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SHALOM MAGAZINE

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NOTE TO OUR READERS

Our Atlantic Jewish community is losing more and more members as the years go on. In the past, Shalom has printed stories of regional community members who have passed away. While we try to acknowledge the major contributions of many of our late friends and family members, we request that you inform Shalom of passings of which we may be unaware so we may recognize these individuals. Shalom's editorial staff reserves the right to determine the length of memorial pieces to be printed in the magazine.

Written articles are the opinion of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the AJC.

Shalom

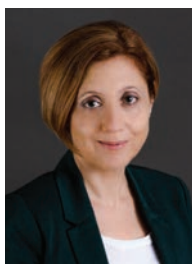
ON THE COVER



Cover and Page 23
Photos: Irena Kazatsker.

Irena Kazatsker was born in Ukraine, and moved in her teens to Israel, where she lived for many years and raised her family. In 2012 Irena and her family moved to Nova Scotia.

Irena describes her passion for photography, "I have seen many different landscapes, met all kinds of people, and had to learn new languages, but I never paid attention to all the unique details of the world until I picked up my first DSLR."



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COVER CAPTIONS: (Row 1) The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia; (Row 2) Israel President Isaac Herzog (pre-recorded); Yaron Deckel, Jewish Agency For Israel (Row 3) NS Premier Tim Houston (Row 4) Ron Omessi, MC; Howard Conter (Row 5) Arik Drucker, AJC President

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From The Desk Of

ARIK DRUCKER

President of the Atlantic Jewish Council

Dear members and friends,

I am writing this the day after attending our immensely successful celebration of Yom Haatzmaut, Israel's 75th Independence, in Pier 21 in Halifax. We have had several truly wonderful celebrations of the rebirth of Israel throughout our region. These events require an enormous amount of volunteer work, coordination, and support from our community, and I would like to again thank so many of you who have rolled up your sleeves and contributed. Although these large-scale events can be challenging to run and execute, seeing all the *b'yahad* that these celebrations bring, makes the effort worthwhile. As a community, we have received many beautiful compliments, some

from the highest levels of government in Nova Scotia, and we should all be proud.

Israel truly is an amazing success story, despite all the issues related to its politics. It has remained a vibrant democracy—despite many wars, despite accepting over 2 million refugees who immigrated from autocratic societies, and despite living in a very volatile region. Its Jewish population has increased over ten-fold, its economy more so, and it remains one of the happiest countries by several indices.

As I near the end of my term as AJC President, I would like to thank many of our members, friends and especially my family. You have all helped during some challenging times over the past two years,

sometimes in ways beyond description. We had operated for almost one year without an Executive Director, and have thankfully managed to find and hire Yoram Abisror, who has stepped up, and is doing a fantastic job after this hiatus. Our fundraising campaign was more successful than the year prior, and Camp Kadimah is slowly but surely regaining momentum after COVID—another major work and volunteer effort. Our community programs remain vibrant and well attended, including the various recent Purim events.

On behalf of the AJC, we thank you all, who help, volunteer and contribute for the Jewish community of Atlantic Canada. 🙏

The Abraham Leventhal Memorial Scholarships

The Atlantic Jewish Council invites applications from residents of Atlantic Canada for Abraham Leventhal Memorial Scholarships towards tuition fees for future post-secondary studies in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

The award will normally be to a maximum of \$5,000 for each application. The biannual application deadlines are May 31 (for studies beginning the following September, or later) and September 30th (for studies beginning the following January, or later).

Applicants can apply once in any 12-month period. Abraham Leventhal Memorial Scholarships may be used towards either part-time or full-time studies.

In order to receive this scholarship, all successful applicants must agree to volunteer a minimum of 18 hours to a/several qualifying Jewish organization(s) in Atlantic Canada in the 12 months following receipt of this scholarship. Up to eight of these hours may be spent attending Hillel Atlantic Canada events for post-secondary students.

Successful applicants will be provided more details about this volunteering commitment.

Applications available at: theajc.ca/scholarships

The Atlantic Jewish Foundation Scholarships

All applications must be received by March 31, 2024

Scholarships will be awarded on financial need, merit, and on the availability of funds. Submitting a scholarship application does not confirm automatic receipt of a scholarship. Priority will be given to first-time applicants. Scholarships are only available to residents of Atlantic Canada.

Applications available at: theajc.ns.ca/scholarships

The Noa & Sarah Heinish Scholarship

Throughout their lives, Noa and Sarah Heinish devoted themselves to the betterment of their community, their house of worship and the state of Israel. Passover of 1943 found Noa and Sarah assisting in the preparation of a Seder for hundreds of young Jewish servicemen stationed in Halifax before shipping out to Europe.

At the end of WWII, Noa was one of a group of interpreters who met the ships which brought Holocaust survivors from Europe to the shores of Halifax. Speaking in Yiddish, he helped them transfer to the trains which took them to family members waiting their arrival in upper Canada. Noa Heinish was one of the founders of Shaar Shalom Congregation and served as its first president. Together with Sarah they lent their support to every arm of the congregation.

Sarah Heinish was an active member of Women's League, Hadassah, Neptune Theatre, the Soroptomists and the Nova Scotia Institute for the Blind. Both Noa and Sarah gave generously of their time and resources in the support of Israel Bond drives, United Jewish Appeal, Camp Kadimah and other groups and were leaders in the Canadian Jewish Congress. For many years they operated a successful clothing business on Gottingen Street in downtown Halifax which closed in 1972.

To carry on their good works, the Heinish family established the Noa and Sarah Heinish Foundation.

This charitable foundation has provided endowments supporting Jewish educational and health care institutions in Canada and Israel. A portion of the funds has been allocated to the Atlantic Jewish Foundation to provide an annual merit scholarship for a student from the Maritime Jewish Community to study in Israel.

Noa and Sarah Heinish Foundation Trust—\$1,000-\$2,000 each. One scholarship per year for study in Israel.

The Miasnik-Rein Trust

A limited number of scholarships of \$2,000 each are available to worthy students, one or both of whose parents profess the Jewish faith. The scholarship is open to students of the Atlantic Region for the purpose of establishing or continuing exposure to their Jewish heritage by means of an organized Jewish experiential education program that includes study, travel, community service, or other suitable activities. Examples of appropriate programs include Holocaust Education tours, organized Israel trips, Jewish teen tours, Jewish summer programs etc. If you are unsure about the eligibility of a program, please contact executivedirector@theajc.ca for more information.

Miasnik-Rein Trust—\$2,000 each. Maximum 5 scholarships per year.

Halifax Endowment Fund (Jayson Greenblatt Bursary)

A \$500 bursary awarded to a Jewish student from Atlantic Canada to further Jewish studies in Israel or in the Diaspora.

Jayson Greenblatt Bursary—\$500 each.



From The Desk Of **YORAM ABISROR**

Executive Director of the Atlantic Jewish Council

The Atlantic Jewish Council has been the cornerstone of Jewish life in Atlantic Canada, acting as the chief Jewish community representative and program provider since 1975. Bringing people together through education is vital. We must strive to collectively foster an environment of learning and support our community, in every way, at every turn.

Over the past few months, I regularly emphasized the value of community involvement. You have all welcomed me with open arms, and I am eternally grateful for that. I promised to devote myself to the ongoing growth of our Atlantic communities, and with your help, we will do that.

As we gathered to celebrate Passover, the stories we read from the Hagada reminded us of a time when our people lacked rights and freedoms. Even in recent times, long after these biblical stories, the ill-treatment of the Jewish people is unfortunately omnipresent. We must be grateful for the many freedoms we cherish, yet we must also hold them close. While we all have our differences, we must always come together and commemorate our history, appreciate our modern liberties, and strive to maintain a path of progress.

Israel has been undergoing many challenges since the new government was formed. Young Jewish adults in the diaspora are experiencing conversations about Israel in their universities, on social media, in the news, and in their networks. Antisemitic and anti-Israel sentiments and rhetoric are ever-present and can naturally be upsetting and challenging to navigate.

Israel is an economic and democratic oasis in the Middle East. Certain critics in the developed world are not too keen on Israel's success. They seek to change the narrative by shifting the perception of Israel from being a democratic state to its un-democratic counterpart.

Over the past several years, political sentiments, among many factors, have unfortunately led to increased hostility towards

Jewish communities and their members. Only together can our communities and institutions combat such unwarranted ill-treatment.

This year, shortly after Passover, we commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, alongside several Jewish communities in Atlantic Canada. I was honoured to participate in some of these events and discuss them with many of you. This chance to connect was only possible with the outstanding work of our outreach community department.

This year Jews worldwide also celebrated the 75th anniversary of the State of Israel.

In 1897 the First Zionist Congress was inaugurated in Basel, Switzerland. Theodor Herzl, a Jewish Austro-Hungarian journalist, writer, and Zionist leader, proclaimed, "If you will find it, it is no dream."

The modern Zionist movement created the infrastructure and provided the global enthusiasm that made the Jewish State's re-establishment possible. This year, Jews in Israel and the Diaspora celebrated realizing this dream. We all reflected on our people's strengths and resilience and remembered those who sacrificed and gave their lives to enable the formation of our people's nation. May we all maintain strong ties to Israel and foster the positive and healthy relationship integral to our Jewish heritage.

I want to thank our dignitaries, guests, and the local Jewish community

for joining us for the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations, where we all had the exceptional opportunity of immortalizing this once-in-a-lifetime event. Again, these festivities were only made possible by the immeasurable dedication of our community volunteers.

We still have a lot of work ahead of us! The 2023 Atlantic Jewish Community campaign is in the works, and I hope to see many of you join us again. The AJC will always strive to support our communities, but we must recognize and appreciate that your help makes all our efforts possible. I will always welcome your ideas and feedback. Help me help you! 💡



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From The Desk Of **EDNA LEVINE**

Director of Community Engagement

2023 continues our upward trend of increased in-person engagement, and in January we hosted two programs for Holocaust education to almost capacity audiences.

On January 17 we presented a program in honour of Raoul Wallenberg Day, in partnership with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. The film *Passage to Sweden* tells the lesser-known story of events occurring in Scandinavia and Budapest during WWII. It focuses on the heroic actions of ordinary people and diplomats, including Raoul Wallenberg, who saved the lives of thousands of Jews and fellow countrymen. Via Zoom, the film director Suzannah Warlick, California, introduced the film in conversation with narrator Chana Sharfstein, Israel. Sharfstein was raised in Stockholm, Sweden, and her family was instrumental in helping concentration camp refugees when they came to Sweden for rehabilitation. Chana shared her memories and recounted how as a young girl she rode her bicycle to visit, with her older brother, the Jewish women refugees, and their absolute amazement to discover that Jewish children had survived the war. Warlick provided insights into the making of the film highlighting the film's theme of solidarity, courage, and humanity.

Our January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, our program, in partnership with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, featured an afternoon screening of the film *Lost Transport* (Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, 2022). Inspired by true events—in April 1945 a train of 2,500 Jewish prisoners from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp stopped in a field near a German village and the German soldiers fled from advancing Russian troops, abandoning those onboard. The village quickly became a refugee camp. *Lost Transport* is the heartfelt tale of the courage, friendship, and cooperation needed to survive the last days of WWII.

This winter Schuyler Smith, CCDI Manager of Partner Relations, Atlantic

Canada, hosted the webinar Antisemitism: How to recognize and prevent it in the workplace. Schuyler brought together experts Jody Spiegel, Director, Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program, The Azrieli Foundation, and Ziv Finkelstein, Manager, EDI Training and Liaison to LGBTQ2+ Partnerships, CIJA, for a discussion on what organizations can do to define and combat antisemitism in the workplace and beyond. A few examples of antisemitism in the workplace include ignoring/dismissing antisemitism when it happens, refusing to grant religious accommodations, and making anti-Jewish remarks. Questions, please contact Schuyler at: sky.ca@live.ca

Avi Abraham Benlolo, Founding Chairman and CEO, The Abraham Global Peace Initiative released their feature documentary, *The Future of Israel and its Defenders*, in celebration of Israel's 75th year. In early spring we hosted a special program with a panel discussion and reception, to follow the screening of this thought-provoking documentary about the incredible strength and resilience of the Jewish people. Guest panelists included Mark David, Arik Drucker, and Rabbi Yakov Kerzner.

Holocaust survivor Israel Unger traveled to Halifax to present his story of survival in a special Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, program. Unger, in conversation with Olga Milosevich, retired CBC radio broadcaster, described the hardships his family experienced during the war when hiding for two years in a cramped attic space above a workshop on the grounds of a flour mill. As well, Unger related his family's struggles after the war as they searched for a country to settle in. The program included a candle-lighting ceremony, reception, and book signing of Unger's memoirs, *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger*.

Programs are being finalized for our 20th annual Holocaust Education Week in Halifax, November 1 – 7, with both in-person and virtual events. Our student program, for junior high and high schools,



Israel Unger
signing my copy
of his memoirs.

will be livestreamed in Atlantic Canada on November 2, at 10:00 a.m. AT, advanced registration required: EdnaLeVine@theajc.ca

This fall our 10th Atlantic Jewish Film Festival (AJFF) celebrates a milestone year including a special opening night screening at Cineplex Cinemas, Park Lane, Halifax, with a reception to follow at the adjacent Lord Nelson Hotel. We hope you will attend and join the celebration, as our festival continues to expand and evolve.

The AJFF remains dedicated to the Jewish community and beyond, to inspire social and cultural understanding. Our AJFF committee has been busy organizing to ensure an outstanding festival of international award-winning films for four days, November 16 – 19. Working diligently behind the scenes with returning festival chair Lynn Rotin, and the organizing committee, Anna Hazankin, Jon Goldberg, Linda Law, Jordan Schelew, Flint Schwartz, Schuyler Smith, Ann Thaw, Howard Thaw, Kristina Wakfer, and Peggy Walt, to bring you a hybrid festival with an engaging line-up of films, relevant programming, presenting in-person screenings in Halifax, and virtual screenings to all in Atlantic Canada.

Please refer to our website www.AJFF.ca for information on how you can support and enrich the Atlantic Canadian arts community and help audiences discover the stories and histories that connect us all.

Do you have a favourite food or family recipe that conjures up a memory—what does Jewish food mean to you? We invite you to share with us your recipes, stories, and photos in our new project “Breaking Bread, B'tayavon!”. Please contact me with any questions: engagement@theajc.ca 📧



REPORT FROM THE CENTRE OF ISRAEL AND JEWISH AFFAIRS

BY JOANNA MIRSKY WEXLER, CIJA NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS, REPRESENTATIVE FOR ATLANTIC CANADA

CIJA LEADERSHIP MISSION, FEBRUARY 2023

A LEARNING MISSION IN TWO PARTS: THE ABRAHAMIC ACCORDS AND A STUDY OF JUDICIAL REFORM

In 2020, the Abrahamic Accords were signed—a historic agreement between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, later joined by Morocco and Sudan. It is the first instance of normalization of ties between the Arab world and Israel since the 1994 Treaty with Jordan. Since its signing, Israelis have flocked to UAE as visitors, and trade between the nations has soared. We visited Dubai and Abu Dhabi to learn more about the country, the relationship between UAE and Israel, and about the views of Emiratis about Israel and Jews around the world. Simply put, the Abrahamic Accords are a game changer in the region. It is an initiative to model tolerance and co-existence between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East. During our three short days there we met with **Canadian and Israeli Ambassadors to the UAE**, as well as a number of representatives from think tanks, NGOs, social media influencers and government officials. While we visited some of the amazing sights of UAE, the trip's focus was to show the impacts of the Accords on the region, and to be able to build connections and partnerships between communities.

Founder and Director of the **Crossroads of Civilizations Museum**, Ahmed Obaid Al Mansoori is a passionate collector of ancient things, especially those of historic and religious value. He has many precious things in his collection, but a special room is reserved for Holocaust education and remembrance. The notion of bringing about tolerance and understanding through education resonated with us as Canadian Jews. If we really are to build these relationships, it will come from a mutual understanding of who we both are, our histories and our successes. Flipping through the guestbook and seeing the number of


visitors and where they came from, it was inspiring to recognize their leadership in promoting increasing ties between Jews and Muslims in the region.

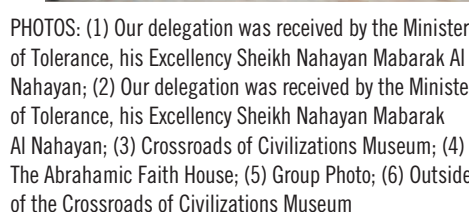
FOCUS ON JUDICIAL REFORM, ISRAELI POLICIES, AND SHARING CANADIAN JEWISH PERSPECTIVES:

We had the opportunity to meet with local journalists, Ambassadors from Morocco, Bahrain, and Canada, as well as UN representatives and Arab Israeli representatives, discussing a range of issues concerning Israel today.

Given the ongoing public demonstrations and debates on judicial reform in Israel, the CIJA Leadership mission's secondary focus was specific to the key elements of the discussion. We met with MKs from the opposition (Yesh Atid, National Unity Party and Ra'am Islamic Party) as well as Coalition MKs from Likud and Religious Zionism party. We were able to hear from the Chairman of the Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, the Minister of Diaspora and the founder of the Koppel Policy Forum, (the Think Tank driving the latest attempt at judicial reform). There were a diversity of views within our delegation, but we were given an opportunity to express both the support and concern we have heard from our Canadian Jewish Communities.

I hope that by the time you read this, you will have enjoyed a Yom Haatzma'hut celebration in your community. There is much to talk about, both the potential of the Abrahamic Accords now and moving into the future, as well as the direction of reforms in Israel and what it means for us as Jews in the diaspora. I look forward to arranging discussions in your community on these important topics in the coming months.

Yom Ha'Atzmahut Sameach! 



PHOTOS: (1) Our delegation was received by the Minister of Tolerance, his Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan; (2) Our delegation was received by the Minister of Tolerance, his Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan; (3) Crossroads of Civilizations Museum; (4) The Abrahamic Faith House; (5) Group Photo; (6) Outside of the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum

WHERE ARE WE TODAY? LET'S TAKE STOCK.

BY JUDY ZELIKOVITZ, VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY AND LOCAL PARTNER SERVICES AT THE CENTRE FOR ISRAEL AND JEWISH AFFAIRS

Passover is one of the most widely observed of Jewish traditions. Last month, as we do every year, we gathered around the Seder table to celebrate our ancestors' freedom from slavery in Egypt. The Passover story is one of survival and courage. Led by Moses, the Jewish people wandered the desert for 40 years, choosing to face the unknown over further persecution and oppression by the Egyptians.

Passover also heralds spring and the renewal of the world around us. It is a good time to take stock of where we are today.

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

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

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

Social media platforms both spread hateful ideas quickly to large groups of followers and mobilize those followers. The results are indiscriminate yet organized campaigns

targeting, among others, Blacks, Muslims, LGBTQ2+, women, or Jews, who are trolled online, and, offline, threatened with violence.

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

This surge in online antisemitism has taken a celebrity turn with ignorant and hateful comments from Kanye West. His tweets do not just light up the internet. They engender real-world incidents of violence and hate, including spurring a group to fly a banner proclaiming “Kanye is right” over a busy Los Angeles highway and an attack on a Jewish New Yorker who was assaulted in Central Park by an individual yelling “Kanye 2024.” West has also defended basketball player Kyrie Irving's promotion of a film linking Jews to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Weeks later, police officers arrested two young men who had threatened New York synagogues. Just hours before his arrest, one had tweeted “Jews owned the ships.”

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

Yet another Canadian example is the disturbing case of Laith Marouf, now infamous across the country for his virulent,

hate-filled tweets. They were disturbing enough that the government not only disavowed any future interaction with him but also sought to claw back previously distributed grants and change the responsible department's funding process.

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

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

Oppression comes in many forms. As we recently recalled the story of Passover at the Seder table, in the months to come, let's continue to commemorate our ancestors' journeys and affirm our personal responsibility to ensure that their will to fight oppression will sustain us today as it has for countless generations. 🕊



A CALL FOR RECIPES B'tayavon

The Atlantic Jewish Council food booklet “Breaking Bread” is looking for family recipes with stories and memories.

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CAMPUS NEWS

BY RAN BEN SHABAT, DIRECTOR OF HILLEL AND NEXT GENERATION ENGAGEMENT

HILLEL ATLANTIC SUMMARY OF THE 22–23 ACADEMIC YEAR

Looking back on the Academic year of 2022–2023, Hillel Atlantic Canada had much to celebrate. The organization was able to offer a variety of engaging programs and events that brought together Jewish students from across the region. From Shabbat dinners to educational programs on Judaism and Israel, Hillel Atlantic Canada offered the perfect platform for students to connect, engage, and learn about their heritage.

One of the highlights of the year was the Biweekly Shabbat dinners. Held at Shaar Shalom Synagogue, these dinners allowed students to relax, socialize, and experience the warmth of Jewish hospitality. Whether they were enjoying traditional dishes prepared by their peers or participating in lively discussions about Jewish life and culture, the dinners helped to build a strong sense of community within the Hillel Atlantic Canada network.

As the Jewish calendar unfolded throughout the year, Hillel Atlantic Canada organized various holiday events. From Rosh Hashanah to Hanukkah, Purim to Passover, these celebrations brought students together to mark the special moments of the Jewish calendar. Whether they were participating in festive meals, attending prayer services, or engaging in fun activities like making hamentashen or lighting the menorah, these events allowed students to connect with their Jewish identity and build lasting friendships.

This year, the Shabbat and holiday dinners were a huge success because of the move to the Shaar Shalom and the ability to use the big kitchen and host dinners in the Gold Room, which allowed accommodating 60–80 students in each event. It was exciting to see our participant numbers grow from event to event and have a massive jump in the turnover of students. I would like to thank all the lovely people at the Shaar Shalom for supporting Hillel Atlantic during the year.

Beyond the holidays, Hillel Atlantic Canada also offered a range of social gatherings that allowed students to kick back and have fun. These events ranged from movie nights to game nights, trivia contests, and more, and they provided an excellent way for students to take a break from their studies and unwind with their peers.

Of course, education was also a central focus for Hillel Atlantic Canada. Throughout the year, Hillel Atlantic hosted various programs that explored different aspects of Judaism and Israel. From learning about the Jewish approach to social justice to delving into the history of Zionism, these programs provided an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of their heritage and engage with new ideas. The Israel book club, for example, allowed students to come together and explore Israeli literature, History, and culture through lively discussions and debates.

Perhaps one of the most fulfilling aspects of Hillel Atlantic Canada's work this year was the volunteering project "Baking Challah for Seniors" in the Community. This project allowed students to put their learning into practice by giving back to the community. By baking and delivering Challah to our beloved seniors, these students were able to spread joy and kindness while also connecting with the broader Jewish community.


Finally, Hillel Atlantic Canada was also actively engaged in the fight against Antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment on campuses. Our organization provides resources and support for students facing discrimination or harassment based on their Jewish identity or connection to Israel. We must ensure that all Jewish students feel safe and supported on campus. This year we engaged with students through initiatives such as Antisemitism Awareness Week and events promoting Israel on campus by presenting



RAN BEN SHABAT

students with a different perspective of the state of Israel.

Hillel Atlantic Canada worked to raise awareness and combat hateful rhetoric against Jews and Israel, ensuring the campus is safe for the Jewish students. Every year we hold meetings with the college presidents and administrators to make sure that they will support us and see Hillel and the AJC as partners in dealing with this kind of issue.

As the academic year draws close, Hillel Atlantic Canada wishes all the students a safe and restful summer. At the same time, this past year was excellent in growth and community-building. With events and programs that brought Jewish students together from across the region, Hillel Atlantic Canada helped to cultivate a solid Jewish identity and fostered a sense of belonging. We look forward to seeing all the students again next year and continuing our shared Jewish learning and fellowship journey. 

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crimes in 2021** over the
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CAMP KADIMAH

Camp Kadimah Is Ramping Up For Its 80th Year

BY SARAH ATKINS, DIRECTOR

As we transition from winter to spring, summer is just around the corner, Barss Corner to be exact! Camp Kadimah is ramping up for its 80th year of providing unforgettable experiences to Jewish children and teens from across the Atlantic provinces, Canada and around the world. Since its establishment in 1943, Kadimah has been known globally for its commitment to cultivating a strong sense of Jewish identity, connection to Israel and community amongst its campers and staff, as well as maintaining an authentic Maritime hospitality. On the heels of our amazing bounce back summer of 2022, we are excited about welcoming back an even larger community for another season of fun, meaning and growth.

The camp's professional staff and counselors have been hard at work preparing a wide range of activities and programs to ensure that each camper has an unforgettable experience. From sports to arts and culture, from traditional programs to new, innovative ones, our camp's diverse program caters to a wide range of interests.

One of the hallmarks of Camp Kadimah is the sense of community and connection that it fosters. For many campers and

staff, Kadimah is more than just a summer camp—it's a second home. The bonds that are formed at the camp often last a lifetime, and the sense of belonging that is created there is unparalleled. Campers and staff members return year after year, eagerly anticipating the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and make new ones.

Camp Kadimah's emphasis on Jewish identity development is another key aspect of our mission. Kadimah provides a unique opportunity for campers to deepen their connection to their Jewish heritage in a fun and supportive environment. Whether it's through Shabbat services, cultural programming, or celebrations of Jewish and Israeli cultural events, our rich program is designed to instill a love and appreciation of Jewish culture and tradition and foster a meaningful relationship with Israel and Israelis. This summer we are excited to ramp up our Hebrew language program through our partnership with Hebrew at the Centre that will serve as an integral part of our Sababa (Israeli arts & culture) Program.

This past February we completed our *B'Yachad* Campaign culminating with our first annual day of giving. Thanks to our generous leadership donors who matched our day of giving campaign we raised over \$500,000 that pushed our five-year *B'Yachad* Campaign over 3 million dollars. Keep a lookout for new CK site enhancements that will "popping" up this summer and beyond!

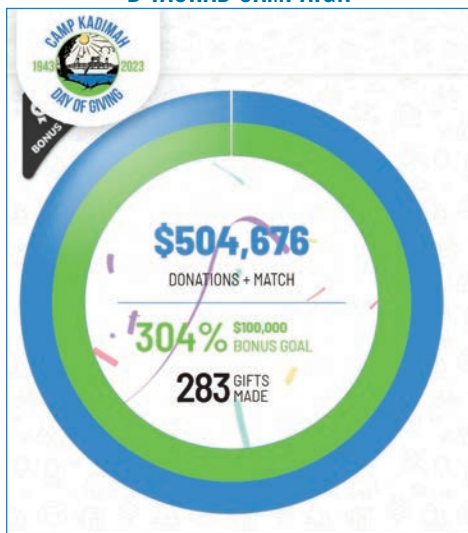
As we prepare to celebrate our 80th summer, there is a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation. The camp's legacy of providing a safe, welcoming space for Jewish youth to connect with their community and deepen their connection to their heritage has never been more important. In today's world, we take great solace in the fact that our campers and staff can return annually to their safe and familiar place where they can be the

CHECK OUT CAMP KADIMAH ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM FOR GAMES AND MORE!


 CampKadimah  campkadimah



B'YACHAD CAMPAIGN



best version of themselves. For generations, Kadimah has been a cherished summer destination, and it's clear that its impact will continue to be felt for many years to come.

We cannot wait to see you at the Barss for summer 2023! 

“ I will always be a Maritimer. I grew up in Moncton and attended Dalhousie University for my Law and MBA degrees. I spent 19 summers at Camp Kadimah and continue to spend my summers in one of my favourite places, Shediac, New Brunswick. I am always happy to connect with my fellow “East Coasters” to see how I can assist them with their legal and business needs. ”

—LEIGH LAMPERT



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YOUTH AND FAMILY NEWS

BY NAOMI BESSER, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH & YOUNG FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Hello everyone, my name is Naomi Besser. You may have seen me here and there volunteering in our community's gatherings. Those events allowed me to realize the importance of a Jewish community in my life and the lives of others as well. I am excited to start my new position at the AJC as a "kids, youth and family director."

This time of year has plenty of holidays with memorable and meaningful days for Israel and the Jewish people. Starting with Passover, Yom Ha'shoah through Yom Ha'zikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Living in Israel has formed how I am used to marking these days. I hope to bring some of that to our community events in Halifax. For Passover, we had a unique activity for kids in which they expanded their knowledge about the holiday traditions and customs. We had "Moses" come in, telling them riddles and seeing if they could cross the Red Sea together.

At Yom Ha'zikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, I needed to emphasize the connection between the days to expand their meanings when we are here, and the people around us do not

share the loss and happiness of those days with us.

To commemorate the fallen Israeli soldiers, we marched together with flags in our hands and proudly displayed their names on our chests. We conducted the ceremony to mark the transition between mourning and celebrations. During the Yom Ha'atzmaut festive, the kids tried to guess which pictures were taken in which Israeli location. They enjoyed some crazy jumping on the bouncy castles. We danced in circles to the songs of Israeli folk music. And finally, eating freshly made Hummus and Falafel. What a day it was, and what a celebration it was! I can't wait for the next holiday to get together and celebrate again in partnership with Julia Lisker.

Between the holidays and the significant events, I am bringing my cultural background and values to the diverse community growing and scattered throughout the Atlantic Provinces.

A little bit about me: I was born and raised on a Kibbutz. For most of my adult life, I was a member of the "Dror Israel Movement,"—an education movement. I worked with varied age groups and roles in diverse populations nationwide. I was a teacher and a youth club director. I moved to Halifax in September 2020.

I want to take this opportunity to wish Maya Lotan Mazal Tov for the birth of her son. 🇮🇱



PHOTOS: (1–4) Yom Ha'atzmaut; (5–6) Passover; (7–8) Zikaron



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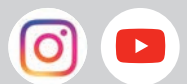
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Sharing Shalom in Fredericton

BY PEGGY WALT

Israel Unger isn't a big guy, but he's got a big mission: to spread awareness of the Holocaust and stop antisemitism. After years of spearheading events through Fredericton's Sgoolai Israel Synagogue, he's found a giant partner in Pastor Jack Leaman and his Capital Community Church.

The 40-something minister, and the distinguished almost 90-year-old Holocaust survivor have dropped formalities and are clearly Bros: "Between him and I, it's Israel and Jack," says the Pastor in the first of several Zoom chats. "You may get weary with our constant accolades of each other. I told Dr. Unger that we could be part of the mutual admiration committee," he laughs.

They even have a shared love for a certain coffee chain. Leaman, who modestly admits they can draw between 650 and 700 people for weekly Sunday services explains: "We're not the biggest church (in New Brunswick), we're like the large Tim Horton's cup before you realize there's extra-large." On the smaller side, there are only about 60 Jewish families in Fredericton (although Unger wonders if it's actually closer to 45).

The two swap stories about their younger years. Unlike Unger's childhood in occupied Poland, Pastor Leaman's life was "quite utopic." His father was in charge of maintenance for Rothesay's Netherwood School for Girls, and he grew up on its campus until grade seven, taking full advantage of the tennis courts, basketball gymnasium, monkey bars, and stream running through the 40-50-acre campus which was landscaped with pretty flowerbeds.

He had "a world, with miles to roam, all summer." By age five he was preaching in the campus chapel to his sister and their friends. They could go fishing and swimming and "even though we didn't have money, we had so much. I was spoiled and didn't know it." The campus was later transferred to the boys' school; the site has since been dismantled and is now home to a member of the Irving family. The fairy-tale existence contrasts sharply to life in Tarnow, Poland, where Unger hid for two fearful years in an attic crawlspace above a flour mill during the war.

Before the call from Unger, Pastor Leaman had limited awareness of the Holocaust. He'd heard of Auschwitz and seen Schindler's List, but never met a survivor. "He held out the carrot, telling his story, and we bit," he acknowledges, remembering their first meeting. "We knew we were in good hands when Dr. Unger brought Tim Horton's and donuts."

Fredericton's Jewish congregation had been hosting a Holocaust Remembrance event for some time, first on a Saturday night at the synagogue, then on the UNB campus, but space was limited. It was a low-key event "with some slides," about 250 people attending.



The Honourable Brenda L. Murphy, ONB, New Brunswick Lieutenant Governor, attending the Yom HaShoah service at the Capitol Community Church.

Dr. Unger noticed a strong representation from the Pentecostal community. Could he find a bigger venue and reach more people?

Pastor Leaman responded that they had 900 seats at his church and offered to host the event. That was 2016, a Kristallnacht service initiated by the AJC and "our people were very grateful to him at telling his story." Although they'd never done anything like this before, "from there, for us, it was a natural desire to be involved." Eight years later, a professionally produced event, now also livestreamed, is spreading awareness like never before to thousands annually.

It's led the congregation to become more aware about antisemitism in today's world, Pastor Leaman says. "I'm not in their everyday lives, but I do believe (it has), we've encouraged families to bring their children to this. The reality of it leaves an impression, and especially to know someone like Dr. Unger...there's less and less people like him who can speak of it." It's taken very seriously by the church: "We wouldn't do something like this multiple times if it wasn't a priority. We're going to take one of 52 Sundays, we're going to promote it, get the word out, have it on the wall, upend our whole schedule, that's what we want to do. Our people have got behind it."

The audience includes everyone from legislative members to the Lieutenant Governor, and another Pentecostal church from Ripples. The Commanding Officer of Camp Gagetown and the local Canadian Legion and the Legion from Woodstock turn out. But Pastor Leaman doesn't do it for the numbers. "I just think it's the right thing to do. We don't count people because people count," he says.

As with other Holocaust events, community members light six candles, each representing one million of the six. But there's a seventh candle too, lit jointly by a Jew and non-Jew, expressing hope for the future.

Dr. Unger appreciates the help. Planning for the next year event begins "immediately after the program is over." Previous speakers have ranged from the Ambassador from Sweden to Leo Adler, a criminal lawyer from Toronto. Dr. Dorota Glowacka from the University of King's College, and the daughter of a survivor, has been there, and speakers usually go to Saint John too. The event displays 40 posters from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. The church prints programs, lessening the work for Dr. Unger and his committee: "They've made things a lot easier, for me in particular."

Unger is very secular and retired after a distinguished career teaching chemistry at the University of New Brunswick, raising a family, writing

FEATURE

As with other Holocaust events, community members light six candles, each representing one million of the six. But there's a seventh candle too, lit jointly by a Jew and non-Jew, expressing hope for the future.

scientific papers and representing his fellow professors on faculty associations. He never revealed to his late wife Marlene that he'd been born in Poland until the evening they saw Anne Frank's Diary at UNB.

"Her hiding place was a palace," he told his surprised wife, who was shocked to find out he hadn't been born in Montreal. Unlike Anne Frank and her companions, all nine in hiding survived, as retold in Unger's 2013 book, *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger*, co-written with Carolyn Gammon. Unger didn't believe he had enough for a book at their first meeting (which took place at Tim Hortons, naturally). He was young in hiding, one of just sixteen children from Tarnow's original 8,000 to survive.

Recently Unger learned that 700 other Jewish kids from Tarnow were taken by the Germans to Cracow "and used to show eugenics, to further their race purity ideas. They measured their heads, their noses, the width, the length." Their fate is unconfirmed, but Unger believes none survived, preferring the word "murdered" to the more ambiguous "perished."

What happened to him after the war fills out the compelling story. He never wanted to return: "Poland had only negative images in my mind." Marlene persuaded him to go back and look for names of uncles and aunts.

Going back "was terrible." After visiting their younger daughter in Frieberg, Germany, they took a train from Berlin. "I was very anxious," he admits. They got to Tarnow, and it was dark, and they'd booked a hotel just around the corner from the train station, the station where "they embarked Jews to Belzec mostly, a straight-out murder camp." He remembers the coffee was lousy; amazingly, up the street "was a Tim Horton's."

It was Marlene, herself a powerful advocate who fought Holocaust denier Malcolm Ross, who encouraged him to start talking to schools.

"Sometimes I would get discouraged if I was asked to speak or something and my wife, who wasn't born Jewish and who was an incredible person, would say to me, 'Izzy, I would do it, but I can't do it as well as you can.'"

Pastor Leaman and his church are "good and rare allies. They're not trying to convert Jews," Unger notes. While the church is Pentecostal, there are no Christian symbols in its large meeting place. In a time of diminishing congregational attendance, Capitol Community Church can attract 400-500 youth to its events.

It was Lead Pastor (now Bishop) Raymond Woodward who was the "sparkplug" for the Holocaust event. "He set the tone for everything." Pastor Woodward had been to Israel, and his father was the Principal at Fredericton High School, where Unger's late wife taught. "She said Raymond Woodward (Sr.) was always the first to try to assist any student or teacher who had a personal problem," Unger notes, which in his view "is the essence of Christianity, not preaching, but practicing." He also credits Fredericton's Rabbi Goldman, who is "very ecumenical and knows the difference between tradition and law."

Pastor Leaman, whose Tweets use words like Shekinah, said that hosting Kristallnacht in 2016 and hearing Dr. Unger tell his story, "Elevated the level of education." Although Fredericton's Bible College would regularly visit the synagogue, the church had never hosted

anything like that before. That first year they were uncertain about the culture, what was permissible and proper in terms of food. Leaman notes that they didn't get everything right—"Our music was a bit much."—but now the church choir has learned four songs in Hebrew.

Leaman focuses on the commonalities. "It's one of the cool things about our branch of the Evangelical Christianity, we don't disregard the Old Testament. The culture of our fellowship is a strong emphasis on that. I love talking to Rabbi Goldman. An old book to us is 200 years old; that's not even scratching the surface of how long you've all been studying it. We want to walk as close as we can to the Judeo-Christian footprint." Knowledge gives us "a stronger house," and as for praying for Israel? "That's normative," he offers.

Why the interest? Pastor Leaman pauses. It's to do with "the horrific nature of the Holocaust, it's scary that some people say it didn't exist. There's the risk of it happening again." This shocks him, and the need to educate is important.

"How much more historical evidence do we need? It's somewhere in our base nature. If we don't talk about it, there's a possibility this could happen again. I still shake my head at media or at conversations about Israel, after all this group of people has been through. It's for us to educate, the right thing to do." Leaman hopes to lead a group to Israel in 2024. He reflects again, quoting Paul the Apostle: "he said, all these things were written for our example. Then I want to know as much as I can about that example, because it's what opened the door to where we stand and what we believe. This gives us a stronger house... We recommend everyone read through the entire canon of scripture annually."

Pastor Leaman is happy he took Dr. Unger's call. "How welcoming the Jewish community has been to us. Marlene and Israel invited us for a Passover meal, not just me, but our whole family. None of us knew then of Marlene's short time with us, and it's a very precious memory. We mourned with (Israel) when we lost Marlene. They invited our chorale to sing at the synagogue. The Rabbi invited us for New Year celebrations. We'd never have made that connection without Dr. Unger. It's been a mutual shalom. I leave this at the feet of Pastor Woodward and Dr. Unger. It's really how we all feel."

Has there been backlash, the need for security? "None that I've personally felt, but I'm an optimist by nature," he says.

While this feels like a big warm hug to the Jewish community, the Minister doesn't want this to be "an event that fades off." The Jewish community loves to plant trees," he notes, so the congregation recently planted trees in memory of Marlene, Bishop Woodward's father, Holocaust victims, and to commemorate Pastor Woodward's transition to Bishop. At 'The Grove,' the synagogue contributed a bench with a plaque noting the honorees, a spot for quiet reflection. The trees were planted this past summer when one of Dr. Unger's daughters was home, a place where "our kids can visit the growing, living trees," enthuses Dr. Unger. "The church does everything wonderfully. They had a tent with refreshments after the ceremony, they even had a sun cover. The only challenge is that they have 40 acres of field and for whatever reason, the deer love the trees!"

It means a lot to Unger. "I love having trees for my wife, I have a

whole grove in Israel. I know that my grand-daughters and daughters come to New Brunswick every summer, and I know they go and visit my wife's grave, but I would like them also, if they so choose, to come and see a growing, living, tree in her memory at the Capitol Community Church." It's the living equivalent of the annual candle lighting.

Unger thought antisemitism would end in 1945. "It became not politically correct to be antisemitic, (but) it only went into the closet. Now, you don't have to hide it. It couches as anti-Zionism. I was naïve. It never really went away. Martin Luther King Jr. said it too." He thinks it's more important for non-Jews to stand up against antisemitism, thinking about landing in Tel Aviv the first time he visited Israel. "After the usual announcements, they were playing *Haveinu Shalom Aleichem*, we bring you shalom. It's a greeting, we greet you with peace."


Laughing, Pastor Leaman sings a bit and says he finds himself sometimes just humming the melody, also referencing Psalm 133: "How good, how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Leaman concludes, "We only regret that we hadn't started on this sooner."

Unger sums up: "It's just three words in Hebrew, Jack. Capitol Community Church, it's exemplified by that song—they were greeting us with 'peace, shalom, hello'. They are welcoming, without reservations."

With their tagline 'Our church is your church,' Unger thinks that's what the church is to the wider community. Despite recent surges in antisemitism, "there are a lot of kind-hearted people."

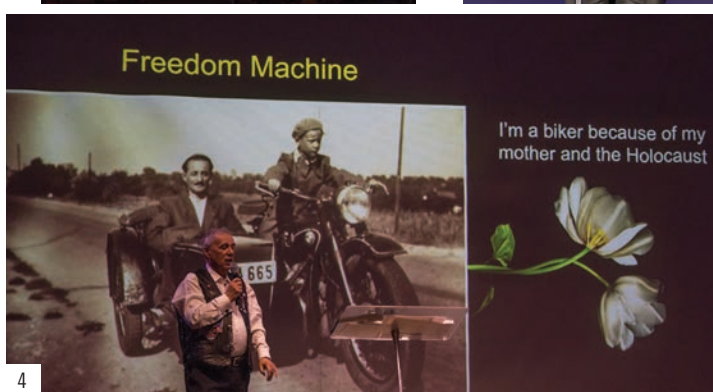
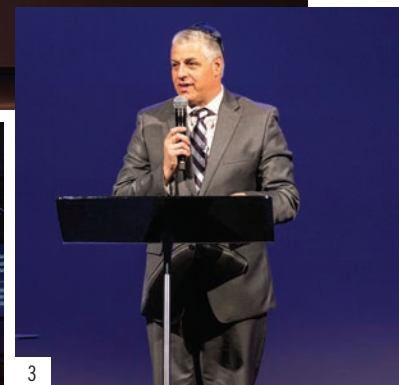
Pastor Leaman and Israel Unger bonded over love their love of Tim's, and their shared mission which has "no strings attached," but maybe there's a deeper connection. The minister is surprised to learn that with a different spelling, Lehman can be a Jewish name. Perhaps it's time for DNA testing as his Saint John grandfather was adopted. "We don't know much about his background, so you never know," he admits.

The lessons of the Holocaust and its profound influence on the world are never far from the minds of both men.

Unger relates a final memory of his second return visit to Poland. He met the son-in-law of the man who had hid them. "When they discovered the hiding place in the attic...his grandmother-in-law asked to (see it). They took her there and the staircase to the attic was gone. It took two men to carry her up into the hiding place, and they took her in, and she asked to sit there by herself for about fifteen minutes. I don't know what motivated her, I'm not even trying to speculate. It was just so interesting." 

Peggy Walt graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction from the University of King's College with support from the Nova Scotia Talent Trust and the Abraham Leventhal Memorial Scholarship. She's writing a book about her husband's family during the Holocaust and her conversion to Judaism, and works in the arts in Nova Scotia.

PHOTOS: Holocaust Remembrance Day programs at the Capitol Community Church throughout the years: (1) Rabbi Yosef Goldman reciting the memorial prayer; (2) Choir performing Hebrew songs; (3) Pastor Jack Leaman; (4) Holocaust survivor presentation, Yom HaShoah service; (5) Pastor (now Bishop) Raymond Woodward; (6) Israel Unger; (7) Children lighting the memorial candles



Israel's 75th Independence Day



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Message to the Atlantic Jewish Community Yom Ha'atzmaut 75



As we mark 75 years of independence, we see a remarkable shift in the Jewish People's place in the international community. A partnership of the Jewish State and Diaspora Jewish communities now live in a world where Israel is an equal member of the United Nations with the world's other nations.

Israel is now a modern economy generating exciting innovations across many industries and a cultural hub excelling in many fields. More than ever before, a tourist destination for people from across the globe, Israel's restaurants, coffee shops and wineries are winning prizes on the international stage.

Israel's ties to Canada's Atlantic region go back to our first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, who did his military training under British command there, before Israel secured sovereignty.

Ever since, the Jewish community has been a strong partner with Israel. Halifax Port has always been where Israel's Zim Shipping has docked its ships, bringing Israeli products to Canada.

Thank you for 75 years of support. Thank you for marking Israel's 75th anniversary. We look forward to the next 75 years of Israeli sovereignty knowing our partnership with the Atlantic Jewish community will remain a source of inspiration.

Please do visit Israel as often as possible!

Paul Hirschson,
Consul General of Israel in Montreal



Photos From the Halifax Gala



Israel's 75th Independence Day

**April 25, 2023
at the Chrysler Pavillion**

PHOTOS BY IRENA KAZATSKER



REMEMBERING VICTOR FIENBERG Z'L



Victor Fienberg passed away peacefully at his home on December 20, 2022. He is survived by his wife Sybil, son Max (Kennedi), daughter Lauren, granddaughter Ellia, sister Anita and mother Betty. He was predeceased by his father Elliot. Victor grew up in Halifax having attended Gorsebrook School, Queen Elizabeth High School and Dalhousie University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree. Halifax was the place that he loved and the place where he decided to live, work, raise a family and contribute to his community.

Victor always had a strong entrepreneurial inclination. This inclination found expression in the various restaurants that he operated over his lifetime. Starting with a hot dog stand on Spring Garden Rd. to ever more complex and sophisticated enterprises. His latest restaurant, Hali Deli, represented not only a return to the basics, from which he started, but contributed to the culinary landscape of Halifax where, till now, no authentic deli existed. The menu focused on Easter European comfort food with a decidedly Jewish flavour. Judging by the success of this venture, Victor clearly understood and responded to an underlying need.

Although the menus and the locations varied over time there was always one constant that defined a Fienberg restaurant. It was a meeting place for friends and associates. The restaurants provided a welcoming venue for the discussion of a sundry of community and current events. Conversations about

politics and religion were especially welcomed. As such, it was a common sight to witness a steady stream of people grabbing a mug of coffee and taking a seat at the designated table for an unspecified period of conversation and comradery. Many complex issues were identified, discussed, and ultimately resolved in very quick order at these serendipitous encounters.

One of the lesser things known about Victor was his penchant for seeking out the stranger. If you were new to Halifax or if he saw you alone at the Beth Israel Synagogue, you would be quickly approached by Victor. A conversation would ensue after which you would undoubtedly be invited to his house for a meal. Like his restaurants, his home was also a meeting place not just for the stranger but also for those, including students, who otherwise would not have a place to go especially for the Jewish holidays. His home was as welcoming as his restaurants and this welcoming and non-judgemental attitude was perhaps the characteristic that defined Victor the most.


For more than a quarter of a century Victor served on the Board of the Beth Israel Synagogue in varying capacities. He assumed many roles including President, Vice President, Financial Secretary, Membership and Programming. He undertook these roles with pride and conviction. At times, Victor was seen so frequently at the Synagogue that it was not always clear if he was still in the restaurant business. Such was his commitment. Victor's love of the restaurant

business and for the Shul found a common expression. For many years the Beth Israel Congregation was very well fed. Whether it was Succoths, Simchas Torah, Chanukah, Purim or Shavuoths, you could always count on Victor to organize a full and scrumptious holiday meal.

Victor understood the importance of tradition and inter-generational continuity. He regularly attended daily Mincha and Maariv services as well as shabbat and holidays services and worked hard to encourage others to follow his lead. He innately knew that while thoughts were good actions were better and that he needed to model the very behaviours that he expected of others.

Victor also contributed to the broader community. Of particular note was his leadership role with Churchill Academy. He was a strong advocate for extending educational opportunities for the non-traditional learner and at a time when this was not universally accepted. He worked hard to support the school leadership in the areas of advocacy, recruitment and retention and fundraising.

In his latter years, Victor suffered from a number of health related issues that diminished his capacity to be fully engaged in the areas that gave meaning to his life. Victor never complained, drew attention to his maladies or felt sorry for himself. This, too, defined the man and his spirit.

Victor will be missed by his family and friends and by all those who took the time to truly know him. 

REMEMBERING LEON DUBINSKY Z'L



Early Tuesday morning, Cape Breton lost one of its favourite sons. On January 17, 2023, at 4:44 a.m., Leon Isaiah Dubinsky passed away peacefully in the arms of his loved ones at the age of 81.

A man made of music, wit, and humour, Leon was a good man who valued family above all else.

Leon was born in Sydney on July 5, 1941, to the late Newman and Esther (Goldman) Dubinsky.

Leon is survived by his wife, Elizabeth MacCormick; daughter, Ella (Kyle) Dubinsky of Englishtown; and brother, Leslie (Josine) Dubinsky, of Bedford. He is also survived by brothers-in-law, Barrie Carnat, Englishtown, Johnnie (Mary) MacCormick, Dartmouth, and Ronnie (Rhoda) MacCormick, Cape Breton, as well as sisters-in-law, Anne-Marie (Dennis) Bowie, Dartmouth, and Mary-Ellen (Ryan) Seale, Cornwall.


Leon was predeceased by his parents and his sisters, Helen Dubinsky, Sylvia (Louis) Allen, and Evy Carnat.

Leon was a songwriter, musical director, actor, and teacher, and made many significant contributions to Cape Breton art and culture over the years. He wrote the unofficial anthem for Cape Breton in "We Rise Again", as well as hundreds of other beautiful songs. Leon was the musical director of the Cape Breton Summertime Revue and Rise and Follies for twelve years, and was a founding member of the band, Buddy and the Boys. In 2002, Leon received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the ECMAs.

Leon was deeply honoured that his music had an impact, whether it was in a bar room or a concert hall, a church or a synagogue. He loved hearing how his songs brought hope and inspiration to so many over his long, rich, creative life. He was loved deeply by his

family, his friends, and the entire Cape Breton community.

Leon sang in the Temple Sons of Israel choir throughout his life and cherished being a part of the Cape Breton Jewish community. An avid storyteller, Leon's presence loomed large, and his jokes, puns, punch-lines, and deep wisdom brought smiles to every face. He loved Cape Breton, and especially Englishtown, where he spent many years making paths in the woods, stacking wood in the winter, writing and playing music by the fire, and taking care of his family. He adored his dog, Schmeeps, a fond companion for the past several years.

His family is heartbroken by this loss, and cannot find the words to express their grief. But in these moments, we turn to Leon's lyrics: "And now you're gone, and life goes on, it just doesn't go on the same." 

The Place of Transformation

POETRY BY LARRY FINKELMAN

"This is what the wilderness was. It was not Egypt, not Israel, but the no-man's land between them. Liminal space is important not for what it contains, nor how large it was, but rather, because of what happens there. It is *the place of transformation*."

—Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, 2017

Larry Finkelman lives in Fredericton, NB and you can read more of his poetry and contact him at: www.larryslinesofpoetry.com

Passover reminds us
of our redemption from slavery
and how God guided us in the desert,
as we made our way to nationhood.

It celebrates the space between
departure and destination,
tragedy and transformation,
ruin and reinvention.

It is where despair is tinged with
determination,
discouragement mingles with hope,
grief with acceptance,
fear with courage,
and fragility with firmness.

The place where the familiar becomes strange,
the ordinary becomes new,
and chaos crystallizes into order.

It is where time stands still,
where the landscapes of our lives change,
and truth comes into sharper view.

Where we give thanks
to those who bid us farewell,
those who supported us along the way,
kept things going while we were gone,
and welcomed us when we returned.

It is where we wander the wilderness,
opening space within our hearts
to hear the yearning of our souls,
and draw closer to something beyond
ourselves.

It is the place where we recognize we are not
alone,
as cocoons are shed,
and butterflies emerge.

Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Halifax, Nova Scotia

On the evening of April 17 in the Paul O'Regan Hall, Halifax Central Library, 125+ people gathered for the Atlantic Jewish Council's annual Holocaust Remembrance Day program. Keynote speaker Israel Unger, Holocaust survivor, related a powerful story of courage and survival. In a small town in Poland, Israel Unger and his family hid from the Nazis in an attic crawl space for two years. All of them survived.


Seventy-eight years after the Holocaust, antisemitism, the world's oldest hatred, is not only still felt around the world, but has been on the rise, as has the frequency of violent attacks.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (of which Canada is a member) adopted its Working Definition of Antisemitism, which declares:

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

In 2019 Canada adopted this definition, and since then many provinces and cities in Canada have followed.

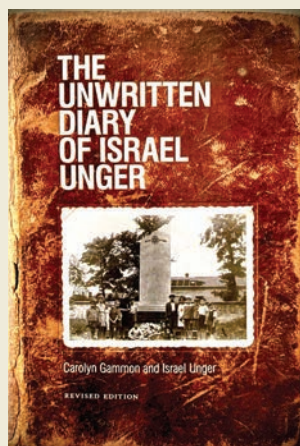
Israel Unger was joined in conversation with Olga Milosevich, retired CBC radio broadcaster. The program was presented with the support of the Halifax Central Library and the Azrieli Foundation.

A recording can be found on the AJC Holocaust Education YouTube channel: @holocausteducation1815; or with this link: youtube.com/live/tZIVyIdVxLg?feature=share 

PHOTOS: (1) Claudia Chender, MLA and NDP Leader, right and Judith Goldberg; (2) Israel Unger and Olga Milosevich; (3) U.S. Consul, Daniel Bingham-Pankratz lighting a memorial candle; (4) Consul général de France Provinces Atlantiques du Canada Johan Schitterer, centre, with Olga Milosevich and Ian Johnson; (5) MLA Lorelei Nicol chats with Israel Unger as he signs a copy of his memoirs (6) The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, ONS, KC, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, speaks with MLA Lorelei Nicol, Halifax Deputy Mayor Sam Austin, and MLA The Honourable Tony Ince; (7) Dorothy Riteman and Marcia Kohler; (8) The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, ONS, KC, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia and Her Honour Patsy LeBlanc, centre, with Israel Unger, right, and from left Ann Wright and Dr. Sharon Unger; (9) R to L: The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, ONS, KC, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, U.S. Consul, Daniel Bingham-Pankratz and Consul général de France Provinces Atlantiques du Canada Johan Schitterer; (10) Israel Unger's memoirs: *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger*



The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger



Guest speaker, Holocaust survivor Israel Unger was born in 1938 in Tarnow, Poland. At the beginning of the Nazi period, 25,000 Jewish people lived in Tarnow, Poland. By the end of the Second World War, only a few hundred Jews from Tarnow survived. Israel Unger and his family hid for two years in an attic crawl space above the Dagnan flour mill in Tarnow. Their stove was the chimney that went up through the attic; their windows were cracks in the wall. Survival depended on the food the adults were able to forage outside at night. Against all odds, they emerged alive.

In 1951 the Unger family immigrated to Canada. After discovering a love of chemistry, Israel Unger had a stellar academic career, married, and raised a family in Fredericton, New Brunswick. In 2013 Unger published his memoirs, *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger*.

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Yom HaShoah: Unto Every Person There Is a Name




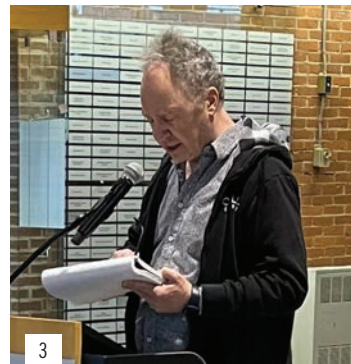
In honour of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Atlantic Jewish Council is proud to continue our tradition to participate in the "Unto Every Person There is a Name" program in partnership with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.

B'nai B'rith International is the North American sponsor of the worldwide Holocaust memorial project "Unto Every Person There is a Name". The project is coordinated by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem and provides the opportunity to remember the murdered Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the six million, among them one-and-a-half million children, while the world remained silent.

We in Halifax join with Jewish communities throughout the world in the public recitation of names of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This reading aloud of the names of Jewish victims who were murdered by the Nazi regime has become a cherished ritual in our community.

We seek to remember them not only as a collective, but rather as individuals—one at a time—through the public recitation of their names and thus help to restore their identity and dignity.

By personalizing the individual tragedies of the Jewish victims of Nazi Germany and its collaborators, this project counters persistent efforts by enemies of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to deny the reality of the Holocaust. For many on these lists, it is the only time their name will be said aloud as their entire family was murdered or there is no one left to remember them. 



PHOTOS: (1) United States Consul General, Lyra Carr; (2) Jerry Barkow; (3) Jason Brown; (4) Linda Jonas Schroeder; (5) Joanna Mirsky Wexler; (6) Mark Stein; (7) Lisa Lachance, MLA; (8) Nancy Cieplinski; (9) Menashe Cieplinski; (10) Yolana Waassersug; (11) Sondra Rutman guiding Brian MacDonald in the reading of names of Jewish victims of the Holocaust

Avi Abraham Benlolo
Founding Chairman and CEO
The Abraham Global Peace Initiative



(1) Rev. Eric J Malloy, National Director Emeritus, Bridges for Peace Canada, centre, with Gerry Mendleson, and Rebecca Malloy; (2) AJC Executive Director Yoram Abisror, second from left, with guest panelists: l to r: Rabbi Yakov Kerzner, AJC President Arik Drucker, and Mark David. (3) Ann Thaw with Rabbi Yakov Kerzner. (4) Joshua Wolfe, CJPAC Director of Outreach and Community Programing, Montreal, attended the screening, pictured with Joanna Mirsky Wexler and Yoram Abisror, AJC Executive Director. (5) Sondra Rutman, Jason Brown and Roni Omessi. (6) Anna Fried, AJC Executive Director Yoram Abisror, and Schuyler Smith. (7) Lezlie Oler and Hedda Medjuck.

FREDERICTON NEWS

THE WORK OF FREDERICTON'S ANTISEMITISM COMMITTEE ACTIVITY BY MARILYN KAUFMAN

The antisemitism committee has undertaken several projects.

The Holocaust Educational Interactive Exhibit that was piloted a year ago for about 200 Fredericton grade 11 high school students, will be expanding this year to other high schools in and near the Fredericton area. It will open for viewing at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in May and then move to the Sgoolai Israel Synagogue from May 29 – June 9.

The exhibit held its opening launch in January at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. It will be open again in May with school visits in the morning, and by the public in the afternoons. We were pleased to welcome AJC Executive Director, Yoram Abrisor to the opening. Eileen Duguay, Larry Finkelman and Ayten Kranat assisted with the public tours during the event.

A big thank you goes out to former Min. of Education, Dominic Cardy, the Anglophone West School District, and the NB Dept. of Education for their support with assisting us in the establishment of this project, spearheaded by Jasmine Kranat.

Through the efforts of Marilyn Kaufman, a municipal proclamation celebrating Israel's 75th anniversary and Jewish Heritage Month in May, will be delivered at a Fredericton City Council meeting April 24, by Mayor Rogers. Further, a motion for a provincial proclamation celebrating Israel's 75th anniversary of Independence was passed unanimously in the House Mar.29th. The motion was moved by former Min. of Education Dominic, Cardy

(IND), seconded by Mr. Benoit Bourque (Lib) with the support of Mr. David Coon (Gr). Thank you to CIJA for its help.

Larry Finkelman has expanded his power point deliveries on antisemitism. He has presented several of them to the Fredericton Multicultural Association, the New Brunswick Teachers Association and is lined up to do two professional development presentations for teachers in May in Saint John. Thus far, Larry has had a very positive reception to his informative talks.

Kelly Newman has worked diligently to bring the AGPI Human Rights project, The Power of One, to NB communities. Fredericton Public Library will be hosting the exhibit May 16 – 17 and then it moves on to Market Square in Saint John, where it will be accompanied by the film documentary, The Future of Israel and Its Defenders. Kelly is also networking and looking at mutual trade opportunities between New Brunswick and Israel.

As May is Jewish Heritage Month, Marilyn has arranged for the Fredericton Public Library to host several children activities on Israel. There will also be book displays with Jewish content and Jewish authors to borrow for reading. Similarly, the adult section will do the same. It will also display The Power of One, and in the evening of May 11 it will feature a power point presentation by Julie Smith on the history of concentration camps WW11. Description follows:


"As violent nationalist movements reappear in Western countries, Holocaust denialism

and diminishment are growing alongside them. A recent survey showed that nearly half of young North Americans believe the Holocaust was exaggerated or did not happen at all. That makes it all the more important to bear witness to the physical symbols of the 20th century's greatest atrocity, the murder of more than six million Jews.

This talk will highlight stories, photos, and lessons from one Fredericton resident's journey to former ghettos, death camps and killing fields of the Holocaust, including her 2022 visit to the Auschwitz concentration camps."

Shelley Stephens has been working with various cultural groups preparing for our community's involvement in the Cultural Expressions Festival which takes place in June.

May 7th, a Yom Ha'atzmaut falafel supper will be held at the Sgoolai Israel Synagogue. Guest speaker will be former Min. of Education, Dominic Cardy who co-sponsored the adoption of the IHRA definition by the New Brunswick Legislature. Following will be the AGPI film documentary, *The Future of Israel and Its Defenders*. Marilyn and Kelly are chairing the event.

A thank you to the entire committee for their support and assistance both in front of and behind the scenes: Anita Adilman, Ricky Peled, Eileen Duguay, Larry Finkelman, Kelly Newman, Rabbi Yosef Goldman, Jasmine Kranat, Shelley Stephens, Ivan Levine. 

CELEBRATING TU B'SHEVAT

CONTRIBUTED BY KELLY NEWMAN


With temperatures around -18, only a few braved the trek through O'Dell Park, led by Nature NB. Those who did had a walk-through old growth forest, finding hemlock, yellow birch, burls, fungi, and usnea under the canopy of some of NB's oldest trees.

We gathered in greater number back at

Sgoolai Israel Synagogue, where Rabbi Goldman brought his love of stamps along with his love of Torah. Stamps are a most interesting way to learn of our world and its history.

Who knew Israel has a series of stamps for the seven species? Who knew how many countries celebrate trees?!

And who knew Canada has approximately 247 tree stamps?! We may now have some new stamp collectors on our hands.

The presence of future minyans was delightful, unexpectedly turning Mincha prayers into an impromptu Torah class. 



FREDERICTON NEWS CONT.

NEW BRUNSWICK WELCOMES ISRAELI CONSUL GENERAL PAUL HIRSCHSON


CONTRIBUTED BY KELLY NEWMAN

Last November, New Brunswick welcomed Israeli Consul General Paul Hirschson on his first visit to the province. He accompanied JNF's Sharon Diamond and JNF Atlantic's Sue David to Fredericton for an informal event recognizing JNF Atlantic's 2021 Negev Honouree, Arnold Chippin.

Arnold has given considerable support to ADI Negev Nahalat Eran, a rehabilitation village that provides a wide range of resources and solutions for children and young adults living with severe disabilities and complex medical issues. It is expansive and impressive in both size and purpose, supporting individuals and their families in an inclusive, holistic approach that is integrated with the greater community.

The JNF has long been known for its work in land management, preservation, and regeneration. Adding social service infrastructure to their directives makes the organization a powerful contributor in the fulfillment of Tikun Olam.

Mr. Hirschson spoke of the potential organizations have for creating a more peaceful world through the medium of business. His optimism for our region is refreshing and encouraging.

And given his background and experiences, we can be sure his enthusiasm is based in substance and not platitude. The coming year is poised to bring our communities a new vibrancy to move forward with and along with it, prosperity for our region. 



FREDERICTON SGOLAI ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE NEWS

On behalf of our Co-Presidents and the Board of Directors, of our Fredericton Sgoolai Israel Synagogue, it is my honour, to acknowledge, the generosity and leadership, of Shaindy and our Rabbi Yosef Goldman for hosting our two Passover Seders. Also, it is important, to acknowledge, the tireless leadership, and many successes of our Shul Co Presidents, Shelley Stephens/Louie Budovitch.

It has been amazing, the renewal of our Fredericton Jewish community celebrations, starting with Channukah, which had approx. 70 people of which approx. 30 were children.

Then we had our Purim celebrations over two days, with approximately 80 people including approximately 40 children.

Now, we are celebrating Passover, with approx. 130 meals with two Seders.

Special mention to ladies (Sisterhood) for making the celebration so successful and delicious.

The knights of Columbus demonstrated their chivalry, generosity, and honouring, by serving our food and cleaning up after at our first Passover Seder.

I want to acknowledge the progressing effort that is being undertaking to create a Fredericton Hebrew School and children's social events, catering to different needs, similar to Saint John which now has approx. 45 children, with vibrant Friday night services.

Kol Hakavod—Ivan Levine, Committee Chair, Sgoolai Israel Synagogue

On Behalf of Board and Co-Presidents of Sgoolai Israel Synagogue, we wish to send the following greetings:

- Mazel Tov to Jonathan Lazarev on his Medical School Graduation!
- Mazel Tov to Yelena Birk on receiving her B.A. in Psychology from the University of New Brunswick.
- Mazel Tov to Kathryn and Kevin Kline on the birth of their daughter, Eleanor Rose, a sister for Callan.
- Mazel Tov to Daniel Chippin on receiving his PhD in Economics from the University of Toronto.
- Mazel Tov to Dolev on his Bar Mitzvah and happy Birthday to his twin sister Lotem, and


previously his older brother Aviad who had his Bar Mitzvah during the Covid Pandemic

- Mazel Tov to their proud mom, Ricky.

We have had so many functions well attended in Fredericton to mention a few are Purim and two Passover Seders hosted by Shaindy and Rabbi Yosef Goldman. I want to thank all of the hosts, volunteers, and Sisterhood ladies who have helped to make the events so successful and to the families who joined with their children.

Wishing those who are not well in our community a speedy recovery.

Wishing all Happy 75th Anniversary of Israel and enjoy your Summer.

Shelley Stephens/Louis Budovitch—
Co-Presidents, Sgoolai Israel Synagogue. 



PHOTOS: (1) children at megillah reading with the groggers March 6, 2023; (2) Children Baking Hamantaschen with Inball March 6, 2023; (3) children coloring at Purim party March 7, 2023 at Shul; (4) Purim Party celebration—Hamantaschen March 6-7, 2023; (5) Rabbi Yosef Goldman and Shaindy Goldman, Purim celebration in Shul March 6-7, 2023; (6) Kelly dressed up to celebrate Purim March 6, 2023 at Shul

REPORT FROM THE SAINT JOHN JEWISH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

BY KATHERINE BIGGS-CRAFT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CURATOR

The Saint John Jewish Historical Museum initiated a Winter Wednesday Walks series via Zoom for Museum members. Over eight weeks, a dedicated audience of former Saint John residents gathered on Zoom to reminisce about the families that lived on Orange Street, King Street East, Elliot Row, Leinster Street and Summer Street, the merchants who had their stores along

Main Street, the war veterans from the community and those whose lives were cut short by illness, accident or murder. It was an opportunity to share several years worth of research and the stories were well received. More importantly, it was a unique experience that reunited former Saint John Jewish community members who had not seen each other in years—or decades! Plans are going forward to create a regular series of events using Zoom to allow community members to re-connect and catch up.


The first in-person Yom Hashoah/ Holocaust Memorial Day Event since 2019 was held on Monday, April 17. We were pleased to welcome Leonard Vis of Toronto as our guest speaker. He went into hiding in 1942. His brother, sister and parents were hidden elsewhere. He was arrested in a raid on his hiding place by the Gestapo and local police. During his transport to the Westerbork Transit Camp on Yom Kippur 1943 he managed to jump from the train, returned to his caregivers and went back into hiding. The whole family survived. He focused his story on “survival skills and street smarts” which he credited with being able to survive the war.

Leonard Vis shared his story with more than 1300 high school students in Saint John, Quispamsis and Hampton, New Brunswick over two days. He opened each presentation with a different introduction and a question: “Who hates broccoli?” At each school, one student who answered yes to the question was invited to the stage and asked a second question: “Whose problem is that—yours or the broccoli’s?” Each student replied that it was their problem and was rewarded with a copy of a Holocaust memoir. What a wonderful way to convey the message. Several students stayed after the presentations to ask him questions.

Special thanks to all of the Saint John community members who came forward to help with setting up the Synagogue for the event—by bringing in extra chairs, distributing kippahs and programs and lighting candles. A special thanks to Elena Zeifer and Ludmilla and Alexey Izvekov for sharing their musical talents.

We will have a new exhibit in place for the coming tourist season: “Coming of Age: Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Celebrations.” The exhibit will include invitations, kippahs, programs, newspaper stories, gifts and memories of this milestone event. Visitors will find many familiar names among the documents that have been copied and assembled for the exhibit. If you celebrated in Saint John, there is still time for you to share your memories and your memorabilia for inclusion in the exhibit.

There was no Bar Mitzvah like a Saint John Bar Mitzvah—the entire community lent their time and talent to make each and every event unique and a success—from the teaching of the Torah portions by the Rabbis and teachers, to the preparation of everything to be served at the kiddush in the Shaarei Zedek Synagogue after the Saturday morning service—and all of it done with the love of family and community.

The Museum will be open from Tuesday, May 23 to Tuesday, November 7 for visitors. We have already heard from many individuals and families making plans to visit the Museum over the coming months and are also looking forward to more than 80 cruise ships making stops in the Port of Saint John. It promises to be a busy summer. 



PHOTOS: (1) XXX; (2) JM 1997.91.236—Invitation; (3) Leonard Vis, Holocaust survivor, Yom HaShoah service; (4) Shelley Cohen, Sally Davis and Evelynne Meltzer; (5-8) Yom HaShoah service

SAINT JOHN NEWS

BY SUSAN ISAACS-LUBIN

Our snowbirds have arrived home from a good winter, and we are very happy to see everyone.

The Saint John has had several events in the last few months. Purim was celebrated amid much noise with the greggors and many of those participating wearing costumes, and of course, delicious Hamantaschen.

On January 27th, we held a Welcoming Shabbat with a program of arts and crafts and learning for the children, and a special Shabbat Service for the adults, with treats for everyone following the Services.


A Community Seder was held on the first night of Passover. A traditional meal and Seder was held for all who attended. This was the second year we have held a community Seder. Thank you to Esti Bar Levi and her volunteers for arranging this program for the community.

And a sincere thank you to Drew and Jen Wall from No Frills Grocery store for filling their shelves and our homes with a full range of Passover items.

And for the second year, we celebrated Mimouna on Saturday, April 15, following the end of Passover. This is a wonderful tradition that was introduced to our Synagogue last year by our Israeli families of our Saint John community.

The Synagogue Board arranged with the City to have the Israeli flag raised in front of City Hall for Yom Hashoah. There was a short, but very moving ceremony. The Mayor spoke, Bruce Washburn, President of the Synagogue Board, spoke. Then the flag was raised while Elena Zeifer sang Hatikvah, accompanied by Ludmilla and Alexei Izvekov. We are pleased that our Saint John Jewish Historical Museum was able to hold the first live, in person Holocaust Memorial service (Yom Hashoah) since Covid. Leonard Vis, a Holocaust survivor, was the guest speaker.

Mazeltov to the Cohen family. Parkland Shannex in Saint John has named their newly built Alzheimer's unit after their mother, the late Honourable Erminie J. Cohen. Erminie spent the last few years of her life in Shannex and was very active in all aspects of Shannex life. We also want to wish Mazeltov to Lee Cohen, who recently received the Order of Nova Scotia.

Mazeltov to Avishag David, a recipient of the 2023 VIVE awards from the Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick. Avishag is a Strategic Program Director at the McKenna Institute. The David's are now living in Fredericton, but they started their life in Canada with us, and we still claim the family as Saint Johners! 



PHOTOS: (1) A group of children from the Jewish Studies program preparing for Purim; (2) Delicious homemade desserts for Mimouna; (3) Mia Fischer, Orin Marciano, Yael Fischer; (4) Hebrew School children with teacher, Dana Gonen; (5) Israeli flag flying of the City of Saint John at half staff honouring Yom Hashoah; (6) Purim with Yael Fischer and Orly Melech, with Orin Marciano as the dragon; (7) Saint John City Hall Israeli Flag raising with Bruce Washburn, Elena Zeifer, Ludmilla and Alexei Iz and the Mayor of Saint John, Donna Readon; (8) Passover Community Seder; (9) The children attending the Community Seder

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NEWFOUNDLAND NEWS

News from the far east

BY RABBI CHANAN AND TUBA CHERNITSKY



PHOTOS: (1) Kids in The Kitchen; (2) Passover Seder; (3-4) Purim Party

It's been a great winter. As our colleagues say in Winnipeg, we can't guarantee the weather but we can guarantee the warmth!

Chabad hosted well attended Community Shabbat dinners and monthly Shabbat services (followed by a delicious Kiddush lunch, of course!).

The very popular "Kids in The Kitchen" is happening again, once a month, in person, until June. The most recent one was after Purim.

Speaking of Purim... this year's theme for Purim was "Purim in Paris". The celebrations

began with the traditional Megillah reading from a scroll, followed by a Purim feast of french cuisine and desserts. It wouldn't be a Paris themed Purim without wine so we included a wine tasting opportunity after the meal with a variety of Kosher wines from Argentina, California and Israel.

The week after Purim, Rabbi Chernitsky traveled to Montreal together with three local Jewish teens for the National Friendship and Inclusion Weekend, organized by the Friendship Circle of Montreal.

The Friendship Circle exists to bring companionship and friendship to children with special needs and the Montreal branch organized a beautiful Shabbaton filled with speakers, great food and spirituality.

After the weekend, we returned to Newfoundland invigorated, inspired and ready to be leaders in the realm of friendship and inclusion.

Wednesday April 5 was the Community Passover Seder, attended by 33 guests! It was the biggest Seder yet and very much enjoyed by all. We were lucky to have with us two young Yeshiva students who helped with the set up and running of the Seder.


Everyone walked away having done all the Mitzvot of the night—eating matzah and drinking the 4 cup—with a better understanding of what Passover is all about.

The Sunday of Passover we hosted a baby girl naming ceremony for the Katz family. Mazel tov!

We got together to wrap up Passover just before the holiday ended on Thursday April 13. This is based on a hasidic custom to eat matzah and drink 4 cups of wine in the afternoon of the last day of Pesach. This is also known as "Seudas Moshiah", the feast of Moshiah as this is the theme of the last day of Passover.

We all had a chance to share a take away from Passover or a personal story of "leaving Egypt", i.e. our comfort zones.

Last but not least is the yearly Shavuot Ice Cream Party—We will be reading the ten commandments from a Torah scroll, followed by an ice cream bar and Shabbat dinner, as Shavuot overlaps with Shabbat this year.

Have a healthy summer! 

We are open 24/7 (with social distancing practices). For more information you can reach us at 709-341-8770 or through e-mail at chabadofnewfoundland@gmail.com.

Beth El Synagogue News

BY MICHAEL PAUL MD, PRESIDENT


As the warm weather finally arrived and the snow began to melt, we started preparing for Passover. Our food arrived shortly before the start of the holiday. There was a community Seder at the home of Sharlene and Finn Weitzman. Numerous shul members each prepared delicious items. Co leaders of the Seder—Finn Weitzman and Michael Paul called upon Seder participants to read sections in Hebrew or in English. It was to all accounts, a very successful event. Yasher Koach to all those who helped out.

We are preparing for the Bat Mitzvah of Sally Rose Citrome. She is studying very hard with her teacher, Elizabeth Loder. This joyous event is due for the Parsha Bamidbar on May 20, more about this in the next instalment.

The Holocaust Memorial Service, arranged by Beth El Synagogue and the Jewish Community Havura as a joint event, will occur on Sunday May 7 at the Bruneau Centre of Memorial University of Newfoundland. It is being planned by the committee composed of Drs Barbara Grandy,

Emmanuel Haven and Steve Wolinetz. They are continuing an event started about 70 years ago by the late Lewis and Grunia Ferman.

On Saturday April 15, following Shabbat services, there will be a lecture presented by Dr. Kevin Solez entitled "Ugaritic Literature and the Hebrew Bible".

We continue to enhance our community and thrive. 

PEI NEWS

BY JOSEPH B. GLASS

For Tu Bishvat 5783, the Prince Edward Island Jewish Community (PEIJC) planned a horse pulled sleigh ride through the forests of the Island and a Tu Bishvat Seder. However, the weather conditions were not agreeable with sub-zero temperatures, wind chills of below -20°C, and icy trails. The event was cancelled.

Thank you to volunteer Martin Rutte who canvassed PEIJC members for the Jewish National Fund Tu Bishvat campaign. Donations from Prince Edward Island increased by 26 percent over the previous year. In addition, the Jewish community collected funds in support of the Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance. The funds were designated for the replanting of trees following the devastation of Island forests during Hurricane Fiona in September 2022.

The PEIJC participated in "World Religion Day 2023: Celebrating the Beauty, the Unity, and the Oneness of the World's Religions." Hosted by the PEI Sikh Association in Charlottetown on January 15, the event brought together local representatives of various religious groups who discussed the theme: "Equal Wings for Equal Rights for All," with a focus on gender equality. Speakers from Sikh, Bahá'í, Muslim, Hindu, Bhuddhist, Jewish, and Christian religions took part. Dr. Joseph B. Glass discussed gender equality in Judaism and differentiated between traditional views on gender roles and changes initiated in the modern era. He elaborated on the different obligations and priorities for women and men in Jewish life as outlined in traditional Jewish thought and underscored some rabbinic discussions on the subject.

The PEIJC organized two Purim parties this year, one for the five-year olds and under crowd and the second gathering was held for the rest of the community. Over recent years, Prince Edward Island has seen a noticeable increase in its younger Jewish population through birth and immigration.

The children dressed up in costumes, and about half of the costumes were related to the Purim story. Leslee Sack, the community Bubbe, provided lovely Purim boxes with dried fruit, graggers (clappers), Purim-themed

colouring books, and other fun goodies for the children. Erica and Steve Powers graciously hosted the event and served lots of treats and snacks, including Hamantaschen, fruits, crackers, cheese, cookies, veggies, chips, drinks, and sushi. Purim storybooks from PJ Library were read and the children viewed a Sesame Street DVD on Purim. A build your own crown station and lots of other crafts for kids were organized. This was a wonderful opportunity for young Jewish children from different parts of PEI, and their parents, to connect and enjoy the holiday festivities.

The over five crowd were welcomed in the home of Pam Tarday and Lewis Levy for the adult Purim party. The participants brought a variety of dishes and shared a potluck meal. Pam's Hamantaschen were delicious, especially the blueberry ones.

The community Seder was held at the York Community Centre on the first night of Passover. Over 70 people attended the celebration. Members of the group read and sang from the Haggadah and enjoyed a communal meal of Passover delicacies. Fortunately, PEI was not plagued by matzah shortage. To support sustainability, participants brought their own place settings and cutlery to avoid using single-use plates and plastic cutlery. Thank you to Leo Mednick, Lisa Kessler, and Leslee Sack for organizing the event.

The PEIJC observed Yom HaShoah with a memorial ceremony on Sunday, April 16 at Memorial Hall of the Confederation Centre for the Arts in Charlottetown. The six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust were commemorated with the lighting of memorial candles, reading aloud the names of victims, reciting the Kaddish, and chanting of the El Maleh Rachamim. Over 120 persons from the Jewish community and other religious communities attended this important outreach event.

The keynote speaker was PEI award-winning poet, fiction writer, and playwright J. J. Steinfeld. He addressed the subject of "IDENTITY DREAMS AND MEMORY SOUNDS: The Holocaust, Jewish Identity, and Intergenerational Trauma through the Lens of a Second-Generation Author's Post-Holocaust Writing." J.J. Steinfeld grew up as the only child of Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors, and with the knowledge that he had been born in a Displaced Persons Camp in Germany. From an early age, he was



PHOTOS: (1) Joseph B. Glass presented with a gift by Sikh organizers of World Religion Day, 2023; (2) Leslee Sack in her "WHAT WOULD MOSES COOK?" apron; (3) Pam's Hamantaschen; (4) Parents and children at the under five Purim Party (5) First night Seder at York Community Centre

confronted with difficult historical questions about suffering and the destruction of lives that affected his world view and caused him to search for purpose and meaning through creativity. While his writing deal with many aspects of the human condition, certain themes weave through his imagination's desire to confront what had happened to his family and the Jews during the Second World War, mainly the influence of the past and memory on the present, especially on how the Holocaust affects subsequent generations. Another aspect of this theme has been the effect of personal and historical trauma on individuals; how the turmoil and struggle of existence stir some people to rage while paralyzing others. In his fiction, poetry, and plays, he has attempted to have a dialogue with the Divine, with the past, with what was displaced, stolen, destroyed, but still exists in memory, in the desire for some connection to the past, for an understanding of the present, and in the hope for a less damaging future.

J.J. Steinfeld read excerpts from his

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CAPE BRETON NEWS

BY SHARON JACOBSON

Two excellent books were suggested to me by Paula Michalik, a community member of delicate insight. “This Is Happiness” by Niall Williams and, “Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan. Both take place in Ireland. Both could have been set on Cape Breton Island. Plain-speaking, yet quiet folk living an existential rural reality, one book begins: “It had stopped raining.” Ah, yes, The Weather! It does not get more Cape Breton than this!

Well, at one point this winter, like characters in this book, we all noticed “it had stopped snowing” for three weeks! Yet synagogue services were fewer? The weather was obviously not the reason. Of course, some people had left for warmer climes, some simply hibernated, or whatever.

Our dwindling numbers reflected as well our lack of programs. We will have no Yom Hashoah event this year; most of us were unaware of who had made this happen previously. Maybe next year we will join the other Atlantic communities to spotlight the Holocaust and its ugly parent, Antisemitism.

EVEN SEDERS WERE FEWER.

Enie and Moe Lief departed for Toronto, their new home. David Ein and Paula were occupied with their return from Florida. Marlene (Elman) and her husband “Skip” Walker, both expert sailors had resumed sailing in the Caribbean on their sailboat, “A Splash of Water”, (love the name). They had been “high and dry” during the previous Pandemic years.

Their winter home you might say is on the water! Friends flew in to join them as they visited various islands, feeling the freedom of the holiday. Stanley and I and our son, Matthew (Boston) attended two seders in Toronto. One was with Stanley’s brothers, the Jacobson family, 28 people at various tables; the other, with my brother and his family and sundry cousins and relations, 14 altogether celebrating. Our final song was adapted from a Broadway musical, “There’s No Seder Like Our Seder” (there’s no seder I know). I could just see Elijah humming his way out the door?! Crazy, I know.

Peshe & Peter Kuriloff celebrated his 80th birthday together with family in Costa Rica.

When I asked him about a Seder, he replied: “Hi Sharon, yes. We improvised. The kids did a play where they put either Pharaoh or G-d on trial—not sure which. It was hilarious. Some prayers and good singing. It was a brief but Satisfying Seder.”

Barrie Carnat was also in Toronto with family. His first Seder was at son, Daniel’s with 24 people in attendance! Barrie enjoyed the surplus of matzah in Toronto and the candy fruit slices that were his favourite treat as a kid. He also said that for many years there had been large seders in Englishtown. They would borrow chairs and tables from the Community Hall; fed 30 plus people, sang songs and told the story of Passover. His brother-in-law, Leon Dubinsky was sorely missed. Indeed, Leon’s presence at a family gathering like this was no doubt the stature of



a Moses presiding over the table!

Well, After all, Jews are about Family, Food, and the Gathering Ritual!

This brings me to the sadness we all felt at the passing of Leon Dubinsky. He had cultivated Cape Breton as his home. It had inspired him. The iconic and ubiquitous “We Rise Again” reverberated universal themes, for the Miners of Cape Breton, the Red Cross, the March of the Living, the Holocaust, and the victims of any war or disaster.

Like Heinrich Heine and Irving Berlin, he grabbed the hearts of his country, his people...he spoke for us all.

His Music, stirred the soul, reached viscerally into your bones. Hauntingly, it wrenches



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you from the undertow and lifts you onto the crest of its wave. Thank You Leon.

The clan gathered for his funeral as well as countless friends. His wife, Beth and daughter, Ella eulogized a husband and father with his songs!

His nephew, Uri Carnat and musician friend, Max MacDonald “spoke the stories”; brother-in-law, Barrie Carnat presided over the service. In attendance, was his brother, Leslie, Aunt Inez Schwartz, cousins, Heidi, Jonathan A., Enie (Moe) and his nephew Uri’s wife Kelly and their children.

I believe it was Heidi who brought English-town Dirt to the grave site...a gentle touch.

A former Sydney congregant, Sylvia Neiman Epstein also passed away. At a young age, she had studied piano and even in her final days she could be seen playing the baby grand in her Independent Living Residence. She loved jazz, musicals and music from the 40’s and 50’s. Cape Breton, it seems had quite a musical Jewish community! Sylvia hailed from Cornerbrook, Nfld. but moved to Montreal with her mother, when her Dad and brother died. She attended and graduated from McGill University. She met Erwin Epstein from Sydney and the rest was history. Petite and exuberant, she presided over the local Hadassah chapter, as well as supporting local charitable endeavours. She lived for 50 years on Rigby Rd in Sydney, in George’s River, and Florida; when retired, she and Erwin moved to Toronto to be closer to daughter Sandra and grandchildren, Neesa & Geofrey. She visited Vancouver where son, Michael and his wife, Catherine and their three kids, David, Alexander, and Johanna lived.

Incidentally, she was a masterful cribbage player! A true Cape Bretoner!

I must thank Bev Bernick Jacobson for researching this profile of Sylvia. Bev grew up in Sydney and remembers “the people in her neighbourhood” fondly.

On a lighter note, Bethsheila (Leith) Kent celebrated her 75th Birthday this spring. I hope it was accompanied with “birdsong”, Bethsheila!

Also, Beth Sheila, who had spear-headed a project for the Shul to help repair the leaking roof, announced that \$1300 had been raised through the sale of assorted dishes, cutlery, and cookery items from the Kosher Kitchen of the synagogue. Bravo Bethsheila!

These are confusing and perhaps, intimidating times for Jews in the Diaspora? In Israel, Netanyahu is trying to overhaul the Judicial system amidst widespread protest by its citizens and violence in the West Bank. Is this more fodder for the growing anti-Semitism that is being fed into the gut of social media and world opinion? I wonder how other Jews in the Maritimes sort this out on a local level... just wondering...

But let’s get back to a more lyrical way of seeing the world. For example, when we talk climate change in our Cape Breton community, it is like Ireland, Rain—Too Much; Too Little A professor from Cornell University recounts a tale wherein a Rabbi asks the Nazis to join as we pray for rain. His point—“Maybe G-d will get so mad, He will send another Flood!”

“It had started raining.” (This Is Happiness, Niall Williams). ☺

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short stories and poetry illustrating intergenerational trauma from this second-generation author’s post-Holocaust writings. Our sincerest thanks to J.J. Steinfeld. Six of J.J. Steinfeld’s short stories addressing the Holocaust can be found in his latest collection, *Acting on the Island: And Other Prince Island Stories, New and Selected* (Nimbus 2022). Special thank yous to Raquel Hoerstring Barbosa, Ilana Clyde, and Ian MacAusland-Berg for their parts in the commemoration ceremony.

As part of the PEIJC’s community outreach activities, Darryl Bloom and Joseph Glass spoke about Judaism with Dan’s grade six Social Studies class in Kinkora. The Q&A session covered an array of topics including Hanukkah, Passover, Hebrew, the Holocaust, traditional foods, and golems. After a short explanation of Passover, the students tried some matzah, and they loved it (probably because it was egg matzah). Later in the class, as a contrast to the bread of affliction, the students were treated to Leo Mednick’s Montreal style bagels. They were a real hit! Not a poppy seed or a crumb of matzah remained.

The students were a delightful group and very inquisitive. After looking at a siddur, the Hebrew script piqued their curiosity, and they asked to be taught a few words in Hebrew. After their teacher thanked Darryl and Joseph, the children yelled out “todah” in unison and the session ended with a very warm “shalom” from the students. The students had learned at least two useful Hebrew words and when to use them and a bit about Judaism. ☺



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MONCTON NEWS

BY FRANCIS WEIL

Since our last article in this Magazine we, in Greater Moncton, had a certain number of activities, namely we celebrated Purim and Pesach, had a Bar-Mitzvah, organized a very solemn Yom-HaShoah ceremony, had funerals and discovered that the first Jewish boy born in the area was not the one we thought.

As usual, the bulletins from the congregation can be seen and downloaded from www.tiferesisrael.com. Do not hesitate to go on this website. All the bulletins contain more details than we can include in this report.

The synagogue has been able to maintain a minyan every Shabbat morning (with one exception).

When R. Isaac & Pinchas Yagod are not in Moncton, Ury El, Eitan Izichkis, Arik Tolmasov, Rowen Shinder and David Miller have been very generous with their time to prepare the weekly Torah readings. Toda raba to all five.

As mentioned in the previous report, we still hope that more of the many Israeli families will join. Quite a number of them do participate in our social events, it is very pleasant that they are more numerous now.

On Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Iyyar (April 22) David Elroie Nasimov became Bar-Mitzvah. A good crowd attended and the kiddush, organised by his mother and Sisterhood, was beautiful.

The community had the visit from Rabbi Rosenberg from New York. He spent a few days in Moncton, inspecting the Mikvah and finding it in good working condition.

The AGM took place in February. New members have joined the board of directors. Welcome to Alina Langleben and Leigh Lampert as well as to Carole Savage, the new treasurer.

The President, Vice-President, Secretary remain the same. It is worth noting that the President is the oldest synagogue president of all four Atlantic provinces. He seems to like to cumulate the titles as he is President, Gabbai and Editor of the community bulletin.

Leigh Lampert and Nicole Druckman are both on the board of Camp Kadimah.

Sisterhood, under the leadership of Betty

Druckman and Victoria Volkanova organised a beautiful community party for Purim in the lobby of the synagogue right after the reading of the Megillah. It was prepared by a few families—the Langleben, the Izichkis, the Savage and others—Please have a look to some of the pictures—they show the beautiful costumes some of the kids were wearing.

Sadly, one of our newest members, Betty Kozovsky passed away in March. She was buried in the Dieppe Jewish Cemetery.

The eight days of Pesach went well with family Sederim in various places. The store Taste of Homeland had plenty of Matzah for everyone.

An American sent a message to the Shul asking if we knew anything about the birth of his Grand Father. Upon checking, and with the help of Jennifer Savage, we found that it was true, that a Louis Phillips was born in 1883 in Cherryfield (a small village then, but now within the limits of Moncton). He is buried in a Jewish cemetery in New Orleans. That is a complete surprise to us as we always thought that the first Jewish baby born in the Moncton region was Wilfred Gorber (born in the early 1900s).

Josh and Adam Makarov, sons of Michael and Victoria, went to Israel this winter on a Birth-right tour. They wrote an excellent description of their trip, description that you can read in our Pesach bulletin: www.tiferesisrael.com/Docs/BulletinNissan5783s.pdf

Adam Makarov is graduating this spring from Dalhousie U. with a Bachelor of Sciences (Medical Sciences) with Honours. He was the recipient of the AJC's Abe Leventhal scholarship this year.

On Sunday April 23, the community held its annual Yom HaShoah ceremony. It was organised by Victoria Volkanova, Zohar El, Christine Chiasson, Elizabeth Karpowicz and Francis Weil. The invited speaker, Gally Felter Gonen, spoke about Romania during WW2, of her Grand Father, Alfred Felter, who helped the Jews in the city of Sibiu. The ceremony was very well attended. Thank you



PHOTOS: (1-2) Purim kids; (3-5) Yom HaShoah

to all who helped organising it, particularly the Langleben family.

In her presentation, Gally Felter Gonen tells the story of the Jewish community of Sibiu (Romania), who lived through times of persecution and hostility with resilience and courage, guided by their leaders. The president of the Jewish Community, Alfred Felter, played a role in reversing the plan of nazi Manfred Von Killinger, to deport all remaining Romanian Jews to death camps in late 1942 – early 1943. Through correspondence, meetings and personal connections, his actions had contributed to changing the course of history. Based on the book “Ember In The Dark” by Alexander S. Felter.

There is a special link between the cities of Sibiu and Moncton. Sibiu is where the family of the late Isadore Fine came from. Isadore Fine and his wife Esther donated the beautiful Inuit art collection that is now in the library of the Université de Moncton. umoncton.ca/nouvelles/info.php?id=17443; umoncton.ca/umcm-hebdo-campus/pdf/2015-12-03.pdf

The community is expecting some Bat-Mitzvah and Bar-Mitzvah to happen this summer. A Cheder program has been set up.

Wishing all a very healthy and prosperous summer 2023. 🍷

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU ABOUT?

BY RABBI YOSEF GOLDMAN, SGOOLAI ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE, FREDERICTON, NB

There is a saying in Hebrew: “tell me who your friends are; and I will tell you who you are”!


Apparently, this is derived from a statement in the Talmud (Tractate Bava Kamma 92b) that says: “if your friend calls you a donkey—prepare a saddle for your back” (Rabbi Steinsaltz Koren edition translation). Let me tell you: I don’t think this is a good friend to have!

I was thinking that we can slightly change this Hebrew expression to: “tell me what your celebrations, festivals and days of remembrance—and I will tell you who you truly are”. This past year, my spouse, with a lot of help from others who shall remain nameless, has invited people from all faiths to participate in our Jewish celebrations. After many restrictions of COVID-19 were lifted, many Jewish families who we never met before, became very interested in what our Shul has to offer in terms of Jewish Holy-days and they started coming.

Let me explain something. If I came to a job interview and before finding out if I got the job—I come to the future employer with a list of vacation days I expect to have; what are the chances that I will get the job, if I list religious holidays from Two (or more) different faiths?! I would think that there is Zero Percent a chance of them hiring me! Therefore, for us to be able to revive our community, and strengthen our Jewish identity, we figured that if non-Jews saw our beautiful celebrations, and our very intense (but enriching) way of remembrance of important events—we will be blessed by the presence of more Jewish people, if only for the fact that these new (non-Jewish) friends will tell their Jewish friends how great their experience was!

We are about to celebrate the 75th Birthday of the State of Israel, and the government of Israel made the previous day, by law, the Israeli Remembrance Day for the fallen soldiers. Personally, I believe that if we don’t remember the soldiers and victims of

terrorism in a proper way—we have no right to celebrate the independence that we have through their ultimate sacrifice. Therefore, in contrast with the USA, that Memorial Day has turned into a shopping frenzy, which is totally disrespectful, in Israel all shopping malls are closed on Remembrance Day! The usual TV & Radio shows are all canceled, and replaced by reading of the names (roll call) of the fallen soldiers and Terrorist victims (who, by the way, are not all Jewish, but Muslims, Christians, Druze, Cherkesi and others I can’t remember), and very sad songs of war & remembrance!

So, to answer the question above, if you come to Shul to celebrate Hanukkah, Tu Bishvat, Purim & Passover you can be considered Jewish according to many communities; but if you come for Minyan at a Shiv’ah house and for the Holocaust Remembrance ceremony and you come and fast & pray with us on Yom Kippur and Tisha’ah B’Av (which I consider the hardest fast, because we aren’t in Synagogue most of the day)—then you are most definitely one of us! 



ON BECOMING FREE

BY RABBI CHANAN CHERNITSKY, DIRECTOR, CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF NEWFOUNDLAND

As Passover just finished, let’s talk about freedom.

The concept of freedom is truly elusive. What is it and how do we achieve it?

Is freedom about having unlimited choice, being able to do whatever we want—whenever we want?

A lot of people have no lack of money or time but aren’t free. They don’t feel that they can do what they want, whenever they want, etc. Something or someone is hindering their growth or pursuit of happiness.

Famously, the Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke about Howard Hughes soon after he had passed away, in 1976.

It was before Passover and the Rebbe spoke about the concept of freedom.

Was Howard Hughes “free”? He was one of the richest men in the world at the time.

“No”, said the Rebbe. Howard Hughes suffered from terrible anxiety and fear of being

killed, poisoned, etc. and wasn’t able to enjoy his fortunes. That’s not freedom.

So who is free and how do we attain that freedom?

The freedom we are striving for on Passover and year round is the freedom to express who we truly are. It is not about having unlimited choice.

Interestingly, Victor Frankel wrote extensively about this concept in his work “Man’s Search for Meaning”. He notes that in his time in Auschwitz he saw people who were happy and strongly hoped to survive the war—they had no material possessions and they were not free in the physical sense—but they were content. They had meaning. They had a purpose.

This is the freedom that we want. The freedom to express who we truly are. The freedom to express our soul and its deep desire to connect with the Infinite G-d.

In Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers, one of the tractates of the Mishna) tell us that: “Who is free? He who occupies himself with the Torah and Judaism”.

The obvious question is—how is that true? Clearly, a person sensitive to his Judaism can’t eat in all sorts of restaurants and do certain things on Shabbat and on and on. How is he or she free?

The answer is as above, that freedom is not about unlimited choice. Freedom is about being in sync with who we truly are—a G-dly soul eagerly waiting to connect with its source—and living that way. Anything other than that is a constraint.

So, what’s holding you back? Will you finally be free? Free from pressures, trauma, toxicity, etc.

Best wishes for a healthy summer! 



THINKING OF ISRAEL

BY RABBI YAKOV KERZNER, BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE, HALIFAX, NS

As I sit here on Yom Ha'Atzmaut, my thoughts go back to earlier memories of Israel. My Grade Five teacher standing with a radio to his ear reporting the latest updates of the Six Day War. The dreaded fear in our shul of Holocaust survivors as the Yom Kippur War unfolded. The ridiculously high inflation of the 80's. A backward country where a phone line was a long-awaited luxury. My first trip to Israel during the tense first Intifada. My cousin beaten to near death following my grandmother's funeral in the midst of the Second Intifada. Viewing missile fragments in Sderot. Vacationing in Israel while the Second Lebanese War raged on. Visiting Northern Israel upon the cessation of hostilities. The inability to remember how many Gaza Wars have occurred in the last few years. The pride felt when seeing a modern advanced country of the last twenty years. Walking the streets of Jerusalem and hearing Hebrew replace Yiddish, Arabic, English and Russian in the streets of every Israeli neighborhood. Walking along the streets of any city confident that Jewish soldiers were there to protect me. The emotions that rise to the surface knowing that my parents and grandparents are buried in the land that generations of their forbears hoped to live and die in. The mixture of pride and fear when my own son joined the IDF and helped guard the Gazan border. And the frustration when the rift between right and left, between religious and secular turns into street demonstrations and talk of a civil war.

The Jewish people have a long and

tortured history, but an undying optimism has always reminded us that better days will come. That G-D will never let his People perish. That, as it says in the Torah, the merit of the generations that preceded us will guarantee our survival. That our connection to the past, our attachment to tradition, our faith in G-D and our adherence to the Torah will save us from destruction.

It was impossible to imagine that three years after the Holocaust, the nations that passively allowed the murder of our families, granted us the right to reclaim the Land of Israel. There was no way that a young nation of seventy-five years would stand proud as a regional superpower and a hi-tech center with a reborn religious life and a vibrant democracy.


One extremely important ingredient has allowed our past success and given us the hope for an even better future. Unity. The story begins with Joseph and his brothers. The brothers were jealous of and hated Joseph. They planned to kill him. In their eyes, Joseph was an arrogant upstart bragging that he would be the leader of the clan. But when push came to shove, Reuven, the first born and the traditional leader made a simple declaration. We cannot take the life of our brother. Jealousy and hatred were overridden by the bonds of brotherhood. Reuven understood that we must stand united. We cannot let our disputes degenerate into unrecoverable divisions. We stand together.

Admittedly, we are in troubled times. The divisions are great. The rivalries between the

right and the left and between the religious and the secular are threatening to tear us apart. Our fractious society seems to be ready to split down the middle.

But we have survived much greater challenges.

No matter how dire the situation appears, we have faith, not only in G-D but in our Jewish brethren. We must truly believe that brotherhood and unity is the one G-D given blessing that allowed us to survive thousands of years of nation building, exile and diaspora living.

We have no choice but to remain united and survive. We must not and will not forget that no disagreement is strong enough to rip us apart. We will continue to believe that our survival is our G-d given right and that to grow and prosper is the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham at the beginning of his journey to the Promised Land. 



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"I would like to extend warm greetings and best wishes to the Atlantic Jewish Community on the 75th birthday of the State of Israel."

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PESACH – WHAT DOES SPRING HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

BY RABBI MENDEL FELDMAN, CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF THE MARITIMES

The Torah cautions us three times to celebrate Passover only during the spring season.

Our months follow the lunar cycle (which is 11 days shorter than the solar calendar), so naturally Passover would fall out at various seasons of the year. To prevent this, every 2–3 years we add an extra month to our calendar, (known as a leap-year), so that Pesach does not “move” away to another season, and always coincides with spring.

Why is the Torah so adamant that we observe Passover during the spring season? The Torah explains this at the three occasions “for in the month of spring, G-d brought you out of Egypt.” But still, what is the importance of celebrating Passover each year at the identical season when it occurred the first time? What message does the Torah wish to impart from this?

The Rebbe gave the following explanation: In the winter you go out to your yard, and you see the trees are bedecked with snow and ice, no leaves, no growth, no vegetation they appear lifeless. However, this is only on the surface, but in reality, although the tree seems dormant it is very much alive.

Winter is a cold and difficult time for many organisms, including trees, and the trees must prepare themselves to survive this harsh season. During winter’s dormancy, a tree’s metabolism, energy consumption, and growth all slow down significantly in order to endure the harsh season of winter when water and sunlight are scarce. This dormancy occurs in stages; it begins in the fall with the loss of leaves, so trees do not expend energy in keeping them alive during the winter.

Through the winter months, the rate of growth is brought nearly to a halt, the stored energy is utilized to maintain the tree’s health. With no growth and the task of keeping its leaves alive, trees are able to survive through winter by maintaining only the “essential system” until the spring when nature reawakens, and the trees begin to blossom once again.

The truth is that the spring blossoming is a direct result of the incredible work the tree did during the harsh winter, conserving its energy and nutrients. What seemed like lifelessness was the furthest thing from it; it was really the conservation of life internally, allowing afterward for the outward blossoming.

We can now appreciate one of the reasons that the Torah instructs us to celebrate Passover during springtime for it is this season and its botanical wonders that allow us to internalize one of the holiday’s vital messages.

The prophet Ezekiel described the Jewish people before the Exodus in these words: “But you were naked and bare, similar to the tree in the winter: naked and bare. When the Jews were in Egypt, the sages teach us, they were submerged in the “forty-nine gates” of impurity, to the point that if they would have remained there any longer, they could not be redeemed.


They suffered so much they were numb and lost all hope for redemption. But, just like the tree, that was only externally, at the surface it seemed like the Jews were bare and naked. But as “spring” arrived, as Passover came, the people blossomed, and

merely seven weeks after liberation, in a singular moment in history, G-d revealed Himself to them and gave them the Torah, the blueprint to create a nation under the direct sovereignty of G-d, and to change the world.

Within a few weeks, the incredible transformation that has happened to this people during all those years in Egyptian exile became apparent. They may have seemed life-less, but internally, they were alive to the degree that they were able to receive the Torah just seven weeks later.

So too, in our own lives, sometimes the situation can seem hopeless, and unpromising. Look again! There is a simmering life beneath the surface, give yourself some time, “sunlight” and nourishment, and you will come back to life.

What is more, sometimes our dormancy serves a vital purpose, occasionally, our minds and souls retreat into hibernation in order to conserve energy focus and vitality. It is essential to the process of nature, you can’t be bedecked with green leaves all the time, there are times in life when we need to shed the leaves and retreat into our inner self. Don’t be afraid of such moments; it will allow you to regenerate with new life, vitality, and focus!

Wishing you a spring and summer season of good health, growth, and vitality. 



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THE RECEIVING OF THE TORAH. COERCED OR ADVISED?

BY RABBI PINCHAS YAGOD, CONGREGATION TIFERES ISRAEL, MONCTON, NB

Shavuot starts, of course, in the year 2448.

Moses told the Jews before entering the desert, that they were travelling towards Israel. He told them that before entering Israel it was integrally important that they accept the Torah law beforehand. Why was it necessary to accept the Torah before entering the Land of Israel? In short, its because the entering wasn't just going to be an entering, or an occupation. It was going to be a spiritual acceptance of the land, much the way the acceptance of the Torah was, and thus it had to be according to G-d's law. A lengthier explanation can be covered in a different article.

In order to accept the Torah, it was necessary to give us time to mentally prepare, so as not to risk accepting it half-heartedly or in a contradictory state of mind. In order to aid this properly, Moses taught us many lessons, for over a month and a half, all about recognizing G-d and loving each other, and also teaching us Jewish laws which were designed to reflect these important virtues.

Finally, it was time for the giving of the Torah. G-d told Moses that it was necessary for the Jews to make a specific type of mental preparation towards this event. This preparation would involve creating a state of mental focus wherein one would be able to absorb some very strong and very quick spiritual climbs.

These changes would be difficult to experience, or simply be inaccessible, without the proper, prepared focus.

We do a similar form of mental exercise every year by fasting on Yom Kippur in order to prepare our souls for a better year.

Everyone assembled at the mountain, getting ready for this momentous event.

What happened next is quite fascinating. The Talmud, in Tractate Shabbat page 88a, describes what happened next in a very shocking presentation: "G-d held the mountain above them like a large container and said: if you accept the Torah, good. If not, out there *will be your collective burial*." To understand why the Talmud appears to indicate that G-d threatening us into accepting, requires understanding the fact that the Talmud was purposely written in a puzzle/brain teaser format.

Thus a unique form of coded and terse expression is extremely prevalent and requires an accurate cracking of the code.

One of the main ways of decoding the Talmud is to state what it seems like the Talmud is saying, then to raise the questions that seem to jump out due to the specified phrasing.

So here goes: It appears as though G-d has coerced us into accepting the Torah!

However, this conclusion appears to have been jumped to, due to the following issues:

1. why does the Talmud compare the mountain to a large container?

2. Why does it say "*out there* will be your burial" and not "*here* will be your burial"?

3. Mount Sinai is traditionally known as being one of the smallest mountains in the world, while the amount of people gathered at that site, being 600,000 families, (most of whom actually had large families) plus guests, equalled at least 8 million individuals—simply much too big to be wiped out by such a small mountain. One possibility is that everyone would get slightly dusted, or that a quite a minimal percentage, all grouped in one small area, would have perished, leaving the rest of the nation completely unblemished with a very small net difference; thus the threat seems to be of no consequence. (One might argue that its not impossible for G-d to kill so many with such a small mountain. However, this argument doesn't make sense, because G-d, who is unlimited, wouldn't need to resort to the mountain for threats, as He could have simply said "or else I will end your lives").

I have an answer to each of these questions in order as I listed them: (number 2 is not my own answer)

1. It seems to me that perhaps the container metaphor is meant to set the tone entirely for the rest of the sentence. You see, the Hebrew name the Talmud uses for this container is "Gigit/גיט". This was a type of storage container which could hold a large volume, and could preserve its contents for a long period of time, keeping it healthy and valuable. What G-d appears to be saying is: i have a large container of healthy and valuable wisdom which I am offering you.

2. G-d does not say "here", but rather "out there". Meaning that out there, later on, if you miss this important advice, you will suffer from the lack.

3. Notice how the Talmud does not include any kind of segue of "i will drop it on you"

indicating that the death will not happen due to the dropping of the mountain, but rather due to a different cause. Notice also, how the phrasing is not "*out there you will all die*" but rather, "*out there will be your collective burial*". The word *burial* seems to be oddly specific, when a simple "*you will all die*" would have been more direct to the point. Thus perhaps G-d is indicating a spiritual burial rather than a physical one.

In conclusion, the Talmud appears to be saying: "G-d held the mountain above them as a container of wisdom. He said: 'if you accept this Torah, you will benefit well. If you don't, the lack will cause you to suffer strongly later on.'"

After seeing how the Talmud can be decoded like this, one might ask: why does the Talmud start out with such a dramatic, even misleading codification.

The answer is that the Talmud often uses these forms of expression, in order to pique the interest of the reader, so as to make it a more intriguing experience, because Torah study is not meant to be a drag). This actually presents a serious hypothetical question? What would have happened had we not accepted the Torah? There are many explanations, but the one that seems to emerge from here is that had we not accepted it, life would have gone on as usual. G-d would not have forced us into it afterward. However, there would be no Jewish people, no Jewish culture, no Jewish land, not even a distinguishable Jewish name. This then truly would have been our burial. Thus we would have effectively done ourselves in, worse than any of our enemies' plots, such as the Holocaust, because no matter how many bullets or poisons a Jew may be faced with, they are still a Jew, and can still feel proud of their heritage, unless they allow themselves to get diluted to the masses, even in a peaceful time.

Ultimately, it seems that the answer to the question in the title is that the Torah was not forced upon us, but rather was advised to us by G-d who knows us so well, and he even gave us a choice in the matter.

Happy Shavuot to everyone. Thank you for reading my article. If you have any questions for me, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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Chag Shavuot Sameach!

