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The last Passover countdown checklist you will ever need

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

(JTA) -- The 30-day period between Purim and Passover is often fraught, especially for Jews -- especially if, against all sound advice, they insist on hosting a Passover seder. To ease the challenging process of planning and preparing the festive meal, we offer this handy Passover countdown checklist:

30 days out (the day after Purim): Begin going over your invite list for the seder. Parents, siblings and their kids, check. Widowed Aunt Fay? Of course. But Cousin Eric? A nice guy, but how did he vote?

27 days out: Think about clearing out cabinets to make way for Passover food.

24 days out: Continue thinking about clearing out cabinets to make way for Passover food.

23 days out: Throw out Passover food still crowding the cabinet from last year: the bottle of off-brand ketchup still three-quarters filled, one jar kosher le Pesach duck sauce, one carton gluten-free "panko" matzah crumbs, two boxes of Streit's matzah you bought last year on the second-to-last day of Passover worrying that you'd "run out."

22 days out: Clear out last of cabinets to make room for Passover food.

21 days out: Announce to family that no more non-Passover food will be purchased between now and the holiday. Start planning pre-Passover meals based on the crap you have on hand: freezer-burned hamburger meat, bags of stale macaroni, whatever that thing is in the Tupperware.

20 days out: First Passover shopping trip: condiments, tea bags, tomato sauce, tuna fish, shelf liner, grape juice, off-brand ketchup, kosher le Pesach duck sauce, one carton gluten-free "panko" matzah crumbs, potato vodka. Total bill: \$347.71.

18 days out: Begin planning menu: Search online for new Passover recipes. Brisket with horseradish gremolata? Skillet roast chicken with fennel, parsnips and scallions? Braised lamb shanks with dates,

tangerines and baby onions? Check the number of steps and ingredients for each recipe, gasp, then agree to make the same three things you've been making for the past 19 years.

17 days out: Cousin Eric calls asking if he can bring a date -- someone he met at a "political rally." For a "very famous politician." Uh-oh.

16 days out: Second Passover shopping trip: macaroons, Passover cake mix, soda, jars of gefilte fish, paper plates and disposable utensils, matzah meal, wine, almonds and walnuts, jarred horseradish, cottonseed oil, mayonnaise, potato vodka. Total bill: \$740.

5 minutes later: Return to grocery store for your free five pounds of matzah, per coupon. Reduce grocery bill by \$20.97.

10 minutes later: Return again to grocery store to buy one pound of gluten-free shmurah matzah for Aunt Fay. Increase grocery bill by \$67.26.

14 days out: Ask spouse to bring up kosher dishes, seder plate and Haggadahs from the basement.

13 days out: Ask spouse to please bring up kosher dishes, seder plate and Haggadahs from the basement.

12 days out: Ask spouse to please bring up kosher dishes, seder plate and Haggadahs from the basement -- dammit.

10 days out: Finalize guest list. Finalize menu. Longingly peruse ads in Jewish newspaper for weeklong Passover cruises.

7 days out: Last shopping before Passover: beef, chicken, fish, produce, milk, cheese, parsley, shank bone, eggs, chocolate-covered matzah, potato vodka. Total bill: You don't wanna know.

5 days out: Clean and kasher sink, counters, stove,



oven and refrigerator. Begin cooking seder side dishes.

5 days out: Inform family that Passover rules already apply in kitchen: no bread, pasta, beer or everyday tableware or cutlery. When they ask what they are supposed to eat, reply "improvise."

3 days out: Ask spouse to bring up table leaf from the basement. Begin vacuuming and cleansing all surfaces with the care normally given to sterilizing microbiological laboratories. Longingly peruse ads in Travel + Leisure magazine showing non-Jewish couples on Caribbean vacations.

2 days out: Ask spouse to bring up table leaf from basement, dammit. Set table.

1 day out: Cousin Eric calls. It's off with his plus-one -- he can't date a "RINO" who thinks Rachel Maddow "sometimes makes some good points." Panic.

Seder day: Welcome parents, siblings, their kids, Aunt Fay and Cousin Eric. Ask your youngest to recite the Four Questions, which he does perfectly, which is less impressive than it might seem when you remember that he's 23. Read Haggadah. Eat festive meal. Welcome Elijah. Ignore Cousin Eric.

1 day after: Vow never to do this again.

2 days after: Agree to do this again next year.

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The updated Sedar Plate

By Rabbi Cantor Russel Jayne



Rabbi Russell Jayne

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

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

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

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

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

Purim fun at Calgary Jewish Academy



The celebration of Purim at the Calgary Jewish Academy was a huge success, with everyone enjoying themselves and getting into the spirit of the holiday.

belong in our communities.”

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

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

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

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

“Like the artichoke, which has thistles protecting its heart, the Jewish people have been thorny about this question of interfaith marriage. Let this artichoke on the Seder plate tonight stand for the wisdom of God’s creation in making the Jewish people a population able to absorb many elements and cultures throughout the centuries - yet still remain Jewish.”

Also on interfaithfamily.com, Jim Keen proposed a kiwi instead of an artichoke, but that doesn’t seem to have caught on.

There are always one-off experiments, such as Rabbi Paul Kipnes in southern California who four years ago put a football, a history book and a corkscrew on his Seder plate. The football represented the Angel of Death “passing” over the Jewish homes, the history book the continuing debate as to whether or not the Exodus from Egypt is the literal history of our people or a mythical archetype, and the corkscrew the work require to release the joy of life.

Hard to top, however, is the Progressive Jewish Alliance, which in 2010 put together a “Food Desert Seder Plate” that banished the original arrangement

altogether, replacing it with items symbolizing the lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low-income neighborhoods.

A rotten piece of lettuce illustrated that inner-city grocery stores often carry only spoiled produce. A potato chip instead of the boiled potato in the *karpas* space indicated that high-fat potato chips are cheaper and easier to find than fresh potatoes. There was also no egg, since fresh eggs were one of the luxuries lacking in these neighborhoods.

Now however strange some of them might be, Seder plate additions are within the spirit of the holiday. These symbols are intended to make a link between the biblical story of the Jews leaving Egypt, and participants’ contemporary narratives. When we update the Seder plate we become part of the continuous revelation which began at Sinai and continues to this very day. Our “enhancing” of the Pesach experience with modern symbols and rituals is a great affirmation that we, as a people, take our Judaism seriously.

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

Chag Sameiach to one and all!!

Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne is spiritual leader and Kol Bo at Beth Tzedec Congregation.

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Happy Passover!

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Self-Discovery through storytelling: A Grade 2 autobiography project

By Lesley Machon

“Story, as it turns out, was crucial to our evolution—more so than opposable thumbs. Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to.”
– Lisa Cron, *Wired for Story*.

In today's fast-paced world, it can be easy to forget the importance of reflecting on our past and understanding how our experiences shape us. However, for Tali Miles Grade 2 students, taking the time to explore their personal histories was not only a fun project, but a meaningful one as well. Through an autobiography project, these students had the opportunity to delve into their past, reflect on their present, and dream about their future. They discovered the power of storytelling and how sharing their stories can create connections and foster understanding.

Students began by reading the biographies of famous individuals such as Kobe Bryant, Walt Disney, Danica Patrick, Sue Bird, and Judy Blume. After combing through these stories for details and interesting facts, they set off to collect details from

their own early days, including their birth dates, birth cities, and their temperaments as babies.

Honing in on the present, they wrote "Top Ten Lists" that highlighted their current favorite foods, people, sports, and other interests. These lists gave insight into each student's personality and helped the class get to know each other better.

After each section was complete, students compiled all their writing pieces and bound them into a book, along with baby photos. They wrote a summary of their autobiography, and drew a side profile of themselves to accent with written details including favourite foods, sports, country flags, and siblings. To conclude their project, students were asked "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The answers were both amusing and inspiring, ranging from basketball coach to snake store salesperson.

The project provided the students with an opportunity to learn about themselves and each other. By sharing their favorite pages from their autobiographies in groups of four, students discovered they had friends who could roll their tongues, friends who had large soccer card collections, and friends who had siblings or were only children. They also learned about each other's favorite foods, favorite animals, and shared baby pictures.

While the project may have focused on personal history, it highlighted the importance of storytelling in our lives. Each student's autobiography was a story, and students were able to share it with their classmates in a way that



CJA students learn their own stories.

was engaging and informative. Their reflections cultivated self-awareness, curiosity about self and other, and an appreciation for their unique identities.

This is the power of storytelling. Stories help us connect with others, learn from each other, and understand ourselves better. They allow us to share our experiences and perspectives in a way that is memorable and meaningful. As Neil Gaiman once said, "We owe it to each other to tell stories."

Whether telling our own stories or listening to others, storytelling is a powerful tool that can inspire, motivate, and transform. It can help us make sense of our lives, and bring us closer to the people around us. In a world where we are bombarded with information and distractions, storytelling is a way to slow down, connect, and reflect.

In conclusion, storytelling is an essential part of the human experience. As these Grade 2 students learned through their autobiography project, storytelling is not just about sharing information. It's about creating connections, fostering understanding, learning from each other, building relationships, and making sense of our own lives. Whether we are sharing our favorite childhood memories or discussing our hopes and dreams for the future, storytelling has the power to educate, entertain, and inspire.

Lesley Machon is a Humanities Teacher at Calgary Jewish Academy.



Mazel Tov to the CJA Junior Girls Basketball team on earning silver in the C.I.S.A.A. League Championship. Go Hawks!

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On the wonders of a crumb

By Rabbi Mark S. Glickman



Rabbi Mark Glickman

It's a late October evening, just before 7:00 and I'm frustrated. Once again, I can't find the darn remote. All day long, I've been looking forward to watching my favorite show, but now I don't even have what I need to turn on the TV! I've searched and searched for that thing, and it's nowhere to be found – not on the coffee table, not in the dining room, and not even in the washroom (phew!).

Hmmm...I wonder. Maybe it slipped between the cushions of the couch, falling into the furniture abyss below. I lift one of the cushions, look underneath, and there I see it, a bright white speck – far larger than a grain of salt, far smaller than a pea – shining forth like a jewel in the dust.

A matzah crumb.

That's right. It's a small piece of unleavened bread – the bread of affliction – that by some great miracle

managed to survive the repeated cleanings and straightenings since it originally flew off its Manischewitz mother ship at our Pesach seder many months before.

How did it last so long? How did it get to its resting place beneath that couch cushion? And how did it keep from disintegrating into its biodegradable subparts? Alas, we'll never know.

All we can say for certain is that those pesky matzah crumbs are mysterious and magical things. They fly to incredible places; they last forever; they're indestructible.

On one level, it's amazing what these little unleavened granules can do, but on another, it makes a certain amount of sense. After all, like the matzah crumb, there is something about Pesach itself that is downright eternal. For thousands of years, our people has gathered around our seder tables to tell the story of our people's flight toward redemption. It's a journey that began with our departure from Egyptian slavery, led us into the wilderness, brought us to the Promised Land, and still continues today. Indeed, it's an eternal journey – one that will not be complete until our people's great messianic vision of a redeemed world is fulfilled.

It's important that we remember this as we prepare for our upcoming Passover celebration: The journey isn't over. Yes, our ancestors got to the Land of Israel, but until the world around us becomes the good place we know it can be, that journey remains incomplete. That's why Chad Gadya – the song that begins as a cute ditty only to turn dark in its final verses – doesn't conclude until God comes and destroys Death itself.

That's why we open the door for Elijah, who our tradition teaches will one day herald the messianic age. That's why we conclude our seder with the words "*L'shanah haba'ah biy'rushalayim*. Next year in Jerusalem."

The great hope of Pesach, in other words, is a hope that remains unfulfilled even after all these centuries. So we keep on hoping, we keep on praying, and we keep on eating matzah to remember slaveries past and present.

Pesach is about far more than the weeklong festival each spring. It reminds us of our ongoing responsibility to fix our broken world. And for us Jews, that responsibility transcends time and space...Just like the matzah crumb.

So this year, when you break your matzah, when you crack off pieces to hold your charoset and maror, and even when have it with some butter or jam the next day, don't lament the crumbs. Celebrate them instead. For this is what Pesach truly is – a little piece of brokenness that sticks around forever, reminding us that in this world, there is great work to be done, and that we can't consider the work complete until all human suffering ends, and until all the crumminess surrounding us truly gives way to kindness, justice and compassion.

Chag Sameach. May you and your loved ones have a wonderful and truly "crummy" Pesach holiday.

Rabbi Mark Glickman is the spiritual leader of Temple B'nai Tikvah, Calgary's Reform Jewish Congregation.

Pianist Mona Golabek brings Children of Willesden Lane to Calgary

By Maxine Fischbein

When long-time Holocaust education volunteer Paula Lexier saw a production of *The Children of Willesden Lane* some five years ago, a dream was born.

"I thought it was amazing. I was impressed with the storytelling and the artistry of the production, and I really had this passion for bringing it to Calgary," Lexier said.

Fast forward to last year when the KSW Holocaust Education Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary ran with Lexier's idea, forming a group of partners to bring Grammy-nominated concert pianist Mona Golabek to Calgary to perform her highly-acclaimed one-woman show during Shoah Week.

Local philanthropists Al Osten and Buddy Victor have generously underwritten Golabek's Calgary performances, including two abridged daytime performances for junior and senior high school students and 500 copies of Golabek's book, which will be distributed to youth between the ages of four

and 18.

The Western Canadian premiere of Golabek's multimedia show will take place in the Bella Theatre at the Taylor Centre for Performing Arts on Wednesday, April 19, followed by a second performance the following evening.

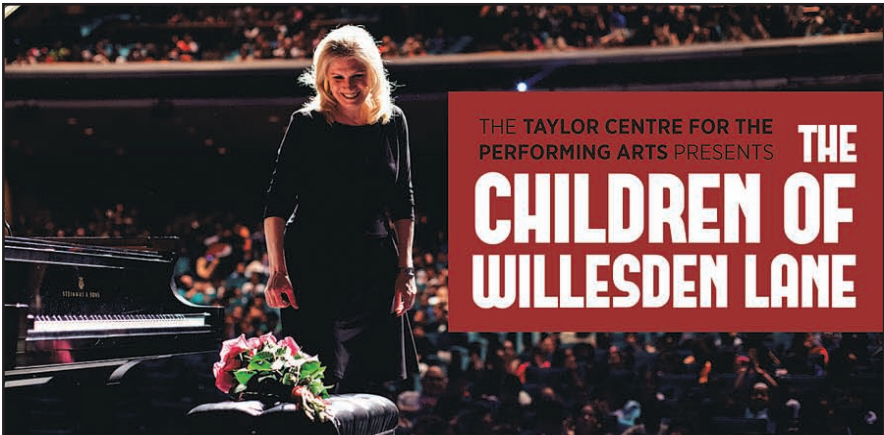
Based on the eponymous book by Golabek, *The Children of Willesden Lane* tells the story of the Kindertransport, a humanitarian mission that saved the lives of 10,000 Jewish children by transporting them from Nazi-occupied Europe to England in the months leading up to World War II. In particular, the story focuses on the experiences of a budding

young Viennese piano prodigy, Lisa Jura, Golabek's mother.

There was excitement in Mona Golabek's voice when she spoke to *AJNews* from her home in Los Angeles last week. With a packed performance schedule, the renowned pianist is a moving target at the best of times, spending 50 to 60 percent of her time on the road. On top of that, she was dealing with extensive damage to her home following the recent California floods.

Seemingly unflappable, Golabek did not let the

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Set in Vienna in 1938 and London during the Blitzkrieg, *The Children of Willesden Lane* tells the story of Lisa Jura, a young Jewish pianist who is dreaming about her concert debut at the storied Musikverein concert hall. With the issuing of new ordinances under the Nazi regime, everything for Lisa changes, except for her love of music and the pursuit of her dream.

Combining vivid storytelling and masterful performances of classics by Bach, Beethoven, and Rachmaninoff, *The Children of Willesden Lane* is a critically acclaimed one-woman show that illustrates how music can bring light and hope to even the darkest of times.

Mona Golabek's one-woman show is both a tribute to her mother's triumph over persecution and a celebratory concert of life-affirming classics.
- Jim Burke, Montreal Gazette

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– Rabbi Mark Glickman and the Board of Trustees

Chag HaPesach: What's in a Name?

By Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski



Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski

As the Passover season begins to blossom and emerge, many of us pull out our Kittels (white robe), dust off our Haggadot and begin re-exploring the exodus story from Egypt. When learning through the pertinent texts, one may notice that the Torah first introduces the holiday of Pesach by the name of "Chag HaMatzot" - "The Holiday of Unleavened Bread" (see Shemot 23:15). Only several verses later does it even refer to the holiday as "Chag HaPesach" - "The Holiday of the Paschal Lamb" (see Shemot 34:25). As well, if one looks thoroughly through the Bible, the term of "Chag

HaPesach" is actually only used in one instance, while the term "Chag HaMatzot" is utilized numerous times (contrast Shemot 34:25 with Shemot 23:15, 34:18, Vayikra 23:6, Bamidbar 28:7, and Devarim 16:16). Even though it would seem clear that the more biblical name for the holiday is "Chag HaMatzot" based on its greater usage in the Torah, the authors of the Mishna and Gemara regularly employed the term "Pesach" (see Mishna Chagiga 1:3 and Mishna Chulin 5:3 among others). It has also become common parlance to refer to the holiday as Pesach. But why should this be? Wouldn't we want to refer to this beautiful holiday by the same name employed by Hashem? Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809), a Chasidic master from Berdychiv, Ukraine, asks our question in his book entitled "Kedushat Levi." He suggests the following explanation: The verse states: "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Shir HaShirim 6:3). This sentence of king Solomon describes the reciprocal relationship between the Jewish people and G-d in very flattering terms. This can be seen when the Jewish people lay Tefillin in which the praises of Hashem are written out on the parchment. In Maseches Berachot 6a, we are told that G-d also "puts on Tefillin", but the verses in His contain the praises of the Jewish people. We can also

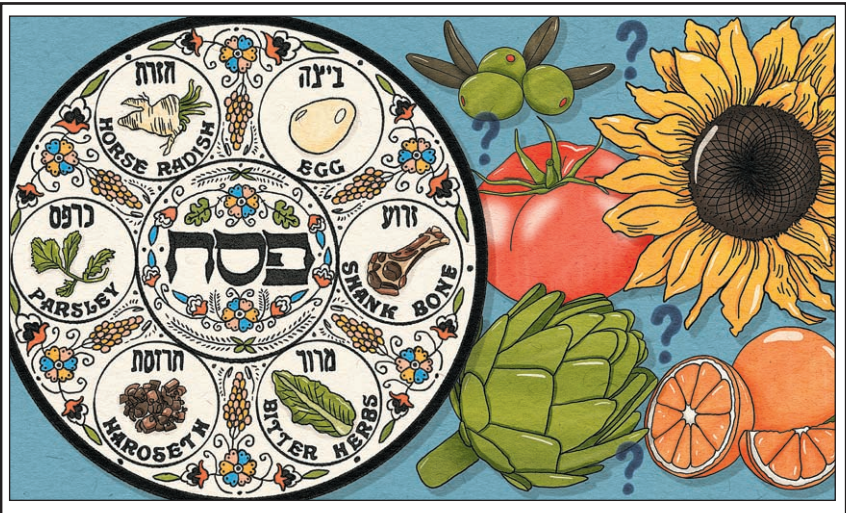
understand a statement recorded in Tanna dDebay Eliyahu which expresses that it is a positive commandment to recite the praises of the Jewish people... from these sources, we find that we are always trying to express Hashem's praises, while Hashem expresses the Jewish peoples'. In the context of Pesach, Rashi (Shemot 12:39) explains that the unleavened breads of the Israelites baked by the sun while the dough was slung over their shoulders was to give credit to the Jewish people since their faith in Hashem at that time was demonstrated by the fact that they didn't tarry in Egypt while their dough would bake into bread so that they would have something to eat while on the way. Instead, they trusted in Hashem and left immediately. Therefore, we find that Hashem calls the holiday "Chag HaMatzot," to publicize the virtues of the Jewish people. On the other hand, we call it "Chag HaPesach," to tell the praises of Hashem Who, at that time, had deliberately "passed over" the homes of the Jewish people when He killed all the firstborn in Egypt. This complementary relation reflects what king Solomon referenced when he stated, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Shir HaShirim 6:3)(Kedushas Levi on Shemot 12:27). Have a wonderful Pesach. Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski is the Head of Judaic Studies at Halpern Akiva Academy.

Here's why I stick to the basics on my seder plate

By Rabbi Sari Laufer

(JTA) — Olives. Tomatoes. Oranges. Artichokes. Dates. Cotton balls. And, now, sunflowers. This list might seem like a setup for a logic puzzle or a grocery run. But it is, instead, a (non-exhaustive) list that I have seen of additions to the seder plate, items to highlight and include stories and histories that are not, at least explicitly, part of the Passover seder. On its surface, it is a noble goal — why shouldn't we consider the plight of Ukrainians in spring 2023 (sunflowers), or remember the American history of slavery (cotton ball)? Wouldn't we want to honor the farm workers who put food on our tables (tomatoes), or intertwine the story of the Palestinians along with our own (olives)? In my own family, my mother insists on the orange on the seder plate, regardless of its apocryphal origin as feminist symbol. But I won't be adding anything to my plate. As a rabbi, teacher and mother, I'm sticking with the traditional items. My decision to eschew seder plate innovation stems

from the thinking about inclusion that I do all the time in my work. Both in encountering ancient text and modern community, I am always asking: Who is not in the room? Whose voices are not being heard? I know that the language I use, that we use, matters; I think carefully about the stories I tell, the translations I use, and the questions I ask. When I preach, when I teach, my hope is always that anyone, regardless of how they identify, sees themselves in the text and in the message. At the same time, I am always aware that by naming one story, or one identity, I might be excluding another. One of the great tensions of Jewish life in the 21st century is between universalism — the central themes and ideas of Jewish wisdom that speak to all of the human experience — and particularism, the doctrines and injunctions meant to distinguish Jewish practice and ritual from that of the rest of the world. And of all of our stories, it is perhaps Passover that best embodies this tension. It is a story embraced by Jews, by Black Americans, by Christians the world over. It is our story, to be sure. But it is also a story for anyone, and everyone, who has ever known bondage, who



has ever felt constricted, stuck in a narrow place. It is a story for all who have sought the freedom to be their fullest selves, whether that freedom is physical, spiritual, or both. Bechol dor vador, chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim: In every generation, we are obligated to see ourselves as if we, ourselves, had come out of Egypt. Core to the seder, this statement is our directive — this is how we must experience and also teach the Passover story and its lessons. We experience it as our own story; it is not simply something that happened to our ancestors, or a story of myth or history. It is ours, regardless of where we come from, who we are now, or where we might be going or becoming. The seder night is a night for telling stories, our own and the ones we think need to be told. But to my mind, we do not need more on our seder plate to make that happen. In fact, I worry that, in this case, more is less — in trying to include each particular story, we lose the universal truths. I hope that we sit around our seder tables and talk about the plight of today's refugees,

Continued on page 13

HAPPY PESACH!

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By Shael Gelfand

Calgary singer, vocalist and entertainer Shari Chaskin will emcee the Gala and there's a tremendous line-up of speakers, performers, and special attractions. The Keynote speaker will be Tomer Gonen.

This year's Gala also features the Masks International Show, an international entertainment company that transforms art through innovative production. It's a visual sensation of stunning images and performances. And for some entertainment thrills, Calgary's own Bravo Circus Studio and Entertainment, founded by aerialist and hula-hoop performer Maria Chekmareva, will feature some world-class circus stars.

For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, contact Sharon at sfraiman@cmdai.org or call 587-435-5808.

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Pesach – The time to make the most of our time

By Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides



Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides

With the holiday of Passover (*Pesach*) upon us, I find myself marveling at how quickly time has been passing. I'm sure I'm not alone in that; *Pesach* evokes memories in so many of us – *Seders* we have had, matzoh brie recipes, the extensive preparations, and invariably, family members who may no longer be with us – and that always reminds us of how quickly life goes by.

Pesach is a holiday that is deeply interconnected with the concept of time. On a very basic level, *Pesach* takes place just as it's becoming spring (although we *Calgarians* know that it also usually comes with one last dump of snow) which is why we say "*Chag Aviv Sameach* – Happy Spring Holiday!" Spring suggests themes of renewal and rebirth.

Pesach is also a holiday that commemorates a specific moment in time – our freedom from slavery in Egypt. The vivid rituals and customs of *Pesach* create a deep sense of continuity between the present and the past, which reinforces that our story is a living, breathing, ongoing narrative which continues to shape our identity.

When considering the concept of time in Judaism, the number 40, and its derivatives, pop up a lot. We were slaves in Egypt for 400 years, we wandered in the desert for 40 years, *Moshe Rabeynu* spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai, it rained during the great flood in Noah's time for 40 days and 40 nights, Jonah warned the city of Nineveh that they would be destroyed in 40 days if they did not repent, it is at the age of 40 that we are permitted to study the mystical tradition of *Kabbalah*. The examples go on and on.

In our tradition, the number 40 is most associated with a period of transition, transformation, or testing. Forty is a numeric reminder that growth and change take time and patience and that *Hashem* walks beside

us as a holy presence through those difficult periods.



Everyone had a wonderful time at the JCC Purim Party.

The number 40 comes up in other faiths and in the secular tradition, as well. In his book "Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals," Oliver Burkeman argues that we only have a limited amount of time on earth – roughly 4000 weeks - and he suggests that we should make the most of the time we have.

What do we do with this information? Well, most often, we try as hard as we can to ignore it! Human nature causes us to forget that life is fleeting. We distract ourselves and convince ourselves that our time is infinite.

Burkeman asserts it's time to stop and face the facts: Life is short. Time is of the essence, and chances are we won't get to do the vast majority of things we want to do. He challenges us to accept it, get over it, and then decide: If life is short, what am I going to spend my time doing?

Perhaps one of the most thought-provoking insights of the book is about the advice billionaire Warren Buffett once told his pilot regarding his secret to success. Buffett apparently told the pilot to make a list of the twenty most important things in his life, the top twenty things that he wanted to spend his time on. Buffett told the pilot to take those twenty things and put them in order of most important to least. Upon completing this task, Buffett told the pilot to look at the bottom fifteen things on the list, and, counter-intuitively, to erase and avoid them completely.

Buffet explained that those bottom fifteen things are the temptations that will steal our time and energy and prevent us from focusing on the top five things we want to do; We simply can't do it all, so our challenge

is to focus on what is most important and leave the enticements of lesser important things behind us. Burkeman uses this story to argue that we should be mindful of the time we have left and use it wisely.

This concept of time management is particularly relevant around *Pesach*, as we change seasons and have to make decisions about who we spend our time with and what we spend our time doing.

The beauty and majesty of the *Pesach* symbols can bring us meaning and joy but can be buried underneath the work and responsibility surrounding the holiday. Our tradition urges us to seek out the joy. Our wish during the *Chol HaMoed* part of the holiday: "*Moadim l'simcha* – May your times be joyous!" reminds us that though we focus on symbols like salt-water tears, bitter herbs, and pyramid-block charoset, we must also make room to celebrate our freedom; to remember the renewal of spring, and honour the circle of life.

Pesach is a time for us to reflect on our history and our faith, but it is also a time to consider the present and the future. The story of our passage from slavery to freedom is a reminder that life is a journey, a caution to use our time wisely and focus on what truly matters, and a gentle nudge that we must make the most of the precious time that we have.

From my family to yours, a *zissen une kusher Pesach*, *Chag Pesach Sameach*!

Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides is the assistant Rabbi at the Beth Tzedec Congregation, the Jewish Community Chaplain through Jewish Family Service Calgary, and has a small independent Rabbinic practice at RockyMountainRabbi.com.

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Pesach and responsibilities

By Rabbi Nisan Andrews



Rabbi Nisan Andrews

During my sojourn in London, England, I remember a congregant who had just returned from a visit to the city of York. After shacharit, he shared some pictures from his trip, including a photo of Clifford's Tower. At the time, I thought it was just another ancient edifice of the sort that abounds in Great Britain. That was until I noticed a strange look on the faces of some of the morning attendees.

It seems that this tourist was just as ignorant as I regarding a gruesome event that occurred at this location close to a thousand years ago; Clifford's tower is the site of England's worst massacre of Jews.

The Shabbat that precedes Pesach this year is the anniversary of the death of approximately 150 slain by a mob besieging the original watchtower. Due to earlier looting of Jewish homes, the city's Jews sought protection from the local lord, and leave was granted for them to take refuge inside the castle, the site of the current Clifford's Tower. The throngs of ruffians besieged the tower, whose numbers were later bolstered by royal troops who joined the fray.

On Friday, 16 March 1190, the eve of Shabbat HaGadol, the Shabbat that immediately precedes Pesach, the Jews recognized that they could not hold out against their assailants. Some chose suicide rather than waiting to be killed or forcibly baptised. Others accepted offers of free passage if they surrendered, only to be murdered as they left the tower. Those that remained alive in the building attempted to burn their last possessions, only for the

fire to spread and consume the structure's wooden support beams.

After the captives in the tower were dealt with, the rioters destroyed the documents of debts to the Jews, which had been placed for safekeeping at the cathedral of York, York Minster. Perhaps absolving themselves of these debts was a reason for the riot. It was always easier to do away with the people they owed money to than confront the debt itself.

There is a thematic parallel in the week's Torah portion in both fire and personal obligation. We are instructed that "the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not be put out." The Talmud tells us that, in truth, fire descended from heaven and burned miraculously, making wood unnecessary. However, G-d commanded us to supply wood for the altar and not rely on miraculous, spontaneous combustion.

Again, the theme here is that for our offerings to be effective, they must reflect a more profound reality; we must bear the onus of accountability. This truth is represented by our personal responsibility to provide our own fuel for our sacrifices and not offload that burden on others.

This message is even starker from the Temple in Jerusalem. There, the altar had an exact location, as the Rambam (Maimonides, 1138-1204) writes: "...the place where David and Solomon built the altar...is the very place where Abraham built an altar and bound Isaac upon it; which is where Noah built [an altar] when he came out from the Ark, where Cain and Abel brought their offerings, where Adam, the first man, brought an offering when he was created - and it is from [the earth of] this place that he was created. Thus, the Sages have said: Man was formed from the



place that would one day atone [for his sins]" (Mishneh Torah, Beit Habechira 2:2).

In other words, individuals must take responsibility for their errors. If one has debts, one must repay them. Since the individual and atonement come from the same place and origin, atonement is within us. Only when we accept personal accountability can penance be achieved.

Passover, as a holiday, echoes these themes. Pesach is full of obligations; four cups of wine, maror (bitter herbs), matzah, and, significantly, the eradication of chametz. Likewise, there is an element of fire, as how else do we eradicate chametz?

The message of the festival is clear; the season's theme is that of our duty to family, society, community, and, most importantly, G-d. A responsibility that cannot be passed to anyone other than ourselves.

Rabbi Nisan Andrews is spiritual leader at Congregation House of Jacob Mikveh Israel.



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On behalf of the National Board and leadership of Weizmann Canada, we extend our deepest sympathy to the family of the late Susan Switzer z"l, including her siblings Darlene (Bill), Lorne (Nadine), Ronald (Helmi), John (Christine), and Mark.

Susan was a beloved daughter, sister, aunt, great aunt, and friend. May her memory be a blessing.

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New poll says most Canadian Jews oppose Israeli judicial reforms

Most Canadian Jews oppose policies favoured by the current Israeli government, according to a new poll commissioned by the New Israel Fund of Canada and JSpaceCanada.

In the poll, fielded by EKOS Research Associates, fully three-quarters of Canadian Jews say they are emotionally attached to Israel. However, 56% claim that Israel's government is moving in the wrong direction, compared to just 13% who say it is moving in the right direction.

Opposition is especially strong to laws proposed by members of the governing coalition that would allow gender segregation in some public places, ban Pride parades, and legalize conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ people on religious grounds, with between 83% and 88% of Canadian Jews expressing opposition to such moves.

Some 73% of Canadian Jews oppose judicial reform that would make it easier for the Israeli government to reverse Supreme Court decisions, thus adding their voices to that of well-known Canadian jurist and former Minister of Justice Irwin Cotler, among others.

Two-thirds of Canada's Jews oppose the idea of disallowing Palestinians from serving in the Israeli parliament, compared to just 15% who support the idea. About twice as many Canadian Jews oppose building new Jewish settlements in the West Bank and incorporating parts of the West Bank into the State of Israel as favour such initiatives. The so-called "grandparent clause" in Israel's Law of Return allows anyone with one Jewish grandparent to claim citizenship, but religiously Orthodox members want the clause removed. Some 58% of Canadian Jews oppose such a move, while 17% favour it – hardly surprising since fewer than one-fifth of Canadian Jews are Orthodox.

Israel's Minister of National Security was once convicted of incitement to racism and supporting a terrorist organization. Israel's Minister of Finance recently described himself on radio as a "proud homophobe." JSpaceCanada and the New Israel Fund of Canada have proposed that the Canadian

government refuse to meet or build relationships with these ministers. Nearly 6 in 10 Canadian Jews agree with that proposal, while just 2 in 10 disagree.

Commenting on the results, Joe Roberts, Board Chair of JSpaceCanada, said, "These results couldn't be clearer, Jewish Canadians are overwhelmingly concerned with the direction and policy decisions proposed by Israel's radical governing coalition. These are not the shared values that the Canada-Israel relationship was built upon. Jewish Canadians, like the hundreds of thousands of Israelis taking to the streets to protest the undermining of democracy and assault on the human rights of Palestinians, expect bold and decisive leadership on this issue from the government that represents us in Ottawa."

Ben Murane, Executive Director of the New Israel Fund of Canada said, "Canadian Jews are worried that a country that removes basic democratic checks and balances and eviscerates the independence of the judiciary can no longer be referred to seriously as a full democracy. They overwhelmingly oppose the Israeli government's legislation stripping power from the country's judiciary, one of the few remaining institutions willing to protect the rights of Palestinians, LGBTQ people, women, and other vulnerable populations."

The poll was funded by JSpaceCanada and the New Israel Fund of Canada, organizations that promote democracy and equality in Israel, as well as a two-state solution to end the Israel-Palestine conflict. It was designed and analyzed by Professor Robert Brym of the Department of Sociology and Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. Brym commented, "To corroborate these findings we need more polls with larger samples asking similar questions. However, this poll provides a fair baseline representation of Jewish community perspectives on issues of vital importance to the approximately 404,000 Canadians who identify as Jewish by religion or ethnicity."

The poll, fielded between February 16 and 28 2023 by EKOS Research Associates, is based on a nationally

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representative sample of 288 Canadian adults who identify as Jewish by religion or ethnicity. Nineteen of 20 polls like this one would likely yield results with less than a 5.8% margin of error.

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Sephardic Matzah Spinach Pie

By Susan Barocas

(Noshers via JTA) - Matzah pies called minas are a classic Sephardic Passover dish, traditionally served for brunch or lunch with the slow-cooked, hard-boiled eggs called huevos haminados. The truth is that a mina makes a great side or main dish for any meal, even when it's not Passover. With a top and bottom "crust" made from sheets of matzah, the filling can be made of meat — like seasoned lamb, beef, chicken — or vegetables, most commonly spinach and cheese, though sometimes with leeks or mashed potato added. Another option is to shred, salt and squeeze about 2 pounds of zucchini to use in place of the spinach in the recipe below. The flavors in this vegetarian mina mimic spinach and feta borekas or spanikopita, but I've added a twist. Given the fondness for artichokes in Sephardic food (and for me personally), I've added some to the filling for extra texture and flavor.

Ingredients

20 oz frozen chopped spinach, thawed, 5 or 6 sheets plain matzah, 2 Tbsp olive oil, 1 medium onion, finely chopped, Salt to taste, 1 14 oz can artichoke hearts, drained and diced, 1/2 cup fresh dill with thinner stems, finely chopped, 1 cup (about 4 ounces) crumbled feta, 2/3 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese, divided, 1 1/2 cup milk (can be low-fat), 1/2 tsp ground black pepper, 1/8 tsp nutmeg (optional), 3 large eggs, divided.

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Put the spinach into a fine mesh strainer and set in

the sink or over a bowl to drain.
Fill a large baking pan with tepid water. Break two sheets in half as equally as possible. Add the matzah to the pan of water for 2 minutes, making sure they are submerged. (You can gently lay a couple heavy pieces of silverware across the top of the matzah to hold down.) The matzah should be pliable, but still hold its shape. Take each sheet out by lifting it holding onto two corners. Let some of the water drip off for a moment, then lay the softened matzah in a single layer on a thick dish towel or two. You can do the matzah in batches depending on the size of your pan with water.
Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and a couple pinches of salt, stir and sauté about 5 minutes until the onion starts to soften. Mix in the chopped artichoke and cook another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, as the artichokes and onions begin to take on a little color.
As the mixture cooks, use a large spoon or your hands to squeeze as much liquid as possible out of the spinach. Set the squeezed spinach into a large mixing bowl, breaking up the clumps. When the onion and artichokes are ready, add to the bowl with the spinach and stir to blend the vegetables. Add the dill, feta, 1/3 cup grated cheese, milk, pepper and nutmeg, if using. Mix until well blended, then taste for saltiness. Depending on the saltiness of the feta, add salt as needed. Beat two eggs and stir into the mixture until well blended.
Put 1 tablespoon olive oil in an 8 x 11.5-inch (2 quart) glass baking dish. Swirl the oil to cover the bottom and a bit of the sides, then put the dish in the



preheated oven for 4 to 5 minutes. Heating the baking dish will help create a good bottom crust and keep it from sticking. As soon as the dish comes out hot, cover the bottom completely with about 1 1/2 sheets of matzah, slightly overlapping. The matzah should sizzle as it hits the oil. Spoon half the spinach mixture onto the matzah and gently spread evenly. Cover with another layer of 1 1/2 sheets of matzah, then the remaining spinach mixture making sure it's even. Add the top layer of matzah, covering the filling edge to edge. Use the extra half piece of wet matzah to fill in any of the layers as needed.
Beat the remaining egg and tablespoon of oil together. Pour the mixture all over the top of the matzah. Some will drip down the sides and that's fine. Use a pastry brush to spread any pools of egg so the coating on the matzah is even. Bake for 40 minutes, then sprinkle the remaining 1/3 cup grated cheese evenly over the top. Continue baking another 10 to 12 minutes until the top is golden brown. Let stand 10 minutes before cutting. Serve warm.



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Checking ourselves on Passover

By Rabbi Leonard Cohen



Rabbi Leonard Cohen

Each Pesach we observe the mitzvah of "bedikat chametz" - the cleaning out of chametz, i.e., leavened foods, from our property.

The source of this commandment is from the Torah "lo yir'eh lekha chametz" - which translates literally to, there shall be no chametz to be seen/found/present by you. The terminology is exacting - not simply you shall not eat chametz, but that no chametz shall be detected amid you (and your property). It is the extremity of the wording in the

Torah which is the source of the intensity of the laws of Chametz.

A strict observance of Torah precludes keeping ANY chametz - not only food but any items which could harbor chametz. The rabbis and sages in fact made the mitzvah more manageable through the institution of selling chametz. While some rabbis take a stringent position requiring extreme cleansing of one's property, others (e.g. Rabbi Haim Ovadia) take more lenient stances, in order to avoid imposing an excessive or unmanageable burden. A group of students once asked Rav Yisrael Salanter, founder of the Mussar movement, what halachic stringencies they should observe regarding matza for the upcoming holiday. Rav Yisrael gave them one: "Don't yell at the widows preparing the matza." Chametz cleaning is no easy task; it is therefore important to share in its labour and show kindness and appreciation to those engaged in its challenge.

Why does the Torah use extreme phrasing regarding the elimination of chametz at Pesach time?

Chametz is symbolic of the yetzer hara (evil inclination) which causes us to become "puffed up" - i.e. prideful, or overfilled. The mitzvah of eliminating chametz reminds us to restore humility - to remember our origins as a slave people - and simplicity in our lives. Rabbi Dovid Zauderer writes, "The concept of

removing chametz from our homes for the seven days of Passover is really a message for all of us to try and remain chametz-free for the duration of our lives."

A more challenging question might be, if chametz represents our yetzer hara, why is it permitted in the first place during the rest of the year? The Radbaz, in his work Metzudas Dovid, explains that Hashem deliberately imparted in us a yetzer hara to test our inclinations, to expend the effort necessary to bring us closer to Kedusha/holiness. During Pesach, we can throw out the yetzer hara with the chametz, but only temporarily. The rest of the time, we are meant to do the hard labour of contending with the temptations and challenges of the potential for wrongdoing inside of us.

The comprehensive nature of the Torah commandment thus makes sense; it reminds us how easily we can get lost in the clutter of life, and how wonderful it can be to rid ourselves of that which we don't need -- and come back to the sacred essence of our (Jewish) existence.

Leonard Cohen is the Rabbi of Kehilat Shalom Calgary, now hosting weekly Shabbat services with Kiddush luncheon in person. For more information, or to reach Rabbi Leonard, email info@ksccalgary.org

Seder plate *Cont. from page 6*

whether from Ukraine, Syria or Central America. I hope that we sit around our seder tables and talk about the bravery of each and every person who tells their coming out story and lives their truth. I hope that we sit around our seder tables and talk about the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, the ongoing struggle for farmworker and immigrant justice here in the United States, the shameful history of American slavery and its lasting legacy of systemic racism, our own stories of immigration and exile and whatever other stories you and your families need to tell.

Over the course of the seder, we lift up the items on the seder plate and tell of their significance. What is this bitter herb, we ask? It is to remind us of the bitterness of slavery, the bitterness of being subject to

a power we have not chosen, the bitterness of being despised for who we are. What is this shankbone, we ask? It is a reminder of the power that can redeem us, the helping hands that pull us out of our bondage, the strength of conviction that we honor. These are particular items, to be sure, but they are telling universal stories.

Why do we need additional items, when these symbols allow us to tell the stories we want to tell? I worry that the more specific stories we attempt to include, the more we are excluding. What happens to people who do not see their specific story represented on a seder plate that is groaning with symbols of so many other stories?

One of the core lessons of the Exodus is the impulse toward empathy. Over and over, the Torah returns to this narrative, reminding us to protect and love and be kind to the stranger, because we were strangers in the

land of Egypt. The Torah is not specific; we do not name that we must be kind to the Ukrainian refugee, or the trans teenager, or the Palestinian farmer, or the African man who is enslaved. Because to name one, in this context, would be to exclude another. Our empathy, the Torah teaches, is meant to be boundless and inclusive. We are to welcome anyone — and everyone — who feels out of place, who feels unmoored, who has been oppressed or mistreated.

To my mind, and in my understanding of the rites of Passover, each and every one of their stories is already represented on the seder plate and in the seder ritual. No additions needed.

Rabbi Sari Laufer is the Director of Congregational Engagement at Stephen Wise Temple in Los Angeles.



SARAH KEMPLER was an Intelligence Corps officer when she was injured in a Jerusalem truck-ramming in 2017.



AMIT GINAT was injured in a Hezbollah ambush during the Second Lebanon War (2006).



NADAV YAIISH, a fighter in the Duvdevan elite unit between 2010 and 2016, was injured during classified operational activity.



OFIR ANIDGAR was wounded while serving as a commander in Operation Protective Edge (2014).



LIRAN HADAD was wounded in the Gaza Strip in 2004 while serving in the Givati Brigade.



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Lenka Lichtenberg wins JUNO for Holocaust-themed poetry album

By Irena Karshenbaum

After sitting through a very long awards ceremony, held in Edmonton on March 11, 2023, Czech-born, Canadian music artist, Lenka Lichtenberg, was shocked to hear that her work, “Thieves of Dreams: Songs of Theresienstadt’s Secret Poetess,” beat out the other four nominees to win a JUNO Award in the Global Music Album of the Year category.

The announcement was not what Lichtenberg was expecting as, she believes, a Holocaust-themed album has never won a JUNO and it is the first time that a Czech-language album had been nominated and won. She says that after a lifetime of recording, since the age of 10, and submitting, “Over and over again to the JUNOs and entering MASARYK five years ago, which I thought was my best album ever, I wasn’t expecting to win. I thought I should be a happy person thanks to my beautiful life and I should stop dreaming of a JUNO. Of course, I submitted “Thieves of Dreams” and thought this has no chance, and when I was nominated, I was shocked.”

The collection of 15 songs (plus one instrumental) - based on poems written between 1940 and 1945 by her grandmother, Anna Hana Friesová, just before and while she was incarcerated, together with her daughter, Jana Renée Friesová, at Terezin, or Theresienstadt - did not fall on deaf ears by the JUNO jury who recognized the work’s universal beauty and poignant story.

Lichtenberg found her grandmother’s poems in her mother’s desk, in her Prague apartment, after her mother had passed away in 2016. She explains that the poems were most likely written on scraps of paper, which Anna Hana managed to keep hidden for two and a half years while at Terezin. After the mother and daughter were liberated, on May 8, 1945, and returned to their lives, Anna Hana copied her poems into booklets and never spoke about her experiences during the Holocaust, or her poetry, again. Anna Hana’s daughter was different. Jana Renée wrote about her time in Terezin in her 1996 book, *Fortress of My Youth*.

The discovery of her grandmother’s poems compelled Lichtenberg on a journey to, “Bring her voice back to life in the way I best knew how, through music.”

Born in Prague, Lichtenberg studied at the Prague Music Conservatory before arriving in Canada in 1981 where she went on to obtain a Masters degree in Ethnomusicology from York University. She taught music and built a career as a musician, composer and producer with seven solo music albums to her credit spanning a broad spectrum from Czech, Moravian and Slovak folk songs, new age remixes, and songs sang in Yiddish, Arabic, Iraqi, English and French. Her style has been described as “folk-art jazz,” which also applies to “Thieves of Dreams” performed entirely in Czech.

This depth of experience allowed Lichtenberg to delve deeply into her grandmother’s poetry, which, in spite of all the tragedy she was living through, was surprisingly full of hope and love. In *Miracles*, Anna Hana writes, “There never have been more magical moments/and evenings, and intimacy more brilliant/and nights in dreams more beautiful/and a heart has never dreamt so exquisitely/as in our togetherness.”

Lichtenberg hopes that her grandmother was writing about her grandfather, Richard Fries, and in many poems she believes she was, although she is not entirely sure, as by the time the family was deported to Terezin, her grandparent’s marriage was falling apart. She recounts that after her grandfather returned from being imprisoned by the Gestapo, he was, “a broken man.” Surviving such horrors and set in contrast to his wife’s “very energetic and very funny” nature, “Apparently, they argued so loudly you could hear them through the whole house.”

Of course, Anna Hana was not a woman who had fallen out of love with her husband. In *It was a cold dusk*, my love, she writes about the heartbreak of parting from her beloved husband, “With our last tear the final darkness fell/and G-d couldn’t see our faces;/the end fell into our eyes like a stone onto a mirror;/only the wind wanted to know what was going



Juno award winner Lenka Lichtenberg

on.” Fries was deported to Auschwitz where he was murdered in the gas chambers on October 10, 1944.

“There is some sadness, loss of faith, but they are not bitter,” Lichtenberg describes the poetry. In fact, Anna Hana shows a remarkable capacity for forgiveness. In *I wanted to curse you, bitter land*, she writes about being betrayed as Jews by Czechoslovakia, “Damned be all places,/where I’d been happy!/Suddenly my heart softened,/as if broken; instead of cursing/I whispered a prayer: after all,/all the trees there were in full bloom.”

It may have been her eternal hope that allowed Anna Hana to find companionship and love again by remarrying Bedrich Stein, another Holocaust survivor, after the War.

This desire for renewal also applied to Lichtenberg’s own life as a Jew. The process of assimilation, to try to save themselves, had started with her great-grandmother, Františka Siegrova, whose second marriage was to a non-Jewish man, Jan Siegr, a judge. Both perished in the Holocaust. She at Auschwitz and he was shot for storing food to send to Terezin. Her grandfather, Richard Fries, who was from a mountainous part of Czechoslovakia, had experienced pogroms himself causing him to indicate “no religion” on his marriage document, even though both him and his wife were fully Jewish. “They felt that would somehow keep them safe. Of course, that wasn’t the case with the Nazis,” Lichtenberg explains. When their

Continued on page 22



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Potato Kugel for Pesach

Our friends at the Carriage House Hotel and Conference Centre have provided this delicious recipe for our readers to enjoy over Passover and year-round. Bitayavon!

Yields: 8 servings. Total time: 95 minutes

Ingredients

2 large yellow onions, peeled and shredded , 5 lb. russet potatoes, peeled and shredded , 6 large eggs
1/4 c. vegetable oil , 1 tbsp. kosher salt , 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper , 1 tbsp. finely chopped chives

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375°. Working in batches, place handfuls of shredded onions and potatoes in a clean

kitchen towel and squeeze out excess liquid into a bowl, reserving the liquid. Transfer onion and potatoes to another bowl.

Let excess liquid sit to allow starch solids to settle to the bottom of the bowl, about 5 minutes. Pour liquid off slowly, leaving the solid potato starch in the bottom of the bowl. Discard liquid.

In another large bowl, beat eggs well then beat in oil, reserved potato starch, salt, and pepper. Pour egg mixture over potato and onion mixture and toss to combine.

Brush a 9”-x-13” baking dish with oil and place in the oven to preheat, 5 minutes. Carefully, remove baking dish from oven and fill evenly with potato mixture.

Bake until golden and potatoes are tender, about 1 hour. Turn oven to broil and broil kugel until top is golden, about 2 minutes.

Sprinkle with chives before serving.





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Calgary – Currie



Diana Batten
Calgary – Acadia



Joe Ceci
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Kathleen Ganley
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Rachel Notley
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Chag Pesach sameach!

Happy Passover!



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Menachem Kaiser on his quest to reclaim a family home

By Maxine Fischbein

When Canadian-born author Menachem Kaiser spoke at the Calgary Public Library on March 14, it was a rare literary treat.

His book *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure* was a New York Times Critics Top Non-fiction Book in 2021 and earned the Canadian Jewish Literary Award (biography) in 2021 and the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature in 2022.

Kaiser's genre of choice is ordinarily fiction, and he did not initially intend to write about his attempt to reclaim an apartment building in Sosnowiec, Poland owned by his grandfather's family prior to World War II. Good thing he did.

Kaiser's adventures in Poland (which have outlived the publication of *Plunder*) did not yield much information about his grandfather; but the "conversation" he engaged in with his Zaidy, Maier Menachem - for whom he is named - led to a page-turner that is suspenseful, introspective, quirky, and jaw-dropping. It is a tale of lost property, found relatives, star-crossed lovers and a bizarre cast of real-life characters, including an aging Polish lawyer dubbed "The Killer" and treasure hunters more focused on Nazi plunder purportedly hidden in the tunnels of Silesia than the tragic fates of Jewish slave labourers worked to death while building the massive subterranean structures.

Kaiser spoke at the third program of an annual Holocaust education series organized by the Holocaust and Human Rights department of Calgary Jewish Federation in partnership with the Calgary Public Library and the Edmonton Public Library. The event attracted an audience of 300, with nearly half attending in person and the balance via Zoom.

The series is generously supported by the Isadore and Florence Burstyn Memorial Fund, KSW Holocaust Education Fund, Viewpoint Foundation and donors to the Holocaust and Human Rights Fund at the Calgary Public Library Foundation.

Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin - co-chairs of the Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education department at the Calgary Jewish

Federation - engaged Kaiser in a wide-ranging discussion about his reclamation efforts and his memoir.

"The origin story is kind of actually an anti-origin story," Kaiser said. "I was adamantly opposed to writing a book about anything to do with Eastern Europe or particularly with Poland. My grandparents are both Polish Holocaust survivors.... I didn't identify as Polish. And I didn't really have much of a curiosity, to be totally honest, about their story."

While living in Lithuania on a Fulbright Fellowship, Kaiser met a Brooklynite who was the road manager for a German band, The Scorpions, and the son of the Chief Rabbi of Galicia. The family invited Kaiser to Poland for Rosh Hashanah.

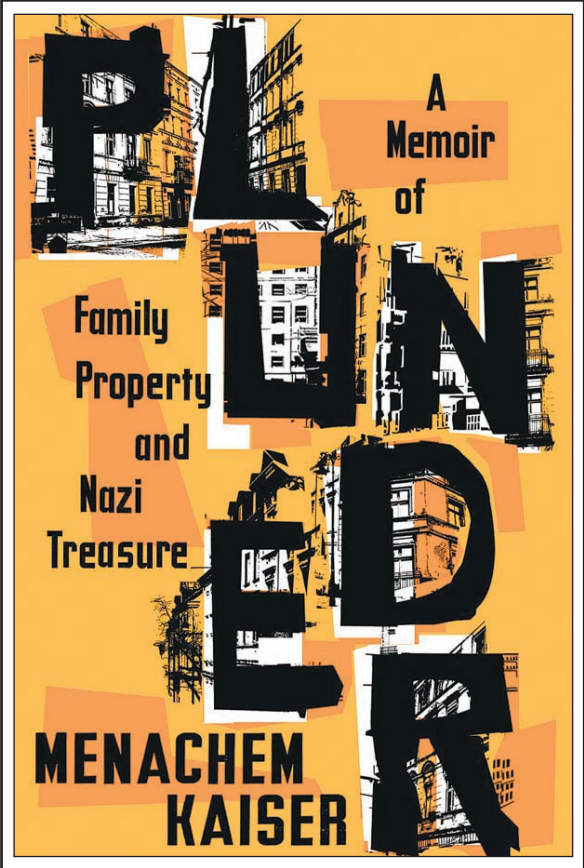
Kaiser's father prodded him to take an interest in previous efforts by his own father to reclaim the building that had belonged to his family in Sosnowiec, Poland prior to the Holocaust. Kaiser's grandfather had passed away in 1977, some eight years before he was born. Referring to his father as "a wonderful man and a sub-par storyteller," Kaiser said he "didn't really have a sense of who [my grandfather] really was."

"There was a kinship but I didn't really have a handle on it," Kaiser said. "There were some documents about applications for medical assistance from the German government after the war and a few hints about which camps he was in, but for all intents and purposes we didn't know anything."

In 2015, when Kaiser's father faxed him information about the building in Sosnowiec, Kaiser began to relate to his grandfather's prior attempts to recover the property. "You know, failure is an interesting thing to project onto someone because you can...relate to frustration, probably easier than triumph."

It became a "perch for my imagination" and "a way for me and my grandfather to start a conversation," Kaiser said.

He engaged legal counsel on the advice of a local Chasid who recommended The Killer. "Sounds like the kind of lawyer you want," deadpanned Kaiser who launched into hilarious descriptions of the woman he figured was "...somewhere between 80 and 120



years old."

When Kaiser walked through the doors, one of two daughters who worked in their mother's practice was absorbed in a video about wrestling pandas. The entire office was festooned with images of cats. "I'm in... let's go," was Kaiser's reaction.

He imagined his application to the courts would be swift and successful. He was wrong. A year after initiating the process, Kaiser had to go to court to prove that his great-grandfather and great-grandmother - both murdered during the Holocaust - were dead. He possessed no proof, so the court came back with "we're not sure."

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Humour is good for the soul

By Lisa Thomson

Have you ever caught yourself battling to stifle the giggles at the worst possible time – at a funeral, in an important office meeting, or as a child, being reprimanded by your teacher? How could your thoughts go so horribly awry in such serious moments? And yet, these are the moments when humour creeps up to make us human and feel alive.

We all know that challenging times can be debilitating. Whether it's an acute event or chronic stress, the cumulative effects of adversity can wreak havoc on all of us. During these times, the last thing we think about, is laughing. But... research is telling us that this is one of the most important things we can do for ourselves.

Humour is a key ingredient in building resiliency in the face of adversity. Poking fun at our state of affairs lowers our stress hormones, makes things feel more manageable and helps us overcome fear. Shared laughter builds connections and reminds us that we are not alone. How many of us have had a chuckle over a situation with a complete stranger?

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the power of humour for many of us, bringing the world together with shared laughter and a dose of humanity. For example, there was the toilet paper 'thing'. The uncomfortable uncertainties of the lockdown were very evident, and collective anxiety was at an all-time high. While there were so many more pressing concerns, the thought of running out of toilet paper struck fear in our hearts (we all had that initial... gulp). The humour that arose from the silliness of stockpiling the 2-ply went viral, and was the source of social media memes, jokes, and giggles. This shared humorous connection went a long way to diffuse anxiety and made us feel we were all in it together.

Laughing ourselves silly with JNF



For the first time after COVID, JNF Calgary's Laugh Yourself Silly comedy night started again, with a good crowd chuckling and roaring. Both the antics of our contestants in The Great Debates and the professional comedy of Keith Barany left everyone with smiles on their faces. Thanks to all those who came out for an evening of laughter, and an especially big thank you to all the contestants who braved The Great Debates!

The emotional and physical benefits of laughter have long been the subject of research. In Norman Cousins' 1979 book *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient: Reflections on Healing*, he discussed his theory of 'laughter therapy'. Cousins, a renowned Jewish journalist, editor, political activist and professor, had a strong personal connection to his area of research on the biochemistry of human emotions and the contribution of positive attitudes in fighting illness.

Diagnosed with a crippling connective tissue disease in 1964, Cousins used his theory of mind-body connection, and took it upon himself to incorporate humour into his life as part of his healing process. Cousins was a pioneer in the field with his research on humour's impact on health, and he maintained that a positive attitude has significant physical and emotional impacts on our wellbeing.

Sometimes humour can be an effective coping mechanism when handling serious, painful or frightening topics. Shared laughter and humanity in

challenging circumstances can help relieve anxiety and build resilience.

Humour is good for the soul. Meg Soper, speaking at JFSC's May 2 Annual Event, understands how a positive attitude elevates both our own wellbeing as well as those around us. A motivational speaker, Soper combines her experience as a stand-up comedian, operating room nurse, and mother of two millennials to motivate audiences with humorous anecdotes and stress-busting strategies for personal resilience, teamwork and effective communication. Soper believes laughter is truly the best medicine available to deal with the day-to-day stress in our lives.

Proceeds from JFSC's Annual Event go towards promoting mental wellness across programs and services. For more information go to www.jfsc.org, to purchase tickets contact Tammy at tammyo@jfsc.org or call 403-692-6391.

Israeli President warns of a 'real civil war' amid court reform battle

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) — Israeli President Isaac Herzog warned of the possibility of civil war if the governing coalition won't agree to a compromise on its judicial reform legislation.

The statement is one of the most dire pronouncements by a senior Israeli official about the tumultuous fallout from the judicial proposal, which has sparked fierce debate, months of street protests and civil disobedience. And it is a stunning pronouncement from Herzog, a public figure known for congeniality, who holds a position that has historically been defined by restraint.

"I have heard real, deep hatred," Herzog said in an address carried on primetime TV. "I have heard people from all sides saying that, G-d forbid, blood in the streets will not shock them."

Herzog, whose compromise proposals were already

being rejected by the government, said his warning should terrify every Israeli.

"He who thinks that a real civil war, one that costs lives, is a line we won't reach, is out of touch," he said. "In this moment, of all moments, in the 75th year of the state of Israel, the abyss is within reach."

The speech, as chilling as it was, did not appear likely to head off the intensifying unrest. The opposition welcomed Herzog's proposed compromise, while government figures rejected it.

Israel has been rocked

by weeks of protests against the reforms proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, which would sap the Supreme Court of much of its power and independence. More recently, the national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir — who has professed admiration for Meir Kahane, a rabbi barred from Israel's parliament in the 1980s because of his racism — has ordered police crackdowns on protesters.

Continued on page 39



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2023 JFSC Annual Event

"Humour is Good for the Soul"

Managing stressful times through humor, passion and resilience with Meg Soper, Motivational Speaker

Dessert reception to follow

Tuesday May 2, 2023
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or contact Tammy
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community calendar

Want to know what's going on in Jewish Calgary?
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Have an event?
Click on "Suggest an Event" to add it to the calendar





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A MESSAGE FROM LISA LIBIN

As we close out our 2022 UJA campaign, I am already extremely excited with the prospect of the coming year. Like every campaign year, 2022 brought its own challenges but most importantly through our generous community, it also provided some amazing opportunities that I believe we can act on in the coming months.

When I began my term as president (which happened to coincide with when our 2022 campaign launched), it was a great opportunity for me to assess what resonates with our community and gain a good sense of why we all give.

One thing is clear – we all see Calgary's Jewish community as something special. Whether we are parents with children in day school or summer camp, seniors who look forward to frequent programs and delicious lunches, PJ Library® babies and toddlers, university students and Jewish young professionals, or valued Holocaust survivors and educators, we all actively choose to engage in our community for one defining reason: Jewish Calgary is special. Jewish Calgary is important.

We are already deep into planning our 2023 campaign strategy – a sneak-preview, much of it will revolve around this shared emotion; this feeling of community importance and uniqueness we all hold near and dear. But it will also be key that those who may not yet feel that same passion, that same connection, have the opportunity to truly experience and understand what makes Jewish Calgary the exceptional place it is.


This is where we must all play a role. We need to not only be involved but share this involvement with those around us. Bring a family member or friend to an event, encourage youth to volunteer and get engaged in activities that interest them, and if you work downtown, check out a great JAC program and engage with like-minded young professionals. This list goes on and on.

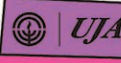
Think about how often you might be influenced to be part of an event or activity because a friend or family member is going. Now share that notion with someone else. So, the next time you attend a community event, I ask you to take a look around the room. I can almost

guarantee you will see people hugging, people talking, and ultimately you will see people just happy to be together at the same time, in the same place. This may have been something we took for granted for numerous years, but I still continue to feel this energy at each event I attend – especially after many years of virtual life.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you for making my Jewish community into something that I feel is special – and important. Through your donations – but more importantly through your involvement and engagement – I am not only proud of who our community is today, but who we are set to become.

B'Shalom,


Lisa Libin
President
Calgary Jewish Federation



THIS IS MY
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All events on this page are made possible by your gifts to Federation's annual UJA Campaign.

Building an inclusive community is a priority. Contact us and we will make every effort to meet your needs.

YOM HASHOAH
HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY COMMEMORATION

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023 | 26 NISAN 5783
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SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023



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All donations made through Birdies for Kids will be matched up to 50% making your donation go even further!



This past February marked JDAIM - JEWISH DISABILITY ACCEPTANCE, AWARENESS, AND INCLUSION MONTH. Jewish Calgary offered engaging and interactive programs for all ages and abilities, beginning with a screening of *Life, Animated*, an award-winning film about a boy diagnosed with autism who turned animated Disney movies into a language to express love, loss, kinship, and brotherhood. Paperny Family JCC hosted *Through My Eyes*, an inspirational art exhibit showcasing the work of Yehudit Chayil, a local artist who overcame obstacles due to a mobility disability to master the art of painting. Concluding the month was a heartwarming presentation from Lieutenant Colonel Tiran Attia of Israel's *Special in Uniform*, who spoke on how the IDF incorporates young adults with disabilities into their regular service. Jewish Calgary also educated on acceptance and inclusion through special editions of PJ Library®'s *Tot Shabbat* and the JCC's *Welcome Shabbat*. Inclusion is a mindset, everyday initiative, and daily action that Jewish Calgary is proud to support. For more information or to volunteer, contact Karina Szulc at karinas@jewishcalgary.org.



SAVE the DATE

YOM HAZIKARON
Israel's Remembrance Day
MON. APRIL 24 • 7:00PM
PAPERNY FAMILY JCC

YOM HAATZMAUT
Israel's 75th Independence Day
TUES. APRIL 25 • 5:30PM
PAPERNY FAMILY JCC

CURATE AND CREATE FOR ISRAEL@75

The National Library of Israel (NLI) is offering a worldwide YOM HAATZMAUT PROGRAM AND POSTER COMPETITION, to motivate students to design Yom HaAtzmaut posters, and get a chance to visit Israel! Explore 75 primary sources, provided by the NLI, and SUBMIT POSTERS BY APRIL 26, 2023 to be eligible. Poster winners will be presented on NLI platforms, and will receive \$750 USD towards an Israel experience, or school-wide activity!

For more info go to: EDUCATION-EN.NLI.ORG.IL/CURATE-CREATE



The first PJ Library® books arrived in Calgary in July 2009. Sixty-nine books were sent out to the inaugural group of PJ Library Calgary children, and since then we have sent out 69,659 books! Books that are loved and cherished, and passed down to family and friends; books that teach us about Jewish holidays, and how to be a mensch; books that make us feel happy, or silly, or ones that make us think – 69,659 books that have helped shape our community.

Since 2009, PJ Library families have gathered together to learn about holidays, create art, play with joy, and get to know each other. As a PJ parent myself, I can genuinely say that I met some of my best friends through PJ Library and so have my children. The babies that laid together on the floor at Shalom Baby have now been friends for close to nine years and will carry a bond that was created because of PJ Library – forever.



My name is **Sydney Truax** and I am the **PJ Library and Family Engagement Coordinator** with Calgary Jewish Federation. I have a passion for bringing people together and creating a sense of community. I am honoured to have this role and play even a small part in giving families their connection to Jewish Calgary.

If you would like to **learn more about PJ Library** or if you have an event or get-together you would like to see in our community, contact me at: **struax@jewishcalgary.org** or **403-537-8592**. I look forward to hearing from you!



PJ FAST FACTS

- PJ Library subscriptions cost **\$100USD** per child. Thanks to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, our community only pays 50% of that cost, and your generous UJA donations help to pay for the rest.
- We currently have about **500** PJ Library and **140** PJ Our Way® subscriptions.
- Since 2009 we've sent out **69,659** books... that means in April we'll be sending out our **70,000th** book!
- Some Calgarian children started receiving books at six months and received a book every month until they turned 13! That's **150** FREE books!
- This year, PJ Library Calgary is celebrating our **14th Anniversary!**
- PJ Library provides books and programming to readers ages **0 to 8½**. This year we have celebrated holidays, swam at the JCC, created art, sang songs, read books, and so much more!
- PJOW provides books with Jewish themes to readers ages **8½ to 12**, plus an array of fun and age-appropriate programs and events for students in grades 4, 5, and 6.
- So far, **PJ Our Way** has celebrated Chanukah, jumped at the trampoline park, played glow in the dark mini golf, and more!



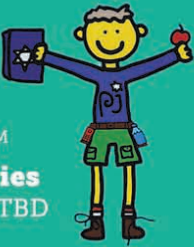
Thank you to our PJ Library Legacy donors who are ensuring our families will have the gift of books for generations to come. The Harold Grinspoon Foundation has extended the program to March 31, 2024 so we can continue raising funds for the future of PJ Library Calgary. Every cash legacy gift will received a 25% match to support PJ Library Calgary in perpetuity. There is no minimum amount to participate. For more information contact **Diana Kalef** at 403-444-3154 or **dkalef@jewishcalgary.org**.

2022 PJ LIBRARY ENDOWMENT HONOUR ROLL

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Shoshanna & Zeev Berger	Rochelle Lipsman	Professional Corporation
Sheila & Barry Bloomfield	Martinson Family	Cheryl & Morley Shore
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Hanita & Aaron Dagan	Nancy Flatters & Andrew Oppenheim	Deborah & Adam Silver & Family
Andrea & Laurence Davis	Pfeffer Family	Marg Semel & Adam Singer
Susan Dvorkin	Polley Family	Hilda & Len Smith
Lil Faider ^{*1}	Cynthia & David Prasow	Jackie Halpern & Glenn Solomon
Alice Fischer	Beth & Lorne Price	Darlene Switzer-Foster
Mary & Arthur Fishman	Jorda Promislow	Michelle Thal
Ellen & Daryl Fridhandler	Rochelle Rabinovitz	Kathie & Stephen Wainer
Kristina & Matthew Greenberg	Karen & Sheldon Roth	Fania Wedro
Eva & Gordy Hoffman	Pnina & Mark Rubensohn	Lynne Oreck-Wener & Bob Wener

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **PJ Passover Party**
Sunday, April 2 • 10AM-12PM
- **PJOW Goes to the Movies**
Thursday, April 20 • Time TBD
- **Popsicles in the Park**
Sunday, June 25 • 10AM-12PM



REGISTER FOR PJ



For kids 0-8½ years:
pjlibrary.org/enroll-in-a-community



For kids 8½-12 years:
pjourway.org/signup



PJ celebrates Shabbat every other Friday with an interactive half hour of songs, stories, and brachot (blessings).

Upcoming dates:
March 31 • April 21



Do you have a baby, two or under? Join us every other Wednesday at the JCC. for coffee and nosh while sharing the joys and oys of parenting.

Next meeting: **April 26**



PJ LIBRARY GRANDPARENTS

Great news! Grandparents can receive the gift of PJ Library, too! Register to receive special mailings and emails from PJ. Scan QR code below or go to **pjlibrary.org**



DID YOU KNOW?

PJ Library will pay you to hang out with your friends! **PJ Library Get Together Grants** are now open! Whether you're hosting a Shabbat dinner, holiday event, volunteer project, or hike, PJ Library will reimburse your family for up to \$100USD of expenses to feed, entertain, and delight your gathered guests. Families may apply for a total of three separate events. Eligible PJ Library subscribers will have already received a Get Together email containing a personal host code and link to complete an application. Contact Sydney for more information or if you need help finding your unique code.

Israel is our responsibility



Rabbi Gila Caine

By Rabbah Gila Caine

From when, i.e., from which date, does one begin to mention the might of the rains by inserting the phrase: “He makes the wind blow and the rain to fall”?...The mishnah states a general principle: One requests rain only immediately preceding the rainy season... Until when does one request rain? Rabbi Yehuda says: We request rain until Passover has passed. Rabbi Meir says: Until the month of Nisan has ended... (Mishnah, Ta’anit 1)

The rainy season in Israel is winter, but here in Canada? I guess summer. How about Australia? It doesn’t really matter when the rainy season is in YOUR corner of the world, because liturgically speaking, we are always aiming at the rainy season in the land of Israel as a way of maintaining a centre. This isn’t only about that strip of earth being our indigenous homeland, but also, and I would say mainly, because by asking all Jews around the world to pray for rain at the time when Israel needs it most, we hold a shared sense of solidarity and create time and again a sacred focal point.

It isn’t the land which is sacred. All Earth is sacred. Rather, it is our joint intention, the aligning of our body towards Israel in prayer and our thoughts towards the parched land, that creates and recreates our sacred body-Israel.

On the first day of Pesach Jews around the world will stop praying for rain, and begin mentioning dew (dew, the summer moisture and ancient symbol of revival). As Jews living in Alberta we are still responsible for the lushness and fruitfulness of Israel, and liturgically we aren’t only allowed to join our voices in the call for rain and dew, but are actually obligated to do so. Even if we don’t currently live on the land or vote for its government. The rationale for the whole Zionist project (be it cultural, political or religious) lies on the premise that Jews around the world have a say in the viability of the land and that their words (our words) can tip the balance between a livable home or destroyed wasteland.

Over the past few months, I’ve watched in awe as the semi - hidden rifts and cracks in Israeli society have come into plain view. What might have been swept under the carpet of “shevet achim gam yachad”; is now presented plainly for all of us to see and choose from: A democratic state, or a halachic state. And to be clear, halachah in its most reactionary and fundamentalist iteration, one which would proclaim many of this city’s Jews non-Jewish (or suspect at best).

What kind of Jewish homeland are you hoping and praying for? If you want one in which all are ruled by an antiquated version of Torah, where adult women are considered legal “minors” and where majority rules but there are no protections for minorities (sexual, religious, ethnic etc’), then we are headed in the right

direction. If, on the other hand, you would like to support an Israel which is part of the Western world - you need to speak up now. We need to speak up now. By speaking up you are joining and supporting tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Israelis from across the religious and political spectrum, who are out demonstrating every week, all over the country. If you care about an Israel where your ideals and your Judaism are recognised and respected, you need to make your voice heard.

This is hard, because we all know how questioning Israeli government policy has the tendency to get hijacked by third parties with an anti-Zionist agenda. So we have to be clear in our words and intentions, and work through organisations we trust are doing this work to support Israel and not cripple it. But we can’t allow this fear to hold us back from proclaiming we too hold a stake in the “personality” our country is developing, since Israel is homeland to all Jews. If this “personality” is moving far away from what I believe is the essence of Jewish peoplehood, then it is my religious obligation as a Jew, to call on my land to do tshuvah.

For untold generations we’ve aligned ourselves in the cycle of rain rituals and dew liturgy, focusing on a land far away, but at the core of our being. This year as Pesach approaches, we are obligated to listen closely to what our land needs and make sure we articulate a demand for freedom and a just covenant from those in power.

Pesach kasher v’sameach.

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

Lichtenberg *Cont. from page 15*

only child, Jana Renée, was born in 1927 the parents wrote “none” under religion on her birth certificate. Jana Renée only learned she was Jewish at the age of 12, after the Nazis had occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939, and her parents had to explain to her why she couldn’t go to school.

Lichtenberg, like her mother, did not know she was

Jewish, when, at the age of 10, as a well-known child singer in Czechoslovakia, she was invited to perform at the Prague Jewish Community Centre and her mother had to finally tell her about her roots.

As an adult, Lichtenberg wanted to defy the path of assimilation her family had been on for almost a century, “I decided I would make up for all that had been lost and live as Jewish a life as possible.” She started to study Jewish music and through that met her future husband, Rubin Cohen. The couple have three children.

Lichtenberg performs regularly as a cantorial soloist and co-leads Shabbat services at Congregation Darchei Noam in Toronto. She is working on releasing volume two containing 12 new songs, from a total of 65 poems that her grandmother wrote, sang in English this time. Aiming for a release date of October of 2023, the collection does not yet have a name. A book containing all poems, both in English and Czech, is also in the works with editor, Alena Jirásek.

Irena Karshenbaum writes in Calgary. irenakarshenbaum.com

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A conversation about Palestinians in Israel

By David Sklar

Peter Driftinier was visibly nervous but composed, as he stepped up to the front of Temple B'nai Tikvah's library on the evening of Monday, February 27th. He was there to present a talk on his month working with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs in the occupied territories.

“What do you mean by occupied?” was the first question lobbed at Driftmier before he could even get two sentences out of his mouth.

He was there to address his experiences working with the Wi'am Centre in Bethlehem, All That's Left (an Israeli leftist-NGO) in Masafer Yatta, Rabbis for Human Rights, Tent of Nations, and the Centre for Jewish non-violence to name a few.

By simply saying the words, "Occupied territories," Driftmier knew he was opening a can of worms.

Anytime the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is discussed or even attempted to be brought up within the Jewish community, accusations of disloyalty, self-hatred or simple naivety can be tossed around. According to Driftmire, the CJF (Calgary Jewish Federation) didn't initially want to publicize his event for fear of blowback, but they eventually agreed to do so.

As Driftmier took sip after sip of water between slideshows of interviews and videos he filmed, he discussed some of the logistics behind IDF military training zones in the West Bank, as well as growing settler violence. But, as Driftmier will tell you himself, he is neither a conflict nor political expert and rather wanted to focus on the Israeli and Palestinian human rights workers, who have been putting their careers and lives on the line, defending their beliefs. And it was in these recounted personal moments, that the audience was able to connect with the lecture.

For Driftmier, his connection to Israel began on Birthright, where many young Jews first get their first taste of the Land of Milk and Honey, but according to him, “You only get one side of the story. If you are active in Jewish life you can’t not talk about Israel. And as someone who is committed to human rights, you also can’t ignore the occupation.”

Within his first 24 hours of landing in the Middle East and heading towards Bethlehem, he already felt the stark difference between how Israelis and Palestinians live. “What was once a suburb of Jerusalem now has a wall and a checkpoint that you have to go through.”

“And whose fault is that?” was an audience member’s retort. “The Palestinian terrorists. They brought this on themselves. Israel is just defending itself.”

Driftmier, while conceding that some Palestinians want to harm Israelis and Jews, noted our general perception of them is often caricatured and one-dimensional. “I was taught to be scared of Palestinians, to avoid them. But when you’re able to connect with people on the ground, discuss their day-to-day lives, their fears, frustrations, hopes and joys, the reality is so much more nuanced.”

“Do you know that Palestinians are the biggest recipients of UN funding? Where does that money go?” was an enquiry from another audience member.

Perhaps drifting further away from the personal stories of the lecture, Driftmier stated, “People

shouldn't be mass evicted from their homes, have their towns bulldozed, lack access to water and electricity, constantly be afraid of midnight raids or watch settlers attack rabbis in the middle of the day."

“But if their homes are constantly being demolished, why don’t they just go somewhere else?” was yet another question raised.

Driftmier wanted to stress the power imbalance that exists between those that have full rights and others that are denied basic human rights. "I close my presentation with a tractate from the Talmud that states, *Anyone who is able to protest against the wrongdoing of their house's people and does not - they are responsible for the wrongdoings of their house's people.* I don't think the Jewish community is ready to hear that."

"Well, I don't agree with that," was heard from the back.

The tractate or my opinion? Peter responded.

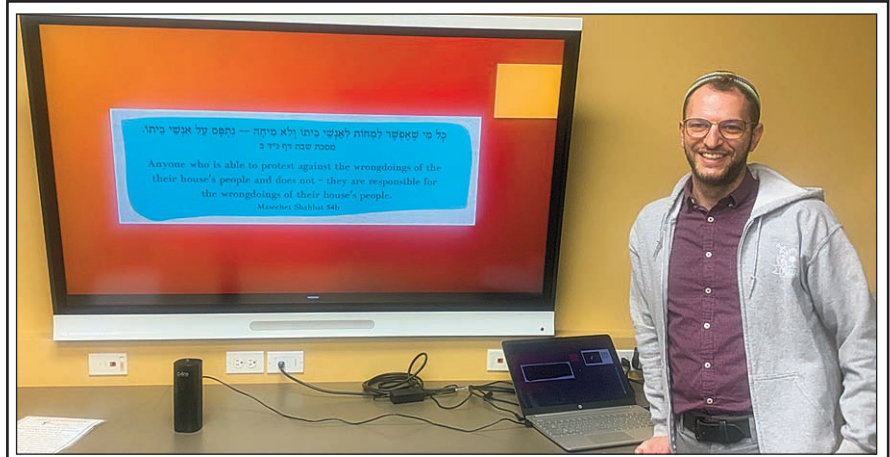
“Both!”

Had Driftmier crossed a line?

Driftmier later told me that he felt some people weren't there to listen and engage. "It was more of a staging opportunity for people to air their points. But that's ok. People do that at all kinds of Q and A's."

What could someone from the Jewish community, who feels very attached to Israel, but is concerned with government policies, do, I wondered? How can they fight for justice without crossing the line and being accused of being anti-Zionist?

“This line is used by the right to prevent people from taking action. Look for the Jewish, Israeli and Palestinian organizations that are doing human rights



Peter Driftmier gave a presentation about his work with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs.

work like Rabbis for Human Rights. Learn from them, and look at the different ways you can support it, whether it's financial, volunteering, or applying political pressure. Don't worry about the line. It's imaginary. It's used to prevent you from taking action and ensure that their agenda ends up winning."

It wasn't lost on Driftmier that the day before his talk, settlers rampaged through the West Bank town of Hawara in which the Israeli Central Command chief Maj. Gen. Yehuda Fuchs described as a "pogrom." Driftmier said that Israelis in the thousands took to the street to protest their government, but there was near silence from the Diaspora Jewish community.

Jennifer Eiserman, who introduced Driftmier at the start of the event, had many more questions than answers. “Why is it that calling yourself pro-Israel means that you can’t support Palestinian rights or being pro-Palestinian means you are automatically anti-Israel? Why is it always so black and white? I thought Peter provided a glimpse of hope into what often seems like an intractable situation.”

Perhaps this night's lecture stressed how fraught it still is within the Jewish community to even attempt to have nuanced conversation taking both sides into account, but that it is important to do, nonetheless.

David Sklar is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



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On Dynasties, Marriages and Leadership in Hasidism

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

Despite some Lufthansa scheduling catastrophes, the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies was able to pivot gracefully for this year’s annual Tova Yedlin Lecture which took place in the Student Lounge of the Old Arts Building at the University of Alberta on March 16.

“I am so sorry that I cannot be there in-person with you today,” explained Professor Marcin Wodzinski, this year’s guest speaker from the University of Wroclaw, who spoke to a sizeable crowd of lecture attendees via Zoom. Professor Alexander Carpenter of the Wirth Institute warmly welcomed Professor Wodzinski, who has spoken at the University of Alberta on past occasions as well. In addition to a great number of Edmonton Jewish community members, academics from various departments also joined for a ‘Viewing Party’ and the lecture was accessible to an even larger audience over Zoom.

Professor Wodzinski’s lecture “How to Marry Charisma: Dynasties, Marriages, and Leadership in Hasidism,” drew a diverse crowd to learn about a highly intriguing, and little understood topic. When asked in an interview prior to his talk about what drew the decorated historian to this research, Professor Wodzinski replied: “I think my interest in Hasidism might appear less surprising when you consider where I live and work. Hasidism is possibly the most important religious phenomenon, and I mean of any religion, that has ever emerged in Poland. It is also a religious, but also cultural phenomenon that informed much of contemporary Jewish civilization, even for those who don’t know much about it. And if you live in Poland, a sensitive eye easily catches traces of a Hasidic past, graves, pilgrimage sites, courts, you name it. Then once you get to the Hasidic literature, you discover much of this is happening on the streets of towns and villages you know, in the same neighbourhoods you pass every day, in the same place and space, yet in a different spiritual dimension. This is just fascinating, no?”

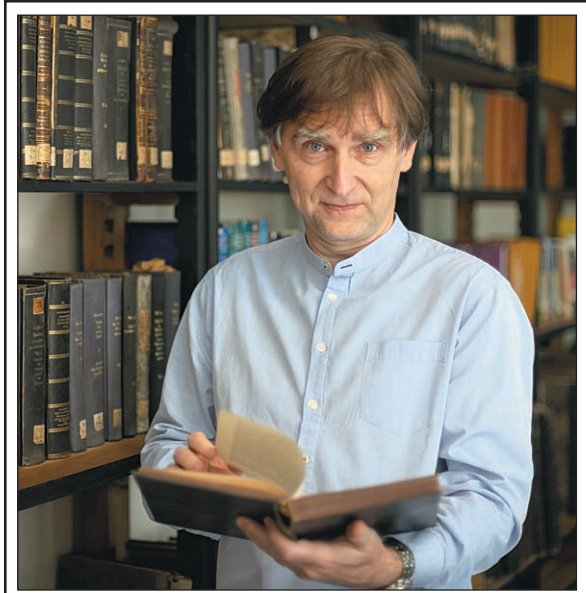
His ability to see the significance of historical echoes still resonating in everyday places around him has resulted in some extremely fascinating documenting of the trends and traditions observed in the marriages of Hasidic dynasties throughout Central and Eastern Europe leading up to the first half of the twentieth century. In partnership with two colleagues from Israel, Professor Wodzinski has taken on the monumental task of cataloging these marriage alliances into an online database. This information, although daunting in scope, would be a potential breakthrough for many Jewish genealogy projects.

As the Director of the Taube Department of Jewish Studies, Professor Wodzinski has observed firsthand the significance of strong Jewish studies institutions

in his country. “What is unique is the scale of success we managed to achieve,” he stated. “I’m very proud of both our research and teaching activities. I claim we might be the fastest growing humanities department in the universe. When most university programmes in the humanities shrink, we managed to grow from 1 position in 2003 to 10 academic and 3 administrative positions now. We have one of the strongest Yiddish studies in Europe, leading scholars in the field of post-Holocaust Jewish history, excellent team of researchers working on Hasidism and Jewish religious life more generally, amazing scholars working on Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, and other Jewish literatures. We have also an excellent research library, including one of the best book collections on Jewish spirituality bequeathed to us by the late professor Ada Rapoport-Albert. I’m also very proud of our BA and two MA programmes in Jewish studies, one in Polish and one in English. The English programme is quite unique globally, I think. This is a three-semester MA programme based on three tracks of specialization in East European Jewish history and culture, with three intensive languages taught: Hebrew, Yiddish, and Polish.”

This scope is certainly indicative of a Polish society hungry to understand their thousand-year history alongside Jewish life. Since the first Jews stopped in a forest outside Lublin and heard through the trees “*po lin*” or “here rest” Jews have been a part of Poland’s historical trajectory. Whether or not the story of how the Jewish first arrived in Poland is apocryphal or not, this influence and lasting contribution to Polish culture is illustrated by the amazing research like Professor Wodzinski is receiving.

Despite trends in the right direction within academy and grassroots local activism throughout the country, Professor Wodzinski is still cautious with his optimism. “The Jewish community in Poland is very small, possibly too small to develop without careful support from the more mighty players outside,” he noted. “At the same time this is deeply divided and painfully torn by all sorts of conflicts. This is not the best situation for the Jewish culture to flourish I’m afraid. At the same time, there is huge interest in Jewish history and culture in Poland which led, among others, to the creation of several major cultural institutions that present Jewish history and culture to the wider public. Some of them are European-scale success. The best example is the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews, a landmark international success and really an amazing institution. But there are several more, including Jewish Festival in Kraków, a number of smaller museum, cultural events, etc. This disproportion between small and socially weak Jewish community on the one side and thriving presence of Jewish culture in public sphere, usually produced by non-Jews for non-Jews about the Jews, is certainly unhealthy. But there is no easy remedy



Professor Marcin Wodzinski via zoom.

to this situation.”

Professor Wodzinski is quite right that many prominent and dedicated organizations working to preserve the memory of Jewish Poland are not run by Jews at all: the Brama Grodzka NN Theatre, The Auschwitz Jewish Center, or the work of Bogdan Bialek who has devoted himself to preserving the history of Jewish Kielce and educating the local population of the city’s infamous post-war pogrom. This is a by-product of the dwindling numbers of Jews in the country, but also symptomatic of a national movement to engage with history in an authentic and transparent manner.

Prominent scholars like Professor Wodzinski who are major players on the international stage of Jewish scholarship are safeguarding the knowledge that remains after the dynastic Hasidic communities have dispersed into the diaspora.

“Historical topics of Polish-Jewish past are often targeted by the regime in their whitewashing attempts to reshape the public consciousness of the Polish society,” explained Wodzinski. “This is directly affecting Jewish studies: government officials and state-owned media have, on a number of occasions, continued to express their dissatisfaction with academic research on sensitive issues such as Polish involvement in Holocaust-related crimes or Polish antisemitism. At times this has taken the form of incitement against institutions or individual scholars. The real question is how long this unfavorable political climate will continue to exist, and if it does, how it will reflect on longer-range trends in scholarly interests, choice of studies, distribution of human and financial resources, and public debates.

“In the short run, pronounced polarization of Polish society and major public debates prompt quite a number of individuals to choose studies that are meant to provide them with the tools for pursuing identity quests, of combating antisemitism, and propagating a

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Art Spiegelman discusses his life's work at EPL, CPL event

By Jeremy Appel

Cartoonist Art Spiegelman, who depicted his father's Holocaust survival in the Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus*, spoke on Feb. 21 at an online forum hosted by Edmonton Public Library, in partnership with Calgary Public Library and Edify Edmonton, as part of its Forward Thinking Speaker Series.

The event, which had almost 600 viewers, was a dialogue between Spiegelman and local author Sandra Wong, where they discussed Spiegelman's life and career, and a rural Tennessee school board's decision last year to ban *Maus* from its curriculum.

Spiegelman recalled grappling with this question of what art is while on nitrous oxide during a dentist appointment, and he came up with an answer.

"Art is anything that gives form to your thoughts and feelings," he said. "That's a lot better than what I learned in college, which was just that art is anything you can get away with, which means if they'll buy it, it's art."

Throughout the talk, images of Spiegelman's works that were being discussed were put on screen for the audience to see.

"Maybe all art is provocative," said Spiegelman. "You just have to spend a longer time finding what the provocation is in certain paintings."

One of Spiegelman's earliest influences was *Mad Magazine*, which he described as "unlike anything else available" at the time.

"It was my gateway to America. My parents couldn't give me that and we didn't even have a television set when I was little," Spiegelman recalled.

"Mad was telling you that the whole adult world is lying to you. 'And we here at Mad, we're adults,' so it was a magazine asking you to think for yourself even as a kid."

New Yorker covers

In a particularly provocative and prescient *New Yorker* cover from September 1993, Spiegelman depicted students returning to school, but all of them were armed with guns — six years before the Columbine massacre brought the issue of gun violence in schools to the forefront of U.S. cultural discourse.

"I was just worried because my daughter was about six years old, so she was in school when I did

this," he explained.

"And even before Columbine, there have been shootings in schools in the United States since about 1848. Nothing as dramatic as what seems to go on every week now, but in the year leading up to [the cover image], there was a shooting in a middle school.

"It was definitely on my mind. As sort of a back to school moment, I just figured the guns would be an appropriate image."

Spiegelman acknowledged that he seeks to push the boundary of what's acceptable.

"A lot of it just comes from knowing approximately where the lines are going two inches over," he said, "but sometimes I get more like two feet over it and this usually involves getting rejected."

These lines are often set by *New Yorker* arts editor Francoise Mouly, who is Spiegelman's wife.

His first cover art for the magazine, which Wong described as "beautiful," was drawn after the 1991 Crown Heights riots, showing an image of a Black woman and Hasidic man kissing.

Maus

When Spiegelman set about writing *Maus*, there wasn't as much written about the Shoah as there is today, nor was it a major part of popular culture.

"I could read everything in my college library in about three weeks that was in English and was serious about that subject," he said.

That began to change when the French documentary *Shoah* came out in 1985. "It unleashed a popular culture version of the Holocaust in a much bigger way and soon after that, maybe because my generation came of age, there were a lot of books," Spiegelman said. "Now one couldn't read them in a lifetime."

Spiegelman watched the seminal miniseries with his father and step-mother, who was also a Holocaust survivor.

"He just walked out saying he already knows all this stuff," Spiegelman said.

The artist embarked on telling his father's story. Spiegelman decided to use anthropomorphic animals — Jews as mice and their persecutors, both German and Polish, as cats — in part to recognize his narrative's limitations.

"No matter what I did, I could never get it right. Even if I lived through it, I wouldn't be able to get it right," he said. "It was all attempts to get closer and



Cartoonist Art Spiegelman via zoom.

closer, but still acknowledge in various ways in the course of the book that this was as close as I could get to finding that story."

Wong asked Spiegelman what he saw as his responsibility to those who died in the Shoah and its survivors.

Spiegelman recognized that surviving the Holocaust was largely a matter of luck. "If the war lasted longer, everyone would have been killed, so to do that, and have him presented with his flaws, was to me a much more important way of doing something about what he lived through," he said.

"It was about how this person survived from a combination of luck and very strong will, always looking for what he could do next to keep it going."

Book banning

Of the decision to ban *Maus*, the McMinn County School Board's decision referenced the book's "unnecessary use of profanity and nudity and its depiction of violence and suicide," the latter referring to his mother's death.

"Obviously, none of them read it," Spiegelman said.

In the book, Spiegelman's character refers to his mother as a "bitch" after he finds out she died by suicide. "I'm screaming about her death and abandoning me, and I'm left as the prisoner on the whole planet without her," he explained. The only nudity in *Maus* is a picture of his mother dead in a bathtub.

In another part, Spiegelman exclaims "goddammit" when he found out his father burned his diaries.

"There were very few bad words in *Maus*. I wasn't trying to avoid them or use them. They were just where they had to be," he said.

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Matzah pajamas are the latest trend in American Jewish branding

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) — Rabbi Yael Buechler conceived of her latest product two years ago, after planning ways to make the Passover seder fun for her two young sons. But it wasn't until she started promoting the matzah pajamas she designed that she decided to make adult sizes, too.

After she reached out in December 2021 to The Maccabeats - the Orthodox a capella group that releases splashy new videos for most holidays - to offer kids' pajamas for their Passover project, they demurred.

"They wrote back jokingly, 'Haha - but like, do they come in grownup sizes?'" Buechler recalled.

But these days, both lines sell like, well, unleavened hotcakes. Jewish influencers have modeled the pajamas on social media, often as entire families, and the children's set vaulted near the top of Passover sales rankings at Modern Tribe, an online marketplace for Jewish products.

That the breakout Passover product is technically sleepwear reflects a new frontier in the ongoing commercialization of Jewish holidays. It also reflects the turn toward comfort clothes that Americans in general have made since the COVID-19 pandemic began just before Passover three years ago.

"You used to get dressed up to go to seder, but now everyone is a lot more casual," said Amy Kritzer Becker, one of Modern Tribe's owners.

Indeed, the promotion of fancy clothing for Passover is a prime example of American consumerism layered atop traditional Jewish practice. Many traditionally observant families buy new clothes, especially for children, for the holiday, to fulfill the mitzvah of "simcha," or joy.

That became a marketing opportunity for clothing manufacturers as Jews moved to the U.S. in large numbers and emerged as a consumer segment.

"Because of the alignment of the Passover holiday with Easter, it was an opportunity for Jews to also purchase nice attire," said art historian Kerri

Steinberg, author of "Jewish Mad Men: Advertising and the Design of the American Jewish Experience."

Steinberg says the commercialization of Judaism has been a defining characteristic of American Judaism — and, in some ways, a safeguard for Jewish identity in a country that long boasted of being a melting pot.

"One thing that's been very discrete and sort of distinctive I would say about Judaism in America is how it's been branded and marketed, and packaged," she said. "[That acculturation] stopped short of full assimilation because in order to maintain a vibrant Jewish market, their identities had to be sort of retained in a discrete way."

"In America, capitalism has been the key structure," Steinberg added. "So it does make sense that there were opportunities for more consumption of Jewish goods and products around the holidays."

Some of those goods and products were integral to observing the holiday. American Jewish newspapers from the turn of the century and onward featured ads from companies like Streit's, Horowitz, and Manischewitz battling over claims to the best matzah and whitefish.

And of course there is also the Maxwell House Haggadah, created as a marketing ploy for the coffee company in 1932 and still produced today. Its creator, Joseph Jacobs, was an advertising maven who saw huge potential in a base of Jewish customers; he is credited with inventing the concept of targeted marketing.

But other products promoted for Passover had little or nothing to do with what happens during it. Stetson advertised its hats to Jewish customers in Jewish newspapers, while Colgate hawked perfume and other companies noted sales on shoes. Even Macy's had a Passover department advertised in a March 1912 edition of the now-defunct Hebrew Standard.

By the second half of the 20th century, other forces were working in favor of Passover products. The rise of identity politics in the 1970s meant that many Jews were seeking items that would let them display their Jewishness, Steinberg said. Then, starting in the

1990s, the rise of kitsch, a nostalgic aesthetic, opened the door to nostalgic items such as Manischewitz purses, Streit's aprons and gefilte fish T-shirts.

Just as dreidel and menorah patterns are ubiquitous on items mass-produced for Hanukkah, the telltale striping of factory-produced matzah has long adorned items marketed for Passover.

"People have always loved matzah products," said Becker, whose store



offers a slew of print-on-demand matzah-emblazoned products, as well as baby shoes in the print.

"Obviously matzah is the preeminent symbol of the holiday," Steinberg said. "Claiming matzah is just a proud assertion of Jewish distinction."

For Buechler, who launched her line of Jewish fashion products a decade ago with nail decals of the 10 plagues, the motif was inspired by her son's confusion.

She had gotten her children new pajamas to live up another at-home seder, their second during the pandemic. "It goes late anyway," she reasoned about the festive meal, which traditionally cannot begin until after sunset.

When she offered the two options — one yellow and the other blue — her then-2-year-old son declared he would have the "matzah pajamas."

She decided to turn his idea into reality, creating a design that could be printed on fabric, ordering samples and then producing them in a large quantity in China. Then she set to work promoting the product, mailing free sets to influencers and reaching out to online Judaica stores, many of which were initially hesitant to purchase inventory they weren't sure would sell. (Buechler also gave a set of matzah pajamas away through Kveller, the Jewish parenting site that, like JTA, is part of 70 Faces Media.) Then the adults began to demand pajamas for themselves, which were manufactured quickly.

How does fast fashion square with the meaning of the holiday?

"Passover has always been about making things in haste," Buechler said. "And when you think about the matzah itself, the entire reason we have matzah is because we left Mitzrayim, we left Egypt, in a hurry."

By last year, Buechler says she has sold around 1,800 sets of the matzah pajamas. Etsy lists them as a "bestseller" item, and ModernTribe, which also sells Buechler's Midrash Manicure products, has sold over 100 of the children's matzah pajamas since adding them to their inventory. They were the second-highest selling Passover item last year, behind coasters featuring the 10 Plagues.

"We've had a hard few years," Kritzer said. "I think people just want to have a little fun too."



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Memorable Jewish moments at the 2023 Oscars

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – With seven nominations for his most personal film ever, this could have been Steven Spielberg’s biggest year at the Academy Awards. But the hot-dog fingers had other plans.

“The Fabelmans,” the director’s highly personal dramatization of his Jewish upbringing, didn’t win a single one of the Oscars it was nominated for Sunday night. Spielberg’s film lost out on the biggest categories, including best picture, director, actress, and original screenplay, all to the same movie: chaos-theory multiverse comedy “Everything Everywhere All At Once,” where the aforementioned hot-dog fingers play a starring role.

But while the most Jewish movie came up empty-handed, other Jewish stories played out on the movies’ biggest night. Here’s what you need to know.

Spielberg’s autobiographical opus may have come up empty-handed Sunday, but it got a booby prize: “The Fabelmans” was host Jimmy Kimmel’s favorite punchline. Kimmel used his monologue to drop a series of jokes about the film, including dubbing Spielberg and star Seth Rogen “the Joe and Hunter Biden of Hollywood”; speculating that nominated co-star Judd Hirsch was actually absentee Tom Cruise in a mask; and warning anyone plotting to slap him Will Smith-style, “You’re gonna have to go through the Fabelman to get to me.”

Later, Kimmel kept up the bit, introducing Paul Dano and Julia Louis-Dreyfus to present an award. Kimmel billed them as “Steven Spielberg’s dad and Jonah Hill’s mom,” referencing not only Dano’s role in “The Fabelmans,” but also Louis-Dreyfus’ part as a clueless white Jewish mother in the much-maligned Netflix film “You People.”

“All Quiet on the Western Front,” Netflix’s grueling drama about German soldiers on the frontlines of World War I, ended the night with four Oscars: international feature film, original score, cinematography and production design. In addition to having a Jewish producer, the movie was also adapted from a novel and 1930 film that both met the ire of the Nazi party and were tarred as Jewish plots to destroy the German state.

Another anti-dictator winner on Sunday was “Guillermo Del Toro’s Pinocchio,” which won the animated feature Oscar. Set in Fascist Italy, the Netflix film features a scene of Pinocchio mocking Il Duce himself, Benito Mussolini.

One of the most heartwarming moments of the evening was the best supporting actor win for Ke Huy Quan for “Everything Everywhere All At Once.” Quan, a former child actor, had abandoned his onscreen career for decades before his big

comeback role last year. In his emotional acceptance speech, Quan gave a special shout-out to “my ‘Goonies’ brother for life,” Jeff Cohen — a Jewish former child star turned entertainment lawyer. Cohen and Quan appeared in “The Goonies” together in 1985, and when Quan landed his big “Everything Everywhere” role, Cohen negotiated the terms of his deal.

There were a couple big-name Oscar winners with Jewish parents. Immediately after Quan’s big moment, veteran actress Jamie Lee Curtis picked up her first-ever Oscar, also for “Everything Everywhere.” It was also a big moment for the “Halloween” star. “My mother and my father were both nominated for Oscars in different categories,” Curtis noted during her speech. Tony Curtis, Jamie Lee’s Jewish father, was one of the biggest stars of Golden Age Hollywood yet received only one Oscar nomination, in 1959 for “The Defiant Ones.” Jamie Lee Curtis is involved in restoring the synagogue in her grandparents’ Hungarian hometown, where no Jews now live.

Another winner with a Jewish father: the writer-director-actor Sarah Polley, who won best adapted screenplay for “Women Talking.” Polley explored the secret of her biological parentage in her 2013 documentary “Stories We Tell.” “Women Talking” is set inside a different religious community: an isolated Mennonite society in which the women have been systematically, sexually abused by the men.

The winner for best documentary went to a profile of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whose 2020 poisoning by KGB agents after he publicly criticized Vladimir Putin was an international scandal. Navalny is currently imprisoned in Russian solitary confinement; the filmmakers dedicated the award to him. The documentary also details an aspect of Navalny’s campaign more controversial to Western observers: his onetime support of the “Russian march,” a gathering of Russian neo-Nazi organizations.

Did you know the songwriter Diane Warren is a 14-time Academy Award nominee? Singer



Netflix's Oscar-nominated adaptation of "All Quiet on the Western Front" won Academy Awards. (Reiner Bajo/Netflix)

Sofia Carson reminded everyone in the middle of the evening’s first performance for best original song. Warren, who is Jewish, joined in the performance of “Applause,” her composition from the feminist documentary “Tell It Like a Woman.” She has never won an Oscar, and unfortunately for her, the streak continued Sunday night as the viral sensation “Naatu Naatu,” from the Indian film “RRR,” took the prize. (As a consolation, Warren received an honorary Oscar at the Governor’s Awards preceding the telecast.)

Also drawing blanks was “Tár,” the cerebral classical-music psychological drama with somewhat inexplicable Jewish themes.

The broadcast included a promotional video for the Academy Museum, which opened last year to celebrate the history of Hollywood. In the video, a curator named Dara Jaffe explains that one of the museum’s roles is to “bring important film histories to light, from the Jewish immigrants who founded the Hollywood studios to the early innovators of African-American cinema.” The inclusion is notable because the museum drew steep criticism when it first opened for giving short shrift to the industry’s robust Jewish history; Jaffe was appointed to put together a permanent exhibition about that history in response. The exhibition has not yet opened.

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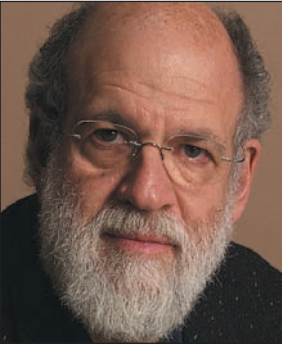
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Jeremy Kagan paints the Torah

By Shelley Werner



Jeremy Kagan

Renowned Filmmaker Jeremy Kagan will be the feature next month on the Season Finale of Art and Scroll Studio.

Professor Kagan is well versed in creating stories that move. As a filmmaker and professor, he excels in the art and craft of making narratives come alive. Whether the source material is a book or a script, he teases out the essence of the emotional content and conveys it in a way that will move the viewer. He is an internationally recognized director/writer/producer of feature films and television and a well-known teacher. He has made many movies about Jewish subjects and worked with many Jewish actors, including "The Chosen."

One story that had never been before his lens is the Torah. He was drawn to the idea of creating a visual midrash, that is an artist work that would capture the essence of the Torah portion.

On April 19, 2023 at 7 pm MDT he will be the special guest on the season finale of Art and Scroll Studio



"Tablets" by Jeremy Kagan is featured on this month's cover of AJNews.

zoom series on Judaica art.

"On my iPad, I've been drawing a visual response to this week's Torah portion and the Midrash about it. I do this every week and, over the last few years, I've made five sets of these drawings. The first set started on a whim. I had learned some odd stories about the first parsha Beresheit. One Midrash described the snake as a tall creature on two legs with a long neck and a lust for Eve. I had just learned an ancient Indian technique of painting on stretched silk and decided to illustrate this creation story."

Every week in synagogues around the world, a section of the Torah is read. The Torah is divided into 54 portions – called parshas. After each parsha, a selection from the prophets is also read, and these are called the Haftorah. Kagan's paintings and drawings are responses not only to the text of the Torah and Haftorah, but also to the rabbinic commentary in Talmud and Mishna and to apocrypha that have emerged over the centuries.

"I created the first set of paintings and pencil caricatures from the Haftorah over a six year period," explained Kagan. "I was at the time working as a filmmaker. Over the last four years using the iPad I have done a second set of visual responses and I am presently working on the third set."

Rabbis write that there are multiple meanings for each word in Torah, starting with the literal, and moving toward the more subtle and esoteric. Hebrew, as a language itself, offers interweaving permutations as each letter has symbolic and even numerical values, all of which give rise to much interpretation of the text.

"In many of the paintings there are references to the Kabbalah and its imagery," noted Kagan. "Kabbalah is the spiritual path of Judaism. It provides meditative, mystical and practical guidance. It is a vast field of knowledge and experience. And in much of the imagery there are reflections of Kabbalistic concepts including a basic one that has a visual component called the "Etz Chaim" – the tree of life, and it divides into 10 energy-like centers called Sephirot that are part of this tree. Each of these has colors associated with it."

Making images from these inspired words is a challenge. At one time because of the second commandment, which forbids making idols, image making was frowned upon until the last two centuries when Jewish graphic artists began to express themselves. Kagan took on these projects as a personal assignment of doing a drawing for each week.

"It has been fun and a challenge and an opportunity to get closer to Torah," he explained. "I must admit these images are mostly surface and just touching the edges of the depth one could go into the teachings."

It is said that everyone should write a copy of the Torah during their life times. These are his versions. He hopes the images entertain, provoke and inspire the viewer to further examinations and insights and encourage people to explore more these remarkable writings.

"Each illustration draws me closer to my history, our history, my family, our ancestors and to reminding me of the ethics, imagination, and abiding courage of our sages and our people," said Kagan. "I have had the gift of being a Jew in America."

He comments that he has had the fortune of grandparents who risked immigration and the unknown, leaving Europe and probably escaping death



'Red Sea' by filmmaker/author Jeremy Kagan. He will be a guest on Art and Scroll Studio April 19 at 7 pm MDT. Visit artandscrollstudio@gmail.com for advance tickets

in the Holocaust. His family tree reaches back to rabbis on all sides for hundreds of years. They were all orthodox and may not have approved of his drawings. "But I am in their debt for bringing me here where I have had the blessings, as is said in morning prayers, of kindness, mercy and grace to be a creative being. And I am grateful."

Professor Kagan teaches graduate courses at the School of Cinematic Arts at USC and has created the Change Making Media Lab which specializes in developing and creating Entertainment Education (EE) emphasizing the values of narrative dramas and comedies to successfully motivate behavior change.

Some of his feature credits include the box-office hits "Heros" with Henry Winkler, the political thriller "The Big Fix" with Richard Dreyfuss, "The Chosen" from Chaim Potok's classic novel, and "The Journey of Natty Gann." Among his many television shows are Katherine: The Making of an American Revolutionary and HBO's "Conspiracy: The Trial of the Chicago 8." Among his other television films are "Descending Angel" about former Nazi criminals disguising themselves in the US and "Color of Justice" with Judd Hirsh about racism.

Jeremy Kagan will be the featured guest on April 19, 2023, 7 pm MDT on Art and Scroll Studio: A zoom series that celebrates the makers and creators of Judaic art.

To register for the virtual and free program please click here: <https://bit.ly/JeremyKaganTickets>

Shelley Werner is a designer and the host of Art and Scroll Studio. ([YouTube.com/@artandscrollstudio](https://www.youtube.com/@artandscrollstudio))

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No-Bake Strawberry Coconut Pie for Passover

By Sonya Sanford

(The Noshers via JTA) - When Passover comes around, I look for desserts that could be enjoyed beyond the eight days of the holiday and do not involve matzah meal of any kind. We live in a golden era of grain-free dessert innovations, and in the past few years this wealth of creativity has greatly enhanced the offerings at my Passover table, including this riff on Café Gratitude’s vegan coconut cream pie. I’ve added strawberries for their brightness, both in color and taste, which complements the rich creaminess of the coconut.

This recipe is also easy to modify with your own favorite flavorings or ingredients. You could swap strawberries for another berry or a mix of berries. You could add a few tablespoons of cocoa powder to the filling and chocolate shavings to the garnish. Or you could add caramel and chopped nuts to the mix. Coconut is an easy base to enhance.

In all fairness, this dessert is a departure from the classic coconut cream pie you may be familiar with, and if you are a dessert traditionalist and like pies sugary and plenty sweet (not that there’s anything wrong with that), this may not be for you. What this does offer is a creamy, smooth, coconut-rich treat without grains, refined sugars, dairy or any baking required. It also offers a way to end a rich seder meal on a lighter note, and it sneakily satisfies both a wide range of potential dietary concerns as well as the laws of kashrut for Passover. And maybe, after a few bites, you might just feel slightly more bountiful and cosmic.

Ingredients:

For the crust:

Coconut oil spray (or other cooking spray), 1 cup raw unsalted pecans, 1/2 cup shredded unsweetened coconut, 1/2 cup good quality dates, such as Medjool of Khadrawy (pitted and soaked in water for 10 minutes and drained), big pinch of salt

For the filling:

1 cup raw unsalted cashews, soaked in water for 6-12 hours, 3/4 cup sliced strawberries, fresh or thawed if

frozen, 1/2 cup coconut cream, refrigerated overnight (or use a can of refrigerated whole fat coconut milk and skim off the top layer of cream that solidifies) 1/4 cup coconut milk (or the remaining liquid from the can), 3 tablespoons light agave nectar, or your preferred sweetener, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract juice of 1/2 a lemon, about 2 tablespoons, pinch of salt, 1/3 cup melted coconut oil, 1/4 cup shredded unsweetened coconut

For the coconut whipped cream:

1 cup coconut cream, refrigerated overnight (or use a can of refrigerated whole fat coconut milk and skim off the top layer of cream that solidifies), 1 tablespoon agave syrup, or your favorite sweetener (sugar or maple syrup work fine), 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

For the garnish:

Sliced fresh strawberries, shredded coconut

Directions:

1. To make the crust: Spray a 9-inch springform pan or a pie pan with oil. Line the bottom of the pan with a round of parchment paper.
2. In a food processor, pulse the pecans, coconut, soaked dates and a pinch of salt together until the nuts are finely ground and the mixture forms a paste-like consistency and sticks together when pressed between your fingers. Press the raw crust into the pan in an even layer. Place the crust in the freezer to set while you make the filling
3. To make the filling: Soak 1 cup of raw cashews for 6 hours or overnight. If you forget to soak your cashews ahead of time, you can cover them with boiling water and let them sit for 1 hour before using.
4. Combine the soaked cashews, fresh sliced strawberries, coconut cream, coconut milk, agave, vanilla extract, lemon juice and salt in a high-powered blender or food processor. Blend until smooth and creamy.
5. Add the melted coconut oil and blend until incorporated. Add in the shredded coconut and pulse



- a few times until just mixed in; you still want that coconut texture.
6. Pour the filling into the crust. Place the pie back in the freezer and let it set for 2 hours or until very firm. Transfer to the refrigerator and store there until ready to garnish and serve. Can be made up to one day prior to serving.
 7. Just before serving, make the coconut whipped cream. Make sure the coconut cream is very cold, and then combine all of the ingredients together and whip using an electric hand mixer or immersion blender until thick and whipped topping-like. If you find your coconut cream is too stiff, you can add a few tablespoons of liquid from the can to the cream. If it’s not whipping up and is too loose, you can place the mixture in the freezer in the mixing bowl for 15-30 minutes and try again. There are also many dairy-free whipped creams and toppings available to use if you prefer to skip this step.
 8. Top the pie with the coconut whipped cream. Garnish with strawberries and shredded coconut and serve. Makes 6-8 servings.

Sonya Sanford is a chef, food stylist, and writer based out of Los Angeles.

The Noshers food blog offers a dazzling array of new and classic Jewish recipes and food news, from Europe to Yemen, from challah to shakshuka and beyond. Check it out at www.TheNoshers.com.

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Dynasties

Cont. from page 24

more diversified and liberal version of Polishness. In this sense, Jewish studies in Poland, as in several other East European countries, is the paradoxical beneficiary of right-wing populism and the rising wave of xenophobia. In the longer run, however, we cannot be certain this will remain the case.”

The crowd was transfixed despite the last-minute technical difficulties. The firing off of questions did not stop, and it was clear how engaged everyone at the ‘Viewing Party’ was. Professor Carpenter fielded questions from the Zoom attendees, and on-site audience members approached the microphone so Professor Wodzinski could see and hear then clearly. If the audience participation was any indication, it is clear that the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies should definitely look into re-engaging Professor Wodzinski.

Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

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Why this night is different

By Rabbi Steven Schwarzman



Rabbi Steven Schwarzman

Pesach, Matzah, and Maror - in the Haggadah, Rabban Gamliel teaches that whoever doesn't say these three things on Passover hasn't fulfilled their obligation. If you use a bare-bones Haggadah, you might think that this is a magical incantation of sorts: utter these three words, and somehow you're good for Pesach. And it might seem especially odd that we say the word "Pesach" on Pesach, as if we didn't know the name of the holiday!

Like much of the Haggadah, this is actually a quote from the Mishnah's tractate Pesachim. Unlike in the Haggadah, where this passage follows Dayenu, so one might reasonably see it as a summing up or boiling down of all the thank-yous in Dayenu into three essential points, in the Mishnah, it follows the four questions and the obligation to teach our children about the Exodus.

In both settings, Rabban Gamliel's teaching gives us insights into what Passover and the seder are really

all about.

In the Haggadah, where it follows Dayenu and its list of it-would-have-been-enoughs (when it actually wouldn't have been, just that we're grateful for each step along the way), Rabban Gamliel brings us back to the present. Yes, we are and should be grateful for G-d bringing us out of Egypt and back into our homeland, the Land of Israel. But first we have to remember where we began. Rabbi Barukh HaLevi Epstein, in his 20th-century commentary *Barukh She'amar*, asks what makes this mitzvah different from all the others (yes, he clearly had a sense of humour!) in that Rabban Gamliel singled them out. His answer is that all mitzvot require that we think about why we do them, but for these three, the inner experience of thinking is not enough. We have to say the words out loud, perhaps as part of our obligation to see ourselves as if we, personally, left Egypt. We have to experience the Exodus ourselves: how our homes were spared - Pesach, and the haste with which we had to leave - Matzah, and the bitterness of servitude - Maror.

In the Mishnah, where Rabban Gamliel's insistence that we say these three words follows the four questions, the context may be both simpler and deeper: simpler, in that these three items - the Pesach sacrifice, the matzah, and the maror - were the main dishes on the seder table, as Dr. Joshua Kulp of the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem explains, and deeper, in that they help us, and force us, to concentrate on those four probing questions. Why, truly, is this night different? Why do we do all these unusual things at this meal?

In his Mishneh Torah, Maimonides writes that we are to surprise the children (and all guests) at the seder by breaking the habits and expectations of a normal meal. Once we've done that (as one technique, Maimonides suggests clearing the table before anyone

gets a chance to eat!), we have the attention of all present. By doing things differently than usual, that's when we can get down to the real business of the seder, which is to tell and relive the story as if we were there ourselves.

You see, the seder isn't a ritual to do by rote, reading the Haggadah word by word - including Rabban Gamliel's three words - like machines. The point of the seder is to use the rituals, including the words of the Haggadah, as a springboard to a deep discussion. How can we see ourselves as leaving Egypt? What do servitude and freedom mean in our lives? What does redemption mean to us?

When we work toward answering these questions, we'll know why this night is different. On Passover, we don't have the option of just going about the business of our lives, because that's not what it means to be free from serving Pharaoh so that we can serve G-d instead. We're obligated to do a deep dive into what our lives mean, as human beings and as Jews. We have to name the things that create meaning in our lives, because that will help us get started on the path toward growing them.

As we gather for our seders, may we all be blessed with the deep comfort that comes from tradition, from familiar recipes and songs, and familiar people. And may we also be blessed with the deep experience of what Passover means, using the tools that the Haggadah has built-in to help us consider the real questions of life in new ways each year, with new people joining us at our tables and new understandings of our lives. *Chag kasher vesameach!*

Rabbi Steven Schwarzman is the spiritual leader at Beth Shalom Synagogue, Edmonton's egalitarian conservative congregation.

Spiegelman *Cont. from page 25*

These were simply pretexts to ban the book, Spiegelman suspects. When news came out about the school board's vote, Spiegelman told the *New York Times* that McMinn trustees just wanted to "teach a nicer Holocaust."

Still, Spiegelman admits he was somewhat shocked when he initially discovered that young children were being assigned *Maus* in schools, given its heavy subject matter.

"I just looked dismayed, like it was a form of child abuse," he recalled. "It took me a while to get used to

the fact that I later met many kids who had read it and many adults who had read it, and often the kids were more alert with their questions than the adults.

"I was just being ageist in reverse."

In response to a question from an audience member, Spiegelman placed the *Maus* ban in the context of an "insane culture war" in the U.S., a key battleground of which is "trying to limit what children can read."

This push for more parental control over their children's education is part of a larger attack on public education itself.

"That's, I think, the very strategic and specific agenda. The yahoos on the school board just thought

that this was a book they could remove without anybody even getting upset," Spiegelman observed, noting that the meeting's minutes were posted on Jan. 27, which is Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"I think they were actually just dumbasses. It wasn't a belligerent thing."

The controversy has been good for business. Sales of *Maus* increased 753 per cent in January alone, *Forbes* reported.

"They were very shrewd marketers in McMinn County," Spiegelman said.

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

Happy Passover!

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JNF Alberta Cup was fun for the whole family



The JNF Alberta Cup last month at the West Edmonton Mall was a success! Congratulations to the Tu Bi'Shevat Tigers for winning for a second year in a row. This year's Mensch Valuable Player in memory of Nathan Reboh z"l was Brendon Pipke and the Most Valuable Player in memory of Stevie Schwartzberg z"l was Tyler Large. The Community Free Skate was also a great success. Toda Raba to all the sponsors and participants.

Where are we today? Let's take stock.

By Judy Zelikovitz



Judy Zelikovitz

Passover is one of the most widely observed of Jewish traditions. Looking back at our long history, we gather around the Seder table every year to celebrate our ancestors' freedom from slavery in Egypt. At that same Seder table, we look forward, retelling the story for our children of our exodus from Egypt to Israel, which, since Roman times, has been a communal, unfulfilled aspiration.

The Passover story is one of survival and courage. Led by Moses, the Jewish people wandered the desert for 40 years, choosing to face the unknown over further persecution and oppression by the Egyptians.

At the heart of the story, over these 2,000 years, are our tenacity as a people and our willingness to stand up to those who would do us harm.

Passover is also a time to take stock of where we are today.

Sadly, in 2023, even in Canada, Jew-hatred is still very much a reality. Only now it manifests not only in the streets but also in the virtual world – where social media has created a breeding zone for hate that has gone almost unchecked. And, as we have seen here and across the globe, what happens online can be an indicator of what is to come in the real world.

As online technology continues to develop and expand and the lines of our public and private worlds blur, hate is finding new means of expression.

In Canada, we have a Charter protecting, among many treasured freedoms, our freedom of expression. But Canada's Charter of Rights is also our Charter of Responsibilities, and all freedoms come with limits. Dictating responsible use of our freedoms, those limits must apply to online communications.

Social media platforms both spread hateful ideas quickly to large groups of followers and mobilize those followers. The results are indiscriminate yet organized campaigns targeting, among others, Blacks, Muslims, LGBTQ2+, women, or Jews, who are trolled online, and, offline, threatened with violence.

In 2018 a man entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh during Shabbat Saturday morning services, murdering 11 innocent Jewish worshipers and injuring six more – the deadliest attack on Jews in US history. His own online history indicated strong ties to online antisemites.

This surge in online antisemitism has taken a celebrity turn with ignorant and hateful comments from Kanye West. His tweets do not just light up the internet. They engender real-world incidents of violence and hate, including spurring a group to fly a banner proclaiming "Kanye is right" over a busy Los Angeles highway and an attack on a Jewish New

Yorker who was assaulted in Central Park by an individual yelling "Kanye 2024." West has also defended basketball player Kyrie Irving's promotion of a film linking Jews to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Weeks later, police officers arrested two young men who had threatened New York synagogues. Just hours before his arrest, one had tweeted "Jews owned the ships."

Canada is not immune. In May 2021, during the Gaza war, online hate spilled onto the streets of Montreal when two young men were arrested after driving through a Jewish neighbourhood yelling slurs and threatening Jews – after posting their actions on TikTok.

Yet another Canadian example is the disturbing case of Laith Marouf, who has become infamous across the country for virulent, hate-filled tweets. They were disturbing enough that the government not only disavowed any future interaction with him but also sought to claw back previously distributed grants and change the responsible department's funding process.

These are just a few of the many reasons CIJA has been advocating for legislation to address online hate. The time has come to tell online platforms that, if they cannot moderate online hate by shutting down those who post it, the government must step in. CIJA has demanded accountability. Freedom of expression is a cherished Jewish and Canadian value. But messages aimed at harming identifiable groups is not legal in the real world and it must be legislated against in the virtual realm.

We are hopeful that the government will indeed tackle harms from online hate with legislation, forcing platforms to take accountability for the content they leave up. We have advocated for a third-party regulator and that platforms become responsible for capturing, removing, and preserving – for prosecution – content that violates Canada's hate laws.

Oppression comes in many forms. As we recall the story of Passover at the Seder table once again, let's take a moment to remember our ancestors' journeys and our personal responsibility to ensure that their will to fight oppression will sustain us today as it has for countless generations.

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

Wishing you a happy and blessed Passover

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Calgary Nose Hill

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Menachem Kaiser

Cont. from page 17

When Kaiser had first visited the building where he believed his grandfather had grown up, it was more a matter of “etiquette” than a “memory mission,” he said. He recalled a “semi-forced emotional moment” when he thought, “Wow, this is where my grandfather grew up.”

“It’s really interesting when you are in those spaces,” said Kaiser, who wondered whether the experience was “a real moment” versus an expectation that he was “supposed to have a moment.”

Friends called him out on what they viewed as an act of “appropriation.” Initially taken aback by that point of view, Kaiser came to appreciate that he was “missing a narrative... The fact is that people lived in that building and I wasn’t taking them into account.”

Kaiser took it upon himself to go back to the building and meet the people living there. “To me it would be an act of intense moral cowardice to not,” he added.

“Those initial meetings were so intense and wild and rich,” said Kaiser, who formed relationships with tenants and learned the unique history of the building when, under communist rule, it became a residence for people connected with the local theatre.

Ironically, after all that, Kaiser learned he had been in the wrong building. It had been built after the war, necessitating address changes along the block. It turned out that another building had belonged to the Kajzers; it was an investment property in which Kaiser’s grandfather had never lived.

“All my interactions with Poles were wonderful,” Kaiser said. “By and large I was met with overwhelming curiosity, support, interest of people who went over and beyond to help me.... I had a really good time in Poland.”

Kaiser said there was a political shift in 2015 when a nationalist and revisionist government came to power, “initiating an assault on the judiciary.” It was a “really scary moment” for friends who had grown up in a free Poland, Kaiser said.

Then testifying about his grandfather’s property, Kaiser said he could not assume that the judge hearing his case was acting independently.

Meanwhile, a bizarre news story was unfolding that eventually intersected with his. In 2015, two treasure hunters captured worldwide attention. Media including the *New York Times* and *CNN* reported claims that they had discovered an alleged “Golden Train” containing gold looted by the Nazis and subsequently buried in Silesia.

“For whatever reason, most of the world believed it,” Kaiser said.

At the time, he was working on a novel set in Poland and thought it would make “a great set piece.” He wrote to Joanna Lamparska, a local historian and journalist well connected with the treasure hunting community. She introduced Kaiser to some of the hunters and to Project Riese, seven underground

tunnels of epic scale.

“Curiously, there is virtually no documentation as to what the Nazis intended to do with these tunnels,” Kaiser said, adding that this stoked a culture of mystery and conspiracy.

A friend and fellow writer who was along for the ride asked one of the treasure hunters how the deaths of the thousands of Jews that dug those tunnels fit into his narrative. The treasure hunter, Andrzej, began to answer in Polish, which Kaiser does not speak. During the exchange, Kaiser became aware that his own surname was repeated a number of times.

“He didn’t know my last name, so he wasn’t speaking about me.... I stopped him and asked what he was saying,” Kaiser said. Andrzej was speaking about Abraham Kajzer, whom he called “One of the greatest people to come out of the war, Jew or Pole.”

“That is not a sentiment you hear often from a rural Pole,” Kaiser noted.

One of the slave labourers forced to build the tunnels, Kajzer daringly documented his experiences and observa-tions on scraps of paper he stole from cement bags. He hid the notes under the latrines of nearby labour camps, later writing a book that has become a bible for the treasure hunters, Kaiser said.

“After the war, he was saved by a German woman who hid him. He borrowed a bicycle from her and rode from camp to camp and collected these scraps of cement packaging, and he later turned it into a book,” said Kaiser.

Using Google Translate, Kaiser cross-referenced biographical information in the book with research done by The Killer and discovered that Abraham Kajzer was his grandfather’s first cousin. “All of a sudden the family went from extinct to non-extinct,” Kaiser said.

“I became a major celebrity among the treasure hunter community,” Kaiser quipped, adding that they quickly mythologized the relationship, identifying him - despite his own objections - as Abraham Kajzer’s grandson.

In *Plunder*, Kaiser’s narrative alternates between his quest to reclaim the apartment building and his “descent, pun fully intended, into the tunnels.”

The Nazis were very secretive about the tunnels, noted Kaiser, who spoke of the resulting conspiracy theories, including Nazi research in anti-gravity technology and time travel; commun-ing with ancient occult civilizations; and efforts to establish bases on the moon and Antarctica. Kaiser’s personal favour-ite is that it was all for nothing... just a giant money-laundering project by Nazi officials who knew the war was lost and needed a way to get

their money out of Berlin.

Albert Speer, Nazi Germany’s chief architect, wrote an endnote about the tunnels in which he said that “more concrete was planned for these tunnels than for the entirety of occupied Germany,” Kaiser said. “More sober and responsible theories,” according to Kaiser, are “underground factories or a base of some sort.”

Kaiser said his sudden celebrity among treasure hunters motivated him to write *Plunder*. He recalled saying to himself, “Okay, this story has gotten so weird that I have to at least try.” On the most personal level, it was a gift, really, to my father,’ Kaiser said. “Here’s our family’s story. I don’t have answers, but at least it can be told.”

Kaiser said his most emotional moments were “the errors and missteps,” those moments when, after taking something for granted, “the rug gets pulled from under you and you really have to redo your assumptions.”

He had assumed that the process of reclaiming his grandfather’s building would be easy, that his book would neatly conclude with the desired result. “Ten months later I’m, like, in a lot of trouble. There’s no way I’m getting this building back in time.”

“It really forced me to interrogate what I was doing and why,” noted Kaiser. “What is my relationship with my grandfather? I had to untangle this on the page in a way that would make sense to another human or even to myself.”

In the end, Kaiser said, “The prize becomes the story.”

To those who hope to engage in similar missions, he said, “I promise you will have an enriching and strange time....I promise you your story is more complicated than you think.”

Kaiser said he became “a reluctant spokesperson” for descendants of survivors following the publication of *Plunder*. While reticent to play that role, he emphasizes that “stories properly told and honestly told are important” and that descendants are part of those stories.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



As we gather with family and loved ones around the Seder table to celebrate the unparalleled strength of our community, we want to thank you for your enduring support.

Our work is about you.

Visit www.cija.ca to learn how our advocacy on behalf of Canada’s Jewish community makes a difference in your life.



CIJA is the advocacy agent of Jewish Federations across Canada.

Flourless Chocolate Cake for Passover

Thanks to our friends at Grumans Catering and Delicatessen for providing our readers with this delicious recipe for a flourless chocolate cake that is ideal for Passover. Enjoy!

Ingredients

½ cup (4 oz.) fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (not unsweetened), ½ cup (113 g) unsalted butter or margarine, ¾ cup (150g) sugar, 3 large eggs, ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder plus additional for sprinkling


Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F and grease an 8-inch round baking pan. Line bottom of pan with a round of parchment paper.


Chop chocolate into small pieces. In a double boiler or metal mixing bowl set over a saucepan of barely simmering water melt chocolate with butter, stirring, until smooth. Remove top of double boiler or bowl from heat and whisk sugar into chocolate mixture. Add eggs and whisk well. Sift ½ cup cocoa powder over chocolate mixture and whisk until just combined. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 25 minutes. Cool cake in pan for 5 minutes and then invert onto a serving plate.

Dust cake with additional cocoa powder and serve with fresh raspberries if desired. (Cake keeps, after being cooled completely, in an airtight container, 1 week. It can also be made ahead and frozen.)

HAPPY★PASSOVER




Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Lorie Abernethy
and Gie Roberts




Chag Sameach
Happy Passover
from Jeanette
and Rudy Berger

Best wishes for a Pesach filled with
good health, peace and happiness

from
Kim, Alex, Adam
& Zach Chulsky




Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover




from
Sheila Bermack
and family

Chag Sameach
Happy Passover
from
Renée & Milton Bogoch

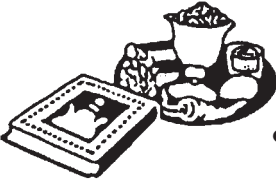


Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from John & Linda
Barron and family




Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness


from
Marnie,
Darren, Jonah
& Chloe Bondar



Chag Sameach - Happy Passover
from
Robbie Babins-Wagner
& Neil Wagner and Family




Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Bronia & Sid Cynigiser




פסח שמח לכולם

from
Sandy & Bernie
Corenblum and
family




Happy Passover
from Rhonda Barad,
Steve Kaganov & family




Wishing the community
a Happy Passover -
Chag Pesach
Sameach! from
Judith Hagan-Conn

Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Harvey Cynigiser and family

Happy Passover
to the entire community from
Michele Doctoroff,
Ted and Sydney Switzer




Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness
from Ruth Dvorkin,
Susan Dvorkin, Dara,
Spencer & Josh




Best wishes for a Pesach filled with
good health, peace & happiness

from
Jeff & Rich
Eichler




Chag Sameach
Happy Passover
from
Shirley & Al Chafetz



Happy Passover
to the entire community
from Phyllis D'Aguiar

Happy Passover to the entire
community from
Dr. Caron
& Rabbi Mark Glickman




Chag Sameach - Happy Passover
from Vivian and Ben Herman

חג פסח שמח


פסח כשר ושמח

Wishing the entire community
a Happy Passover



from Zohar
& David Wallach

Wishing the entire community
a Happy Passover



from the
Balaban
family


Happy Passover to the entire community
from Sandy Fayerman

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy Pesach
from Maxine & Milt Fischbein


We wish everyone
a happy & healthy Passover

 from
Sam, Cindy, Rebekah
& Josh Feldman


Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with
joy and love
from
Eva & Gordy Hoffman
and family




Best wishes for a Pesach filled with
good health, peace and happiness

 from
Louise Glin
and family

Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness


 from Therese Groner
and family

Wishing family & friends all the
best this Passover from
Susan & David Inhaber and family

 Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from
Halley & Bruce Girvitz

Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness

from Jackie and
Hayim Hamburger
& family

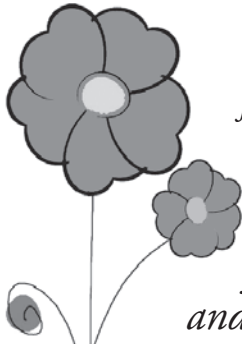


Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with
joy and love
from Arlein Hoffman
Chetner & family


Chag Sameach - Happy Passover
from
Helena Barker & Israel Lachovsky

Wishing family &
friends a Passover filled
with joy and love

from
Jason, Cheryl
and Jacob Gurevitch



Wishing the community
a Happy Passover
Chag Pesach Sameach!


 from
Janis & Brian
Kowall
and family

Wishing family
& friends
all the best
this Passover

 Love from
Mel & Gail Ksienski and family

Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness


from
Barb & Ron Krell
and family




Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Lea Kohn & family

Happy Passover
to the entire
community

from
Rabbi Cantor Russell G. Jayne
& Mr. Russ Janiger





Chag Sameach - Happy Passover
from
The Molotsky Family



Wishing family & friends
all the best
this Passover
from
Walter Moscovitz

Wishing family & friends all the
best this Passover from Cheryl,
Rob, Danielle, and Jarrett Milner

Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Roz & Danny Oppenheim

Wishing everyone a happy
and peaceful Passover

from
Sandra &
Harold Lipton
and family




Wishing family &
friends a Passover
filled with joy
and love
from Jenny
Belzberg



Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with joy and love
from
The Oppenheim Family




Best wishes for a Pesach filled
with good health,
peace and happiness




from
Lily &
Bill Lister
and family

Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with joy and love



from
Roz Mendelson
&
David Hodgins

Best wishes for a Pesach filled with
good health, peace and happiness



from Al Osten

Chag Sameach - Happy Passover
from Cynthia & David Prasow
and family




Chag Sameah
Happy Passover
from Beth & Lorne Price
and family

Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Rochelle Rabinovitz
and family



Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with joy and love



from Gail &
Brian Sidorsky
and family

Wishing everyone a happy,
healthy Pesach from Medina Shatz,
Randy Best, Scout and Blueberry

Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with joy and love



from
Gail, Dean, Bryan,
Ellie, Matthew,
& Rayna Staniloff


חג פסח שמח

from Judy Shapiro and
Richard Bronstein and family



Wishing family
& friends a
Passover filled
with joy and love


from Miriam Milavsky
and family



Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Therese Nagler

Pesach Sameach from Diana Kalef,
Elliott, Jonah, and Micah Steinberg

חג פסח שמח



Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Ron & Helmi Switzer

Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with
joy and love




from
Ron Plucer
& family

Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with
joy and love



from
Raechelle, Lorne,
Shoshanna and
Leo Paperny

Happy Passover
to the
entire community



from
Mark & Amalia Mandel
and MHM Professional
Corporation

ПОРЯДОК СЕИДЕРА



קדש
КАДДЕШ
Произносят Киддуш над бокалом вина.



ורחץ
УРХАЦ
Омывают руки, но не произносят при этом
обычного при омовении рук благословения.



כרפס
КАРПАС
Обмакивают «карпас» в соленую воду,
произносят благословение над овощами и
кушают.



יחץ
ЯХАЦ
Среднюю мацу, из трех находящихся на
«кеаре», делят на две части; большую часть
прячут для «Афикоман».



מגיד
МАГГИД
Начинается чтение Агады. До того, как
младший в семье задает вопросы «Ма ништа-
на» наполняют второй бокал.



רחצה
РАХЦА
Омывают руки для еды, но на этот раз с
обычным благословением.



מוציא
МОЦИ,
מצה
МАЦА
Произносят благословения «Хамощи» и «Ал
ахилас мацо», и кушают кусок мацы, величи-
ной с «казант».



מרור
МАРОР
Произносят благословение «Ал ахилас мо-
рор» и съедают горькую зелень, величиной с
«казант», предварительно обмакнув в «ха-
росет».



בורר
КОРЕХ
Делают своеобразный сэндвич из двух кус-
ков мацы, прокладывая между ними «хазерет»



שלחן עורך
ШУЛХАН ОРЕХ
Праздничная трапеза.



ברך
БЕРАХ
Наполняют третий бокал вина и произно-
сят застольную молитву.



צפון
ЦАФУН
Съедают «Афикоман», величиной с «ка-
зант».



הלל
ХАЛЛЕЛ
Наполняют четвертый бокал вина и
произносят специальную хвалебную молитву
«Халлел».



נרצה
НИРЦА
После окончания правильно проведенного
Сейдера можно быть уверенным, что он был
полюблен Всевышним

Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness
from Evelyn Sheftel
Shapiro & family

Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness
from Darlene Switzer Foster,
Bill Foster and family

Wishing the community
a Happy Passover
Chag Pesach Sameach!
from
Stan & Carey Smith
and family

Wishing family & friends a
Passover filled with joy and love
from
Esther and
Gary Silberg



Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Bob & Cheryl Shiell
and family



Happy Passover
to the entire community
from
Marg Semel, Adam Singer,
Rachel & Hanna



Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness
from
Hilda & Lenny
Smith and family



Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace and happiness
from
Betty Sherwood
& Jim Casquenet



חג פסח שמח
from
Mary & Ken Taub

Wishing family & friends a
Passover filled with joy and love
from
Dalia, Allan, Tammy
and Mark Wolinsky



Best wishes for a Pesach
filled with good health,
peace & happiness
from
Dorothy Hanson,
Sheldon Shagal
& family

Wishing family & friends a
Passover filled with
joy and love
from
the Zivot
Family



Chag Sameach - Happy Passover
from
Linda & Gary Wolf



Wishing family & friends
a Passover filled with
joy and love
from
Wynne &
Harvey Thal



Wishing family & friends a
Passover filled with joy and love
from
Marilyn Libin
& Jed Gaines



Chag Sameach,
Peace, Health & Happiness
from Esther,
and Sam Plucer



Wishing family & friends
all the best this Passover
from Alvin Libin
& Bobby Libin
and family



Chag Sameach -
Happy Passover to the
entire community
from Jerry and Fay z"l Schwartz



from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

Where the wild things were

What exactly was the fourth of the ten plagues that were inflicted upon the Egyptians? It goes by the Hebrew name “arov,” but the Haggadah does not provide us with clues to its exact meaning.

The ancient Greek Septuagint translation, the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and the Greek version of the Torah by Aquila (composed under the supervision of prominent rabbis in the second century C.E.) all rendered the word as “*kunumuia*”: dog-fly, an insect pest that often plagued Egypt (and apparently still does).

Philo discoursed at length, seemingly from personal experience, on the malevolence of this insect, which epitomized the worst traits of both dogs and flies. Under normal conditions “it shoots in from a distance with a whizzing sound like an arrow, and when it has reached its mark it pierces very closely with great force... But these dog-flies were prompted by the Almighty to be even twice as treacherous and hostile against the Egyptians.”

Most non-Jewish translators, including the King James English version, translated arov as “flies” or another insect species. This option also had Jewish advocates, such as Rabbi Solomon David Luzatto (Shadal) of Trieste. Shadal reasoned that it must refer to tiny creatures because larger animals could have been kept out of people’s houses by strong doors and barriers. He understood that when the Torah speaks about the arov “devouring” the Egyptians, the expression should be read as hyperbole, as we speak of being eaten alive by insects.

However, most of us were brought up on the assumption that arov alludes to an incursion of diverse kinds of wild beasts. It’s an occasion for children to pull out the lions, tigers and bears that have been lying in their toy-boxes since reading about Noah’s ark; and it generates some vivid artwork in illustrated Haggadahs.

This is indeed in keeping with Rashi’s explanation of the original passage in Exodus: “All manner of evil beasts, snakes and scorpions mixed together [*“be-irbuvia,”* from the same root as arov].” He cites a midrash that compares the strategy underlying the

Egyptian plagues to conventional siege tactics that seek to throw the enemy into a panic with horrifying noises. In the Midrash, Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish referred to the fourth plague as a “mixture of birds and animals.”

As we see, Rashi took his cue from the root meaning of the word: “mix.” He did not really enter into the question of which species of beasts made up the mixture. (It is in fact most interesting to compare the varied examples of animals that different commentators included in their lists of arov species.)

Other French exegetes of the period, such as Rabbis Joseph Kara and Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) narrowed the zoological range of arov candidates—to wolves and other beasts of the night. They adduced texts in Jeremiah and Zephaniah in which the prophets spoke of the retribution that will be inflicted on the wicked when “a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces.” In Hebrew the “wolf of the evenings” is *ze’ev ha-‘aravot*, employing the Hebrew root “arov.” Rashbam explained that nocturnal predators are the most deadly and fearsome.

For some interpreters, the vital clue to identifying the arov was the verb employed by the Torah when G-d threatened to unleash them on Egypt: “I will send arov.” Maimonides’ son Rabbi Abraham assembled several scriptural passages where the verb “to send” is applied to wild beasts. For instance, in Moses’s admonitions in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, he threatens the disobedient Israelites that the Lord will “send beasts upon them.”

Formulating an idea that would be shared by several subsequent authors, Rabbi Abraham located the significance of this detail in the fact that, unlike other plagues, this one did not involve the creation of miraculous new beings with which to chastise Pharaoh, but rather modifications to the behaviour of existing species. Normally, nature maintains a balance in which wild creatures occupy a separate domain and restrain themselves from intrusions into human habitations. However, on this unique occasion G-d

chose to suspend those restraints and thereby “send” the creatures into the Egyptian population centres and private residences. It was in this sense that it was deemed a miracle when large numbers of animals broke out of their normal nocturnal enclaves and made their way by day into the Egyptian habitations.

Rabbi Bahya ben Asher pointed out that, unlike most of the other plagues, the word “arov” is accompanied by the definite article. This indicates that they were not new creations but the same beasts that had been there all along; however it was only now that were they unleashed to assail the Egyptians. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch claimed that the miracle consisted of removing the animals’ fear of humans.

(Rabbi Isaiah Berlin took a contrasting view, suggesting that beasts that had hitherto been tame and docile were now miraculously transformed into vicious predators.)

Several authors offered reasons why this plague was particularly appropriate. For instance, Rabbi Jacob Zvi Mecklenburg discerned poetic justice in the choice of animals to serve as weapons against the Egyptians, when viewed in the context of the veneration of zoological forms that was so central to their idolatrous religion, with its menagerie of sacred bulls, cats, crocodiles and the like.

Don Isaac Abravanel found a measure of divine justice in the way that the animals (with a little help from angels of destruction) confined the Egyptians captive to their homes and fields, in retribution for Pharaoh’s own treatment of the Israelites. The same type of Egyptian “hospitality” that he had imposed on his unwilling Hebrew guests, Pharaoh was now forced to extend to the savage arov as they stampeded “into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt.”

And the uninvited guests probably behaved like a pack of rowdy party animals.

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

Two Alberta delegations will head to Maccabi this summer

By Tammy Vineberg

Will Hatch was one of eight teens from Edmonton and Calgary who had a chance to experience JCC Maccabi in San Diego, California in August 2022. The experience opened his eyes to the Jewish world outside of Alberta.

“I feel like we have a smaller Jewish community than other cities. Outside of Talmud Torah, I didn’t have many Jewish friends until I started going to BBYO. But when I went to Maccabi, I didn’t realize how many Jewish teens there were, especially Jewish teens who play sports,” he says.

He wanted to go to Maccabi after hearing about it from friends at Camp BB Riback. During his trip, he played hockey, stayed with a billet family, and made new friends, some who he still stays in touch with.

The JCC Maccabi Games, which celebrated their 40th anniversary in 2022, provide an opportunity for teens to play 13 different sports with delegations around the world. It is a Jewish event for Jewish teenagers that fosters long-lasting memories and identification with organized Jewish community groups and with Israel. JCC Maccabi Games helps

build a strong Jewish identity among all its participants.

Maccabi pairs well with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton’s strategic plan to develop young leaders and provide accessible Jewish experiences. This year there are 11 teens going to Fort Lauderdale, Florida from August 4 – 11. They will be billeted with local host families and participate in table tennis, swimming, volleyball, baseball, and tennis.

There is also a separate trip for the Israel JCC Maccabi Games from July 5 to 25. Eight athletes are competing in soccer, swimming, flag football, and hockey. This delegation will also include a few Israeli teens from the Federation’s Partnership2Gether region. The sporting tournament will include meeting famous and influential Israeli sports figures, and will culminate with a tour of Israel focusing on sports and important cultural and historical sights.



Eight teens competed as Team Alberta at the JCC Maccabi Games in San Diego last summer. Exciting plans are underway for this summer! Photo by Marit Abrams.

The participants will be housed in dorms. Chloe Soibelman and Marit Abrams are the delegation heads for Team Alberta.

For Will, he believes JCC Maccabi is an opportunity that teens shouldn’t pass up. “I think it’s life changing. Most people only go once, and they try to make it the best experience for you.”

Tammy Vineberg is Associate Director of Marketing and Communications, Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

Pianist *Cont. from page 5*

disaster distract from her greatest passion - sharing her mother's incredibly moving story.

Golabek and her late sister Renee learned both piano and their family history from their mother. Like her, the Sisters Golabek became talented pianists, performing together as a duo and producing several recordings including the best-selling album, *Carnival of the Animals*, featuring the voices of Hollywood stars including Audrey Hepburn and Charlton Heston.

Golabek was enjoying a highly successful career as a concert pianist, garnering a Grammy Nomination (Best Chamber Music or Other Small Ensemble Performance for *Arensky: Piano Trio #2 in D Minor / Tchaikovsky: Piano Trio in A Minor*).

Yet, despite all her success, she had a nagging feeling. "I came off one of my tours and thought to myself, 'something is really missing in my life'," Golabek said.

"When I was a little kid, my mom taught me the piano and told me the story of her life. It entered my heart, but then the years passed. One day I was engaged to play the very piece that she had dreamed of making her debut in, the *Grieg Piano Concerto*," Golabek added. "A dream was born.... I wanted to share her story with others."

At first, Golabek wrote a book about her mother's experiences. "Someone fell in love with it and sent it to a major publishing house. The rest was history for me," she said. Some philanthropists then embraced the book, feeling it would be "a powerful message for young people."

They assisted Golabek in forming the *Hold on to your Music Foundation* which, in turn, shared the story with schools. It wasn't long before Golabek's efforts came to the attention of filmmaker Steven Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation, which partnered with Hold on to your Music Foundation in The Willesden Project, bringing further educational resources to this unique form of Holocaust education.

The best was yet to come. Golabek was introduced to Hershey Felder. The pianist, actor and playwright - famous for his portrayals of composers - knew a good thing when he saw it.

"I'm going to take a chance on you. I'm going to produce you," he told Golabek, whose debut performance of *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* took place at LA's Geffen Playhouse Theatre about a dozen years ago. "He changed the course of my life," said Golabek of Felder. "He's toured me all over the world."

Sadly, Lisa Jura Golabek, who passed away in 1997, did not live to see how her daughter immortalized her story. "I hope wherever she is, in heaven, she's

observing the millions of kids who have now read the book in multiple languages," said Golabek. "It's just been fabulous to see the reaction all over the world."

So impressed was Paula Lexier with Golabek's show, that she enthusiastically stepped up to help organize her Calgary performances, serving as liaison between the KSW Holocaust Education fund, the Taylor Centre for Performing Arts, Calgary Jewish Federation, and event sponsors Al Osten and Buddy Victor.

"What makes this story so different is that she shares the history of the Kindertransport in a way that I've never seen before," said Lexier. "Her weaving of classical piano pieces with her mother's tragedy and triumph resonates with the audience in a completely different way. That is what makes the experience so unique."

"The fact that the Taylor Centre for Performing Arts is offering this as part of their regular concert season reinforces the quality of the production," Lexier added.

Organizers are predicting brisk demand from Calgary music lovers and encourage members of the Jewish community to grab tickets while the best seats are still available.

In addition to the public performances on April 19 and 20, Golabek looks forward, as always, to interacting with local youth. Calgary Jewish Federation Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education co-chairs Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin promoted the youth performances with Calgary and area social studies and band teachers who snapped up every available seat.

"I am thrilled that 1,200 junior high and high school students will get to experience the abridged version of the production and have an opportunity to participate in a Q and A after the performances," Lexier said.

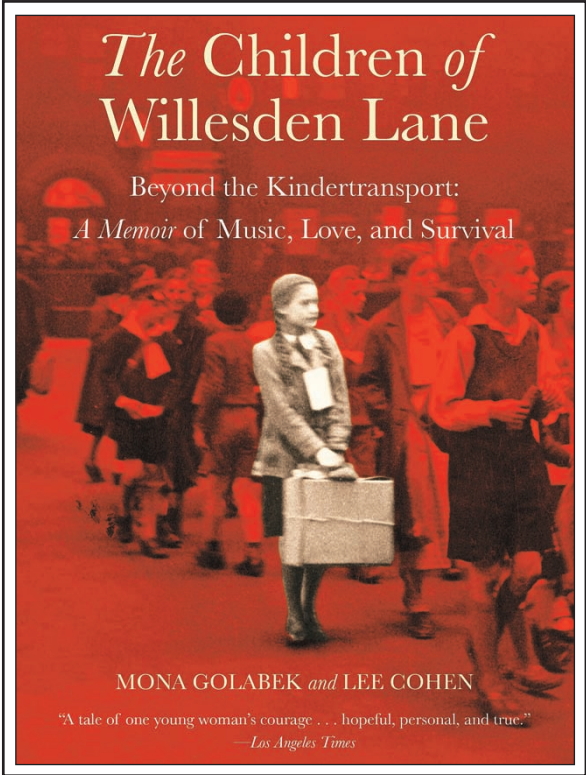
At the heart of *The Children of Willesden Lane* are the last words Lisa Jura ever heard from her mother as the 14-year-old boarded the Kindertransport train.

"My grandmother told my mother to hold on to her music, that it would be her best friend and that she would be with her every step of the way through her music," Golabek said.

"Even though the story is set 80 years ago it has more relevance today than ever before," said Golabek, because it touches upon the rescue of refugees as well as the fight against antisemitism and racism.

To date, an astonishing 2,000,000 young people have read Golabek's book, which has been translated into 12 languages, including Arabic.

Golabek told *AJNews* that she will soon take *The Children of Willesden*



Lane to the United Arab Emirates. Her performances there will be her first in an Arab country. In January 2024 she will team up with the Israel Philharmonic in a Willesden Read event sponsored by philanthropist Charles Bronfman.

Golabek's performances and conversations have also had a profound effect closer to home.

"I've seen this story captivate young African Americans all across America. They really relate it to the stories they've heard from their legacies. I see Hispanic and Asian refugees cheer this story," says Golabek. "We are all in this together."

To purchase tickets for the April 19 and 20 Calgary performances of *The Children of Willesden Lane*, go to taylorcentre.ca/all-events. For more information about *The Children of Willesden Lane*, go to holdontoyourmusic.org/

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

Israeli President *Cont. from page 19*

The speech was extraordinary in part because the role of president is mostly ceremonial. The president, in recent years, has been seen as a conciliator in Israel's fractious society.

Additionally, Herzog, a former leader of the Israeli Labor Party and chairman of the Jewish Agency, is seen as a compromiser. In 2021, when the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, elected him in a secret ballot, he won a larger majority than any of his predecessors, drawing support from the left and the right.

The legislation advanced by Netanyahu's coalition would allow a simple majority of the Knesset to override Supreme Court decisions, and would give the coalition complete control over the selection of the court's judges.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly defended the rights of vulnerable populations in Israel, including Arab Israelis, LGBTQ people, non-Orthodox Jews and women. Netanyahu's supporters say the proposed changes put necessary brakes on an activist judiciary while empowering the country's right-wing majority, while critics at home and abroad — including President Joe Biden, top Democrats in Congress and portions of the Jewish organizational establishment in the United States — say they threaten Israel's democracy.

With his speech, Herzog unveiled a proposed compromise, which would balance judicial and political interests in selecting judges. Proponents of reform say the system now allows judges too much power in choosing their replacements, and want to give the upper hand to the governing coalition.

Herzog's compromises also include advancing a law that would make it harder to pass the "basic laws" that comprise Israel's constitution. Basic laws currently require a bare majority of 61 of 120 members to pass. Herzog's proposal would preserve the 61-vote threshold for each of the first three votes, but would also add a fourth and final reading requiring a two-thirds majority of 80 Knesset members.

His compromise would also reduce the power of the Supreme Court to review laws the Knesset passes, but would not go as far as Netanyahu's proposals to gut judicial review. Under Herzog's system, for instance, the court would not review basic laws, which would require more votes to pass. Herzog also proposed a basic law to protect the rights of vulnerable populations.

Government figures immediately rejected Herzog's proposal. "It's worse than the current situation," said Shlomo Karhi, the communications minister, on Twitter. "We can't accept it." Opposition leaders, meanwhile, welcomed the proposal and said it could serve as a basis for a negotiated compromise.

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