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The voice of Jewish Hamilton

This is the time to show solidarity

Jewish organizations unite to protect the most vulnerable among us



Community professionals shared strategies JHamilton in mid-March to discuss the COVID-19 crisis. Seated, l to r, are Temple Anshe Sholom Cantor Paula Baruch, Beth Jacob Synagogue manager, Shira Kates, Kehila Heschel board member, Anita Bernstein, Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO, Gustavo Rymberg, and Hamilton Jewish Family Services executive director, Alexis Wenzowski. Standing, l to r, McMaster Hillel director, Judith Dworkin, JNF executive director, Suzy Polgar, Federation Campaign Director, Elaine Levine and the Adas Israel's Rabbi Chanan Weiser.

STORY BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**, HJN

CLOSURES, CANCELLATIONS and working from home are transforming the landscape of the Hamilton Jewish community as Jewish organizations scramble to adapt to new realities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. At a meeting of Jewish communal professionals on March 14 at JHamilton, a spirit of unity, resolve and collective solidarity was palpable as people expressed support for each other and shared strategies

of how to best protect their most vulnerable members. What was profoundly evident was that the pandemic has ushered in a new era of intra-organizational collaboration, none more so than frontline agencies, Shalom Village and Hamilton Jewish Family Services (HJFS). Organizations have canceled their spring fundraising events and Federation has cancelled the community Yom HaShoah commemoration and Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration.

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“Never has the damage inflicted upon Israel's three airlines reached these heights ...”

How Israel is dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic P10

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Difficult days

We need each other
now more than ever

Gustavo Rymberg



HOLA. These are difficult days. I'd like to think that things are going to get better, that together as a community, as a city, and as a country, it won't take long for us to overcome this terrible situation. It's hard to believe that normal doesn't exist anymore, that normal is changing every day and that slowly, we're all being forced to adjust to a very different way of life.

I've felt this lost and confused twice before in my life. The first was the July 1994 bombing of the AMIA - Buenos Aires' Jewish Community Centre, and the second after 9/11. What's different about today's situation is that those events had a beginning and an immediate, tragic end with dramatic consequences. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we don't know how or when it's going to end. Nor do we know what will be its ultimate cost.

But we are learning new life lessons, by the hour and by the day.

We're learning that normal does not last forever and that the world and our lives can be transformed in an instant; that it doesn't matter how bad last week was; tomorrow can be worse; that there are people who need our help now more than ever. People who have never asked for help, will need our help; People whom we could never have imagined wanting for anything, are going to need to know that someone is concerned for their wellbeing and ready to help.

We're learning that, despite the tragedy unfolding in Italy, Spain, France or Israel, people believe in singing together, in being together in different ways and that, despite our self-isolation, people around the world are finding new ways to be in touch.

We're learning that, in a situation where doctors in Italy are forced to choose who will live and who will die, our obligation is to live every day, doing our best, as if it's our last.

Synagogues, churches, and mosques are closing, but we continue praying and believing, and helping others in countless ways.

We're learning that grandparents can't hug their grandkids, seniors are in lockdown facilities, community events, lifecycle celebrations and community gatherings are being cancelled, but we're still looking for ways to get together. Because we need each other now more than ever.

Letters to the Editor

Racism. Not by default

IN THE MOST RECENT EDITION OF THE Hamilton Jewish News, there was an opinion piece about how to handle racism and hate in Hamilton. I wholeheartedly agree with the thesis that something needs to be done.

I do, however, take exception with the author's quoting of Robin Diangelo, who says that racism is so ingrained into 'white' people that 'white' people are racist by default. Here's a thought: don't call me racist, until I do something racist. Calling me racist for being 'white' is, wouldn't you know it, racist.

Why is it that when one tries to question the notion that all white people were born racist, they are informed that this insubordination and lack of willingness to simply 'comply' is subconscious racism in full swing? How have we become so removed from reason that such an ideology has become so widely accepted?

With the exception of anything related to Diangelo, the piece was insightful, and the author's commitment to fighting racism and prejudice is admirable, and I don't mean to undermine all the work she does to fight oppression, which, as she alluded to, appears in many forms. But the singling out of "white" people as being the perpetrators of racism by virtue of their being "white" leads me to question the sincerity of her efforts. She didn't need to quote Robin Diangelo, and therefore villainize a group of people based on their skin colour. But she did. So yes; let us address racism. But let us address it wherever and however it appears.

Oliver Borr

The HJN welcomes letters to the editor. To submit a letter for publication, email wshneider@jewishhamilton.org.



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A princess tea party



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Hamilton was transformed into an enchanted wonderland on March 8 for the Hamilton Jewish Community Centre's second annual "Princess and Me High Tea." Princess Ariel of Atlantica, together with Queen Elsa and Princess Anna from Arendelle, were all on hand to entertain and delight the sellout crowd of children and their parents.

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be struggling more than we are.

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“Our community is doing amazing things”

SOLIDARITY CONTINUED FROM P1

Synagogues cancelled their in-person services and programs in early March, and are conducting services and classes remotely, while Jewish schools have cancelled classes until further notice.

Hamilton Jewish Family Services (HJFS) cancelled all of its seniors programming in early March and has moved some of its programs online. The Kosher Food Bank and its financial relief programs are still operational, albeit it with safety precautions. (For details see page 13).

Shalom Village has closed its doors to all with the exception of relatives of those receiving end-of-life care. (See Shalom Village COVID-19 update on page 14)

A common concern for all the community's Jewish organizations is the financial implications of the crisis.

“It's important for people to understand that organizations still need your support,” said Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg. “Galas and events may be cancelled or postponed, but if you've bought a ticket for an event, or taken out a sponsorship, at the end of the day, it was meant to help the organization. The priority should still be to support these organizations.”

Hamilton Jewish Federation staff have been working remotely and Federation's primary focus has been on identifying and responding to needs in the community. To that end, Federation staff are mobilizing to reach out to every individual in their database over the next few weeks. Federation has also created the Hamilton Jewish Community Response to COVID-19 Facebook group, as a central address in the Jewish community where people can ask for and receive help. The page is moderated by representatives from each of the Jewish institutions in Hamilton and will provide all the information relevant to the Jewish community throughout the term of the pandemic.

“Our community is doing amazing things during this time,” wrote HJFS's Alexis

Wenzowski in one of her daily communications. “Let us keep up this good work, and continue to show solidarity with one another. We are more connected than we think.”

How you can help

This crisis is impacting us all. But those who will suffer the most — and face the greatest risks — are the most vulnerable among us. They need our support as soon as possible. Join the Hamilton Jewish Community Response to COVID-19 Facebook group to connect with other members of our community. If you or someone you know needs help, please don't hesitate to reach out to Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg at grymberg@jewishhamilton.org or Jewish Family Services at info@hamiltonjfs.ca.

Things to keep in mind

The coronavirus pandemic has created massive uncertainty in our country and our world. In the coming days, weeks, and possibly months, work and life as we know it will change fundamentally. And while there is no real way to know exactly what will happen, how long it will last, and what the long-term impact of all of this will be, one thing is for certain ... things are uncertain and probably will be for a while.

Take good care of yourself. It's easy to let your self-care and stress management practices go by the wayside when things are nutty and you have people counting on you. However, it's important right now to double down on taking care of yourself first, so you are able to be there for others. Stay calm, wash your hands vigorously, and heed warnings from government agencies.

Communicate constantly. Many people feel scared and isolated in the midst of this. Check in with people personally. Ask how they are doing and really listen and see how things are going with their families. Remember, no matter what the problem is, community is the answer.

The lawyers and staff at Ross & McBride LLP wish the entire community a happy and healthy Passover.



Jeffrey Manishen

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When an ailing Holocaust survivor falls through the cracks

BY **ALEXIS WENZOWSKI**
JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

IT TOOK A stranger for us to find Leo (whose name has changed for privacy purposes.) A stranger, whom I will call Joan, came into our office and told us they knew of a Holocaust survivor in need. He was 90 years old and living in poverty. She asked if we would help.

Of course we would.

Joan had stopped by Leo's apartment after not having seen him for more than 20 years. She just had felt the urge to go. During the visit, Leo grew confused and fell. Joan left as Leo was being taken to the hospital. She told me about the bad state of Leo's living conditions, and how concerned she felt.

I'm at Leo's apartment the next day. I don't even know his last name, but Joan had given me his unit number. As I'm leaving my card with the building manager, the community manager overhears us talking. She tells me she knows who Leo's caregiver is, that she will connect us, and that Leo is now in the hospital.

I hear from the caregiver right away. She confirms that Leo has no family, but that she and her family have adopted Leo. He spends holidays with them. They do his grocery shopping and they are emotional support. She tells me she adopted him because she has known him for many years, and because he has always been kind to her family. He is now her family. When I meet Leo, we immediately connect. I tell him that I represent Hamilton Jewish



Family Services (HJFS), and that I have come to help. I tell him that we will be friends. "I would like that very much," Leo replies.

Leo is a Polish Jew. He was born in 1929. He moved around a lot as a child, and stayed with his grandfather. And then the war came. "It was very difficult, very difficult, in the camps," Leo tells me. He is full of stories.

After the Second World War, Leo stopped practicing Judaism. He tells me that he didn't feel safe as a Jew after the war, but that he has always been "a Jew on the inside."

Leo's story is one of tragedy and heartbreak. He has been living on his own for many years, and because he has been kind to people, many have taken advantage of him. The flip side is, because he is kind, he has touched many hearts.

Leo is fiercely independent. He keeps mostly to himself and "doesn't want no trouble." He likes to move and be active, and finds it difficult being in the hospital. He reminds the nurse that, "just because I am private, does not mean I do not have feelings."

I arrange for a rabbi to visit Leo. He has not been to shul for many years, but having a rabbi come to see him touches his heart. He tells me after how much the visit meant to him.

I tell Leo that he is an example of someone who fell through the cracks, and that we have to do better. I tell him that because of his story, we will spend our next weeks connecting with the hospitals, social service agencies, City Housing, and other supports, telling them what we do – and how we can help survivors. No one else should fall through the cracks.

While writing this, Leo is still in the hospital. His caregiver and her family visit and support him every day. HJFS is connecting him with the Claims Conference, and also looking into the possibility of long-term care. We are visiting him regularly.

HJFS has worked with survivors, on behalf of the Claims Conference for many years. These days, we primarily help survivors remain independent as long as possible. This includes arranging for homecare support, emergency rent, food, et cetera. There is no cost for survivors to access our supports. For more information about our Claims Conference Services, please call Terry Nyp at 905-627-9922 x 22 or email at terryn@hamiltonjfs.ca. We also invite you to visit our website at www.hamiltonjfs.ca or the Claims Conference website at claimscon.org. We also ask that you share with healthcare professionals and other community supports about the work we are doing with survivors, so that no one else falls through the cracks.

Editor's note: This article was written two weeks before the COVID-19 outbreak in our community.



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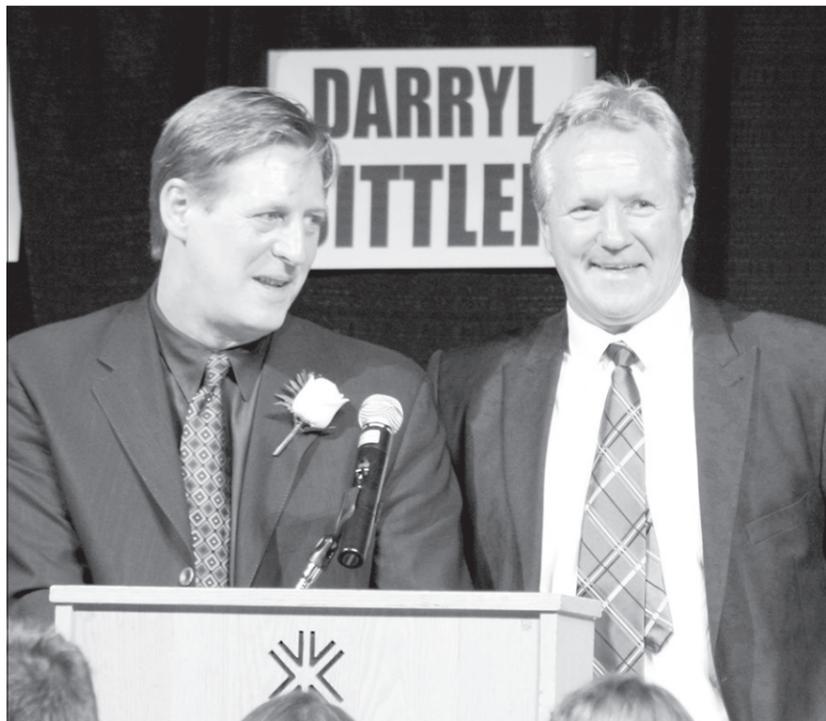


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Hall of Fame NHL superstars Guy Lafleur, Bobby Hull and Johnny Bower at the 50th anniversary sports dinner.

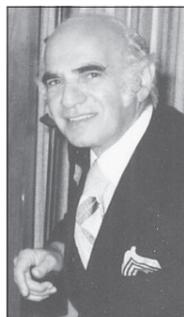


Media personality, Jim Ralph with former captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Darryl Sittler at the 2009 Sports Dinner.

A Hamilton tradition comes to an end

TVO's Steve Paikin reflects on the end of the B'nai Brith Sports Celebrity Dinner, A Hamilton tradition that lasted 69 years

BY **STEVE PAIKIN**
COURTESY OF TVO



B'nai Brith member, Saul Smurlick dreamed up the idea of having a sports dinner fundraiser for his organization.

FOR NEARLY SEVEN DECADES, the biggest names in North American pro sports came to Hamilton to share their stories and memories from the biggest stages in the world.

Not anymore.

It turns out, last week's 69th annual B'nai Brith Sports Celebrity Dinner was the final one. Officially, the dinner celebrated the achievements of local high-school athletes. But it turned into something so much more, raising \$2.6 million over the years for local charities and, at least for one day, putting Hamilton on the big-league map — even though the city features no teams from the Big Four leagues.

I'm a Hamiltonian, born and raised, and, as a kid, I was fortunate enough to go to the dinner with my parents and my brother, Jeff, every year. And we've continued to go as adults. My brother estimates he's been to 37 of the 69 dinners. I'm not far behind. Jeff, who still lives and works in the Hamilton area, eventually became dinner chair, meaning he was responsible for bringing so many big names to the event for the past quarter century.

Growing up, Jeff was a maniac for both professional and NCAA basketball. The UCLA Bruins were his favourite hoops team. In fact, he dreamed of playing for them one day and even got an interview with a team recruiter. (That dream died hard when he stopped growing at 6'3", and the recruiter told him, "Even if you were the best basketball player in all of Canada, you probably wouldn't be good enough to play for us." Ouch.)

But Jeff did the next best thing. As dinner chair, he decided which athletes to pursue for the dinner and reached out to two UCLA legends — Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Bill Walton — inviting them to come to Hamilton.

"I idolized both in childhood, as

UCLA guys, and to have them in the room was totally amazing," Jeff told me earlier this week. "Plus, they are both bigger than life, physically, and did their jobs well." (Abdul-Jabbar is 7'2" tall, while Walton checks in at 6'11". Walton's charismatic half-hour speech, all without notes, urging the high-school athletes in attendance to overcome adversity — as he had had to do, thanks to three dozen orthopedic surgeries on his body — was spectacular.)

When the Los Angeles Lakers were winning multiple championships with Abdul-Jabbar and Magic Johnson in the 1980s, their coach was Pat Riley. And, yes, he came to Hamilton, too.

"I was at home on a Sunday night, and the phone rang," Jeff recalls. "It was Pat doing his homework for his speech at our dinner the next day. It's pretty cool when you pick up the phone and someone says, 'Jeff, this is Pat Riley!'"

The athletes who've made the trek to Hamilton over the years are a who's who of professional sports. Major League Baseball's all-time hit king, Pete Rose, was there in January 1976, having just been named World Series MVP two months earlier. Rose's teammate Johnny Bench was the best player in the 1976 World Series; he ended up on the dais in Hamilton eight years later. Other baseball notables included Brooks Robinson, Steve Garvey, Roberto Alomar, and Ball Four author Jim Bouton.

One of the first big names to attend was, perhaps, the most historically significant player of all time, Jackie Robinson, who in 1947 broke baseball's colour barrier.

As a teenager, I got an autograph from New York Yankees catcher and captain Thurman Munson, who, only three years later, in 1979, died when the private plane he was piloting crashed.

The dinner had its share of big-name superstars from the NFL, as well. As a big Oakland Raiders fan, I

loved meeting George Blanda, who played quarterback and kicker for the Silver and Black until age 48.

In 2001, the dinner wanted to celebrate its 50th anniversary by inviting legends from the Original Six NHL franchises. As a result, I got to meet Johnny Bower (Maple Leafs), Guy Lafleur (Canadiens), Phil Esposito (Bruins), Red Kelly (Leafs and Red Wings), Bobby Hull (Blackhawks), and Hamilton native Harry Howell (Rangers) — an incredibly special night.

"I drove Guy Lafleur after the 50th to the airport the next morning," Jeff tells me. "We went through the Tim Hortons drive-through, and he spilled his coffee on the passenger-seat floor. I never cleaned it for three years till I sold the car! He was so sincere and so open and honest. Told some very personal stories. He was a really great guy."

So if the event was always so memorable, why end it? The decision was excruciating for my brother, but he suggests it was inevitable. Back in the day, big-name stars simply didn't make the salaries they do today, so picking up a few thousand extra dollars to do a charity banquet was worth the trip to the Hammer. Nowadays, if you're making \$20 million a year, an extra \$10,000 just isn't incentive enough to leave home.

Also, when my brother signed on to help with the dinner, he was one of two dozen on the organizing committee. Today, that number is more like half a dozen, and they still have to do the same amount of work. The dinner used to draw more than 1,000 people annually. This year, attendance was 700 — not bad, but the smallest crowd ever. Competition for the entertainment and charitable dollar is just exponentially more intense these days.

One of the biggest thrills about being Jeff Paikin's brother was getting to go out for drinks with the athletes after the dinner. That's when

they tended to bring out their juiciest and most profane stories. In 1989, Baltimore Orioles catcher Rick Dempsey expressed astonishment over drinks at how much another catcher was being paid: Dempsey thought he was so much better than the other guy. My brother and I looked at each other in disbelief as this major leaguer bared his soul to us.

"I remember sitting with Dan Fouts in the bar at the Royal Connaught Hotel after, thinking, this guy was the QB in the best playoff game ever played, and he's here shooting the shit with me!" Jeff recalls. "Fouts, Dennis Hull, Tony Esposito, Ben Curtis, and Mark Tewksbury were the best after-dinner guys. They were open, sincere, and no egos at all. Just the guy across the table."

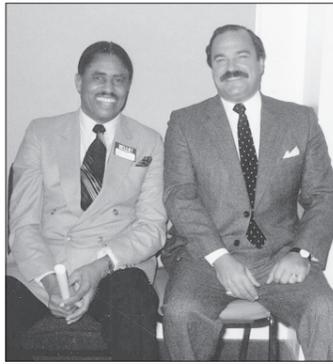
The final edition of the sports banquet took place on Jan. 23, and, once again, it was an all-star lineup. One of the all-time great mixed-martial artists, Montreal's George St-Pierre, headlined this year's gathering and teased the audience about whether he'd make a comeback. Ben Curtis, who's won four major tournaments — including the 2003 British Open — Team Canada hockey gold medalist Tessa Bonhomme (now with TSN), and one of Canada's best-ever baseball and basketball announcers, Dan Shulman, were also on hand. So was Leafs broadcaster and dinner emcee Jim Ralph, whose wry sense of humour has been a highlight of the dinner for nearly two decades.

But the last-ever sports-dinner speech was given by Canadian swimming gold medalist Mark Tewksbury, who offered up perhaps the most riveting speech I've ever heard at this gala. As Tewksbury took us on his journey to gold, you could have heard the proverbial pin drop in the hall. Tewksbury finished that speech as brilliantly as he did the 100-metre backstroke at the '92 Olympics in Barcelona.

If the sports gala had to come to an end, it couldn't have wrapped things up in a more inspirational and memorable way.



Toronto Maple Leafs player, Colby Armstrong and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (2011)



Grambling State University coach Eddie Robinson with Cuppy Katz.



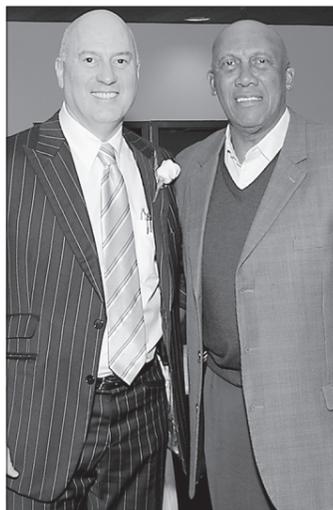
Les Levitt and Gordie Zuck chaired many years of sports dinners...



...as did brothers Barry and Stephen Foster.



Emcee Paul Hanover with former Baltimore Orioles manager Earl Weaver.



Long-time dinner chair Jeff Paikin and Major League Baseball pitcher and coach Fergie Jenkins.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEFF PAIKIN

How it all began

Jeff Paikin pays tribute to the people whose dedication made the Celebrity Sports Dinner the success that it was

making the dinner what it was were Saul Smurlick, Les Levitt, Cuppy Katz and Stephen and Barry Foster. Paul Hanover was the emcee for more than 30 years and a master in front of the room.

Q. How did the dinner change over the years?

A. When you look at the list of table buyers from 40 years ago, it's sadly reflective of a Hamilton Jewish business community that has disappeared. Most of the tables were sold to Jewish businesses or the banks that dealt with them. There were 12 tables representing Jewish owned scrap businesses like Internetco, Hotz, Waxman and Usarco. Big furniture stores like Zacks and Adlers would also buy tables. Socially it was very much known as the best room in the city.

Q. How much money did the dinner raise every year?

A. The year before I took over as chair, we made \$15,000 to give away. I looked at the people on the committee and said, 'Guys, if that's the best we can do with a 21 person committee, what are we doing here? We've got to make a whole lot more money. it's all about return for the effort.' Three years later we made \$115,000.

Q. Why did you hold off publicizing that that this dinner would be the last until after the event?

A. The dinner deserved better than to make it about us. We wanted it to be about the people who bought tickets, the high school athletes being honoured, and the head table being a great show for everyone.

Q. How do you feel now that it's over?

A. I'm relieved we ended on top. I also have huge mixed feelings because I always felt proud that the dinner was a Jewish run event for the betterment of the entire community.

Q. What are the origins of the B'nai Brith Sports Dinner?

A. The idea for a dinner was dreamed up by Saul Smurlick, who was a member of B'nai Brith's Viceroy Reading Lodge 786. The first dinner took place in 1951 at the Delaware Avenue JCC featuring (American sportscaster) Mel Allen. They had a couple of hundred people at the most. When they ran out of space, the event was moved to the Adas Israel, and from there to the Holiday Inn. In 1984, it moved to the Convention Centre and it's been the largest uninterrupted annual dinner at that venue for 36 straight years.

Q. When did you become involved?

A. I've been involved in the dinner for 35 years, and have chaired or co-chaired it for 20. At first, Barry and Stephen Foster and I were co-chairs. After Barry and Stephen passed away, Stephen's son-in-law, Brent Clifford, joined and did a whole lot of good work. They put a lot of effort and energy into it for a lot of years. Slowly but surely, the guys who were in charge were very happy to say it's somebody else's turn. The first meeting I went to, we had a committee of 22. The last meeting I went to, we had a committee of four with a couple of helpers.

Q. How do you account for the dinner's continued success, even after the B'nai Brith lodge disbanded?

A. A group of concerned citizens, most, but not all of whom were Jewish, wanted to keep it going so they had to reinvent themselves. The guys who dedicated themselves to

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The Beit KKL-JNF Canada House in Sderot, the city closest to the Gaza border, will serve as an after-school education, empowerment, and enrichment centre for high school students from Sderot and its surrounding areas. Join JNF as we aim to close the educational achievement gap and foster academic success and empower youth in the periphery of Israel. All donations will be matched dollar for dollar by KKL, making your donation that much more significant!

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

BARI WEISS

NEW YORK TIMES AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST,

Bari Weiss is an Op-Ed staff editor and writer for the New York Times who delivers an urgent wake-up call exposing the alarming rise of anti-Semitism and explains what we can do to defeat it. Weiss is a frequent guest on the Bill Maher show as well as CNN and The View. She has been called heroic, fearless, brilliant, big-hearted and right! Join us to hear Bari Weiss as our keynote speaker as she discusses combating antisemitism.



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Israel's Econ 101 or how gas helps



Robert Tick

ISRAEL'S OFFSHORE natural gas helps all Israelis. After attending a November 2014 conference about the offshore gas discoveries, I concluded that not only is Israel's natural gas good for Israel, the gas reserves could change the balance of world power vis a vis Europe's natural gas needs. Recent headlines about an underwater pipeline from Israel through the eastern Mediterranean to Cyprus and Greece and over to mainland Europe are exactly what I expected.

The amount of gas discovered offshore from Haifa in 2009 is immense. Since first discovery of the Tamar field, other fields have also been discovered. Most notably, the Leviathan field was found in December 2010. Leviathan's vastness could drive Israel's status toward energy super-power. Whereas Tamar has enough gas to cover domestic needs for decades, Leviathan can supply substantial quantities to Europe for decades as well.

The domestic economy and the shekel win because the State collects royalties from the sale of gas. In time, Israel can build a substantial sovereign wealth fund from gas royalties. Moreover, the growth of the sovereign wealth fund should strengthen the shekel, control inflation and help keep interest rates low. Those benefits are why I conclude that all Israelis win because of Israel's natural gas supplies. Looking more globally, at the far margin of Europe's natural gas needs, Israel's Leviathan field can displace Russian gas supplies. In other words, once the pipeline from Israel is connected, Russia could lose its hold over Europe's winter heating needs.

So, what is the investment thesis? The investment thesis on Israel's

gas and transformation to energy exporter is, "it's complicated." The complication has to do with the high-risk nature of offshore gas investment, the costs involved in developing gas platforms and under-sea pipelines and the politics of the region. To make the situation even more complicated, the companies involved in developing Israel's offshore gas have organized themselves a little differently than we would expect in Canada.

Whereas Canadian investors may be familiar with different share classes i.e. Class "A" voting and Class "B" non-voting, many of Israel's companies are created with private general partnerships controlling public operating limited partnerships. The GP/LP model is difficult to invest in because, as I understand the structure, the publicly traded limited partnerships bear all risks including the General Partner's management fee before any profit accrues to LP unitholders. Furthermore, the general partner typically receives a priority of return on profits earned, which further delays shareholder returns.

With all that in mind, it is my conclusion that investment in Israel's natural gas supplies is best left to industry players for now. That said, the State's collection of gas royalties should be substantial over time, so shekel-denominated investments, including Tel Aviv Stock Exchange listed companies should benefit from the currency's strength. If you have risk capital, Israel's listed stocks or the start-up economy might be of more interest to you.

Rob Tick is an Investment Advisor and Portfolio Manager at Mandeville Private Client Inc.

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Aramaic — not just an historical curiosity



Ben Shragge

MY FATHER was a wandering Aramean.

Well, not directly. My father grew up in Winnipeg, sojourned in Alabama, and settled comfortably in Hamilton. But the above Biblical verse, recited during Passover, does feel personal to me because my last name is Aramaic, the ancient language of the Arameans.

Shragge derives from shraga, the Aramaic word for "light," which appears in the Talmud about 50 times and is still a male given name in Israel and Orthodox communities. Prominent bearers of the name and its many derivatives include Rabbi Joseph ibn Shraga, considered the greatest Italian Kabbalist of the 16th century; Shlomo Zalman Shragai, Jerusalem's first elected mayor; and Rabbi Samuel "the Maccabee" Schrage, organizer of a Hasidic neighbourhood patrol group in Crown Heights.

Say what you will about Facebook, it's only there that I could stumble upon a 1,300-strong group dedicated to reviving the Aramaic language in Israel. After asking about my last name's origins, I learned that Judeo-Aramaic speakers from northern Iraq dropped the "g" but still call a lamp a shrata; that the Arabic given name Siraj (used in the Quran for "light") is likely an offshoot; and that Assyrian neo-Aramaic speakers will say of a beautiful woman, La-šra'ta kemra/imara la nhor ana nahrana ("She says to the lamp, don't shine, I will shine").

A little backstory: Ancient Aramaic developed around 1000 BCE in the Aramean city-states of what is now Syria, becoming a major language of trade and diplomacy. (In the Bible, Aram is the father of the Arameans, and like Abraham, a descendant of Shem—hence the word Semitic, used for a family of languages that includes Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic.) In the sixth century BCE, Darius I declared a standardized Aramaic the official language of the Persian Empire, which included much of the modern Middle East.

Following Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire in 331 BCE, Greek language and culture gained in influence. Yet Aramaic continued to flourish across national and religious boundaries, like English today. By the beginning of the Common Era, most Judeans—including such notables as Judah Maccabee, Hillel, and Jesus—spoke Judeo-Aramaic

dialects in daily life. (Maccabee, in fact, is an Aramaic last name like my own, deriving from maqqaba, meaning "hammer.")

As Jews dispersed and the Middle East itself was conquered by Arabs in the seventh century, upstarts like Yiddish, Ladino, and Arabic gradually supplanted Judeo-Aramaic (and were themselves eventually supplanted by English, Russian, and modern Hebrew). Yet Aramaic survived in Jewish tradition as a language of the Bible (major parts of Ezra and Daniel), prayer (the Kaddish and Kol Nidre), marriage and divorce (the ketubah and get), mysticism (the Zohar), over half the Talmud, and in my case, a last name. Meanwhile, Aramaic continued to be spoken by Middle Eastern Christians and Mandaeans (followers of a separate dualistic religion), as well as neighbouring Jews.

Aramaic is not just an historical curiosity, and certainly not a dead language. Long before I gave my last name much thought, I was a teenager driving through east Hamilton when I came upon a storefront with Hebrew-style letters. It turned out to be an Assyrian community centre. Around 1,500 modern Assyrians live in Hamilton and speak a neo-Aramaic sister language to Hebrew. There are up to four million Assyrians worldwide, mostly Syriac Christians whose homeland includes parts of northern Iraq, southeast Turkey, northwest Iran, and northeast Syria. Yet before I stumbled upon that building, I was completely unaware of their existence.

Historian Howard Sachar referred to Jewish communities in Eastern Europe as "a Semitic archipelago in a Slavic sea." But prior to Ashkenazi isolation in Christian Europe, most Jews (or Judeans) were integrated into a larger Semitic-speaking world in which peoples and ideas mingled and Aramaic was the common tongue. Helena, queen of the Assyrian kingdom of Adiabene, converted to Judaism around 30 CE; while Gregory Bar Hebraeus, a 13th century Syriac saint, was the son of a Jewish doctor. If there is to be real peace in the Middle East, it can only come by reclaiming a shared identity between Jews, Assyrians, Arabs, and other children of wandering Arameans.

Pride in Aramaic—an ancient but still living Semitic language, spoken by the ancestors of Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike—is a shraga, a light, that can shine the way.

Ben Shragge is the digital editor of the HJN.

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How technology can enhance your family seder



Rabbi Ben Shefter

PASSOVER IS A holiday filled with so many family memories and traditions. I still remember the anxiety I felt as a child being forced to sing the Four Questions in front of my whole family. There was also the “Moses Staff” that my uncle would lead us around the table with when we were all delirious from exhaustion or inebriated by wine. And there was the famous “baa”ing of my Bubby, grandmother, during Chad Gadya, One kid Goat. All of these made the seder fun and engaging as I was growing up. However, when I had to host my first seder, without my family around, I was forced to start thinking about what traditions and memories I wanted to bring to the table.

In Tractate Menachot 28b, the Sages highlights a unique aspect of the trumpets used in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. Unlike all the other vessels, that were allowed to be used from generation to generation, the trumpets needed to be remade over and over again. Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky explains that the trumpets act as an alarm clock to excite people to learn and connect to Judaism. Since each generation has different technologies, and interests, it is incumbent on all parents and educators to renew and revive traditions for the new generation. The way that you were taught in school should not be the same way your children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews should be taught today.

You can see this idea come to life in the myriad haggadot that can be purchased. Whether it is the comic book haggadah, the pop up bird haggadah, or the social

justice haggadah, you can find many different texts to liven things up. The one problem with all of these books, is that they are books. With so many different technological tools, it is important to harness some of these other avenues to arouse people’s curiosity to ask, why is this night different from all other nights? In light of these ideas I wanted to share three new tools that you can use to connect your guests to Judaism.

The first and easiest thing to do is to use all the amazing artwork and videos out there to spark conversations. One of my favourites is the YouTube video Batmoses: Freedom Rises on Passover. Prompting people to bring or share a video or piece of art that connects to Passover, freedom, or Judaism can change the feel of the Seder.

One of the major portions of the Seder is the Maggid section, when we retell the Exodus story and look for parallels in our own time. A fun way to open up people to exploring their own interpretation or *drash* is by using Humanity Against Chametz Cards. Here’s how it works: One black card is placed in the middle of the table, and white cards are split amongst the people at the table. Everyone chooses a white card to complete the sentence appearing on the black card. One can purchase a whole set from chutzpah-cards.myshopify.com/

A way to make the hiding and finding of the *Afikomen* more educational and interesting is turning this part of the seder into a scavenger hunt. Lock the Afikoman in a box and then hide clues that lead to the hidden location and how to unlock the box.

Rabbi Ben Shefter is McMaster Hillel’s senior Jewish educator

What to do when Google is your medical resource



Phyllis Shragge

I WAS INJURED one dark October night. It wasn’t my fault. I blame an exterior wall for the mishap. True, I was walking and simultaneously writing a text, but the wall should have been paying more attention to its surroundings.

I scraped my arm on the stucco and blood gushed from my wound. I gasped. I swore. Then I decided a mature response was warranted, so I rinsed my arm with running water, applied a topical antibiotic ointment and put on a Band-Aid.

I thought that was that, but the scrape bled for a week. And when it eventually stopped bleeding, it looked weird. What were those tiny yellowish bumps? And why did it hurt more now that it did before? Was it infected?

I did some research on Google. I was more confused after my research than before. For an entire weekend, I debated the pros and cons of making a doctor’s appointment. I was worried that if there was no infection, I would be embarrassed for making a big deal out of nothing. Finally, on Monday morning, I made an appointment. The doctor would see me at 10:15 a.m.

As I drove to the office, I realized that I wanted to have an infection. I really did. Had my injury affected my thinking process? Was I that desperate for validation?

If my car windshield has a tiny crack, I race to get it repaired. If my toilet plugs, I call the plumber. If my dining room light flickers on and off, I don’t hesitate to call an electrician. But when it comes to seeking medical help, I worry about looking stupid. I don’t take my health for granted. I know I’m lucky to have no major medical

issues. But don’t minor problems need attention? Why was I feeling guilty about bothering the doctor?

I arrived at the doctor’s office a few minutes before the scheduled appointment. As I sat on a chair in the waiting room, I realized that I was glad that my scrape was stinging. Yes, I was glad. And when I saw the doctor and he confirmed the scrape was infected, I was relieved. I wonder about my sanity.

Perhaps my concern about medical validation is a reaction to losing a buffer, my own personal expert on health. My husband Bill, a cardiac surgeon, and I were married for 37 years until his death in 2012. He was my family’s rock in so many ways, especially in matters concerning health. If anyone in the family had a medical issue, we would turn to him. Most of the time, he would reassure us that there was nothing to worry about, but occasionally, he would make sure we consulted our family doctor or a specialist.

Bill’s passing meant I lost not only my best friend and confidant, but suddenly I was thrust into a sphere of medical uncertainty. I realize that when Bill was my medical resource, I was in a privileged position, and I was lucky. Should I feel guilty? Or should there have been some benefit to all those long, long days at the hospital and all those weekends on call?

Now, I deal with medical problems the old-fashioned way, by looking online.

I guess I could have worse problems than worrying about whether my medical issues are bad enough to warrant a doctor’s appointment. I know that someday there won’t be any question about it.

In the meantime, I promise to avoid wayward walls while I’m texting.

Phyllis Shragge is a local writer, mother of five, and grandmother of four.

What’s in a name?

BY STEVEN BROCK
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

WHEN MY FIRST SON was born in 1990, my wife and I named him David. A common Jewish name, it was that of my uncle who was tragically killed in a work-related accident in 1941. When we decided on this name, we didn’t realize that the name David went back in my family for at least seven generations spanning more than 180 years.

Jewish Ashkenazi tradition maintains that a newborn child be named in honour of a recently deceased relative so that the name of the deceased will live on with the hope that the child will emulate the positive qualities of their namesake.

While tracing my family genealogy I discovered three more Davids in my maternal ancestry. One was my great grandfather, Dawid Minc, born in Olkusz, a town in southern Poland around 1810. Although unable to find a death record, it is likely that he died his early 50s, because in 1863, his grandson—my great-great uncle—was born and named David Minc.

When my maternal grandparents were considering a name for their newborn son, David was an obvious choice. The 1863 David also likely died in his 50s, so my grandmother would have wanted to honour her uncle. In a similar vein, a cousin of my grandfather, David Wolf Buchner had also recently passed away during that decade, so



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUTH BUCHNER BROCK

The author’s late uncle, David Buchner.

my uncle David Buchner carried the name down to the next generation from both sides of the family.

When our son David was born, we did not fully grasp that, by bestowing the name, David ben Simcha v’Toba, we honoured not only my late uncle, but all the Davids in the family that came before him. There are undoubtedly even more from before 1800, that through my genealogical journey I still have not discovered. Now when we consider the Hebrew term, *Zikhrono Livrakha*, (May his memory be a blessing), we feel doubly blessed. Not only for the way that our children have so greatly enhanced our lives, but also for the mitzvah of propagating the memory of our ancestors.



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A tsunami called COVID-19

The crisis is one of the largest challenges ever faced by Israel's tourism industry

BY **MARK FELDMAN**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

MAKE NO MISTAKE. The coronavirus attacked Israel like a tsunami. Rolling over the Israeli tourism industry, it swept up the beach and continued into the heart of our country. Israel was set for her most successful tourism year ever. Low cost carriers were bringing in tourists in the tens of thousands. North Americans were flying into Israel in numbers never before imagined. Hotels have been popping up like mushrooms after a downpour. Nobody saw it coming; we had no advance warning.

Israel has endured wars, intifadas, 9/11. We've survived terrorism attacks and had Ben Gurion airport closed for all foreign airlines when the country was beleaguered by missiles. We've seen airlines go bankrupt and cease flying, stranding passengers halfway around the world. Never, though, has the damage that has fallen upon the three Israeli airlines, El Al, Arkia and Israir reached these heights.

When the Israeli Ministry of Health enacted a 14-day quarantine for anyone entering Israel from anywhere in the world, it was a watershed moment. Arkia and Israir ceased all international flights. El Al sent 5,000 workers out of 6,200 employees on a three-month unpaid leave. Try to grasp that — more than 80 per cent of an airline's employees were sent home for three months! Cathay Pacific, which is at the nexus of the virus, cut 50 per cent.

The empty airport conveyor belts are on everyone's mind. Airlines, hotels and hostels, tour companies, and vehicle leasing companies are all feeling the impact of coronavirus. Some have already responded with layoffs and unpaid leave. The Israel Airports Authority regularly employs 4,000 permanent workers and 2,000 temporary workers, and has already put 1,400 temporary employees on unpaid leave. It might still put others on unpaid leave. Arkia Israeli Airlines Ltd. put 100 of its 550 employees on vacation.

Travel agencies have followed suit, either sending the majority of their staff on unpaid holiday or requesting employees to take a 50 per cent cut in salary. Most of the European airlines have stopped flying to Israel as of March. Delta Airlines and Air Canada have suspended their flights. El Al is still flying from Toronto and Montreal, but that, too, can be changed.

How many of you remember the 2008 West Nile Virus or the 2003 SARS outbreak? What about the 2009 Swine Flu or the 2016 Zika virus? In each of these cases, the initial hysteria and speculation died down as the true threat came to light. The coronavirus is different; it's burrowed deep into our consciousness.

The head of the hotel association in Israel was quoted recently saying that the industry was facing its worst-ever crisis as tourism revenues plummeted in the



PHOTO BY TOMER NEUBERG / ISRAEL 21C

Workers in Israel prepare to disinfect a bus as a preventive measure amid fears over the spread of the coronavirus.

face of the coronavirus outbreak, and warned that a cash injection from the state was the only thing that could save it from collapse. The closure of Israel's borders to tourist entries from the entire world has been estimated at \$450 million US each month. There will be massive layoffs, and dozens of hotels will close. The hotel industry has never been in such dire straits. Hotel chains are consolidating hotels that are close to each other, while isolated hotels are on the verge of closing.

Passover and Easter are finished. Massive cancellations

have flooded the hotel industry; people are simply too worried that the quarantine will still exist. Summer reservations are yet unaffected but unless there is dramatic change, they too will be cancelled.

Every day brings new quarantine policies. Another country has closed its borders. One more airline will stop flying to Israel. Never has Israel, nor the world, seen such a threat in this century. When it comes to the future, we all face uncertainty.

The quarantine concept has thrown us for a loop and sent the tourism industry into a tailspin

from which it could take months, or even years, to recover. El Al will survive; no government will allow her to fall. She represents a pipeline to the outside world for the State of Israel. Yes, the government will insist El Al pay the price. They'll demand deeper cuts in personnel both salary wise and number wise. Yes, there's a lot of fat still existing at El Al, and this may force them to cut to the bone. If the government had any sense, they would let our smaller airlines — Arkia and Israir — merge, allowing them to compete effectively with low-cost carriers.

The stronger travel agencies will survive, both because they have been diligent in putting money away for seasonal downturns, and because the corporate world still requires insightful travel consultants.

Some tourism sites will go out of business or deeper in debt. Most will survive; Masada will still be Masada. If the situation prevails into the summer, you'll see tour guides give up their profession, unwilling to wait for an uptick.

How this will play out and who will remain standing can't be predicted. Airlines will survive, travel agencies will thrive and hopefully, as the days grow longer so will our understanding of the risks. And when you sit around the Passover table, saying, "Next Year in Jerusalem," it's my fervent hope you'll think of us and make it a reality.

Mark Feldman is the CEO of Ziontours, Jerusalem.

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Negev Dinner proceeds to help periphery youth in Sderot

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Partner with us to help build the Beit KKL-JNF Canada House in Sderot, as we aim to close the educational achievement gap and foster academic success and empower periphery youth.

"We believe that every child has the potential to achieve great things no matter where in Israel he or she was born, and that our role is to make the resources required for this available to them," said Avi Musan, KKL-JNF Houses Director.

"The house will be open to every teenager who wants to succeed, and we will provide them with all assistance so that they can develop their capabilities. This is a one-of-a-kind anchor that is unparalleled in the State of Israel."

The Beit KKL-JNF Canada House in Sderot, the city closest to the Gaza border, will serve as an after-school education, empowerment, and enrichment centre for high school students from Sderot and its surroundings, who will be provided with the necessary tools and skills for academic and personal success.

The building will be well-fortified, protecting students and staff from rocket and mortar attacks and will be accessible to people with disabilities. Its design will be invitingly clean and bright, with large windows to let in natural light, colorful wall illustrations and open spaces, creating an environment and ambiance unlike that of a school.

The Beit KKL-JNF Canada House will feature a courtyard for outdoor studies



KKL-JNF Canada House in Upper Nazareth

and comprise learning spaces of different sizes and relaxation areas equipped with a variety of educational and multimedia resources to encourage creative learning based on the "edutainment" model of informal education.

The House will be divided into classrooms, a multipurpose hall, meeting room, patio, kitchenette and a unique experiential learning hub. The classrooms are designed to contain small learning groups, except for one large classroom (that can be divided into two), and a computer lab with cutting-edge equipment. The multipurpose hall will be used for workshops, lectures, performances and film screenings. The hub is an open space with poufs, armchairs, sofas, and video game consoles.

"I feel that I've really been seen for the first time." — Hannah, a student at Nazareth Beit KKL-JNF House.

Your donation will be matched by KKL-JNF in Israel — shekel for shekel. For more information about this year's Negev Dinner project, please contact the JNF Hamilton office at 905-527-5516.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEHILA HESCHEL

Kehila Heschel

BY ANITA BERNSTEIN

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HHA graduates participate in Jewish leadership program in Austrian Alps

BY **GOLDIE WEISER**

As CEO of the Lauder Foundation, Rabbi Josh Spinner is a key player on the stage of world Jewry overseeing a portfolio that includes all of Eastern Europe and beyond. He is also a graduate of the Hamilton Hebrew Academy, Class of '84. When he received the 2015 HHA Legacy Award, Rabbi Spinner described how Hamilton, and the HHA, serve as a blueprint for him as he helps chart the priorities of communities across Europe.

What is equally remarkable is that two additional HHA graduates, from different eras, joined Rabbi Spinner in the Austrian Alps at a program aimed at strengthening Jewish identity among young European Jews.

Rabbi Eli Zians, HHA class of '00 is the director of the Jewish Overseas Leadership Training (JOLT) program, a leadership program for exceptional teens. Past participants have described the JOLT experience as having a transformational impact on their identity as Jews and leaders of the Jewish people. The program begins in Poland, where participants learn about a vibrant Jewish world that was and reflect on the enormity of what was lost in the Holocaust.

From Poland, they travel to Austria, where they partner with the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation to create a camp for disconnected European Jewish youth whose mission is to instill in campers an understanding of, and love for,



PHOTO COURTESY OF HHA

HHA graduate Rabbi Eli Zians with JOLT participants in the Austrian Alps.

being a Jew. From Austria they fly to Israel, where they reflect on their experiences in Poland and Austria, hone in on the leadership skills they learned and identify how they can help make a difference to the Jewish world at large.

While most high school students spend their summer break relaxing and recharging for the rigours of their upcoming academic year, Shimmie Green, Class of '16, opted to join JOLT. The result was a teaming of HHA graduates, spanning four decades, partnering together in the Austrian Alps and perpetuating Jewish life across the globe.

The HHA vision is to foster graduates who not only excel academically, socially and emotionally, but who feel a deep commitment to the broader Jewish

community. In describing his JOLT experience, Shimmie Green said, "It really embodies the essence of what it means to be a Jew. It's not all about yourself, you are part of a bigger picture. It's each individual's obligation to care about others well being on a personal level. When people truly care, greatness occurs, on both a micro and macro scale. It's really amazing."

There is no greater testimony to the success of a school than to see graduates who have taken their place as the planters and builders of a Jewish tomorrow.

For more information about the JOLT summer experience, visit summer.ncsy.org.



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER

An empty cradle: A child's gravestone at Beth Jacob Cemetery.

Jewish Genealogy Society

BY **STEVEN BROCK**

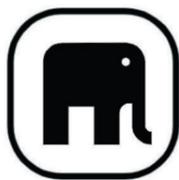
FOR THOSE TRACING their family trees, some of the most important information can be found on the gravestones of your late relatives. While perusing cemeteries may seem like a macabre activity, for the Jewish genealogist the Matzevah inscriptions can reveal significant data about their ancestors. At a minimum, the monument will indicate the date in English and in Hebrew when the person passed, along with their age when they died. It may tell you whether they were married, had siblings, children, or grandchildren. It also provides a very important link back to the previous generation, as almost all Jewish gravestones will state the Hebrew name of the deceased's father.

In order to help genealogists with this research, the website JewishGen.org has developed a searchable database which endeavors to catalogue every Jewish burial around the world.

The Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) now contains data for more than 3.54 million graves from 128 countries globally.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Hamilton and Area (JGSH) participates in this worthy endeavor and has recorded and indexed the data from all graves in the seven Hamilton area Jewish cemeteries. With a recent update carried out over the past two years, JGSH has now submitted almost 3,700 records and more than 3,200 photographs.

JewishGen and JOWBR make it easy to research your family history. Let us show you how by attending one of the JGSH's monthly meetings. Our upcoming meeting on April 1 has been postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis. Please consult our website at www.jgsh.org or contact Hazel Boon at 905-524-3345 or jgshamilton@gmail.com for information about future meetings.



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The community came out in large numbers to support Hamilton Jewish Family Services at its annual wine-tasting fundraiser in February.

Jewish Family Services

BY ALEXIS WENZOWSKI

Hamilton Jewish Family Services (HJFS) has suspended all in-office non-essential services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including its seniors programs, employment counselling, in-person client meetings and all workshops and courses. Services that will NOT be affected by these services are the Hamilton Kosher Food Bank and the Financial Relief Program. Our staff will be checking in with our vulnerable clients regularly, and use technology to engage our employment counselling clients.

The Hamilton Kosher Food Bank needs your help. Our vulnerable clients live day-by-day, and are unable to stockpile goods. The rush to buy goods has made their lives even more challenging. One client told me of going to four different grocery stores to find chicken, and, after all of that, they still found none. Another client told me of being able to only purchase two rolls of toilet paper. There was none left in any of the stores. Please consider their stories

when buying your own goods, and consider how you can support the needy in the community. If you have any kosher goods such as canned vegetables, apple sauce, soup, beans, pasta, or rice, we will gladly take them. We are also needing shampoo, dish soap, hand soap, and toothbrushes.

Our clients are in need of extra supplies as they prepare for social distancing, or if they must socially isolate due to illness. We ask that clients phone HJFS to set up an appointment. Our number is 905-627-9922 x 21.

We recognize that these are really tough times for people. If you are struggling due to the economic situation, call or email us. We will help with food and whatever else we can manage. Your information is confidential. You have support here and a safe place. You can reach out to us at info@hamiltonjfs.ca. Together, we will continue helping people in the spirit of Jewish values and traditions.

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Shalom Village COVID-19 update

BY **RENEE GUDER**

CEO SHALOM VILLAGE

AT SHALOM VILLAGE, we all remain vigilant in our efforts and are doing everything we can to protect the health and safety of our residents, families, employees, volunteers, suppliers, service providers and all other visitors.

As you likely already know, Shalom Village is closed to visitors, except for individuals whose family members are receiving end-of-life care. As you can imagine, this is very concerning for our residents and their families. At precisely the time when people want to feel assured of their loved one's safety, we are telling them they can't see one another. Also, residents are now unable to leave the campus for trips, to shop, or to participate in group activities. We understand the importance of supporting our residents' emotional and mental health; as a result, the recreation team and all Shalom Village staff are committed to ensuring life within our home carries on as close to normal as is possible.

We are helping residents to connect with their families using technology such as FaceTime and Skype, or even a phone call while positioned at a window, so that people can see their loved ones while conversing. Small group recreational activities will continue so that residents can remain connected and engaged, however classes will be limited in size and/or offered more frequently to maintain social distancing.

Sadly, for our community participants, all adult day programs and fitness club activities are cancelled. For many seniors, these are the only



opportunities they have to socialize and get out of their homes, or to provide respite to family members who care for them. We ask the community to please be aware of seniors in your neighbourhood and to check in on them and support them, while still taking care to practice social distancing.

We have had numerous offers of help, but we are unable to allow volunteers on site. However, there still may be ways that you can help us to support our residents and the community. Currently, we are asking people who have an old tablet they are not using to consider donating it to Shalom Village through the Foundation. If you're able to do so, please contact Laurie Pringle at Foundation@ShalomVillage.ca and she will help to arrange the donation. Please DO NOT bring items to the campus, as we will want to organize collection, disinfection and distribution. Also, our online donation page remains open, so if you are considering charitable donations, we hope you will consider supporting Shalom

Village at this time. Your support will help us to cover the many additional expenses we are incurring as a result of the additional preventative measures we are taking.

We provide frequent updates, and more in-depth information about daily activities on our Facebook page. To visit the page, simply go to www.ShalomVillage.ca and click on the COVID-19 updates link at the top of the page, and that will redirect you to our Facebook page.

Finally, I would like to thank you for all of your efforts at home. I know that this is a difficult time for everyone as we make changes in our own lives, to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community remain healthy. If you have questions or thoughts on how you may be able to support Shalom Village, feel free to send an email to info@shalomvillage.ca. Please note that we may not be able to respond to everyone in a timely manner, as we continue to prioritize the care of our members, families and staff.

A reflection on isolation and social distancing



Rabbi Jordan Cohen, Temple Anshe Sholom

THERE'S A JOKE going around in Israel that nine months from now, the busiest professionals are going to be midwives and divorce lawyers. The effects of isolation can be quite devastating. For the elderly, single people, and those who struggle with addiction and fear of domestic violence, isolation, voluntary or imposed, can be as much of an actual danger as the virus. That is why connection, contact and a sense of community are imperative.

While I have been spending most of my time at home managing the effects of the virus on our Temple community and connecting with congregants, I have found that a healthy personal routine is important to surviving voluntary isolation. Here are a few tips I have found to be successful:

I have created a pleasant space in our home to which I retreat first thing every morning. There, I offer my morning prayers, meditate, and do my personal health check-in (temperature, blood pressure etc). I use a guided meditation app called "Petit BamBou" (www.petitbambou.com) which I have found highly effective in helping me maintain focus and a sense of balance.

A long time ago I learned an important lesson from my father which has been reaffirmed during this period of "home shuling." After many years of working in an outside office, my father created an office in our basement. Every morning he would get up at the same time, get dressed including shoes and a necktie, and go downstairs to work. Even when he was just making telephone calls and doing paperwork, he would put on the dress shoes and tie. I once asked him why he bothered with those sartorial touches, even when he was seeing nobody else. He told me that, for him, getting properly dressed in shoes and a necktie put him in work mode. When the tie came off, it was time for rest. During this period of isolation and working from home, I am following my father's example. It would be so easy to sit at my desk in my pajamas or sweats and get most of my work done. But each morning I am getting properly dressed (foregoing the tie, I will confess) and I find it is immensely helpful in focusing me on what I have to do. I am doing this for myself.

Take good care of yourself, your loved ones and friends. Stay connected and active — physical isolation does not have to mean social estrangement and loneliness.

Beth Jacob Synagogue

BY **SHIRA KATES**

Save the date Tuesday, May 26 for the return of the Beth Jacob Lottery, the synagogue's biggest and most exciting annual fundraiser.

Get ready for a fantastic live auction, huge brisket buffet with all the fixins', and more as we celebrate our honoree Jacques Schoenberg and his contributions to our community.

The Schoenberg family have been part of Beth Jacob Synagogue since 1955. Jacques grew up, got married, and raised his family in Hamilton. We are proud to honour Jacques' generosity of time and commitment to both Beth Jacob and the greater Hamilton

Jewish community.

Net proceeds will support Beth Jacob Synagogue's Hebrew School and programming. Doors open at 6 p.m., buffet dinner from 6:30 p.m. Catering by the fantastic Susan Walman and team. Raffle Prizes include first prize of \$2,500; Second prize: \$1,500; Third prize: \$1,000; Tickets are \$75. Watch for more information. Sponsorship available and appreciated. Contact Shira at shira@bethjacobsynagogue.ca.

Visit bethjacobsynagogue.ca to see a photo gallery of last year's event. Please note: If isolation continues



Jacques and Clareta Schoenberg

into May and a cancellation is the responsible course of action, an update will be provided no less than two weeks prior.

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Where Karl Marx met Shalom Aleichem

Turned away from the beaches of Toronto, a group of Jewish factory workers in the 1930s bought a piece of land as a summer home for their children. Ninety years later, the spirit of Camp Naivelt endures.

BY HARVEY STARKMAN

SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

There is a delightful YouTube video you should watch. It's called A Day at Camp Naivelt, shot in the 1940s. I'm guessing it is post war because of the joy in life and the physical energy you see in the children, young people, and families. There is no dialogue, only a banjo soundtrack. In the background of many of the outdoor shots, there is a primitive statue of the head of a male figure. Knowing what I did about Naivelt, I wanted to morph that unclear and unidentified image into a bust of Karl Marx, but it just wouldn't work. When I asked who it was, I was told it was Sholem Aleichem.

I wasn't surprised. Both of them belonged there.

Camp Naivelt was more than a summer camp for children. Naivelt means 'new world', embodying a belief that a new world could be created through human effort. It began as a summer residential colony for members of the Jewish Labour League Mutual Benefit Society, founded in 1926, which became the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO) in 1945. The first-generation Naivelt members were for the most part unionized garment factory workers, 'single-generation proletarians' who slept in tents that over time became a cluster of cottages. Camp Kinder land, the children's summer camp, ran until 1971.

The camp itself is an hour east of Hamilton, in Brampton. The original



PHOTO COURTESY OF ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES

change caption

100-acre property that straddled the Credit River with the children's camp on one bank and the adult colony on the other, was purchased indirectly from the CNR in 1936. I say 'indirectly' because the CNR was not keen to sell to Jews. However, being part of an 'international' progressive fraternal movement had its advantages: the land was purchased by a member of a similar organization in the Ukrainian community, and transferred to its Jewish owners.

Because of its Marxist-oriented progressive values, expressed through actions targeted at achieving fair working conditions and social justice for all, Naivelt was known as the 'Red Colony' – although I'm not sure if that was a name used affectionately by its supporters or derogatively by its critics. Naivelt was the country retreat where people could meet, discuss, and even argue while the children absorbed values and culture through play, story, and song. That's where Marx meets Sholem Aleichem.

While the founders of Naivelt were Internationalist and secular in belief, they remained very consciously Jewish. If one could create a new world, one could also create a new Jewish culture whose values aligned with progressive values. That new culture was known as Yiddishkeit or secular cultural Yiddishism. As in all cultures, language is the glue. At Naivelt, as in the factories where the members toiled during the week, Yiddish was everywhere. There were discussions, readings, performances, and classes for children. Mostly there were songs. Songs like Ale Brider with lyrics by the Jewish socialist poet Morris Winchevsky proclaiming the brotherhood of all men, the sisterhood of all women, and the unity of all. Or songs about the dehumanizing effects of factory labour ending in lines calling for action and change like, "Wake up, working brother, wake up!" And there was the Toronto Jewish Choir, originally the Freiheit Gezangs Farein

or Freedom Choral Society whose early song selections mirrored these themes. In the early 1950s, another group emerged from Naivelt: The Travellers, whose Canadianized version of Woody Guthrie's This Land is Your Land celebrates inclusion, and the determination to "walk the freedom highway."

The Naivelt of today is much scaled down from its peak in the early 1950s. For some, political convictions changed after the shattering revelations of Soviet antisemitism under Stalin. For the second and succeeding generations, education and opportunity allowed them to leave the factories and enter the middle class. For younger generations, learning Yiddish lost its allure, especially when other summer camps offered more enticing attractions. Even the scale of the camp has changed: in the 1970s half of the property was sold to the City of Brampton to create public parkland – perhaps in exchange for heritage status that protects the cottages that remain.

But the spirit of Naivelt has endured. During his lifetime, the immigrant factory worker and unionist Max Tohn grew flowers in his downtown Toronto backyard while his more practical neighbours grew vegetables. For him, creating beauty for others to enjoy was a quintessential human act, a refusal to allow himself to become dehumanized by the repetitive mechanical work he did in his factory job. You see that spirit too in the life work of people like Drs. May and Gerry Cohen who met at Naivelt. The progressive Jewish labour movement that gave birth to Naivelt is gone, but its core values of equity, inclusion, and social justice resonate still with the values of the wider Jewish community of which we are a part.

Harvey Starkman is a free lance writer and HJN contributor.

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Passover Greetings



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