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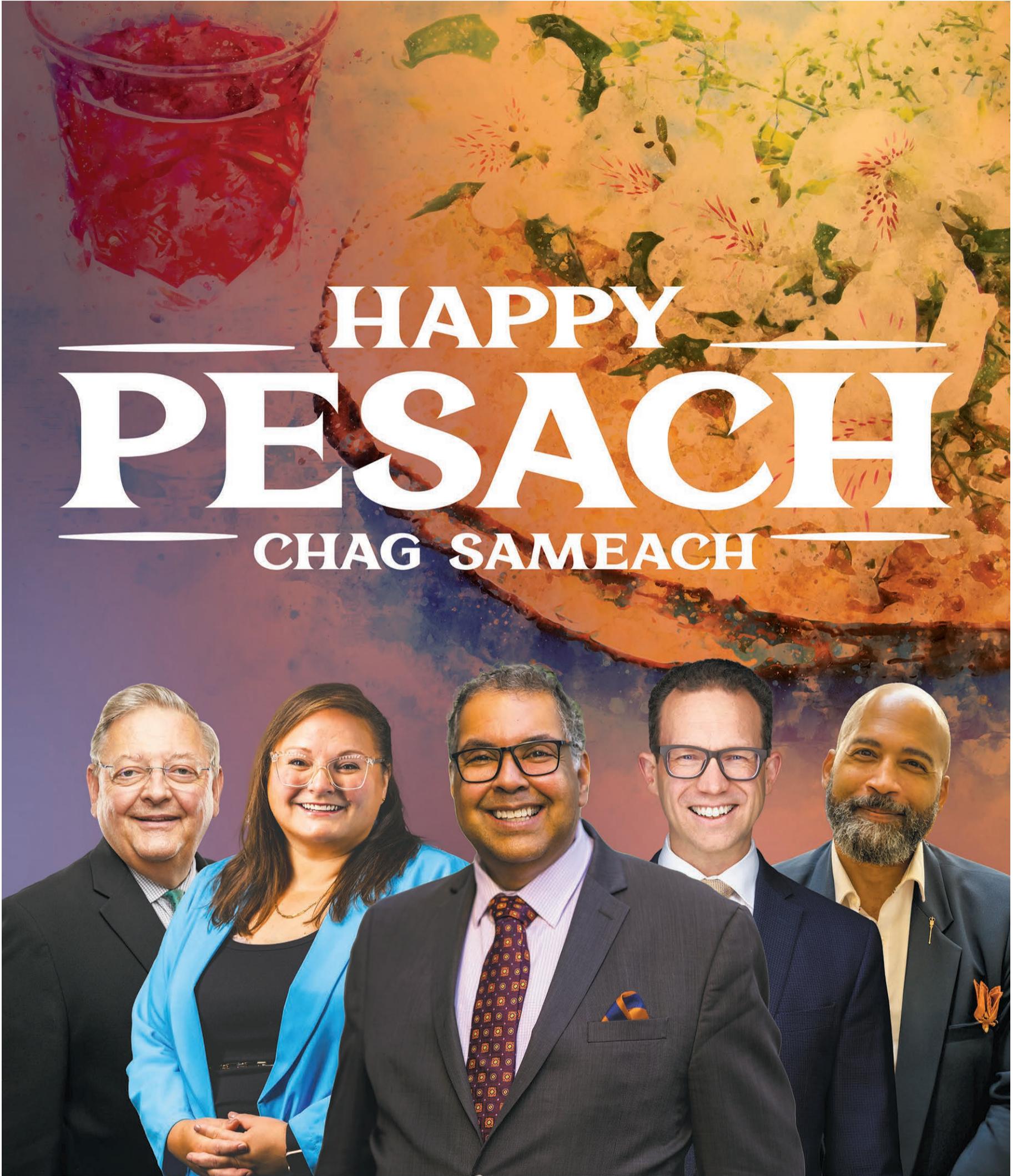
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Cover art: Let My People Go © by Shelley Werner. Part of the Flight and Freedom exhibit at TBT Gallery in Calgary from April 10 - June 30



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ALBERTA'S NEW DEMOCRAT CAUCUS

The long journey to redemption



Rabbi Guy Tal

By Rabbi Guy Tal

"Good morning," said the little prince.

"Good morning," said the merchant.

This was a merchant who sold perfected pills that had been invented to quench thirst. You swallow one a week and you no longer feel any need to drink.

"Why are you selling those?" asked the little prince.

"Because they save a tremendous amount of time," said the merchant. "Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save fifty-three minutes in every week."

"And what do one do with those fifty-three minutes?"

"One does what one wishes with them."

"As for me," said the little prince to himself, "if I had fifty-three minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water." (The Little Prince)

Efficiency, the shortening of processes, speed, optimization, productivity, thrift, effectiveness. These are synonyms for improvement and progress. Yet, they may also serve as ciphers for the disregard of the path, of inner maturation, and of those protracted processes that construct a new and enduring reality.

"And they hearkened not unto Moses for shortness of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (Exodus 6:9).

"Whosoever is straitened in his spirit, and his breath is short, and he is unable to prolong his breathing" (Rashi, ibid).

But great things are fashioned through long and profound procedures of essential change in the nature of reality and the spirit of man. Redemption is not built in a day, nor is the human spirit transformed in a single hour. At times, speed signifies superficiality, and efficiency represents a self-concession that abandons the full scope of creation. One cannot hasten the formation of the fetus in its mother's womb; one cannot leap forward the maturity of the soul or the capacity for internalizing truth. "Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly" (Isaiah 8:6).

"I sometimes think drivers don't know what grass is, or flowers, because they never see them slowly," she said. "If you showed a driver a green blur, Oh yes! he'd say" (Fahrenheit 451)

The Mishnah in Tractate Avot, Chapter 5, delineates a list of matters pertaining to the number ten. Thus, for example, the chapter opens with the statement: "By ten utterances (mamarot) was the world created," meaning that ten times the Holy One, Blessed be He, commanded a thing to be brought into existence, such as "Let there be light." Later, the Mishnah also notes the Ten Plagues. The *Sfat Emet* cites his grandfather, who connects these concepts:

"My lord, my grandfather, my teacher and master, of blessed memory, said: that the necessity for the ten plagues was to remove the husk (*klipta*) and the concealment from the ten utterances, in order to transform them into the Ten Commandments."

Once, in the depths of history, the world was created by means of ten utterances. The words of G-d Himself are the very essence of pure holiness that became substantial within reality, the Divine spark dwelling within every creature and every being. Yet, it is shrouded and hidden by many layers of evil, darkness, and wickedness. Generation after generation, humanity contends with the removal of this husk, which seems only to broaden and thicken. And behold, after a profound internal process, thousands of years and especially two hundred years of darkness and servitude, a process of forging the Nation of Israel like a fetus in its mother's womb, the time arrived for holiness to be revealed and to burst forth. But the husk would not permit it to break through, gripping it with force. Thus, the Lord intervened, peeling away the evil, husk after husk, stumbling block after stumbling block, revealing the holiness hidden within existence. This is the procedure leading from the Creation of the world to the Giving of the Torah. In this manner, the Ten Utterances – the unilateral Divine proclamation, a declaration unto a reality without a recipient – are transformed into the Ten Commandments: a discourse, a dialogue, granted to the People of Israel at the Revelation of Mount Sinai.

However, the process was too rapid, and superficial. The change emanated from above rather than from internal labor, appearing artificial and forced – as if "He suspended the mountain over them like a tub." The husk of stone and the evil clinging to reality did not vanish in a single day, nor through a process of several months. Immediately following that exalted standing, the People of Israel fell into the Sin of the Golden

Calf, which illustrated the current reality more than it created a new one—the process of repair remained long and intricate.

Therefore, the rapid and Divine process is replaced by a long and exhaustive human educational one. It is a struggle and deep internal building spanning generations. "In every generation, a man is obligated to see himself as though he went forth from Egypt." Every year, we sit at the Seder night, reliving those same experiences and recounting those same stories, discovering the Commandments within the Utterances, or the Utterances within the Commandments, praying, expecting, and yearning for the complete repair, the *Tikkun* of the world, and the coming of the Messiah; for "eye to eye shall they see, when the Lord returneth to Zion."

In the midst of this long, wearying, and arduous process, one must not throw up his hands or surrender to despair. In one way or another, the good shall be revealed, shall triumph, and shall endure. This faith is the immense internal force that leads us from destruction to redemption, from the Holocaust to the establishment of the State of Israel, from the seventh of October to the striking of our enemies hip and thigh, and shall soon lead us unto the complete Redemption.

Yet even within this long journey, a journey fraught with ascents and descents, destruction and rebirth, we must guard ourselves against "shortness of spirit." We must not allow the race for victory or "efficiency" to make us forget the beauty of the path. Even if the way to the spring is far longer and more taxing than those fifty-three saved minutes, it possesses a value that no pill can replace: the ability to notice the flowers by the wayside, the internal ripening that is born of the walking itself, and the knowledge that the water will be sweeter and purer precisely because of the thirst that steadily built within us along the way. Redemption, it seems, is not the final destination, it is the capacity to walk toward the spring at leisure, step by step, without forsaking a single moment of the journey.

Rabbi Guy Tal is the Rabbi at Beth Israel Synagogue in Edmonton.

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The Sweetness of Liberation

By Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein



Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein

As we prepare for Pesach this year, we do so at a remarkable moment in Israel's history. The war with Iran has created a genuine possibility – perhaps for the first time in decades – that the existential threat to Israel might be addressed. We approach our seders carrying both hope for what this could mean and grief for what it has cost.

Watching footage from Iran these past weeks – the destroyed buildings, the rubble and dust filling the streets – I found myself thinking about bricks and mortar. The images brought to mind charoset, the mixture we place on our seder plates. The Talmud in Pesachim describes how we prepare charoset thick like mortar, and when ground together, the mixture

resembles the clay our ancestors used for bricks in Egypt. This commemorates the labour of slavery, the exhausting work of building for Pharaoh.

At the same time, we make charoset from apples, dates, figs, pomegranates, nuts, wine, and sweet spices. These ingredients connect to a powerful tradition about Jewish women in Egypt. When Pharaoh ordered Hebrew baby boys killed, women went to the apple orchards to give birth in hiding. Tradition links this to the verse in *Song of Songs*: 'Under the apple tree I awakened you; there your mother conceived you,' understanding it as a reference to these secret births in Egypt.

While labouring under slavery, Jewish women were also bringing children into the world. They chose life and love even under Pharaoh's rule. They acted as though there would be a future worth living in, even when that future seemed distant. The mortar and the apples come from the same chapter of our story – one reflects the oppression, the other reflects the determination to survive it and build beyond it.

Israel now stands at a threshold. Iran's regime has threatened our people for decades, funding terror, building weapons, and openly calling for Israel's destruction. The current conflict may finally end this threat. Israeli children might grow up without this shadow over their futures.

The price has been real. Soldiers have given their

lives. Civilians in both Israel and Iran have died. Families mourn losses that will echo for generations. We acknowledge this grief even as we recognize what might be gained.

When we make charoset, we physically combine these elements. The thickness of mortar and the sweetness of fruit become one substance. You taste both together.

We can make that same choice during uncertain times. We can hold grief for those who have fallen and hope for Israel's security. We can recognize the difficulties of war and still welcome the possibility of lasting peace and safety for our people. Liberation has never arrived neatly wrapped. It comes through struggle, through sacrifice, through difficult decisions made by people who believed the future was worth fighting for.

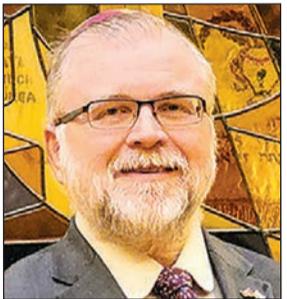
At our seders this Pesach, when we taste charoset, we taste the legacy of those women in Egypt who refused to let Pharaoh determine their future. They laboured as slaves because they had no choice, but they also chose to bring new life into the world, to love and to hope. They lived in the reality of slavery while actively creating the possibility of freedom.

Chag Pesach Sameach.

Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein is Rabbi at Congregation Beth Shalom in Edmonton.

The Passover Seder: Judaism's original classroom

By Rabbi Russell Jayne



Rabbi Russell Jayne

Of all the rituals in the Jewish holiday cycle, the Passover Seder may be the most remarkable. It is not usually conducted in the synagogue, nor is it usually led by clergy. Instead, it unfolds around dining room tables, led by hosts and guests who transform an ordinary

meal into one of Judaism's most powerful acts of teaching.

For thousands of years, Jewish families have gathered every spring to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Our journey from slavery to freedom, and our birth as a people bound together by memory and covenant. Yet the genius of the Seder lies not simply in the story we are telling, but in how the story is told.

Rather than presenting the Exodus as a lecture or historical account, the Seder turns this pivotal moment into an experience. We taste bitterness through the maror, recalling the harshness of slavery. We dip vegetables into salt water to remember tears. We

recline like free people, celebrating a dignity restored. Every element of the table becomes a teaching tool.

The Seder is, in many ways, Judaism's original classroom.

And, what makes this classroom unique is its emphasis on curiosity. The evening begins with questions, famously asked by the youngest participant, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The Haggadah does not discourage these questions; rather, it invites them. Jewish tradition understands that identity is not formed through passive listening, but through engagement, wonder, and conversation.

In fact, the ancient rabbis structured the Seder so

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Na'amat and PJ Library partner in Community Chesed to support families in need

By Mira Campbell

In a meaningful act of community collaboration and compassion, Na'amat and PJ Library partnered to support a local charity dedicated to helping vulnerable families with newborns. The initiative benefited Basically Babies, an organization that provides essential baby supplies to parents living in situations of extreme need.

Basically Babies prepares and distributes complete layettes containing approximately 120 items of new or gently used baby essentials, including clothing, blankets, and care items for infants and toddlers up to 24 months old. These layettes help ensure that families facing significant challenges have the necessities to care for their babies with dignity and security.

Through the warmth and kindness of our community, PJ Library families contributed a car full of baby clothing and other infant items. In addition, Na'amat donated a generous cheque for \$500, which was presented to Chelsea Lee, the organization's manager of operations, during the delivery.

The initiative was a beautiful example of community unity and compassion in action and reflects the deep Jewish value of chesed (acts of loving kindness), a core principle that encourages individuals and communities to care for those in need. Jewish tradition teaches that acts of compassion strengthen not only those who receive help, but also the entire community that comes together to provide it.

There will be a hands-on opportunity to do a mitzvah and help Basically Babies sort clothing on Thursday, April 23 from 6-9 p.m. If you would like to volunteer, please email Mira at pjlibrary@edjfed.org for more details.



From left to right- Terry Karpman, Robin Marcus, Darlene Bushewsky, Manager of Operations Chelsea Lee, Mira Campbell, Maya Feldman and Gail Milner.



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Purim at Beth Israel



Everyone had a great time! Photos by Paula Kirman.

Understanding our Jewish identity

By Rabbah Gila Caine



Rabbah Gila Caine

Zionism has become a contentious word in parts of the Jewish world, mainly due to a well-organized smear campaign run by forces outside our community. Go read more about antizionism as a form of Jew-hatred in the works of Adam Louis-Klein and others. And yet, some of the discomfort for a section of the Jewish

nation with the word Zionism (mostly disconnected from the fact that an overwhelming majority of Jews celebrate our relationship with Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel) lies in the manner in which we've built our narrative both as Israelis and as Diasporic Jews.

Are we Zionists because we articulate our relationship with Israel in the language of refuge, or, in the language of sanctuary? Very slight difference, but worlds apart.

On the night before leaving Mitzrayim (Egypt), Hashem told B'nei Yisrael to take blood from the sacrificial lamb and "...put it onto the two posts and onto the lintel..." (Shemot 12:7). This was done to mark their homes so they would be saved from our God flying around that land all night, it was a mark of protection.

I think of this protective blood today, even here in Canada and all the more so for our family and friends in Israel and around the world. In a chilling and

inverted way, it reminds me as well of the doorposts of synagogues around the world as our communities are now being attacked in acts of sacrilege and desecration.

A friend asked some days ago "Is anywhere safe for us?!", articulating the feeling of many Jews as they experience perceived safety shifting under our feet. Are Jewish spaces the only safe places for us today? Are we flung together out of necessity? Are we, as articulated poignantly by Rav Soloveitchik in his exploration of human suffering, thrust into a covenant of fate, a shared destiny "[where the individual] is subject and subjugated against his will to the national fate/existence, and it is impossible for him to avoid it and be absorbed into a different reality" (R' Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*)?

Rav Soloveitchik offered us two ways of understanding our shared Jewish destiny. The first is the above-mentioned Covenant of Fate, and it is predicated much more on the decisions of those around us than on our own desires. It is the outcome of Jew-hatred.

The second destiny Rav Soloveitchik suggests is a Covenant of Destiny, in which "The nation is enmeshed in its destiny because of its longing for an enhanced state of being, an existence replete with substance and direction" (R' Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*). This second covenant is rooted at Mount Sinai during the time B'nei Yisrael received Torah - "Moshe took the blood, he tossed it on the people and said: Here is the blood of the covenant that YHWH has cut with you by means of all these words." (Shemot 24:8).

This verse throws me back to the blood on B'nei Yisrael's doorposts, and I ask myself, in what way is the blood of covenant different from the blood on the doorpost?

In the Torah, blood is the liquid of life and the symbol of a living creature's life-force (which is why Jews are never allowed to eat blood). And since Zionism is our covenant with our people and our

land, the question we need to ask ourselves is this: What sort of life-force are we placing at the centre of our Zionism? Is our Zionism one of protection? Is it forever an outgrowth of the Shoah and October 7? Is Israel only our refuge? It sounds crazy asking this now, as Iranian missiles rain down on Israel and as Jewish institutions are attacked around Canada. But we have to ask ourselves this question. Not because we ignore the Covenant of Fate, a very real and important reality, but because we must centre a Zionism which embodies the promise of shared Destiny, wherever we are in the world. This Zionism of Destiny reminds us we are choosing time and again, with pride and joy in our heritage and with all of our being, to come together in the building of our communal Sanctuary.

We can learn from the calendar year: Our covenant with God and with our people might have some of its roots in shared fate and fear of the very real dangers raging outside our doorways. This is the long-ago night of Pesach. But as we remember that night and learn from what it can teach us, we must shift our focus and make our way to the sacred mountain of Sinai, where we go into a deeper covenant of meaning with our God and with our people for all of eternity.

Am Yisrael (the People Israel), and Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel), and of course the ever-evolving Torah of Israel, are all intertwined, all giving meaning to each other.

This is a Zionism of life.

May the echoes of war quiet down in Canada, and may the flames of war die down in Eretz Yisrael, may all the people of Israel be protected and safe.

And may the month of Nissan bring with it new flower-buds blossoming on our Tree of Life.

Chag Pesach Sameach

Rabbah Gila Caine is the spiritual leader at Temple Beth Ora in Edmonton.

"Flight and Freedom" art show presented by TBT Gallery in Calgary

By Shelley Werner

At this time of year, with Passover nearby, our thoughts turn to the hope of spring, with the remembrance of journeys past. From April 10 to June 30 *Flight and Freedom* presented at B'nai Tikvah Gallery (TBT) in Calgary, includes seven local artists, with work that features reflections on these themes.

It is always relevant to discuss the topic of migration, of an exodus that takes place somewhere in the world, or in our personal lives. Change is constant, and it is illuminating to consider what makes us move,

what chases us, and what do we migrate toward? The idea of freedom is powerful as an impulse that can draw us to uncertain futures. The question remains, do we emerge from a journey to a new reality that is better than the one left behind, or does achieving a new freedom bring with it unanticipated chains?

Curator Jennifer Eiserman says, "Passover is a holiday that asks the Jewish people to engage in practices that encourage us towards humility, to find the strength to resist oppression, to defend human dignity and to create new visions for a world that embodies Shalom - wholeness and peace. The works in *Flight and Freedom* explore these themes through

paint, textile, collage, asking visitors to consider what a world of Shalom might mean to them."

Artists were invited to participate in a group art exhibit that speaks to the the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt as told in the Torah. The annual seders memorialize this journey from bondage to liberation. TBT Gallery welcomed works that relate to this theme, either through art work that is part of an existing collection or newly created works.

The seven artists in the show, Lisa Thomson, Marilyn Samuels, Lily Rosenberg, Branwyn Cookhouse, Jennifer Eiserman, Sheera and Shelley Werner each have very different styles and use a wide range of media.

Lisa Thomson will present her version of flight in oil. Her time spent in the mountains of Alberta and

Continued on page 19

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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

As we look ahead to Passover, our annual celebration of liberation and collective purpose, I find myself reflecting on what it truly means to move forward together as a community. The story we retell each year is not only about leaving Egypt—it is about a people choosing to step into the unknown side by side, trusting that shared action can lead to transformation.

Over the past months, we have heard from so many of you who feel a deep desire to do something—to support one another, to stand visibly as Jews, and to strengthen the bonds that hold our community together. That instinct is powerful. But its impact becomes even greater when it is expressed collectively. Community doesn't happen in the abstract. It happens when you show up—at events, at gatherings, in moments of celebration and moments that require courage and resilience.

We have seen this spirit in action across Edmonton. You have attended programs, volunteered your time, and engaged in dialogue. At the same time, we are watching our shared vision take physical shape as construction on the new Oshry | Kipnes Jewish Community Centre continues to progress on schedule. Each milestone reached is building not only walls and spaces, but a renewed sense of excitement about what this hub of Jewish life will mean for generations to come. Together, these moments—showing up for one another and investing in our collective future—are strengthening the foundation of our community.

As we prepare for Passover, I invite you to think about the symbolism of the Seder table: a place where generations gather, where stories are shared, and where everyone contributes something to the

build throughout the year—a community woven from many voices, strengthened by participation, and animated by a shared sense of responsibility.

In the weeks ahead, we encourage you to take part in Yom Hashoah, Yom HaZikaron, Yom Ha'atzmaut, and the 30th anniversary of the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, events that bring our community to life. Your involvement—whether small or large—helps shape the future we are building together.

May this season inspire renewed commitment, meaningful connection, and the hope that comes from knowing we journey forward as one community.

Chag Pesach Sameach.

Register for our upcoming events at jewishedmonton.org.

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ONE – Festival Hatzafon 2026

By Jenna Vetsch, LJI Reporter

On Sunday, March 15, the Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association (AIFDA) held Festival Hatzafon 2026, presented by Title Sponsors Cristine and Barry Slawsky. AIFDA dancers returned to the Westbury Theatre stage for a cultural celebration centered on the theme “One,” curated by Artistic Director Sari Uretsky and Assistant Artistic Director Abby Wright. The show was professionally filmed by Reel Mensch Studios, allowing both audience members and dancers to relive the magic of the performance.

Special guests from Vancouver’s Israeli dance group, Orr Chadash, travelled to share the stage with Edmonton’s Aviv and Rikud dancers over the weekend. The Aviv and Vancouver dancers had the chance to connect and share a meal before the busy weekend of rehearsals and performances at a Shabbat dinner, sponsored by KBS Developments.

On the day of the festival, the lobby buzzed with excitement as family, friends, and special guests filled the theatre. Among those in attendance who came to celebrate an afternoon of cultural expression were MLA Lorne Dach and Roshan Prasad of the Council of Hindus of North America. Also in attendance were Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright, NCJWC Edmonton Section President Jodi Zabłudowski, and many others.

Melodie Greyeyes, member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and National Director of CMJ Canada, set the tone for the event with a land acknowledgement, followed by a dance offering a blessing for Israel. Her presence added depth and meaning to the opening moments. Following this, Jayden Leung and Aviv dancer Rachel Kondor performed the Canadian and Israeli National Anthems.

The show featured 13 choreographies performed by dancers ranging from kindergarten through to adults, in university, and beyond. Audiences were treated to heartwarming group performances, inspiring solos, hand-clapping classics, and powerful choreographies. Highlights included the debut of a brand-new dance, *Breaking Free*, choreographed by Sari Uretsky and Abby Wright, which captivated the audience with its storytelling and dynamic movement. Reflecting on the weekend, Sari said, “I feel an incredible sense of pride in passing on my love of Israeli dance to the next



The Aviv Dancers performed beautifully at Festival Hatzafon 2026 in Edmonton.

generation and in the work we are doing together as a small but vibrant Jewish community.”

The festival garnered overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, describing the event as healing, beautiful, uplifting, and professional. One parent shared, “watching my kids on the stage takes my breath away” and “I am forever grateful for Aviv.”

The event concluded with a reception in the lobby sponsored by Pauline Uretsky for people to connect and nosh over snacks and light refreshments.

Community organizations, institutions, businesses, and individuals helped make the festival a success. AIFDA extends a heartfelt thank you to the generous support of its sponsors and community partners. Contributions from the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF) helped offset theatre rental costs, while funding from the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, powered by the UJA, made it possible to bring on a stage manager, backstage runners, and MCs, ensuring the show ran with ease.

The ever-entertaining MC duo, Kingsley and Jayden Leung, kept the show light while also grounding the audience in a powerful message. As Kingsley shared, “even in a time when the world can feel divided and heavy with pain, there is still a quiet truth that runs deeper than fear. Humanity has always moved forward when people choose one another over hatred. The rise of antisemitism and other forms of prejudice

reminds us how fragile dignity and safety can be, but it also reminds us how necessary courage, empathy, and solidarity are. We are ONE.”

Support from the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC), Edmonton Section, helped uphold AIFDA’s commitment to ensuring that no dancer is turned away due to financial hardship. The festival also benefits from its ongoing partnership with the (Edmonton) Talmud Torah Society, which provides subsidized rehearsal space for youth dancers.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) awarded AIFDA an operating grant which supports arts-based organizations that foster community connections and primarily rely on volunteers to carry out their mission and mandates. This support helps sustain AIFDA’s year-round programming, including Festival Hatzafon, which showcases the organization’s ongoing artistic work and mission to enrich the cultural mosaic of Edmonton.

AIFDA recognizes that volunteers are the backbone of the festival, generously contributing their time and energy to ensure everything runs smoothly. Additionally, parents invest time, energy, and encouragement in their children’s passions. Dance teachers provide patience, guidance, and strong role models, helping young dancers develop their skills and confidence.

Sari expressed that “this year’s festival felt a little different. Although it marked my 20th year working with Aviv, it felt like we needed it more than ever. It was a meaningful opportunity to come together as a community, celebrate our beautiful heritage through dance, share some laughter, and simply enjoy being together.”

Here are several ways to continue supporting AIFDA and the legacy of its dancers:

Casino – AIFDA’s casino event and fundraising activities throughout the year support the dance program by paying for rental space, teachers, costuming and some travel expenses. AIFDA is appreciative to those who have signed up to volunteer at the upcoming casino in April. There is still one shift Sunday evening that needs to be filled. Contact aifdaedmonton@gmail.com to grab that spot.

Cookie Dough Fundraiser – visit www.aifda.ca for more information.

Donations are always appreciated and can be made at any time by e-transfer to aifdaedmonton@gmail.com

Share your Festival Hatzafon experience! The AIFDA Executive would love to hear from you. Tell them about your highlights from this year’s festival at aifdaedmonton@gmail.com.

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From Megillah to Carnival Magic: A Purim to remember at Talmud Torah

By Natalie Soroka

The Purim assembly and carnival at Talmud Torah School on March 3rd came together as a joyful, high-energy celebration that brought the entire school community into the spirit of the holiday. From the moment students arrived in their colourful costumes, the day carried a sense of excitement, creativity, and togetherness that only Purim can inspire.

The festivities began with the much-anticipated Purim parade, a tradition students look forward to every year. Classes wound their way through the halls, showing off imaginative costumes, while younger students waved, cheered, and joined the procession with pride. Principal Johnson live-streamed the event, so families could see their children shine!

The parade led directly into the school-wide assembly, where students took center stage in a variety of performances; Megillah participation brought the Purim story to life, with students reading, chanting, and sharing the narrative in a way that was both meaningful and accessible.

A lively Readers Theatre performance titled, *The Wonderful Kingdom of AZ*, added humor and dramatic flair, keeping the audience engaged and entertained. Purim songs and dancing filled the room with energy, as students and staff joined together in

celebration, clapping along to familiar melodies and enjoying the festive atmosphere.

As part of the school's annual Purim tradition, K-6 staff created math-themed T-shirts featuring their own interpretations of the iconic 6-7 meme. The students absolutely loved it!

After lunch, the excitement continued with the Purim carnival, a highlight of the day and a testament to the leadership and creativity of the Grade 6 students. They took full responsibility for planning, decorating, and running the event, transforming the space into a vibrant, activity-filled celebration.

Some of the most popular stations included the Haunted House, a thrilling walk-through experience that had students laughing, shrieking, and lining up for more. Face painting, where younger children proudly emerged with butterflies, superheroes, and colourful designs, puzzles and challenge stations, offering brain-teasing fun for students who love a good mental test. Plus, additional games and activity booths that kept the carnival buzzing with movement and excitement.

The decorations, designed and arranged by the Grade 6 leaders, added to the festive atmosphere, turning the space into a playful, imaginative Purim wonderland.



Throughout the day, one thing was clear: children and adults enjoyed every moment. Whether participating in performances, cheering on friends, or exploring the carnival stations, students embraced the joy and creativity that Purim encourages. The event showcased not only the holiday traditions but also the strength of the school community, with students supporting one another, older grades leading younger ones, and everyone celebrating together. The Purim assembly and carnival were a vibrant expression of school spirit, leadership, and the timeless joy of Purim.



The Purim assembly and carnival at Talmud Torah School on March 3 came together as a joyful, high-energy celebration that brought the entire school community into the spirit of the holiday.

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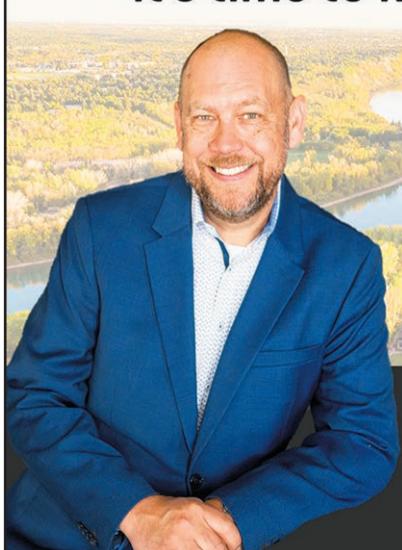




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Dr. Oren Cohen Roman delights his Edmonton audience – with Yiddish

By Regan Lipes

The annual Tova Yedlin Lecture, hosted by the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, is a notable occasion merging scholarship and community during Jewish Studies Week. On Thursday, March 12, Dr. Oren Cohen Roman, Associate Professor of Yiddish at Lund University in Sweden, delivered this year's Tova Yedlin Lecture in the auspicious Senate Chambers of the Old Arts Building at the University of Alberta to a packed audience.

The annual Tova Yedlin Lecture addresses European Jewish topics before the Holocaust, and Dr. Cohen Roman spoke about the melody that often, traditionally, accompanied Yiddish literature. "I grew up in Israel in the 1980s and Yiddish was very much present, but mainly as part of my grandparents' generation, many of them Holocaust survivors," explained Dr. Cohen Roman. "It was a familiar language spoken between older family members and acquaintances, often used to convey wise sayings, jokes, and secrets," he elaborated. "With us children, it was never spoken. Only Hebrew. I was fascinated by this language, associated with a distant culture and existence. Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust fascinated me, and I dreamed of learning this language." With Canada's own rich Yiddish traditions from the early twentieth century immigration wave and post Shoah Yiddish literary scene of Montreal, many millennials within the Jewish community of Edmonton will relate to his youthful memories of the language.

Almost thirty-years ago, Bruce Mitchell observed Israeli attitudes towards Yiddish revival in his article "Yiddish and the Hebrew Revival: A New Look at the Changing role of Yiddish" in *Monatshefte*. He wrote that "Those upperclass Ashkenazim who had formerly held their own vernacular in contempt, and even suffered a linguistic handicap to suppress it in their

private lives, are now committed to ensuring the survival of Yiddish as an essential part of Jewish," (195). In a 2025 article in *Forward* commemorating the centennial anniversary of YIVO, PJ Grisar noted that: "The idea for the institute came at a unique inflection point in history. After World War I, diaspora nationalist movements anticipated new government resources from minority treaties, international agreements granting rights to minority populations in countries looking to join the League of Nations. There was an urgency to documenting a way of life that seemed to be fading." Yet the institution's continued visibility as a scholarly and cultural reservoir of knowledge, speaks to the nostalgia that drives a current revival, for love of Yiddish.

Dr. Cohen Roman, like so many of his generation, for whom the sounds of Yiddish still lived, perhaps muffled, but alive, opted to seize the opportunity to learn the language more formally at university. He admitted that he had not planned for Yiddish scholarship to become his career path, but "I just took one class, and then I realized that I was waiting all week for that one class. So I followed my heart and ended up writing a PhD in Yiddish literature." With funding to the Humanities being cut at so many universities, not only in Canada, rich languages, like Yiddish, can struggle to maintain standing within their departments. As senior faculty retire, they are not always replaced, and such is the ongoing battle for resources within academia. Dr. Cohen Roman's prognosis for the future of Yiddish studies is more optimistic than some of his counterparts in Canada.

"Specifically for Yiddish studies, it has never been a large subject at any university, to the best of my knowledge. But it does attract students regularly, and some excellent scholarship is being pursued in this field. Like other small subjects, some universities take pride in nurturing Yiddish studies, recognizing the value of its authentic voice of a European minority culture. Moreover, some people love and appreciate Yiddish culture so much that they have provided



Dr. Oren Cohen Roman

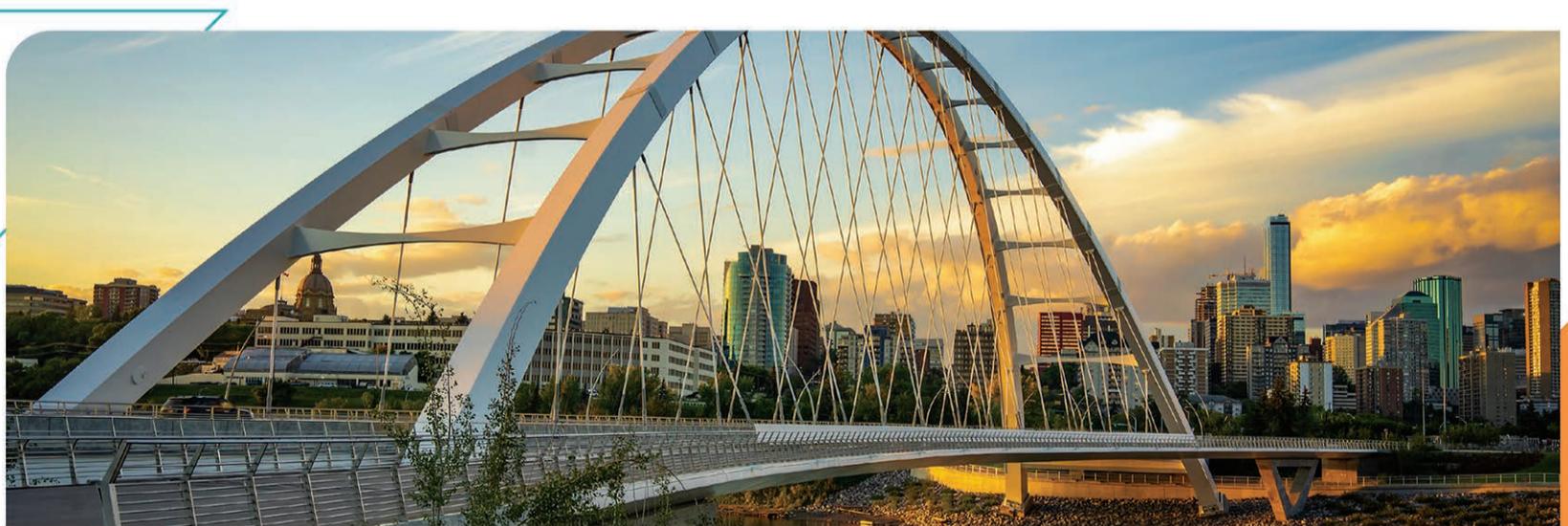
private funding to allow its study at universities," he explained. "In Sweden, where I work, Yiddish has been recognized as one of the country's five minority languages. This implies state funding for both university studies and activity within the community, such as cultural activity, children's education, and book publication. This is a very exciting chapter in the history of Yiddish culture, and I am happy to be a part of it."

With this established and well supported discipline thriving at Lund University, it is interesting to know what kinds of students are attracted to the study of Yiddish language and literature. "Some of my students have a Jewish background, while others do not. Some have heard Yiddish at home, from their parents or grandparents, and connect with their cultural heritage, like I myself did. By contrast, other students are total beginners. Each student has her or his own background, interests, and aspirations that bring them to Yiddish. Some have married into a Yiddish speaking family, others are interested in the Jewish religion, Hasidic thought, modernist literature, or the history of the Holocaust. Some German-speakers are also intrigued with Yiddish because of its similarity to the German language. You see people from various religions and religious backgrounds – from secular to very observant Jews, as well as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, along with atheists. Everyone is welcome to

Continued on page 25

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Pesach and intermission

By Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidès



Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidès

Google maps always plays a role when I teach my B'nai Mitzvah kids their Torah portion. Since every Torah portion comes from our Chumash, (the Five Books of Moses) every student's portion is related to our people's redemption from slavery and so every student invariably asks how long it took the Jews to get from Egypt to Eretz Israel.

A quick Google map search shows that if you walk from what is now Cairo to Jerusalem, it would take an average person one hundred and sixty-three (163) hours. Or basically, just under a week.

Now, even taking into account time to sleep, not walking during peak sunny hours, the slow-moving group, the punishing environment of the desert, traveling without a compass, etc.; even taking ALL of that into account, my students usually come to the conclusion that the journey should take maybe six (6) months. Tops.

And yet, as we all know, it takes our people forty (40) years! Of course, when my students ask, I tell the court-mandated joke that the journey took so long because Moses is a man and didn't want to ask for directions.

But seriously, what took so long? And why is so much Torah (three out of five books!) focussed around that wandering, in-between, liminal time?

As a musical theater kid, I found an answer in the form of a standard intermission; the wandering in the desert is our people's intermission. To flog the analogy: If the biblical history of our people was a play, act one is the creation of the world, act two is slavery, and act

three is entering the Holy Land.

The wandering in the desert? That's the intermission.

And just like during a play's intermission, the wandering is not the end of the story. It's a break in the action. A chance to take in what has unfolded and prepare for what is still to come.

This happens in our day to day lives: there are seasons when everything feels quieter, slower, or uncertain – times when we feel suspended between chapters, between versions of ourselves, between the life we once knew and the one that has not yet fully revealed itself. In those moments it can be easy to believe that the curtain has come down for good and the story is over.

Spiritual artist Jacqueline Whitney writes about the "intermission theory" stating that the pause in the middle of a story is not a failure of the narrative. It is part of the structure of the story itself. The intermission is the moment when we breathe, reset, and gather strength before the next act begins.

In Hebrew, Egypt is *Mitzrayim* coming from a root that suggests narrowness, constriction, tight places. *Mitzrayim* is not only a physical land; it is also a spiritual metaphor. It represents the places in life where we feel trapped, confined, unable to breathe or imagine something different.

At our Seder tables, we retell that sacred moment when, through courage and faith, through signs and wonders, Hashem led our people out of slavery. The story is not only ancient history; it is a reminder that human beings are capable of moving beyond the narrow places that confine us.

So, did we walk directly into the Promised Land after the narrowness of *Mitzrayim*? No. Instead, we enter the wilderness (*Bamidbar*) and wander for forty years. At first glance, this can feel confusing, even frustrating. Why does the journey take so long?

Because the wilderness is not a detour at all. The wilderness is the intermission.

Just as an intermission in a play allows the audience to pause and reflect before the story continues, the desert becomes the sacred pause between acts in the story of the Jewish people. The Israelites had physically left *Mitzrayim*, but leaving the land of

Egypt did not immediately erase the habits, fears, and limitations that hundreds of years of slavery had carved into their lives.

The wilderness becomes the space where transformation begins to take shape. In the desert, our people receive the Torah at Sinai, we build the Mishkan, we learn to rely on manna that appears each morning. Slowly, step by step, we begin to see ourselves not as a people defined by slavery, but as a community bound by covenant.

And finally, after that loooong intermission, Act Three begins: we enter the land promised to our ancestors. There, the covenant must be lived in everyday life – in fields and villages, in justice and compassion, in the rhythms of a society guided by G-d and Torah.

Seen this way, our wandering in the desert is not empty, wasted time. It is the sacred space that allowed redemption to deepen and mature.

Pesach reminds us that liberation from *Mitzrayim*, from the narrow places, is always possible. The wilderness teaches us that growth often unfolds in the spaces between departure and arrival. We learn that the journey toward freedom is not a single moment, but a process that calls for quiet faith that the next chapter of the journey is still unfolding before us.

When we find ourselves in a season that feels like a pause – between chapters, between identities, between what was and what will be – try not to mistake that stillness for a finale.

Intermission is not the end of the play.

It is the sacred space where we process what has happened, the place where we rest, where our souls quietly prepare for what is unfolding.

And one day we may look back and realize that the intermission was not empty time at all – it was the moment that made our next act possible. The moment that allowed the next chapter of our life to become even more beautiful than the first.

From my family to yours, wishing you all a meaningful and kusher Pesach.

Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidès is an independent Rabbi in Calgary. Her Rabbinic Practice is at RockyMountainRabbi.com

May your home and heart be filled with togetherness, joy and happiness!

Happy Passover

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Taking the pulse of our community: Introducing the MENSCH Survey

By Danielle Dolgoy

How is our community really doing?

It is a simple question, but an important one. At Jewish Family Services Edmonton (JFSE), we support individuals and families across Edmonton every day. In recent years, we have seen growing demand for counselling, social supports, and programs that strengthen connection and resilience. We also know that mental and emotional wellbeing do not exist in a vacuum. They are shaped by many aspects of daily life, including relationships, financial security, belonging, safety, purpose, and community connection.

To better understand these experiences, JFSE, in partnership with Jewish Federation of Edmonton, is launching a new initiative: the Mental & Emotional Needs Survey of Community Health, or MENSCH.

The survey is being administered independently by Y Station Communications & Research and is supported by Edmonton Community Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. At its core, MENSCH is about listening.

Why “MENSCH”?

The name is intentional. In Yiddish, a *mensch* is someone of integrity and heart, someone who shows up for others and contributes to the wellbeing of the community. Taking a few minutes to complete this survey is, quite simply, a very menschy thing to do.

It also reflects a broader idea. Mental health is not only about diagnoses or therapy. It is shaped by the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people live, work, learn, and connect. Feeling supported, having access to resources, experiencing belonging, and navigating challenges with dignity all play a role in our wellbeing.

By asking thoughtful questions about these realities, the MENSCH survey aims to create a clearer picture of what our community is experiencing right now.

Why This Matters

Organizations like JFSE exist to serve community needs, but we can only do that well by listening.

Today, JFSE supports roughly 500 Jewish clients, about 10 percent of Jewish Edmonton. It is a significant number. At the same time, it raises an

important question: how many more people might benefit from support, but feel unable to ask for it?

Many people carry challenges quietly, behind busy schedules, family responsibilities, and the expectation that we should manage on our own. Creating space to share experiences helps us better understand those unseen realities.

The insights gathered through MENSCH will help inform programming, identify emerging needs, and strengthen supports for individuals and families. This work is about building resilience, both individually and collectively. Strong communities are not defined by the absence of struggle, but by how they respond with care and connection.

Supporting Families and Older Adults

This is especially true for older adults and family caregivers.

JFSE provides in-home supports that help older adults continue aging in place with independence and dignity. For many families, these services are a lifeline. Care plans are overseen by professional social workers, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks for clients or their loved ones.

At the same time, caring for someone whose health is declining can carry a quiet emotional weight. Caregivers often juggle work, parenting, and caregiving, while setting aside their own needs. This kind of silent suffering is more common than we realize.

It does not have to be this way. Help is here, and support is available.

An Invitation to Pause and Reflect

Completing the MENSCH survey is also an opportunity for reflection.

Life moves quickly, and it can be hard to pause and check in with ourselves. Taking a few minutes to complete the survey offers a chance to take stock, to consider what is supporting you, and what may be weighing on you.

Participation is completely anonymous. Responses cannot be traced back to individuals and will only be



Local youth from BBYO preparing Passover care packages for JFS clients.

shared in aggregate. That anonymity creates space for honesty and openness.

A Conversation for This Season

As Passover approaches, many will gather around the Seder table to tell the story of liberation and renewal. The Seder is rooted in questions, reminding us that asking is part of who we are.

The MENSCH survey invites us to ask some modern questions. How are we caring for ourselves and one another? What helps us feel connected and resilient? Where can we grow stronger?

These reflections may spark meaningful conversations with loved ones. They may also encourage those who have been struggling quietly to consider taking the brave step of seeking support.

Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness. It is an act of courage that strengthens both individuals and communities.

Be a Mensch

Communities thrive when people show up for one another.

By participating in the MENSCH survey, you are helping build a clearer understanding of our community's needs and strengths. Your voice will help shape programs and services that are responsive, meaningful, and grounded in real experiences.

Most importantly, you are helping create a culture of listening, compassion, and resilience.

Take a few minutes. Pause, reflect, and share your perspective.

It is a small act, but it is a very menschy one.

Danielle Dolgoy is Executive Director of Jewish Family Services Edmonton.



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'Last Known Address' is a valuable resource for Holocaust education

By Ari Sniderman



Author Kathy Kacer

As a teacher and student of Jewish History over the last 20 years, I have come across various methods of teaching Holocaust education. A question, whose answer is always evolving, of course, is: What are the best ways to meaningfully integrate the memory of the Holocaust and Jewish identity-building?

Kathy Kacer's newest Holocaust education book for young readers, *Last Known Address: The Stumbling Stones of Europe*, will be an important resource going forward. As I read, I saw meaningful ways of utilizing it for Holocaust education not only in my classroom, but in my home and in the community.

Last Known Address begins by introducing the reader to Gunter Demnig's thirty-year-old "Stumbling Stones" project. Demnig has been placing plaques in the streets throughout thirty countries in Europe at the last chosen address of over 100,000 victims of the Holocaust. Kacer then presents the stories of thirteen individuals whose plaques can be stumbled upon by visitors and locals navigating the streets, just as the victims whose names they bear had in the good times.

As mentioned, Kacer frames the book as intended for "young readers." Specifically, the jacket states the intended audience as children between nine and twelve years old. Books suitable for this age bracket include other personal, non-fiction records such as *Hannah's Suitcase* and *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*. *Last Known Address* has great value as an abridged anthology. By portraying abridged accounts of multiple individuals, as opposed to a singular account, there is a broader opportunity to pique curiosity and invite further research from readers. I

was especially intrigued by the story of Salman Schocken and ended up taking an extra hour to finish the chapter about him!

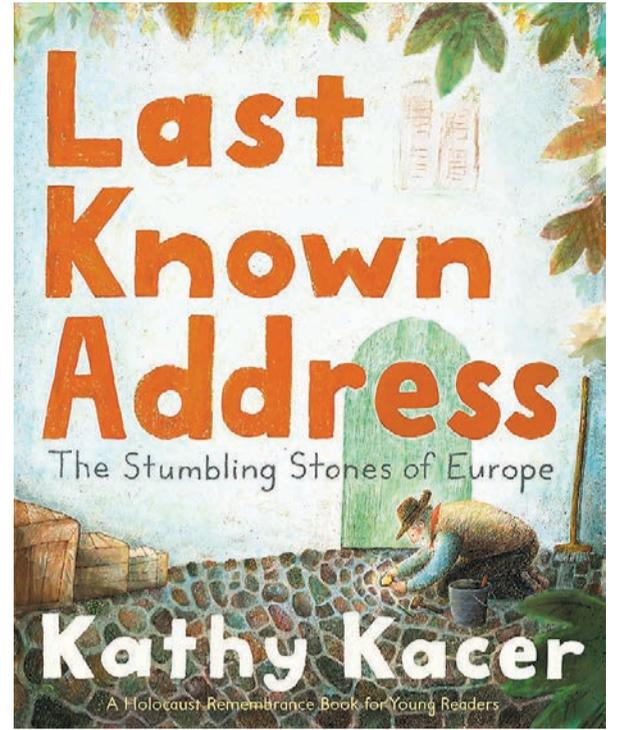
In presenting their stories, Kacer has the reader connecting deeply to the events. Each chapter introduces an individual by name and location of their stumbling stone (or alternative memorial). Many chapters then include the story of the individual told in narrative, after which a short section details the facts of the victim's life.

In each chapter, Kacer outlines the family dynamics, passions, and day-to-day lives of the victims that easily places the reader in the shoes of each. She is able to sensitively and respectfully relay each narrative, daring the reader to hope for a positive outcome to each heart-breaking tale.

In creating an incisive reading experience, Kacer is compelled to use terms and write of subjects which are unfamiliar to children being introduced to Holocaust education. This lends an opportunity for parents and teachers to facilitate discussions, concentrating on facts and feelings. Where Kacer gives the hard truths about Auschwitz and its brutality, adults can address the concepts in a safe space.

Educating young people about the Holocaust always boils down to a balance between age-appropriate truth and oversharing to the point of trauma. This is a hard balance to reach in a group as the threshold is deeply individual. One reason this unique anthology works as a meaningful resource is that the different stories offer different types of revelations about the events of the Holocaust.

Through the eyes of Leone Sabatello and Vera Katz Schiff, readers get a disturbing picture of antisemitism stomping into daily life. Readers realize the bravery of the partisans from Max Windmüller. Jan and Amelie Daniels are a Roma couple whose story focuses on the destruction of numerous communities and culture, and Matvey Ajzinberg's story conveys vivid descriptions of family separation. Holocaust education often focuses on the above themes, so the presentation of them through the anthology is clearly intentional and curated.



In the community, Kacer's text can be utilized for ceremonies and programming for youth and intercultural exchanges. In my house, I can envision reading *Last Known Address* with my kids as they begin to approach the appropriate age.

In the classroom, a teacher could read sections of *Last Known Address* with their class to introduce the Holocaust in general, or to further understanding through the memory of the individuals introduced by Kacer. I have certainly been waiting for a book like this to add to our program. I trust it will find a good home between Anne Frank's diary and *Hannah's Suitcase* in synagogue and school libraries everywhere.

Ari Sniderman is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



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Alberta writer Danyael Halprin brings Passover magic to children's bookshelves

By Jana Zalmanowitz

Award-winning Calgary journalist and writer Danyael Halprin is no stranger to the writing process. She's been contributing to various publications since she got her start in journalism at *Canadian Living* magazine in Toronto in the '90s. She's taken on roles such as book reviewer, travel writer and running journalist. She's written about everything from the mental health benefits of distance running, to the highs of a THC-infused restaurant dinner, pre-legalization, to the promise of Alberta's wind energy sector. Halprin's work has appeared in magazines such as *Avenue*, *The Calgary Herald*, and *iRun Magazine*. As of March 17, her work is finding a new home, on children's bookshelves and in bedtime story rosters.



Author Danyael Halprin

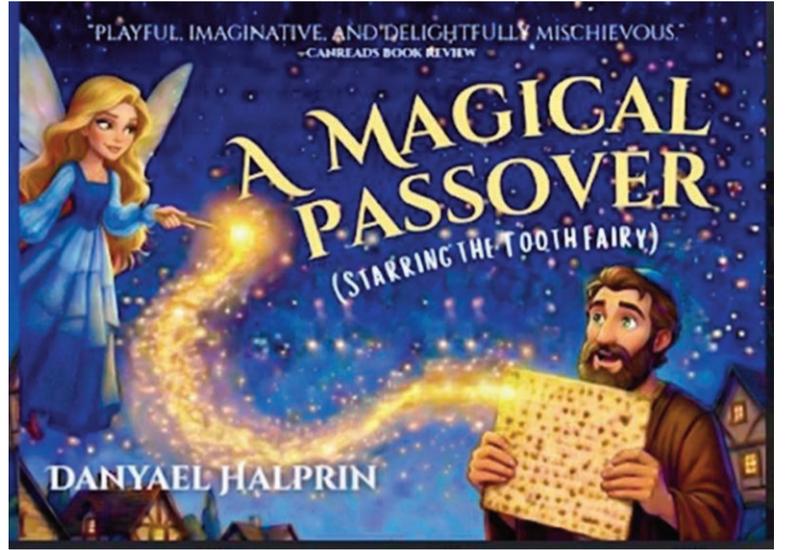
"I'm not used to being on this side of the interview," Halprin says with a laugh as she sits down to talk about her first children's book, *A Magical Passover Starring the Tooth Fairy*, published by RE:BOOKS Publishing. The book is the first picture book for Rebecca Eckler's RE:BOOKS Publishing, who describes it as "warm, witty and full of heart." The partnership between Halprin and Eckler is a natural fit, in that it merges the strengths of two Jewish women writers with ties to Alberta. Eckler, a 10x best-selling author, built a successful career in Canadian media. Her expertise in navigating the literary and media landscape was the foundation for launching RE:BOOKS, which provides a platform for emerging female Canadian authors to get their work into the world.

Many families with children will find something they recognize in *A Magical Passover Starring the Tooth Fairy*. The story brings together two well-known worlds: Jewish tradition and secular folklore. When young Jesse loses a tooth on Passover, readers witness the unexpected meeting between Eliyahu and the Tooth Fairy and the mishaps that ensue. The result is a lively comedy of errors that kids will enjoy, with a meaningful message parents can appreciate. The book shows what can happen when different traditions collide, learn to appreciate one another and ultimately work together. It's a welcome message in today's increasingly diverse families and society.

While the story may seem different from Halprin's previous works, she says it's one of many that swirl around in her creative mind, waiting for the right opportunity. "This story has existed in my mind for a while, waiting to find a home," she explains.

Halprin is a mother to three children, now in their teens. Years ago, her son lost a tooth on the first night of Passover. While he sat there processing the shock of the moment the tooth gave way, Halprin was exclaiming to her kids, "You know what this means? Eliyahu and the tooth fairy are both coming tonight!" And the story was written. The joys of having a creative writer for a parent.

Halprin found a home for her book in Eckler's newly founded Jewish imprint, RIVKAH Books. It was a perfect match. "They loved it immediately," Halprin says. "Rebecca saw the magic in it right away." Like, *A Magical Passover Starring the Tooth Fairy*, RIVKAH



Books aims to entertain audiences while also holding a deeper purpose. For RIVKAH Books, that means in a time of rising antisemitism, Jewish authors have a platform that celebrates and amplifies their voices. Says Halprin: "With all the hate and trauma over the past few years, it's more important than ever for the Jewish people to sing louder, be prouder, and shine their beautiful light into the world. I hope my book brings some much-needed joy into our community and the world."

A Magical Passover Starring the Tooth Fairy has been well received. A set of twins has called it "a silly magic mix-up, with a big lesson" and adults have used words like charming and memorable to describe its messaging in how it handles some of life's mysteries. As for Halprin's own family, they're enjoying the now-illustrated version, delighted to see a childhood story back on centre stage. "We read it together and my daughter was laughing at all the right parts," Halprin says.

Now as Jews around the globe gather to celebrate Passover, many feeling the weight of serious issues facing world Jewry, they can also share a message of hope that resonates with their children. "It's not just a silly story about Eliyahu and the Tooth Fairy," Halprin says. "Yes, it's fun and playful, but there's a deeper message. It's about one culture merging with another and about learning, understanding and embracing each other's traditions."

A Magical Passover Starring the Tooth Fairy by Danyael Halprin is available starting March 17 through Amazon and at select local bookstores. Amazon Link: <https://a.co/d/05B8BVY>

Jana Zalmanowitz is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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“Flight and Freedom”

Cont. from page 6

among ski races inspired her to capture the freedom experienced by those who choose to fly into the wind. “At takeoff, the ski racer crosses a threshold – from force and friction to flight and freedom in the open air. In that suspended instant, exposed and committed, we are fully alive. *Finding Your Wings* speaks to the moment we reach beyond our limits to rise beyond what holds us.”

Marilyn Samuels’ fibre art works will add texture to the show. “Yearning for freedom is an age-old quest that is still going on today. My work was inspired by two events. The first is the annual migration of Steppe Eagles which occurs every spring. Hundreds of eagles fly over the Negev desert in Israel on their way from hot Africa to the cooler environs in Europe. The second event happened in late 1949-50 when close to 50,000

Yemenite Jews, a long-oppressed minority, walked across deserts, mountains and borders to arrive in Aden, Yemin from where they were airlifted to the newly formed state of Israel. Most had never seen an airplane and were afraid to enter. They were reminded of the prophecy in the Book of Isaiah 40:31 “they shall mount up with wings like eagles” and in Exodus 19:4, “I will transport you on eagles’ wings.” And so they flew to freedom. *On Eagles’ Wings* is made from wool, silk and plant fibres that have been wet felted in a process called nuno felting (layers of silk captured by wool fibres). It was then machine and hand embroidered.”

Sheera (the artist formerly known as Sarah Bing) will present “Flight & Freedom.”

This painting explores the chaos and vulnerability of leaving the only home you’ve ever known to wander a desert with no clear destination, echoing the Exodus story remembered at Passover. The warm yellows and browns evoke the scorched landscape, while hidden, hallucination-like figures – including a ghostly white elephant – hint at the way hunger, thirst, and fear can distort our perceptions. In this liminal space between bondage and true freedom, reality blurs, and the psyche becomes as wild and uncharted as the wilderness itself.

Branwyn Cookhouse will present her multimedia work on the theme. Her vision of flight is characterized by urgency, danger and decisiveness; freedom by a weight lifted, liberty of choice, and safety. However, these notions are inherently connected to what they achieved for the Israelites. They were presented with the opportunity to flee, to fly – a critical action necessary for attaining their freedom. Their journey not only freed them from bondage in Egypt, from Mitzrayim, the limitations of their lives and faith, but also unified them as a people.

Jennifer Eiserman, curator of the gallery will show two works. “As I enter the last stage of my life, I find myself again at the edge of a wilderness. However, unlike the previous wilderness I have traversed, now I have come to appreciate the value of trusting in the process of becoming. I understand that a lack of definition can be a positive, exciting quality.”

Through an ambivalence of form, the work represents this shifting identity, the fullness of what

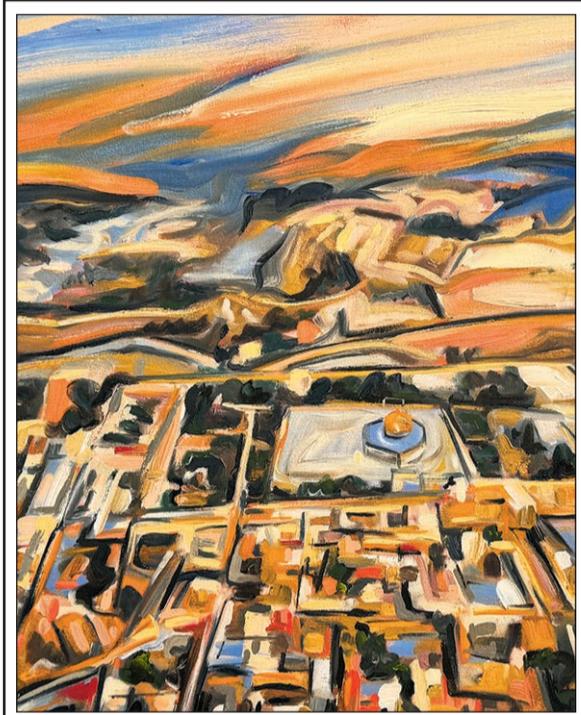


(Detail from) Chihuly in Jerusalem © by Lily Rosenberg

is and, at the same time, the opening of what will be. By using the traditional female craft technique of crochet to engage the negative space, to bring fragmented, dislocated parts back together, the process of re-weaving the resources of a life lived is made real for the viewer.

The show will also include works by Lily Rosenberg. Her painting which is acrylic and collage was done with the thought of bondage to freedom. It includes the tower of David and modern times, with reference to an exhibition by glass artist Chihuly. Her bold colours and dynamic graphic elements express the exuberance of freedom. She wishes that when people view her work that they feel she has something to say in a whimsical way; to have a sense of “wow” and a feeling of joy.

“Flight and Freedom” can be seen from April 10 to June 30, 2026 at TBT Gallery, Temple B’nai Tikvah, 900 47 Ave SW, Calgary. Monday to Thursday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm / Friday 9:00 am to 2:00 pm or by appointment with Shelley Werner shelleyruthwerner@gmail.com



The Other Side © by Sheera

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Stan Mayer and Perry Swenson at the Magen David Adom International Medical Response Seminar in Tel Aviv.

Magen David Adom unites Israeli Society and saves lives

By Stan Mayer and Perry Swenson



December 2025 Magen David Adom (MDA) hosted the 10th International Medical Response Seminar in Tel Aviv. We joined twenty-eight physicians, paramedics, nurses, and other healthcare professionals from eight countries for 5 days of intense learning. Lectures from experts in prehospital medicine, population resilience, blood and human milk banking and disaster

response were complemented by mass casualty exercises. Tours of the MDA Ramle dispatch center and meeting with trauma team physicians at Shaare Tzedek Hospital facilitated understanding of the Israel emergency medical system. Spending a day in an ambulance gave a taste of the day-to-day efforts of

MDA serving the public.

We visited with MDA staff and residents of Sderot, Kibbutzim Ofakim and Be'eri who graciously shared their experiences and showed us firsthand the carnage and horrors committed on October 7th. We paid respect at the Nova Festival site and learned of countless acts of bravery. The recounting of personal stories and the response from that day under unimaginable stress was humbling. We met with heroes.

Attending the MDA seminar as healthcare practitioners with interests in emergency medicine and prehospital systems as well as long-time supporters and previous volunteers, was an opportunity not to miss. The unfortunate reality is that MDA has extensive experience in dealing with trauma and mass casualty incidents. The ability to adapt and learn from events and then share their learnings allows us to examine and potentially improve our local systems. The adoption of protocols and technology by MDA is second to none. Yet what is more impressive is the engagement of community and the population to enhance response to all emergencies and lead to a

more prepared and resilient nation. Invariably in any conversation with a member of MDA staff or volunteer, the love of vocation was evident.

As part of Klal Yisrael we take pride in such a dynamic organization that unites Israeli society but also shares expertise responding to disasters globally. Training individuals and communities with programs such as the First 7 Minutes builds stronger societies. MDA can bring people together regardless of faith or nationality. There is something that tugs at your heart when you wear the white shirt and hoodie with the Red Star of David on the back and sing Hatikvah at the site of the Nova Music festival or at the Kotel with your new friends and colleagues. We are in this together. Am Yisrael Chai!

Stan Mayer is an Emergency and Family Physician practicing in Alberta and Nunavut

Perry Swenson is a Paramedic with Maskwacis Ambulance Authority and STARS flight Medic in Alberta

Passover Seder *Cont. from page 4*

that children would notice things that seem unusual. Why are we eating matzah instead of bread? Why are we dipping food? Why are we reclining while eating? These small disruptions spark curiosity and invite discussion. The goal is not simply to transmit information, but to cultivate a living relationship with the Jewish story.

And that story is meant to feel personal.

The Haggadah teaches that in every generation,

each person must see themselves as if they personally came out of Egypt. It is this instruction that transforms the Exodus from distant history into lived memory. The Seder asks us not only to remember our ancestors' journey, but to imagine our own place within it.

And that act of imaginative empathy is one of the most powerful tools for preserving Jewish identity and for building a bridge between the generations. A child sitting at a Seder table in Calgary or Edmonton today is participating in the same ritual that shaped their grandparents and great-grandparents. Through this simple act of telling our story together, Jewish continuity is re-newed and strengthened.

And, perhaps, that is the deeper wisdom expressed by the Seder. Identity is strengthened not only through belief, but through shared experience.

The Passover story reminds us that our people were not formed merely by ideas, but by a collective journey. And it is one that continues to shape our values today. The memory of slavery teaches empathy. The experience of liberation inspires gratitude. And the act of telling the story together reinforces the bonds of peoplehood.

In a world that often feels fragmented and fast-moving, the Seder invites us to slow down. It asks us to gather around the table, listen to one another's questions, and remember the story that binds us together as a people.

May our Seders this year be filled with thoughtful questions, lively discussion, and the joy of sharing our tradition with the next generation. And may our people, through story, symbol, and conversation make our ancient journey from slavery to freedom come alive once again.

Chag Pesach Sameach.

Rabbi Russell Jayne is Senior Rabbi and Cantor at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Calgary

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C Teens Shabbaton lasted a full week due to inclement weather – and what a wonderful week it was

By Regan Lipes

This year's C Teens Shabbaton in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, was one for the books! After all the wonderful Shabbaton memories were made, and Time Square had been filled with 4,500 singing, dancing, jumping, Jewish teenagers and their chaperones Motzei Shabbos, extreme weather conditions descended upon New York and surrounding areas. Instead of flying home on Sunday, as scheduled, cancelled flights and a local 24-hour State of Emergency order, meant that G-d had different plans for this year's cohort of attendees.

Rabbi Ari Drelich of Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton chaperoned four young boys for a weekend, that turned into a week. What needs to be celebrated is the amazing work that Chabad organizers undertook at a moment's notice to ensure that all the guests who had come for the Shabbaton were taken care of with full Chabad-hospitality until their rescheduled departures. This meant lodging and meals but also programming for the teens; it should also be noted that this was all provided as chesed. ("On the house")

Parents were grateful to their children's chaperones for looking after their teens for an extra three days but could not have imagined the level of enrichment that was provided during this additional time. The Edmonton teens got to go for Torah study with Yeshiva boys, participated in group activities with young Jews from around the world whose flights had also been cancelled, went swimming, had basketball tournaments, and attended concerts. With Purim coming so soon after the Shabbaton, girls got together to bake, and eat, Hamantaschen in preparation. There were so many teens and chaperones whose travel plans changed that entire halls were filled for events. Quite movingly, at one such gathering guest were joined by an inspiring speaker: a Chabad Rabbi/Chaplain who lost both his legs in Syria.

A big yashar koach to Amit and Benji, two Edmonton teens who were the first-place winners of the Chabad Snowman Competition! Since snow was the reason everyone's flights could not depart as scheduled, it seemed only fitting to use the ample mounds of fluffy powder to make snowmen. The teens needed to ensure that their creation would be C Teens-themed and reflect Yiddishkeit in some way. Amit and Benji, as true Canadians, sculpted a snowman nearly their own height – not their first rodeo. They bedecked him in a Rabbi's kippah and black hat holding C Teens swag-merch in one snowy arm, and Moshe's staff in the other – a snowman fit for Crown Heights! As the winners, they will receive free registration for next year's Shabbaton festivities.

It is a testament to the strength of Jewish unity to see the success of what organizers were able to achieve with so little time to prepare for an extra three days of massive hosting. Groups from around the globe found themselves staying longer than expected, and Chabad made certain to fill this time with meaningful moments, friendship, joyful learning, and food – the cornerstones of a Jewish experience.

Rabbi Drelich and the Edmonton boys returned tired, nearly a week after their departure, but spiritually recharged. Parents from Jewish communities near and far remain grateful to the C Teens Shabbaton organizers and chaperones for taking such amazing care of their kids, but this year's group can truly say that they had a once-in-a-lifetime Shabbos experience in Crown Heights. It has been said that when Jews find themselves in need of support abroad, in addition to reaching out to their nation's embassy or consulate, they should contact the local Chabad and the 5786 (2026) C Teens Shabbaton is testament to this.

Next year's C Teens Shabbaton will be held from February 25 to 28 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Boys and girls from grades 9 through 12 who are interested are invited to contact Rabbi Drelich at Chabad@shaw.ca, or 780.993.1818.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Rabbi Ari Drelich with part of the Edmonton CTeen delegation in New York.

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NCSY is thriving in Edmonton

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

“I grew up involved in everything,” said Daniella Asbell with a smile during an interview with the *Alberta Jewish News*. “I was in CKids, CTeens, NCSY, BBYO, and it was all part of expressing my pride in being Jewish.” The Edmonton-based university student grew up with Beth Israel Synagogue as a second home. “I got so much out of the Jewish youth programs I was part of,” she explained further. “Yes,” added Rachel Alayev. “And then COVID had a huge impact. It was like ‘What are we going to do?’ and then Daniella and I started talking to each other about it, and we knew we had to do something.”

Daniella and Rachel were not sure how it would happen, but only that it needed to materialize: the Orthodox Edmonton Jewish community needed to have organized identity affirming programs for young people. “We focused in on the teens pretty quickly,” elaborated Daniella. “The high school kids don’t have a Jewish school anymore, so they seemed like the ones who would benefit most.” At the time, Daniella’s father, Shane Asbell, was President at BI, and so the girls approached the Board of Directors with their idea to set up an organized Jewish youth group for teens.

“NCSY is a well-established organization,” commented Robin Marcus, who supervises youth programming at BI on behalf of the Board. “My kids – they’re grown-ups now with their own little ones – both did NCSY when they were teens,” she elaborated. “I was in NCSY when I was a teenager too!” With the support of Robin and the rest of the BI Board of Directors, Daniella and Rachel set to work establishing a new relationship with NCSY and figuring out the administrative side of setting up a chapter in Edmonton.

When they first spoke with the NCSY National Office, their Rabbi asked how many teens they estimated would come to an average event, recalled Rachel. “I think Daniella and I were both a bit nervous to answer because we might not always get a huge turnout. We said probably about ten, and maybe that was even hopeful, but he was so supportive and said that our community is exactly the kind of place NCSY wants to be. He said that even if one Jewish teen is being brought closer to Judaism and the teachings of Torah, then that’s already something significant.”

In January 2023, Daniella and Rachel hosted their first NCSY program, and the rest is history! “We come up with ideas and run them by the main NCSY administrators, and they help us develop them and support us in finding ways to increase engagement,”



NCSY is offering fun and engaging activities for Jewish youth in Edmonton.

offered Daniella. “We try things out, and we expand and build on the things that we see the teens excited about.”

In February, NCSY hosted their third local Shabbaton at BI. Nineteen teens between 12 and 18 spent a meaningful and uplifting shabbat together, making memories, learning Torah, and celebrating the joy of their shared Yiddishkeit. The seasoned NCSY teens were over the moon to have Rachel back in town for the event. Rachel, who currently lives in Calgary finishing up her work practicum as a pharmacist, remains heavily involved in all NCSY planning and coordination.

“I remember one Shabbaton two years ago in Keats Island, BC. The kids all had such an amazing time, and they were so sad when we were flying home. I kind of chuckled and reminded them that if they all come to shul each week to be together, every Shabbat could be a Shabbaton,” Daniella mused with a smile. “But it’s also the weeknight programs that help to build these friendships,” she added. “When Benny Bernstein was home for Sukkot, he came to help with our Soup and Sweets in the Sukkah event, and he had a great time. Then he said he wanted to do something more to contribute while he was around, and suggested Latte’N’ Learn evenings,” Daniella explained. “He hosted the first one, and it was a huge success! The teens loved having Benny!” Following this, other Latte and Learn speakers included Rabbi Guy Tal, Rabbi Dave Rotenberg from Ottawa, Philip Kirman the current President of BI, Yitzhak and Pessy Borenstein, Daniella Asbell, some teens themselves, among others. These events usually bring out between ten and twenty teens, but there are always the regulars. “This gives the teens a chance to learn about their own Jewish identities from people who are doing so much to shape and help our community thrive,” added Robin. “They gain pride in being Jewish, learn about core

values, and develop leadership skills.”

In Fall 2025, seven local Jewish teens traveled to Niagara Falls to represent Edmonton at the NCSY National Convention. “People there were so nice, and they seemed to really appreciate that we came from as far away as Edmonton to be there,” recalled Benji Lipes about the memorable experience. “We saw some of the same kids when we went to the Whistler Shabbaton in February, and it was really cool because two of the male counselors from that trip came here to Edmonton for our Shabbaton.” NCSY is hopeful to continue being able to bring in male counselors in mentorship roles for key events.

“NCSY is affiliated with the Orthodox Union,” explained Robin. “It’s rooted in Orthodoxy, but we welcome Jewish kids who go to other shuls too, and the unaffiliated. We want them to understand what it is to be in a shul and feel at home. This way, they’ll always feel that going to shul is a safe and welcoming thing. They might not become regular shul-goers till they have their own children, but they will definitely feel at home and know that there is a community there for them.” The change has been noticeable at BI. More teens come to Shabbat services, perhaps more for social reasons than spiritual ones, but it is a great start. Now, when Daniella, who coordinates children’s activities and davening on Shabbat every week, as well as programs for the High Holy Days, needs to be away on a Shabbat, teens from NCSY jump in to fill her shoes for the day caring for the tinier congregation members. “Thanks to Daniella and Rachel’s efforts, there is a sense of continuity and legacy. Our NCSY girls have great role models for Jewish leadership and want to help out when they can too.” This was also demonstrated at the 2025 Shabbos Project Challah Bake, when the NCSY girls volunteered to help coordinate behind the scenes and supported organizers with set-up and clean-up.

Another notable event of late, was the Krav Maga class held at BI in cooperation with Stand With Us. Teens were taught the basics of Israeli martial arts and had a lot of fun in the process. A group favorite is the regularly held Pizza’N’Gaga nights. “We had a cake decorating activity that was really fun,” recalled Rachel. “The teens were partnered up and one person was blindfolded while the other gave them decorating instructions.”

NCSY Edmonton is always looking to bring on new motivated and creatively inspired Jewish talent. If anyone is interested in assuming administrative, coordination, or implementation responsibilities, Daniella, Rachel, and Robin are always available to chat further. Community members who may not be affiliated with BI are reminded that NCSY is for all Jewish teens. “We operate through Orthodoxy,” Daniella explained. “Yes, our food will always be kosher, and for certain activities we cater to boys and girls separately. Like when we did a tour of the Mikvah with Nina Bernstein, that was a night only for the girls, obviously. We made it really fun, and did nails and decorated Shabbat candle holders,” added Rachel. “We are all about supporting Jewish youth to feel pride in their identities,” concluded Daniella.

Those interested in NCSY program opportunities for their kids should contact BI directly. Parents who would like to see even more excellent programming from the NCSY team can always donate online through the BI website. Those considering joining the team in a more official capacity are invited to contact Daniella, Rachel, or Robin directly. The Edmonton Jewish community is so grateful to the efforts of the local NCSY team for all they do to build stronger Jewish futures for our children.

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The story of Leonard Cohen's masterpiece, Hallelujah, now told in a children's book

By Irena Karshenbaum

Hallelujah! The Story of Leonard Cohen

By Alicia Jo Rabins

Illustrated by Gene Pendon

Apples & Honey Press

32 pages

Over a chance conversation last July about my upcoming trip to Montreal, I was advised that I "must" visit the city's Shaar Hashomayim synagogue for Shabbat services to hear the congregation's amazing cantor. Some days later, I found myself in that very synagogue on Shabbat, in an airy and bright chapel that seemed to sparkle in clouds of gold where I was told that their talented cantor was away, but this was the synagogue of Leonard Cohen.

The singer, songwriter, poet and novelist was not at Shabbat services that morning either, having passed away almost a decade earlier, but his spirit lingered not only over the country's oldest Ashkenazi synagogue, founded in 1846, but over the city as well.

I needed no further evidence of the profound mark Leonard Cohen left on Montreal when I was walking along Crescent Street where I looked up and was greeted by the mural of the artist presiding over the city like an emperor. With his hand resting on his heart and casting his serene Mona-Lisa-like smile, Leonard Cohen was gazing at me. It was the mastery of the mural, painted perfectly, like that other masterpiece in the Louvre, that had the effect as if Cohen himself was watching over all the pedestrians,

even me, hurrying along Montreal's busy streets.

The mural was a grand tribute to a man who did much to enrich Montreal's cultural landscape with such novels as, *Beautiful Losers*, and songs like, *Suzanne* and *Closing Time*. But it is Cohen's song, *Hallelujah*, which took him ten years to write, that today is considered iconic.

Hallelujah burns with passion from the heat of a consuming love between David and his beloved, and explores themes of desire, love, and religious faith. The repetition of the single ancient word, Hallelujah, that is used in both Jewish and Christian prayer, sung like a guttural cry to God has the power to crack open the heart of any listener with its metaphorical battle axe.

With these mature themes, the song is an unconventional work to inspire an illustrated children's book, especially one for readers so young. And yet, it is a work that first-time children's book author, Alicia Jo Rabins, weaves skillfully given her other calling, as a poet, which guides her poetic prose.

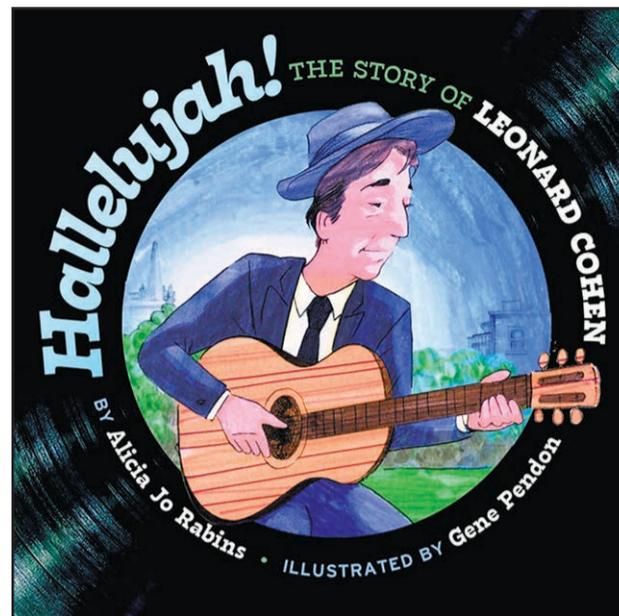
Hallelujah! The Story of Leonard Cohen, written for ages 5 to 8, tells the story of Cohen growing up in Montreal. The pages pull the reader through the boy's childhood that is a medley of music. He listens to his mother sing folk songs in Yiddish and Russian and his grandfather sing in the Byzantine-Revival-style sanctuary of their synagogue, the Shaar Hashomayim congregation. One day, the young Leonard meets a man who plays the Spanish guitar and asks the musician to teach him to play. Plucking the guitar strings, Rabins writes, "Sounded dark, like a rainy day with thunder... and sweet as a bowl of mint chip ice cream. A rainbow of music flow out of his guitar."

Leonard writes songs until he has enough to perform a concert. His performances grow in number and his music, "Opened people's hearts."

But there is one song, as the story continues, that is dwelling inside of the young man that only he feels he can write. Draft upon draft, years pass and finally the words pour out onto the page that feel right to the songwriter. Completing his masterpiece, Cohen's struggle does not end there, as his record company does not recognize the song's brilliance and refuses to produce it. The young musician has only one option. He can share this piece with his audiences, at his live concerts.

Hallelujah was eventually released in 1984 through Cohen's studio album, *Various Positions*, and was overlooked until a cover version was released by Jeff Buckley, in 1994. That cover then inspired hundreds of covers by various artists and in numerous languages including Hebrew, Japanese and Arabic.

Hallelujah! The Story of Leonard Cohen is a story of

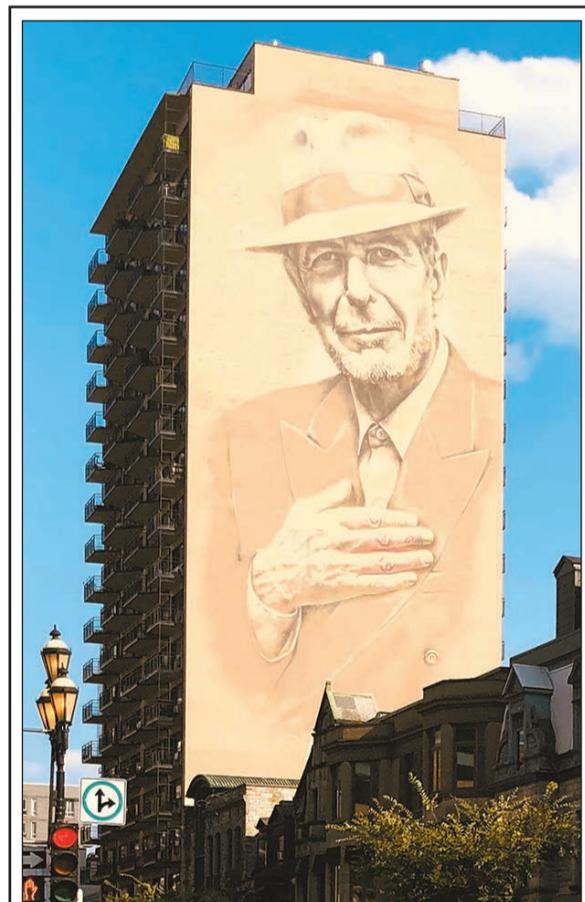


perseverance, professional as well as personal. The book presents many mature themes written in a language a child can understand and leaves the adult reader to ponder these same themes again for themselves through the raw power of the deceptively simple story.

The book was illustrated by Gene Pendon who, in 2013, proposed an idea to the City of Montreal to create a mural to honour Leonard Cohen's vast contributions to the city. Pendon's hope was to complete the project in time for Cohen's 80th birthday in 2014. The 21-storey mural, based on a photograph his daughter, Lorca, took of the artist in 2008 while he was on a tour in Europe, was painted by Pendon and fourteen other artists. It was unveiled in 2017, a year after Cohen's passing. The mural, looking over Crescent Street where Cohen is believed to have spent much of his time, has become a Montreal landmark, and appears, naturally, in *Hallelujah! The Story of Leonard Cohen*.

Published in 2025 by Apples & Honey Press, an imprint of Behrman House, which is a regular supplier of books to the PJ Library program that mails free Jewish-themed books to children, *Hallelujah! The Story of Leonard Cohen* is not available, yet, through the program. This writer sincerely hopes this moving book will soon arrive in mailboxes of PJ Library subscribers.

Irena Karshenbaum is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter. She writes in Calgary. irenakarshenbaum.com



The fabulous mural of Leonard Cohen in Montreal. Photo courtesy Irena Karshenbaum.

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Controversy surrounds Edmonton Police Chief Driechel's trip to Israel

By AJNews Staff

This is a developing story.

Controversy has mounted over Edmonton Police Chief Warren Driechel's attendance at a Major Cities Police Chiefs conference held in Israel in February 2026, as first reported by Lauren Boothby of CityNews Edmonton. Driechel's trip was approved by the Edmonton Police Commission, and it was paid for by the Major Cities Chiefs Association – not Edmonton taxpayers, or the Jewish Community. But many people – including Edmonton Mayor Andrew Knack – are publicly criticizing him for poor judgement in attending and the commission for approving it. The criticism has been loud and vocal and has reached an incendiary tone – alleging Islamophobia and Zionist partisanship. The criticism has prompted a wave of equally loud and vocal support for the Chief, accusing the naysayers of antisemitism and extremism. The Chief issued a nuanced statement explaining his position. Here is a sample of statements on all sides:

Mayor Andrew Knack:

"I am deeply disappointed and frustrated by the decision of the Edmonton Police Chief to travel to Israel and the Edmonton Police Commission Chair's approval of this trip.

"For many Edmontonians, the violence in the West Bank and Gaza is not distant. Families in our community are grieving and are worried about loved ones who are living among unimaginable hardships. Decisions like these cause real hurt, damage relationships with communities that already feel marginalized, and break trust.

"At a time of rising Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism, anti-semitism, and hate towards marginalized communities, the choice to make this trip is harmful and further alienates members of our community.

"I am also concerned about comments that characterize our community members as extremists. Language like this is divisive and shuts down

important conversation.

"My expectation is that all leaders in the City of Edmonton be aware of the impact of their actions and decisions on the people we serve. At a time when unity is so important, this decision has caused pain for many Edmontonians.

"I've asked the commission to review how the current policy on travel is decided, particularly given the active travel advisories and sanctions in place. In addition, I expect the Edmonton Police Chief and the Edmonton Police Commission to meaningfully connect with our community to repair where trust has been broken so that all Edmontonians feel safe."

Chief Warren Driechel:

"In mid-February, I joined police chiefs from Canada and the United States on a visit to Israel where we met police and community leaders in several cities. I spent time with police officers from Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze faiths representing a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I also met with Muslim community leaders who shared openly about their concerns and their reasons for working with police. These officers and community leaders operate in an environment that demands extraordinary vigilance – managing crime, counter terrorism, supporting community and crisis response all amid extreme complexity.

"Police to police we were able to talk about the toll this work takes on the people who do it. We talked about building trust in communities where there is little trust. We were able to get a glimpse of the undertaking required to police in complex environments. I am grateful for what I was able to learn and share with those we visited and among my North American peers. These missions offer a great deal of insight and valuable perspective. I am grateful for the continued leadership and support of the Edmonton Police Commission who have supported me in this.

"As police we focus on behaviour, not beliefs. Where



On March 19, Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright spoke to the Edmonton Police Commission in defence of Police Chief Warren Driechel.

I have felt challenged this week is in the implication that any community group should have the right to direct where we can learn.

"I stand by my decision to take the trip to Israel and continue to view it as valuable among multiple learning experiences I will have in this role. I remain focused on my long standing and ongoing commitment to dialogue, learning and connection across communities and across boundaries."

Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright issued a statement followed by an open letter to Mayor Knack, City Councillors and the Edmonton Police Commission. The letter is signed by Jewish Federation of Edmonton and a number of allied groups. She writes:

"We write to express support of Chief Warren Driechel in light of his participation in a trip to Israel organized by a chiefs of police association, and with concern for the public discourse that we have seen unfolding.

"The attempts to sow division among Edmontonians

Continued on page 27



Happy Passover to our friends in the Jewish Community on behalf of the Royal Iranian Canadian Civic Legion (RICCL)



We, the Iranian people, can't wait for the day that together we defeat the Islamist occupying regime in Iran, so we can host our Jewish friends in Free Iran and celebrate Passover 2027! More than ever, we are confident that Iran's Lion & Sun Revolution will soon be victorious, thanks to its leader H.I.H. Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, sacrifices of our courageous brothers and sisters in Iran as well as support of the amazing allies of Iranian people, our Jewish friends in Canada, as well as the State of Israel.

As Rumi says:
"If everything around you seems dark, look again, you may be the light."



A message from the Osten & Victor Alberta Tennis Centre

By Danny De Costa and Ron Ghitter

Osten and Victor Alberta Tennis Centre's founding donor and naming partner, Al Osten passed away at the age of 95 on January 23, 2026. In 2023, Al lost his partner Buddy Victor of 65 years who died just five days from his 93rd birthday.

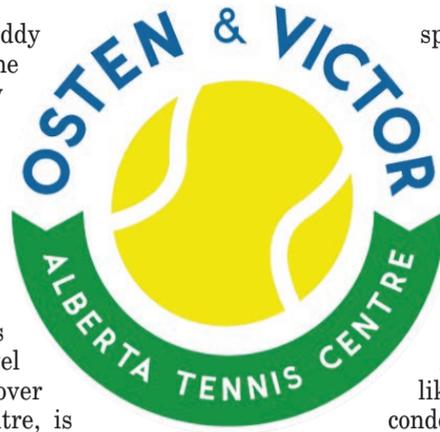
Approximately 13 years ago, over lunch with Al Osten, Ron Ghitter shared his dream of building a badly needed indoor tennis development in Calgary. At that time, the organizing group, spearheaded by Ghitter, had limited funds and were actively seeking financial support to commence construction. Ron mentioned that we were intending to name each of the 8 planned indoor courts and hopefully the building. A few days later, Al called and committed Buddy Victor and Al to a major donation to name the building. Despite having virtually no knowledge of tennis, Al and Buddy's generous donation, helped spearhead the development of the Osten & Victor Alberta Tennis Centre (ATC).

Once the Tennis Centre opened, Al and Buddy became great supporters of our Tennis Centre, visiting frequently, and taking great interest in our Tennis

Centre's development. Al and Buddy supported numerous activities at the Centre, including the Calgary National Bank Challenger, as well as supporting our Israel Tennis Centre tour which occurred in 2017. He also later sponsored the construction of another tennis centre in Israel.

Since opening its doors in 2016, the Osten & Victor Alberta Tennis Centre has become the crown jewel for Canadian Tennis, servicing over 350,000 players. Today, the Centre, is regarded as Canada's premier tennis facility, winning over 20 industry awards and becoming a beacon of inclusive and accessible tennis in Alberta. The ATC now employs 70 employees, many of whom come from around the world. The Centre also partners with numerous organizations to provide affordable access to tennis. It is also slated to begin expanding its facilities in the very near future.

"Al and Buddy were dear friends of my wife Myrna and me. Without their generous financial and



spirited support, the enormously successful Osten & Victor Alberta Tennis Centre likely, would never have come into being. We are immensely grateful for their friendship and support. Their legacy of generosity and philanthropy will be an inspiration," said Ron Ghitter, ATC Founder and Director.

On behalf of the Osten & Victor Alberta Tennis Centre, we would like to extend our sincerest condolences to Al Osten and his family, as well as the Jewish communities in Calgary and Edmonton. Al greatly contributed to the province of Alberta, and his legacy will carry on for many generations to come.

Danny De Costa is Chief Executive Officer and Ron Ghitter is a Founder of the Osten & Victor Alberta Tennis Centre.

Dr. Oren Cohen *Cont. from page 13*

study Yiddish and brings their unique perspective to class." One need not be of Jewish heritage to love Yiddish. In fact, the editor of the Russian Federation's only Yiddish newspaper *Birobidzhaner Shtern*, with a circulation of around five thousand copies per month, Yelena Sarashevskaya, is not Jewish.

A 2025 article in *The Conversation*, "What Yiddish Literature Reveals about Canada's Diverse Canon and Multilingual Identity" noted that Yiddish literature has become multinational and can no longer be regarded solely within the European context. In fact, the presence of Yiddish literature being composed from the diversified spaces of non-European countries means that the language and its stories have the potential to gain more visibility on the world literary stage. "Yiddish literature, even in translation, carries many relevant voices to readers," noted Dr. Cohen Roman.

The audience for the 2026 Tova Yedlin Lecture was an interesting turnout of mainly members of the Edmonton Jewish community, a few U of A professors, and a small handful of graduate students. Seeing so many community members present, on that blisteringly cold Thursday, was a powerful signal that Yiddishkeit thrives in the northern City of Champions.

Dr. Cohen Roman's lecture focussed on the lyrical musicality of Yiddish literature, and the distinction between private and public reading. For a population no longer used to reading aloud, this was an intriguing discussion to be certain.

Dr. Cohen Roman began by contextualizing vocalized reading for his listeners: "It's comparable to the engagement of an audiobook or going to a public event where an author reads a portion of their book, or even the joy of reading animatedly for children." He then proceeded to connect this to the oral traditions of storytelling and demonstrated how a hazzan would melodically recite a passage of *Devarim*. He explained that the melodies of Yiddish texts would be indicated, not with notes, but with reference made to established songs. This made for a lively, and highly engaging lecture, some portions sung, that exemplified the vibrance and robustness of traditional Jewish storytelling traditions.

Dr. Cohen Roman explained to *Alberta Jewish News*: "A popular misconception is that Yiddish is a 'funny' language. For sure, there is great humour written in Yiddish, witty proverbs, great jokes, and incredible funny stories (I must mention the great writer Sholem Aleichem here). But there is so much more, too: drama, lyrical poetry, memoirs, political thought, religious-mystical revelations – you name it! I always try to

showcase the wealth of Yiddish literature." He added thoughtfully and poignantly: "Yiddish is also a Jewish language, so you sometime encounter anti-Jewish prejudice, which is a good opportunity to 'grab the bull by its horns,' expose the prejudice for what it is and debunk it."

If the audience's enthusiasm for Dr. Cohen Roman's topic were not enough, the snaking line to speak with him after his lecture made being a Yiddishist seem more like being a music celebrity than bookish scholar. People had questions – and plenty of them. According to the *World Population Review*, the United States has 360,000 Yiddish speakers, Israel 188,000, Ukraine 169,000, and Canada 41,000. If Sweden, not even in the top five countries for Yiddish-speaking populations can nurture this flourishing discipline, then perhaps Canadian education has lost sight of the diversity true scholarship should strive for. There is enthusiasm for Yiddish in Edmonton, as was evident during Dr. Cohen Roman's lecture. Perhaps, in time, this enthusiasm will inspire something of a Yiddish Renaissance within the Jewish community and within local academia. Hopefully this will not be Dr. Oren Cohen Roman's last visit to Edmonton.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאֵה בְּיָרוּשָׁלַיִם

Wishing everyone in the community a happy and healthy Passover.
Thank you for welcoming Alberta Jewish News into your homes each month and for participating in these holiday greetings. We are proud to be part of the Calgary Jewish Community.

From Deborah Shatz, Daniel Moser, Sandra Fayerman, Ori Ovics and Sandra Edwards

The Canadian Afterlife of the Great Yiddish-Language Holocaust Novelist, Chava Rosenfarb, as told in Letters and Stories - with Goldie Morgentaler

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Lovers of great literature have a unique opportunity on April 14, Yom HaShoah, to hear one of the country's most important preservers of Yiddish literature, Dr. Goldie Morgentaler, Professor Emerita from the University of Lethbridge. She'll be speaking at an event titled: "The Canadian Afterlife of the Great Yiddish-Language Holocaust Novelist, Chava Rosenfarb, As Told in Letters and Stories."

The lecture is presented in partnership with the University of Calgary's Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, the University of Calgary Jewish Community and the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta and will be held at The Military Museums.

The event will be open to registrants from the local Jewish, and scholarly communities for a very special public engagement with Dr. Morgentaler – an acclaimed scholar, translator, and the daughter of Chava Rosenfarb.

Dr. Morgentaler built a robust career teaching the works of Charles Dickens, a very different research area than what she focuses on now. She is a noted translator of her mother's numerous works and is herself a native Yiddish speaker. "It can be funny sometimes because I don't even realize that I translate from Yiddish when I say things in English until my husband points it out," she explained to a class of undergraduate Comparative Literature students at MacEwan University. "My husband will mention something that we need to do, and I'll reply: 'But I don't have when' because I'm thinking with Yiddish instincts."

In a recent interview with the *Alberta Jewish News*, Dr. Morgentaler recalled her mother's sentiments. "She wanted her works to be read and appreciated by broad audiences. My mother once wrote that no author writes for the inside of their desk drawer, and she was pessimistic about the future of Yiddish." Dr. Morgentaler elaborated that her mother was not discouraged for lack of deep love for the Yiddish language, but because of the number of readers her writing could potentially reach. "When people tell me they want to learn Hebrew I say, great, go to Israel – learn Hebrew. But with Yiddish it's different. If someone tells me they want to learn Yiddish, I have to say, go to Harvard, go to Oxford, go to McGill, but I can't give them a destination to go live in – just institutions that teach the language still."

In 2024, Dr. Morgentaler was the recipient of a Canadian Jewish Literary Award in the category of translation for *In the Land of the Postscript: The Complete Short Stories of Chava Rosenfarb*. The appearance of Rosenfarb's short fiction in a single collected volume has made her post-immigration to Canada prose more accessible to a diverse readership. In a 2025 article by Dr. Regan Lipes, "What Yiddish Literature Reveals about Canada's Diverse Canon and

Multilingual Identity," published in *The Conversation*, it becomes clear that for her audiences, Rosenfarb is not only a Yiddish writer, but a Canadian one as well. 2023 was declared the 'Year of Chava Rosenfarb' by the City Council of Lodz, Poland, and a street named in her honour signifies her importance within the Polish literary consciousness. Canada played a significant role in the author's adult life, and as more North American audiences engage with her work, the impact of Yiddish on the world canon becomes more evident.

For undergraduate Comparative Literature students reading Rosenfarb's work, it is the consistency of the Canadian backdrop that initially stands out to them. "The stories in the collection are all rooted in Canada," Dr. Morgentaler emphasized to an audience of MacEwan University students. "These characters were representative of a generation of survivors who were doing everything they could to rebuild their lives."

One student asked if Rosenfarb's characters were based on real people, to which Dr. Morgentaler responded: "I think parts of these characters were based on people my mother knew, some to a greater extent than others. The struggles they face, and the challenges they encounter come from seeds of truth, and what my mother and others like her were experiencing in those days of building lives in Montreal."

In 2025 *Letters from the Afterlife: The Post-Holocaust Correspondence of Chava Rosenfarb and Zenia Larsson*, was published. The volume was lovingly edited by Dr. Morgentaler, and the Polish letters meticulously translated by Krzysztof Majer, while Sylvia Söderlind translated Zenia Larsson's Swedish text into English. Larsson, a childhood companion of Rosenfarb, survived the camps by her friend's side, and the two remained in contact exchanging letters between Canada and Sweden well into their seventies.

"Polish was their common language," Dr. Morgentaler explained during her interview with *AJNews*. "Zenia didn't speak Yiddish." The collection paints a touching portrait of two female writers whose bond preceded the Shoah but became impenetrable through their shared survival.

In a January 2025 review in *Hadassah Magazine*, Rochelle Saidel comments: "I found myself reflecting on the language challenges that accompany displacement. The friends wrote in Polish, the language of their childhood. Rosenfarb would have preferred Yiddish, but Larsson was not fluent; unlike Rosenfarb, she had not attended a Yiddish-speaking school in Poland. Over time, Larsson began losing her Polish as she grew more comfortable in Swedish, and Rosenfarb's command of Polish also weakened. This correspondence grew more difficult as the years progressed and their facility with a shared language eroded." Saidel also notes: "Their lives



mirror the broader experiences of many Holocaust survivors. They had to adjust to entirely new circumstances, foreign countries and unfamiliar cultures and customs. Both faced economic hardship in the years immediately after the war. Rosenfarb and her husband initially settled in Brussels before immigrating to Montreal, where her husband restarted his professional path by enrolling in medical school. Rosenfarb continued writing in Yiddish, even as she navigated the daily demands of life in English and French."

During her visit to Calgary, Dr. Morgentaler will have both these texts available for purchase. "My mother certainly has many other texts I could recommend. *The Tree of Life* is a three-volume novel after all, so I think I'll just bring the short stories and letters. It's quite appropriate too, because all these writings deal with life after the Holocaust," she added.

Irena Karshenbaum, a Calgary-based writer, cultural producer and historian, has been working to invite Dr. Morgentaler to come and speak for quite some time. Herself an occasional contributor to the *AJNews*, Karshenbaum noted: "This, of course, is about the works of Chava Rosenfarb, but Goldie is the main attraction. Her work as the translator of her mother's writing has been painstaking and masterful," she emphasized. "Listening to Goldie is like eating steak and potatoes; it satiates."

Karshenbaum is a board member with the Jewish Historical Society of Southern which is how she first met Dr. Morgentaler, while conducting an oral history interview with her. Since then, she has been working hard to try to share the works of Chava Rosenfarb, and the scholarly insights of Dr. Morgentaler with wider audiences. This upcoming event has been a longtime in the making, starting as a sapling in Karshenbaum's innovative mind, and now blossoming into a community-wide presentation.

Those planning to attend are kindly asked to pre-register for the event. This event that coincides with Yom HaShoah is made possible by the Centre for Military, Security, and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary, the University of Calgary Jewish Community, and the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta. The event is also being graciously supported by the KSW Calgary Holocaust Education and Commemoration Endowment Fund, a part of the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary.

The lecture is free of charge and includes a kosher reception. Books will be available for purchase.

To register online visit events.ucalgary.ca/arts/centres/military-security-strategic-studies/event/512183-the-canadian-afterlife-of-the-great.

Talmud Torah Purim activities bring everyone together



The Talmud Torah Purim Carnival and assembly is one of the highlights of the year for staff, students and TT families. There is something for everyone – a costume parade, a carnival, a school wide assembly, face painting and even a haunted house.

Controversy *Cont. from page 24*

come at a time of increasing polarization and an unprecedented escalation of antisemitism and hate-motivated incidents. We call upon our leaders to speak out and state that antisemitism and antizionism is incompatible with the city that is inclusive for all its citizens.

“The disproportionate outrage directed at the Chief’s trip due to the destination being Israel reflects a double standard attempting to delegitimize Israel and it demonizes a Canadian ally.

“If the Chief (or if any public official, for that matter) had travelled to any other country, it is unlikely that the same level of criticism or controversy regarding the trip would have emerged. Framing professional engagement in this way risks normalizing anti-Israel sentiment and, more broadly, contributes to an environment where antisemitism is normalized.

“Community reporting and monitoring efforts across Alberta continue to show that antisemitic incidents remain one of the most frequently reported forms of hate motivated incidents. Discussions surrounding the Chief’s trip to Israel will contribute to division if they are not addressed thoughtfully.

“We wish to recognize the professionalism and integrity of the Chief, who, like many public leaders, engages internationally to learn, exchange ideas, and strengthen institutions. He has been unfairly targeted in an ideologically motivated campaign by those who are seeking to divide Edmontonians and seeking a boycott, divestment, and sanction campaign, which former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rightfully claimed was antisemitic in 2019.

“Efforts to call upon Chief Driechel to provide acceptable answers for his trip to Israel or else resign are unacceptable and quite frankly hold the Chief to a standard that would not be placed on anyone if the destination of their travels was anywhere other than Israel. Rhetoric aimed at the Chief lead to increased security risks to the Jewish community in Edmonton and elsewhere.

“Edmonton’s strength comes from its diverse communities working together and when public discourse becomes polarized around identity or international politics, it can create ripple effects locally that undermine trust and safety for communities here at home.

“We call on the Mayor, members of City Council and the Edmonton Police Commission to unequivocally



Former Jewish Federation of Edmonton President Steven Shafir spoke to media.

stand with Chief Driechel at this time and stand against the mounting hate-campaign aimed at vilifying the Chief because he dared associate with Israelis.”

Great courses for Edmonton Lifelong Learners

Audra Jones could hardly wait to be old enough to go to school.

The school in this case was ELLA, the Edmonton Lifelong Learners Association, which offers a huge variety of courses both in-person and online for students over 50.

Jones first heard of ELLA from members of her book club.

“They kept talking about all of the exciting courses they were taking. I was quite jealous because I wasn’t yet of an age that I was eligible to take the courses, nor was I retired so I didn’t have the time to enjoy them.

“I was really looking forward to retirement and being old enough to go to ELLA.”

The civil engineer could finally attend the courses when she retired, taking classes from photography to meteorology, archaeology to forensic anthropology. Now 59, Jones is a four-year veteran of the program.

ELLA was created by a determined group of lifelong learners 25 years ago. Since then the association has presented in-person classes every spring at the University of Alberta and online courses in winter.

This year ELLA celebrates its quarter-century anniversary with a variety of events during the spring course session from April 27 to May 15.

Registrants can choose from more than 30 courses, which run from Monday to Friday during the day. One evening course will be offered on Understanding Wine.

ELLA participants learn from instructors who are nationally and internationally renowned in their field. There are no precursor requirements, no exams,

no homework.

But there is plenty of inspiration, mind-sharpening knowledge and the camaraderie of fellow lovers of learning.

There are a surprising number of current ELLA members who have attended courses since the beginning of the organization, or close to it, returning each year because there is always more to learn and friends to reconnect with.

Jan McGregor first came to ELLA in 2007. She jumped into courses in disciplines she knew little about. And she also quickly jumped into volunteering and ELLA board work.

McGregor says courses she has taken changed her world view and opened new doors. Her professional background was as a biologist, but there has been lots to explore beyond that discipline.

A course in Islam was eye-opening, she says. Classes in improv theatre and creative writing led her to gain confidence in public speaking and expressing herself.

And a course called Beyond the Barn Door, which explored the research happening at the U of A farm, led to a position as the public representative on the Animal Use and Care Committee. That committee reviews animal research at the university, ensuring the animal subjects are well treated and the research merits the involvement of live animals.

McGregor stresses it’s great to jump into courses with unfamiliar topics.

“They’re so well taught. The instructors are just



Audra Jones

amazing. They’re so willing to talk if you want to stay afterwards...They’ll explain things and give you extra resources.”

Information on joining ELLA and how to register for classes is available at my-ella.com.

The kids shine at Festival Hatzafon



One of the highlights of Festival Hatzafon is having the opportunity to watch the young dancers perform as part of a wonderful cultural celebration.





EXPAND YOUR WORLD

Mind-boggling non-credit classes for people 50+

Registration opens April 2, 2026.

In-person classes at U of A: April 27 - May 15, 2026

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HAPPY PASSOVER

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Dr. Michael and Sylvia Alpern

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Melany and Joel Allen & Family

 Wishing family and friends a happy healthy Pesach from Dr. Bernie Adler

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai. from Freda & Marvin Abugov, Cera & Andrew Dixon, Breckon, Ramona and Poppy

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Luba Allen

 Happy Passover from Marcia Bercov

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Lauren Baram and Lawrence Rodnunsky

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Robert, Krista, Alyia and Daniel

חג פסח טוב
from Sharon Bookhalter

חג פסח טוב
from Darlene and Gordon Bushewsky and Family

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Judi Card

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai. from Matt, Tami, Shira & Zev Cairns

 **Happy Pesach to the entire community from The Belostotsky Family**

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from the Cairns Family

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Colin, Jen, Asher, and Nooni Muscat

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Miriam, daughters Carolyn and Susan

חג פסח טוב
from Leeor, Ohad, Noa, Shai, Daniella

 Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Clyde and Karen

Best wishes for a healthy, happy Passover. Am Yisrael Chai, from **The Goldsand Family**

Happy Passover from Benji, Rachel, Matan and Aliza Eidelman

 Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Mel and Rob Fainsinger

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Kelli Gariepy

 Happy Pesach to the entire community from Brandy and Rob Graesser

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover

 Best wishes for a healthy, happy Passover. Am Yisrael Chai, from Nikki, Naomi, Stephanie, Jared & Michla

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Shulamit Gil and Keith Dannacker 

 from Kyle, Jess, Ollie, Jordan, Kalin, Benjamin, Jade, Michelle and Mark Huberman

 Happy Pesach to the entire community from Samuel Koplowicz

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Lesley Jacobson and Family

 Wishing you a meaningful Passover from Joan Juskiw and family

 Happy Passover from Mindy Jacobs & Eoin Kenny

Wishing everyone a Passover filled with love, joy, & thoughts of freedom from the Kezerle-Yager Family 

Wishing everyone a Passover filled with love, joy, & thoughts of freedom from **The Linetsky Family** 

Wishing everyone a happy Passover filled with love, joy and good health.



from Stephen Zepp, Karen Leibovici, Adam and Anika Zepp and family



Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Barbara Mandel



Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Robin and David Marcus and family

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Kim and Bert Malo



Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Sharon Marcus



חג פסח שמח from Kyle, Claire, Jacky, Rosy, & Franky

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Dan, Jen, Jackson & Josh

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Arlene, Micah, Nathan, Elysa, Avery and Finn Morin

Happy Passover from Carter, Ayla, Arielle, Oscar, Léah and Dylan Muscat

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Francie & Jon Nobleman

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Paul and Regina Polushin

The Edmonton Chapter of Na'amat Canada thanks the Edmonton Jewish Community and the Alberta Jewish News for participating in this Holiday Greeting Fundraiser. We wish everyone a safe and happy Passover celebration. Am Yisrael Chai.

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from The Lerner families



Wishing family & friends a joyful Passover from Regan & Dmitriy, Benji, Jacob and Tamara Lipes

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Yuliya, Alexey, Liza and Zach Massarsky

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Malkie, Gavi, Dani, Elie, & Nes

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Jack and Sandy Margolus



Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Gail and Kevin Milner



Happy Pesach to the entire community from Michele & Josh Miller



Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Sherry and Alfred Muscat

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Anat, Brian, Noah, Eva and Maya

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Marina & Gary Marcus and family

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai. from Beryl Nahornick and Bev Sonmor



ПОРЯДОК СЕЙДЕРА. Кַדְדֵשׁ КАДДЕШ. Пронизосят Киддуш над бокалом вина. Омывають руки, но не пронизосят при этом обычного при омовении рук благословения. כַּרְפָּס КАРПАС. Обмакивают «карпас» в соленую воду, пронизосят благословение над овощами и кушают. יַיֵּחַץ יАХАЦ. Среднюю мацу, из трех находящихся на «кваре», делят на две части; большую часть прячут для «Афикоман». מַגִּיד МАГГИД. Начинается чтение Агады. До того, как младший в семье задает вопросы «Ма ништа-на» наполняют второй бокал. רַחֲצָה רАХЦА. Омывають руки для еды, но на этот раз с обычным благословением. מוֹצִיא מוציא, מַצָּה МАЦА. Пронизосят благословения «Хавоци» и «Ал ахилас мяцо», и кушают кусок мацы, величиной с «казант». מַרֹּר МАРОР. Пронизосят благословение «Ал ахилас морор» и съедают горькую зелень, величиной с «казант», предварительно обмакнув в «хавросет». כּוֹרֵךְ КОРЕХ. Делают своеобразный сэндвич из двух кусков мацы, прокладывая между ними «хавросет». שְׁלַחַן עוֹרֵךְ ШУЛХАН ОРЕХ. Праздничная трапеза. בְּרַךְ БЕРАХ. Наполняют третий бокал вина и пронизосят застольную молитву. צַפּוּן ЦАФУН. Съедают «Афикоман», величиной с «казант». חַלְלֵל ХАЛЛЕЛ. Наполняют четвертый бокал вина и пронизосят специальную хвалебную молитву «Халлел». נִרְצָה НИРЦА. После окончания правильно проведенного Сейдера можно быть уверенным, что он был любим Всевышним.

HAPPY PASSOVER

 **Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Carol and Ron Ritch**

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Aubrey and Draytin Rogerville 

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Jasen & Anna Reboh and the kids with lots of love for our beautiful community!

חג פסח טוב
from Mona and Dan Rosenberg

Best wishes for a healthy, happy Passover. Am Yisrael Chai. Joel and Christina Reboh & Family 

 *Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Josh, Sarah, Jonah, and Samuel*

 *Wishing everyone a Passover filled with love, joy & thoughts of freedom from Howard & Esther Starkman and family*

חג פסח שמח
from Howie & Debbie Sniderman

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Errol and Renee Raff and Family

 Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Hersh & Jane Sobel

חג פסח טוב
from The Soifer Family עם ישראל חי

 **Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Reisa and Murray Sheckter**

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Beverly and Stephen Shafran

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from the Schayer Family

 *Best wishes for a healthy, happy Passover. Am Yisrael Chai.*
Riva and Howard Shein and family

 Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Esther Sklofsky and Family

חג פסח טוב
from Jonathan Tankel

 Happy Passover from Keith and Lauren

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Sue Winestock 

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Allan and Dalia Wolinsky 

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Allan, Syma and Steven Uram 

Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Rick, Nikki, Zach, Amanda, Jordan, Kayla & Isaac

חג פסח שמח
Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover from Connie and Danny Zalmanowitz 

 Happy Pesach to the entire community from Eva and Sam Weisz

Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai, from Shelley Weinstein and Bruce Bradley 

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Stacey, Erin, Jordyn, Abby & Zoe Wright 

 Chag Sameach. Am Yisrael Chai. Hal Zalmanowitz

חג פסח שמח
from Forrest, Anna, Adina, and Naomi 

Happy Pesach to the entire community from Jodi and Michael Zabłudowski 

from the **Sources**
by Eliezer Segal

Dippings and Delicacies

Toward the beginning of the traditional Passover seder, it is customary to partake of a green vegetable dipped in salt water.

As is the usual case when we enjoy food, this act is introduced by a blessing expressing our appreciation to the “creator of the produce of the earth.” In the standard listing of the parts of the seder, this segment is referred to as “*Karpas*.” The word, likely of Persian origin, is variously identified as parsley, celery or other green vegetables.

A twelfth-century Haggadah from the Cairo Genizah, the oldest such surviving text, does not contain instructions for the seder, although it is generally not difficult to reconstruct the actions that are supposed to accompany the words of the liturgy. Here, however, the matter is not so simple. Following the Kiddush, it inserts the blessing for ritual washing of the hands. This conflicts with our prevalent practice of washing *without* a blessing.

After the handwashing, the manuscript inserts a number of blessings specifically related to eating the Karpas, such as the expected “Blessed are you...who creates the produce of the earth.”

But there is more – The Genizah Haggadah also includes the blessing over fruits: “...who creates the fruit of the tree.” This implies that the Jews who followed this rite were eating foods other than green vegetables.

The manuscript then inserts several additional blessings, including more poetic texts, such as: “...who has created mountains and valleys and planted in them trees and all manner of fruit. Blessed are you, Lord, for the land and for the fruit of the tree,” and “who created various kinds of delicacies with which to enhance many living persons.” It is probable that these blessings were meant to be recited after eating the Karpas, though the dominant procedure now is not to recite a closing blessing – and in any case, the accepted text for such a blessing is very different from the ones in the manuscript.

Some scholars deduce from this that there were four separate dippings: for vegetables, fruit, a flavoured

rice dish, and for meat or eggs.

My own understanding is that it was not necessary to consume all those dishes, but merely that vegetables, fruits and other types of “delicacies” were each acceptable options. The important thing was that the participants should dip something before convening the main meal. This is consistent with the central motif of the seder as outlined in the Mishnah and other ancient rabbinic sources, that it is to be modelled after an aristocratic banquet (the prototype of freedom) at which the guests were offered hors d'oeuvres to dunk prior to reclining at their tables for the serious dining. Although it was common at such feasts to distribute lettuce, parsley and other greens, any suitable appetizer would suffice to express the idea of freedom.

We are all familiar with the clause in the “four questions” that points out how “on all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night we dip twice.” This is not quite how the line appears in the Mishnah. In the original version, the contrast is between a single dip on regular nights and a double-dip on Passover. This attests to the fact that in ancient society it was customary to nibble on at least one dipped hors d'oeuvre at any respectable dinner, not just at religious ceremonies. Our amended version about “not even once” was introduced at a later age after such dipping had gone out of fashion.

In the Mishnah it states cryptically that following the Kiddush “one dips with *hazeret* until one gets to the appetizer that accompanies the bread.” It is clear that “*hazeret*” there refers to lettuce, which was a favourite choice of appetizer in the ancient Mediterranean. The Roman author Martial, a contemporary of the Jewish sages whose views were embedded in the Mishnah, wondered why the fashion had changed in recent years: “Tell me why lettuce, which used to be the last item of our ancestors’ meals, now opens our feasts?!”

A complication arose in the Passover context because lettuce was also the vegetable that the rabbis identified as maror, the “bitter herb” that the Torah

requires in commemoration of the bitterness of slavery. When Passover was celebrated in the Temple, the recitation of the Haggadah was probably conducted following the sacrificial meal. After the Temple’s destruction, however, the order was reversed and the festive meal – minus the lamb – was moved to the slot that it occupies in the current traditional practice, after the recitation of the Haggadah. This created a considerable delay before anyone could eat. The sources attest that other foods, such as garden beets or meat, were eaten as the pre-seder snack.

Some scholars have suggested that the combined factors of pre-dinner hunger, the presence of lettuce at the table for maror, and the widespread custom of dipping lettuce appetizers at formal banquets brought about the custom of nibbling some of the lettuce at the beginning of the seder. This led to considerable confusion about why we eat lettuce twice at the same meal (as asked in the Four Questions), which of those occasions was the primary one for fulfilling the precept of maror, and what blessings should accompany them. If the first dipping fulfilled the obligation of maror, why did it have to be eaten again during the meal? It is probable that these difficulties led to the implementation of the current practice (ascribed to a rabbi in the late talmudic era) of using non-lettuce Karpas for the first dip.

The Talmud explained that *hasa*, usually identified as romaine lettuce, was chosen as the preferred vegetable for maror because “it is tender at first and hardens in the end. So too, it was with the Egyptian exile, which initially [e.g., in the time of Joseph] was gentle but ultimately became harsh.”

Therein lies a cautionary lesson that can be taken to heart by Jewish communities who have felt secure in the comfort of their diasporas.

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

Chabad Purim party was a sparkling good time

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton attracts guests from near and far for their Purim festivities each year, and 5786 (2026) was no exception. Rabbi Ari Drelich emceed an energetic and entertaining Purim programme that will stick out in the memory of the Edmonton Jewish community.

The event showcased the beautiful talent of Cantor Yaacov Friedman who filled the Fantasyland Hotel’s main ballroom with his enchanting voice and uplifting Jewish melodies. This invigorated the evening as revelers ate, drank, and were merry. The costumes were a kaleidoscope of fluorescent and neon colors accented with sparkles and glitter. Adults also brought the costume ‘A-game’, but unsurprisingly, the little ones were the stars!

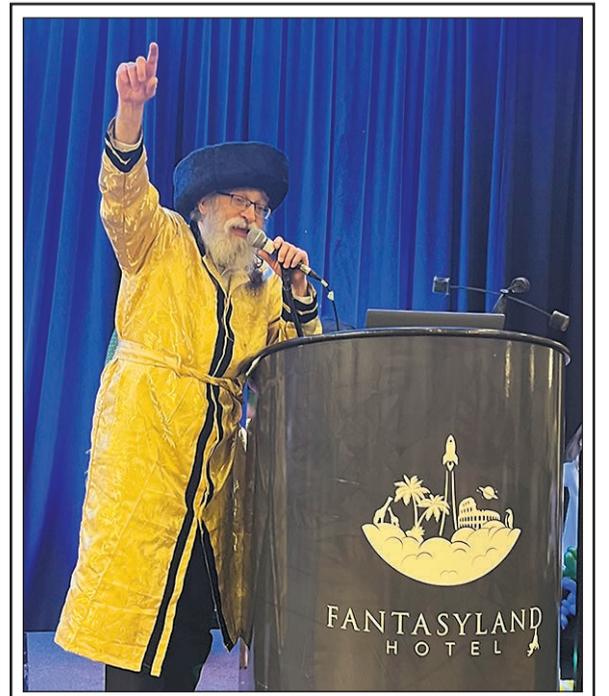
With glowing wands and flashing batons the Ben and Sandra juggling duo regaled little ones who

could hardly remain seated bouncing with excitement. The dance floor transformed into a tiny mosh-pit of jumping dancing children spinning in circles, and a wonderful time was had by all. This year, especially with the talents of Cantor Friedman, the entertainment was top-notch!

Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton would like to thank the Ghermezian family, the Cheivekman family, the Flaig family, the Kliazov family, the Uritsky family, and the Sandler family. They also extend their gratitude to Shmulik Shifrin, and of course, YES Kosher Friendship!



Rabbi Ari tells the kids the story of Purim.



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Pesach: Making Space for What Matters

As spring arrives, many homes enter a season of clearing and preparation. Beneath the surface, this is more than cleaning, it is about making space. "סור מרע ועשה טוב, בקש שלום ורדפהו."

"Turn away from what is not good, do good; seek peace and pursue it." (Tehillim) Letting go creates room, for clarity, for kindness, and for peace.

In Tanya, it is taught that the purpose of creation is for this world to become a dwelling place in the lower realms, a place where the Divine is revealed within everyday life (Likutei Amarim, chapter on dirah betachtonim).

Preparing for Pesach reflects this deeply. Removing chametz is not only about physical space, it is about refining what is within us, making room for something higher to be revealed.

Jewish wisdom describes this inner process through the Ten Sefirot, a flow from awareness into action. Thought, feeling, and action align, shaping how we live and how we relate to others. Around the table, something powerful happens. As it is written: "הנה מה טוב ומה נעים, לשבת" הנה מה טוב ומה נעים, לשבת "אחים גם יחד" "How good and pleasant it is when people dwell together in unity." (Tehillim)

A home becomes more than a place, it becomes a space where presence can be felt. Its meaning is not found in perfection, but in connection. This is the essence of peace: "ה' יברך את עמו בשלום" "May there be blessing with peace." (Tehillim)

Peace is wholeness, when what we understand, feel, and do come into alignment. It is lived through simple acts: "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" "As explained in Tanya, true love of others flows from recognizing a shared inner essence (Likutei Amarim, chapter on ahavat Yisrael).

Pesach invites us to transform our homes—and ourselves—into places where something greater can dwell. As it is written: "ועשו לי מקדש, ושכנתי" "Not in a distant place, but within Ourselves, our homes. Within each other. Wishing everyone a wonderful Kosher I'Pesach.

Interested in learning more email YesKosherFriendship@gmail.com





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