate rituals combat oppression

By Cantor Russ Jayne, Calgary Beth Tzedec

(Calgary) - The traditional Seder plate contains an egg, shank bone, *karpas*, *charoset* and *maror*. Some also make room for *hazeret*, another kind of bitter green. Recently, however, other fruits and vegetables have shown up on the plate, representing a variety of causes from solidarity with oppressed Jewish communities to welcoming the intermarried. As a Hazzan, an integral part of my role is to encourage the introduction of new rituals into our spiritual practice. With that in mind, I would like to take you on a brief journey through some of the more “interesting” additions that have graced, and continue to grace the Seder plates of 21st Century Jews.

First was the orange, which has come to symbolize the power of Jewish women - female Rabbis and Cantors, the Jewish midwives in the Exodus story, gender-neutral language in prayer books, among other places. Yet when Jewish Studies professor Susannah Heschel first plunked down a tangerine on her Seder plate in the early 1980s, it was in the name of gay and lesbian inclusion, as she explains in her essay on Miriam's Cup.

"During the first part of the Seder, I asked everyone to take a segment of the orange, make the blessing over fruit, and eat it as a gesture of solidarity with Jewish lesbians and gay men, and others who are marginalized within the community...In addition, each orange segment had a few seeds that had to be spit out – a gesture of spitting out, repudiating the homophobia that poisons too many Jews."

Although not its original intention, this fruit has evolved over the decades to represent the inclusion of all “outsiders.” If you look at recent *Hagaddot* from the Shalom Center, you will see this beautiful explanation.

“Why this orange? Because in olden days there was no orange on the Seder plate and it was said that outsiders — gay men and lesbians, transgendered people, converts, those who lack some important ability or skill, the unlearned — all these no more belonged in the community than an orange belongs upon the Seder plate. So we place an orange to say firmly, all these belong."

Then, a few years ago, olives started showing up. First, they symbolized a call for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as stated in the Shalom Center's "Freedom

Seder for the Earth."

"Why this olive? Because for millennia the olive branch has been the symbol of peace, and we seek to make peace where there has been war."

More recently, though, it has taken on an activist bent representing the olive trees of Palestinian farmers that have been destroyed as a result of the Separation Barrier.

How about an artichoke? In an essay on [interfaithfamily.com](http://interfaithfamily.com), Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael suggests this prickly vegetable with the soft heart for the interfaith-friendly Seder plate.

"Like the artichoke, which has thistles protecting its heart, the Jewish people have been thorny about this question of interfaith marriage. Let this artichoke on the Seder plate tonight stand for the wisdom of G-d's creation in making the Jewish people a population able to absorb many ele-ments and cultures through-out the centuries - yet still remain Jewish."

Hard to top, however, is the Progressive Jewish Alliance, which in 2010 put together a “Food Desert Seder Plate” that banished the original arrangement altogether, replacing it with items symbolizing the lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low-income neighbourhoods.

A rotten piece of lettuce illustrated that inner-city grocery stores often carry only spoiled produce. A potato chip instead of the boiled potato in the *karpas* space indicated that high-fat potato chips are cheaper and easier to find than fresh potatoes. The egg was missing as well since fresh eggs were one of the luxuries lacking in these

neighbourhoods.

Now however strange some of them might be, Seder plate additions are within the spirit of the holiday. These symbols are intended to make a link between the biblical story of the Jews leaving Egypt, and participants' contemporary narratives. When we update the Seder plate we become part of the continuous revelation which began at Sinai and continues to this very day. Our “enhancing” of the Pesach experience with modern symbols and rituals is a great affirmation that we, as a people, take our Judaism seriously. Given the effect of COVID-19 on this year's celebrations, I can only imagine what additions will grace our Seder plates in years to come.

Of course, what I long for is the day when these symbols can be removed from our plates, when there is no new form of oppression we need to bring to the forefront. Because that will mean that the narrow places of “Egypt” will truly be a thing of the past and that we will, at last, be celebrating as “children of freedom.”

*Chag Sameach* to one and all!!

# Chag Sameach!

Happy Passover to all our Donors, Supporters and Friends

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"Passover has a message for the conscience and the heart of all mankind. For what does it commemorate? It commemorates the deliverance of a people from degrading slavery, from most foul and cruel tyranny. And so, it is Israel's - nay, God's protest against unrighteousness, whether individual or national."

-Morris Joseph

## CHAG SAME'ACH!

Please note, we are continuing to offer Counselling (via phone or video) as well as our Home Support Services during these challenging times. Now, more than ever, the need for competent, compassionate and holistic care, on a short or long term basis, is of paramount importance. Contact us at [info@jfse.org](mailto:info@jfse.org) for more information.

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# Let’s use the crisis as a wakeup call



Rabbi Zolly Claman

By Rabbi Zolly Claman

(AJNews) - We are living through unprecedented times. Since the virus has spread, and especially since we officially closed the doors of our shul until things calm down, I have been fielding calls, text messages and emails all asking the same things in different ways. Some with an underlying tone of fear, others grappling with the anxiety of not being in control and knowing what is over the next bend. But all with the same implicit yearning for meaning or reason within this pandemic and global chaos.

I am no prophet and I most definitely do not have answers to everything. Specifically, the greatest theological questions that have stumped great historic leaders like Moses and King Solomon, are the ones I don’t profess to have answers to.

But still, I think there is room for interpretation towards the way this global crisis has hit us in Jewish communities around the world. I don’t intend to explain the ways of G-d, but rather to strengthen ourselves with an empowering idea and try to leverage these difficult times towards a more meaningful life.

Communities around the world are unforcefully closing their shuls for the first time in history. I have friends and family who belong to synagogues in Vancouver, Ottawa, Columbus, Jerusalem, Berlin, New York, Chicago, Miami and the list goes on. There is one thing we all have in common: our synagogues are not running daily minyanim or Torah classes.

Superficially it seems as though Judaism is on break until the virus subsides. However, it is the opposite that is the truth. We are accustomed to feel that the epicenter of our Judaism is our Synagogue. That is where we go to pray, study, celebrate and mourn. What we are being reminded of now, is that was never the intention. The epicenter was always meant to be our homes.

The first Shabbat that we closed Beth Israel we were to have read Parshat Vayakel, which speaks about the building of the *Mishkan*, or Tabernacle – the very first place of worship in Jewish history. Putting the irony of that being the first communal reading that we did not fulfil due to the closure, we must remind ourselves of a nuance in the very verses of the Torah which bear a poignant significance to our lives.

When we are introduced to the concept of having a place of worship, G-d tells Moshe to command the nation to, “make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell *among them*” (Exodus, 25:8). The commentaries point out that it does not say ‘and I will dwell *in it*.’ But rather the dwelling is with the people themselves, “*among them*”.

In other words, the place of worship – the tabernacle or the shul – was always meant as a recharge and calibration of the commitment of the Jewish home and heart. G-d dwells within us – not exclusively within the physical edaphus of the synagogue.

Allow me to quote an essay composed by one of the great Jewish leaders of the 19th century, Rav Samsun Raphael Hirsh: “If I had the power I would provisionally close all synagogues for a hundred years. Do not tremble at the thought of it, Jewish heart. What would happen? Jews and Jewesses without synagogues, desiring to remain such, would be forced to concentrate on a Jewish life and Jewish home. All synagogues close by Jewish hands would constitute the strongest protest against the abandonment of the Torah in home and.”

This shocking theoretical idea was never actualized by Rabbi Hirsch, but it seems to have been actualized by G-d through the COVID-19. Perhaps it is a wake-up call to re-evaluate our Jewishness in our homes. Maybe we need to ask ourselves if we have been relying on the place of worship too much for our service towards our Creator. We go to shul to pray, but do we know how to pray

## Festival Hatzafon goes Virtual



With help from Reel Mensch Studios, Festival Hatzafon has become a virtual event! For details visit Aviv Israeli Folk Dance on Facebook.

ourselves? Do we leave prayer with a feeling of connection and love? Do we know how to unload our stresses and successes on G-d? To me, this is resonating as a personal wakeup call and I extend the invitation outwards for the ringing to be heard.

My addresses on these pages are usually lighter, but I truly believe there is something worth contemplating here. Our community has been sticking together through the Virtual Torah Centre that I created. In it, we share live classes and prayers.

This message is an empowering perspective to look at the isolation as a calling and this time of crisis as an opportunity. May we all have the ability to utilize this stage to re-calibrate what it means to be a Jew.

With warm wishes towards a kosher, healthy, inspiring and meaningful Pesach,

*Rabbi Claman is the spiritual leader at the Beth Israel synagogue, Edmonton’s Modern Orthodox congregation.*

*If you would like to be included in the Virtual Torah Centre, email your name and number to Rabbi Claman and he will add you to this very special group – rzc@familyshul.org.*



Wishing you a Happy and Healthy Passover  
Chag Sameach  
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# Jewish students unite in Zoom University Hillel

By Deanna Schwartz

(Alma via JTA) - At Zoom University Hillel, there are no comfy places to study or free snacks. There's no director or rabbinic intern or student board. But there are memes, words of comfort and a sense of community as strong as any university's Hillel house.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced nearly every college to transition to online courses and, in most cases, move students out of their dorms and back to their homes. College students naturally have taken to Facebook meme groups to cope with the sudden lifestyle change.

The Zoom University Hillel Facebook group, which was founded by Clark University student Ari Hoffman, stemmed from a larger group with over 200,000 members called Zoom Memes for Self Quaranteens.

Hoffman posted in the original group, jokingly asking, "So who wants to join Zoom University Hillel?" When people expressed interest, Hoffman created the group. Within four days, the group had over 8,000 members.

Hoffman said he didn't expect the group to grow so quickly.

"It was kind of wild how it blew up," he told me.

In the group are memes, polls, Zoom hangouts, matchmaking and, of course, Jewish geography.

Tyler Bardfeld, a sophomore at the University of Delaware, posted in the group looking to unravel the "largest conceivable game of Jewish Geography." Within 18 hours, the post had over 2,000 comments of students clicking on people's names to see how many mutual friends they have.

"I thought it was interesting how there were all these people that I recognized from summer camp and when I was in BBYO and people from school ... I didn't think it would get as many comments as it did, but it was fun," Bardfeld said.

Adina Ornstein-Luks, a student at Vassar College, shared a similar experience of joining the group and immediately seeing people she knew from summer camp, college and home all in the same place.

"I was like, 'This is crazy. This is the intersection of all of the Jews I've ever known all in one place!'" Ornstein-Luks

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Beth Shalom Schpielers presented Shushan Rouge

Under the direction of Dr. Steven Katz, the Beth Shalom Schpielers performed an entertaining and thoroughly delightful musical rendition of the Purim story that demonstrated their love for musical theatre and yiddishkeit.

said. "I really got a kick out of it. I was looking through and I had mutual friends with everyone."

Like many Jewish gatherings, humor plays a huge role in the group. A poll questioning whether or not Shrek is Jewish (Shrek means fear in Yiddish) sparked vigorous debate. Sophie Frieden, a student at DePaul University (and Alma ambassador) started a thread of bar/bat mitzvah pictures and glow-ups.

"The humor is good. We're able to make fun of each other, but in a lighthearted way. There's good banter," said Sofia Freudenstein, a student at the University of Toronto.

Occasionally a political debate breaks out, but the group mostly remains civil and drama-free, something that can be rare for online Jewish spaces. Especially rare among a group of college students, there has been almost no discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Members are using the larger group to find smaller pockets of community, with call-out posts such as "Where are my Russian-speaking Jews at," "Where are my trans Jews at?" and "Where are all my Latino Jews?"

Freudenstein said she loves how everyone is finding their niches in the group.

"For me, it was finding all the other Canadians," she said.

Ornstein-Luks posted looking for other queer Jews and got a lot of responses right away — prompting her to create a spinoff group called Zoom University Hillel (but queer) with Jacob Miller, a fellow Vassar student. She said this smaller subgroup has been the best part of the experience for her because it's allowed her to connect one on one with people and serve as a self-described "queer yenta."

Numerous group chats on Facebook Messenger, Slack, Snapchat and What's App have started from the group. People are using the group to find friends, something New

Continued on page 11

HAPPY

Passover

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from the

Sources

Everyone’s invited:  
(Well, almost everyone...)

by Eliezer Segal

By reciting the Passover Haggadah we are fulfilling the Torah’s command to tell about our liberation from Egyptian oppression. The pivotal section of the service, in which the ancient rabbis expound relevant passages from the Bible, is designated “*Maggid*,” from the word meaning “to tell.” The Haggadah presents this narration of the exodus as the answer to the “Four Questions” that children ask about various peculiarities of the festival meal.

Immediately preceding the Four Questions is a short passage whose precise function is not clear and has generated diverse interpretations. It does not appear in Haggadah manuscripts that follow the old Israeli rite, and only its last line is found in the tenth-century liturgy of Rav Saadia Gaon. Some medieval commentators treat it as a Babylonian creation.

This text consists of three parts: (1) we point to the matzah as the “bread of affliction”; (2) we extend an invitation to the needy to join in the Passover offering; and (3) we contrast our current state of subjugation and exile with the anticipated celebration of next year’s holiday in true freedom in our homeland.

This section is usually designated by its opening words “*ha la ma ‘aniyah*,” Aramaic for “this is the bread of affliction.” Maimonides’ text, in use among Yemenite Jews, precedes it with a declaration in mixed Aramaic and Hebrew, “in haste we departed from Egypt.”

The insertion of an Aramaic text is surprising in a service that is otherwise all Hebrew.

This incongruity elicited numerous explanations. Some commentators linked it to the seder’s thematic structure which weaves between evocations of enslavement and of liberation; the shift in language between the Four Questions and the “*Ha Lahma*” somehow suggests that we have not quite arrived at the “freedom” stage of the seder.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Joel Halevi (“Raviah”) explained that the use of Aramaic was for the benefit of women and children who did not understand Hebrew. Some authorities seem to suggest that in ancient Jerusalem Aramaic held particularly joyous associations.

Rabbi Simeon Duran explained how the *Ha Lahma* is an appropriate lead-up to the Four Questions: At this point in

a normal banquet, the children would expect to proceed directly to the meal and would be wondering why this night is different. In anticipation of that situation, the Babylonian rabbis introduced this passage in Aramaic, their local Jewish vernacular, in order to make it clear that this was not just a fancy meal but a special religious feast commemorating the exodus.

Although the invitation to the hungry appears in the Talmud, it is not connected there to the Passover seder. It is mentioned as an act of exemplary piety by the Babylonian sage Rav Huna. Before commencing his meal he would always open wide the doors of his house and announce “Let anyone who is in need come and eat!” Rava commented that he himself was unable to emulate this practice on account of the military garrison stationed in his town of Maḥoza who would devour all his provisions if they heard such an invitation.

The Jews of medieval France and the Rhineland inhabited a world teeming with supernatural spirits. They worried that if they extended their invitation in Hebrew, mischievous party-crashing demons would ruin it. Hence it is advisable to filter them out by issuing the declaration in Aramaic - a language that, according to the Talmud, demons do not understand.

Some commentators objected that this was unnecessary since the Passover night is deemed a “night of guarding”- in the sense of “a night on which they are protected from demons”; though perhaps this could be interpreted as “a night on which they should protect themselves from demons,” which would fit the situation quite nicely.

Rabbis Yom-Tov Ishbili and David Abudraham suggested that the concern was not for demons but for angels who also have a long record of rivalry with the people of Israel. However, angels are also unable to understand the Aramaic invitation; otherwise they might show up inopportunely while we are proudly celebrating our ancient moment of triumph and remind the Almighty of some sinful shortcomings that make us undeserving of redemption.

Some authors objected that the line “next year we shall be free,” is worded in Hebrew (though some rites recite it

in Aramaic as well). Raviah ascribed this to the fact that the passage originated in Babylonia where their non-Jewish neighbours understood Aramaic and might take offense at the Jews’ unpatriotic dissatisfaction with their place of residence. (The ninth-century Babylonian Ga’on Rav Mattityahu reported that as Jews came to have more non-Jewish than Jewish neighbours, they would offer the gentiles food in advance so as to forestall them from showing up at the seder.)

Rabbi Simeon Duran explained that the desires for freedom and the ingathering to Jerusalem are so prominent in Jewish thought that children would understand them even when they are expressed in Hebrew. At any rate, those constitute heartfelt prayers that we do want the angels to understand and fulfill.

Referring to the matzah as “*lehem ‘oni*” equates it with the expression in the Torah whose simplest translation is “bread of affliction.” As such it recalls not only the hasty departure from the land of our enslavement - but also the oppression from which we were fleeing. Some authorities inferred that the slaves themselves were fed a diet of this crudest and cheapest of foods. We give this aspect of the matzah tangible representation in the practice of breaking one of the matzahs, thereby distinguishing it from normal holiday breads that are eaten from whole loafs.

However, the talmudic sage Samuel offered a more homiletical play on the word ‘oni, expounding it from a similar root meaning “to answer” - it is the bread over which we provide answers.

Indeed, one can hardly imagine a more fitting characterization of this quintessentially Jewish event, a meal at which some unleavened bread draws the participants into a lively and incisive symposium of questions, answers and learning.

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# YEG Virtual Jewish Film Festival: May 3 -7

Grab some popcorn and a pop and get comfy in your own home for the Virtual Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, from May 3 – 7, 2020.

Though the Jewish Federation of Edmonton made the difficult decision to cancel the live Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, all is not lost. They have now announced the new format and schedule. The festival is free to everyone – all you need is an email address and a computer or smart screen to participate.

“The Jewish Federation of Edmonton is pleased to bring the Virtual Edmonton Jewish Film Festival to our community and beyond – free of charge,” announced JFED Director of Development Susan Schiffman. “While we are physically apart, this is a great way to gather as a community and we are pleased to present an assortment of films that will provide diversion, entertainment and comfort in these difficult times.”

Complementing the five feature films that make up the body of the virtual festival, EJFF is showcasing a juried selection of short films from film makers around the world. These ‘shorts’ will be presented after the feature films. Exhibiting these films at the EJFF provides opportunities to see a variety of films which may not receive mass distribution, and for independent filmmakers to reach new audiences.

Guest speakers and virtual pub talks will also be added to the schedule as the date draws nearer. Stay tuned to jewishedmonton.org for film trailers, updates and to register for the Virtual Film Festival.

“Once again, the Edmonton Jewish Federation is very grateful to our dedicated sponsors, advertisers and amazing group of volunteers who are making this festival possible,” concluded Schiffman.

The schedule for the Virtual Edmonton Jewish Festival is:

### Golda’s Balcony, The Film

English, Historical Drama, 86 min.  
Sunday, May 3, 3 -10 PM  
In this rare, multi-camera angle shoot from the original

run of the hit Broadway play “Golda’s Balcony,” Tovah Feldshuh brilliantly recreates 100 years of Jewish history, playing 45 different characters including Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Holocaust survivors, Israeli soldiers and, of course, Golda Meir herself. Feldshuh portrays the amazing rise of Golda from Russian schoolgirl to Prime Minister of Israel, with heart, dazzle, and jaw-dropping artistry.

### With Slight Steps

Israel, 2018; Hebrew with English subtitles  
Documentary short:10 minutes

Film director Guy Hodes takes his 96-year old grandmother back to Kibbutz Dalia, and to a time when she was the High Priestess of Israeli folk dancing. She observes how the kibbutz’s outdoor dance amphitheater has deteriorated and reflects upon how Israeli ideals, too, have changed; yet with slight steps, she will dance with her grandson.

### Picture of His Life

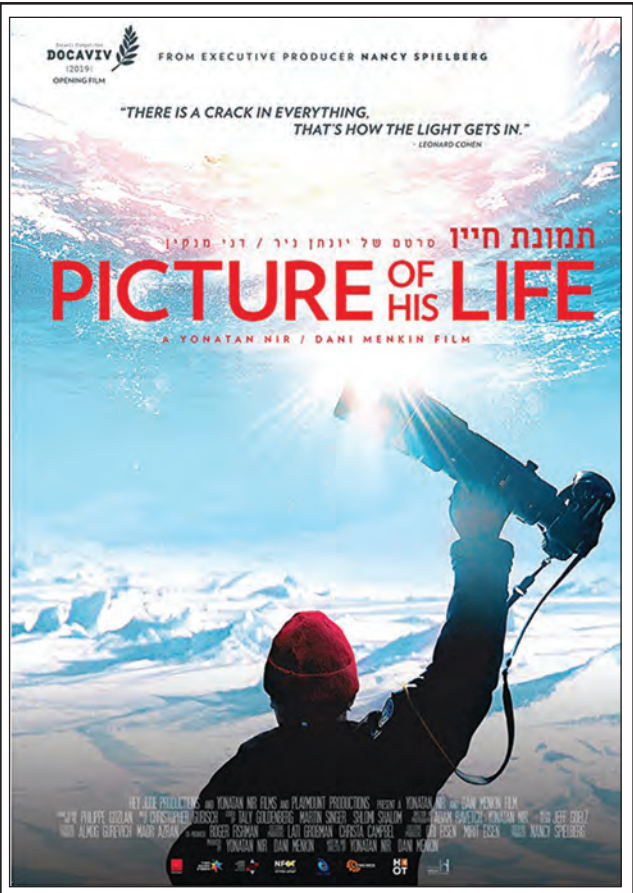
Israel, USA, Canada, 2019  
English & Hebrew with English Subtitles  
Documentary, 72 minutes  
Monday, May 4, 3 – 10 PM

Daring Israeli underwater photographer, Amos Nachoum embarks on a perilous quest to the Canadian Arctic in pursuit of his ultimate dream of swimming alongside a polar bear and capturing the encounter on film. This breathtaking, intimate portrait reveals a passionate artist who risks life and limb in pursuit of singular beauty.

### How to Swim

Israel, 2018  
Hebrew with English subtitles  
Short: 15 minutes

Avigail is at the doctor’s office in the homestretch of her pregnancy and everything seems to be on track, yet she finds herself terrified. What follows is a wacky, day-long



adventure, filled with vulnerability and humor.

### Golden Gym

Israel, 2019  
Stop motion animated short; 6 minutes

After his daily workout at the gym, 70-year-old Tsvi is involved in a car accident and his family confiscates his car keys. Unwilling to give in to the loss of independence that

Continued on page 10

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**SUNDAY, MAY 3** GOLDA’S BALCONY, THE FILM  
SHORT - WITH SLIGHT STEPS

**MONDAY, MAY 4** PICTURE OF HIS LIFE  
SHORTS - HOW TO SWIM & GOLDEN GYM

**TUESDAY, MAY 5** THOSE WHO REMAINED  
SHORT - HOPE DIES LAST

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 6** THE HOUSE ON WANNSEE STREET

**THURSDAY, MAY 7** THE KEEPER

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**ALL FILMS WILL PLAY FROM 3:00 - 10:00 PM ON SCHEDULED DATES**

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## Film Festival *Cont. from page 9*

comes with old age, Tsvi carries on with his life as before. His determination will lead him to a great new adventure!

### Those Who Remained

Hungary, 2019  
Hungarian with English subtitles  
Drama: 83 minutes  
Tuesday, May 5, 3 - 10 PM

This is the poignant and painful story of two Hungarian Holocaust survivors, a young girl and a middle-aged man, whose relationship helps them to heal and provides them with someone to live for, when all they once loved is lost. Set against the backdrop of the chilling menace of Hungary’s Stalinist regime, the film is exquisitely acted, and beautifully photographed.

### Hope Dies Last

United Kingdom, 2017  
Silent short film: 8 minutes

A powerful silent short based on the true story of Józef Paczyński, a Polish political prisoner at Auschwitz who was the personal barber to camp commander Rudolf Höss for much of the second World War. Each time he was ordered to cut the Nazi’s hair, Paczynski feared that the haircut might be his last.

### The House of Wannsee Street, Memoirs of a German Jewish Family

Argentina/Germany, 2019

Spanish/English with English subtitles  
Documentary: 70 minutes  
Wednesday, May 6, 3 -10 PM

Poignant questions of identity and resilience are brought to life as award-winning Argentinean filmmaker Poli Martinez Kaplun confronts her mother and aunts about their hidden Jewish past. Eighty years after her family’s flight from Germany, she returns to their family house on Wannsee Street, just a few feet from the site where the Wannsee Conference decreed the Final Solution for the Jews of Europe.

### The Keeper

UK/Germany, 2018  
English; Historical Drama: 120 min.  
Thursday, May 7, 3 -10 PM

The Keeper tells the incredible true story of Bert Trautmann, a German soldier and prisoner of war who, against a backdrop of British post-war protest and prejudice, is chosen as Goalkeeper for Manchester City, and goes on to become a British football icon. Though his signing causes outrage to thousands of Manchester fans, many of them Jewish, Bert receives support from an unexpected direction: Holocaust survivor Rabbi Alexander Altmann. Bert’s love for Margaret, an English-woman, carries him through, and he convinces even his harshest opponents by winning the 1956 FA Cup Final, playing with a broken neck to secure victory. But fate will soon twist the knife for Bert and Margaret, when their love and loyalty to each other is put to the ultimate test.



## Matzah Mac & Cheese Recipe

By Sonya Sanford

(Noshers via JTA) - I first tried “matzah mac & cheese” at my friend Daniel’s Shabbat potluck dinner. For a few years running, he hosted huge groups of people every single Friday night, and his family provided most of the food. The menu hardly changed, and this was one of the staple dishes. It may technically be a Passover food, but that didn’t stop him from serving it year-round to a room of happy eaters.

Like a lot of Passover foods, you may question the name. This has no macaroni, nor does it use kosher for Passover pasta. It unquestionably tastes like matzah. Matzah mac & cheese falls into the category of “matzah pizza” or “matzah lasagna,” i.e. things that get named after comfort foods you can’t have if you’re keeping kosher for Passover, and might taste a little different from the original. I have no problem using matzah as a substitute for crust or in place of sheets of pasta, especially if it tastes good. There’s a humility about it that feels true to the spirit of the holiday.

Whatever you choose to call it, this dish is cheesy, creamy, and filling. And as a comfort food, it should not be confused with health food. This is the get-me-through-the-last-days-of-this-holiday-all-I-want-is-pizza food. This is the kind of dish you throw together last minute when you want to spend less time in the kitchen; served with a big salad and you have a complete meal. Try making it after the seders — and after the leftover matzah ball soup and brisket are gone. This is the dish you taste and think about eating next Passover.

### Ingredients:

- 8 squares matzah, or as needed
- 2 cups milk
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground pepper, or to taste
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1½-2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1½-2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese



### Directions:

- Preheat the oven 350°F.
- Grease a 9” x 13” baking dish, ideally ceramic or pyrex.
- In a large shallow dish, whisk together the milk, eggs, salt, and pepper. Use a dish that is large enough to place whole squares of matzah into.
- Dip squares of matzah into the egg and milk mixture before placing them in an even layer on the bottom of the baking dish. Use about ¼ cup of sour cream and spread it evenly onto the bottom layer of matzah. Top the matzah with a heaping cup of shredded cheddar cheese, and a heaping cup of shredded mozzarella cheese.
- Repeat the process two more times with layers of dipped matzah squares, sour cream, and cheeses.
- Add one last layer of matzah for a total of 4 layers. Top the matzah with the remaining sour cream and a generous ½ cup of each kind of cheese. Pour the remaining egg and milk mixture over the layers of matzah and cheese. Cover with foil and bake for 35 minutes.
- Uncover the dish and bake for 5 minutes uncovered, until bubbly and cheesy. Almost all of the liquid should be absorbed into the matzah at this point. If you like your matzah mac & cheese browned on top, turn the oven to broil, and broil for 1-2 minutes (watch carefully, the top will brown fast).
- Let the dish rest for 5-10 minutes and then serve.



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# PJ Library has resources for families

The world has thrown families across the country a major curveball, but even as the majority of us are stuck at home, PJ Library is there to lend a helping hand.

The Jewish non-profit that sends free books to more than 200,000 across North America (and 700,000 across the globe) each month has been proactive in creating numerous creative and unique ways families can fill the hours at home -- from awesome activities to pandemic parenting and work-from-home wisdom.

Below, find some of the daily activities and hubs families can use to break up the boredom of sheltering at home:

PJ Library is offering a plethora of sounds and activity ideas on their "Resources for Quarantined Families", including Storytelling games to play with kids, printable games and much more.

Three times each weekday, PJ Library is hosting a live community storytime session featuring a "read aloud" by PJ Library staff, parent -- *and even the authors themselves!* Storytimes are at 11am, 1pm and 4pm ET, and storytime

### PJ Library Digital Resources

**Family Activities**  
[pjlibrary.org/familyactivities](http://pjlibrary.org/familyactivities)

**Storytimes and Craft-Alongs**  
every weekday at 11am, 1pm, and 4pm Eastern

**Virtual Field Trips**  
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Follow for virtual author visits, classes, sing alongs and more!

can be accessed via the PJ Library Facebook Page and their official Instagram account.

The PJ Library Facebook Page is also hosting a daily schedule of craft demonstrations and sing-a-longs, virtual field trips, and more for kids. Virtual field trips include a "trip" to London's Royal Opera House to check out some incredible live performances, a trip to Tel Aviv with the Sesame Street crew and even the PJ Library warehouse! There are even Zoom Video craft sessions for adults, too.

PJ Library's "Have I Got a Story for You!" podcast is publishing all-new episodes. The podcast, which brings classic Jewish folk tales from the page and gives them a modern, fun-filled audio twist, delivers some great new offerings, with a new episode published each Tuesday throughout the month at <https://pjlibrary.org/podcast>. Currently, families can tune in to "The Passover Story for Kids" and "Sweet Town Rivals" about the rivalry between fairies and trolls! Stories coming up include "Al Learns the Four Questions" (Available 3/31).

## Jewish students unite

Cont. from page 7

York University freshman Nina Robins said she thinks is unique.

"You don't necessarily see social media as a place to make more friends ... but I think people in this group are really down to meet new people and I think that's cool," Robins said.

Hoffman said it's nice to have people to talk to during all this isolation.

"Just having a little group that's smaller than that bigger group but still a good amount of people to talk with [is really nice]," Hoffman said.

As one would expect in a group of over 8,000 young Jews, there is plenty of matchmaking. Multiple matchmaking Google forms have emerged, promising to find applicants their true love/bashert through a blind Zoom date.

Aaron Raimi, a college student in San Diego, took the matchmaking to a new level by creating the spinoff group Zoom University MeetJew -- Find your #CoronaCutie,

which gained nearly 3,000 members in a matter of days.

"I was thinking, 'Why doesn't someone create a page that revolves around dating?' ... I thought it could be something fun, so I posted on the [Zoom University] Hillel page saying, 'So, am I gonna be the one who has to create this Jsweep/dating/shidduch Zoom University page?' I got a bunch of reactions," Raimi said. "I was like, 'You know what, everyone's quarantined, I have a lot of time on my hands, I'll just make this and see what happens.'"

While Zoom University Hillel is created and run by students, there are also online programs from Jewish college professionals. Hillel International recently launched Hillel@Home, a series of virtual events with speakers, and many college Hillels have created their own virtual programs.

Zoom University Hillel is not the only Jewish-focused Zoom meme group, either -- there's also the Zoom University Chabad and the Zoom Beit Midrash, among others.

In a time of fear and uncertainty, these Facebook groups are bringing students together and providing a

sense of community.

"This would have never happened if we weren't in this situation, which is why I'm really trying to see this as a positive," Ornstein-Luks said. "This group is truly iconic. I think it's so funny and so powerful."

Multiple students have posted in the group expressing their gratitude for the community.

Mason Brown, a University of Minnesota student, posted his appreciation, saying "It's amazing that during something as serious as a global pandemic, we're so willing to come together (albeit virtually). I hope everyone is doing well, and staying safe and healthy. I can't wait to meet more of you and make connections over the next hectic few weeks or so, but I hope this group continues even beyond that."

Freudenstein said the group has given her a sense of unity that she didn't expect.

"It's not just my Hillel that I'd be comfortable in, but no matter what campus I'd go to, Hillel would try to make me feel comfortable," she said. "That's a really nice feeling."

### It's a girl!

Kaia Lena Antflick, born March 2020 in Toronto, to Zachary and Talisa Antflick, the first grand-daughter to Jerry and Lissa Antflick. She was born 6lbs 14oz and we are thrilled that mom and baby are both happy and healthy.



## חג שמח

# HAPPY Passover



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Happy Passover  
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Susan & Bruce Mintz

**איחולים לחג האביב**  
from  
Faith & Stan Greenspan



Happy Passover  
from  
Jim Bowron  
& Maita Silber



Wishing the Jewish community  
a happy & healthy Passover  
from Stacey, Erin, Jordyn,  
Abby and Zoe Wright



Wishing everyone  
a happy, healthy Passover  
from Michele & Josh Miller



Best wishes to our friends and  
family for a happy Pesach  
from  
Joyce & Sam Galante

Best wishes to our friends  
and family for a happy Pesach  
from Karen Leibovici  
& Steve Zepp



Wishing the Jewish community  
a happy and healthy Passover  
from  
Sam & Eva Weisz



Happy Passover  
from  
Gillian & Billy Horwitz

**ברכות לחג האביב**  
from Jonathan, Zachary  
and Gabriella Tankel



Best wishes to my friends  
and family for a  
happy Pesach  
Louise Kagan and family



Best wishes to our friends and  
family for a happy Pesach  
from  
Ruth & Alan Swerling

Best wishes to my friends and  
family for a happy Pesach  
from  
Naomi Wolfman and family



Riva & Howard Shein  
& family  
**פסח שמח לכולם**

**פסח שמח**  
from Barb, Gabe, Megan and Daniella  
Mandel

Lauren, Keith, Ezra and Shira  
Tankel  
**איחולים לחג האביב**

Wishing the Jewish community  
a happy and healthy Passover  
from Nikki Hayden, Naomi,  
Jared and Stephanie





Best wishes to our friends and  
family for a happy Pesach  
from  
Beverly & Stephen Shafran

**ברכות לחג הפסח**  
from Esther & Howard and  
Marina & Daniel Starkman and family



Happy Passover  
from  
Dylan, Leah, Carter & Ayla  
Muscat



Wishing the Jewish community  
a happy & healthy Pesach  
from Lena, Victor, David  
& Josh Linetsky



Wishing the Jewish community  
a happy and healthy Pesach  
from Harvey & Minnie Emas  
and family



Wishing the Jewish community  
a happy and healthy Pesach  
from Joel & Christina Tsipora  
Reboh and family



Best wishes to our friends  
and family for a happy Pesach  
from Jodi, Michael and Rebecca  
Zabludowski



Happy Passover  
from  
Frank & Netta Phillet

**חג שמח**  
from  
Regan, Dmitri, Benji and Jacob Lipis



Happy Passover  
from  
Tulane Rollingher



Best wishes to our friends and  
family for a happy Pesach  
Errol & Renee Raff and family

**ברכות לחג הפסח**  
from Jane & Randy Soifer



Wishing everyone  
a happy, healthy Passover  
from  
Mona & Dan Rosenberg

Happy Pesach -  
Get ready for Mashiach  
from Chabad of Edmonton



Wishing the Jewish community a  
happy and healthy Passover  
from  
Mindy Jacobs & Eoin Kenny





Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Robin & David Marcus and family

Happy Passover from Paula & Eric Weil





Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Brandon & Rachelle Marmur

פסח כשר ושמח

from Daren, Ari and Noam Sniderman



Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Dr. Jerome Yager & Cintia Kezerle



Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Linda Goody



Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Ron & Naomi Wolch

ברכות לחג האביב

from Dr. Michael & Sylvia Alpern



Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Gabe and Sonia Goldberg and family

Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Jay, Dia and Zachary Silver



Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Carol & Ron Ritch

ברכות לחג הפסח

from Shulamit Gil and Keith Dannacker



Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Gail, Kevin, Justin, Alana Milner & Helen Markovich

Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Melany, Joel, Jake, Cas, Micah and Lev-Eitan Allen

Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Pesach from Anita Sky & Howard Davidow



Chag Sameach from Howie, Debbie & Liz Sniderman



Chag Sameach from Sue & Alvin Winestock



Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Gary, Marina, Matthew and Luba

Happy Passover from Robert, Krista, Aliya and Daniel Brick



פסח שמח

from Darlene & Gord Busbewsky and family

Happy Passover from Sharon Bookhalter & Jerry Glasser

Wishing the Jewish community a happy & healthy Passover from Leon, Zhanna, and Jason Uritsky & family

Best wishes to my friends and family for a happy Pesach from Luba Allen & family





Happy Passover from Shirlann & Lawrence Bliss and Bliss Baked Goods

חג שמח

from Murray & Reisa Sheckter and Shayna Segal

Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Dr. Bernie & Miriam Adler



Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Passover from Ken, Natalie, Marlee and Jenna Soroka





Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Pesach from Jeff & Shira Sheckter and family



Happy Passover from Murray, Marilyn and Seth Glick

Wishing the Jewish community a happy and healthy Pesach from Angela & Lonnie Zwaigenbaum and family



Wishing everyone a happy, healthy Passover from Jane & Hersh Sobel



Happy Passover from Arlein Hoffman Cbetner and family

חג שמח

from Bluma & Jack Goldberg

# Managing the impact of COVID-19 on our community

On Friday March 27, 2020, Edmonton Jewish Federation President Steve Shafir and CEO Debby Shocter sent this update to community members.

The Jewish Federation of Edmonton mobilization around the coronavirus has been a top priority, with much attention focused on the safety and wellbeing of our community as the key objective. While we are dealing with a dynamic and challenging situation as the coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to spread worldwide. We have created an information hub to provide resources and practical advice to help you stay informed.

Our goal is to facilitate a coordinated approach to maintaining a safe environment at Jewish institutions, ensuring the continued vibrancy of Jewish life in our community during this challenging time.

The Hub will be updated regularly over the coming days and weeks, so please check back often. You are also encouraged to reach out to Tal Toubiana, Federation's

Head of Security for more information or questions.

With the increasing gravity of the situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, we want to assure you that our team at the Jewish Federation of Edmonton is closely monitoring the situation and preparing as well as we can for any eventuality which will affect our community, staff and programming. The health and safety of all of our participants, especially of our elderly members, is paramount to us.

We are receiving and monitoring information from many sources, including our community partners JFNA, CIJA and JFC-UIA. Information and guidelines have been sent out to our Registered Organizations, our staff, and others. Our emergency plans are in place and are being constantly monitored and updated. We will attempt to keep the lines of communication open and will inform you of any and all changes to our programs and services.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all in-person events and

activities of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton have been cancelled until further notice. If you are unsure if an event is still taking place, please check our website, or contact the office. We are working closely with our community partners to help them also plan for the developing situation.

For more information on the current pandemic please see the Alberta Health website:

Alberta.ca, the Health Canada website: Canada.ca or the JFNA website:jewishfederations.org.

Federation staff are still working remotely. If there is something you feel they can help you with, please email them at: info@edjfed.org.

Thank you for your patience and support during this difficult time.

We wish health, safety and happiness for us all as we weather the coming days.





TBO, Or Shalom and PJ Library hosted a Purim Party at Telus World of Science on March 8. With help from Rabbi Caine the kids put on a play with Esther as a shining star who never lost hope.

# Contemplating Earth-Focused Judaism: Pesach and the quiet heart inside chaos



Rabbi Gila Caine

Purim is always a hectic time, but this year it really overdid it. And now here we are in a world with around half a million ill and some 24,000 people dead from COVID-19. The economy has slowed, schools are shut, and people are losing their jobs. Those who can are closed into their homes. I can go on, but you all read the news of chaos and suffering and fear roaming outside.

Over the past few weeks I've encountered many forms of fear. It takes shape as anger, confusion, impatience,

By Rabbi Gila Caine

sadness, or other emotions that arise when meeting the unknown. This of course makes total sense because a glimpse of what our world might look like to coming generations is not a comforting sight.

Just as our Purim of three weeks ago was a prelude to our Pesach, today's chaos could be a prelude to creation. A friend wrote just this week: "Peace is not a lack of fighting, but the quiet of the heart inside chaos." What does that mean? I'm looking to Pesach for an answer, specifically to the first one ever, known as Pesach Mitzrayim (the Pesach of Egypt). Its importance lies in that Bnei Yisrael chose to celebrate freedom while still living in a system of slavery. Huddling in their homes as Adonai called down vengeance on Egypt, they chose to leave the known – slavery – for the unknown freedom of the desert. I find the image of them in their homes at this moment very powerful, this image of closing in. Imagine what they might have focused on at that moment of Tzimzum (reduction, or, closing in) – perhaps on their loved ones, or the state of their body. Perhaps they were thinking about what they

needed most to have with them on the way out. Perhaps they worried about their donkeys and goats and other animal companions.

Now a huge portion of humanity is going through a long moment of "Pesach Mitzrayim." We are asked to stop and look at the chaos we've created outside with our greedy consumerism, our unethical economy, the way we zoom around non-stop with our cars and planes and boats carrying cargo and people from place to place. And the whole world is screaming to Adonai to put a stop to our slavery – our self-enslavement to stuff.

All of this is on hold as we go into our homes and ask ourselves, when we leave them, will it be back into a Mitzrayim of slavery, or into the unknown desert potential of sacred freedom?

Preparing for Pesach this year should be about this question: Where can we find quiet in the heart of chaos? Where can each of us find G-d and holiness (however you define and envision it) amid all this madness? What are each of you going to do so that the world we build after our current pandemic will focus on new life and true freedom?

Chag Sameach.

*Rabbi Gila Caine is the spiritual leader at Temple Beth Ora, Edmonton's Reform Congregation. The above column is part 3 of a series on Contemplating Earth-Focused Judaism.*

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Chag Sameach to the entire community. May you enjoy this Festival of Freedom, with its beautiful and meaningful traditions, in good health and the spirit of renewal!

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Happy Passover to the Jewish Community Chag Samaeh L'Kulam

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This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School



Purim seems like such a long time ago. Teachers, students, and parents navigated the first week of e-Talmud Torah after schools were closed March 15th. Keeping in touch using Youtube and Google Meets, one of the highlights was a live-streamed Shabbat including 40 students and parents with their host Moreh Ari Sniderman and his family.

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Wishing everyone a Happy, Healthy Passover. Now more than ever, may we remain socially and spiritually connected!



See us at [edmontonbethshalom.org](http://edmontonbethshalom.org)  
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Edmonton Jewish Cemetery

The Next 100 Years

Site work for the new Edmonton Jewish Cemetery will begin this Summer.

The current Jewish Cemetery has served the needs of the Community for more than 100 years, but will soon run out of room for new burials. Fortunately, the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha has been preparing for this time. Land for the new Cemetery was purchased almost 20 years ago. Plans have been developed, and two-thirds of the anticipated cost is already in place.

An additional one-million dollars needs to be raised.

This is your opportunity to participate in the next historic chapter; laying the foundation for the next 100 years of the Edmonton Jewish Cemetery.

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Having spoken with Israel's Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon and Israel's Accountant General Rony Hizkiyahu, both expressed confidence that Israel's economy is strong and well-positioned to face whatever challenges might emerge as a consequence of coronavirus.

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Prioritizing the best interests of our international investor base and the wellbeing of our staff, we have updated our corporate business continuity plan to take into account new realities stemming from the coronavirus pandemic.

Moreover, in keeping with Federal and Provincial directives, we are operating with heightened awareness, including the temporary closure of our offices. The staff of any impacted offices are working remotely. You can find updates and

assistance at **israelbonds.ca** or through client support at **1.866.543.3351**, or at **OnlineCustomerSupport@israelbonds.ca**

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You should also be aware we have discussed the situation with executives at Computershare, the fiscal agent, to ensure they also have contingency plans encompassing the needs of Israel bond investors.

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We wish you, your family & loved ones, the entire community and the people of Israel a safe, healthy, happy and meaningful Pesach.

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