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Cover art: Hannukah Little Dreidel © by Galia Goodman. www.galiagoodman.com
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Hanukkah food hacks for easy and delicious holiday meals

By Lauren Manaker

(Kveller via JTA) - As the Festival of Lights approaches, you might be frying latkes and making applesauce in your dreams. The food is delicious and everyone is content and full, and above all, the meal is mess and stress-free.

Then reality sets in: You are seriously so busy this time of year!

While you may want to instill some tasty Jewish traditions in your family, do you really have time to shred a few bags of potatoes, or knead some finicky sufganiyot dough?

Thankfully, this is 2020 and not 1920. These days, our grocery store shelves are stocked with convenience foods, so use them to your advantage! If you know what to do, it's super easy to make a delicious, "semi-homemade" Hanukkah meal that will still create lasting memories.

Read on for our top Hanukkah food hacks — they're kind of like having your sufganiyot and eating it, too.

For easy latkes, use pre-shredded hash brown potatoes.

No Hanukkah celebration is complete without latkes, but the prep work can be extremely time consuming, tedious, and possibly a bit dangerous (especially if you have little helpers in the kitchen). But here's some good news: It's possible to have tasty latkes not have bloody knuckles.

Refrigerated and bagged shredded potatoes make frying up latkes a snap! Just swap out fresh taters with the bagged alternative in whatever recipe you use, and most people won't even taste the difference.

Pro tip: If you are trying to sneak in more veggies and/or have low-carb guests to entertain, check out my Kveller recipe for Cauliflower Latkes using pre-riced cauliflower instead of potatoes.

Make zero-effort homemade applesauce in an Instant.

Yes, you could just buy some jarred applesauce. But does anyone with teeth (and, um taste buds) actually like the stuff? If you have an Instant Pot — or any pressure cooker — you can make homemade applesauce in a flash!

Just toss eight peeled, cored, and chopped apples into the pressure cooker with 1 cup of water, juice from ½ a lemon, and cinnamon to taste. After the lid is secure and the mixture is cooked on high pressure for 8 minutes, mash up your apples to the consistency of your desire. Of course, you have to then make the most important decision: chunky or smooth?

Pro tip: Put a Johnny Apple Peeler on your Hanukkah wish list to help make the prep even easier! If you don't have a pressure cooker, you can still make easy homemade applesauce.

Use pre-packaged biscuit dough for the easiest sufganiyot ever.

Kids generally love making treats like sufganiyot in the kitchen with their family. But when you don't know if you're having guests over, or if you're generally not the type who enjoys baking, there's a hack for that: Use refrigerated biscuit dough — the kind that comes in a tube — instead. (Just don't tell Bubbie!)

Simply break apart the pre-portioned dough and fry the biscuits in heated oil until golden on both sides. Amazingly, you don't even have to cut circles. The biscuits come pre-sliced! How perfect is that?

If you happen to have a pastry bag in your kitchen, fill it with your favorite jarred jelly and push the tip into the middle of the donut. Squeeze the jelly into the doughnut until it is filled with enough sweetness to make your dentist cringe.

If you don't have a pastry bag, you have a couple of options: You can cut your donuts in half and put some jelly in the middle of the pastry, like a sandwich, or simply serve jelly as an accompaniment to the fried biscuit for dipping.

Pro-tip: Not sweet enough for you? You can also sprinkle some sugar and cinnamon on top of the warm doughnut to add a little more oomph if you wish!

Let your slow cooker make the main dish.

How exactly do you cook a brisket dinner for a crowd while also fulfilling all of your daily (as well as holiday-specific) obligations? By using a slow cooker, of course!



Continued on page 5

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Our cover artist: Galia Goodman

The whimsical holiday art on the cover of this month's *Alberta Jewish News* is by Galia Goodman, a gifted artist.

She is an artist, illustrator and calligrapher whose work is infused with Judaic inspiration and reflects the North Carolina terrain where she lives and other mountain landscapes. Her stunning papercut image *White Tree* is another example of her beautiful art.

"The creative process is as necessary to me as oxygen," explains Galia. "I understand it as my link to the best part of myself. It connects me to both the spiritual and concrete parts of my life, and without it I would cease to function as a whole person. I see the world in terms of color and light, shadows and darkness. The shapes that flow in and out and around me are part and parcel of the work that I create."

Galia has created large works and awards for a number of synagogues, churches, colleges and universities, and non-profit organizations. As a self-defined world citizen as well as a strong feminist, environmental activist, supporter of equal rights for all and education for all, and especially for women, she seeks to practice these beliefs.

Galia's art can be viewed at www.galiagoodman.com.

Art and Scroll Studio is a Zoominar series featuring artist interviews; each episode is dedicated to promoting creators and makers of Judaica.

On December 2, 2020 at 7 pm MST join Art and Scroll Studio for a conversation with Galia about what informs and inspires her work. It's free but you must register at Evenbrite.ca search Art and Scroll Studio or contact artandscrollstudio@gmail.com.



Detail from "White Tree" by Galia Goodman
Papercut, Collage & Acrylic, 20" x 26"

The story of the Hanukkah lights



Cantor Russ Jayne

By Cantor Russ Jayne

Stories have great power. We tell stories about ourselves and about our communities because they give our lives meaning, and they help us navigate between the past and the future. We use stories to help us make sense of the world and our place in it. Not far behind the seemingly innocent plots of many of the stories we tell about our community's religious history lie profound cultural responses to our most pressing questions about what it means to be a human being and how to live life well.

The holiday of Hanukkah offers us at least two stories, which seek to explain why its observance may be compelling. Of course, there is the exciting and courageous story of the Maccabees' military victory and their role in reclaiming a sense of Jewish national autonomy. What grade-school child, or even Jewish adult doesn't love to hear or tell tales about the physical acts of heroism performed by our Maccabee brothers and sisters? Competing with this story of military achievement is the pious narrative of the oil lasting for eight days and the rededication of our holy Temple, a deeply inspiring moment in our people's history.

While each of these stories serves different aspects of our Jewish identities, I would like to share a slightly different recounting of the story of the miracle of Hanukkah, as expressed by Jacob Falk, better known by the title of his book, the *Penei Yehoshua*.

The true nature of the miracle of Hanukkah according to the *Penei Yehoshua* is not that one vial of ritually pure oil miraculously lasted for eight days. Indeed, even if they had not found this container of pure olive oil, the menorah in the Temple could still have been kept lit. The *Penei Yehoshua* reminds us that even open, ritually unfit containers of oil could have been used for the lighting of the menorah after the Temple was rededicated. There is a very interesting law which permits the use of things rendered impure provided they are used for communal needs. So, in truth, there really wasn't a need after all for the miracle where one day's worth of pure oil lasted for eight days. Given this understanding, the *Penei Yehoshua* asks us to reconsider the way we tell the story of Hanukkah and, consequently, to also reconsider its religious meaning.

The story of the oil lasting for eight days does relate a miracle. The question is, how do we interpret the story, and where do we attach meaning? The power of the miracle that G-d performed was not providing oil that we would not have had otherwise. Rather, G-d kept a small quantity of oil miraculously aflame for eight days in order to communicate to the Jewish people that G-d was present in their community. The miracle of the oil was that G-d gave the Jewish community, the very people who had suffered so greatly

in their war against the Greeks, a clear sign that G-d had not abandoned this holy nation.

Despite G-d's silence, or even G-d's seeming absence, G-d is close. As a result of G-d's profound love for the Jewish people, G-d wanted to comfort us and not let us slip into despair because of a frustration at the inability to perceive G-d's immanent presence. The lit menorah is G-d's eternal sign to the Jewish people and all of humanity that G-d does hear us, and responds to our yearning to be in G-d's presence. G-d ultimately wants intimacy with us as much as we seek intimacy with G-d.

When we attach this story of the meaning of Hanukkah to the ritual of lighting our *hanukkiyot*, we affirm our conviction in the belief of the immanence of a caring G-d. In every generation, the Hanukkah candles are testimony that G-d is present and desires intimacy with us. The lights of Hanukkah and the story behind them are our bright light against darkness and despair. The flames dancing from our *hanukkiyot* announce our belief that there is not even a thin wall between us and G-d.

As I face the world this December, this is the story I need to tell to myself, and one I hope you will tell to your families.

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

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Camp BB Riback plans for summer 2021

By Maxine Fischbein

(AJNews) - Although COVID-19 put the kibosh on last summer's Camp BB-Riback season, Camp Director Stacy Shaikin says there has been plenty of positive action at the camp which will open registration for summer 2021 this month.

While the trajectory of the pandemic remains uncertain, Shaikin's goal is to get a good forecast of potential camper numbers so that he can staff up for a season that will look a little different than previous ones given the need for stringent COVID precautions.

Camp remains a labour of love for Shaikin, who grew up in Calgary attending what was then the Calgary Hebrew School (now The Calgary Jewish Academy). He spent summers at Camp BB beginning in 1986, and then worked at the camp into his early 20s. His summers at Camp BB spanned the tenures of seven camp directors including his most memorable mentor, Phil Haid.

Shaikin, who previously worked at Enmax, had been considering a career change when the sudden resignation of the previous camp director in spring 2018 paved the way for a "more gratifying" position he could wrap his cap-covered head around.

In previous conversations with friends and camp alumni, Shaikin had found himself thinking "What a great gig it would be to be the summer camp director."

And suddenly he was.

During the first summer season, Shaikin says he leaned heavily on the expertise of long-serving Assistant Director Emily Wolfe and Billy Sky, grandson of the late Bill Meloff. Shaikin also had some family support as his wife Nancy – a community paramedic for AHS – pitched in at the camp infirmary.

Nancy, who was raised outside the Jewish community, was able to look at the camp with fresh eyes.

"She saw that the experience for kids is amazing and that whatever drew my generation to that camp still exists," Shaikin said.

Shaikin, who has always enjoyed roles involving mentorship and leadership, worked hard to get to know his staff prior to that first season, though he was stymied when sorting out the identities of multiple Rachels and

Rebeccas. Then he began again with 218 campers!

It helped that he knew many of the campers' parents and quickly found all kinds of connections with the kids in his care.

Shaikin began to take serious note of the aging infrastructure of the camp. While giving campers a summer to remember, he generated a priority list to improve camp grounds and facilities.

That list included an \$85 thousand replacement of the ropes course, which had hit its 25 year lifecycle, the purchase of pool heaters and the restoration of the Benjamin cabin which had been decommissioned due to deficiencies.

Top of Shaikin's list was the removal of "30 years of junk," that had become part of the camp scenery.

While the prudent decision was made to cancel summer 2020 sessions as COVID-19 cases rose, Pine Lake nevertheless saw a beehive of activity on its shores. Shaikin and rotating crews of bubbled and physically distanced volunteers rolled up their sleeves to take on camp improvement projects. Some 40 youth pitched in, 15 at a time, with reduced mingling to ensure COVID safety.

"It was an unbelievable experience to see these 17, 18, 19, 20 year olds, who were not getting paid, come out and grind for me in whatever role was needed," Shaikin recalls.

Completed and contemplated upgrades at the camp include a new stable fence, deck work at the swimming

Camp BB Riback: A family affair



Anat Ovics with her kids: Noah, Eva and Maya Sharon.

By Maxine Fischbein

(AJNews) - Camp BB Riback is a family affair for the Ovics and Sharon clan. The Edmonton family has been affiliated with the camp for two generations and is hoping that COVID-19 can be brought under control by this summer so that Noah (18), Eva (16) and Maya (13) can once again have fun at Pine Lake.

Their Mom, Anat Ovics, recalls her summers as a BB camper and counsellor with fondness. "It was a fantastic opportunity to meet other Jewish kids from all over Alberta," recalls Ovics, who maintains friendships forged at Camp BB.

"When I hear about my kids' experiences at camp I say oh my gosh, I remember Maccabiah . . . I remember buck buck . . . All these traditions still exist for them, so I'm glad that they get to experience that as well."

Ovics was a camper in the 1980s together with current Camp Director Stacy Shaikin, under whose watch Noah, Eva and Maya attended their last two camp seasons.

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pool and a refit of the waterfront. Within the next few years Shaikin is planning a new amphitheatre to enhance waterfront activities. "It will be beautiful to have services overlooking the lake," he said.

Fundraising for the pool is a current focus and has already netted a generous \$35 thousand from Calgarians Faigel and Lenny Shapiro. Another large gift from the Sam Ousher Switzer Charitable Foundation is devoted to supporting the construction of a new dock.

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HAPPY CHANUKAH

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Torah & innovation at the CJA



Jonah Potasznik

By Jonah Potasznik

At CJA, we believe that Torah is not a “separate subject” from the rest of our lives that begins and ends with the class times noted on student’s schedules. Rather, it is something that is incorporated into the day-to-day rhythm of school life, and brought by students to their homes and families at the end of the day.

The STTEAM (Science, Technology, Torah, Engineering, Arts, and Math) class that students in grades 4-6 are currently engaging in at the CJA, was built with this belief in mind. In STTEAM, students combine modern principles of science, technology and design with the wisdom of our most ancient texts in order to improve their lives and the world around them. Some of our students applied architectural design principles to the *halakhot* (Jewish laws) of building a *sukkah*, using both to understand how the buildings and spaces of our lives are built intentionally to create certain feelings and emotions within us. Other students are in the process of using modern story-telling techniques like stop-motion animation to bring classical Hanukkah-related texts to



On Nov. 18, CJA held a Jungle Theme Day in support of the CJA’s Virtual Scholastic Book Fair. For book fair information visit: cja.ab.ca. CJA Jr High Students have been participating in extracurricular intramurals including golf and volleyball.



life. Sixth graders are in the middle of a “*chiddush* [innovation] thinking” curriculum, based on design thinking popularized by the The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University.

It is quite moving to see students discover and use connections between domains of life they previously regarded as separate. Regardless of the specific project,

they are working on, the big idea for all students is the same: though Judaism and science are both powerful tools for improving the world in their own right, they become even stronger when used together.

Jonah teaches Grade 4 T’filah and Grade 4-6 STTEAM (Science, Tech, Torah, Engineering, Arts, Math) at the CJA

Hanukkah food hacks

Cont. from page 2

This ultimate “set it and forget it” tool allows you to cook, slow and low, tough cuts of meat like brisket without any worries about overcooking.

Even better? About 10 minutes of effort will reward you with a super-tasty result. Just toss a brisket (fat side up) in a slow cooker with some cans of broth, sliced onions, carrots, garlic, and spices. Cook the dish on the high setting of the cooker for about 6 hours, or until tender. That’s it!

Serve your brisket with latkes and a salad, and your dinner is complete.

Pro-tip: For an easy-peasy but delightful serving option, slice up the cooked brisket and make it fancy-looking with some sprigs of fresh parsley.

Fancy up store-bought hummus for an effortless appetizer.

First things first: You can absolutely take a package of store-bought hummus, serve it in its original packaging with some store-bought crackers, and that’s that. We won’t judge! But why not add some color and flavor to an otherwise standard app?

Take your container of ho-hum hummus and spread it onto a shallow bowl. Scoop a small space into the middle of the hummus, and top the dip with extra virgin olive oil, fresh rosemary leaves, crushed pistachios, and pomegranate arils. If you have the time or inclination, you can include some roasted, diced butternut squash as a topping for some extra color. Or add whatever floats your boat! The decorative additions will hide the fact that you didn’t make the hummus from scratch.

Pro-tip: Think beyond pita! Try serving the hummus with fresh veggies or pretzels. Anything dippable will do!

CJA

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בית הספר היהודי בקלגרי

Cleaning up Poland’s forgotten Jewish cemeteries

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) — National Independence Day in Poland has served in recent years as a backdrop for anti-Semitic, xenophobic and violent incidents at nationalist rallies.

Last month, thousands in Warsaw flouted the coronavirus ban on public gatherings and clashed with police who tried to disperse them. The illegal procession on Independence Day, Nov. 11, included a banner that read “no to Jewish demands” — a reference to the efforts pushing Poland to pass legislation offering restitution for property that once belonged to Jews, mostly Holocaust victims.

Compared to previous years, that was relatively tame. In 2017, marchers shouted “White Europe, Europe must be white,” “Sieg Heil” and “Remove Jewry from power.”

But this year in Nowe Miasto, a village situated 35 miles northwest of Warsaw, about a dozen non-Jewish teenage members of the local branch of the International Scouts movement spent their Independence Day quite differently. They were cleaning up the local Jewish cemetery, beating back the overgrown vegetation from around the graveyard’s 10 surviving headstones.

At noon, the members of the Wagabunda 426th Scout team put down their shears and, outside the cemetery, they joined in the customary singing of the Polish anthem, “Poland Is Not Yet Lost,” or “Mazurek Dąbrowskiego.”

The symbolism of that moment was not lost on Michał Laszczkowski, president of the Cultural Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit that organized the Wagabunda cleanup and dozens of others like it in recent years.

“Maybe it was symbolic, but that wasn’t the intention,” Laszczkowski, 38, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “The fact that the cleanup fell on Independence Day was for practical reasons, not to make a statement.”

Lockdowns and school shutdowns in Poland forced the scouts to postpone plans to clean up the cemetery last month, said Laszczkowski, who contacted the Nowe Miasto Scouts at the suggestion of the Mayor’s Office.

“We needed to do it on a school holiday, so we chose Independence Day because most other events were canceled this year anyway,” he said.

The end result is nonetheless appropriate, Laszczkowski said.

“But looking at it now, yeah, I mean it’s symbolic”

because “the people buried there are an important part of Poland’s identity that doesn’t always get the attention it perhaps should on Independence Day,” he said.

Before the Holocaust, Poland was home to 3.3 million Jews. The Nazis and their collaborators killed 3 million of them — about half the total number of Jews murdered in the Holocaust. They also killed about 3 million non-Jewish Poles. Few of the 300,000 Jews who survived the Holocaust in Poland remain there today, according to the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research. The country now has about 4,500 Jews.

The Cultural Heritage Foundation mostly focused at first on sites important to Polish people in neighboring countries, which have territories that used to be part of Poland or are still home to Poles today.

Then, in 2014, Laszczkowski toured the Okopowa Jewish cemetery in Warsaw. The 83-acre site has about 250,000 graves and is among Europe’s largest Jewish cemeteries. It’s also the final resting place of some of Poland’s best-known personalities, including Ludwik Zamenhof, the inventor of the Esperanto language, and Samuel Orgelbrand, who published Poland’s first encyclopedia in the 20th century.

At the time, Laszczkowski recalled, Okopowa “was a jungle, just a jungle.”

“Parts of it looked like a forest because the plants completely covered the headstones,” he said, adding that other headstones were buried in the ground that had accumulated from the leaves that fell off the many trees allowed to grow all over the cemetery (there are about 7,000 trees now).

“I thought to myself: Why are we fixing Catholic churches in Ukraine but don’t do anything about one of the most important cemeteries in Poland?”

Laszczkowski teamed with the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland and became a driving force behind the Polish government’s decision in 2017 to launch a \$28 million investment fund with revenues devoted to restoring and maintaining the Warsaw cemetery.

“If you go now to Okopowa, it still kind of looks like a jungle,” Laszczkowski said. About 2,000 trees there still need to be felled because they are a hazard and large



Members of the Wagabunda Scouts troop haul a fallen tree out of the Jewish cemetery of Nowe Miasto, Poland, Nov. 11, 2020. (Julia Bandurska)

swaths of the cemetery are still covered.

“But when you compare it to 2017,” he said, “you can already see a difference.”

Okopowa is only the tip of the iceberg for the Cultural Heritage Foundation. Poland still has some 800 Jewish cemeteries among the approximate 1,200 that existed before the Holocaust. Laszczkowski’s foundation has matched 120 of the surviving cemeteries with entities he calls guardians – organizations, such as charities, associations or even schools that undertake maintenance and other duties connected to the cemetery.

“Being a guardian can be a complicated affair because Jewish cemeteries are owned by a host of entities ranging from Jewish communities to municipalities to the forestry service and even private landowners,” Laszczkowski said. “You have to coordinate any action with the owner.”

The response to the effort to maintain Jewish cemeteries has been widespread and touching, including by many young people “who’ve never seen a Jewish person in their lives but understand that Judaism has left a big mark on our society,” he said.

But the issue, and especially the Independence Day action, remains a sensitive subject in a country with a surging right wing and widespread popular resistance both to acknowledging the actions of (relatively few) Poles who collaborated with the Germans and resolving the outstanding issue of Jewish property.

The Independence Day event was intentionally kept low-profile, although some local media did cover it, Laszczkowski said.

“We didn’t send any information,” he added. “We informed only local media because, frankly speaking, Poland is a very complicated, divided country.”

“Almost like Israel,” he added jokingly.

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Chanukah: A Secular/Religious Festival for the Ages



Rabbi Mark Glickman

By Rabbi Mark Glickman

To the rabbis of the *Talmud*, Chanukah seems to have been in a category of its own. Unlike other holidays, they don't seem to understand it very well at first. When those rabbis began discussing Shabbat, for example, or Yom Kippur or Pesach, they just dove right into the nature of the celebrations and rituals. But Chanukah was different.

With this holiday, the rabbis opened their Talmudic discussion by asking “*Mai* – what is – *Chanukah*?” These sages, so learned in all things Jewish, almost seemed puzzled by this celebration. “We know what Sukkot is,” they seemed to suggest, “and we’re clear on Rosh Hashanah. But *Chanukah*? What is this thing?”

One of the reasons for their confusion, I think, is that Chanukah has always been the subject of a push-pull tension between secularism and religion. Historians tell us that it started out as a purely military celebration, a festive salute to the heroism and soldierly prowess of the Maccabees in their victory over the Greeks. The story of

the little jar of oil and of G-d’s miraculous intervention only came along about six centuries later, during Talmudic times. It seems that the Jews of those later eras, living as they did at the whim of other ruling authorities, came to realize that a holiday celebrating a time when Jews gave a military whupping to their own ruling authorities was somewhat impolitic.

The Jews of these later times, in other words, took what had been a secular military holiday and transformed it into a religious one. Now, Chanukah would celebrate divine marvels rather than just human achievement. Now, the purpose of the festival would be *pirsum hanes* – public proclamation of the G-d’s miracle – rather than just waving military standards.

That tension between Chanukah as a religious festival and Chanukah as a secular one continues today. Every Chanukah, Jews around the world light chanukkiyot – Chanukah menorahs – in their homes, the flames shining out their windows to share the miracles that we remember. Similarly, we spin dreidles, eat oily foods, and sing songs, all of which invoke memory of the miraculous nature of that little jar of oil first mentioned in the Talmud.

At the same time, Chanukah is also experiencing the pull of the secular. Retailers have Chanukah sales; delis offer Chanukah specials; and the greeting card and wrapping paper aisles in many stores feature Chanukah sections so that they too can cash in on the festival.

Additionally, some Jewish organizations secularize the holiday, too. They conduct Chanukah candle lightings in shopping malls and town squares – places where, say, conducting a Catholic mass would be unthinkable. Religious observances often have no place in the North American public square – Chanukah only gets there because some of us are willing to secularize it.

So, what is Chanukah? It’s all of these things. It’s a secular festival of gifts, games and yummy, high cholesterol foods, and it’s a religious celebration calling us to focus on the awesome power of G-d’s miracles. It’s a holiday in which we rejoice in the courage and military might of our ancestors, and it’s one whose Haftarah comes from Zechariah (4:6) – “It is not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says Adonai of hosts.”

This Chanukah, of course, will be an unusual one for us all. As I write these words, Covid-19 rates are soaring here in Alberta, and as long as these rates continue, it will be irresponsible for us to hang out for very long in the public square. As a result, this year we won’t be spending as much time at the sales and in the malls and at the town-square candle lightings. To do so would be an irresponsible rejection of *pikuach nefesh* – our tradition’s call to protect human life at almost any cost.

But we will be able to be at home this year. We will be able to sing our Chanukah songs, light our Chanukiot, and place them in the window as a proclamation of G-d’s greatness. These aspects of our tradition need not be given up, even during these difficult days.

Pandemics, in other words, make secular celebrations difficult, because those celebrations often occur in the public square. But they still leave open the rich religious traditions of this holiday.

May this Chanukah be one of safety and health for us all. And, as always, may it be a time of warmth, togetherness, and shared joy in the many miracles that enriched our lives then just as they do now.

Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Mark Glickman is Rabbi at Temple B’nai Tikvah in Calgary.

A family affair *Cont. from page 4*

“I vividly remember what Stacy was like as a camper. When I heard that he was going to be the head of camp I was excited because I couldn’t think of a better fit. He’s super smart, he’s funny, he understands the traditions,” Ovics said.

The summer of 2020 was to have been Noah Sharon’s second year on the camp staff. He previously served as a counsellor and did a Performing Arts rotation. He’d been looking forward to stepping into the role as Performing Arts Specialist.

“Camp for me has always been a really great experience,” says Noah. “It always is the highlight of my summer. . . . As a counsellor it’s definitely a different experience than as a camper, but it’s just so much fun as a counsellor as well.”

Noah was disappointed to miss out on the fun last summer because he had some big plans for the camp’s performing arts program. He’s hoping that COVID-19 will recede and he’ll be able to take on the role of performing arts specialist for summer 2021.

Noah has some impressive credentials as a recent graduate of the Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts (where his sisters also study) and a first year student at the University of Alberta where he is majoring in drama.

Hooked on Camp BB Riback since her first wonder week about a decade ago, Eva Sharon – currently in Grade 11 – was to have been a counsellor-in-training last summer and hopes to sign on as first-year staff this summer.

Eva describes the camp as a “very special community” that has enhanced her Jewish identity and allowed her to hang out with friends and meet new people. One of her favourite camp memories is a Leadership Training

Program (LTP) trip that featured tenting, river rafting and clanging pots and pans for morning wakeups.

“Camp is a very special community,” says Eva. “Not only does it keep you connected to your Jewish identity, but you get to make so many friends. . . .It’s just such a special group of people and it’s always a lot of fun.”

“It was really sad and disappointing,” said Eva of the 2020 season’s cancellation, her last opportunity to be a camper before transitioning to counsellor.

Maya, who is in Grade 9, also pined for Pine Lake.

“I missed all my friends It’s the best part of my summer, just going to camp and hanging out with everybody for three weeks.” Maya has attended camp with the same tightly-knit group of girls since kindergarten at the Edmonton Talmud Torah, where she and her siblings attended elementary school.

She speaks animatedly about bunk parties and everyday pleasures like playing cards and just talking with her cabin-mates. Maya’s memorable highlights include counsellor-supervised sneak outs.

The Judaic aspects of camp are appreciated by all three of the Sharon siblings. The candlelit Havdalah service that ends the Sabbath is a cross-generational favourite for the family as is another camp classic – Maccabiah – when teams vie against each other in sports, art and even wacky competitions like bubble gum blowing. Each Maccabiah has a theme with teams named for Jewish heroes. Recent examples were Hollywood superstars Scarlett Johansson and Gal Gadot.

“Even if you lose Maccabiah, it’s so much fun,” Eva says.

Another highlight for Eva happens on Friday evenings when campers in Grade 7 and up participate in *Sichot* (Hebrew for discussions) ranging from serious topics to goofy ones.

For Maya, Eva and Noah, the camp musical is a beloved tradition. One or more of the sibs have taken part in *Frozen*, *Annie*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Shrek*, *Camp Rock*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Lion King* and a camp-produced musical based on the cartoon *Phineas and Ferb*. Noah played leading roles in *Footloose* and *High School Musical*.

The Sharon siblings are keeping their fingers crossed that it will be safe to go back to Camp BB Riback this summer. They will be relying on the advice of their dad, Dr. Raffi Sharon, a pediatrician who has twice served as the Camp BB Riback physician.

Like many other families, the Ovics and Sharon family have deep roots at Camp BB Riback. COVID-19 may have temporarily taken them out of the camp, but nothing will ever take the camp out of them!

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

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Halpern Akiva Academy Students are looking forward to celebrating Chanukah differently this year -- instead of a concert, our students are creating a virtual Chanukah production to be released on December 16th! Stay tuned for details.

Still the Season of Giving

By Rabbi Binyomin Halpern



Rabbi Binyomin Halpern

Covid-19 continues to impact us in many ways. One of these is the financial strain that it has had on our province and indeed the world. This has resulted in a focus on cost saving measures as individuals, communities and governments brace themselves for immediate and long-term difficulty. It has also given rise to a new term- ‘pandemic penny pinchers,’ as across the globe people are challenging each other how to make the most of their leftovers or extend the life of their clothing.

While saving money is always a good idea, especially during tough economic times, this trend has highlighted for me something much more solemn and serious.

The Talmud makes the following observation:
דקדוקי עניות

The exactions of poverty,
מעבירין את האדם על דעתו ועל דעת קונו
cause a person to go against his own view, and that of his Creator.

In other words, the confining need to save money when there is not enough to go around, can cause us to do things that are frowned upon, both by Heaven and by our inner selves.

Poverty creates a new mindset; one that is all-encompassing. It presents itself in our everyday questions. Should I treat myself or my family to a special outing? Should I support a local establishment, institution, or tzedaka (charity)? Do I have time today to volunteer? These are now viewed through the unfortunate lens of *dikdukei aniyut*, the exactions of poverty. We simply don’t have the time or the resources, or physical ability to contribute as we once did so freely. We tighten our belts for we must, but inevitably, the danger is that the purse strings of our hearts become tighter along the way.

Chanuka is upon us, a time when traditionally we are extra generous. There is a time-honoured Chanuka tradition of showing our appreciation to those who we benefit from day in and day out, and to cheer on the schoolchildren and schoolteachers, who continue with great dedication to teach and learn the very Torah that the Maccabees fought and sacrificed for. It is a time when we are used to opening up our homes and Jewish institutions with Chanukah parties to share with each other Hashem’s gifts to us.

What will Chanuka look like this year?

My point is not to bemoan yet again what we are missing. Rather, it is that we should not allow ourselves to get used to this.

A long time ago there was scholar named Rabi Elazar.

It so happened that one day Rabi Elazar could not attend the yeshiva. It happens to the best of us, and that could have been the end of the story. But it wasn’t. It really bothered Rabi Elazar that he had missed out. So much so that later, when he met his friend Rabi Asi, he said to him “You know, I wasn’t able to attend today’s learning, but you were there. So please tell me, what did I miss??”

This is the challenge for us all. True we are not living times where it is easy or even realistic to give and share the way we did. Still, we must not forget the truth and the feeling that giving more is still the ideal.

I hope and pray that the time comes very soon that we will have again the resources, financial and otherwise, that will allow us to be generous in the ways that we want to be, and sorely miss.

Malka and I would like to wish the entire community a *lichtige* Chanuka, a holiday that will illuminate and inspire us through the winter.

P.S. It is also important to be generous with ourselves! So, in the meantime, remember to smile and laugh, bringing good cheer to yourself and those around you. (6 feet away!)

Rabbi Binyomin Halpern is Rabbi at the House of Jacob Mikveh Israel in Calgary.

Wishing the Jewish community a Happy, Healthy Chanukah!

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Book review: *The Flight Portfolio*, by Julie Orringer

Reviewed by Maxine Fischbein

(AJNews) - Since it is Jewish book month, and we are well into a pandemic that screams for literary diversion, this is a good time for a great read. One was recently delivered by Julie Orringer, bestselling author of *How to Breathe Underwater* and *The Invisible Bridge*, a sweeping historical saga set in Paris and Budapest during World War II and the Holocaust.

The subject matter of Orringer's most recent novel, *The Flight Portfolio*, came to her attention as she was researching for *The Invisible Bridge* (a novel based, in part, on her grandfather's life). Thankfully she chose to spin it into a novel all its own.

In *The Flight Portfolio*, Orringer tackles the true story of journalist and humanitarian Varian Fry, the first American honoured by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. Fry is credited with having saved the lives of more than 2,000 Jewish refugees, among them some of Europe's greatest artists and thinkers. During 1940 and 1941 he headed the Marseilles office of the Emergency Rescue Committee, an organization he co-founded with support from American First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and some well-heeled philanthropists including Peggy Guggenheim.

While Orringer's novel is based, in large measure, on Fry's well-documented wartime efforts (researched by the author for some three years before she even began to write), her treatment of Fry's personal life and its nexus with historical events often falls in the realm of imagination.

Fry works feverishly, employing both legal and illegal means to pluck the likes of Russian-French painter Marc Chagall, French author and poet Andre Breton, Hungarian anthropologist Arthur Koestler, German political philosopher Hannah Arendt and German physician, biochemist and Nobel Laureate Otto Meyerhof from the talons of the Nazis and their Vichy collaborators. In the midst of all that, Fry is confronted by the sudden return to his life of Elliott Schiffman Grant (a fictional character), his lover during their Harvard student days.

Fry struggles to stay focussed on the rescue of 200 anti-Nazi and Jewish artists, writers and intellectuals

whose works and brain trust will otherwise be lost to the world. Learning of the ERC, more and more refugees line up outside his office to beg for help. Meanwhile, Grant asks Fry for help in finding and extracting the imperilled son of his current lover, Gregor Katznelson (a fictional story line). The flames of Fry's unextinguished passion for Grant are fanned, threatening Fry's previous resignation to an incomplete life with his stateside wife, Eileen.

What emerges and intertwines in Orringer's imaginative telling, is a harrowing rescue story, a love story, an exploration of Fry's internal and external struggles, and a window into the devastating effects of racism and antisemitism both in Europe and in the United States.

Why fictionalize an already amazing story? Orringer says, "A novelist, free to extrapolate, may draw the veil aside." Thus she fills in the blanks left by previous historical, biographical and autobiographical explorations of Fry and his heroic deeds.

Fry published his memoir, *Surrender on Demand*, in 1945, an account that did not reference his sexuality. In *A Quiet American: The Secret War of Varian Fry*, biographer Andy Marino, discusses Fry's homosexuality. The fact that Fry was gay was also acknowledged by Fry's son, James, who set the record straight in a letter to the editor following Cynthia Ozick's review of *The Flight Portfolio* in which Ozick had stated that Fry's homosexuality existed only in the realm of "hunches and hints."

In the same review, Ozick expresses discomfort with Orringer's fictionalization of the Holocaust in a world where the Shoah is receding from memory as Holocaust deniers ply their trade.

While the risks of fictionalizing the Shoah should always be cautiously weighed, one must also take into account the intent of the writer. In *The Flight Portfolio*, Orringer retells the story of Varian Fry with a veracity that was impossible at a time and in a place where coming out of the closet posed tremendous, even existential, threats. The fact that Fry had to cloak his essence led to painful consequences depicted in *The Flight Portfolio* and even more tragic ones in Fry's later years, which fell beyond the novel's scope.



Grant is a slipperier fish. But perhaps this is not unintentional. Grant is a man with secrets, including one more potentially damaging than his sexuality. It feels authentic that he is opaque.

Orringer shines in her characterizations of some of Fry's clients, colleagues and acquaintances in Marseilles, including the heiress and socialite Mary Jayne Gold who, in real life as in the novel, flew her own plane between European capitals living it up even in the midst of the conflagration. Connected and irrepressible, she plays a colourful and important role in the rescue work of the ERC both as a philanthropist and volunteer as did ERC staffer Miriam Davenport and Leon Ball, a cowboy from Montana who, until his own disappearance, guides refugees across the Pyrenees toward freedom.

These and other characters often act as Fry's Greek chorus, giving voice to the impossible choices Fry was forced to make while lives hung in the balance.

Fry had everything to lose and nothing to gain in his effort to get endangered Jews out of France before Hitler's Vichy collaborators could turn them over to the Nazis and, ultimately, the ovens of Europe's death camps. His story, though well documented, is surprisingly little-known.

Orringer's timing couldn't be better. At one point in *The Flight Portfolio*, Fry contemplates the things that terrify him including "the idiot dictator shrieking nonsense at the world." If that doesn't resonate in 2020, what does? The daily news reminds us that diseases even deadlier than COVID-19 continue to threaten freedom today.

Fry knew it then; Orringer reminds us now – in a genre that is more accessible and appealing for many readers than history books.

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



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A little synagogue in the land of pagodas

By Maxine Fischbein

(AJNews) - A beautiful synagogue amidst mosques and Hindu temples in a city most famous for its shimmering pagodas, Musmeah Yeshua is the most notable reminder of the vibrant Jewish life that once existed in Rangoon, Burma (now Yangon, Myanmar).

Our arrival in Yangon at the tail end of January, 2020 fulfilled a dream. Our family had lived in Malaysia for a remarkable year in the mid-1990s and travelled extensively there and in Thailand. Burma then languished under martial law and it would be many years until we could take a boat ride on the Irrawaddy or travel the poetry-inspiring road to Mandalay.

As we packed for the long-anticipated adventure, my husband and I felt anxiety too. We had routed our flights so as to avoid mainland China. Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig were already victims of Beijing's rage over the detention of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou, making our Canadian passports potential liabilities.

Meanwhile, a mysterious virus said to have originated in a wet market in Wuhan, China was spreading, though the devastating COVID-19 pandemic had not yet been declared.

We took a deep breath, packed some face masks and flew through Hong Kong toward a remarkable adventure that began, counterintuitively, in Myanmar's only remaining Synagogue.

While researching for our trip, I had come across a company called Myanmar Shalom. At first I figured that some enterprising Israeli had found a way to capitalize upon the wanderlust of post-army Israeli youth.

I was mistaken. Myanmar Shalom is owned by Sammy Samuels, the fourth generation 30-something patriarch of the dwindling Jewish community in Yangon. A graduate of Yeshiva University in New York, Sammy is keeping the doors of Musmeah Yeshua open, as his late father Moses once did, so that Jewish visitors can be greeted and services held when a minyan materializes.

Arriving in Yangon several days ahead of our four-country tour of Southeast Asia, we took a Myanmar Shalom day tour featuring the Jewish sites of Yangon.

Our guide, Soe Yee, picks us up in front of the Chatrium Royal Lake Hotel wearing his traditional Longyi, an ankle-length sarong that provides blessed ventilation in the smothering heat blanketing Yangon even in the early morning hours.

We drive past the shimmering Shwedagon Pagoda (which we explore in amazement later in our stay) – and head toward the centre of town with its picturesque collection of colonial period buildings established after the British colonized Burma in 1885.

Soe Yee – who is not Jewish – points with pride and respect to the multiculturalism evident in Yangon's bustling centre. The street once known as Judah Ezekiel Street is home to a Sikh Temple and a Salvation Army Church. Similarly, at the town centre, pagodas, temples and mosques co-exist in seeming peace – belying a long history of ethnic strife in Southeast Asia's largest country, most recently manifested in the persecution and murder of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar's north.

We waded into the Indian Town area, a riot of shops and stalls, to the Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue. The original 1854 wood building, superseded by a beautiful stone structure in 1896, served the community of Baghdadi Jews that built it as well as Bene Israel and Cochini Jews from India.

Musmeah Yeshua once housed an astonishing collection of 126 Sifrei Torah in a Jewish community that, at its height in 1940, numbered 2,500 in all of Burma. Today only two Torah scrolls and a handful of descendants of the original Jewish community remain. Most of the Jewish community fled Rangoon and Burma when the Japanese invaded Burma in 1941, retreating mainly to India with many of the precious scrolls.

Musmeah Yeshua is bright and majestic, with high ceilings and dramatic columns supporting a second story women's gallery no longer much in use. The tiny remaining community prefers to congregate on the main level where empty wood and rattan benches are scattered in intimate groupings as if in conversation with one another. They certainly have some stories to tell!

A photo exhibit near the entrance of the Synagogue captures some of the highlights of Yangon's history, including glimpses into some of its most prominent Jewish citizens and remarkable guests.

There, we “meet” the Solomon brothers, who established an ice factory in Rangoon during the early 1900s and, most notably, introduced Coca Cola to Burma. Soe Yee will later show us the Solomon home – now an elementary school – and the building that once housed their plant, which was nationalized by the Burmese government in the 1960s when most of the remaining community dispersed.



A view of the exquisite interior of the Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue in Yangon, Myanmar. (Photo courtesy Milt Fischbein)

Israel figures prominently in the photos gracing Musmeah Yeshua, telling the story of a close relationship between the two countries based, in large part, on parallel experiences. Each country was colonized by the British and achieved independence in 1948. Burma was the first Asian country to recognize Israel and the 1950s and 1960s saw the flourishing of a friendship that led to the establishment of an Israeli legation (later an Embassy) in Rangoon.

Burmese President U Nu made a state visit to Israel in 1955 where he was warmly welcomed. In 1961, David Ben Gurion spent 16 days in Burma – a surprisingly long sojourn for a sitting Prime Minister. Ben Gurion, whose affinity for Buddhism is well documented, sported traditional Burmese garb and spent time in a Buddhist retreat, in study and meditation. One of the loveliest photos in the Synagogue's display captures Ben Gurion lighting Chanukah candles surrounded by Rangoon's Jewish children.

Israel and Burma cooperated on many projects, with Israeli experts supporting agricultural projects in Burma. Many of Israel's most prominent politicians visited Burma, including President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, Shimon Peres and Abba Eban, who is captured in a photograph taken while visiting the Shwedagon Pagoda.

We follow Soe Yee out of the Synagogue and into the thick air of India Town where he points to examples of previous Jewish life in the neighbourhood. Beneath the Cholia Jamah Mosque there was once a chocolate shop owned by a Jewish family, another business nationalized in the 1960s.

Continued on page 22

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A MESSAGE FROM ADAM SILVER

There's no avoiding it... "winter is coming." For many of us, those three simple words have come to trigger automatic visions of *Game of Thrones*, a fantasy series that started as a collection of best-selling books, and later became one of the world's most popular television shows for almost a decade. Akin to medieval days, the story is chock full of battling families, wild beasts, love, terror, and both fear and aspirations for the future. There are several interpretations to the constant reference in the series to winter's arrival, including its application as a motto for one of the northern ruling families in the show (the Starks), who always remain vigilant and on alert because dark periods in time and our lives are unavoidable, and the winter literally brings with it a harshness that one must plan for in order to survive. However, the ultimate reference to winter relates to the end of days, in which an army of zombie-esque warriors (White Walkers) marches toward regions inhabited by the living. As the living continue to battle, scheme, live, and love amongst themselves, the relentless undead army marches on. The viewer / reader knows that it is only a matter of time before a full on battle will ensue, with only one victor standing in the end.

These days, we apply similar thinking in that we are about to combine our current fears, isolation, and

uncertainty related to COVID-19 with the dark, short, and cold days of winter. Science confirms that Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is legitimate – feelings of depression, sadness, loneliness, etc. are elevated during the winter months. With our current reality on a collision course with the coming season, many of us will undoubtedly be more challenged than ever before to stay positive, support one another, be hopeful, and be kind.


I have noted in previous POM messages how proud and amazed I am to have observed many acts of empathy and thoughtfulness as the current pandemic unfolded. I have shared how our community agencies continue to come together and how individual leaders and community members give of themselves to improve the lives of others, even more so during these unsettled days. It is incredibly important that we care for ourselves and for others as the physical days grow darker and shorter, and the COVID statistics paint a bleak picture for the coming months. Now is the time to care more, not less, to be kinder and more giving, not less, and to dream for brighter days, not wallow in the coming darkness.

At this time of Chanukah, hope and brightness are key themes. While the Maccabees were certainly brave and effective warriors, they anchored their conviction in their dreams for tomorrow. When the world as they knew it

was at risk of total elimination, they found the passion, faith, and resilience to drive them through their darkest days. Ultimately, they repaired the world through their devotion and hard work – to G-d and to one another.

We in Jewish Calgary must do the same. We have collectively worked to support one another, ensure that active Jewish living can endure during this pandemic, and that community can continue to be forged. As the dark winter approaches, we in Alberta also know that our sun shines like no other, that our mountains are majestic, and that on some days our air can seem like the freshest on the planet. I am asking that you all join me in continuing to dream for our community's bright tomorrow, that you be extra kind to one another, and that you reach out if you or someone you know needs help. **Together, WE CAN** get through this! **Together, WE CAN** support one another! **Together, WE CAN** aim high and succeed!

Chag Chanukah Sameach – Wishing us all a safe and enjoyable winter,


Adam Silver, CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

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For more information on how you can ensure our Jewish tomorrows today, contact Director of Development, Diana Kalef at dkalef@jewishcalgary.org 403-444-3154.

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Memorial Tributes



**Obituary for
Dr. Noel Arran
Jampolsky z”l**
November 22, 1932 –
January 6, 2020

It is with great sadness that the family of Dr. Noel Arran Jampolsky announces his passing on January 6, 2020.

Nov. 22, 1932 – Jan. 6, 2020
We remember him now at the time of his un-veiling (dedication of his headstone) on November 22, 2020, what would have been his 88th birthday. Due to Covid, the un-veiling is restricted to close family and friends. Noel left behind his loving wife of 61 years, Dianne; his children, Valerie (formerly Karen) Jampolsky, Tracy (Michael) Ouchi, and Michelle (Martin) Gerber; his beloved grandchildren, Jordan and Jaden Jampolsky, Maxwell and Malcolm Ouchi, and Liana, Sara, and Rachel Gerber; and his loving sisters-in-law Dolly (Mitchell OB”M) Jampolsky,



**Obituary for
Dr. H. Richard
Uretsky z”l**
May 22, 1946 –
November 9, 2020

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Dr. Harvey Richard Uretsky on Monday Nov. 9, 2020, after a courageous

Ruth - Toto (OB”M) (Mort OB”M) Levitt, Bernice (William OB”M) Cohen and Anita (Myer OB”M) Cohen. He was predeceased by his parents, Max and Ann Jampolsky, and his brother, Mitchell Jampolsky; and brothers and sister-in-law Bernie, Clarice, William, and Myer Cohen and Mort Levitt. Noel, aka “Dr. J”, is missed by his many nieces, nephews, and lifelong friends; all of whom he loved to ‘shmooz’ with and readily be a walking, walk-in clinic for. The family would like to thank all his very kind caregivers who supported him during his final years.

Born in Regina and raised in Edmonton from the age of 6. With his brother, Mitchell, he helped with their family business and at the synagogue from a young age. After he completed his Medical Degree at the University of Alberta he went to Galveston, Texas, for 3 years where he completed his Degree in Dermatology. After a brief 4-day courtship, he proposed to the love of his life, Dianne, and they were married in 1959. They raised 3 daughters in Edmonton. During his 47 years of practicing Dermatology in Edmonton, he was President of the Edmonton Talmud Torah School, Chairman of the Edmonton Branch of Boys Town Israel, Chairman of The Edmonton United Jewish Appeal and a Member of the Beth Shalom Synagogue Board. He was honoured by Golda Meir, and Boys Town

Israel for his community involvement. Noel also volunteered in many other Jewish and secular organizations and causes.

Noel enjoyed his home in Hawaii for 40+ years, his many lifelong poker groups, travel, gadgets and creating photos, pickles, candles and more to please family, friends and charity causes. Even after practicing Dermatology in Edmonton, he would go to northern Alberta twice a month to give patients access to Dermatology.

He moved to Vancouver in 2007 with his wife, Dianne, to be with their children, grandchildren, family and friends who live there and visited him there.

In his final years, Noel battled Alzheimer’s and Cancer but he maintained his kindness, sense of humour, cultivated his love of music, and grew even more loving and compassionate with each day. Even in illness he maintained the spirit of the words he wrote in 2014: “all of our grandchildren are amazing ... and we are so proud to be a part of their lives. Contentment is a delightful emotion.”

Noel is deeply missed and celebrated by Dianne, his children, grandchildren, family and friends. Condolences may be sent to mmgmimg@me.com.

battle with pancreatic cancer. He is survived by his wife Pauline, children Jason (Dani), Sari, Aubrey (Lauren), grandchildren Jayden, Aliya, Ethyn, Iyla, Rena, Noah and Blair, siblings Jerry (Elizabeth), Karen Hering (Abe), Trudy Harowitz (Howard), extended family and friends.

Rick was born and raised in St. Catharines Ontario, the second of four children to Abe and Sara Uretsky. Rick moved to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta, where he met and married Pauline in August of 1968. He completed his medical degree in 1970 and specialized to become an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist in 1974.

Rick practiced medicine for forty-two years both in Edmonton and Jackson, Tennessee. He served as chief of OB/GYN at the Grey Nuns hospital and Chief of Surgery

in Jackson. He focused much of his career on treating pregnant patients with diabetes and established protocols for their highest standard of care. He delivered an estimated fifteen thousand babies over his career. Rick was blessed to be able to work along side his son Aubrey for over six years until he retired in 2016.

Family was everything to Rick. He and Pauline celebrated their 52nd anniversary this past August. Their three children and seven grandchildren were his pride and joy. He had a special bond with each family member individually, and these connections will be cherished by each of us forever.

**New tests show SonoMask able to
Neutralize 99.34% Covid-19**

Israeli start-up Sonovia Ltd. engineered a unique reusable mask with antiviral properties that lasts over a year. Breaking news released that multiple **International accredited ATCCR Laboratories** show that Sonovia's fabric, embedded with **zinc oxide** nano-particles, has a strong antiviral effect which successfully **neutralizes 99.34% of COVID-19, even after 55 wash cycles.** The SonoMask offers superior protection, reusability, and comfort.



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Sonovia’s SonoMask has undergone external laboratory tests, which successfully corroborated that its unique and permanent **fabric impregnation of Zinc oxide** nano-particles have a strong antiviral effect that **successfully deactivates 99.34% of COVID-19 particles even after 55 wash cycles.** Using their patented cavitation process, Sonovia has been able to utilize their years of research into creating the **most effective virus prevention gear available on the market.**

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From Israel to Canada: Sonovia Masks

By Brad Chenkis

My father Boris Chenkis is in the fashion industry. He is always fascinated by retail news in other countries. While watching Israel Daily TV he saw an interview with Liat Goldhammer, the CTO of an Israeli startup called Sonovia. She was being interviewed about new fabric finishing technology for textile manufacturing developed at Bar-Ilan University. Liat was explaining the newly developed technology that would repel and kill bacteria located on clothing. The interview Boris would be watching was in early January. The Covid19 effect had not yet become a worldwide pandemic, so my father just listened with interest about this new Israeli startup.

Watching ILTV again on March 18th, Dr. Jason Migdal, a microbio researcher in Israel, discussed how the Sonovia technology mechanically impregnates metal nanoparticles into masks that destroys microorganisms in fabric. This was verified by two independent labs. And it was durable and washable! Now Boris was very interested.

With the Covid virus becoming widespread, Sonovia had positively impacted Israeli doctors and health professionals by providing them with the technologically advanced masks. On May 12th another interview about the Sonovia mask technology took place on ILTV. My father saw an opportunity to get involved. During my father's teenage years he lived in Israel studying and working at kibbutz Rosh Hanikra. With this connection to Israel that never left his heart, he wanted to support an Israeli startup and purchased masks to keep his family, friends and community safe. Soon after this first purchase he received an email from Sonovia to help distribute these masks in Canada. Boris said yes! And



Brad Chenkis displays the Israeli made SonoMasks which are now available in Canada.

the masks were shipped from Habonim street in Ramat Gan to Vancouver!

Boris reached out with excitement to family and friends. Within days he was thrilled to be delivering hundreds of masks and supporting an Israeli company. Nothing could be better. I have now joined my father to distribute Sonovia masks with leading technology to fight against Covid. For more details about the Sonovia mask, please visit sonoviatech.com.

Please contact me at sonoviamaskcanada@gmail.com for any questions about ordering masks in Canada.

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Canadian Magen David Adom laser-focused on fundraising and education

By TheJ.ca Staff

From their home base in Calgary, the western region of Canadian Magen David Adom (CMDA) had a very busy month of October, as a variety of meetings and sessions brought the message of their life-saving work to the Calgary area and beyond.

Magen David Adom (MDA) is Israel's national EMS, blood services, and humanitarian relief organization and a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent. MDA is not government funded and relies heavily on donations from around the world to continue saving lives. Every year it responds to over 900,000 calls. Since 1976, Canadian Magen David Adom for Israel (CMDA) has been the sole-authorized fundraising organization in Canada, dedicated to supplying ambulances, medical equipment, supplies and blood-testing kits to support the life-saving efforts of MDA in Israel.

The goal of CMDA is to ensure that supporters are aware of the immediate and urgent needs facing the organization. For instance, with winter coming, MDA needs to be prepared for heavy snowfall, especially in the north of Israel. The equipment needed includes ten new 4x4 ambulances to reach patients in tough terrain and severe weather.

It could be said, that is an 'expected' annual need, as along with an increase in demand, equipment needs to be replaced or upgraded. But this year there was a new need emerging, caused by the pandemic, creating added pressures. MDA launched the "Corona Guardians Program", teaching civilians how the virus works and is transmitted in order to cut off the chain of infections among family, friends, and coworkers.

To ensure maximum effectiveness at halting the spread of COVID-19, youth volunteers are being trained to assist the public by handing out masks, spreading information, and teaching them to take responsible actions to combat the virus. This required the purchase of masks, breathing equipment and products to assist the paramedics.

Western Regional Director Sharon Fraiman tirelessly builds bridges with community groups to create awareness of those needs, and generate goodwill with prospective donors.

"I'm working very hard with Jewish and non-Jewish Organizations, churches, leaders from the community, congregations and volunteers," she said, citing one example of the Calgary Rotary Club meetup on October 5. "Such an honor for CMDA to be a part of Rotary Club", she wrote to supporters online. "There nothing more important than saving lives around the world."

Another important Alberta event was held with leaders from five churches in the Airdrie area. They came together with Fraiman and paramedic Don Sharpe to learn about and support Canadian Magen David Adom, and to participate in the "First Seven Minute" program. The First 7 Minutes is an educational and training session developed by International physicians. The program highlights those crucial first minutes and what people can do in a medical emergency, before the ambulance arrives, and is especially effective when presented in the context of a potential domestic attack on a civilian target.

Earlier this year, that presentation received a tremendous response in Winnipeg, with 3 dozen lay leaders and members of the community participating including the publisher of *TheJ.ca*, Ron East.

"Basically my region includes the major centres like Calgary, Edmonton, west to Vancouver and Victoria, as well Regina and Winnipeg to the east," Fraiman explained. "Our donors are not only generous in helping ensure MDA can attend to the emergency needs of Israel, they are generous with their time and effort to also promote our cause."

Donors Saul and Ida Alpern of Winnipeg are front and centre this month, with their earmark of \$160,000 to purchase a Mobile Intensive Care Unit, being built in Canada. Orphaned after surviving the Holocaust in Romania, Saul emigrated to Canada and established a business career after marrying Ida, who was born in Edenbridge, Saskatchewan, and moved to Winnipeg as a youngster. She enjoyed a career as the Assistant Director of Dietetics at the Health Sciences Centre before her retirement.

They have a deep personal connection to Israel, as his brother Avrum gave his life in the War of Independence. The Alperns have made donations to CMDA in the past but this is the most significant expenditure, dedicated to



Outreach, education and fundraising are among the key functions provided by CMDA Western Regional Director Sharon Fraiman, pictured with paramedic Don Sharpe.

Avrum and their family – parents Isaac and Rosa, sister Molly, and brother Shimon - who died in the Shoah. Fraiman noted that another Winnipeg couple have donated two medical scooters, cementing the reputation of the city as the home of philanthropists with big hearts.

On November 8, the Winnipeg chapter held a telethon with hopes of even more success. That evening, CMDA participated in the American Friends of Magen David Adom event – "A 90 Year MDA Virtual Celebration." Some of the world's top entertainment and musical talent participated, including Jason Alexander, Gal Gadot, Howie Mandel, Itzhak Perlman and many more.

Visit cmda.org for more information about Canadian Friends of Magen David Adom.

This article was originally published in *TheJ.ca*

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Camp BB-Riback is a labour of love for Director Stacy Shaikin and his family. A dedicated group of volunteers worked to maintain camp this past summer.

Camp BB Riback plans

Cont. from page 4

Plans are also in place to redo the camp office, an initiative supported by the Oshry family in Edmonton.

Other upgrades will include refurbishing of cabins and the purchase of new bunkbeds. Shaikin is in conversation with donors interested in supporting cabin upgrades at a cost of \$12,500 per cabin.

The volunteer team that worked on restoring the Benjamin Cabin this past summer will be rolling up their sleeves next season to take down an old changing room and build the waterfront deck.

Shaikin, who takes pride in the achievements of everyone around him, has particular praise for the camp’s dedicated board of directors including co-chairs Ronnie Ploit and Cory Krygier, an architect Shaikin describes as the “facilities wizard.”

While a safe and comfortable camp environment is paramount, every bit as important is the programming that engages and inspires campers.

The recent appointment of a Judaic committee including rabbinical students Ilana Krygier Lapidés and Lara Rodin and camp alumna and staffer Megan Raber, bodes well for the enhancement of Jewish programming once the camp can reopen.

“They understand the culture and are looking at what we have to tweak to add a more Jewish element,” said Shaikin.

Being a mensch is a good start, but it isn’t enough, added Shaikin who wants to beef up the Judaic aspects of the camp newsletter and to provide online Havdalah services at intervals throughout the year.

“I want [campers] to come away with respect and pride in who they are,” says Shaikin. “We are a Jewish camp and we have to encourage [Jewish] values.”

High on that list is inclusion and Shaikin is continuing the Camp’s long-standing commitment to serving campers with special needs. With the help of Calgary Jewish Federation Inclusion Manager Karina Szulc, the camp has

partnered with Between Friends, a vital community resource that does pre-camp sessions with staff – including a dedicated inclusion team – to help ensure that all kids can “...have the summer they deserve,” says Shaikin. The camp has put a library in one of the cabins for quiet time, an especially important support for kids prone to sensory overload.

COVID has caused a bruising economic burden for summer camps. Shaikin and the Camp board of directors responded to the challenge by launching an emergency campaign, renting accommodations to families, conducting retreats and applying for every possible grant in order “to keep the lights on” last summer, Shaikin said.

The camp is closing in on their \$300,000 goal for COVID relief thanks to grants from the Alberta Government, Calgary Jewish Federation, Edmonton Jewish Federation, Edmonton Jewish Foundation and Calgary B’nai Brith Lodge #816. A number of parents donated what would have been their children’s 2020 camp fees while others applied those fees to the 2021 season. If other recently-applied for grants materialize, the camp will be within \$10,000 of their emergency campaign goal, Shaikin says.

All of that – and the largesse of countless generous individuals and community organizations since the camp opened in the 1950s – have been wise investments.

“This camp is a breeding ground for leadership,” says Shaikin who is proud of the fact that camp alumni currently head major community organizations in both Calgary and Edmonton. Examples include Jewish Federation of Edmonton Chair Steven Shafir, Calgary Jewish Federation Co-Chairs Jordan Balaban and Jared Shore, *Alberta Jewish News* Editor Dan Moser and newly-minted Calgary B’nai Brith Lodge #816 President Darren Bondar, himself a previous Camp Director. Many other current and former community leaders “cut their teeth at Camp BB,” Shaikin said.

While planning for summer 2021, Shaikin is working on raising endowment gifts and growing an operations reserve fund so as to ensure stability of the camp for future generations of campers. Camp BB Riback is one of 10 Calgary Jewish organizations that have partnered with Calgary Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary to raise after-lifetime gifts through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation’s LIFE & LEGACY program.

While Shaikin says he didn’t sign up for fundraising, he is grooving to the challenge and is looking forward to taking a cultural philanthropy course through JCAMP 180. Another initiative of the Massachusetts-based Harold Grinspoon Foundation, JCAMP 180 provides matching grants which, together with other initiatives, will help the camp to upgrade, “...so we can become what we’re supposed to be,” Shaikin said.

“This camp is a gem. It needs to be taken care of like a child,” added Shaikin.

A father of two, Shaikin brings parental passion to the care and nurturing of all his campers – a calling that now requires even more attention to safety and health, given the pandemic.

“We are trying to stay agile when it comes to the virus,” says Shaikin as he prepares to open camper registration.

December will see a flurry of Zoom meetings during which Shaikin will meet with staff, camper cohorts and parents. In addition to speaking with the camp family in Alberta, he looks forward to reengaging members of the Saskatchewan Jewish community.

“Saskatchewan was a huge part of the camp while I was there,” said Shaikin. “We can help them and they can help us.”

In addition to imparting important information about the camp – particularly in light of COVID – Shaikin looks forward to listening to parents, campers and staff and helping to actualize their hopes and aspirations for summer 2021.

Senior campers who were to have ascended into the Leadership Training Program (LTP) and those who were to have served as Counsellors-in-Training (CITs) last summer are hoping that some of the highlights they missed are recoverable. Shaikin is working on the blend and has plans to move Wonder Week (one week sessions designed to acclimate younger campers) to the second camp session in August when there is less action and a better opportunity to enhance their experience.

Let’s hope that the timing will be right for campers to once again put on their *blue and white sweaters, the dirtier the better*, and pass through the gates of Camp BB Riback for a safe and fun summer of ‘21!

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

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Wishing the entire community a happy, healthy Chanukah from Renee & Milt Bogosh



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Chanukah Sameach from Rebecca Berlin and family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love, health, and laughter from Judy Shapiro & Richard Bronstein and family



חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from Lauren & Sam Bell





Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love, health, and laughter from Al Osten

Best wishes to the community for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Alexandra & Harvey Cyngiser and family



Best wishes to our family and friends for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Jacob Adler and the Adler & Perera Families





Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Jackie & David Busheikin and family

חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from Marnie, Darren, Jonah and Chloe Bondar

Best wishes to our family & friends for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Debbie, Steve & Melissa Baylin

חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from Helena Barker and Israel Lachovsky



Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Val & Lou Bracey



Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Jeanette & Rudy Berger

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love, health, and laughter from Sheila Bermack & family





Best wishes to our family and friends for a happy, healthy Chanukah from Shirley & Al Chafetz

Best wishes to our friends and family for a happy Chanukah from Marnie Bresser & Steve Lipton



Chanukah greetings from the Chochos Family



Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love, health, and laughter



from Jerry and Fay z"l Schwartz

Best wishes to our family & friends for a Happy, Healthy Chanukah



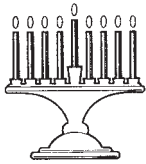
from the Balaban family

Best wishes to our family & friends for a Happy, Healthy Chanukah



from the Plucer Families

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a happy, healthy Chanukah
from
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חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from
Robbie Babins-Wagner, Neil Wagner & family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health, and laughter
from Faith & Jerry Dubisky
and family



Wishing the entire community
a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Phyllis D'Aguiar

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health, and laughter
from Sandy Fayerman



Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health & laughter
from
Bill Foster, Darlene
Switzer-Foster
& family



Best wishes to our friends and family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Helen, Jeff, Emma, Jacob, Hannah,
& Juan Faber

Best wishes to our friends and family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Halley & Bruce Girvitz
and family



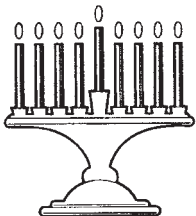
Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from
Susan & David Inhaber and family



Best wishes to our friends and family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from
Barbara Joffe & family

חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from
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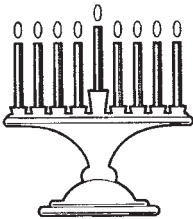
Best wishes to my
family & friends
for a happy,
healthy Chanukah
from
Louise Kirshner



Best wishes to our family & friends
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from
Jenny Belzberg
and family



Best wishes to our family & friends
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from
Kim, Alex, Adam
& Zach Chulsky



חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from
Dr. Caron and Rabbi Mark Glickman

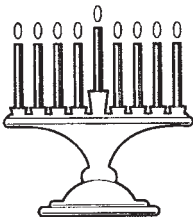
חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach
from
Maxine & Milt Fischbein

Best wishes to our friends and family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Therese & Charles
Groner and family



חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from
Cheryl, Jason, Jacob,
and Gabrielle Gurevitch

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter
from
Arlein Hoffman
Chetner & family



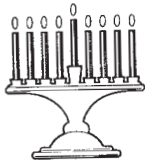
Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health & laughter
from
Cantor Russell
G Jayne &
Mr. Russ Janiger



Best wishes to our family & friends
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from
Gail & Mel
Ksienski



Best wishes to our friends and family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from
Betty Sherwood & Jim Casquenette



Wishing everyone
a Chanukah
filled with love,
health & laughter
from
Elisabeth, Lorne,
Seth and Zac Carson



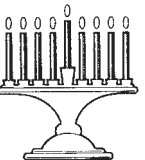
Best wishes to our friends & family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Eva &
Gordie
Hoffman
and family



Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter
from
Louise Glin
and
family



חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from
Vivian and Ben Herman



Best wishes to our friends & family
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from Jackie &
Hayim Hamborger
and family




Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Barb & Ron Krell and family

Best wishes to our friends and
family for a happy, healthy
Chanukah
from Lea & William Kohn




Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter
from
Janis & Brian
Kowall and
family





Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and
laughter from the Krygier
Lapides Family


Best wishes to our family and friends
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Saundra & Harold Lipton
& family



Best wishes to my family and friends
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Doreen Kline and family




Wishing everyone
a Chanukah
filled with love,
health & laughter
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Judy & Lionel




Wishing everyone a Chanukah
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from Cheryl, Rob, Danielle,
and Jarrett Milner

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
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from Rosyln Mendelson
& David Hodgins



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filled with love, health & laughter


from
Miriam
Milavsky
and family



חג חנוכה שמח
from Marg Semel, Adam Singer,
Rachel & Hanna

Best wishes to my friends & family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Frances Pearlman

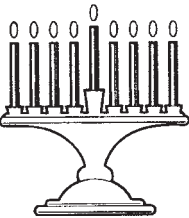
Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter



from
Mariyln & Jed


Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health, and laughter
from Therese Nagler and family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter




from
Raechelle, Lorne,
Shoshana &
Leo Paperny

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Charlene & Gerry Molotsky
and family




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



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Sandy & Larry
Martin and family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter

from
Walter
Moscovitz

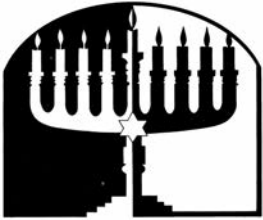


Best wishes to our friends and family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Beth & Lorne Price
and family

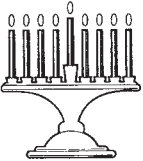
Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health, and laughter from
Gail & Brian Sidorsky and family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health, and blessings

from
Evelyn Sheftel-
Shapiro and
family




Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, health, and laughter
from Cheryl & Morley Shore
and family




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

Best wishes to our family & friends
for a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Ron Plucer & family

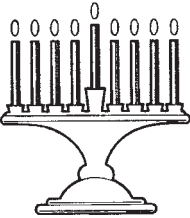


Best wishes to our friends & family
for a happy, healthy Chanukah

from
Tracy Rumig
&
Steve Eichler




Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health & laughter
from Michele
Doctoroff, Ted
and Sydney
Switzer




Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Bob & Cheryl Shiell & family

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

from
Dalia, Allan, Tammy
and Mark Wolinsky




Wishing the entire community
a happy, healthy Chanukah
from Dr. Norman & Kathy
Schachar and families



חג חנוכה שמח
Chanukah Sameach from
Mary & Ken Taub and family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Hilda & Lenny Smith and family



ברכות לחג שמח
Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love,
health, and laughter from the Zivot family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Linda & Gary Wolf and family



חנוכה שמעך
Chanukah Sameach from
Minnie Zukier and family



Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Cynthia & David Prasow and family



Best wishes to our friends
and family for a happy, healthy
Chanukah
from Wynne & Harvey Thal



Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, health, and laughter
from Adam, Deborah, Hannah,
Lilah, and Benjamin Silver



חנוכה שמעך
Chankah Sameach from Diana Kalef,
Elliott, Jonah, & Micah Steinberg



In Amsterdam, the world’s priciest menorah gets a new life

By Cnaan Lipshiz

Amsterdam (JTA) — For the Amsterdam Jewish Historical Museum, Hanukkah this year entailed the stressful chore of assembling the world’s most expensive menorah.

Last week, the Rintel Menorah, a 266-year-old menorah valued at over a half-million dollars, was put back on display at Amsterdam’s Jewish Historical Museum following the restoration of its wooden base, which was lost during the Holocaust. Built in 1753, the menorah is a relic from the golden age of a community that was nearly annihilated by the Nazis.

The restoration entailed the installation of a 3-foot wooden base created by the Judaica designer Piet Cohen. Before that, the Rintel stood on a rectangular marble slab that did little to complement the menorah’s intricate design, which includes eight bells and more than 150 delicate reliefs resembling flowers, leaves and thorns.

The massive base had also complicated the annual transport of the menorah from the museum to the Rabbi Aron Schuster Synagogue, where the community would use it to light Hanukkah candles. Moving the menorah, a ritual that began in 1955 and was discontinued only in 2010, required a driver, three movers and a curator, who would dismantle the Rintel and pack its five parts into wooden boxes. The menorah would then stay at the synagogue, where it was somewhat vulnerable to theft, for

a little over a week before the procedure would be repeated in reverse.

In 2016, the Rintel was appraised at \$563,000. The price tag easily topped the list of the world’s most expensive Hanukkah menorahs that Israel’s Beit Hatfutsot Museum of the Jewish People had compiled shortly before.

The runners up were also Dutch: Twin menorahs, both much smaller and less ornate than the Rintel. One of the twins fetched \$441,000 at an auction in 2016. The other is owned by the Dutch royal family and is on permanent loan to the Jewish museum.

The other menorahs have their charms, but the lighting of the Rintel “was a statement that said, ‘We’re still here,’” Ruben Vis, the chairman of the Organization of Jewish Communities in the Netherlands, or NIK, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

The menorah was commissioned by philanthropist Sara Rintel from Pieter Robol II, a master silversmith, and donated it to the Great Synagogue of Amsterdam. Prior to that, Amsterdam’s Ashkenazi Jews had none of the flashy artifacts characteristic of the city’s older and more prosperous Portuguese communities, Vis noted.

“It was an attempt to match the Portuguese community’s splendor, and it marked a certain peak moment in Dutch Jewry’s history,” he said.

The Great Synagogue is among dozens of Jewish houses of worship in the Netherlands that did not survive World War II. Closed down in 1943 by the Germans, its furniture and marble were looted. Nearly all of its members were among the 75 percent of Dutch Jews killed by the Nazis, the highest death rate of any Nazi-occupied country in Western Europe. Some 40,000 Jews live in the Netherlands today, down from a prewar population of 140,000. The hall of the former synagogue is now part of the Jewish Historical Museum.

Who exactly hid the Rintel during the war is unknown, but the disap-

pearance of the wooden base suggests it may have been kept flat and concealed inside a piece of furniture.

The menorah is considered such a powerful symbol of Dutch Jewry that, in 1898, a replica “was made for the Driit Synagogue, another Ashkenazi house of worship that did not survive the war. The replica also survived the war and had for years been used for lighting candles at an annual Hanukkah concert at the Concert Gebouw, Amsterdam’s best-known concert hall.

In 2015, facing growing assimilation and rising security expenses, the Jewish Community of Amsterdam informed the Dutch government that it intended to auction off the original Rintel.

The community needed the government’s authorization for the sale because the Rintel was listed as a cultural heritage asset. But instead of approving the sale, the government, together with the Jewish Cultural Quarter and the Jewish Historical Museum, arranged to purchase the menorah and offer it on permanent loan to the museum.

According to Emile Schrijver, the director general of the Jewish Cultural Quarter, the umbrella group for five Jewish institutions located in the heart of what was once Amsterdam’s most heavily Jewish neighborhood, the Dutch government provided half of the \$563,000. Another \$125,000 came from the Rembrandt Association, a Dutch organization that helps raise money for the preservation of significant artworks. The rest came from various other donors. The sale was completed in 2016.

The scheme ensured the Rintel remained in the Netherlands, but the change in ownership also meant its permanent retirement. With its changed status from a ritual item used by a living Jewish community into the prized possession of a major museum — with all the preservation-related restrictions that come with it — the menorah could no longer be used for the annual Hanukkah candle lighting.

Vis said his community has come to terms with the Rintel’s retirement.

“Objects have a certain lifespan – something we understand all too well in our current society, with its throw-away culture,” he said. “The Rintel has just reached its usability limit. And it became something else: A work of art. A jewel.”

From our homes to yours,
we wish you a joyful Chanukah.



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Children’s books bring new characters into the Hanukkah story

By Penny Schwartz

(JTA) — Move over, Maccabees. This season’s crop of seven new Hanukkah books for kids puts the spotlight on new heroes, from playful llamas to brave and kind knights on horseback.

An eighth book, “*Honey on the Page*,” that shines light on Yiddish children’s stories in new translation, makes a perfect family gift.

Among this year’s highlights is Arthur A. Levine’s “*The Hanukkah Magic of Nate Gadol*,” a superhero story that comes to life with Kevin Hawkes’ sparkling illustrations.

Over the years, as a leading children’s book editor, scores of Hanukkah books crossed Levine’s desk, but many were retellings of the same story. “Only a few writers ... were telling imaginary tales that took Hanukkah as a jumping-off point,” he wrote in an email.

Nate Gadol is the kind of story he longed for, that enhances the cherished Hanukkah traditions with an aura of magic.

This year, as the COVID-19 pandemic prevents families from celebrating Hanukkah with large festive gatherings, round up the cousins on Zoom, light the menorah, nibble on sufganiyot and share in the joy of a new book.

“The Hanukkah Magic of Nate Gadol”

By Arthur A. Levine; illustrated by Kevin Hawkes
Candlewick Press; ages 5-8

Just when the world needs a dose of magic, along comes Nate Gadol, a Jewish mythical superhero who sparks joy for those in need. In Levine’s warm-hearted tale, embellished with Hawkes’ glorious art, the larger-than-life Nate Gadol swoops in to brighten the lives of the Glaser family, poor but kind new immigrants. In the cold winter of 1881 in their urban American apartment, the Glasers stretch what they have to help their neighbors, the O’Malleys. When Hanukkah and Christmas coincide, Nate and Santa help each other out and surprise both families with gifts. The hero’s name is a play on the phrase represented with the four letters on the dreidel, Nes Gadol Haya Sham (“A great miracle happened there”).

“Happy Llamakka!”

By Laura Gehl; illustrated by Lydia Nichols
Abrams Appleseed; ages 3-5

How does a family of llamas celebrate Hanukkah? With Lllamakah, of course! Laura Gehl’s tender rhyming verse is perfect for cozying up with the endearing little llamas as they light the Hanukkah menorah, play dreidel and build a snow-llama. Lydia Nichols’ cheerful illustrations brighten the pages.

“Kayla and Kugel’s Happy Hanukkah”

By Ann D. Koffsky
Apples & Honey Press; ages 3 -8

The happy pair of Kayla and her rambunctious dog Kugel are back in Ann Koffsky’s latest title in the

delightful series. As Kayla gets ready to celebrate Hanuk-kah, she and Kugel are searching for the family’s Hanukkah box. In Koffsky’s clear verse, the spunky Kayla explains the origins and traditions of the holiday to Kugel. Koffsky’s color-rich, lively illustrations, including many of the mischievous Kugel, are sure to spark smiles.

“The Littlest Candle: A Hanukkah Story”

By Rabbis Kerry and Jesse Olitzky; illustrated by Jen Kostman
Kalaniot Books; ages 4-8

On the eve of Hanukkah, a box of colorful candles tucked away in a drawer comes to life in this sweet story. While the big candles bicker about who will be chosen to light the first candle on the menorah, the wise candle notices that it’s the littlest, Flicker, who is always helping others. When Flicker is chosen as the shamash, or the helper, the small purplish candle humbly shines in the highest place on the menorah. The book pairs noted Jewish educator Rabbi Kerry Olitzky with his son, Rabbi Jesse Olitzky. Jen Kostman’s cartoon-style illustrations are as colorful as the bright boxes of Hanukkah candles.

“The Eight Knights of Hanukkah”

By Leslie Kimmelman; illustrated by Galia Bernstein
Holiday House; ages 3-8

Hark! In this playful tale, Lady Sadie challenges her eight young knights to save their kingdom’s Hanukkah celebration from a dragon who’s wreaking havoc on the villagers. She sends them out trotting on horseback to make things right with kind deeds and bravery. Kids will chuckle when Sir Isabella and Sir Rugelach discover that behind the dragon’s plume of smoke is a young creature who joins them in the grand Hanukkah celebration.

“There Was a Young Rabbi: A Hanukkah Tale”

By Suzanne Wolf; illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler
Kar-Ben; ages 4-8

In this playful, rhyming story, Hanukkah meets “There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly.” On the first night of Hanukkah a rabbi reads from the Torah and lights the menorah. Each night, she adds something new — cooking applesauce, playing dreidel



with her family and enjoying chocolate coins. Young kids will join the chorus in this rollicking read-aloud.

“The Ninth Night of Hanukkah”

By Erica S. Perl; illustrated by Shahar Kober
Sterling Children’s Books; ages 3-8

Oy vey. When Max and Rachel move into a new apartment on the first night of Hanukkah, their special Hanukkah box is nowhere to be found. For eight nights, a multicultural array of neighbors helps the kids improvise. As the holiday ends, Max and Rachel invite their new friends to a Hanukkah celebration. Israeli illustrator Shahar Kober’s animated illustrations add to the humor.

“Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children’s Literature”

Edited and translated by Miriam Udel
New York University Press (ages 10-adult)

Miriam Udel, a scholar of German and Jewish studies at Emory University, has gifted the world with a treasure of a book that introduces readers of all ages to the wealth of little-known Jewish children’s stories by more than 25 early 20th century Yiddish writers, including Sholem Asch, Zina Rabinowitz and Mordkhe Spektor. The rich anthology, perfect for reading aloud, is a keeper to return to over the years.

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A little synagogue

Cont. from page 11

We stroll past the Sule Pagoda to the Mahabandoola Garden where we gaze at City Hall, an extraordinary fusion of Colonial and Burmese architecture, built in 1925. We are standing where massive protests took place in 1988, following yet another military coup and the house arrest of pro-Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

A short walk away, on Pansodan Road, we explore the Sofaer Building (now known as the Lokanat building), a four-story Italianate building designed by renowned architect Thomas Swales and built by Isaac Sofaer in 1906. The Sofaer family, prominent Baghdadi Jews, had amassed their fortune importing wines and spirits, exporting rice and supplying oilmen.

David Sofaer served as Yangon's mayor in the 1930s. Abraham Sofaer eventually made his way from Burma to England and then Hollywood, building a career as a stage and screen actor.

It would be an understatement to say that the Sofaer building – which once housed such tenants as the Bank of Burma, Reuters and the Vienna Cafe – has seen better days. While some of the street-level spaces have been reclaimed and renovated, a cautious trip upstairs brings us to the rusting cage of a mangled elevator and the depressing view of a courtyard filled with garbage. Still, the former glory of the building remains evident in its spectacular yellow façade and original floor tiles imported from England.

Just a short stroll away, we make our way to the Secretariat – the massive former headquarters of British Burma and the site of Aung San's assassination in 1947.

On the East side of the Secretariat runs Thein Phyu Road, formerly known as Judah Ezekiel Street – named for the early Jewish immigrant to Burma who, together with his brother, arrived in the mid-1800s. They worked for King Mindon – the penultimate King of Burma – as bookkeepers. A Moldavian Jew, Jonas Goldenberg, who made his fortune in logging, was also close to King Mindon's court. A century earlier, the first recorded Jew in Burma was Solomon Gabirol, from India, who served in the army of King Alaungpaya.

After exploring other Yangon sites including the colonial-era Post office, Custom House and storied Strand

Hotel, Soe Yee takes us to the old Jewish cemetery, some six miles away. The cemetery – located in the midst of a very poor neighbourhood – has more than 600 graves.

Those laid to rest once enjoyed a vibrant Jewish life in Rangoon that included two Synagogues. The second, Beth El, established in 1932, disappeared with the exodus of Jews from Burma during World War II. The last Rabbi to serve the Yangon Jewish community left in 1969. A Jewish school established in 1910 behind the famous Scott Market is said to have educated 200 Jewish children at its height. With the exception of Musmeah Yeshua, these institutions were laid to their eternal rest many years ago.

The condition of the cemetery – from the crumbling of matzevot to the overgrowth of weeds— is dismal and its future uncertain given government plans for urban renewal.

According to Sammy Samuels, a new cemetery has opened in recent years, about an hour and a half's drive away. That is where Moses Samuels is buried – ironically at a distance from the deeply-rooted community he worked so hard to hold together.

Like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather before him, Sammy labours to keep the light of Judaism shining in Yangon where a once prosperous community contributed disproportionately to civic life and philanthropy. In a country of 54,000,000, with a remaining Jewish community of 20 (swelling to 70 or 80 if you count the pre-COVID community of Jewish expats), the effort seems in need of a miracle.

Yet, in a city full of spectacular religious and secular



A street shot of the Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue in Yangon, Myanmar. It ranks 3rd on Trip Advisor's top things to see in Yangon. Photo courtesy Milt Fischbein.

sites, the Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue holds the #3 spot on Trip Advisor's 149 things to do in Yangon.

Jewish travellers, finding invitations posted at their hotels, have found their way there for Passover Seders and, since 2011, Sammy Samuels – whose Bar Mitzvah and wedding were the last to be held there – has invited some 200 travellers, government officials and representatives of other religions and ethnicities to join his tiny community in lighting the menorah and celebrating the miracle of Chanukah.

Sadly, Yangon is in need of miracles. A second wave of COVID-19 has hit hard. The Synagogue, like other religious and tourist sites, has been forced to close its doors until the contagion subsides. It is the least of Yangon's challenges. Reuters recently reported that some citizens, their livelihoods decimated due to the pandemic, are trapping snakes and rats as food sources.

Fortunately, the Samuels family remains well.

"We need to be resilient and hope for the post-COVID bounce in tourism," Sammy Samuels says.

Last February, during better times, we took our reluctant leave of Yangon, moving on to adventures elsewhere in Myanmar and beyond. We soared in a hot air balloon above thousands of ancient pagodas in Bagan, Myanmar and marvelled at the breathtaking ruins of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Every bit as wondrous as those ancient sites is the small but mighty remnant that fans the flickering flame of Judaism in the land of pagodas.

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

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from Deb Shatz, Dan Moser,
Sandy Fayerman, Maxine
Fischbein and Jeremy Appel at

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Sources

Happy Herod's Day

by Eliezer Segal

The first-century C.E. Latin satirist Persius Flaccus devoted one of his poems to the theme that even persons who are ostensibly free will often enslave themselves to follies of their own making. A blatant example was the inclination to pursue silly superstitions, as exemplified by the widespread popularity of bizarre Jewish customs. A case in point: “When the Day of Herod comes round,... the lamps wreathed with violets and ranged round the greasy window-sills emit their thick clouds of smoke.”

Was Persius describing a particular Jewish practice, or was he merely rehashing a hodgepodge of stereotypical customs that had come to be associated with the Jews of Rome? The Jewish calendar contains no “Day of Herod,” nor is it likely that they would bestow such an honour on the infamous tyrant. On the other hand, Herod the Great was world-renowned as ruler of Judea, and it is conceivable that outsiders would treat his name as a generic identifier of the Jewish nation. Christian texts refer to his grandson, Persius’ contemporary, as “Herod Agrippa.”

For modern readers it might appear more plausible to associate Persius’ festive lamps with Shabbat, particularly as he goes on to mock the Jews’ consumption of fish—long recognized as a Sabbath delicacy—and mumbling incomprehensible prayers. We should bear in mind, however, that in ancient pre-electric times the kindling of candles had not yet become a recognizable ritual, but served primarily to provide illumination; hence its association with the day of rest would not have been obvious to Persius or his contemporaries.

Persius’s verses have provoked considerable debate among historians. Some propose that Herod like other ancient potentates, instituted a holiday to celebrate his birthday or the beginning of his reign.

Among the scholars who have weighed in on this question, a surprising number have tried to identify Herod’s Day as Hanukkah. More than the Sabbath, that holiday was marked from an early time as the “feast of light.” Persius’s contemporary Josephus Flavius was the first to designate Hanukkah in that way, suggesting that it symbolized how the Jews’ right to

worship was “brought to light.”

At first sight this thesis sounds patently absurd. After all, Herod was the implacable foe of the Hasmonean dynasty whose exploits are celebrated on Hanukkah. He was haunted throughout his reign by the spectre of the Hasmoneans whom he always regarded—with much justification—as his rivals for the loyalties of the Jewish nation. He was zealous to the point of paranoia in assassinating all vestiges of the Hasmonean royal family, including his beloved wife Mariamne. In light of these facts it seems impossible to imagine how anyone, even an ignorant Roman satirist, could confuse Hanukkah with a “Day of Herod.”

Nevertheless, there are a number of circumstances that might indicate a tangible connection between Herod and Hanukkah. Some argue that the despot instituted a new celebration precisely in order to eclipse the more modest achievement of his Hasmonean predecessors who had rededicated the Temple after its defilement—but unlike Herod, had done nothing to enhance the relatively modest edifice inherited from Ezra and Nehemiah.

Like the Hasmoneans, Herod celebrated the completion of his Temple with a joyous dedication festival at which countless offerings were sacrificed. In recounting this event, Josephus commented on the auspicious correspondence of events, that the completion of the Temple’s construction coincided with the anniversary of the beginning of Herod’s reign.

Although Josephus does not provide us with the precise date, he records elsewhere that Herod was officially appointed King of Judea by Antony and the Roman Senate in the middle of winter 40 B.C.E. Given that it was on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the day before Hanukkah, that the prophet Haggai announced the establishment of the second Temple, we may note how convenient it would have been for Herod to link his own crowning achievement to that auspicious date.

This has led some scholars to speculate that, rather than attempting to suppress Hanukkah as a subversive outpouring of pro-Hasmonean sympathies, Herod instead chose to appropriate it by redirecting it to a commemoration of his own accomplishments. Accordingly, the transformed festival was so strongly associated with his reinterpretation that it came to be known in some circles as “Herod’s Day.” (Prior to this time, the sources state that Hanukkah was celebrated in a manner analogous to Sukkot, with the waving of palm-fronds expressing the victory over their enemies.)

As it happens, light and fire festivals were celebrated during this season in the Roman empire. After all, the winter solstice marks the turning point at which the daylight hours cease diminishing and the days begin to lengthen. This occasion was celebrated as the birthday of the sun god, and the lighting of lamps or tapers was a common feature of those rituals. If we bear in mind Herod’s well-known sympathies for Rome and its culture, it is fully consistent with his character and policy that he would try to encourage the Jews to observe a winter festival like those that were being observed by loyal Roman subjects throughout the empire.

While the Jewish lunar calendar could not include a date that would always coincide with the winter solstice, it is a convenient coincidence that the solstice occurs on December 25 of the Julian solar calendar and Hanukkah begins on the 25th of the lunar month Kislev. Similar patterns were discernible in other Roman provinces, as local winter festivals were reinterpreted to correspond with the official birthday of the solar deity, and the lighting of fires or candles was incorporated into the festivities. The progressive strengthening of the light, which we emulate when we increase the numbers of the candles each night, is consistent with the themes of the Roman rituals honouring the prevailing of light over darkness.

And so, in the interest of cultural pluralism, let us extend our warmest season’s greetings to devotees of the ancient despot as they gather in the smoky aura of their “Herod Day” lamps.

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Wishing the entire community

a Happy Chanukah



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