Growing up in Montreal, the month between Purim and Pesach was filled with great anticipation. Anticipation of spring, the annual clean up, shopping and preparation of Pesach treats and then the ultimate – the Passover Seder! The Seder in our home was a very memorable event. Our family would gather around the table and my father would be in his glory – a true king surrounded by his family ready to retell the Exodus story. We sang every single song to every tune that we could remember until late into the night.

Today, my home is “Passover Central” where my children and grandchildren gather every year to retell the story and perpetuate our family traditions. This year, when we chant “Next year in Jerusalem”, it will have a very special meaning to our family as my older son and his family are making Aliyah this summer.

But the story of Jewish Exodus is more than just one told in prose, prayer and song around the Seder table once a year. Far from over, it continues to unfold in modern day.

On March 20, 19 Yemenite Jews were rescued and brought to Israel by the Jewish Agency. Some 200 Yemenite Jews have been rescued in recent years as threats against the Jewish community have increased. Since Operation Magic Carpet in 1949, the Jewish Agency has brought 51,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel, with the support of Diaspora Jewry.

Approximately 50 Jews remain in Yemen, 40 of whom live under the protection of Yemenite Authorities in Sanaa, a closed compound adjacent to the U.S. Embassy. If they choose to immigrate to Israel, the Jewish Agency has pledged to make the necessary arrangements.

In 2015, Israel welcomed over 30,000 new Olim. The Jewish Agency continues to work closely with the Ministry of Absorption and Immigration to bring Jews from France and Ukraine. There has also been a 77% increase in immigration from Brazil. The Jewish Agency is fulfilling its mission to provide safe havens and the opportunity to be part of the Jewish state for Jews from countries with deteriorating economic and social conditions who choose to join their chaverim in Israel.

On the home front, we are preparing for a different Exodus. In the days immediately following Pesach, our annual delegation will embark on a transformative journey as they trace the history of our European ancestors on the March of the Living. This year, close to 700 Canadian youth, young adults and adults will join thousands of people from all over the world on an intense two week journey that takes them through Poland and Israel.

One of the many unique elements of the March of the Living experience is the participation of a group of Holocaust survivors that accompanies the youth contingent and shares personal stories and memories of life before, during and after the Shoah. The March of the Living Digital Archives Project will be filming live survivor testimonials at the very place where the horrors of the Holocaust took place.

This footage will be a very precious and lasting educational resource long after the survivors are unable to accompany the groups. Visit www.molarchiveproject.com to view existing films.

The March of the Living is extremely powerful in its ability to capture the history, the horror, the bravery, the resistance and ultimately the excitement and deep meaning of the establishment of the State of Israel. Ceremonies to commemorate Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron and celebrations for Yom Haatzmaut feature very prominently in the program.

Participants return home with a deeper understanding of their heritage that remains with them for many years. If you have not yet personally experienced the March of the Living, I encourage you to do so next year. Visit www.marchoftheiving.org to learn more.

As we anticipate winter’s end, the beginning of Spring and the coming of the holiday of freedom, we should recommit ourselves to retelling the story ‘k’ila’, ‘as if we ourselves’ were slaves in Egypt and so ensure that every generation that follows continues in this very important tradition.

B’Shalom,
Linda Kislowicz
President and CEO
Jewish Federations of Canada - UIA
PJ Purim

PJ Library® Tot Shabbat

Special guest Rabbi Joshua Corber from Beth Tzedec joined songstress Karina Szulc in leading a room full of pirates, dragons, queens, lions, superheroes, and minions in song and dance, celebrating Purim as well as Shabbat.

PJ-Akiva Purim Carnival

Akiva Academy was packed full of hundreds of colourful costumed revelers for the Purim Carnival organized in partnership with PJ Library® Calgary. Calgary Glenmore MLA Anam Kazim was one of the guests. Lilah Silver showed her estimating skills once again by guessing the number of jelly beans and winning the whole stack!

PJ Purim

Calgary Jewish Federation welcomes and supports children and adults with special needs. If you or a loved one needs special accommodations to participate in any of our events, please contact Karina Szulc at 403-389-6994 or karinas@jewishcalgary.org.

Integrated Bursary Program

Jewish life is not beyond your reach

If you find it’s a financial struggle to participate fully in Jewish life in our community, Calgary Jewish Federation’s Integrated Bursary Program can help you.

With one application followed by a discreet, personalized session with a Federation volunteer, you can access subsidies for day schools, summer camp and recreational activities, depending on your need and available community funds. Applications available at jewishcalgary.org or at Jewish Family Service Calgary, Akiva Academy, Calgary JCC and The Calgary Jewish Academy.

For information contact Judy Shapiro: 403-444-3153 or jshapiro@jewishcalgary.org.

Hillel Mitzvah Day

On March 15, Calgary Hillel partnered with the Faith and Spirituality Centre, the Centre for Community Engaged Learning and International Student Services to bring a mitzvah day to the UofC campus. Thirty people, including professors, students and administration, came together to make 500 sandwiches for the Drop-in Centre.

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