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# JNF Gala in Edmonton raises the bar

By Deborah Shatz

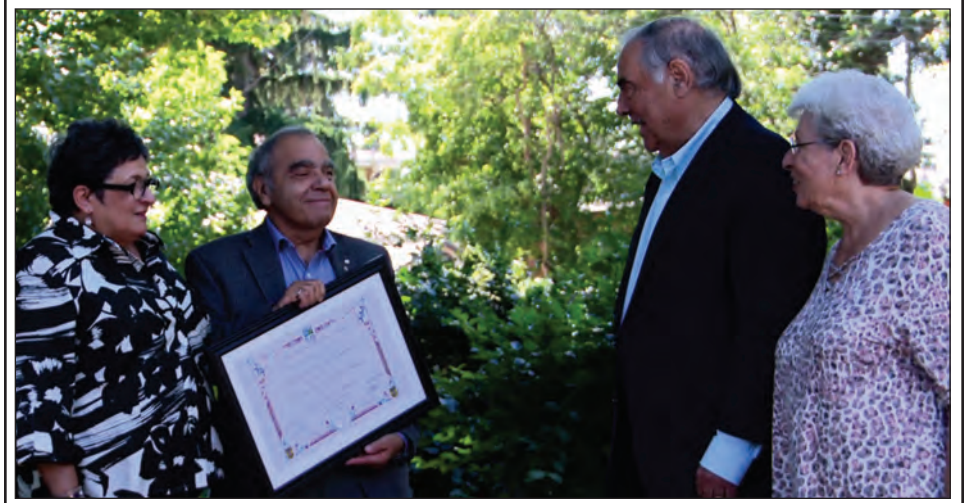
The 2020 Edmonton JNF Negev Gala was a thoroughly entertaining virtual event that paid tribute to two exceptional honourees - Odette and Jacob Masliyah.

On August 27, attendees tuned in to watch the inspirational story of the Masliyahs who separately migrated from Baghdad to Edmonton, met, married and built a life and family together. Over four decades, they committed themselves to family, community, education and heritage, and they were instrumental in building a strong and vibrant Jewish community in Edmonton.

As the attendees got comfortable in their own homes, the event started at the Fantasyland Hotel where Elaine and Ram Romanovsky were all dressed up and waiting for the rest of the guests to arrive. They started at 7 pm to bicker on air: "Where is everyone? We didn't get the email that the event was not in person. I'm hungry - is there no meal?" It was light-hearted banter and a very clever way to start the evening which had switched to an online format when the Covid-19 pandemic prevented large indoor gatherings in March 2020.

Jared Paull, president of Reel Mensch Productions emceed and produced the event. Attendees were treated to an engaging, creative short film that moved seamlessly from lighthearted comedy to heartfelt testimonials and from an engaging history lesson, to an affirmation of communal Jewish values. Yasher Koach to the Masliyahs, Event Chairs Sue and Alvin Winestock, JNF Edmonton Director Jay Cairns, Reel Mensch Studios and many others for their creative innovation! The bar for virtual galas has now been raised very high.

Educational components of the event included a fascinating presentation from Sephardi Voices David Langer and Dr. Henry Green, as well as an informative video about JNF Canada. The Beit KKL JNF Canada



Negev Gala honourees Odette and Jacob Masliyah are presented with the JNF certificate of honour from event co-chairs Sue and Alivin Winestock during a virtual Negev Gala event.

House of Excellence in Sderot Israel is the beneficiary of the Edmonton Negev Gala and it will provide educational opportunities for students living in the area.

Highlights of the 'gala film' included two segments of 'Honourees in Cars Drinking Coffee' clearly an homage to

*Continued on page 9*

# Let's make 5781 a better year

By Rabbi Steven Schwarzman



Rabbi Steven Schwarzman

In the midst of the pandemic, it's not hard to write off 5780 as an exceptionally bad year. Never mind what we were all able to accomplish during the year (including on Zoom), never mind the good things that we did, never mind the sins that we were able to avoid (especially the habitual ones). For too many families around the globe, including mine, loved ones were taken by the virus. Economic disruption was everywhere. And perhaps worst of all, we were unable

to be with our loved ones on happy and sad occasions. We were unable to shake hands, let alone hug. Seniors and young singles were alone, and families with children were forced to adjust to suddenly being with each other all the time.

Near the end of the Talmud's tractate Megillah, Reish Lakish says that the curses (and the blessings) in Leviticus are read so that an aliyah neither begins nor ends with a curse. We add a verse at the beginning and at the end to avoid this. With regard to the similar reading in Deuteronomy, which is less harsh, it's not necessary to add verses. Okay, fair enough. But Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar goes on to say that Ezra the Scribe arranged the Torah reading schedule to make sure that the curses in Deuteronomy are read before Rosh Hashanah, so that, as either Abaye or Reish Lakish explain in different oral traditions, the old year and its curses would be over before the new year begins.

occur, and they occurred even in our ancient past. And the Talmud is here to remind us that good years will return. We will get through this, both here in Edmonton and around the world. It seems likely that, sometime in 5781, one or several vaccines will be ready. And we will emerge from the pandemic, not without real scars, but also perhaps with a renewed understanding of what's truly important in our lives.


And this is what Rosh Hashanah is all about. This year, we may be able to go deeper in examining what we do out of habit that doesn't add to our lives. We may see more clearly what we need to do differently now that we have been through such a difficult time. We may find it a little easier to give up our grudges and reconcile with friends and family members. The pandemic is a curse, not a blessing. But we can derive blessings from what we have learned and make 5781 a better year.

More than ever, may we all be inscribed in the Book of Life, so that we can make this year one of blessings.

As difficult a year as this has been, we can take comfort in knowing that it is not unique. Bad years

*Rabbi Steven Schwarzman is the spiritual leader of the Beth Shalom Synagogue in Edmonton.*

*Shana Tova!*

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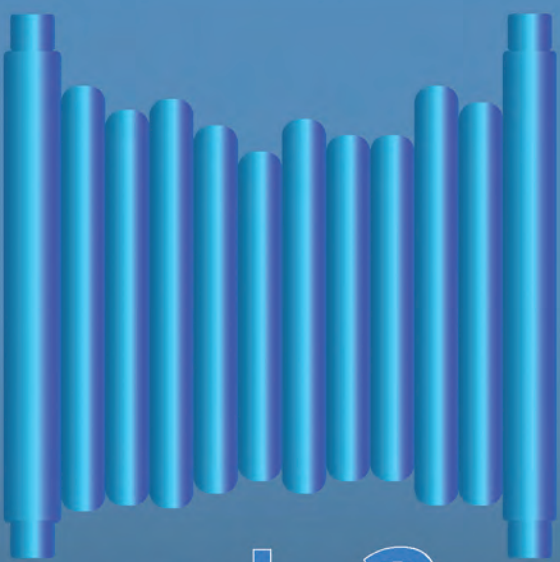
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# Come celebrate Rosh Hashanah with thousands of friends virtually!

By Susan Schiffman

This year, Edmonton UJA kicks off the Campaign and the New Year with a star-studded, authentically Canadian virtual holiday party on September 13th. Like so many things this year, the UJA Kickoff has been re-imagined for the new pandemic normal. No concert at The Citadel. No Hors d'oeuvres. No schmoozing with friends over a glass of wine before the show. So, what will we do instead? We put our heads together with creative minds from throughout Canada's Federation network and came up with a virtual happening worthy of our great Canadian Jewish Community. A joint project of the Jewish Federations of Canada, produced by award-winning former CTV News reporter Naomi Parness in collaboration with Shoy Pictures, this Canada-wide virtual show will feature dozens of community members and celebs from coast to coast. It will be both a look back on our Jewish Canada's resiliency through months of crisis, and a forward-looking, upbeat celebration of the New Year to come.

The show will start with a description of the Canadian Jewish community's extraordinary response to the COVID-19 emergency. Through a great selection of photos and videos contributed by the 11 Federation communities, a story of generosity, strength and hope will be told. Across the nation, donors contributed generously to Federation emergency campaigns and volunteers looked beyond their personal safety to deliver Passover Meals, groceries, protective gear, and basic necessities to the sick,

the elderly, and the isolated. And in spite of the crisis, all of our communities found innovative ways to entertain and engage people through an array of outdoor performances and virtual events that will make you laugh, cry and be proud to support Federation. The show is a splendid chronicle of Jewish Canada's resilience and spirit.

Moving on from the tough year behind us, the show turns to the year ahead, telling a Canadian Rosh Hashanah story through the eyes of many characters, ranging through children from Edmonton, (including Nava and Lexi Shafir and Jeremy Toubiana) Winnipeg and Hamilton to big stars from Montreal, Toronto and beyond. Just for Laughs Founder and notorious mischief-maker, Andy Nulman, will host the show, guaranteeing fun for all. Adorable kids will talk about what they hope for in the New Year – you will see some familiar little faces from Edmonton as well as old friends and relatives from across Canada. Meanwhile, Bub-bies from around the nation will share Rosh Hashanah recipes. Don't miss Edmon-ton's own Paula Weil, who will finally reveal the secrets of her Apple Challah. Holocaust survivors from throughout the country will bring us wise words about enduring hardship and celebrating life. Anna Linetsky, from Edmonton, will give some uplifting advice

for the New Year. We will also have New Year's greetings from our Campaign Chair Howie Sniderman, our CEO Debby Shoctor and cameo appearances from Matt and Tami Cairns and family, and organizations such as Jewish Family Services and the Aviv Dancers.

As for Canadian Jewish celebrities, jazz virtuoso Sophie Milman will sing a few spell-binding numbers and The Maccabeats will delight us with their own very special brand of Jewish Acapella. There will be other surprise performances as well as shout outs from Dr. Ruth, Henry Winkler, Natan Sharansky, and many more. And, it would not be Rosh Hashanah without the Shofar, so get ready to hear some of the best Tekiahs, Sevarims, and Teruahs from around Canada. Keep an eye out for the guy in the hat, he is our own Seth Glick.

And it is all free and happening in your living room on September 13th at 5:30 PM. No parking ap needed! Just pull up a chair and enjoy the show. You need to register to get the link, so go to the Federation website [Jewishedmonton.org](http://Jewishedmonton.org) to do so. If you miss the fun on September 13th check the Federation website, beginning September 14th, for a link to the recording. Shanah Tovah and Have a Blast!

# High Holidays 2020: What will Jewish Seniors be doing?

By Irena Karshenbaum



*Shana Tova U'Metukah, Edmonton!*  
Wishing you a wonderful and sweet holiday season.



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, succumb 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

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# Community and advocacy during uncertainty



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.*

## Celebrating Rosh Hashanah while social 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.

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# 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 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. (though she was not given a position on their 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

## A blast for everyone



Don't miss out! Chabad of Edmonton will have an outdoor Shofar blowing on Sunday Sept. 20, 2020 at 12:45 PM on the lawn of the Chabad House 502 Wolf Willow Rd.

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.

# 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 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.

Meanwhile, the king of Saudi Arabia has thrown cold water on the assurances of Jared Kushner, that all Arab countries will follow the United Arab Emirates' lead and normalize ties with Israel.

Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz said his country would not pursue normalization with Israel until there is peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The king told Trump that his kingdom appreciates efforts made by the United States to bring about peace but that Saudi Arabia would like to see a peace treaty based on the Arab Peace Initiative, which was proposed by Saudi Arabia in 2002, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported.

Saudi Arabia opened up its air space to allow an airplane carrying Israeli and U.S. diplomats to fly through its airspace, offering some hope that it might be open to changing its relationship with Israel. The kingdom later announced that it would allow any airplane from any country arriving or departing from the UAE to use its airspace.

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We apologize for any errors or omissions. If your name has been missed, please contact the UJA office at 780-487-0585 or susans@edjfed.org

# Places of inspiration



By Rabbi Gila Caine

*“Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement.”* (Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel)

The power of these words, taught to me by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, grounds me as I weave our Tfillot for High Holidays. In Heschel’s theology our synagogues turn from places of rest to places of action. No more places that uphold society’s problematic aspects, only places of honest questioning. This idea draws a large question mark over the entrance to each of our Batei Knesset (Houses of Gathering) and asks, what for? Why do we gather? Beyond the legitimate need for Jewish companionship and the craving for familiar melodies and prayers, what is the meaning of this gathering? For generations now, the Reform movement has answered with social action and the ethics of Tikkun Olam. The creative transformation of our liturgy speaks to that, with examples such as the Amidah prayer in which we now mention our foremothers Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel, Bilhaa and Zilpah, along with forefathers Avraham, Issac and Yaakov. This is just one

instance where both gender and class hierarchies are collapsed.

But reading over Rabbi Heschel’s words, my mind is no longer quiet. What liturgical movement are we expected to create? How do I understand “revolution” in this context? The Merriam Webster online dictionary gives this etymology: “from Latin revolvere to revolve.” To revolve is to roll or move around an axis (physically or mentally); it is to create movement while maintaining a centre. In Hebrew, the word / “chag” (holiday or festival, as in Chag Shavuot) has the same definition: to revolve, to move in a circle around a common centre. Ancient festivals are called “chag” most probably because the ritual involved some form of circle dance or movement.

For liturgical revolution to find a home, we need to create structures that can move but maintain a centre. I am reminded here of the difference between the Mikdash (Temple) and the Mishkan (Tabernacle in the desert). One was a solid (imagined) centre, strong but immovable. The other, the Mishkan, was softer, but helped us maintain our centre in a changing place, while we circled around it. Our synagogues are fashioned after the Mikdash (sometimes shuls are referred to as “Mikdash me’at,” minor temple). This leads them to be physically and mentally [emotionally?] stable, but not as nimble as the tabernacle. Synagogues tend to become more of a refuge from the outside world, which is important, but not always a guide for the wanderings in our fast-changing reality. Perhaps congregations also need a minor tabernacle? [“Mishkan me’at”? ]

What could these little tabernacles look like? One image which came to mind is the Sukkah: a small temporary hut

built for the festival of Sukkot, celebrated for 7 days starting at the full moon of Tishrei. The rules for building a Sukkah ensure that the structure we create both protects us from the elements but enables us to feel them (we should have shade from the sun but must also see the stars). We often teach that the Sukkot remind us of the huts the children of Israel lived in while wandering the desert. This year I would like to suggest they are a reminder of the Mishkan, the sacred gathering place of B’nei Israel in their wanderings. A moveable, soft, sacred structure, giving image to holiness in the wilderness.

During Chag Sukkot (here is that word again!), we leave our strong homes behind, we leave our imagined security and stability, move into a hut, and discover it is beautiful! That is the true revolutionary power of Sukkot – flimsy structures are decorated and made lovely, during the only festival where we are instructed (!) to be joyful. Sukkot reminds us that being outside our comfort zone can be created in joy and done in beauty. Sukkot is a time to imagine what joyfully being part of this world could feel like, and this is what our synagogues, liturgy and ritual should also learn how to do.

In the coming decades of massive change in the environment, society and technology, our Jewish sacred spaces cannot remain only places of refuge. They cannot even remain just places of learning or celebration. Rather, they should become places of inspiration for what our world could look like, portals to the world-as-it-could-be, guiding centres as we walk through the developing wilderness of the unknown.

Rabbi Gila Caine is the spiritual leader at Temple Beth Ora, Edmonton’s Reform Congregation.

# Bring some sweetness to Brussels sprouts

By Ronnie Fein

(JTA) -- In 2008, Heinz conducted a survey that identified Brussels sprouts as America’s most hated vegetable. Even people who never tasted them were naysayers, claiming Brussels sprouts were bitter and smelly.

My mother never cooked them. She feared insects might be hidden among the tightly packed leaves. And when I got married, my husband refused to eat them and joked that if I cooked any he’d file for divorce.

Years later a food editor asked me to write about – yes - Brussels sprouts. My kitchen became a Brussels sprouts extravaganza. I cooked the vegetable every way possible: roasted, stir-fried, steamed. I halved them, shredded them, left them whole. I made them with lemon and with hazel nuts, olive oil, Balsamic vinegar. I used them in hash and

pot pie.

I never imagined how versatile Brussels sprouts are.

My husband tasted every dish, loved most and became a “Brussie convert.” We’ve been feasting on the stuff ever since.

It helped that there are health benefits: Brussels sprouts have loads of vitamins A, C and K; iron, beta-carotene and folic acid. Also, we discovered that despite the strong “perfume,” Brussies are worth cooking. Also, you get familiar with the odor.

Brussels sprouts are sold loose or on stalks. The stalks are cheaper and last longer. You can cook the small ones whole, but it’s best to cut the larger ones.

Because of the pandemic, we’ll just be two for dinner this Rosh Hashanah. Our menu is braised chicken, egg noodles and this blessedly simple dish of Brussels sprouts seasoned with Balsamic vinegar and honey, which are lovely, sweet counterpoints the vegetable’s mild sting. Honey signifies the hope

that the new year will be sweet.

## HONEY-BALSAMIC GLAZED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon Balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon finely grated fresh orange peel

### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Wash and trim the Brussels sprouts (if large, cut them in half).
2. Place the vegetables on the baking sheet. Pour the olive oil over them and toss to coat them. Sprinkle with salt to taste. Bake for about 12-15 minutes, tossing the ingredients once, or until slightly browned around the edges tightly packed.
3. Mix the vinegar, honey and orange peel, pour over the vegetables, toss and bake for another 10 minutes or until the Brussels sprouts are tender. Makes 4 servings.

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**THE WORLD STANDS UPON THREE THINGS: THE TORAH, THE TEMPLE SERVICE, AND THE PRACTICE OF ACTS OF PIETY. (MISHNAH AVOT 1:2)**

Some things do not change, even in 2020: the need for deep and relevant Torah, for prayer which connects us with other Jews, and for taking care of each other. From the first day of lockdown and throughout this Covid19 pandemic, TBO has kept its (virtual) gates open for Torah, prayer and care.

Now, we are delighted to invite you to join us for traditional, creative, online, outdoor-in person services to welcome in 5781! Full dates and times will be advertised as we near the High Holidays.

Here’s a shout out to our board and many volunteers, your ongoing work and creativity make sure TBO isn’t just surviving Covid, but is growing in so many ways. Todah Rabah!

**SHANAH TOVAH U'METUKAH שנה טובה ומתוקה**

JNF Gala *Cont. from page 2*

Seinfeld's famous vignettes. Odette and Jacob's casual conversations while driving in a Range Rover were delightful. They offered insights about their early years – some serious and some joking – in a very clever setting.

Another highlight was the relaxed armchair interview of Odette and Jacob by their good friends and event co-chairs Sue and Alvin Winestock. The two couples were casually sitting in the back yard enjoying a sunny Edmonton day and talking about the Masliyah's lives, their values and achievements. The warmth of the day was matched by the warmth of the conversation and the informal setting allowed their personalities to shine.

"My first class was grade 2," reminisced Odette, who taught at Talmud Torah School for many years. "They were phenomenal kids; of course, I still remember them. Many of them are parents now with beautiful kids and beautiful careers. When I talk about the kids I taught (over the years) or the families at Talmud Torah – it is just like family to me. In Judaism we always say you build a good community on good education."

When asked about the House of Excellence project in Sderot, Jacob, an Officer of the Order of Canada, and renowned researcher, author and lecturer said: "The idea is to have an educational centre. Odette and I are both involved in education, so it was a natural thing to go for. For us being immigrants in Canada (and I don't like that term) we believe in education. And for me personally, I truly believe that the only way to do well anywhere in the world is to have an education because it is yours and it is transportable."

Drinking cappuccino on the balcony at the end of the event, Jacob recapped, "We were very disappointed initially that we could not have a gala dinner with people because it's very nice to see people and friends that you haven't seen in a long time. But now looking at what has been done so far with interviews, with laughing and joking and some pretending here and there – actually it wasn't so bad really."

"Not only are we celebrities, but we are professional talk show guests," added Odette. "It was a win, win situation. As people say, if you have a lemon, you make a lemon juice."

Haha, laughed Jacob. "I've never heard you say that before."

The Edmonton Jewish community - and the community at large - has benefitted tremendously from the lemon



Honourees Jacob and Odette Masliyah reminisced in a very clever segment entitled "Honourees in cars getting coffee." Emcee Jared Paull and his company Reel Mensch Production delivered a very creative and entertaining Negev Gala video production.



Glowing reviews from the 2020 Edmonton JNF Negev Gala

Of course, your stories were fascinating, touching, harrowing and, dare we say educational. We have to say that we were quite thrilled to see where the funds raised are going, such a great use of money.

Mazel tov on your most deserved honour and an inspiring gala. The gala was what many are looking for as an alternative to the standard Gala format. You were "cutting edge" once again.

Wow! Outstanding! Creative, informative, classy and polished. We enjoyed every minute. Mazel Tov again to

you and to all the producers, directors and performers.

Beautifully done, loved the medal scene at the beginning and the chats in the car. Managed to squeeze so much history and facts in so little time.

You shared an important part of Jewish history. Your journeys from Baghdad to Edmonton, as well as those of other Sephardic Jews, were fascinating and courageous.

You are true Canadians ...and how lucky we are that you came here as immigrants to enrich our city, this province and indeed this country!

juice that the Masliyahs have provided for us all over the past four decades. We are extremely appreciative of their warm and dedicated service to our community and to Israel.

"My life-long relationship with the Masliyah family made it very easy to have some fun with them and to create something really enjoyable to watch," said Jared Paull. "It was important for us to use this new format not as a consolation option, but as a privileged way to learn more about our culture, get to know the honourees... and wear our pajamas while we attend the gala."

The funds raised at the 2020 Negev Gala will go towards the creation of the KKL/JNF Canada House for Excellence, in Sderot, the Israeli city closest to the Gaza border.

The KKL/JNF Canada House will serve as an after-school, informal education, empowerment, and enrichment centre for high school youth from Sderot and its surroundings. The aim is to provide students with the necessary tools and skills for academic and personal success. Given its location in a volatile region, the facility will be built to withstand direct missile attacks.

Karen Kayemet I'Yisroel (KKL) is matching donations dollar for dollar so, for every dollar raised at the Edmonton Gala, KKL will contribute the same. JNF Canada invites you to join in creating a better Israel by supporting this innovative education and community project. For more information, to access the film and the informative program book that accompanied the event, contact edm@jnf.ca or 780-48-7881.

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## Recalibrating extras and essentials

By Rabbi Zolly Claman



Rabbi Zolly Claman

The year of 5780 corresponding to the secular year of 2020 will be remembered as anything but ordinary. The world at large experienced a complete upheaval and as individuals there was so much pain, suffering and loss.

This edition of *Alberta Jewish News* for Rosh Hashana 5781, represents a freshly turned page away from the year of struggle. This era, however, did not come without silver linings.

As a parent of young children, I can tell you that when school started it was hard to see them return to other influences. As positive as school can be, there was something exceptional about being able to create our own little bubble and oasis at home. Having them at home with us was a true blessing.

Another silver-lining was the complete re-calibration of what it means to be “essential.” Our lives are blessed with a multitude of extras. We live in a society where the

average person is exposed to around 7000 advertisements per day – each one vying for our emotional investment ultimately blurring the line between need and want, between the essential and non-essential.

We have become accustomed to perceive the extras as essential. Take our phones as an example, where we do pretty much everything from them and where making a simple phone call has become their least used feature! Many times, of course, all the ‘extras’ are beautiful and convenient, but our downfall is perceiving them as needs, thus losing sight of what really is indispensable.

At the start of the lock-down era, we saw the closing of all non-essential business, as society was stripped down to its most fundamental and basic iteration. Hospitals, pharmacies and groceries were what remained functioning, while everything else was forced to close their doors.

Along with the non-essential businesses, synagogues around the globe followed suit. Here was a powerful example of this re-calibration. The essential aspect of Judaism is our personal relationship that needs to be nurtured and cultivated within the home. Coming to synagogue, like being able to do banking on our phone, is the cherry on top. It is beautiful and important, to mold ourselves, our homes and our families into a community – pray and grow together, however Judaism within the home is the only truly essential aspect. What does the Shabbat table look like when there is no kiddush at shul to fall back on? Is there excitement, song and joy that accompany the Friday night candles even without the joint Lecha Dodi at synagogue? Are we committed to the Shema even though no one is watching? These are the essential aspects of our relationship with G-d.

The surreal reality of seeing society humbled to a bare-bones existence encouraged us to scrutinize every aspect of our lives and deem it *essential* or *extra*. Even personally, having done the ‘juggle-struggle’ of balancing being a teacher / camp counselor / friend / father / husband and community Rabbi all in a day’s work, certain aspects of routine had to be reassessed. What would make the cut and be embraced as ‘essential’?

Within a spectrum the answer is most certainly subjective whereas certain things humanity at large agrees upon. The importance of relationships in our lives are essential.

I had a very typical reaction to many at the start of the lockdown; I called old friends and mentors that I had lost touch with through the years to catch up. The extra time on our hands reminded us of the most important asset we have in our lives – our family and relationships.

If there is one commitment we must all make while the world starts to open up this year, it should be to draw a bold line separating the essentials from the extras. With that done we will become much better at making sure that the former never gets sacrificed in order to indulge in the latter.

On Rosh Hashana we will all pray to be sealed in the book of life. May this year bring healing and recovery. And may we all experience it with a refreshed appreciation of the essential components in our lives.

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

כתיבה וחתימה טובה

## Hillel increases its online activities

By Jeremy Appel

Leadership for the Hillels in Calgary and Edmonton say that although this school year poses a unique set of challenges with limits on physical interaction, a shift to more online activity could provide them with the opportunity to reach more students than before.

“It definitely has had an impact, and time will tell whether it’s a positive or negative impact,” says Calgary Hillel director Danielle Braitman.

At the beginning of past school years there was an emphasis on tabling and recruitment at the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University, with an in-person kickoff gathering at the start of the year.

They don’t have an official presence at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, nor the Alberta College of Art and Design, but welcome students from both colleges.

“Calgary Hillel operates on multiple campuses, so the students don’t always have that opportunity to come together,” says Braitman. “We do a split between holding events at the Jewish community centre, a separate venue or doing things on the individual campuses.”

This year, they are moving all their events online, so past activities like BBQs and pool parties are not feasible.

“This presents an entirely new set of challenges, but also a lot of opportunity to engage people who maybe aren’t so comfortable in a group setting, or don’t have a vehicle, or have more time constraints, to give them that chance to connect,” Braitman said.

On average, there are about 20 students in Calgary signed up with Hillel each year, she said.

Since Calgary’s post-secondaries are largely commuter campuses, it’s been a challenge in past years to bring all the students together for Shabbat dinners, since they often have them with their families, says Braitman.

This year, they will be hosting virtual Shabbat and Havdalah services to gauge student interest, with the goal of doing them in person once physical distancing is relaxed.

Hillel is putting together welcome packages for their membership this year, providing them with Shabbat and Havdalah ritual kits, as well as wellness kits to provide students with mental and physical health resources, she added.

Braitman says Hillel is hoping to engage more Jewish graduate students, who often don’t have the time to participate in extracurricular activity.

“We’re hoping that with these virtual platforms, we’ll see an increase in availability for those students and a little bit of a different vibe for Hillel altogether,” she said.

Edmonton Hillel is taking a more blended approach, with smaller in-person gatherings, in addition to virtual events.

Lior Erlich, Edmonton Hillel’s president, says their face-to-face events will require students to RSVP and will mostly take place outdoors, so they can ensure appropriate physical distancing.

“At the same time, we still want to bring out this sense of community, because it can feel very isolating for different people who aren’t having the same interactions they can usually get from Hillel,” said Erlich. “We want to maintain this communication between others who can feel they are part of the Jewish community that is there to support them and have their backs. Everyone will still have as much fun as we normally have.”

Edmonton Hillel has its main operations at University of Alberta, but also has students from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and MacEwan University, as well as Grade 12 students who are going into university, she added. Typically, they have 20 to 30 members.

Some activities, particularly those that generally occur indoors with a large amount of students, such as their Jeopardy-style quiz event, will be moved online.

Erlich says this provides an opportunity to reach more students who may be shy about attending in-person activities.

“They may have more confidence to engage with online events than through direct contact events,” she said.

*Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter.*

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# Starkman Realty Ltd: A fresh perspective



By Daniel Starkman

While on a family road trip to Vancouver this August, I was shocked to witness the streams of homeless people all along the streets of downtown Vancouver. Clearly the drug crisis and homeless situation is perceptibly acute in truly, one of the most beautiful cities in Canada. Edmonton is not without the homeless nor without opioid abuse but in contrast to Vancouver, our city looks pretty good. In terms of the

Real Estate market in Edmonton, it seems Edmontonians in many respects are more fortunate than those who reside

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in the beautiful City by the Sea.

We in Edmonton are lucky not to have an overheated and unrealistic real estate market. The quality of life and affordability of being able to own your own home is a goal attainable for most. With an abundance of services and great public education available to all, I believe that Edmonton is one of the best communities in Canada to buy a home and raise a family.

It may interest you to know some statistics. Residential average prices are up to \$369,805, a 0.68% increase from July 2019, up 2.67% from June 2020. Single family homes sold for an average of \$436,142, a 1.39% year-over-year increase from July 2019, and a 3.06% increase from June 2020. Condominiums sold for an average price of \$225, 138, a 0.97% increase year-over-year, prices are up 2.41% compared to June 2020. Duplex prices dropped 0.41% from July 2019, selling at \$331,963, which was a 0.79% increase from June 2020.

There have also been more sales of single-family homes, condos, and duplexes compared to July of last year. Single family homes pricing increased 3.06%, duplexes came a bit down and condos are up a little. Single family homes averaged 49 days on the market, an eight-day decrease from last year. Condos decreased an average of 63 days on the market while duplexes averaged 55 days on market, an eleven-day decrease compared to July 2019. Overall residential listings averaged 54 days on market.

During the past few months with the Covid-19 pandemic, Edmonton has gone from a shutdown buyers' market to a market that appears to favour sellers. Recently we have had to navigate multiple offers in some situations. It's amazing how fast the market shifted from one scenario to another.

We are considered to be in a seller's market right now in Edmonton and the question is of course, for how long? Many people are on the sidelines watching and thinking "when is the optimum time to buy or sell?" My view, waiting for a short or longer time, won't make a major difference because overall Edmonton prices are relatively stable, and are not fluctuating dramatically. This relative market stability in Edmonton makes this an optimum time to either buy or sell homes. More good news: there appears to be an abundance of investment opportunities in and around Edmonton.

Either as buyer or seller Edmonton is a city of opportunity and a great place to live and work. Perhaps Covid 19 has reinforced our sense of community and on that note, I would like to wish the entire Jewish community, A Happy Healthy and successful New Year. Shana tova!

Daniel Starkman is the owner/operator of Starkman Realty Ltd. He can be reached at (780) 863-0778 or starkmanrealty@rogers.com.

## 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.

Let's begin our new year together! Shanah tovah or Happy New Year!

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*Shana Tova and best wishes to all our readers and advertisers for a happy, healthy year, from Alberta Jewish News*

# 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.

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.



**Mrs. G, a quirky documentary about designer Lea Gottleib and the award winning *Asia*, are two of the outstanding feature films that will be screened as part of Calgary's first-ever virtual Jewish Film Festival this November.**



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 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](http://www.CalgaryJewishFilmFestival.com).

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

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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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### This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School



Excitement was in the air on the first day back to school at Talmud Torah. Teachers, students, ELC and afterschool care participants and their families were all pleased to be back at school.

  
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# Holiday Greetings



Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year  
from  
Luba Allen

Talmud Torah ELC thanks the Jewish Community of Edmonton  
and Alberta Jewish News for assisting with this holiday fundraising project.  
Best wishes to everyone for a New Year filled with good health and happiness.

Wishing the  
entire community a  
Happy New Year  
from Rosemary  
& Stan Kitay  
and Naomi Beck



## חג שמח

from Darlene & Gordon Bushewsky  
and family



Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah!  
from Susan Baram

Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year  
from  
the Claman Family



Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year  
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Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah  
from  
Nellie Bass & Doug Haines, Samantha,  
Jessica and Clark

Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year from Mira, Gary,  
Noah, Nathan and Leah Campbell

Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year  
from Krista, Robert, Aliya and Daniel Brick



Best wishes to our family &  
friends for a happy, healthy  
Rosh Hashanah from Anita Sky  
& Howard Davidow



Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah from Freda  
& Marvin Abugov, Cera &  
Andrew Dixon and family

Best wishes to our family & friends  
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from Ruth & Ben Coppens



Wishing the entire community  
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Happy & Healthy Rosh  
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שנה טובה  
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A Happy & Healthy New Year  
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Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy,  
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from Francie & Jan Nobleman

Best wishes to my friends  
& family for a Happy  
Rosh Hashana and an easy fast

Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year  
from Jennifer, Colin, Asher  
and Zach Muscat



שנה טובה  
from Megan, Gabriel and Dani Mandel



from  
Hinda Lipshitz

שנה  
טובה  
ומבורכת

from Robin &  
David Marcus  
and family



Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year!  
from Odette & Jacob Masliyeh




Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah  
from the Lipes Family, Regan,  
Dmitry, Benji and Jacob



*Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah! from Leah,  
Dylan, Carter & Ayla Muscat*


**כתיבה וחתימה טובה**  
*from Stacie & Hartley Perlmutter  
and family*



*Best wishes to our family & friends  
for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah  
from  
Renee and Errol Raff and family*


**שנה טובה**  
*Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah from  
Carol & Ron Ritch*

**שנה טובה**  
*from Aubrey  
and Draytin  
Rogerville*



**Shana Tova!**  
*from Mona & Dan  
Rosenberg and family*


*Happy & Healthy Rosh  
Hashanah! from Jane, Hersh,  
Corey, Annie and Derek Sobel*

*Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah!  
from Marina and  
Daniel Starkman and family*

**שנה טובה**  
*from  
Debbie and Howie Sniderman*


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



*from Esther  
& Howard  
Starkman  
and family*

**שנה טובה**  
*Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah  
from Riva & Howard Shein and family*

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



**שנה טובה**  
*Happy & Healthy Rosh Hashanah  
from Lauren, Keith, Ezra and Shira Tankel*


**שנה טובה ומתוקה**  
*from  
Aliya, Andrew, Orly and Simon*

*Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year from  
Natalie, Ken, Marlee, and Jenna Soroka*



*from  
Jonathon,  
Zac  
and Gabriella Tankel*


Best wishes to our family & friends  
for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah  
from  
Paula & Eric Weil and family




Best wishes to our family &  
friends for a happy, healthy  
Rosh Hashanah  
from Sue & Alvin Winestock

*Happy & Healthy  
Rosh Hashanah*


*from  
Connie & Danny  
Zalmanowitz*




*from  
Anna, Forrest,  
Adina and  
Naomi  
Zeisler*




*Wishing everyone a healthy  
New Year, filled with sweetness  
from the simple things.  
With love and care,  
the Winterstein family.*




*Best wishes to our family & friends  
for a happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah*




*from June Ross  
and Barry  
Zalmanowitz*



*Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year from  
Jodi, Michael, and  
Rebecca Zabudowski*




*Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year  
from  
Hal Zalmanowitz*



Best wishes to our family &  
friends for a happy, healthy  
Rosh Hashanah  
from Freya & Lewis Wasel

**שנה טובה**  
*from Shirley Goldberg and children,  
grandchildren and great-grandchildren*



*Wishing the entire community  
a Happy New Year from  
Stacey, Erin, Jordyn,  
Abby and Zoe Wright*



**ALBERTA Jewish News**

Our next edition prints  
on October 5, 2020.  
The deadline is September 30, 2020

For information email [albertajewishnews@shaw.ca](mailto:albertajewishnews@shaw.ca)

## High Holidays 2020 *Cont. from page 4*

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 hard on seniors who are living on their own. They are finding it very, very hard. 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 and its very hard. 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 Sedar, 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 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 it’s about prayer and this is why I started to come into Calgary was 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 be missing 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 Medicine Hat. It will be very introspective but for Yom Kippur it’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.”

Calgary’s 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. Him 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 another 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 that seniors can participate.”

## Masks and Glee at Talmud Torah



By Moreh Ari Sniderman

Three days before schools closed indefinitely, our students and staff gleefully masked up for the novelty of Purim. Reconvening nearly six months later on the verge of Rosh HaShannah, masks are mundane but the glee of attendance is novel.

You know there’s something strange in the world when summer break is over and kids couldn’t be happier. They listened patiently to protocols and practiced diligently, put paper in their binders, and got back to work.

All the parents, our students, and we the staff, know that it might not last. We all miss those who have gone for online learning. But we have a new, novel appreciation for being and learning together again. Shana tova to all our students, their parents, and all!



Wishing all the Jewish community a Happy New Year



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**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.

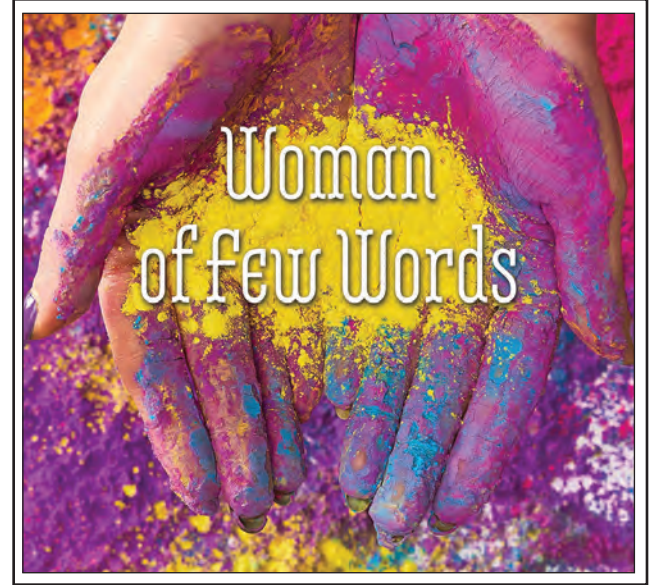
Cheri describes an early life filled with friends and family that would be familiar to many of us growing up in Edmonton and Calgary. At 16, much to her objection, her family moved to Vancouver. During her teenage years she dabbled in the culture of the late sixties, complete with vegetarianism, yoga 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](http://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](http://dystoniacanada.org).

**Link in and Learn: LIR Goes Zoom!**

By Susan Lieberman

The Jewish Seniors' Centre's Learning in Retirement courses, beginning October 13, start right on your screens. The Zoom format will provide exciting learning opportunities!

Kathleen Silverman returns with a new course for art lovers, *Armchair Art: Art Museums of New York City*. Kathleen's followers appreciate her comfortable pacing

and easy manner of interacting with her class. She says, "While I'd rather be in the same room as my students and will miss the in-person interaction with participants, I'm excited to teach this year's course on Zoom."

We may not be travelling to New York this year, but we can have virtual tours of galleries/museums both large and small on the websites Kathleen has explored. Of the new challenge of teaching in the virtual format, Kathleen says, "Participants can relax in the comfort of their own homes as we examine the artworks and some of the structures they're in. It will be a learning adventure in every sense, for participants as well as myself!" Her classes take place on Tuesday afternoons, beginning October 13, from 1 to 3 pm.

Dave Baker, musicologist at the Winspear and longtime Centre instructor, takes us on an historical journey of keyboard instruments with *Beautiful Machines: A History of Keyboard Instruments*. From the pre-Renaissance classical music to computer-assisted synthesizers, the keyboard instruments evolved with the changing times

and technology. Dave will trace the history of the instruments, as well as the artists who mastered them. He says, "I hope people like the human stories that make up the history of keyboard instruments, and I hope they get to hear music that they love, and also discover music new to them." We can sit back in the comfort of our homes and listen to what Dave has to share. Dave's class begins Wednesday, October 14, from 10 am to noon.

Rabbi David Kunin, former rabbi of Beth Shalom Synagogue and presently the rabbi of Beth Shalom Chevra-Shas in Syracuse, New York, presents *Turning Points in Jewish History*. Of our three-thousand year history, Rabbi Kunin says, "There have been many points of transition, necessitating changes in all our modes of existence." He will trace turning points and the responses our ancestors and our contemporaries have made, from the destruction of the Temple to current times. He will examine how, as a people, we "have confronted the world and ensured our tradition and people would survive and thrive." His class begins Monday, October 19, from 1 to 3 pm.

Fees for the six-week courses are \$70 for members and \$85 for non-members. Register by calling 780-488-4241 by September 17, before the High Holidays.

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# What is Chevra Kadisha in Edmonton?

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

On May 26th, 1907, the Edmonton Hebrew Association purchased what is today, the city's Jewish cemetery. For 113 years the Chevra Kadisha of Edmonton has seen to the observant burials of the local Jewish community – but just as importantly, they have attended to the needs of mourning family members.

“There is a 24-hour phone number for families to contact us,” explained the not-for-profit organization's president Rhoda Friedman. “For the person who has the phone, it's nerve wracking,” added longtime member Jim Heilik. “The phone is lying on the table next to the bed, and when it rings, you jump – so each volunteer only gets a two-week shift.”

For over 100 years the group has partnered with Connelly-McKinley, an Edmonton-based funeral home. “We are a burial society, not funeral directors,” clarified Friedman. “Our objective is to take care of everything so that the family doesn't have to worry about details,” Heilik elaborated. With a direct online connection to Connelly-McKinley, the Chevra Kadisha is able to streamline the process of registering the death, making arrangements for transporting decedents to the chapel for burial preparations and to the cemetery for the funeral.

Edmonton's Chevra Kadisha, comprised of about 60 active volunteer members, works with families as they face some of the most difficult moments of their lives. “When there is a death, the family contacts us, then we ask the bereaved to stay with the decedent until we can arrange for transportation, because the body must be accompanied at all times until burial,” said Friedman. A person, called a shomer, stays with the body, saying prayers until departure to the cemetery. “We have several shomrim, and they take turns,” she added.

Both Friedman and Heilik agree that this is a difficult duty to undertake – one that invariably goes hand-in-hand with deep solitary reflection. In the Chevra Kadisha's modest downtown office, adorned with a dozen or so photographs spanning past decades, a wall of cabinetry houses an unassuming Murphy-bed to accommodate the shomrim as they safeguard the body of the deceased.

Although the phone may not ring during a volunteer's two-week rotation, if the society is contacted, everyone must be ready with all hands on deck. “I didn't calculate it myself, but one of the phone carriers has estimated that the average funeral involves about 13 phone calls: Connelly, the family, the cemetery, the rabbis, the shomer, the person who prepares the body. I know when I have the phone, I'll have my landline, my cell phone and the Chevra phone – calls are incoming, calls are outgoing – because you really can't waste any time,” explained Heilik.

Everyone at the society is keenly aware of the many manifestations of loss and grief. Reflecting on her

own experiences working with bereaved families, Friedman commented: “Nobody mourns in the same way. As we are registering a death, there is genealogical information that we record. This stage of the process gives the family space to really remember and reflect on the person, where they came from, what they did. And people start to talk – and we listen. It's a very meaningful time.” Friedman did clarify that although the Chevra Kadisha supports families with their grief, it is the preparation of the body and funeral arrangements that they are focused on.

Unlike standard North American funerals, the Chevra Kadisha approaches all burial preparations in the same way. The body of the deceased is prepared according to Jewish ritual, the tachrichim (burial garment/shroud) and kosher casket are the same for everybody. “There's no menu of things to choose from,” said Heilik. “People don't select from an assortment of different caskets, there's no upgrades, no fancy additions – there's one fee for everyone, and everyone is treated equally.”

As a not-for-profit, their prices are reviewed annually, he explained. “The fee represents our annual costs, which include cost for indigent funerals, planned repair and maintenance to the equipment, the chapels and the cemetery itself; increasing costs from our vendors, future development and, because this cemetery will have to be cared for in perpetuity, contributions to a perpetual care fund. The current cost per funeral is \$10,500 plus GST. We are not able to sell plots, however we do allow people to make arrangements for estate planning for the terminally ill and elderly.”

“Although,” interjected Friedman, “we do, of course, have cases where people cannot afford the burial, and we don't turn anyone away.” All Jews wishing to be buried by the Chevra Kadisha can have their final wishes respected.

The society maintains strict rules about how matzevot (headstones) look, although they do not handle unveilings. Uniquely, Edmonton's Chevra Kadisha is one of the last burial societies that sews their own burial shrouds.

“Some of the women who sew get together a few times a year to sew the tachrichim – we do it right upstairs,” said Friedman gesturing to a loft above the main office.



The Edmonton Jewish Cemetery has been serving the community for more than 100 years.

“For men we include their tallit if the family chooses. If the family does not provide a tallit then we provide them with one.”

The Chevra Kadisha, depending on the family's instructions, will contact rabbis or designated officiants to conduct the service. Both Friedman and Heilik expressed frustration with the restrictions necessitated by COVID-19.

“Since the pandemic began, we've really had to adjust how we do things,” explained Heilik. “A Zoom shivah is not a substitute.”

Nevertheless, during the planning of a funeral, the Chevra Kadisha contacts all its male members in order to ensure that an Orthodox minyan will be present to recite kaddish. “We do things the Orthodox way so that we can serve the needs of everyone. There is no room for interpretation.”

Many Edmontonians have, unfortunately, had occasion to visit the city's Jewish Cemetery for a funeral, an unveiling, or yahrzeit. But what the Chevra Kadisha does goes beyond what is immediately apparent. The volunteers provide a valuable service at the most vulnerable of times.

“What we do is not pleasant, but it is fulfilling,” offered Heilik. They seek to support families, while adhering to Halakic ritual as the deceased is returned to the earth.

“We want people to understand what it is that we do, and the services that we provide,” Friedman finished by saying. Should the need arise, the Chevra Kadisha wants to ensure that members of the Jewish community know where to turn. When the need arises, the number to the 24-hour phone-line is: 780.482.3065.

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