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High Holidays in the Time of COVID-19: A Kehila Saga

By Kehilat Shalom Calgary

Throughout recent months, Kehilat Shalom Calgary's Board members, lay leaders, and rabbi have dedicated themselves to one overarching goal: conducting in-person High Holiday services.

"The High Holidays are an exceptional time for Jewish people to reconnect with their community," explains Rabbi Leonard Cohen. "For so many, the religious highlight of the year is hearing the Shofar, or praying Yizkor for loved ones, or even reaching the end of the Yom Kippur fast at Ne'ilah. So we wanted to make that happen." He says that the Kehila's goal was to make High Holiday services both safe and inspiring.

The congregation has implemented significant changes. Prayer services have been relocated to a large gymnasium to permit social distancing, with open doors for freer air circulation. Congregational singing and dialogue are subdued by the facemasks worn by all. Services are shortened, and communal eating and drinking are suspended, to ensure collective protection. Safety remains paramount.

In spite of these changes, Kehila services remain lively and warm. "We've been doing Shabbat together in person for the past six weeks," says congregational president Sam Fishman, "and things have been going so well. Those coming to our High Holidays will see they're in a safe surrounding." Facemasks, water bottles, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes are readily available for anyone who needs them.

The Quarantined Cantor

Part of what makes High Holidays services exceptional is the liturgical music, as the chanting of such prayers as *Kol Nidre* and *Avinu Malkeinu* is meant to stir hearts and awaken souls. Since the passing of cantor

Rebecca Levant z"l in 2019, Kehilat Shalom has hosted guest cantors for the High Holidays. This year, Kehilat Shalom is bringing in Cantor Emeritus Cory Winter of California (see *Alberta Jewish News*, August 10, 2020).

Bruno Kahane, past president of Kehilat Shalom, says, "The amazing voice that this Cantor has – it's a must-see. Plus he's got such deep knowledge of everything Jewish." Kahane collaborated with lawyer David Wolfman to ensure compliance with all laws, safety considerations and documentation to make it possible to bring the cantor in from the USA.

Cantor Winter has had to commit himself to a fourteen-day quarantine upon arrival to Canada, prior to High Holidays. The congregation has been delivering food and groceries to his door, and renting him the musical equipment he needs in preparation for this year's services. Cantor Winter is also a composer and will be creating new works during his quarantine period.

Countering the Isolation

High Holiday services bring together more members of the Jewish community than any other annual event. The observance of the Jewish New Year provides a welcome opportunity for many to reconnect with friends and acquaintances.



Photo by Elias Punch)

Leslie Levant adds that the need for social reconnection is exceptionally important this year: "Because of COVID, many people feel, and are, isolated. It is a wonderful thing to be together in prayer and have the opportunity to see our fellow congregants and visitors at shul and have some social connection with them. It is a comfort to sing traditional songs, hear a well prepared sermon and be together. I look forward to greeting everyone at the upcoming High Holidays."

The Rabbi and Board of Kehilat Shalom Calgary look forward to seeing you at High Holiday services and sharing this highlight of the religious calendar with you and your loved ones. For more information, email info@ksccalgary.org or visit www.ksccalgary.org.

Israel normalizes ties with United Arab Emirates

(JTA) — In a diplomatic breakthrough, Israel and the United Arab Emirates are normalizing ties.

As part of a peace deal brokered by President Donald Trump, Israel will pause its plans to annex areas of the West Bank, according to a joint statement released Thursday by the White House.

"Israel will suspend declaring sovereignty over areas outlined in the President's Vision for Peace and focus its efforts now on expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world. The United States, Israel and the United Arab Emirates are confident that

Continued on page 8

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Our cover artist: Nina Bonos

The beautiful image on this month’s cover of Alberta Jewish News is by Nina Bonos, an award-winning, Judaica artist who creates vivid watercolor paintings of joyous natural landscape elements.

With a rich palette of jewel tone colors, Nina’s bold compositions explore traditional and modern Jewish themes and symbols. *Pomegranate Trio* is a detail from a Torah mantle illustration Nina created for her Santa Rosa, CA synagogue. This image was also adapted for a torah mantle designed for Congregation Beth Israel in Vancouver, BC.

“My hands, heart and soul capture my artistic vision,” explains Nina. “My Judaica paintings express my life journey and family history as developed through decades of meditation and prayer. Creating art both calms and spiritually energizes me. Mixing colors and creating bold compositions enables me to feel the Divine presence while cultivating gratitude and vision. My paintings tell stories documenting the passage of time, and provide the setting

and destinations for my memories, everyday experiences and dreams.”

Nina’s Joyous Judaica images adorn and add distinction to synagogues and other Jewish gathering places; professional office spaces and residences across the US and Canada. Her fine art originals are adapted as fine art prints and note cards; logos, donor appreciation and life cycle gifts; Torah mantles, synagogue banners, large-scale wall art, etched glass; and home accessories. Nina’s Joyous Judaica collection is available at select Judaica shops and galleries, and on her website at www.ninabonos.com

Art and Scroll Studio, a zoominar series dedicated to promoting and interviewing artists, creators and makers of Judaica will be featuring a conversation with Nina Bonos about what informs and inspires her work on October 7, 2020 at 7:00 pm.



Contact artandscrollstudio@gmail.com to register.

Calgary Beth Tzedec welcomes Youth Engagement Director

By Maxine Fischbein

Calgary Beth Tzedec congregants can look forward to some exciting developments on the youth front with the recent hiring of Jonah Potasznik as the Synagogue’s part-time Youth Engagement Director and Ritual Assistant.

“It is all about building relationships,” says Potasznik, who is excited about the prospect of linking Synagogue youth with each other and with the congregation of Calgary’s largest shul through immersive Jewish experiences.

“Bringing Jewish text and wisdom alive in the lives of young people brings me great joy. I enjoy bringing everyone into that process,” Potasznik said.

Potasznik is equally devoted to creating comfortable prayer experiences for youth – and for congregants in general – through a combination of activities that combine traditional modes of prayer with new techniques that help individuals to slow down, using their bodies and minds in

new ways to move themselves into a more spiritual prayer space.

The ultimate goal, says Potasznik, is for participants to take their experiences with them into their lives, rather than leaving them behind in the Synagogue.

Originally from the Washington, DC area, Potasznik most recently served as Judaics teacher to students in the 5th and 6th Grades at the Hebrew Foundation School in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, QC.

While earning his Master’s Degree in Jewish Education at the Hebrew College Shoolman Graduate School of Education in Newton, MA, Potasznik studied for three years in the Beit Hamidrash at the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem.

“A big part of the Pardes experience is the assumption that our ancient texts have something to say to people living in modern times,” says Potasznik who adds that while it might seem counterintuitive, this received wisdom “has a lot to say about how to live well in 2020.”


Potasznik is clearly excited by the dynamic process of engaging with multiple interpretations of Jewish texts and seeing what else he and the youth he leads can come up with.

“I’m very excited to meet the congregation and get started,” Potasznik said.

As the High Holidays approach, Potasznik’s top priority is planning engaging, family-friendly youth services that will be held each afternoon during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Families who preregister to attend services onsite will be able to meet Potasznik in person; those who choose to stay home can enjoy a virtual, live-streamed encounter with both Potasznik and Cantor Russell Jayne, who will co-lead the youth services.


Jonah Potasznik comes to Beth Tzedec with outstanding experience in formal and informal Jewish education having served as Regional Director of BBYO in the Greater Washington, DC area and as Judaic Educator for BBYO Summer Programs in Bethany, West Virginia. He also has all-important experience in the most immersive of all Jewish youth experiences – summer camp – having served as Director of Jewish Life and Learning at Surprise Lake Camp in Cold Spring, NY.

Continued on page 6



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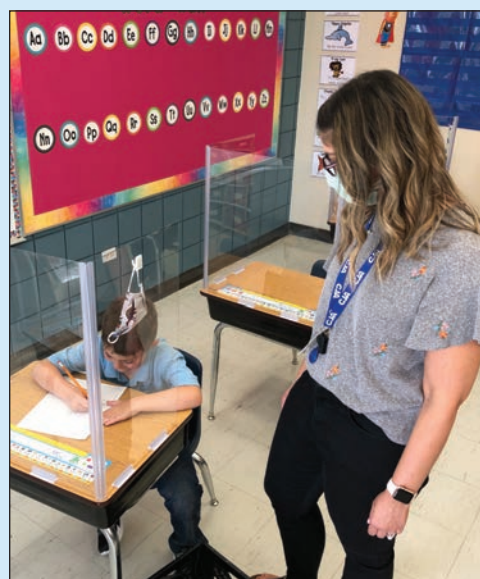
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High Holidays 2020: What will Jewish seniors be doing?

By Irena Karshenbaum

With the global death toll from COVID-19 rising exponentially, as tracked by the Johns Hopkins University of Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center, the only thing certain about this virus is its unpredictability. Canadian actor, Nick Cordero, being only 41, succumbed to the disease while American Gerry Schappals survived not only COVID-19, but also breast and colon cancer and the 1918 Spanish Influenza.

In Alberta, we have been relatively lucky having a fairly low cases-to-mortality rate of 1.78%. However, in watching the daily case numbers, most who have succumbed to the virus have been seniors. The demographic has also been affected by the virus in countless other ways.

Jann Beeston, Executive Director of Jewish Family Service Edmonton, reports that her agency is seeing, “Increased isolation, stress and anxiety, and also increased food insecurity, and this definitely applies to seniors.” Beeston continues explaining that JFSE has increased their connections, “by calling our seniors and we will be sending food packages for the High Holidays.”

Minnie Segal, 84, a widow living in Calgary, echoes Beeston’s observation, “Covid has been very uncomfortable for all of us. It’s very, very hard on seniors who are living on their own. I also have a dog and it helps a lot. This is

something we have never experienced in our lives and we have lived a long time and we are feeling very isolated. In my opinion, there is nothing the community could have done differently.”

Segal who is active in Voices Jewish Seniors’ Choir, that is currently meeting on Zoom, explains she has been doing well and has stayed socially connected by meeting in the park and talking on the phone daily with her friends. She is definitely attending High Holiday services this year but is currently uncertain whether it will be online or physically at Beth Tzedec Synagogue. She continues, “There will mostly likely be no large dinner gatherings this year and individual families will go with their own families.”

One senior, in their 90s, who did not want to be named because they felt it was such a sensitive topic in terms of where they would be going for the High Holidays, explained their social activities have been severely curtailed during the pandemic.

Calgarian Harold Lipton, 66, shares a similar story of diminished connections, “Rosh Hashanah is a time when we all get together. Normally, we have a large family dinner, but this year it will be downscaled to my wife and son and his family.” He explains that his children and their families, who live in Toronto and Vancouver, will not be visiting. “Because of Covid, we’ve stopped having my

mother-in-law over for Shabbat dinner. We’ve seen her but have not sat around the dinner table together. Like Passover when there really wasn’t a Seder, this year people will be doing their own thing separately.”

Lipton says he has attended shul very little in the last six months, “I am conflicted, and I am not going. I don’t think they have enough washroom facilities; their hallways are small and I’m not comfortable to attend services for a long time wearing a mask. I think they are doing a lot to mitigate the risk and I give them credit to be attentive to that, but I just don’t think the synagogue is physically set up for a large gathering. I’m health compromised so I have to be extra careful. I’ll be praying at home with my wife.”

Lipton concludes, “Covid has changed Jewish life. It’s changed communal life. It’s changed religious life. Changed family life. I do believe people really miss each other. Some people are more risk tolerant and they go out but there is an elder part of the community that has to be more careful. I do look forward to the day when we can resume normalcy in that part of our lives, but we are not there yet.

Barry Finkelman, who lives in Medicine Hat and will be turning 70 at the end of September, has been driving to

Continued on page 22

Calgary Beth Tzedec

Cont. from page 3

In addition to his part-time role at Beth Tzedec, Potasznik will be working right next door at The Calgary Jewish Academy where he will be teaching *tefillah* (prayer) to Grade 4 students and *chagim* (Jewish holidays) to students in a variety of grades. Potasznik has some innovative ideas he can’t wait to share with students including a technology and Torah mashup that will combine text study with robotics and programming to enliven his students’ journey through the early stories of the Torah in *Bereishit* (Genesis).

The community can thank Jonah Potasznik’s wife, Dr. Angy Cohen, for the talented couple’s move to Calgary. Cohen, who is originally from Madrid, moved to Israel in 2013 and made Aliyah the following year. She has recently taken up the position of Post Doctoral Associate in Israeli Studies in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Calgary.

During 2019-2020, Cohen was the Post-Doctoral Fellow

at Concordia University’s Azrieli Institute of Israeli Studies in Montreal. Her field of expertise is the Mizrahi experience in Israel and this year she will be working on issues of *Mizrachi* feminism.

Angy Cohen looks forward to sharing her knowledge and expertise with Beth Tzedec congregants and in the community at large, Potasznik says.

“Judaism is baked into the day-to-day. For us it’s not just about the programming, but about the relationships that evolve from being a real part of the community,” said Potasznik.

“We are thrilled to make good on a promise to our congregation by welcoming Jonah,” said Beth Tzedec President David Inhaber who has moved youth and young families to the top of the priority list at Calgary’s only Conservative Synagogue.

Potasznik will also act in the capacity of Ritual Assistant, supporting the work of Cantor Russell Jayne, the Spiritual Leader at Beth Tzedec, who is currently studying toward *Smicha* (Rabbinical ordination).

“I’m very excited to welcome Jonah,” said Cantor Jayne. “It will be wonderful to work with someone who has such a strong love for education and youth and to have Jonah and Angy become a part of the congregational family.”

“Jonah will help the synagogue to develop a strong youth program beginning with the High Holidays youth services and then helping to enrich our B’nai Mitzvah and Shul School Programs. The goal is to find exciting new



Beth Tzedec Youth Engagement Director and Ritual Assistant Jonah Potasznik

ways to get our youth involved in every aspect of Shul life,” Cantor Jayne said.

While Cantor Jayne added that this process will not happen overnight, he is confident that Potasznik’s strong background in education and youth programming will pave the way to putting youth and young families front and centre at Beth Tzedec.

For more information about the High Holidays and youth programming at Beth Tzedec, please contact Jonah Potasznik at jpotasznik@bethtzedec.ca or 403-255-8688, Ext. 6.

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Israeli scholar explores the Mizrachi experience at U of C

By Maxine Fischbein

For a relatively small Jewish community, Jewish Calgary punches above its weight when it comes to supporting cultural and educational initiatives that enrich the community as a whole. And support of Israel studies initiatives at the University of Calgary is once again in the spotlight due to a generous and visionary endowment by Jenny Belzberg and her late husband Hy Belzberg z”l that has led to the recent appointment of Dr. Angy Cohen as the inaugural Post Doctoral Associate in the Dr. Jenny and Hy Belzberg Israeli Scholar Program at the U of C Faculty of Arts.

An academically accomplished scholar, Cohen is already impressing colleagues and community members with her enthusiasm for sharing her expertise in the Mizrachi experience, thus providing fresh perspectives on important aspects of Israel’s story that do not always receive as much attention as they should.

Born and raised in Madrid, Spain, Cohen made Aliyah in 2014, having moved to Israel the previous year. Armed with a BA in psychology and an MA in philosophy, she earned a joint PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Universidad Autónoma of Madrid in 2017.

Cohen’s PhD dissertation emanated from her research into the life stories of Moroccan Jews born and raised in the former Spanish protectorate in Northern Morocco. Her comparative study of Moroccan Jews who immigrated to Israel and those who immigrated to Argentina sheds light upon the divergent ways in which their immigration experiences impacted their memories and their identities.

“This is something that was very close to my heart,” Cohen told *Alberta Jewish News*.

On her paternal side, Cohen’s family came from Tetouan, the Capital of the Spanish protectorate. Her forebears spoke Spanish for many generations, having originated in the Iberian Peninsula.

“When they arrived in the North of Morocco, which is at the gates of Spain, so to say, they spoke Ladino and then, by the 19th century, since there was already a lot of contact with Spaniards, everybody was speaking Spanish. So, in this sense, it’s a very interesting experience of colonization, because they shared a language with the colonizers and the colonizers represented this place that they originated in.”

Because of this, it was a colonization like no other.

“There is a lot of shared history between Spain and Morocco, not always peaceful, but it is shared nonetheless. Especially, if you go to the South of Spain, the similarities are even stronger and more clear, also for obvious reasons. They’re closer.”

Cohen’s paternal grandparents emigrated from Morocco to Argentina where her father was raised, though he later immigrated to Spain.

“The experience of the Spanish Moroccan Jews is a fascinating story of colonization and it is also a fascinating Jewish story in general. The importance of Moroccan Jews cannot be overstated,” Cohen adds.

Cohen will spend part of her time at the U of C writing the book that flows from her dissertation.

“What I wanted to study was how people were impacted by their experience of immigration, particularly in Israel. I took the Argentinean case as a comparative case,” said Cohen who adds that the aliyah of Moroccan Jews – and Mizrachi Jews in general – to Israel was extremely difficult given systemic discriminatory policies that continue to this day.

It is ironic that Moroccan Jews who immigrated to Argentina had a much more salutary experience which led to a marked difference in how they perceive themselves and their past.

Having become very familiar with the Mizrachi experience in Israel, Cohen turned her attention to the transmission of family narratives among Mizrachi families, specifically from first generation immigrants to second generation immigrants.

“The whole topic of family narratives has always really interested me,” says Cohen. “What is the message that we receive from our parents and from our grandparents? What is the story that we feel connected to?”

While working on that subset of the Mizrachi story, Cohen became a member of Arevot, a Beit Midrash (house of study) open to women of all backgrounds that focuses specifically on the experience of Mizrachi women. That up close and personal experience led her to a new academic horizon.

“I decided to change my project and to start working on an ethnographic work about my Beit Midrash because it had a lot of peculiarities that I felt were extremely relevant for people to know In this Beit Midrash we only learned Sephardic sources including sources written by Sephardic female Torah scholars and also, in general, Sephardic female intellectuals,” says Cohen.

“Our learning in Arevot is part of our recovery of a tradition that was erased in Israel and is also part of our process of reclaiming social justice in a better Israeli society.”

According to Cohen, learning from Sephardic sources and Sephardic Rabbinic sources provides the women of Arevot with a Halachic and Jewish approach to the problems of the Jewish state.

“While we try to look for a language to tell the experience of Mizrachi women, which is a very, very different experience from that of Mizrachi men, we are in the midst of a process of trying to figure out our place in ritual, our place in society in general.”

While in Israel, Cohen interviewed most of the women in Arevot and she is currently writing the results of this



U of C Belzberg Scholar Dr. Angy Cohen

ethnography as an example of Mizrachi feminism.

That microcosm has implications for Jewish women everywhere, Cohen says.

“Last year we were in Montreal and I organized a small learning group for women. The Sephardic women that joined were fascinated with it because they had, for the first time, a Sephardic base to discuss issues that bothered them as Jewish women in the 21st century.”

Key to the Arevot experience is the opportunity for participants to deal with current issues by taking a deep dive into the wisdom of their own traditions, including responsa from Moroccan and North African Rabbis on topics that still resonate today, such as the right of women to learn Torah, rules pertaining to tzniyut (modesty) and the place of women in ritual and liturgy and Judaism as a whole.

“This a very relevant field of thought in which we try to discuss and agree about how to live, how to set boundaries, how to be respectful of each other, how to exercise solidarity, how to be there for others. This is important because most things are decided for us, in our name, without us.”

“When you are exposed to this tremendous wealth of resources, it changes something in you. You don’t want to go back. You just want to learn more and more,” says Cohen, who began a small branch of Arevot in Montreal while she was doing post doctoral work in the Azrieli Institute of Israeli Studies at Concordia University.

Continued on page 15

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This year, shul seems so far away

By Rabbi Binyomin Halpern



Rabbi Binyomin Halpern

Life is full of challenges. Sometimes challenges come in unexpected ways and at unexpected times, but they are always there. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, in his classic work Mesilat Yesharim, (Path of the Just), famously compares a person going through life, to a warrior in the midst of a battle.

In his words: *Venimtza shehu musam be’emet betoch hamilchama hachazaka* “We find that a person is truly placed inside of the fierce battle.”

When we think about this idea further, we realize that there are actually different *types* of battles.

There are battles of pain and emotion, where we are challenged to keep our head up, our spirits high, and just keep going. These challenges can be excruciatingly difficult, but they have one advantage; the knowledge of what success might look like and the path towards it. If I can get to the point where I accept my situation for what it is, with the knowledge that Hashem runs the world, He knows what He is doing, and He knows and wants the best for me, that is success. (Of course, even if we feel these

emotions only partially, there is partial credit as well!) But there are other challenges as well. The challenges where it is not even clear *what* to do, or which direction to turn. This is the challenge that many of us find ourselves in currently. A number of months ago, towards the beginning of the pandemic, it was the painful type of challenge. Many things were out of our control, and we had to roll with the punches and accept our situation with love. We had hoped that by this time it would all be past us. However, this is not the case, nor does it seem to be going away anytime soon. As an experiment, I typed in the words “should I still be...” into my search engine. Sure enough, the suggestions that popped up to finish the sentence were ‘worried about covid,’ ‘staying home,’ and ‘washing my groceries.’

The challenge for us then is to no longer merely accept our situation, but rather to figure out *how* we must move forward. How to maintain our health, while meeting all of our other physical and spiritual needs and responsibilities. Do we venture outside? Do we go to indoor spaces? Which ones? How important is it *really*? Every day, and perhaps every hour, many of us wrestle with the balance of how much can and should we be doing of the things that used to be part of our lifestyle.

In our Jewish lives, this is a critical question. OF COURSE, AND WITHOUT QUESTION, protection of our lives is of critical importance from the angle of halacha, (Jewish law), and from every other angle as well. Simultaneously, sadly, we know all too well that our time away from shul, school and other Jewish togetherness has taken its toll. Hopefully, we can still see and feel that loss, but tragically, there will be many ways in which we will never know just what we have lost out on. So the struggle continues. But like every battle, it is not necessarily the brute force

that shapes the victory, but the creativity of the strategy. It is striking that the week before Rosh Hashana we read Parshat Nitzavim which discusses an eerily relevant struggle. Sometimes we feel that as much as we want to have access to Torah and to more Judaism, it is just too far away from us and out of our reach. “No!” says Moshe Rabbeinu, (our teacher Moses) “that is in fact a false perspective.” “For this commandment, that I command you today is NOT hidden from you and it is NOT distant!” (Deut. 30:11) “Torah is *not* in the heavens.” (Verse 12) Okay, fine. We get the message. So where should we be looking if not far away?

כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו

“For the matter is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it.” (Verse 14) True, there are some mitzvot that require going and being somewhere specific. But there are so many others that don’t. The mouth is a reference specifically to Torah learning which can be done with a book, on the phone, or by Zoom. The heart and the emotions, the *essence* of all mitzvot, particularly prayer and repentance, which can be easily done in the safety of our living room. Tzedaka (charity), chesed (kindness), and even *bikur cholim*, can still be done by all of us living inside of our box, if we are willing to be creative and think outside of it. For some, shul will be far away this year; but there is so much that is within reach. Malka and I wish everyone a Kesiva Vachasima Tova, a year of health and blessings, and may we all be able to celebrate together very soon.


Israel normalizes ties

Cont. from page 2

added diplomatic breakthroughs with other nations are possible, and will work together to achieve this goal,” the statement read. The statement, which referred to the two countries as “two of America’s most reliable and capable regional partners,” said that Israel and the UAE will sign agreements in the coming weeks related to investment,

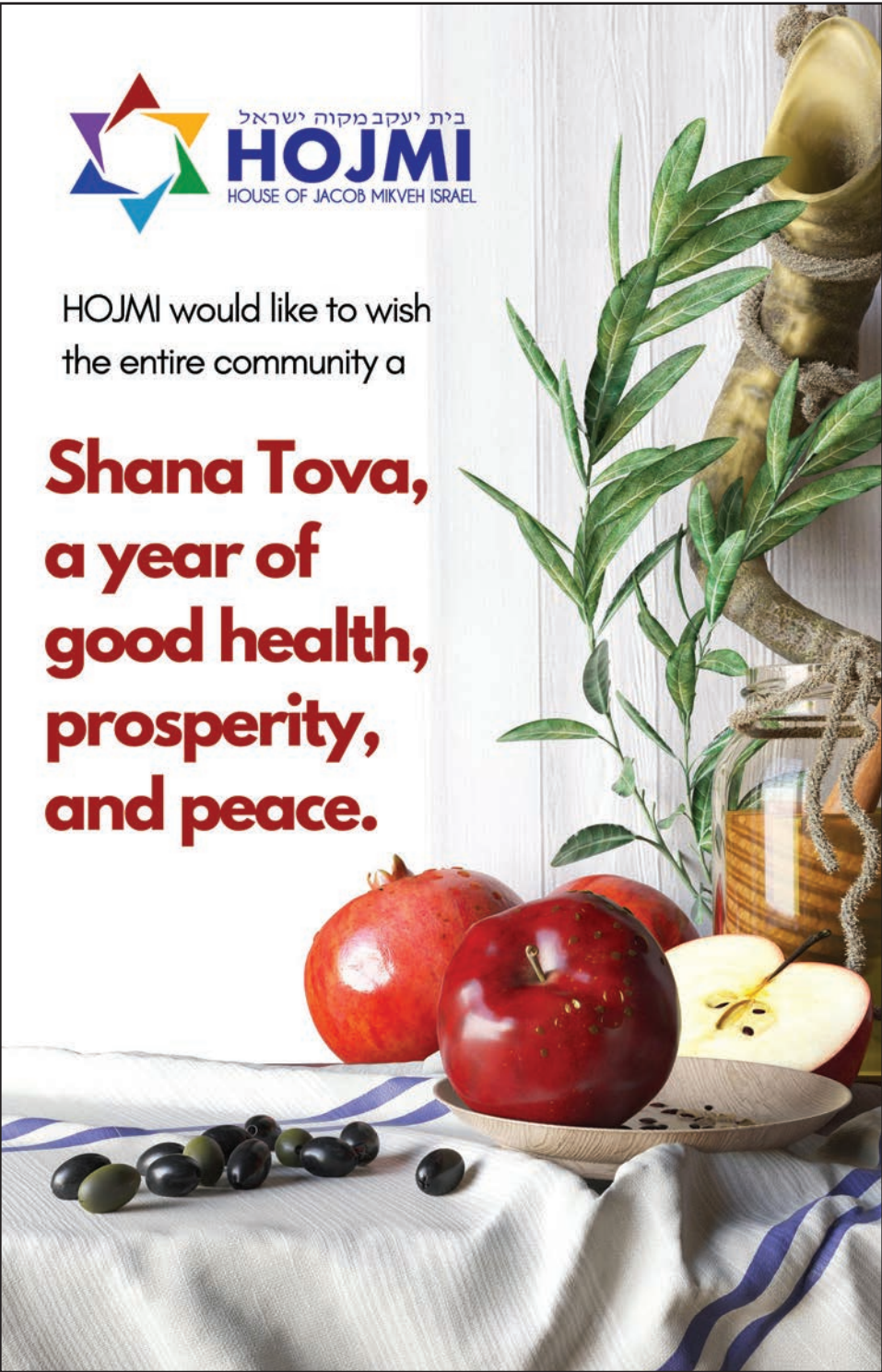
tourism, air travel, security, opening embassies and more. The two nations also will work together on developing a vaccine for the coronavirus, it said. The Gulf states have been growing closer with Israel in recent years, but the UAE is the first to establish formal ties with the Jewish state. The countries share a goal of countering Iranian influence in the Middle East. Most Arab countries do not recognize Israel’s existence. The Jewish state currently has ties only with Egypt and Jordan. “The UAE is employing its decision for normal relations

with Israel,” the UAE’s foreign minister said in a statement, according to the Times of Israel. Speaking to media, Trump suggested that agreements between Israel and some of its other Muslim neighbors in the region could come soon, the Times of Israel reported. “Things are happening that I can’t talk about,” he said. After promising the move during multiple election campaigns last year, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been pushing to annex parts of West Bank around July 1. The plans were delayed after the Trump administration voiced concern with the idea.



HOJMI would like to wish the entire community a

Shana Tova, a year of good health, prosperity, and peace.





Shana Tova

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Celebrating Rosh Hashanah while socially distancing

By Rebecca Firkser

(The Noshers via JTA) - Summer is turning to fall, and with it, Rosh Hashanah approaches, marking the start of a new year and a moment of great reflection. As is the case with every holiday since the start of the pandemic, celebrations will look a bit different. With social distancing in place and indoor gatherings limited, services are more likely to be performed online and there will be fewer, if any, big meals where friends and family can break bread at the same table.

There's no way around it: The start of this new year is daunting — scary, even. Hard as it might be to find silver linings these days, there are still so many ways to creatively observe Rosh Hashanah in the time of COVID-19, even if you'll be celebrating alone.



I know for many people, celebrating Rosh Hashanah means one thing: a big meal. Your typical Rosh Hashanah prep might involve hitting six different stores in a day to find every specific ingredient for your 15-person dinner. Well, this year, you officially have permission to take a break. No brisket at the butcher? Who cares! Opt for a smaller chuck roast or treat yourself to a few bone-in short ribs. Heck, if you dread spending any more time in the kitchen than absolutely necessary, just grab a rotisserie chicken and head to the wine shop. No one is going to judge you.

Maybe you've never made challah from scratch but always wanted to? If you're spending a bit more time at home these days, why not dust off your grandma's recipe? (Or, if you're me, and your grandma didn't bake so much as open cookie tins and ice cream containers, adopt a new recipe as your own — the basic challah recipe in *Noshers* editor Shannon Sarna's book *Modern Jewish Baker* is a great place to start.) You'll probably want to make two loaves: I'm speaking from experience when I say that "accidentally" polishing off half a loaf of warm challah while standing in the kitchen waiting for chicken to finish roasting is one of life's greatest pleasures. That way, you'll still have a full loaf of bread for the pre-meal blessing.

While I've never been mad about spending the rest of the week reheating leftovers from a great meal, you might want to scale back a bit if you're feeding fewer than three people. Instead of roasting a whole chicken and preparing separate side dishes, opt for a one-pan dinner of broken down, bone-in chicken parts with vegetables — everything cooks on the same tray (and you can use the bones for stock tomorrow, if you're so inclined). For dessert, make a smaller cake and eat it right off the cooling rack. No one else is around, who's going to care if you use your fingers instead of forks? And bonus, whoever does the dishes in your household will be elated to find a manageable pile at the end of the night.

Hard as it is for food-lovers like me to admit, Rosh Hashanah isn't about the meal. Check in with your synagogue to see if they plan to host any special online services — even through a screen, seeing familiar faces from your congregation might be the biggest comfort during the holidays. Reach out to extended family or a group of friends to see if anyone wants to participate in a big virtual meal as well. It's challenging, no doubt, but the more we embrace being apart, yet together in new ways, the less we'll feel stuck in this new reality.

This is also the perfect year to start a new tradition: Though I didn't grow up observing the practice, this year I'm hoping to partake in *tashlich*, the ceremony in which sins are metaphorically cast off in front of a body of water. With masks and social distance observed, this is the kind of outdoor activity that's relatively safe right now. Though we can't have a meal together inside, meeting a few loved ones to join together for such a ritual will remind us that we're not alone, and even in these dark times there's still plenty for which to be thankful.

PJ Library's Family Guide to Rosh Hashanah at home

Each fall, Jews around the world celebrate the High Holidays: Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). It's a time when one can take a deep breath and think about the ways to make ourselves and the world a better place. Traditionally, many families celebrate the holidays at synagogue and with relatives and friends. This year, to stay safe, many are staying home, so PJ Library has created a free, everything-you-need family guide to help celebrate what may be many family's first High Holidays spent entirely at home.

The beautifully-illustrated *High Holidays at Home: A PJ Library Family Guide* features new and familiar rituals, hands-on activities such as shofar making and challah baking, conversation starters, "unpacking" of selected prayers (with tips on talking with children about G-d), and family-friendly explanations -- all aimed at making the ten days the High Holidays are celebrated meaningful, memorable and fun for families, this year and in the future.

Beginning August 28th, the PJ Library Family Guide will be available for free download at pjlibrary.org/highholidays. It is also accompanied by an interactive online companion that offers helpful how-to videos, music, and audio versions of blessing and prayers.

A free program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, PJ Library sends engaging storybooks that provide fun and easy ways for families to connect with Jewish life. PJ Library's high-quality books have become everyday favorites of kids from birth through age 12, whether the stories serve as first introductions to Jewish values and culture or inspire families to create new Jewish traditions at home. To find out more, visit pjlibrary.org.

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A photograph of a festive Rosh Hashanah food display on a white wooden surface. It includes a large, open pomegranate showing its red seeds, several red apples with green leaves, a loaf of golden-brown challah with sesame seeds, and a small red bowl filled with honey. A wooden honey dipper is also visible.

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Calgary Jewish Film Festival takes 20th season online

By Maxine Fischbein

It's the time of year when the Calgary Jewish community starts thinking about its favourite Yontiff – that is, of course, the Jewish Film Festival – which will take place this coming November.

This year, the Beth Tzedec Congregation Jewish Film Festival will mark its 20th Anniversary with a difference. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the imperative to maintain physical distancing, film lovers will have to stock up on their favourite cinema snacks, make sure their internet connections are nice and fast and gear up for the film festival's first-ever virtual season.

It will be well worth the effort. As always, Jewish Film Festival Founder and Director Harvey Cyngiser promises outstanding feature films and documentaries.

A diverse Film Festival committee consisting of 23 volunteers spent the spring and summer months previewing films the same way the audience will be seeing them – from the comfort of their own homes – and then meeting via Zoom to select the best of the best.

“We are excited to once again bring some remarkable films to the community,” says Cyngiser. “A surprising number of them relate in a big way to recent and currently breaking news that affects us on so many levels.”

One such film is *SHARED LEGACIES: The African-American Jewish Civil Rights Alliance*, a documentary that looks back on the alliances and friendships forged between black and Jewish Americans during the heyday of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Given the racial reckoning currently taking place in cities throughout North America and around the world in the wake of the George Floyd murder, *Shared Legacies* is a timely Film Festival offering.

“The words and, more importantly, the actions of Rabbis who marched shoulder to shoulder with black leaders and the many members of the Jewish community who joined freedom riders and helped to register black voters in the South remains a source of inspiration today and a reminder that what unites us can be so much stronger than what divides us,” Cyngiser said.

The wide appeal of Calgary's Jewish Film Festival – which grew out of an Adult Education program at Beth Tzedec – can be attributed in large part to the Film Festival committee's commitment to provide multiple and memorable cinematic slices of Jewish life from around the globe. The upcoming season is no different with films set in the United States, Israel, Italy and Ukraine.

Many of this year's films celebrate the accomplishments of remarkable women including two outstanding documentaries, *Golda* and *Mrs. G*.

If you think you already know the story of Israel's first and only female Prime Minister, you will find some surprises in *Golda*, by Israeli filmmakers Sagi

Bornstein and Udi Nir. The captivating documentary features never before seen footage of a frank exchange between Golda Meir and journalists who kept the cameras rolling during an impromptu conversation following an interview on Israeli TV. This previously off-the-record window into Golda's thoughts, combined with rare archival footage and recollections of some of Golda Meir's friends and foes, makes for a fuller and more nuanced portrait of the controversial Golda than audiences have previously seen.

Another woman of extraordinary talent and influence is explored in *Mrs. G.*, a highly-stylized and quirky documentary that tells the story of Hungarian-born seamstress and designer Lea Gottlieb who put Israel on the world fashion map as the founder of the Gottex swimwear empire.

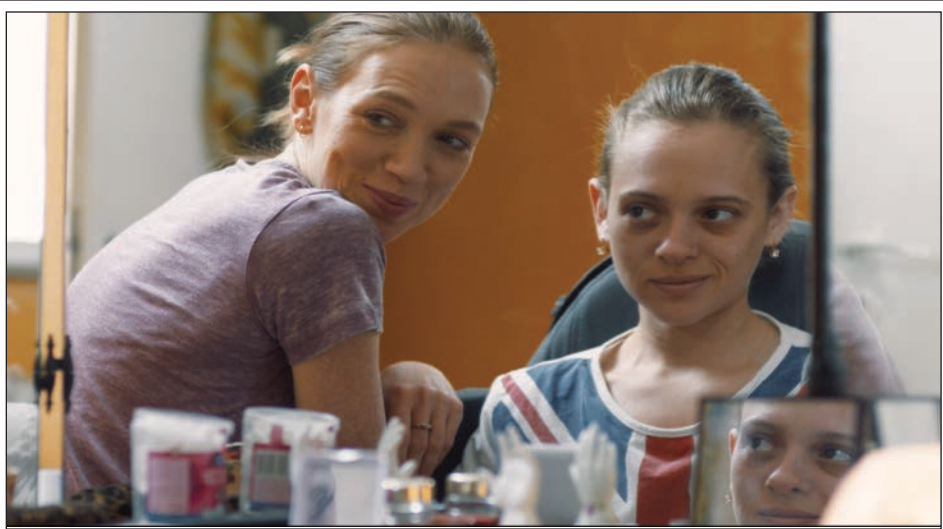
Mrs. G. captures Gottlieb's peaks and valleys in the fashion industry and her fraught relationships with her daughters while, at the same time, capturing the social history of Israel during the 1970s when Gottlieb – a Holocaust survivor – was dressing some of the world's most famous women.

Inclusivity has been a major theme of the Film Festival since its inception in 2000. In keeping with that long-standing tradition, the audience can look forward to *Once Upon a Boy*, the tender portrayal of the Hessings, an Israeli family struggling to create a happy family life for their three children despite the gaps in opportunity caused by their son Ron's cerebral palsy. This poignant documentary follows the Hessings' journey to America for what they hope will be life-changing surgery for Ron.

As always, there is something for everyone at the Jewish Film Festival, including those who may be feeling sports-deprived due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But you don't have to be a basketball fan to be captivated by *Aulcie*, the eponymous documentary about Aulcie Perry, the African-American baller who led Maccabi Tel Aviv to their first European Championship win in 1977. Perry's sports stardom, conversion to Judaism and relationship with Israeli supermodel Tami Ben Ami made him king of the castle until his drug addiction laid him low. But, in many ways, that is where Perry's remarkable tale of redemption begins.

While 2020 has seen the production of stellar documentaries on a wide range of Jewish topics and personalities, there are also some notable feature films in store for this year's Jewish Film Festival. The Felliniesque



Actresses Alena Yiv (L) and Shira Haas in *Asia*, one of the outstanding feature films that will be screened as part of Calgary's first-ever virtual Jewish Film Festival this November.

Italian-Polish co-production *Thou Shalt Not Hate* – a debut feature film by Director Mauro Mancini – will be streamed as part of Calgary's Jewish Film Festival following its premiere at the Venice Film Critics' Week this month.

The visually stunning film begins when a doctor who is the son of a Holocaust survivor attempts to rescue a car-crash victim. Noticing a tattooed swastika on the chest of the seriously injured man, he makes the decision to withhold life-saving care. Guilt arising from the fatal choice leads the doctor to the children of the man he's abandoned... and a demand for retribution.

Aficionados of Israeli TV who enjoyed the performances of actress Shira Haas in *Unorthodox* and *Shtisel* can look forward to a searing performance by her in *Asia* (pronounced ah-see-ah), an exploration of the relationship between a mother and daughter living in the shadow of the latter's rapid decline due to a degenerative disease. The mother-daughter drama premiered at the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival – also held online due to the Coronavirus – garnering a Best Actress Award for Haas as well as Best Cinematography for Daniella Nowitz and the coveted Nora Ephron Prize for the film's director, Ruthy Pribar.

While a big part of Jewish Film Festival has been the excitement of gathering in person and enjoying refreshment and great conversation, the undisputed star of the show remains the thoughtfully curated lineup of Jewish films that, this year, can be enjoyed from the comfort of home.

A mere glance at recent offerings in movie theatres (remember those?) and on streaming services demonstrates the general public's growing taste for Israeli movies and TV and for Jewish subject matter in general, but Calgary's Jewish Film Festival still plays an important role in bringing the world's best Jewish cinema to local audiences.

“Most of the documentaries and feature films we choose to screen are not easily accessed elsewhere,” says Cyngiser who, over the past two decades, has built relationships with film directors, producers and distributors in Israel and around the Jewish world, often receiving word directly from them about new cinematic offerings.

When it comes to relationships, adds Cyngiser, some of the most important ones are right here at home.

“We have the best, most loyal audiences and sponsors that we could hope for,” Cyngiser says.

“We may not be able to bring them together in person because of the pandemic, but we are excited to give them great entertainment at a time when we are all hunkered down at home. And we are blessed to know we can rely on their participation and support in a year when we need each other more than ever.”

As *Alberta Jewish News* went to press, Cyngiser and his committee were finalizing the lineup for Calgary's first-ever virtual Jewish Film Festival. Watch for details in the October issue of *Alberta Jewish News*, including a full listing of films and information on seasons passes, tickets and sponsorship opportunities, or go to www.CalgaryJewishFilmFestival.com.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Alberta Jewish News.



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New insights for the New Year



By Cantor Russ Jayne

Hallel, the compilation of psalms recited on Jewish festivals throughout the year, is the quintessential expression of joy. All of the psalms woven into this section of the liturgy contain the word, Hallel, or praise. Joyous melodies and vivid imagery typically characterize the recitation of Hallel and so its recitation becomes a truly moving experience of prayer. Given its central importance during our holidays and festivals, one would expect not only the recitation of Hallel on Rosh Hashanah, but also some embellished version of the typical Hallel text. After all, we are gathered as a nation to commemorate the beginning of the Jewish year. What could be a more appropriate time to express our praise of G-d and of G-d's creations? Yet, Hallel is absent. It is both a deafening and pregnant silence in the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. So why is there this restriction on the

recitation of Hallel?

The Talmud, in Tractate Rosh Hashanah 32b, gives us the rabbinic reason for the absence of Hallel. We read, "Rabbi Abahu said: "The ministering angels said before the Holy One, 'Master of the Universe, why do the Jews not recite Hallel before You on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?' G-d replied: Is it possible that a King be seated on the Throne of Judgment and the Books of Life and Death are open and the Jews should recite Hallel?"

The Midrash quoted by Rabbi Abahu identifies the solemnity of Rosh Hashanah as the reason for not reciting Hallel. Still, the answer remains unsatisfying. After all, the second Mishnah of Tractate Rosh Hashanah points out that "the world is judged at four times over the year: on Passover for grain; on the Festival of Shavuot for produce; on Rosh Hashanah, all the inhabitants of the world...and on Sukkot, they are judged for water." If this is indeed the case, then Hallel should also be forbidden on Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, since these too are times of solemn judgment. So how can we sharpen our understanding of this curious prohibition?

Rabbi Dr. Zvi Yehudah, Professor Emeritus of Judaic Studies at the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, offered a precious insight toward the resolution of our dilemma. In a D'var Torah, Dr. Yehudah skillfully wove together a warning from Exodus and the proscription of Hallel on Rosh Hashanah. In Exodus 23:6-8 we are warned, "You shall not subvert the rights of the needy in their disputes.

Keep far from a false charge; do not bring death on those who are innocent and in the right, for I will not acquit the wrongdoer. Do not take bribes, for bribes blind the clear-sighted and upset the pleas of those who are in the right." Since G-d is sitting in judgment on Rosh Hashanah deciding the fate of each of us, it is as if we are pleading our case in G-d's own court, and so to sing verses of praise, as we do in Hallel, would be tantamount to offering G-d a bribe. This, in turn, would inevitably affect G-d's judgment. Yet, however, that cannot be the case, because each human's personal verdict must rest solely on teshuvah (repentance), tefilah (prayer), and tzedakah (righteousness), and the extent to which we have incorporated them into our lives.

Dr. Yehudah offers us not only an important insight into a liturgical quandary, but more importantly, he offers us an insight into G-d's Character as well. The Torah's legislation is not solely for us, it is also for the Lawgiver. Both we and G-d must strive, perpetually, to be agents of Justice in this world.

May the knowledge, justice, and mercy of our G-d fill the whole world in 5781 as the waters fill the sea.

With wishes for a Shanah Tovah u'Metukah, a happy and sweet New Year!!

Cantor Russ Jayne is Chazzan at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Calgary.

The anatomy of an apology

By Jeremy Appel

Central to the practice of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is the concept of t'shuva, or repentance. It's the time of year for self-reflection and apologizing to those we've wronged. But an apology must come from the heart.

It's easy to just say, "I'm sorry you feel that way" or some variant, evading any personal responsibility by placing the burden on the individual who has been wronged. This is precisely how not to go about a genuine, sincere apology.

A true apology involves an acknowledgement of what you did wrong, why it is wrong and an expressed desire to do better. It must come from an internal desire to do better for your fellow people, not imposed from outside.

This contrast was on display in Canadian politics recently, when South Surrey-White Rock Conservative MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay suggested newly-minted Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland is being instructed by George Soros based a 2009 video of Freeland interviewing him when she was a reporter at the Financial Times. Findlay quote tweeted a post of the video, saying it showed Freeland listening to Soros "like student (sic) to teacher."

"The closeness of these two should alarm every Canadian," Findlay said in the tweet that tagged the official Conservative Party of Canada account and freshly-elected leader Erin O'Toole and was re-tweeted by prominent Tory MP Pierre Poilievre

Soros, of course, is the bête noir of modern anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, which take the trope of a Jewish cabal secretly controlling the world and replace it with an individual billionaire who just so happens to be Jewish. In some versions, casino magnate and Republican mega donor Sheldon Adleson, or another Jewish billionaire, is swapped for Soros.

After a social media backlash, Findlay deleted the post and offered up a statement that only vaguely resembles an apology.

"Earlier today, I thoughtlessly shared content from what I am now learning is a source that promotes hateful conspiracy theories. I have removed the tweets and apologize to anyone who thinks I would want to endorse hateful rhetoric," she said, without any reference to Freeland, Soros or even the Jewish community, let alone any promise to do better in the future.

The statement makes it sound as if Findlay simply made a careless retweet, rather than quoting the original post to express her agreement and trying to bring it to the attention of her party and its leader as if it were an urgent matter.

A cursory glance at the feed of the account she tweeted, "David Q Milley", shows an adherence to the outlandish QAnon conspiracy theory that believes U.S. President

Continued on page 21



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A MESSAGE FROM FEDERATION’S CO-PRESIDENTS

The beginning of fall and the precipice of the Jewish new year is always a time of introspection and renewal. It is a sentiment that has perhaps never been more true than today; for us as individuals and for us as the Jewish Community of Calgary.

The last several months, with all of their challenges, have brought to light the importance and pride we have in our community. In the early days of social isolation, Federation, along with camps, schools, congregations, and our other Jewish institutions, embarked on phone and email campaigns, checking in on community members. Local Jewish organizations gathered virtually, weekly, to lend support to each other and share ideas and challenges. Fundraisers were postponed, camps were cancelled, programs were modified – and through it all, professional and lay leaders maintained the optimism that our community would emerge strong and vibrant.


It is under these challenges that, as incoming presidents of Calgary Jewish Federation, our number one priority is to ensure the emergence of a strong and vibrant community. Both of us grew up within local Jewish day schools, Jewish day camps and overnight camps, Bar Mitzvahs in our city’s shuls, and life cycle events around the city, surrounded by Jewish Calgary’s friends and family. This community has been integral to who we are, and we are now honoured to give back in this capacity.

Our message to you, our Calgary Jewish Community, is that we don’t just need your dollars, we need your engagement. We need your memberships at shuls. We need your bums in the seats for our film festivals, and speaker events. We need your kids at camps and schools. Together, we need to ensure that all families have access to meaningful Jewish experiences. With one strong voice, we need to hold media and public institutions accountable for intentional or inadvertent antisemitism. We need you at our side as we encourage our government to increase Holocaust education and empower our law enforcement allies to fight hate crimes. We need you standing by us as we support other marginalized communities in this city. And, importantly, we need to stand together as a community when we are the targets of hate and discrimination.

As we embark on our term as Federation co-presidents, we cannot stress enough that the work of ensuring our community’s health and growth is the work of many. It is the work of our parents and our children. It is the work of our youth and our elderly. It is the work of our Russian community and our Israeli community. It is the work of our professionals and our volunteers. It is the work of our LGBTQ community and our Jewish people of colour. It is the work of our Ashkenazim and our Sephardim. It is the work of those who planted the seeds of our community 70 years ago, and it is the work of those who only recently have sought the shade of those same community trees.

May the coming new year bring health and happiness to all of you, and as a community, may it mobilize us to be as strong as we’ve ever been.

Shana Tovah!


Jared Shore and Jordan Balaban
Co-Presidents, Calgary Jewish Federation

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Shana Tova U'Metuka



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Community and advocacy during uncertainty



Judy Zelikovitz

By Judy Zelikovitz

Rosh Hashanah is a time of new beginnings, a time to reflect on a year gone by and on the new year ahead. As is often the case with new beginnings, it is also a time of uncertainty. Last Rosh Hashanah, we wished each other a sweet year, unsure of the future but hopeful of things to come.

As we herald the arrival of *this* new year, we do so understanding that we control far less than we had thought. Normally, the uncertainty that comes with a new start is imbued with hope for the possibilities ahead. This year, however, it is uncertainty itself that dominates. As 5780 draws to a close, we have learned that, during periods of uncertainty, we must seek what we can rely on: the strength of our community and our resolve to face these unprecedented challenges together.

In 5780, the challenges were many, and our community met them with an empowering, inspiring, and united response.

When urgent help was needed, social service agencies and not-for-profits mobilized, delivering food, providing services remotely, and offering support to those who needed it most. Jewish Federations, in Calgary and Edmonton, along with others in Canada, shifted their focus to emergency fundraising campaigns to meet the immediate needs of service agencies on the front lines, ensuring that the changing needs of our most vulnerable were met. CIJA advocated for the inclusion of not-for-profits in government support programs, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, and helped ensure that Jewish schools were eligible. Volunteers mobilized by the thousands, responding to calls for assistance, helping the

many seriously impacted by Covid-19.

Our community was tested in other ways, as antisemitism, the crafty shapeshifter that is always on the move, found new outlets during the pandemic. With Statistics Canada reporting a rise in antisemitic incidents through 5780, our community from coast to coast continued to unite, offering support where it was needed most. Indeed, this was the year we learned the many ways we could help and, for far too many, how to reach out to ask for help themselves.

As we renew our talk of new beginnings at the conclusion of a year defined by uncertainty, many wonder: how can we plan for the year ahead?

For 5781, we must change our approach and, instead of planning according to dates on a calendar, look at our character for the coming year. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz z"l, wrote: *This does not mean, however, that on Rosh HaShanah one should make plans for the whole year. That would be impossible...What one should do on this day is form a general picture of what ought to be the character and direction of this year.*

For 5781, we can accept the uncertainty of what is to come and focus on the knowledge that we can rely on the tested strength of our community. And that continued strength is up to us. We can commit to volunteering our time and, if we can, donating our money. We can commit to finding creative ways to give back and offering support to those experiencing hardship. Instead of planning large events or travel, we can plan to lean on our community

when in need and support it every way we can. We can plan to check in on those who are vulnerable, to be more understanding of ourselves and others, and to be more present when given the gift of company among our loved ones.

As we reframe what planning looks like for 5781, it can be difficult to determine how best to dedicate our efforts. There are many good causes that need our help. Instead of being overwhelmed, be reassured that, for whatever assistance you can offer, there is a worthy cause, organization, or initiative looking for someone just like you. Federations are great starting places. Check out their campaigns and learn what their various service agencies and not-for-profits are doing.

Though much of the past year has been uncertain, Rosh Hashanah presents us with a chance to start anew. We *can* still hope for and work toward a better tomorrow. 5781 will be a year defined not by our individual wishes and schedules but by our collective character and commitment to our community. Planning for uncertainty may seem counter-intuitive, but history has shown that we have the capacity to come together and overcome even the darkest of times. As we look ahead to 5781, amidst all the unknowns, one thing remains certain: our community will continue from strength to strength.

Judy Zelikovitz is Vice President, University and Local Partner Services at CIJA, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

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New children’s books to brighten up the New Year



By Penny Schwartz

(JTA) – Sparkling stars and the light of the full harvest moon comfort a young boy and his older sister as they fall asleep in their family sukkah.

That’s a scene in “Night Lights,” an endearing new illustrated children's book by Barbara Diamond Goldin, one of the country's most highly acclaimed Jewish children's book authors.

It’s one of four new engaging books for kids to usher in the Jewish New Year at a time when holiday traditions are being upended due to the coronavirus pandemic. Having to deal with quarantine and perhaps school at home, families can take pleasure turning the pages of these crisp new reads.

“Night Lights” was published originally 25 years ago. The characters of the mother and sister are featured more prominently in the new shorter, refreshed text, Diamond Goldin told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in a phone conversation. Amberin Huq’s brightly colored illustrations are new, too.

This year’s crop of newcomers also features the latest in the popular Sammy Spider series that has delighted kids for years. Earlier this year, the Rosh Hashanah middle grade novel “Rachel’s Roses,” by Ferida Wolff and illustrated by Margeaux Lucas, was named a notable middle grade novel in this year's Sydney Taylor Book Award for Jewish children's books. The heartwarming immigrant story, set in the early 20th century, is perfect for ages 7 to 10.

Rosh Hashanah begins on the night of Sept. 18. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, starts on the evening of Sept. 27.

Up next is Sukkot, the seven-day fall harvest festival,

when Jews build small huts at their homes to recall the ancient Israelites who wandered through the desert for 40 years after the exodus from Egypt. The fall holidays wrap up with the celebration of Simchat Torah, when the cycle of reading the Torah begins anew.

A holiday with ancient roots, Sukkot resonates with many issues of the day, Diamond Goldin observed, from its environmental and nature themes to a reminder of the plight of those who live in temporary shelters today, including refugees, a point she makes in her author's note.

“Sammy Spider's First Book of Prayers”

by Sylvia A. Rouss; illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn
Kar-Ben Publishing; ages 3 to 8

Young kids are introduced to daily prayers like the Shema for going to sleep, to blessings for Shabbat and special occasions. Each blessing, explained in lively rhyming verse from the point of view of the friendly Sammy Spider, is written in Hebrew, transliteration and a simple English translation. The blessings recited over Shabbat candles, wine and challah are perfect for Rosh Hashanah, which begins this year on Shabbat. Kids will enjoy spotting Sammy Spider dangling from his web on the brightly colored pages that embellish the book.

“Hillel Builds a House”

by Shoshana Lepon; illustrated by Angeles Ruiz
Kar-Ben Publishing; ages 4-8

Meet Hillel, an enterprising young boy who loves building houses -- in trees and even under the basement stairs. But on Jewish holidays, his inventive houses seem to get in every-one's way. Finally, as Sukkot approaches, Hillel finds his groove. In his orange overalls, standing on a ladder, Hillel is gleeful as he helps his family build a sukkah, where they will eat their meals for seven days.

“Sukkot means hammers and nails and branches and fruits and lots of decorations,” Hillel said happily.

“Night Lights: A Sukkot Story”

by Barbara Diamond Goldin; illustrated by Amberin Huq
Kar-Ben Publishing; ages 4-8

At the beginning of Sukkot, a young boy named Daniel and his older sister, Naomi, get ready to camp out overnight in the family sukkah for the first time without their grandpa, who has a cold. Readers will soon figure out that Daniel is a little anxious. There's no electricity, his sister teases him, so he can't have his night light. He brings his teddy bear, but in the shadows, Daniel imagines scary faces in the squashes that hang as decorations.

As the night grows darker, Naomi realizes she needs a little reassurance, too. Looking up through the sukkah's branches, the siblings see the glow of the star-filled sky and the bright full moon that coincides with Sukkot. Maybe their ancestors did have night lights in the desert, after all.

The sweet story will strike a chord with many kids who fear the dark. Amberin Huq's expressive illustrations glow with the golden hues of fall and glisten with the lights of the night.

“Worse and Worse on Noah's Ark”

by Leslie Kimmelman; illustrated by Vivian Mineker
Apples & Honey Press; ages 4 to 8

In this upbeat spin on the biblical story of Noah's Ark, award-winning author Leslie Kimmelman infuses a kid-friendly Jewish sense of humor. The story imagines how bad things can get when Noah and his family shelter through 40 days of the biblical flood in the ark's crowded quarters along with pairs of all their animal friends. The story of Noah is read aloud from the Torah in the synagogue two weeks after Simchat Torah.

In “Worse and Worse,” the animals get seasick, peacocks bicker with the zebras and the skunks make quite a stink. As the troubles amass, Noah's wife and sons complain, “Could things get any worse?” -- a refrain that kids can repeat page after page.

Just when readers think the kvetching will never stop, Noah gets the crew working together to fix a leak that threatens them all. They begin to cooperate and care for each other.

Kids will dive in to Mineker's cartoon-like illustrations of zebras, parrots, growling lions and sloths hanging upside down. An author's note prompts conversation about empathy.

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Mizrachi experience

Cont. from page 7

Her Arevot Montreal group is currently meeting online and Cohen says she looks forward to Calgary Jewish women joining in the discussions.

“These are relevant sources and relevant discussions regardless of whether you are Sephardic or not,” said Cohen, adding that even Sephardic women do not always have the benefit of studying sources from their own traditions because most Jewish educational institutions are Ashkenazi.

Cohen did not attend Jewish schools and had a fairly secular upbringing, so halachic issues were not front and centre as she was growing up. In her mid-twenties she began to explore her Moroccan roots as part of “... a bigger process of looking for my place in the family and in life in general.”

Today, she describes herself as traditionist, a concept Cohen says was coined by Oxford professor and author Yaacov Yadgar.

Following post doctoral stints at both Tel Aviv University and Concordia University, Cohen looks forward to bringing Mizrahi and Sephardic perspectives to the U of C and to the Calgary Jewish community.

“I think Sephardic history has a very different narrative about what it is to be Jewish in a non-Jewish world, about Muslim-Jewish relations, about the place of Jews in the Middle East,” says Cohen.

“The Sephardic experience brings a completely different narrative from the narrative that we are used to reading in textbooks of Jews as being persecuted, always in danger, permanently the other. Sephardim have had a history of persecution and exclusion, but they’ve also had an experience of belonging, of autonomy and participation in the non-Jewish world,” adds Cohen.

During her time at the U of C, Angy Cohen will be concentrating on further research and writing, including articles about Arevot as well as other projects relating to Israel. She also hopes to do some teaching beginning in January pertaining to intra-Jewish conflict in Israel, different Mizrahi movements and, overall, providing a Mizrahi window on Israel’s history.

She hopes that she can set the record straight where some misconceptions about Israel are concerned.

“One of the critiques tends to be that Israel is a colonizing entity,” says Cohen, lamenting the common assumption that Israel is a European country in the Middle East.

“That is in no way true, not demographically, not historically. ... So I think it is important for people to hear a different version. Sephardim were always in the Middle East.”

According to U of C History Professor David Bercuson, Cohen has “hit the ground running.”

Bercuson, who this year marks his 50th anniversary at the U of C, administers the Dr. Jenny and Hy Belzberg Israeli Scholar Program. He turned to three colleagues representing the History, Political Science and Anthropology departments to form the selection committee for the program’s inaugural Post Doctoral Associate. They reviewed applications from some 14 applicants. Remarkably, Angy Cohen was, in Bercuson’s words, their “unanimous first draft choice.”

“Angy is an outstanding scholar,” said Bercuson, lauding Cohen’s publication record, her PhD and the universities she has been at.

“She’s very enthusiastic and extremely bright and highly motivated. I think she understands very well that her position is not simply to come here and do her own work, which is part of what the Post Doc is all about, but also to take part in outreach to the community, and not only the Jewish community, but the community at large.”

Cohen’s responsibilities include addressing at least two meetings on campus and two meetings off campus to talk about topics in her areas of expertise that would be of interest to the community.

“Certainly in the Jewish community there should be a lot of interest in this question of Mizrahi women. They are a very important element in Israel society,” Bercuson said.

Bercuson describes Cohen as an accomplished academic with a dynamic personality, adding that she and her husband, Jonah Potasznik (who will be teaching at the Calgary Jewish Academy while also serving as Youth Engagement Director and Ritual Assistant at Beth Tzedec Congregation) have been proactive in reaching out to people and letting the community know that they are here.

“They are very willing, obviously, to interrelate with the community and not just the Jewish community. They haven’t been here that long, and I am just so pleased at how this is turning out.”

Cohen’s post doc position is a one year appointment but Bercuson says that there is a possibility of extension.

Cohen’s position, while in many ways a first for the University and the community, is part of a long history of Israeli studies and academic exchange initiatives at the U of C.

Jenny Belzberg and her late husband, Hy, were early supporters of the U of C in general and Israel studies in particular, having funded previous Israel studies academic exchanges and visiting scholar programs, sometimes in partnership with other community philanthropists, including the Kahanoff Foundation.

An endowment gift by the Belzbergs many years ago helped to fund a Canada-Israel Academic Exchange Program that was headquartered in Ottawa. The program arranged for scholars from Israel to come to Canadian universities, including the U of C, and to send scholars from Canada to universities in Israel, Bercuson said.

Later, an Israel Studies Program was established at the U of C with Notre Dame Professor Allan Dowty serving as the first Kahanoff Chair Professor of Israel Studies from 2003–2006. This initiative was funded, in large part, by a grant from the Kahanoff Foundation and was also supported by Jenny and Hy Belzberg.

Subsequently, the decision was made to start a full Israel Studies Program, Bercuson said. Israeli scholar Shlomit Keren was hired as associate professor of history and director of Israel Studies. Professor David Tal served as Kahanoff Chair beginning in 2009. When he moved on, the Kahanoff Foundation wound down the program.

What remained was the original endowment from Jenny and Hy Belzberg. Academics continued to come and go, though there was no permanent program.

Following the passing of her husband Hy, after 68 years of marriage, Jenny Belzberg wanted to do more. After discussions



Jenny Belzberg and her late husband Hy z"l made endowment gifts that will support postdoctoral associates in Israel Studies at U of C in perpetuity.

with the University, she made a second generous endowment gift this past January. The combined funds will support post-doctoral associates in Israel studies in perpetuity.

“These things make a difference,” says Jenny Belzberg who has herself made a difference on multiple fronts since the earliest days of the University.

In addition to supporting Israel studies, the Belzbergs have been strong supporters of the U of C library. Hy and his family “were integral in securing Mordechai Richler’s papers for the University of Calgary,” according to the memorial notice published by the U of C following Hy Belzberg’s passing. So valued was his contribution at the U of C, that their flags flew at half-mast when he passed in January 2017.

Jenny served on the U of C Faculty of Social Work Dean’s Advisory Committee and in 2002 she was the recipient of an Honourary Doctorate recognizing her extraordinary contribution to the arts.

“We need to connect the University with the community,” says Jenny Belzberg, who expressed delight in the selection of Angy Cohen as the first Post Doctoral Associate in the Dr. Jenny and Hy Belzberg Israeli Scholar Program.

“She is young and vibrant and the subject matter is relevant today,” said Belzberg who, herself, has been a trailblazer and respected role model for women.

“We have a university here where there is not even a hint of some of this garbage that’s going in some of the Universities in Canada and the United States with regard to Israel. It’s very important to have somebody here like Angy who will be a voice for people who want to know about Israel,” Bercuson said.

“She’s not going to propagandize Israel, but then Israel doesn’t need propaganda in my opinion. It just needs truth. Having somebody who is here on campus as part of the campus community is an important part of what this is all about.”

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter for Alberta Jewish News.

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Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah from Stephen, Ben and Sophie Kaganov



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Wishing the entire community, a Happy New Year

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Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from David Lapides & Ilana Krygier and family



Best wishes to my family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Louise Kirschner



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Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah from Roslyn Mendelson & David Hodgins

Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah!

from Miriam Milavsky and family





Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Cheryl, Rob, Danielle and Jarrett Milner

A look at Lethbridge

By Jeremy Appel

The first Jewish family arrived in Lethbridge in 1905, according to the Lethbridge Historical Society. Harris Goodman, who came from the U.K., moved with his family in 1904 to Medicine Hat and then High River before settling in Lethbridge.

Like many Jewish immigrants, the Goodmans owned a tailor shop. Harris himself built the shop's brick building on Third Avenue South, with the family residing on the second floor.

The now-defunct Lethbridge Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1911, with 19 men listed as members. But it wasn't a brick-and-mortar shul, nor did it have a rabbi. Its local leadership rented halls for holidays and services and brought rabbis from out of town, according to the book *Land of Promise: The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta*.

A 1913 photo of a Lethbridge Purim party shows about 60 people in attendance, which the book notes was probably close to the city's entire Jewish population. The congregation became a sort of hub for the larger southwestern Alberta Jewish community, including members from Magrath, Pincher Creek, Blairmore and Milk River. In 1921, there were about 100 Jews in Lethbridge and 50 in the surrounding towns.

By 1935, the community purchased an old church and turned it into Beth Israel Synagogue, which in 1952 acquired a rabbi from the U.K., Morris Susman, who was there for a decade.

The congregation, which at this point had 62 contributing families, moved to a new building in 1956.

"However, Jewish numbers in Lethbridge began to decline as young families sought opportunities elsewhere," *Land of Promise* notes. And, like Medicine Hat, this decline has accelerated in more recent years.

Garry Kohn, who was born in Medicine Hat, has been based in Lethbridge since 1962. He spent some time in Winnipeg and Vancouver, and moved to Israel to enlist during the Six Day War in 1967, before returning to Lethbridge in 1968 to run his business.

"We're down to maybe 12 souls here in Lethbridge right now," said Kohn, who was the last president of Beth Israel before they sold the building in 2009.

"They allowed us to use the small chapel for 10 years rent-free as part of the agreement we had with them, but since our community has dwindled so much, there was no point in signing a lease to go to shul two times a year."

He says his family continues to celebrate the major holidays, such as Hannukah and Pesach, at home, but there isn't really any communal life to speak of.

"The interesting thing, whether you're talking about Medicine Hat or Lethbridge, there wasn't one marriage union that actually came out of the Jewish community. It was almost like one big family, so you just didn't do those," said Kohn.

"When the young people grew up, they went away to university and found larger communities, and they found their mates there."

Professor Goldie Morgentaler, a Yiddish translator, bucked this trend when she moved to Lethbridge from Montreal in 1997 to teach literature at the University of Lethbridge, where she says she "very occasionally" has a Jewish student.

Morgentaler's mother - Chava Rosenfarb - was a Yiddish author and poet, whose final book Morgentaler is in the process of translating to English. (Her father is famed

physician and abortion rights activist Henry Morgentaler.)

If she gets stuck on a particular word, finding a solution is as easy as firing off an email to a fellow Yiddish scholar, she added.

The only instance where she felt particularly alienated as a Jew in Lethbridge was when one of her university colleagues - Tony Hall - was fired without pay for promoting Holocaust denial on YouTube, a decision that was reversed in 2017 before Hall's 2018 retirement.

"I was shocked, because I knew him," said Morgentaler, who was the lone faculty member to write a formal letter of complaint to the university about Hall's conduct, although others privately expressed their concern. "That was not a pleasant experience, because if I'm complaining and everyone knows I'm Jewish, they can say, 'Well, she's complaining because she's Jewish.'"


Morgentaler didn't agree with the decision to fire him without due process, which is a violation of the professors' collective agreement, but was troubled by the way the conversation shifted from Hall's transgressions to how he was mistreated by administration.

"The whole story of his anti-Semitism fell by the wayside. Nobody talked about that anymore and what they were upset about was that due process wasn't followed, which was true," she said. "He shouldn't have been suspended without pay, but he should have been suspended."


Even without the Hall affair, it can be a pretty alienating experience as a Yiddish translator in Lethbridge, but Morgentaler and her husband have property in Toronto, where they spent much of their time off pre-COVID.

"I get my fill of Yiddishkite there," she said.

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter for Alberta Jewish News.





Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Marnie Besser and Steve Lipton




Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Char & Gerry Molotsky and family

Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Therese Nagler and family







Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Walter Moscovitz



Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from The Palters: Jay, Leigh-Anne, Ben, & Ella


Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Ron Plucer and family





Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Judy & Lionel

שנה טובה ומתוקה
from Adam, Deborah, Hannah, Lilah, and Benjamin Silver



Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Rosslyn & Norman Steinberg and family

שנה טובה ומתוקה
from Diana Kalef, Elliott, Jonah & Micah Steinberg


Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah, from Raechelle, Lorne, Shoshana & Leo Paperny


Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Carol Ryder and family



לשנה טובה תכתבו
Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Hilda & Lenny Smith and family

Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Cheryl & Morley Shore and family






Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Carey & Stan Smith and family

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Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah from Beth & Lorne Price and family

Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Cynthia & David Prasow and family




Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Bob & Cheryl Shiell & family






Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Marg Semel, Adam Singer, Rachel and Hanna



Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Al Osten





Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Kathy & Norman Shachar and families

Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Esther & Gary Silberg and family




Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Minnie Zuckier and family






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Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Faigel & Leonard Shapiro

Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Evelyn Sheftel-Shapiro and family






Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Carole Stoffman and family

שנה טובה ומתוקה
from Candy & Mike Schacter and Ari Schacter

חג שמח
from Irene & Dr. Stuart Ross

שנה טובה ומתוקה
from Robbie Babins-Wagner and Neil Wagner


Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Frances Pearlman & family



Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Dalia, Allan, Tammy, and Mark Wolinsky

Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah from Fanny and Leo z"l Wedro


שנה טובה
Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah from Mary & Ken Taub and family




Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah from Jane Paterson and family

נה
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מזרחית
Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah from The Zivot Family


Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah! from Wynne & Harvey Thal





Wishing the entire community a Happy New Year from Linda & Gary Wolf and family

Shana Tova!
from Medina Shatz & Randy Best and Scout





Though the faces were hard to see, the smiley eyes said it all. A pared down crew of Na'amat Canada Calgary volunteers cheerfully packed backpacks with school supplies for over 800 school-aged children living in regional domestic violence and homeless shelters. They moved the campaign up to August from October this year, in case there is a second or third wave at that time.

COVID-19 did not stop this project from brightening children’s lives

Na’amat Canada Calgary volunteers gathered over two days in August to pack backpacks with essential school supplies for more than 800 school-aged children living in 12 Calgary and southern Alberta domestic violence and homeless shelters.

“Planning for the 23rd year of the *School Supplies for Kids* project was very challenging. Our main concern with the two packing days was to keep our volunteers safe. This

year our packing days were structured very differently, so we could implement the necessary precautions to follow the Alberta Health guidelines. It also involved a much smaller number of volunteers,” says Stephanie Sacks, *School Supplies for Kids* Chairperson.

“Packing Day” was the final stage of the annual *School Supplies for Kids* project. During this packing marathon, backpacks were filled with school supplies and then

distributed to the domestic violence and homeless shelters. Na’amat Calgary’s community service initiative aims to equip these youth with the tools they need to succeed in school, and to help strengthen their self-esteem.

Since *School Supplies for Kids* inception in 1998, this Na’amat Canada Calgary’s community service project has provided more than 22,000 children with backpacks filled with school supplies. Na’amat Calgary’s dedicated volunteers continue, even during the current pandemic, to make these children’s lives a little brighter.

“It is heartwarming to see how our members and volunteers remain committed to providing the needed backpacks despite the challenges of working together during the time of COVID-19,” notes Linda Gutman, *School Supplies for Kids* Volunteer Coordinator.

Established in 1925, Na’amat Canada is part of an international Jewish women’s non-profit organization that is dedicated to enhancing the lives of women and children in Canada and in Israel.

Shana Tova!

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Thank you to our members, donors and friends who have made these challenging times easier for those in need at our women's shelter, our day care centres and our vocational high schools throughout Israel.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Help make a difference this Rosh Hashana for the women, children and families in Israel.

Na’amat Canada

For information on how to get involved contact naamat@naamat.com or call 1-888-278-0792

Book Review

Woman of Few Words: My Creative Journey With Dystonia
by Cheri Tannenbaum
Gefen Publishing House, 2019
ISBN: 978-965-229-973-4

Review by Connie Zalmanowitz

"I felt like I was wrapped in a cocoon of silence that was forced upon me, separating me from the world and deepening my isolation."- Cheri Tannenbaum in *Women of Few Words*.

Woman of Few Words: My Creative Journey with Dystonia is a book that tells a compelling story of a resilient, talented and very human woman. The author, Cheri Tannenbaum, was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1952. She was the eldest of 4 children, born to Sam and Frances Belzberg. Cheri attended Edmonton Talmud Torah School from Grades 1-6 and then like her Jewish friends, she went onto public school.

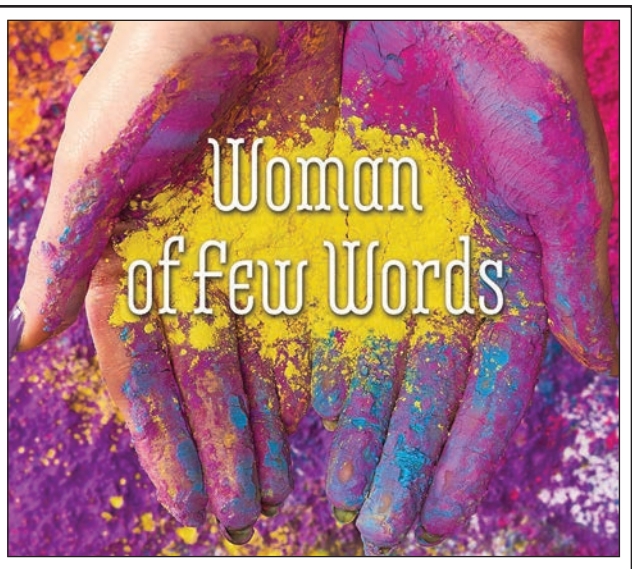
Cheri describes an early life filled with friends and family that would be familiar to many of us growing up in Edmonton and Calgary. At 16, much to her objection, her family moved to Vancouver. During her teenage years she dabbled in the culture of the late sixties, complete with vegetarianism, yoga and meditation. At the age of 20, like her siblings before her, she found spiritual answers in Judaism and began a religious journey that would anchor her and give her the courage to survive and thrive through what lay in her life ahead.

During her first year at Stern College Cheri's

handwriting became illegible, her speech became unintelligible and her feet began kicking uncontrollably when she walked. Cheri tells of years of misdiagnosis, doctors believing the illness was in her mind and recommending psychiatric treatment. Finally, and to her great relief, the mysterious symptoms were identified as a rare neurological disorder called Dystonia. There were no treatments, few specialists and little known about the illness that had robbed her of her speech and muscle control. Her parents wasted no time and started a Foundation called the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation in an effort to fund research and develop medical treatments. That Foundation has now been in existence for over 40 years and has identified over 300,000 sufferers in North America and contributed to numerous breakthroughs in understanding the disease.

Cheri's forty-five-year journey with Dystonia has been fraught with unbelievable challenges but she has been sustained by her strong Jewish faith and the support of loving people around her. The hurdles she describes have been enormous. Everyday activities require creative, often effortful and preplanned ways of doing the things many of us take for granted. Yet she has completed university degrees, run creative businesses, built a full life in Israel, and has 3 amazing children and grandchildren. In reading the book, one often wonders how she has managed to be so optimistic and remain so strong in her faith. Cheri is very honest in her descriptions of the questioning she has done with G-d over the years, in trying to understand the larger purpose in her disabilities, specifically her lack of voice.

Cheri considers it an honour when others are inspired by her and is sincere in hoping that her struggles help others. But she conveys to the reader, that she had no other choices but to move ahead and look for purpose. Her accomplishments as you will read are many, but I



suspect she will always be seeking to explore and make the most of life and her relationship with G-d and Dystonia.

Women of Few Words: My Creative Journey with Dystonia was published in 2019 by Gefen Publishing House in Jerusalem, ISBN: 978-965-229-973-4. It is available for purchase in hard cover or Kindle from the publisher at gefenpublishing.com or from your favorite bookseller.

Dystonia is a movement disorder characterized by involuntary muscle contractions that cause abnormal movements and or postures. It can affect many parts of the body including the eyes, mouth, voice, arms, legs and torso, affecting one's ability to see, speak, write and walk.

For more information about Dystonia and the various forms and treatments visit dystoniacanada.org.

Apology anatomy *Cont. from page 11*

Donald Trump is in the process of taking down a “deep state” cabal of pedophiles and Satanists.

How did the algorithm come to place this tweet in a sitting MP’s feed?

Findlay is not some fringe figure in the Conservative Party; she’s their former environment critic (and was not named to the current shadow cabinet). Yet O’Toole had no comment on the matter, referring reporters to her Twitter statement, which was no more than an attempt at damage control. There was radio silence on this matter from the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver.

Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs’s Richard Marcheau did lightly criticize Findlay, correctly stating that “it’s important also to know that even without intent, the effect can be antisemitic,” without reference to her statement.

B’nai Brith Canada accepted Findlay’s non-apology, but cautioned that it may not have been entirely genuine.

“While we accept Ms. Findlay’s apology, we would have preferred she more directly address her own hurtful actions in re-tweeting this hateful content and that she, like all political leaders, should understand the impact of their words in fostering antisemitism,” reads an unsigned statement from B’nai Brith Canada.

This ambivalence may be informed by B’nai Brith’s own history of dabbling in Soros conspiracism.

In 2016, B’nai Brith Canada’s website posted a brief post by Jordan Zaitchik entitled “Jewish Billionaire George Soros Funds Groups That Support Boycotts of Israel.”

It lists various civil society groups that have received funding from Soros’s Open Society Foundation for their work in Israel and Palestine, such as Adalah and the New Israel Fund, falsely claiming they all support the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement targeting Israel, depicting Soros as the hidden hand behind it.

The piece also mentions a \$45,000 grant the foundation made to Black Lives Matter, a fact which is itself the basis of far-right conspiracies. And it’s still up on their website four years later.

This fixation on the finances of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs dovetails with the agenda of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has long sought to criminalize NGOs critical of Israel, a brazen violation of civil rights that an organization with as honourable a history as B’nai Brith ought to squarely oppose.

But blind support for Israel’s right-wing government leads many of those who purport to represent the Jewish community to overlook anti-Semitism in quarters that are staunchly pro-Israel, like the Conservative Party, while magnifying those that aren’t.

In perhaps the most egregious example, B’nai Brith Canada co-sponsored a 2018 event with far-right political commentator Ben Shapiro, who has said American Jews who voted for President Barack Obama, are "Jews in name only." Shapiro was an online favourite of the 2017 Quebec mosque shooter, who visited his Twitter feed a few times a day prior to the shooting.

This is not the way to represent the Jewish community, with its many multitudes.

Perhaps some extra t’shuva is in order for some of our community leaders.

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter for Alberta Jewish News.

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May you all be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life for a year of sweetness and peace.

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

from the

Sources

Balanced Budgets

by Eliezer Segal

Jewish religious tradition portrays Rosh Hashanah as the day on which all humanity passes in judgment before the Almighty. The solemn imagery of the “*Untanneh Tokef*” hymn conveys the high stakes of this judgment: “Who will live and who will die” - who will or will not be granted a full natural lifespan, who will die peacefully and who suddenly, painfully or tragically?

Amid such gut-wrenching life-and-death scenarios, we might be forgiven if we are not particularly impressed by a more prosaic verdict that is ascribed to the New Year judgment: “Who will be reduced to poverty and who will enjoy wealth?”

The Talmud, however, singles out this aspect of our annual audit for special consideration. Rav Ta lifa the brother [or father] of Rabinai of ozai taught: “All of a person’s livelihood is allocated from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, except for the expenses related to the sabbaths and festivals, and the costs of the children’s Torah education. As regards these, if one spends less, then his allotment will be reduced, but if he spends more, then the allotment will be increased.”

The basic themes of Rav Ta lifa’s teaching are familiar ones: As an incentive for us to repent and mend our behaviour during the “days of awe,” we should bear in mind that the sizes of our incomes and of our grocery carts for the coming year will be determined in proportion to how we fare in our annual performance review.

Furthermore, Rav Ta lifa insists, we are encouraged to be generous when it comes to the costs of religious activities, and not focus too narrowly at the bottom line. We ought to have faith that the Almighty will arrange somehow for our incomes to be supplemented so as to cover the deficits. Rabbi Yom Tov Ishbili noted that the Talmud mentioned sabbaths, holidays and education as common examples, but that the same rule would apply equally to other religious precepts.

Rashi approached the passage from a narrower and more practical perspective. The point was not so much about how your virtuous or sinful conduct can affect your

economic prosperity in the coming year. Rather, Rashi regarded the Rosh Hashanah judgment as analogous to the submission of an annual budget by a CFO. “Everything that a person is destined to earn during the coming year, which will serve as the basis of one’s livelihood, is budgeted precisely. One should therefore be scrupulous to avoid excessive expenditures, since funds for provisions will not be supplemented beyond the original allocation.”

This is the same principle that would later be restated succinctly by Dickens’ Micawber: “Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen, nineteen and six, result: happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result: misery.”

Rashi may have been impelled to apply his accountancy model to Rav Ta lifa’s teaching in order to resolve the incongruity between the inclusive tone of the first clause and the exceptions advocated at the end. (I personally suspect that somebody in Rashi’s family had been overspending their household budget.)

Unlike Micawber’s £20, however, when the Rosh Hashanah budgets are drawn up most of us do not get to be in the room where it happens, so we cannot be certain how much we were given to spend. Rashi presumably intended that we should be conservative and plan for the worst case, spending as little as we can on nonessential pleasures.

Several commentators were troubled by Rav Ta lifa’s directive to spend lavishly on sabbaths and festivals. It appeared to contradict a famous statement by Rabbi Akiva: “Treat your sabbath like a weekday rather than placing yourself in debt.”

In an uncharacteristic personal reminiscence in his *Arba’ah Turim law code*, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher recalled how, when he was in financial straits, he would often ask his father Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel whether his predicament was severe enough to justify economizing on his sabbath meals. In the end he was inspired by an insight that he found in a commentary on the tractate Avot attributed to Rashi. The Mishnah there juxtaposes Rabbi Akiva’s saying to

Rabbi Judah ben Teima’s exhortation to be “as ferocious as a leopard in carrying out the will of your father in heaven.” From this we may infer that, except for cases of most extreme poverty, we should all be prepared to battle like leopards to enhance our religious observance by trimming our weekday expenses, and trust in the Lord to balance our accounts.

In any case, various authorities quibbled about exactly how poor a person must be before having to “treat their sabbath like a weekday.” If the person does not have the wherewithal to repay a loan, that would seem to qualify - but what if it were possible to obtain the requisite funds from charity funds? And even then, didn’t Rav Ta lifa say that we should place our trust in the Creator and go into debt for the sake of a worthy objective?

The insistence on living within one’s means resonated strongly with Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, the “afe ayyim.” In the chapter about sabbath preparation in his *Mishnah Berurah* compendium he digressed into an impassioned diatribe about how this topic “constitutes a severe reprimand of our own generation.” Too many people fail to keep a proper accounting of their household expenses, and their love of extravagances (in this matter he attaches particular blame to the womenfolk) causes their spending to exceed their earnings. Then in order to keep their financial heads above water they end up indulging in questionable business practices. “This kind of misconduct has been the downfall of many people, leading eventually to crimes of larceny and violence, and even to disgrace and humiliation.” I’m not sure that the situation has improved much since then.

Undoubtedly we could all profit from learning to live within our means ...and subjecting ourselves to a periodic moral audit.

‘From the Sources’ by Eliezer Segal is sponsored by the Zeisler Families of Edmonton, Calgary and New York City

High Holidays 2020

Cont. from page 6

Calgary for Rosh Hashanah and returning for Yom Kippur for at least the last 10 years to attend services at Temple B’Nai Tikvah. This year, Finkelman explains since he is still doing a lot of isolation, “Services are going to be over Zoom.” Being on his own for the holidays is not a new experience. Since the city’s only shul, the Sons of Abraham

Synagogue, closed in 1999, Finkelman who was the synagogue’s last president, recalls how “a couple of times I would take the Machzor and go down to River Valley and read.”

He continues, “The High Holidays are as much about being with the community as about prayer and this is why I started to come into Calgary - for the community. This year is going to be different. The services at Temple have been very soothing for the soul and fulfill my needs. I’m going to miss being there. But I’m a pragmatist. This is what we have to do to have a safe community, and hopefully, we’ll be back next year. *L’shana haba’ah*.”

Finkelman, who grew up in Toronto and attended a Conservative Synagogue, explains, “It’s a very small community here in Medicine Hat. It will be very introspective but for Yom Kippur that’s what it’s supposed to be about.”

Finkelman tells how he has been very busy during the pandemic and has maintained social and communal connections, “I’ve been maintaining a cohort of friends on Zoom, coffees, walks while keeping six-foot distance. The computer has been a godsend.”

Temple B’Nai Tikvah has adapted to the pandemic by providing Shabbat services over Zoom and Rabbi Mark Glickman explains that the congregation will be doing the same for the High Holidays. He and only a few other people, including the technical crew, will be in the Temple building live streaming the services while everyone else will be at home. He explains, “This is based on Jewish values of *pikuach nefesh*, reflecting the idea that we do everything that we can to protect life.”

Rabbi Glickman observes, “I’m seeing two things that are in conflict with one another. People are really feeling isolated and want connection and on the other hand seniors are feeling scared to be in large groups. Seniors are feeling both of those particularly strongly. Our community without the participation of our senior members is horribly incomplete. One of the reasons we’re doing this on Zoom is so that seniors can participate.”

L'Shanah Tova
Umetukah

to Calgary's Jewish Community
from Rabbi Mark Glickman
and the Board of Trustees




Email: office@bnaitikvah.ca
for details about our ZOOM
High Holiday Services

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*Shanah tovah
to the entire
Jewish community
of Calgary.*



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Board Members and Staff of JFSC
would like to invite you to our AGM.

Monday, September 21, 2020 @ 7:00pm
Everyone is welcome.

AGENDA


- Adoption of 2019 AGM minutes
- Approval of amended bylaws
- Adoption of the 2019/20 audited financial statements
- Appointment of the 2020/2021 Auditors
- Election of the slate of Directors for 2020/2021

Please join us via Zoom.

Register by calling Peta at 403.692.6389 or email petag@jfsc.org

\$18 membership required in order to vote.

We look forward to seeing you.

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Deadline is September 30, 2020

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