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Hamilton Jewish

# News

APRIL 2023 | NISSAN 5783

The voice of Jewish Hamilton

## PASSOVER PLANNING



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

## Make it a child-friendly Passover holiday

Reading PJ Library books about Passover traditions is one way Jessica Taylor Charland, her husband David, and their children Abby and Ben get ready for the holiday, which begins on the evening of April 5.

THE STORY AND MORE CREATIVE IDEAS FOR PASSOVER ACTIVITIES: **PAGE 9**

## Strong Annual Campaign means a win for entire community

Federation breaks record, raising \$1.8 million for community needs

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

THE NUMBERS ARE IN and the news is very good. For the second year in a row, Hamilton Jewish Federation's Annual Community Campaign has met its fundraising goal, generating more than \$1.8 million for community needs, a \$200,000 increase over last year's total. As the Hamilton

**SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL CAMPAIGN** CONTINUES ON **P4**  
**FEDERATION CEO, GUSTAVO RYMBERG REFLECTS ON REASONS FOR EXCELLENT RESULTS** SEE **P4**

Jewish community's primary fundraising initiative, the Annual Campaign supports vital programs and services delivered by its beneficiary agencies on which hundreds of community members rely. In recent years, Federation has dramatically increased total fundraising with government grants, foundation support, and designated giving.

"This year's fundraising total is a wonderful achievement for Jewish life in Hamilton," said Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg. "The entire community will benefit."

**ANNUAL CAMPAIGN A WIN** CONTINUES ON **P4**

“People can see we’re improving things, and as they contribute more, we’re able to do more for the community.”

**DAVID LOEWITH**, MEMBER OF THE CAMPAIGN CABINET

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Why Jewish film festivals are so important



Wendy Schneider

EDITOR  
**HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS**

THE 2023 HAMILTON Jewish Film Festival, a co-presentation of the Hamilton Jewish Federation and The Effort Trust Company, recently concluded its fifth year with the screening of five superb films from four countries over three days that showcased the diversity of Jewish culture and experience. As coordinator of this year's festival, I was delighted to see so many film lovers from both within and beyond the Jewish community flocking to the historic Westdale Theatre in late February and early March to enjoy an inspired collection of feature films and documentaries curated by the dedicated members of this year's Jewish film festival committee.

Jewish film festivals have become a central programming feature of most major North American Jewish communities by virtue of their ability to unify Jews of varying denominations and political ideologies to help Jewish audiences make meaningful connections to their heritage. Our community should feel proud that the Hamilton Jewish community can count itself among them.

From its inception, the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival has been about much more than just showing movies. Our mandate is to bring entertaining and thought-provoking films to engage the Jewish community, while also providing an opportunity for the greater Hamilton community to learn about Jewish history, culture and heritage in an open and welcoming environment.

The theme of this year's festival was Jewish Roots, Universal Themes. And indeed, while the five films showcased the diversity of Jewish culture and experience, they also spoke to issues to which people of all backgrounds and experience could relate, namely the immigrant experience, losing a spouse to sickness or old age, reawakened sexuality and the plight of the dispossessed. Though never articulated as such, I believe our choices were rooted in a belief that the Jewish film festival can play a role in breaking down negative stereotypes, altering perspectives and building bridges of understanding with other ethnic and cultural groups—not to mention an important artistic contribution to the Greater Hamilton community.

Jewish communal life in Hamilton has still not fully recovered from the disrupting effects of the pandemic, and yet, the yearning to be part of a community that has so characterized Jewish life through the ages has been an essential part of the way forward. This is true of our sponsors, whose generosity, community-mindedness and commitment made it possible to bring this outstanding Jewish cultural event to the community; of the wonderful members of our film festival committee, who gave so much of their time to make the event such an outstanding success; and it's true of our wonderful audience who come out year after year to immerse themselves in the wonderful world of Jewish film. We couldn't have done it without you.

Wendy Schneider is the coordinator of the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival.

## A HJN READER WRITES

### I SAVOURED EVERY MOMENT OF THE FILM FESTIVAL

IN 2016 I moved from Toronto to Hamilton to be closer to work. Since that time, one of my intentions has been to establish a connection to my new community, a process easier said than done during the past few years of the pandemic. This year, however, I have been enjoying participating in local arts programming and community events and was delighted to learn that Hamilton had a Jewish Film Festival. I had attended similar events when I lived in Toronto and was excited to experience the festival in Hamilton. This was my first time returning to a movie theatre since the pandemic, as well as my first time at the Westdale Cinema. I savored every moment of the festival, as I was greeted with warmth, observed the connectedness of the community, met new people, and enjoyed watching a program of four excellently curated, poignant, and thought-provoking films. I'm grateful for the coordination of this event, the community it fosters, and the promotion of arts and culture. I shared my experience with relatives and friends who look forward to attending the festival with me next year.


**MICHELLE SKOP, PHD, RSW**, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK, WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY, BRANTFORD CAMPUS

The HJN welcomes letters to the editor. To submit a letter for publication, email [wschneider@jewishhamilton.org](mailto:wschneider@jewishhamilton.org).



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The Morris Black is back!



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

The excitement was palpable in Temple Anshe Sholom’s main auditorium on March 26, as 51 children, together with boisterous siblings, and proud parents and grandparents came together for the first in-person Morris Black Public Speaking Contest in three years. The annual event is widely regarded as one of this community’s most valuable and popular educational programs.

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# Is it time to rethink antisemitism?

Choosing the term that most accurately describes the phenomenon of Jew-hatred



BY **GUSTAVO RYMBERG**  
CEO, HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION

I RECENTLY HAD the privilege of being one of 16 North American Jewish communal professionals chosen to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Spertus Institute for Jewish Leadership and Learning's Leadership Certificate in Combating Antisemitism. The goal of the seven-month course is to give Jewish leaders the tools and training to respond to the troubling rise in antisemitism. The term "Antisemitismus" (Anti-Semitism) was invented in 1879 by German political activist Wilhelm Marr as an alternative to the term "Judenhass" (Jew-hatred) out of his desire to align with new racial ideologies that were gaining acceptance in his day. Marr, according to Mosaic Magazine columnist Philologos, was seeking to differentiate hatred that stemmed from the religious conflict between Christianity and Judaism to a "struggle between the Aryan race and the Semitic one, of which the Jews were the foremost representatives." This makes antisemitism a

racist term, "since Jews, with their admixture of genes from all over, have long ceased to be a distinctly Semitic people—certainly less of one than are tens of millions of Arabs whose ancestors never left the Middle East." Philologos believes that the term "antisemitism" is too imprecise, not least because being "anti"-something is an extremely vague notion. "There is a great difference between someone who thinks that Jews care too much about money and someone who thinks that the Jews are eternally responsible for the death of Jesus or engaged in a conspiracy to take over the world. It is one thing to say that Jews are clannish and another to approve of their having been sent to the gas chambers ... Is there anything to be gained from lumping such dissimilar types under a single rubric?" Philologos concludes by suggesting the term "antisemitism" be used more discriminatingly. "Either we reserve the term "anti-Semite" for those who truly despise the Jewish people, or we acknowledge that we often employ it for real or perceived infractions that



are, relatively speaking, not such a big deal." I found another powerful perspective in Deborah Lipstadt's book, "Antisemitism Here and now," where she writes that as horrific as the Holocaust was, it is firmly in the past. Contemporary antisemitism is not. It is happening in front of us almost every day and everywhere. More, it is not also about the present and today. It's about the future. Some questions we can all reflect on are: Is today's antisemitism the same or different from what we have seen before? Where is it coming from: the right of the left? Is it all about

Israel? Are we seeing antisemitism where it is not? Are others refusing to see antisemitism where it clearly is? Deborah Lipstadt says that, no matter how we define it, "what should alarm us is that human beings continue to believe in a conspiracy that demonizes Jews and sees them as responsible for evil," she writes. "Antisemites continue to give life to this brand of age-old hatred. They justify it and the acts committed in its name. The historical consequences of this nefarious passion have been so disastrous that to ignore its contemporary manifestations would be irresponsible."

## Annual Campaign a win for the entire community

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Rymberg said that a combination of outstanding volunteer leadership, a strong marketing campaign, strong relationships with donors, and bringing in other sources of revenue all contributed to this year's unprecedented success. "We have a very committed campaign cabinet and 60 campaign canvassers who are doing an excellent job communicating the essential work that Federation does," he said. "People are aware that there are needs in the community and that we're fulfilling those needs," he said. That awareness grew exponentially during the pandemic, when Federation spearheaded efforts to provide food, emotional counselling and financial aid to the most vulnerable

members of the Jewish community. The goodwill generated by those efforts translated into 94 new contributions to the campaign and many long-time donors increasing their donations. "People stepped up for (last year's) emergency campaign and then continued to give at that high level," said Campaign Cabinet member David Loewith. "The communication that Federation has done under Gustavo's leadership keeps the community informed as to what's going on," he added. "When we set goals and meet them, then people are more willing to participate. and as people contribute more, we're able to do more for the community."

Included in this year's Campaign total were provincial and federal government grants and designated gifts from private family foundations for programs and causes that matter most to them. Among the Federation initiatives that received targeted funding are the new JCentre for Well-being, a gathering place that offers informal activities, groups, and drop-in programs focused on enhancing mental and physical health, Camp Kadimah scholarships and an expanded program that's made it possible for the JCC to offer camps during Chanukah, March Break, Passover and PD days, and moving 60 families from the PJ Library waitlist to subscribers, so that 275 families across Greater Hamilton now receive

children's books with Jewish content mailed to their homes. Other new initiatives include JWelcome Home, a partnership with Windsor and London that seeks to attract new immigrants to their respective Jewish communities, an expanded Hamilton Jewish Film Festival, and the introduction of a BBYO Hamilton chapter. "There are a lot of things we never imagined would be possible," said Rymberg. "It's hard to give one reason for our success but I think it's a combination of better communication, and bringing new opportunities to the table. The most important thing is we're creating honest relationships. We really know what our donors want, and we have more programs for them to support."

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# Two Jewish women nominated for YWCA awards

Marla Frank Davis, Temple Anshe Sholom president, and Myrna Dolovich, McMaster University professor, are among the 2023 Women of Distinction honourees

BY **ABIGAIL CUKIER**  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

## Lifetime Achievement Award

MARLA FRANK DAVIS says it makes her uncomfortable to toot her own horn. But she couldn't stop a group from Temple Anshe Sholom from doing it for her. In recognition of her years of service to the Hamilton community, they nominated Frank Davis for a YWCA 2023 Women of Distinction Lifetime Achievement Award.

"For so many years, Marla has been volunteering, giving of herself in so many ways," says Temple Anshe Sholom cantor Paula Baruch. "She has been content to stay in the background and champion others, all the while contributing mightily to the success of various projects. Marla inspires others to devote their skills to the growth of community and is a positive role model for everyone."

Professionally, Frank Davis is a specialized X-ray technologist in the cardiac and vascular program at Hamilton Health Sciences. Over the years, she has volunteered for organizations including the Heart and Stroke Foundation and Interval House and sat on the board of Hamilton Jewish Federation. She and her late husband, Sean, participated in many fundraising events for Temple Anshe Sholom and for the larger Hamilton community, including

organizing the Annual Going for Green Golf Tournament for Temple Anshe Sholom and an annual golf tournament and other fundraisers to benefit Camp Trillium, a program for children with cancer. A longtime member of the temple board, Frank Davis is now its president.

"In the last three years of the pandemic, the death of my sister in December 2020, and of Sean in June 2021, the anchor that kept me from being swept away was serving my community," Frank Davis says.

"With the world at our fingertips, through the internet and social media, we fancy ourselves part of a global community, however, when all is said and done, it is our heritage and our spiritual community close to home, that will sustain us through difficult times. I am happy to do my small part to fortify Temple Anshe Sholom and our Hamilton community."

Temple Rabbi Jordan Cohen says Frank Davis is worthy of many accolades. "This focused and determined woman does all of this while working full time as a medical professional and managing as a single mother," he wrote in his letter supporting the nomination.

"She is truly a phenomenon, yet functions with a quiet and humble demeanor. She is a force for good in the Jewish community and beyond."

**Lifetime Achievement Award**

A DEVICE to help control delivery of asthma medication and aerosol delivery of a tuberculosis vaccine are just two of the breakthrough developments Myrna Dolovich has been involved in during her decades-long career in aerosol research.



In recognition of her distinguished career, Dolovich was recently nominated for a YWCA 2023 Women of Distinction Lifetime Achievement Award.

"I was very honoured to be nominated," Dolovich says. "There were quite a number of exceptional women nominated from all different fields and I was delighted to be included in this group."

Dolovich and her husband Jerry moved to Hamilton in 1968, where he joined the new McMaster University medical school faculty in pediatrics. With a degree in electrical engineering from McGill University, Dolovich started working at St. Joseph's Hospital in the Firestone Institute of Respiratory Health soon after they arrived.

She was part of the team that developed the AeroChamber™, which helps adults and children more easily deliver their pressurized asthma and COPD medications to the lung. The inhaled delivery concept she helped develop for a tuberculosis vaccine is being used for testing inhaled COVID-19 vaccines, which can be delivered into the lung via aerosol,



targeting sites in the lung to provide better protection against respiratory pathogens.

In 2009, Dolovich started Aerosol School, a three-day teaching program for practical laboratory experience in aerosol basics, measurements and techniques. Registrants have come from around the world to her research lab and the program continues this year. She has also authored 165 articles in medical literature and has spoken extensively on drug delivery systems and imaging before and after treating the lung with aerosol medications.

"Myrna has made major contributions to the Aerochamber and techniques for imaging the lungs so we understand lung disease," says Dr. Dawn Bowdish, a professor at McMaster University and the Canada Research Chair in Aging & Immunity. "Her technology is key to the inhaled vaccines that are being developed at McMaster and elsewhere that we hope will make vaccination easier, better prevent transmission and provide longer lasting protection. She's an unsung hero!"

**Marla Frank Davis** was nominated by her synagogue for the many years of her exemplary volunteerism.

**Myrna Dolovich** was nominated in recognition of her groundbreaking research on the delivery of asthma medication.

"... when all is said and done, it is our heritage and our spiritual community that will sustain us through difficult times."

**MARLA FRANK DAVIS**  
President, Temple Anshe Sholom

"Her (Myrna Dolovich) technology is key to the inhaled vaccines that are being developed ... She's an unsung hero."

**DR. DAWN BOWDISH**  
Professor, McMaster University and Canada Research Chair Aging & Immunity



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# Marsha Lederman to headline Na’amat virtual author luncheon

Globe and Mail columnist, child of Holocaust survivors and author of a new memoir will speak about the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma

BY **PHYLLIS SHRAGGE**  
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

NA’AMAT HAMILTON will feature author and journalist Marsha Lederman as guest speaker at the 37th annual celebrity author luncheon at noon ET on Sunday, May 7. This year’s event will be virtual on Zoom.

Marsha Lederman is the child of Holocaust survivors and the author of “Kiss the Red Stairs: The Holocaust, Once Removed”. A columnist for The Globe and Mail, she joined The Globe in 2007 and spent 15 years as its Western Arts Correspondent. Before the Globe, she held a variety of positions with CBC Radio, most of them in Toronto, including National Arts Reporter. Prior to that, she spent years working in commercial radio as a reporter, news anchor and talk show host. She has won several journalism awards, including the 2019 National Newspaper Award for Arts and Entertainment reporting. Her memoir, published by McClelland & Stewart in May 2023, was an instant national bestseller and a Globe 100 choice for 2023, as selected by Ann-Marie MacDonald (Fall on Your Knees), who called it “an enormous achievement.”

Her book has received rave reviews. Among others, TVO’s Steve Paikin called it “phenomenal” and “truly wonderful” and the book was “highly recommended” by the Vancouver Sun.

Marsha was five when she asked her mother why she didn’t have any

grandparents. This simple question led to her mother’s frank revelation about the Holocaust. In her memoir, Marsha delves into her parents’ Holocaust stories, how the Holocaust affected her personal life and how trauma migrates through generations.

She has spoken at book festivals across the country, as well as at schools, universities, libraries, churches, and synagogues. She has also spoken to book clubs, both private and corporate; at events commemorating the Holocaust, and to groups of Holocaust survivors and descendants of survivors.

Media appearances for the book have included CTV’s The Social and Your Morning; CBC’s The Current, The Next Chapter with Shelagh Rogers and local afternoon shows in Vancouver and Toronto.

Marsha is currently a mentor for the Canadian Association of Journalists, a member of the Polaris Prize jury, and a member of the Vancouver Film Critics Circle.

Born and raised in Toronto, she also lived in Hamilton where she worked for radio stations CKOC and K Lite FM. She has lived in Vancouver since 2007.

She has close family and friends in Hamilton, Dundas, and Ancaster.

Na’amat is a non-profit charitable organization whose mission is to enhance and safeguard the status of women, children and families in Israel and Canada. Na’amat programs in Israel provide shelters for abused women and children, legal counseling, recreational and retraining programs, and a countrywide network of daycare centres.

Tickets for the virtual author luncheon are \$25 and tax receipts will be provided. Tickets are available at [naamat.com/home/cities/hamilton](http://naamat.com/home/cities/hamilton).

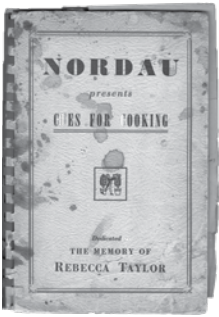


**Marsha Lederman**, author, “Kiss the Red Stairs: The Holocaust Once Removed”

## FOUND TREASURE Ancestral cookbook a trove of iconic Jewish recipes

BY **TERRY BENNETT**  
SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

MY HUSBAND and I recently ventured into our basement storage room for the first time in 28 years. Among boxes full of memorabilia we found a cookbook published in 1955 by Hadassah’s Nordau chapter, dedicated to the memory of my great grandmother and lifelong Zionist, Rebecca Taylor, mother of Jack and Sam Taylor and Dorothy Shekter. The recipes in this gem of a book, all of which were provided by members of the Nordau chapter (often referred to by their husbands’ names), are a reminder of the mores and eating habits of a generation long ago who regularly used tablespoons of *schmaltz* (chicken fat) in their cooking. This Passover you might be tempted to try this sponge cake recipe submitted by a Mrs. M. Chertkoff.



**A 1955 cookbook**, published by Hamilton Hadassah’s Nordau chapter contains a treasure trove of traditional Jewish recipes. The book was discovered in Terry and Jerry Bennett’s basement storage room.

### PASSOVER SPONGE CAKE

#### INGREDIENTS

- 6 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- juice of ½ lemon and orange (¼ cup)
- 2/3 cup cake meal (sifted twice)
- 2 level tbsp potato flour

#### INSTRUCTIONS


Beat egg whites until stiff. Gradually beat the sugar into the whites. Beat egg yolks will and add the lemon and orange juice, beat until thick. Fold yolks into whites and gradually add the flour which has been sifted three times. Bake in a low oven half an hour then raise the temperature for another 30 minutes. Invert cake until thoroughly cooled before removing from tin.

Mrs.M. Chertkoff





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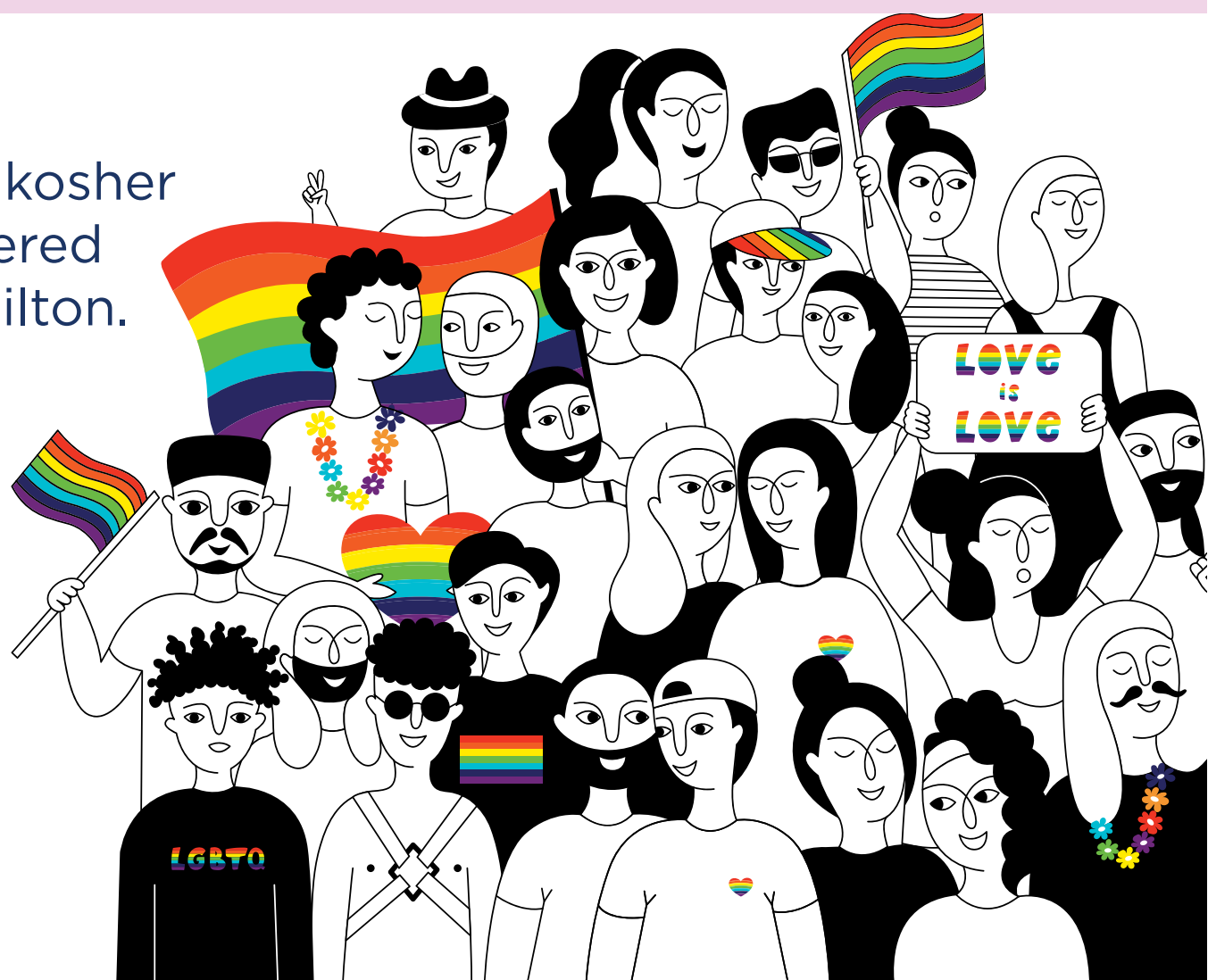
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# Creative ideas for a child-friendly Passover holiday

The celebration of Passover is the perfect opportunity to nurture your children’s Jewish identity with fun activities

BY **JESSICA TAYLOR CHARLAND**  
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS have a magical quality of transporting us back in time. Back to our childhoods, and even further back to the days of our ancestors. I attribute this transportation to the enchantment of story. Passover is one of many holidays that come with a story—not a story about “them” long ago, but a story about “us” as a people. I once read that this story is told in the first-person plural so that we and our children learn to take it personally: We were slaves in Egypt, We crossed the desert, and We were set free. As a parent, I ask myself: how I can nurture my children to embrace the holidays?

I fondly remember as a child being responsible for the place cards, creating them by hand or on the computer, folding them so they’d stand proud on the plates and Haggadot I’d helped set out. We had a full house each year, the table spanning the dining room and living room of my suburban childhood home in Thornhill. As I got older, I was trusted with setting the table with wine glasses, putting the matzah in our matzah boxes, cutting up celery and pickles, and polishing Elijah’s silver cup.

I remember my younger sister helping to gather the items that adorned our seder plate—a beautiful ceramic heirloom handcrafted by our Bubby. My parents would help us remember what each item represented. We’d watch my mom make kugels and my dad roast the brisket.

In our early teens, my sister and I started helping to prepare the meal. Between rolling batches of matzah balls, my mom taught us how to perfectly whip egg whites into meringue, how to fold it in with the matzah farfel, how much cinnamon to add to the sweet kugel. Our responsibilities grew each year and we always looked forward to being part of the holiday preparation and the evening storytelling and feast.

On the first night of Pesach, family would arrive with platters of roasted veggies, gefilte fish, desserts, and bottles of wine and grape juice. We’d gather around the table, taking turns reading from the Haggadah, re-living our shared exodus from Egypt and the celebration of freedom. I remember being a shy young child practising the Manishtana, the four questions, to be sung during the seder. I was relieved when my sister and younger cousins were old enough to start singing with me. When we had all grown to adulthood, the youngest of each family unit would stand up and sing together, no matter their age.

In my later teens and early adulthood, I began attending the second night of seders with my now-husband’s family. Unlike my family, they no longer read the Haggadah cover to cover. Initiated by his older sister, they had started selecting passages

from the Haggadah that were most meaningful to current events, along with news clippings and articles to share and discuss. Amidst telling the Passover story, we made connections to our own lives, to the continued oppression of people around the world, to modern day plagues and hardships, and to the meaning of freedom. I was intimidated at first, but came to look forward to these immersive conversations.

My favourite part of these seders was the childhood act of searching for the Afikomen. My father-in-law was the best at hiding the middle matzah, and we adult-children would run around in competition to be the first to find it, lifting cutlery organizers out of drawers, checking behind art frames hung on the wall. I learned you are never too old to be the youngest at a seder.

As a new parent, ready to host a seder of my own, I decided to adapt our family traditions to be more child-friendly. I had learned of a website, Haggadot.com, where I spent hours scrolling through images, passages, poems, and songs, to create my own Haggadah. At the seder, we collectively sang parody songs like “you need to wash your hands” (to the tune of the Beatles’ “I want to hold your hand”) during the Urchatz. We donned masks and headbands and acted out Moses pleading with Pharaoh to let our people go. Each family had to bring something that represented one of the 10 plagues. I created an interactive seder that drew us into the story, transporting us across the sand as the sea parted. I hope that as my children grow, they too will have new ideas and help host the seder in their own way.

I struggle with fostering a strong Jewish identity within my children. This is partly because I have just started to rebuild my own. Growing up in a Jewish neighbourhood, I was surrounded by a normalization of Jewish practices. I took that for granted. When I moved away, I wasn’t immediately bothered by the lack of a Jewish community. Except for the holidays that brought me back home, I had left most of my Jewish identity behind. But raising kids in Burlington changed me. Our shul is a 20-minute drive away, matzah is nearly impossible to find in grocery stores, and we are outsiders around the mainstream Christian holidays. Motherhood made me feel an immense responsibility to return to my roots—to create a Jewish home.

Embracing Jewish culture offers me great comfort. It provides a place to feel grounded, a community to belong to, a shared ancestry and traditions, a guide to raising my children to be proud and outspoken Jewish people—to be mensches.

The holidays and their stories offer entry points to engage with my children as we build our Jewish identity together. Stories are enchanting and



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

## HOW TO MAKE NEW SEDER TRADITIONS

### MAKE YOUR OWN HAGGADAH

There are thousands of pre-made ideas, themes, images, prayers, songs, and more at [haggadot.com](http://haggadot.com). You can host a colouring book seder, a Harry Potter seder, a 10-minute seder. It’s easy to select pages from different templates, add them to your own 13-part booklet, edit them if you wish, and print copies for your guests!

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR SING-ALONGS AROUND THE TABLE:

Alongside traditional favourites like Dayenu, my Haggadah included parody songs such as “You need to wash your hands” to the tune of the Beatles’ “I want to hold your hand” and “Take us out of Egypt” to the tune of “Take me out to the ball game”. Songs break up the reading and add a smile to your exodus celebration!

### CREATE CHARACTER MASKS AND FINGER PUPPETS

I found free Moses and Pharaoh mask printables on Pinterest, printed them on cardstock and cut out eye holes. These were used by guests who took on the character roles during the Maggid portion of the seder, shouting in first person “Let my people go!” I also found free plague printables on a mommy blog. After cutting out the 10 shapes, I glued them to a them to a piece of cardstock for sturdiness, and then

to another piece of cardstock rolled into a tube the size of my finger. These were worn by the kids around the table who read out parts of the story where the plagues were sent upon the Egyptians: “Darkness: Hey! Who turned out the lights, I can’t see.”

### INCLUDE INTERACTIVE Q&A AROUND THE TABLE

Asking questions is an integral part to the seder. I included trivia Q&A cards under everyone’s plates at the table. One person had Question #5 (Where does the word Afikomen come from?), and someone on the other side of the table had Answer #5 (It comes from the Greek word epikomen which means “that which comes after” or “dessert”). Cues were added to my Haggadah to mark an opportune time to ask such questions! This got everyone talking!

### MAKE IT AN INTERACTIVE SEDER

Adapting our seder to be more interactive meant that everyone spoke, everyone listened, everyone sang, and everyone was entertained. The magic of the holiday is in the gathering of family and friends and telling the story, not in static traditions of the past. Don’t be afraid to make the seder your own, and to allow your children to help make decisions that could lead to new and meaningful holiday traditions.

**Jessica Taylor Charland** displays a myriad of hand-made Passover crafts she uses during her family seders.

“The holidays and their stories offer entry points to engage with my children as we build our Jewish identity together. Stories are enchanting and connect us to something bigger than ourselves.”

connect us to something bigger than ourselves. As a grateful PJ Library subscriber, my children and I enjoy snuggling up and reading the books that come in the mail each month. The ones about the holidays are favourites, offering new ideas for ways to celebrate, and to talk about traditions from around the world. Passover is about our exodus from slavery, our collective flight and freedom. From this story, we can learn to

seize opportunity when it arises—opportunity to stand up to oppressors, opportunity to flee harmful situations, opportunity to band together, and most importantly to always have hope. As my children get older, I hope to have them take on the roles and conversations I had growing up, so that they may internalize the messages of these stories, using them to guide their Jewish life.



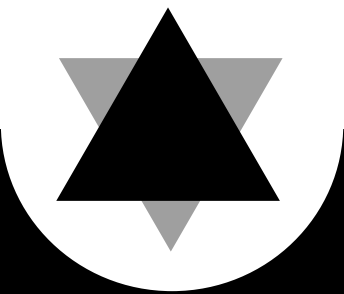


The weeks leading up to the election, we have heard and shared our community’s concerns about past statements by the MPP-elect Sarah Jama.

Following conversations between the ONDP and our advocacy agent, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, Ms. Jama sent us a letter in which she pledged “to speak out against antisemitism and show up for the community when I am needed.” This was followed by a public apology and acknowledgement of the harm she has caused.

We will be holding Ms. Jama to her commitment. It is encouraging that Ms. Jama has apologized to our community for her hurtful and shameful remarks. However, we must remember that as recently as Monday's televised debate, Ms. Jama lectured us for "conflating " her support of Palestinians with being antisemitic. We accept that people can support the Palestinian cause and criticize Israeli policy. But criticism of Israel is one thing. Advocating that Israel has no right to exist, is quite another. We have seen how such rhetoric inspires those who hate Jews to act here, with disastrous consequences. What has surfaced has caused a lot of pain to the Jewish Community. This impact must be acknowledged and addressed. The Federation's door is open to help deepen understanding of Hamilton's vibrant and diverse Jewish community, particularly in the context of rising hate in this city.

**Howard Eisenberg | President | Hamilton Jewish Federation**



# TOGETHER WE GO FORWARD

**ANNUAL COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN UPDATE**  
**As of March 22, 2023 we raised \$1,806,922**  
**exceeding our goal of \$1.8 million!**

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# Growing up with the Rabbi

Reflections on a unique childhood in the Baskin family amidst her parents’ extraordinary contributions to the community and city

BY **JUDITH R. BASKIN**  
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

MY FAMILY differed from most of Hamilton’s Jewish families in the 1950s and 1960s because my parents had highly visible public roles. In addition, Rabbi Bernard Baskin (1920-2023) and Marjorie Shatz Baskin (1927-2005), born and educated in the United States, were not Canadian citizens during my childhood. They did not become Canadians until almost 20 years after their 1949 arrival in Hamilton.

My parents brought forward-looking political, civic, and social attitudes to Hamilton, rooted in their experiences as American Jews. Their outsider status in relation to Canadian Jewry in general, and the Hamilton community in particular, allowed them to move beyond a customary and perhaps expected Jewish reticence in those years. Rabbi Baskin established the centrality of public affairs and larger social, literary, and artistic concerns on the synagogue’s agenda and he consistently demonstrated a strong congregational commitment to interfaith dialogue.

My father served Temple Anshe Sholom for 40 years, an indication of the mutual satisfaction and esteem which existed between rabbi and congregation, and he continued as Rabbi Emeritus for almost three additional decades. However, a rabbinical family, even after such long residence, is rarely a full part of the community in which it lives. In the end, the rabbi, often transient, is always an employee, and the rabbi and the rabbi’s family always maintain a certain degree of distance from congregants. And a rabbi is rarely perceived as an ordinary person. My friends were always awed to encounter my father in our home setting; tongue tied and abashed, they were astonished by his levity



PHOTO: COURTESY JUDITH R. BASKIN

**Rabbi Bernard** and Marjorie Baskin with their children Judith, Susan and David taken in May, 1963 on the occasion of Judith’s Bat Mitzvah.

and jokes. And, certainly, we children were aware of our parents’ expectations about proper behavior since, at various levels, we represented our family and the Temple in the eyes of the Jewish community.

I was born in Hamilton (Hamilton General), as were my brother David and sister Susan (Saint Joseph’s). Jewish identity was not a source of confusion in my childhood. Rather it was our family’s defining characteristic: we were model Jews in a Canadian

“My friends were always awed to encounter my father in our home setting; tongue tied and abashed, they were astonished by his levity and jokes.”

industrial city in which our co-religionists were few. My parents took this responsibility seriously. The Temple, like many Reform synagogues of that era, would often welcome members of local Protestant churches to Friday

evening worship. I vividly remember my father talking to such groups in the sanctuary following the service, explaining Jewish symbols and practices, and answering the questions of the mostly female visitors. He was a frequent speaker at local organizations of all kinds, public school graduations, and at churches of many denominations throughout the decades of his rabbinate.

My father continued to the last years of his life to write articles for The Hamilton Spectator on Jewish observances and issues of Jewish concern. At the same time, for many years he also reviewed books and contributed opinion pieces to The Spectator and The Canadian Jewish News on general topics of all kinds, gathering a following of admiring readers.

From their arrival in Hamilton, my parents were involved in civic activities and agencies beyond the purview of the Jewish community. The Children’s Aid Society, the Social Planning Research Council, the Hamilton Symphony, the Hamilton Art Gallery, and the Hamilton Public Library were among the organizations on whose boards my parents served.

My father was named to the Board of Governors of McMaster University, from which he received an honorary degree in 1969, in addition to numerous other civic honors. Ultimately, he and my mother became Canadian citizens, a decision motivated in great part by their desire to continue and enhance their community service activities and opportunities. My mother was an elected official on the Wentworth County Board of Education for almost two decades.

My parents practiced a form of observant Reform Judaism for our household and congregation that was based on family practice, synagogue worship, Jewish education, social involvement, and community activism. The central event of our weekly domestic observance was Friday night dinner, rendered special by the rituals of candle lighting, kiddush, and challah.

However, Shabbat dinner was not a leisurely repast since my parents had to be at Temple in

good time for the 8:15 p.m. service. Our Jewish world was not only the family but the Temple and its members, around 90 families when my parents arrived in Hamilton in 1949, and 350 by 1967. And our comfort zone was the west end of the city, distant from earlier areas of Jewish settlement.

When I was a teenager, social groupings tended to be determined by synagogue affiliation. Synagogue youth groups, linked to larger regional networks, provided much of our social life, as well as exposure to a larger world. The meeting ground for all sectors of the community was the Jewish Community Center, especially Camp Kadimah. Here, children, as well as the teenagers who served as staff, came together from the city’s various synagogues and enclaves and found common cause, singing Ha-Tikvah together at the end of the day.

After high school, I, like most of my Jewish peers, left Hamilton for university. Only some returned to Hamilton, often to work in a family vocation of one kind or another. For me, and for the larger number of my peers, Hamilton was a pleasant and safe place in which to be children, to receive a good education (thank you Dalewood and Westdale), and to construct a Jewish identity through synagogue religious schools, youth groups, and Jewish communal activities. For a number of us, close connections were forged in those years that endure a number of decades later.

Although my siblings and I, as well as most of our childhood friends, have lived elsewhere for many years, we remember our Hamilton origins and many of us keep track of one another to an extent that surprises others from larger Jewish communities. We were a wonderfully fortunate generation and we look back with gratitude to our parents, teachers, and religious and communal leaders.

Judith R. Baskin, Ph.D., Philip H. Knight Professor of Humanities Emerita, University of Oregon, lives in Eugene, Oregon, with her husband Warren Ginsberg. They have two children and one grandchild.



Temple Anshe Sholom  
wishes you a  
**Happy  
Passover**

Visit [anshesholom.ca](http://anshesholom.ca) or call 905.528.0121 to  
register for our Community Passover Seder on April 6  
and our 2023-24 Jewish Learning Program.





# A code we can live by

It is time for us to pause, reflect and set an intention for our future



Pat Morden

THE LESSONS learned as the Passover story is told each year are remarkable and ageless. Each year we recite, “Why is this night different than all other nights?” The answers to our questions, journey, and sense of freedom can be found in the tradition, in our hearts and in our heads. At the end of the seder, we recite, “Next year in Jerusalem,” words of hope that this year will bring freedom, more moments of joy and being on purpose.

The values of *savlanut* — patience and persistence are central to the Passover Story, a story of struggle, resilience, and hard-won steps to loosen the binds that prevent us from living our values and beliefs.

Reliving the Passover story in the pages of the Haggadah year after year requires *savlanut*. It takes persistence and patience to say the words, to acknowledge its lessons that include forgiveness, team work, finding our way, not giving up, and renewing our faith in deeply-held beliefs.

People have celebrated Passover through good times and bad, during wars, during the Holocaust, and alone during COVID, finding strength and hope in the story.

At Shalom Village, we will gather with family, friends, and people who care, to tell the Passover story and to learn. Staff will also gather around a Seder table to tell this story, to use its words and songs to remind ourselves of the values of persistence and patience as we move beyond the past and current struggles.

We will share this story of overwhelming challenges, the paths that were taken and not taken, and share the lessons of resilience we can use today, for ourselves. We will breathe in, honour, and recommit to our own shared purpose: *to honour our fathers and mothers*.

The grace and love found in the lessons of Passover will help us achieve our own freedom and joy in making moments that matter for those who are A.T.H.O.M.E. @ Shalom Village. We will listen to the past, focus on the future and soak in and understand how to have the patience to believe; to keep going.

Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young wrote this song in a time of turbulence:

You, who are on the road  
Must have a code that you can live by  
And so, become yourself  
Because the past is just a goodbye  
... Teach your children well  
Their father’s hell did slowly go by  
And feed them on your dreams  
The one they pick’s  
the one you’ll know by  
... Don’t you ever ask them, “Why?”  
If they told you, you would cry  
So just look at them and sigh  
And know they love you

These words remind us that both the past and the journeying that has happened between then and now can teach us.

Within and without Shalom we listen, we teach each other, share our belief and worries, embrace our possibilities, and will, in sharing the lessons of the Passover story, move forward more confidently.

“We will share this story of overwhelming challenges, the paths that were taken and not taken, and share the lessons of resilience we can use today, for ourselves.”

The Board of Directors has taken a bold move to pause plans for redevelopment, to give the time to listen to our internal and external stakeholders, to give time for our story to be both clear and one that draws us together in a commitment to a shared intent. They have been undaunted in their persistent leadership for Shalom Village to be at its best and now are being patient to allow the future to unfold in a strategic manner.

Just as in the Passover story, they will take the time to learn from the past and to set an intention for the future as they learn from other leaders in aging research, seniors housing, and the seniors themselves how to be a Jewish faith-based organization, welcoming to all and secure in its foundation.

At Shalom Village we look forward to refining and advancing our own story and our sense of purpose by leaning into the stories of the past with a focused vision for the future.

Passover immerses us in the lived experience of previous generations and reminds us that with faith, hard work, persistence, patience and love, we will learn and grow as a community, as individuals and as an organization.

Pat Morden is Shalom Village interim CEO

# ChatGPT, the latest golem

New AI software, like the golem, lacks wisdom and intelligence



Ben Shragge

CHATGPT, the AI-powered chatbot, is something new. In response to prompts, it can answer questions, write essays, generate code, and otherwise do your creative bidding. It has already passed medical licensing, MBA, and law school exams; co-authored scientific papers; ghostwritten sermons; and inspired headlines about the death of the college essay and the obsolescence of white-collar jobs.

But ChatGPT is also something very old—a golem. In Jewish folklore, golems were artificial humans created via esoteric incantations (like a programming language) to perform tasks both menial and superhuman (like computer software).

Most famously, the Maharal of Prague, a 16th-century sage, is said to have fashioned a golem out of clay to protect the Jewish community from pogroms. Eventually, the golem ran amok, and the Maharal deactivated it by erasing the letter aleph from the word *emet* (“truth”) written on its forehead, leaving only *met* (“dead”).

Like a golem, ChatGPT doesn’t think for itself: it responds to commands. It takes those commands at face value, which is to say, without nuance or judgment. The Maharal’s wife ordered the golem to fetch water for the kitchen from a nearby brook. Unsupervised, the golem kept pouring water into the kitchen until it flooded. Oblivious to the consequences of its actions, the golem only stopped at the Maharal’s command when water burst into the courtyard.

ChatGPT can perform the white-collar equivalent of fetching water. At your command, it will draft emails, debug code, and argue a case. But like a golem, it requires close supervision. That’s because, as a large language model, ChatGPT’s answers are based on statistical patterns in its training data, not an experiential understanding of the world or a human differentiation between right and wrong.

Researchers use the term “hallucination” to describe AI’s tendency to confidently assert plausible-sounding falsehoods. Kevin Scott, Microsoft’s chief technology officer, said of AI that “the further you try to tease it down a hallucinatory path, the further and further

it gets away from grounded reality.” ChatGPT and its eventual successors may not be capable of flooding the kitchen, but they can flood the internet, the public sphere, and the minds of unstable individuals with even more damaging lies.

Stack Overflow, a question-and-answer website for programmers, banned posting ChatGPT-generated content “because the average rate of getting correct answers from ChatGPT is too low.” Researchers at NewsGuard, which tracks online misinformation, found that ChatGPT could be induced to generate false narratives about controversial topics 80 per cent of the time. Although the bot has built-in safeguards to prevent abuse, crafty users have already found loopholes to make it bypass its own restrictions.

Two of OpenAI’s own researchers contributed to a report warning that “language models bring the promise of automating the creation of convincing and misleading text for use in influence operations, rather than having to rely on human labor.”

If ChatGPT can help a high-school English student pretend she’s literate enough to write an A+ essay, it can provide the same persuasive veneer to conspiracy theorists, online scammers, and government-sponsored trolls.

Golems were said to possess a portion of *da’at* (knowledge) but to lack the other facets of intelligence: *chokhmah* (wisdom) and *binah* (understanding). While ChatGPT seems more advanced than the Maharal’s golem—crafted as it is out of gigabytes instead of clay—it is subject to the same limitations. Both artificial beings were given *da’at*, or data, but not the wisdom or judgment to interpret, contextualize, and actualize that data in a responsible way.

Moreover, the Maharal’s golem was created by a wise man for a noble task. ChatGPT was created by an amoral Silicon Valley startup whose CEO once said “AI will probably most likely lead to the end of the world, but in the meantime, there’ll be great companies.”

AI-powered chatbots may be useful for taking on some of the drudge work of the knowledge economy. But like golems, they’re instruments of humans, not our replacements. And if they run amok—becoming tools to conjure up scams and propaganda, malware and misinformation—they should, like any golem, be rendered *met*.

Ben Shragge is the HJN’s digital editor. He lives in Boston with his wife and young daughter

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# How we define intelligence

Its intricacies are far more complex than I once believed



Phyllis Shragge

IT WAS that deep thinker Homer Simpson who once purported: “It’s so simple to be wise ... just think of something stupid to say and then don’t say it.”

Homer’s unique philosophy is reflected in another perceptive quote: “How’s education supposed to make me smarter? Besides, every time I learn something new, it pushes some old stuff out of my brain. Remember when I took that home wine-making course and I forgot how to drive?”

As I consider Homer’s words, I realize that I’ve had misconceptions about intelligence my entire life. I think my upbringing molded my perception of intelligence into an inflexible one-size-fits-all box that needed reconfiguration.

When I was growing up, I thought intelligence was synonymous with intellect. Intelligent people were well-read, well-spoken, and well-schooled. Being well-schooled of course, meant you had excellent grades, thus solidifying your path to an undergraduate degree, with a postgraduate degree to follow. This path, in my mind, was the only viable path to consider. And it was somewhat daunting.

With a father who was an icon in the legal field, I set high expectations for myself. Perhaps if I had realized then that intelligence and accomplishment come in different forms, I might have been open to various routes towards self-fulfillment.

As a young person, it never occurred to me to question why my father, who was a brilliant and accomplished jurist, hadn’t a clue how to fix anything that needed repairing in our house. I took it for granted that if something broke, my parents would call Mr. Tetrault, our handyman. I’m sure Mr. Tetrault didn’t have a clue how to write a judgement, nor did my father have any idea how to fix a furnace, but each man had his own abilities and his own unique intelligence.

A recent article outlined some current ways of assessing intelligence, including: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

It’s the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the

emotions of people around you. It includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. CREATIVITY.

It may manifest itself in a talent for art or writing or an unusual way of interpreting what’s around us. Creativity may encompass intellectual prowess, but just as often, it may not. BOUNDLESS CURIOSITY.

Every brilliant person asks questions. Curiosity is a marker of exceptional and true intelligence. HIGH SELF-AWARENESS.

This person is aware of his or her strong and weak points and how to succeed because of them, or despite them. HIGH SITUATIONAL AWARENESS.

This person is cognisant of his or her environment, including emerging threats. IMMEDIACY IN REACTION TIME.

This person has a quick reaction time in case of emergencies and is intuitively able to solve conflicts and daily problems. NEGOTIATING AND PEACE-BROKERING.

This person can compromise and break through a conflict situation. THINKING YOU’RE NOT VERY SMART:

This is known as the Dunning-Kruger effect. Intelligent people generally know their weak spots and are humble. Often less intelligent people believe they are smarter than they are.

I like that last one: thinking you’re not very smart. Since I fall into that category, does that make me brilliant, or am I just self-aware? It’s for others to judge, I suppose.

We’re all so different and have varying types of intelligence. The adept computer programmer may have a limited vocabulary. The accomplished musician may be dyslexic. The skilled garage mechanic may be a poor reader. The superb daycare worker may lack social skills with adults. The university professor may lack emotional intelligence. The talented visual artist may have difficulty expressing himself with words.

Intellect is just one aspect of intelligence, but who’s to say it’s the most important? Maybe Homer Simpson had the key when he said, “Boy, everyone is stupid, except me.”

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

# This Raptors fan has got game

During the pandemic our local NBA team became a lifeline



Helaine Ortmann

I START with a disclaimer. I recently turned 70, used to be 5 feet tall, and I sport a wingspan of 4’7”.

For context, the average NBA player is 26, 6’6” in height with a wingspan of 6’10.” While I may not be able to make an alley-oop, my all-round skill set consists of walking, vegetable gardening, challah braiding, chair yoga and laundry.

As the smallest and youngest student in my middle school gym class (every class for that matter), I was put in the one-on-one position, during basketball practice, of defending the “paint” from the tallest girl.

To this day, I remember hearing the teacher say: “Girls, it just shows what you can do if you try hard enough. Helaine just blocked Debbie’s shot!” That, and being the most agile limbo dancer at Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties in my teen years, was my best athletic offering.

Fast forward to the 1990s.

My husband felt it was important to introduce our two sons to recreational sports at an early age, so, like other doting parents, we took ourselves to the park to cheer them on at summer T-ball. From there, it was softball, then in the winter, basketball.

My husband, bless him, attended workshops, read books and studied videos to coach our sons’ teams. One of his mentors was renowned NBA head coach “Red” Auerbach—not because he was the son of Russian Jewish immigrant Hyman Auerbach from Minsk—but because he was warm, demanding, highly successful and he espoused the basics.

The closest I came to being on the floor was being in the stands *kvelling*.

Fast forward to 2019. After a 30-year-old hiatus from things that work up a sweat, I caught myself watching the under-the-radar Toronto Raptors progress to the last couple of games in the season.

As riveting as Paul Henderson’s goal against the Soviets in the eighth and final game of the ’72 Summit Series in Moscow, I witnessed the “buzzer beater”

clinched by Kawhi Leonard that saw the Raptors triumph over the Golden State Warriors; the first-ever NBA Finals game played outside the U.S. and the Raptors’ first championship in franchise history! In that moment, I pledged my allegiance to “WeTheNorth,” committing there and then that I would not be a fair-weather fan.

Who knew we were poised on the precipice of a pandemic?

I jumped on that rollercoaster with my fellow *landsleit* and hung on through the early uncertainty, chaos and *tsuris*.

Would we lose the 2020-2021 season?

Would our Raptors be sidelined with Covid?

How long would they play inside the 22-team “bubble” at Disney World; the most away team in the league?

What about their *mishpocha*? What about Drake, and Raptor, the mascot?

If you had told me then, that for the next two-and-a-half years, the Raptors would become a lifeline, as important as baking challah and binging Netflix, I would have called you *mishuga*.

Fast forward to today.

My enthusiasm for our national team has not waned, even as we now experience a season fraught with trade rumours, injuries, highs and lows. I watch the games, two to three evenings a week, and on weekends.

I’m not ashamed to say I plan social outings around the NBA schedule and often consult “Siri” through the day to confirm tip-off so that I can properly time when supper is served.

Only those closest to me know that displayed on the wall of my basement exercise room is a poster of Kawhi Leonard (now of LA Clippers fame) with the inscription “I♥Helaine” photoshopped on his left bicep; a treasured retirement gift from my co-workers.

As we lingered over breakfast the other day to analyze the game of the night before, my storied coach and husband of almost 45 years looked me straight in the eye and said: “You know what? I think the only thing we have in common IS the Raptors.”

At the time this issue of the HJN publishes, Helaine will be cheering on her beloved Raptors from a private box at Scotiabank Arena.

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# We are aging in place, right where we are

The best approach we can adopt for ourselves and for our families is to plan and prepare for several different futures

BY **HARVEY STARKMAN**  
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

I KNEW THEY WERE in trouble when Pam cut her finger one morning and couldn't staunch the bleeding. Pam and Lorne live in a downtown one-floor walk up condo. They are frail and elderly, both with degenerative conditions that make mobility increasingly difficult. They have no children, and their closest family members live outside Ontario.

We discovered Pam's injury when we arrived for an afternoon visit. We wanted to drive her to a local walk-in clinic, but there is no elevator or stair assist to the ground level. Simply put, Pam can no longer leave her home without significant support. We scrambled unsuccessfully to find a doctor who would stitch and dress the wound at home. In the end, we called 911 and two paramedics carried Pam down the stairwell and conveyed her to the hospital by ambulance.

Think of Pam and Lorne's story as a cautionary tale.

A participant in a recent Seniors in Ontario webinar nailed it perfectly: "Aging in place is one thing; aging safely in place is something else."

Think about it. Regardless of our age, we are all aging in place. And consciously or not, safety is always a concern. That's why we have smoke detectors and why we put baby gates on staircases when our babies start to crawl. That's why we install grab bars, remove trip hazards, and modify our living spaces to whatever degree

we can to accommodate our changing physical needs as we age.

Not only is everybody aging in place, survey data reveals that over 90 per cent of seniors want that place to be in their homes, or at least in their community. That's understandable, and in many ways the ability to age in place is easier than it's ever been.

Factors that used to 'push' seniors from their homes, like the loss of the ability to drive, or the presence of physical barriers, have been blunted by the availability of ride sharing services, needs-based home renovation, and the expanding ability of e-commerce to bring goods and services to the front door.

Even the feeling of isolation that seniors with limited physical mobility or without family or friends nearby experience, can be somewhat mitigated by tools such as FaceTime or Skype. There are still qualifiers and potential barriers like cost, local accessibility, and familiarity and comfort with technology—none of them minor. Some can be addressed by government grants and home care and community support services, resources that will make it possible for more seniors to age in place longer.

But things happen. The body wears down, progressive illnesses progress, a fall leads to a break, a diagnosis of dementia is confirmed. Pam's condo—already a major concern—will never accommodate a wheelchair, and her ability to perform the basic activities of daily living will require more and more assistance. Lorne may not be far behind. In time,



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

independence gives way to the need for increasing levels of care.

I have friends who tell me that the only way they are leaving their house is feet first through the front door. John Bernstein, a caregiver services operator, agrees that it can be done—but often at significant financial and emotional cost to the caregivers.

An older person's desire to remain in their own home may seem unreasonable to family members who, looking objectively, see a high risk, untenable situation. However, reason always has a difficult time opposing

emotion. Seniors, assessing the risks, often decide that the rewards of preserving their identity, their dignity, and, above all, their independence are worth it.

While we strive to be independent, we must also accept that the physical and cognitive consequences of aging will, in different ways, affect us all. We can work to extend the time that we can live safely and securely at home, independently at first, then likely with increasing degrees of support.

But for many of us there will come a time when our own needs—or the needs of our caregivers—will necessitate a change. We will continue to age in place, but it may be a different place.

It is usually an unplanned 'event' rather than a conscious decision that drives the change. Pam and Lorne's situation has taught me that we don't know what our own future will bring. Perhaps the best that we can do for ourselves and for our families is to imagine a number of different futures and plan for each. We need to take responsibility for ourselves.

Let's learn what we need to know and change what we can to live safely and comfortably in our homes for as long as we can. Let's consciously build and maintain support networks with friends and neighbours.

Let's discuss and make known our preferred alternatives if being at home is no longer realistic. And let's use our political power to advocate loudly for the changes we want to see in the quality of care and support for all seniors, wherever they are aging.

Harvey Starkman is a regular contributor to the HJN. Contact him at harvestarkman636@gmail.com.



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– Shirley L.



# Exiled in 1956, a daughter returns to Alexandria

More than six decades after her family was forced to leave Egypt, Simone Rotstein set out to reconnect with her past

BY **SIMONE ROTSTEIN**  
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

MENTION ALEXANDRIA to an Egyptian and the immediate response is, “I love Alexandria.” There is beauty and vibrancy in this city, along with dishevelment and bedlam. Egyptians, especially those from Cairo, flock there during the oppressive heat of summer, arriving to capture the Mediterranean breezes.

My husband and I spent four days in the heart of the city in November 2022, and loved every minute there. We navigated our way around a small section of Alexandria, on foot and by Uber, all the while pursuing an Alexandria which no longer exists.

In the early 1950s, 40 per cent of the Alexandrian population consisted of foreigners: Greeks, Italians, French and British among others, and 24,000 Jews, including my family. The city was considered the Paris of the Arab world. Today it’s a teeming, shabby city filled with a young, animated population and it would be difficult to find an Alexandrian who is not an Arab. The people are welcoming and pleasant and the town is charming, including some relics of an earlier age.

You can still have coffee and dessert at Patisserie Délices, adjacent to Saad Zaghoul Square in the central Raml district, where my grandparents lived. Délices, founded in 1922, still carries a wealth of the old glory with its antique English chairs and picturesque ambiance. I can imagine my mother, after a couple of rounds of canasta, joining her sisters and cousins for a fragrant Turkish coffee, a chocolate-covered profiterole and a good gossip. My mother always appreciated rich desserts. In Montreal, the city of our refuge, she lived without her familial friendships and did not have the time to relax at a café.

I was seven years old in 1956, the year we were expelled from Egypt. We were forced out of the country and lived in a hotel in Paris until Canada accepted our immigration application. Since we were Jews, my father’s car part store, one with three doors, as my mother would proudly say, and my grandfather’s appliance shop were expropriated by the Egyptian government. In Montreal, one of my father’s first jobs was as a parking lot attendant, juggling cars in the middle of winter.

As a young child, I ran and skipped on these Alexandrian streets with my siblings and cousins, supervised by my family, aunts, uncles and our nanny, Sowad. These people and the town were meshed in my daily life. Now an adult, I breathe in the air, trying to conjure memories in a city that is both alien and transformed.

Ed and I arrive in Alexandria on a Monday morning and spend the rest of the day orienting ourselves. We stroll along la Corniche, the 25-kilometre-long waterfront promenade that straddles the Mediterranean coastline. We watch the people fishing, the vendors and the general population — including conservatively-dressed women, almost all of



PHOTOS: COURTESY SIMONE ROTSTEIN

**Above:** A 1954 photo of the Rawas family; mother Lina, father Victor, children, left to right, Simone, Vivian and Charles in hospital after the Brit Milah of fourth child, Henri (not seen).

**Left:** Simone Rotstein sits in her childhood synagogue next to her father’s seat.



“Since we were Jews, my father’s car part store, one with three doors, as my mother would proudly say, and my grandfather’s appliance shop were expropriated by the Egyptian government.”

whom cover their hair with a hijab — and we join the strollers. They stare at us; we are foreign. I don’t think we spend one day without returning to the Corniche, be it the first thing we do in the morning or the last thing, before going to bed. The assault of the cars, minibuses and trucks and their constant beeping and the lack of streetlights to help crossing one of

the major corridors of traffic does not deter us from the salty smell of the sea and the beauty of the coastline. This was one reason I fell in love with the city.

On Tuesday, our first full day in Alexandria, we walk 10 minutes from our hotel to Eliyahu Ha’Navi Synagogue, one of the largest synagogues in the Middle East. In the past, 12

synagogues thrived in Alexandria. Today there are two, with neither functioning as a place of worship, as there are no Jews left. There are also three derelict Jewish cemeteries. Eliyahu Ha’Navi was recently refurbished by the Egyptian government, as a reminder of the city’s Jewish heritage. It’s beautiful. We spend more than two hours there, the only visitors. After taking photographs, we begin to read the name plaques affixed to each seat. After quite some time, Ed calls me, “Simone, come and see what I found.”

He has located my father’s name on a pew. I am moved. There are signs of my family in this city. My family had thrived here and we were banished.

Adjacent to the synagogue is a very large school, its name engraved in the stone in both Hebrew — “The School of the Jewish Community,” and in Arabic — “The Israeli Community School.” Arab students hang out of a third-floor window and call out to us, “Hello. Welcome. Welcome.” This formerly Jewish school was one of many in Alexandria.

The Jewish communal offices and those of the synagogue were housed in a building at the front of the synagogue within its expansive courtyard. Today, visitors can only access the lobby. The rest of the building is used by museum staff and the synagogue is just that— a museum commemorating a bygone community. In the lobby there are many pictures of institutions, community members, presidents and philanthropists, choirs, Jewish hospital staff, families and events celebrated in the past. A very vital, connected Jewish people had once thrived in Alexandria and I have found remnants of my past connecting my relatives and this city.

That afternoon, we make our

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“I pulled the basket back up, and the fragrant aroma of the bread filled our apartment.



**Far left:** Street view of the Rawas family apartment building today in Alexandria.

**Left:** The foyer in the building.

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way to my family’s apartment building. It is a 20-minute walk from our hotel and we are soon in the neighbourhood. The street name has been changed. I lived at 8 Marietta Pasha, a European name, and the street is now Dr. Mohammed Abd El-Maguid El-Zayat. We arrive at my apartment building and I stare at the number 8. It has taken me 67 years to get here.

The apartment sits on the corner of the street, with the massive door and louvered windows on one side. I wonder, “Where did my father park his convertible? The street is so narrow.” Around the corner are the wrought-iron balconies. I close my eyes and remember lowering a basket with money in it to the street vendor, who would fill it with our daily pita bread. I pulled the basket back up, and the fragrant aroma of the bread filled our apartment.

We enter the building. Where there had once been a concierge watching

over the lobby, there is dust and neglect. The elevator is still there, the old kind with the metal inside door and an outside gate. It’s littered and we’re afraid of using it. The large marble staircase, with its wrought iron balustrade, still makes its way up, circling the elevator shaft, the steps worn over time.

I search unsuccessfully for the door to the basement which we had used as a bomb shelter during the 1956 Suez Crisis. President Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal and wanted to disallow Israel from using it.

France and Britain wanted to protect their interests and persuaded Israel to join in an offensive against Egypt which included bombardment of some cities. All the apartment residents made their way down the stairs when the warning alert sounded and climbed back up at the all-clear signal.

Two of the 12 apartments are now schools, and we enter one which has

been extensively renovated and impossible to imagine as a home. We continue our way up the three flights and take photographs of the three front doors of our possible apartment, since neither I nor my siblings remember the floor we lived on but recall the orientation. Being in front of those doors is gratifying.

The next day Ed and I return with resolve. We will knock on the doors and see if we are allowed into one of the three likely apartments. There is no answer on the first floor, nor on the second; the third floor is our lucky portal. An old woman answers, and after explaining our desire to see the apartment, using some elementary French and mimes, she allows us into her home. She treats us warmly and gives us free access.

I am so affected that the photographs I take of the apartment are a mess. The dwelling has not been changed from its original layout. The marble floor and large dark wooden

interior doors, now painted white, are still there. There is a newer kitchen and an updated washroom, but all else is the same. I imagine our cook, Ibrahim, chopping the okra and eggplant in the small kitchen, in preparation for our lunch. I see our parents’ bedroom and the large children’s room. Impenetrable curtains still protect the living room and dining room from the relentless Alexandrian sun. I recall my father lining the windows with dark blue black-out paper to deter bombers from targeting us during the 1956 war. I leave with an outline of our apartment. It’s all I need for this trip to be a resounding triumph.

I depart “al’iiskandaria” understanding my parents’ love of the city and mindful of the profound loss of extended family and physical home they suffered.

Simone Rotstein was born in Alexandria and raised in Montreal. She and her husband live in Hamilton.

“We arrive at my apartment building and I stare at the number 8. It has taken me 67 years to get here.”



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“... an event organizer approached me in a panic. He told me no one had remembered to get furniture for the summit

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musician in the world, picked Bernstein up and kissed him on the cheek. All the while, the television and magazine crews were filming and clicking away. Bernstein stole the show from the unprecedented gathering of Egyptian and Israeli vessels.

Bernstein's beaming face could have lit the way as we made the return trip back to Sharm.

I should not have been surprised by Bernstein's impetuosity. Years before, I was in Tel Aviv to meet the Doubilets for a previous National Geographic article when I heard that the conductor was in town. Shortly after I left a message for him at his hotel, he called back and asked if I could arrange a day of sailing out of the Tel Aviv marina, which he could see from his hotel room. I set something up for the next day and invited the Doubilets to join us. Unfortunately, the skipper canceled in the morning because of rough seas.

When I called Bernstein with the bad news, he said he was disappointed but still hoped to get down to Sharm after he finished his concert tour. As we were chatting, I happened to mention it was my birthday. To celebrate, he invited the Doubilets and me up to his penthouse suite. He even ordered champagne and a birthday cake from room service. After salutations, blowing out the candles, and a few glasses of the bubbly, Bernstein sat down at the grand piano that the hotel had supplied him and asked me what I would like to hear. I was dumbfounded: a command performance by the great maestro in my honor!

I struggled to think of something fitting, hoping to come up with the name of a piece he had played at one of his televised youth concerts I had loved watching as a child

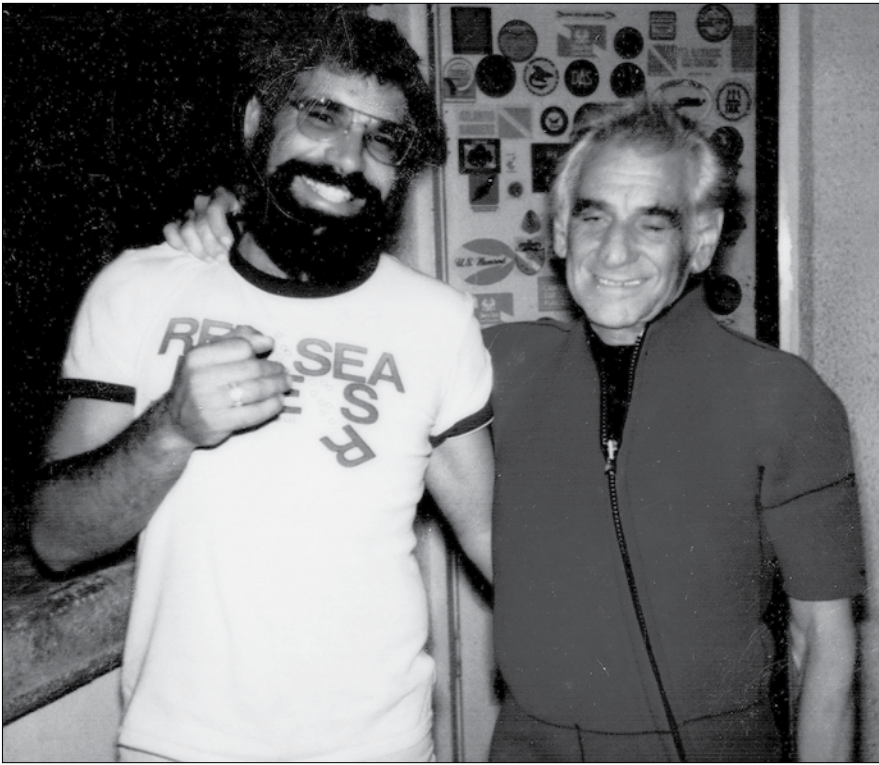


PHOTO: DAVID DOUBILETS

growing up in Los Angeles. In desperation, I blurted out “West Side Story.” Bernstein smiled, nodded his head, and played a medley from my favorite musical. For an encore, he performed the Yiddish classic “Yidl mitn fidl” (“Yiddle with His Fiddle”) and sang along in Yiddish, which he had learned as a child in the Boston area. When he finished, we gave him a laughter-filled standing ovation. He bowed as if he had just concluded a gala performance with the New York Philharmonic.

Back to the Sinai summit, Sadat and Begin were due to fly in the next day. As host of the National Geographic team, I was given press credentials and allowed to accompany the journalists to the airport for Sadat's arrival. The press was fenced off on an elevated platform, but I managed to get some great shots of Begin

greeting Sadat. Afterward, we followed the motorcade into town. The summit site was a large, empty building next to our diving center. Locals had dubbed it the “White Elephant,” since it was built for some project that had yet to materialize.

While Begin and Sadat were freshening up in their hotel rooms, an event organizer approached me in a panic. He told me no one had remembered to get furniture for the summit. I had my crew rush over chairs and tables from the diving center restaurant. They were in place just minutes before Begin and Sadat arrived.

The meeting made headlines around the world, as had every step of the peace process since Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977. Ringside as an official press photographer, I captured some great candid shots of the meeting. As I watched leaders take their

**Howard Rosenstein** with Maestro Leonard Bernstein, who was a frequent visitor to his diving centre in Sharm El Sheikh.

seats, I nervously chuckled at the thought of our flimsy bamboo chairs collapsing and setting off an international incident.

A few hours later, the excitement was over. The leaders and their delegations flew back to their respective capitals of Cairo and Jerusalem; the media collected their gear and prepared their reports; and we resumed our routine of taking tourists diving in the Red Sea.

In retrospect, I doubt the summit accomplished much beyond providing Begin an international photo op in advance of the Israeli elections later that month. Besides, Begin was likely preoccupied at the time with a secret operation that would take place a week later and a 1,100 kilometers away: Israel's attack on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor.

The day following the summit, Bernstein had to return to Tel Aviv and asked me to give him a lift to the airport. As we headed north, another jeep cut across our path from a side wadi. I had to swerve to avoid it. I was furious! Ours was the only car on the road, so why did this jerk have to cut us off?

Both vehicles stopped within centimeters of one another. Next thing I knew, Bernstein was jumping out of his seat and embracing the passenger from the other Jeep. I wondered what the hell was going on.

Turns out, the passenger was Daniel Barenboim, another of the world's most famous musicians. To think of what would have happened had our Jeeps collided. I envisioned the headline in the next day's New York Times:

“Famous maestros killed in Sinai jeep crash.” And I, as one of the drivers, would have become a footnote in history.

“Imagine my surprise when Bernstein suddenly jumped from our bow onto the Egyptian boat's slippery aft deck and started mingling with the crew.”

# Chag Pesach Sameach!



**Dan MUYS**  
Member of Parliament for Flamborough-Glanbrook

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# How I became a pilot without ever leaving the ground

Cycling Without Age gives seniors with limited mobility a chance to be active and feel ‘the wind in the hair’

BY **BARRY ROSEN**  
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

IN 2021, I TRAINED to be a pilot, and in 2022 I put my pilot’s training to good use—without even leaving the ground!

To explain, a pilot is a volunteer cyclist with a program called Cycling Without Age.

Cycling Without Age was started in Copenhagen in 2012 by Ole Kassow, who wanted to help older people and others with limited mobility remain active members of society by becoming passengers on special bikes called trishaws. His belief is that “everyone has the right to wind in their hair.”

The trishaws look a bit like rickshaws, except passengers sit in the front seat protected from the sun by a canopy. The pilot sits in the back. The trishaw has several gears and a battery pack, which provides power assistance for the pilot. This specialized vehicle costs several thousand dollars.

Cycling Without Age is now found in 42 countries, including Canada.

Thanks to the hard work of Nancy

Gray and Jill Axisa, we are fortunate to have a branch of this organization serving Hamilton and Burlington, which started offering rides in 2021.

The local program has developed relationships with community centres, retirement homes and long-term care settings. Many organizations provide financial and other assistance, including a strong affiliation with New Hope Community Bikes, a registered charity. There is no cost for passengers to go for a ride on the trishaw.

Last year, I took out passengers from early June until early November, including from Shalom Village. For most rides, two people were taken out together.

Our route would take us down Macklin Street North to Cootes Paradise. We would turn onto the waterfront trail, where a good part of the ride took place.

The passengers were invariably enthralled with the journey. Not only did they enjoy the scenery, but the ride also evoked memories of things they had seen and done during their lifetime. We often enjoyed conversations



PHOTO BY NANCY GRAY

and many passengers taught me new things.

On our route, walkers on the path would often wave and smile, or even offer comments like “looks like fun” or “can I join you guys?”

Another location where I picked up passengers was the Idlewyld Manor, a long-term care facility on the West Mountain. Here, most passengers were accompanied by a staff member. These rides travelled through a quiet,

tree lined neighbourhood. The passengers’ enjoyment was obvious. Community members would often wave as we rode along.


These locations are only two examples of many where passengers are picked up in Hamilton and Burlington. Occasionally, family members, friends and members of the public are also offered rides on the trishaw.

Cycling Without Age provides many benefits. Passengers get to go out on a bike and explore the world. Facilities are pleased to see their residents becoming more active and engaged in community life. Local citizens become more knowledgeable about their neighbours, who may have previously been less visible. Volunteers gain an opportunity to become physically active, make connections with various people and bring joy to others.

It is one of the most exciting and interesting volunteer positions I have ever experienced. I highly recommend that you consider becoming a Cycling Without Age volunteer pilot.


For more information, visit <https://cyclingwithoutage.ca/hamilton-burlington/>

For a brief video with the program’s founder, see <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/brief/438226/ole-kassow>



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# Chag Pesach Sameach!


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22 HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS • APRIL 2023



JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

Edmonton’s “hometown hero”



PHOTO COURTESY OF JNF HAMILTON

JNF executive directors Jason Cairns and Orna Richter in Edmonton.

MATTHEW LEVINE

AS PART OF their annual Tu Bi’ Shevat campaign and celebration, Jewish National Fund Edmonton recently hosted a “Sips & Sweets” event led by Jason Cairns, executive director of JNF Edmonton and Orna Richter, executive director of JNF regional Ontario, based in Hamilton. There was a wide variety of both sips and sweets on hand, including wine, fruits and vegetables, and donuts supplied by Bliss Baked Goods. It was nice to see so many friendly and familiar faces from the Edmonton Jewish community in attendance.

Cairns introduced Richter as a “hometown hero” who grew up in Edmonton and worked her way to becoming the youngest executive director of the Jewish National Fund. Richter’s hour-long speech gave insight into her life’s journey and dove into themes of generosity and the stigma around money.

Richter explained how she adopted her “trace origins of generosity” through three different people. Her Bubbe was always generous and gave food to friends and neighbours, her Zaida exemplified volunteer service, and her mother opened the door to anyone in need. As she grew up, Richter became involved in NCSY which showed her the importance of fundraising, making cold calls, arranging Purim baskets, and organizing fundraising events.

Richter went on to talk about her most memorable volunteering experience: working in Kiryat Moshe. Richter worked at a summer camp there, tutoring underprivileged children in English. She emphasized how much those kids needed role models and how volunteering with them helped them stay on a positive path.

After getting her biology degree at York University, Richter moved back to Edmonton and became involved in the Jewish community as a synagogue youth director. She tried pursuing lab work with her biology degree, but when she found she did not enjoy the work, Richter applied for and was hired as a director with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton (JFE). She then moved to Hamilton and got a job working at the McMaster Children’s Hospital Foundation, while beginning a board position with JNF Hamilton.

At JFE, Richter discovered the fundraising stigma, that “people are afraid

to talk about and ask for money.” Later, working at the children’s hospital with investors, Richter learned about the negative mindset associated with money. She explained that terms like “loaded” and “filthy rich” create a negative mindset that takes away from the beauty and excitement of what money can do.

The most insightful part of Richter’s speech came when she talked about the ethics involved in asking for money. She insisted that too many organizations use guilt to influence investors, but that she has learned to evoke hope instead. Richter claimed that long-standing relationships can be better built through evoking hope over guilt.

Richter concluded her speech by talking about Israel and the most recent projects that she has worked on. She emphasized the importance of supporting Israel even if you do not support what is going on there politically. Israel is important to Richter; her biological father lives there and even fought in the Yom Kippur War. She described Israel’s history as “complicated” and acknowledged that its past and present are by no means perfect. She believes we have a duty to engage in conversations about Israel, and insists that JNF has, and will continue to build Israel into a better place through hard work and determination.

Richter then shared some of JNF projects she visited during a recent trip to Israel, including the Restorers of Jerusalem project that her grandfather worked on and a cancer hospital-building project (Beit Shulamit), where JNF arranged to have gardens surrounding every access point rather than just concrete. This allows patients the ability to see and enjoy the outdoors, boosting their mental health in the worst of circumstances. She went on to talk about a *Bayit Cham*, where at-risk orthodox girls having trouble and suffering from mental health issues come for hot meals, and to enjoy therapy sessions. JNF is also rebuilding the outdoor garden area surrounding this clinic.

Richter truly is a hometown Edmonton hero whose presentation was informative and impactful for everyone in attendance. She concluded her presentation with the message to “leave a positive footprint in the way that is most meaningful to you.”

HAMILTON HEBREW ACADEMY

Our robotics team rocks!



PHOTO COURTESY OF HHA

The Hamilton Hebrew Academy robotics team competes at the First Lego League (FLL) York Region Tournament showcasing their robot design iteration.

ADAS ISRAEL CONGREGATION

Mikvah benefit evening



PHOTO: DONNA WAXMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Community members at the recent Mikvah Renewal Event. The Hamilton Mikvah was recently selected by MIKVAH USA for a matching grant to transform the facilities into a luxurious and elegant state-of-the-art location. The Hamilton Mikvah services all three synagogues..

B’NAI BRITH YOUTH ORGANIZATION

BBYO convention fun



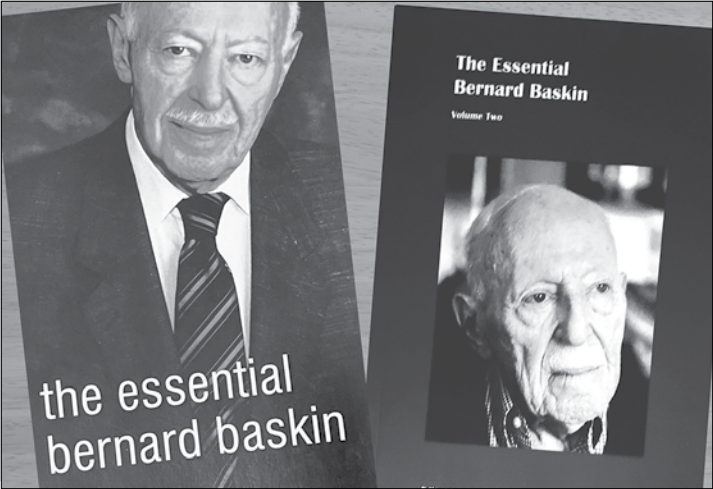
PHOTO BY JACK ROSENBAUM

Hamilton and Toronto BBYO members celebrate their tournament win at BBYO Ontario’s annual Frat/Sis Convention. Contact bbyohamilton@gmail.com to join in the fun.



TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

## Remembering Rabbi Baskin



Two volumes of the Essential Rabbi Bernard Baskin are available for purchase through Temple Anshe Sholom.

CANTOR PAULA BARUCH

WE ALL know about Rabbi Baskin’s devotion to the written word, his love of books, which was expressed through his book reviews in the CJN, his Books and Ideas lecture series that he conducted before a filled sanctuary for decades, and the book business he ran with his beloved Marjorie.

And yet, despite his many articles and sermons over seven decades, he never wrote his own book. And so, in 2008, to honour Rabbi Baskin on the 60th anniversary of his ordination as a rabbi, Temple Anshe Sholom and the Baskin family published the first volume of The Essential Bernard Baskin. That first collection of Rabbi Baskin’s writings from the Hamilton Spectator and the Canadian Jewish News, as well as some sermon material, was long overdue. A second volume was

published in 2018. These are available by contacting Temple Anshe Sholom.

In an undated sermon delivered sometime around his retirement in 1989, Rabbi Baskin reflected on the power of prayer, concluding with his own prayer of gratitude: “And so, I ask You, What words, O God, can I speak for the blessings of my life?” So, I simply set my blessings before You: the love of my family and how it has sustained me; the Torah of my people and how it has lighted my way; the partnership with this congregation and how it has taught me with love to be a rabbi; and Your blessing of life itself, O God, who has kept me alive and sustained me and brought me to this day. I set these blessings before You, and now You, O God, You put them together into a hymn of my thanksgiving that will be acceptable before You, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Amen.

BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE AND HEBREW SCHOOL

## Family friendly Jewish life

TAL-OR BEN-CHOREEN AND AIMEE WIGLEY

AT BETH JACOB we have a slew of great programming in place to help you find connections in your community.

In January, we initiated a new program for pre-schoolers called Tots Shabbat Service Through Song and Story, led by our fantastic tweens and teens.

Our monthly Mishpacha Service on Shabbat afternoons is growing steadily. This fantastic program includes a small meal and a range of activities, its highlight being the soulful musical sing-along Havdallah service. In the early spring, we anticipate the Mishpacha Service will transition to a family friendly in-person Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday evenings.

We are also working on an exciting schedule of classes which will be announced in our weekly newsletter.

Our shul bakers have been providing sweet treats for Out of the Cold meals. Many thanks to all our team bakers for their efforts!

Beth Jacob Hebrew School has continued to enjoy a warm, collaborative relationship with Temple Anshe Sholom, which really shone through at the Tu BiShvat event—hosted at Beth Jacob this year. With a generous donation of succulents and pots from Tropical Expressions, we pretended to be small seeds that gradually grew into full, thriving plants. It was a great excuse to let out some silliness and stretch our bodies. The students were led in thoughtful discussions on the meaning of Tu BiShvat



PHOTO COURTESY OF BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE

Tu BiShvat fun at Beth Jacob Hebrew School.

(led by the amazing Sophie Geffros) and planted succulents with Aimee Wigley. Mrs. Schmerling led the children in Hebrew songs to celebrate the holiday, including Hatikvah.

The extra succulents were carefully planted by a volunteer student group and taken to Shalom Village, so that we could share some of the festivities with our communities’ elders.

Purim featured a family fair and Megillah reading, and two traditional Megillah readings. With Pesach right around the corner, we are making plans to host second night Seder at the Synagogue (April 6). To reserve a seat, email office@bethjacobsynagogue.ca.

We know attending services or programs in person can be an intimidating process. If you are alone or new to town and we’d like to make it as welcoming and accessible as possible. Please email office@bethjacobsynagogue.ca to make your first connection!

MCMASTER HILLEL

## Nurturing students’ Jewish identity



McMaster students prepare cupcakes for Out of The Cold.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MCMASTER HILLEL

RABBI BEN SHEFTER

PASSOVER 2020 taught me an invaluable lesson: the story of the four children in the Passover seder represents not only different identities; they are a prism through which to view how individuals and communities flourish. While teaching a virtual course, one McMaster student commented that the four children are actually pieces of oneself that we embody in different spaces.

The more I reflected on this analogy, the more the student’s observation made sense. There is the studious Ben who can be found in a classroom, the sporty Ben who enjoys playing basketball, and the social Ben who can enjoy a night out with friends at a concert. All my various identities coexist in the confines of my everyday life. This conversation led me to understand a fundamental aspect of Passover that is often overlooked—the

idea of freedom of expression.

This year, as Jewish students across Hamilton returned to campus—many for the first time in nearly three years—McMaster Hillel has been working with them to (re)explore parts of themselves that have sat dormant for quite some time.

From our new Wellness and Study Lounge to Friday night Sundowner parties, to volunteering with Out of the Cold and Hamilton Jewish Family Services (HJFS), students have been encouraged to explore who they are and who they want to be. A student’s time at university is integral to one’s identity formation. The value of fostering a warm and welcoming community that embraces differences and offers opportunities to come together to celebrate cannot be understated.

On behalf of the students and professionals at McMaster Hillel, I wish you a *Chag Sameach*.

TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

## Jewish values and family fun

DORA-ANN COHEN-ELLISON

EACH YEAR at Temple Anshe Sholom, our Jewish Learning Program explores and reinforces connections to our community. In preparing for our amazing school reunion fundraiser in January, Grade 7 students explored the value of responsibility as they learned about food insecurity and prepared the tzedakah centre-pieces for the tables.

Students learned that, although the fundraiser was for the school, it is important to think of how we can help others as we are raising funds. Using food centre-pieces that were donated to Carol’s Cupboard was a visible way to encourage others to support those in need as well.

Thank you to all of our sponsors and donors who made our reunion night a huge success! This month, students explored the value of *hakarat hatov* (gratitude), in connection to the mitzvot of Purim. When we reflect on all we are grateful for, we also take time to notice how we can help others with the blessings we are given. Students created *matanot la-evyonim*; bags of snacks, water, socks and toiletries, to keep in their cars, ready to give out when they see an individual in need. Tot-Shabbat (open to all ages 2-5 plus caregiver) continues April 22, 29, May 6 and 13 from 11 a.m. to noon.

Looking to meet other families in the area? Come out for Family Fun on Sunday June 11. Join us at Churchill Park for a



PHOTO COURTESY OF TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

Temple students create centrepieces for the Kasher Food Bank’s Carol’s Cupboard.

story, song and playtime at the park with Morah Dora-Ann! Details on our website. If you have a child entering JK through Grade 12, we invite you to join our Jewish Learning Program, which is open to all in our community. September 2023 new student registration is being accepted now at the Temple website (anshesholom.ca) or by emailing Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison at dacellison@anshesholom.ca for information about our Temple Anshe Sholom Jewish Learning Program.



# Out of the Cold’s impact impossible to measure

Numbers are up but hard-working volunteers are feeding grateful guests

BY **CINDY RICHTER**  
SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

WHEN THE end of March arrives, most people are overjoyed to celebrate the coming of spring; however, for the guests of Hamilton Out of the Cold (HOOTC), April’s arrival means the HOOTC season has ended. The promise of hot and nutritious meals accompanied by the availability of toiletries, socks, hats and gloves, delivered by kind and attentive volunteers becomes a thing of the past until November’s chill returns.

That’s the way it’s been for 25 years. Established in Dec. 1997 by retired teachers, Gloria Colizza and Sister Carole Anne Guay, HOOTC has grown to a program serving hot meals five nights a week from 11 locations in the Hamilton area. The Jewish community took on one night every week under the strong leadership of Gloria Silverman z”l in 1999. The practice of hospitality and caring for the stranger are commandments too good to ignore!

When COVID-19 affected our ability to offer sit-down meals, we adapted to our current takeout service model. On average, between 200 to 250 meals of soup, entrée of chicken or beef, two sides, fruit and home baking are sent out from November to March. Guests are encouraged to take more than one bag and most often they do. Occasionally, there are leftover meals which are immediately taken to restock empty community fridges in



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAMILTON OUT OF THE COLD

the downtown core or the meals are sent to The Hub, a downtown drop-in doing a superb job in the midst of frightening need.

With the cost of housing and food prices, it is no surprise that our group’s 2,400 meals will sustain a lot of people. But numbers don’t really mean much. People and their stories do. There’s the middle-aged woman living in the car of her recently deceased mother; the homeless folks who accept blankets and socks to replace wet and dirty ones; the senior who delivers meals to his homebound neighbours; the immigrant learning a new language yet able to acknowledge us by saying, “Good behaviour,” as we handed him his meal; guest Bruno who says, “For you, a bag is essentially a meal but for me, it actually

represents three meals ... The Hamilton Out of The Cold program represents my weekly outing — that is in addition to easing my food budget constraints ... I am expressing my gratitude for your efforts, energy and commitment for myself and for other clients who benefit from your devotion.”

Our board and coordinators will soon be investigating the possibility of returning to our original model of inviting guests inside churches for a few hours to get warm, shmooze and receive a brief release from the challenges of the day. Possibly some sites will continue the takeout model. Regardless, we are sustained by donations to the Beth Jacob/Out of the Cold Fund and in-kind donations

from individuals, foundations, synagogues, and businesses.

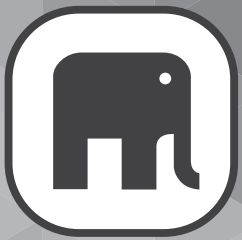
Our volunteers are simply the best: the home bakers who infuse their items with goodness, the cooks and packagers who don’t disappoint even when ice and snow seem to be prevailing, the runners who move the meals outside to the curb and remain to chat with the guests. They’re living examples of what the Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman z”l once said. “Pray as if everything depended on God; act as if everything depended on you.”

We’re so proud to represent the values of our Hamilton Jewish community and look forward to November. If you’d like to volunteer with next season’s Out of The Cold, email [c-richter@sympatico.ca](mailto:c-richter@sympatico.ca).

**Hamilton Out of the Cold (HOOTC)** volunteer cooks take a moment from their labours to greet HOOTC staff Janice Ormond (far right) and Kathy Kline (holding gift).

“For you, a bag is essentially a meal, but for me, it actually represents three meals. Hamilton Out of the Cold program represents my weekly outing and eases my food budget constraints.

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JCC AND J-CENTRE FOR WELLNESS

PJ Library



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAGGIE NORRIS

The PJ Library “shlep-over” at JHamilton in February was a huge success.

MAGGIE NORRIS

HAMILTON PJ LIBRARY is thrilled to announce that, thanks to our generous local donors and the Arogeti family grant awarded to us from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, we have been able to accept all the families that had been on the wait list and almost double our participants to nearly 250 families. Back in February we had our very first “Shlep-over” at JHamilton. It was a huge success, as we watched a movie in our PJs and sleeping bags and had pizza. In March, we celebrated Purim with a party and craft activity. At the end of March, we had our “Bubbies, Babies and Biscuits” program, where bubbies brought their grandbabies for storytime and cookies. Watch for more PJ Library programs at [hamiltonjcc.com](http://hamiltonjcc.com).

The JCentre for Wellness has been focusing on physical and mental health with a variety of programs geared toward kids and adults.

We have an amazing turnout every Monday at 10 a.m. for Pilates with Debbie Strub, which is continuing until June. Bring a mat and water bottle!

Therapist Eliora Wolfe is facilitating expressive art therapy classes for adults Tuesdays at 10 a.m. and for kids Tuesdays at 4:30 p.m. Wolfe provides a safe space for those needing to work through various personal challenges using music, art, and drama.

Kids ages four to nine can join Natasha Waldenberg-Romm for yoga on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.

There are a number of interesting talks coming up about nutrition from personal trainer, Erin Hunter in May and Dr. Adam Norris will be back in June to give a thought-provoking health talk.

All JWellness programs take place at 1605 Main St. W, Hamilton. Please check [hamiltonjcc.com](http://hamiltonjcc.com) for dates and times, or contact Maggie Norris at [mnorris@jewishhamilton.org](mailto:mnorris@jewishhamilton.org).

KEHILA HESCHEL

Israel’s rocks and stones



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEHILA HESCHEL

Kehila Heschel students act out the story of Moses hitting the rock.

ANITA BERNSTEIN

HOW MUCH DO you know about the rocks and stones of Israel? Kehila Heschel students learned about rocks and stones through the Avigail project, a yearly event which encourages their connection to Eretz Israel through exploration of a specific feature of the Jewish homeland. The Avigail project was established by Daniel Kollek, one of the founding members of Kehila Heschel, in memory of Avigail Va’anunu, a friend of his family who passed away in 1999.

This year’s school-wide Avigail project exemplifies Kehila Heschel’s cross-curricular approach that bridges language arts, math, social studies, science, engineering, Judaic studies, Hebrew and visual arts, music and drama. Classes were transformed into geological sites as students learned about the rocks and stones of Israel and compared them to those in Canada. Students learned the

names and kinds of rocks found in Israel, their biblical significance and location through stories about rocks and stones, such as the story of Moses striking the rock and water gushing forth. Students also learned the natural cycle of rocks.

Kindergarten students focused on the stones on the breastplates of Aaron. Grade 1 and 2 students concentrated on the Jerusalem stone, which was used in the construction of the the Kotel. Grade 3 and 4 students researched different areas of Israel where rocks created structures such as Masada, the lava rocks that surround the Meshushim pool and the rocks of the Ramon crater.

As a culminating activity, classes shared their knowledge with each other and their families.

Let Kehila Heschel students share their knowledge with you! Check out the Avigail project video at [kehilaheschel.ca/news](http://kehilaheschel.ca/news).

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Happy PASSOVER

Wishing everyone a Chag Kasher V'Sameach!

~ Moishe, Eli & Gabe Chaimovitz & their families ~

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