



One of a kind feature

Ora Markstein's prized possessions **P10**

Rediscovering Camp Ramah

What happened to Hamilton enrolment? **P14**



Hamilton Jewish News

THE VOICE OF JEWISH HAMILTON

HAMILTONJEWISHNEWS.COM

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Our Future. Powered by you.

by BARB BABIJ, CEO, Hamilton Jewish Federation

The town of Berdichev was buzzing with the news of the death of a certain very wealthy Jew. The townspeople didn't shed a tear; for this man, who had been so blessed in his life shared not a penny of his great wealth. The rabbi of the town, the renowned and saintly Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, however, was deeply grieved by the passing of the wealthy miser, and even planned to attend his funeral. The townspeople were incredulous. However, because the rabbi was attending, they too decided to attend and discover

why this stingy man was receiving so much respect and honour. When the funeral was over, people approached the rabbi and asked the reason for such a show of honour to such a person.

"No one knew him like I did," was his reply. "Everyone took him to be a miser, but I came to discover his true character. Your assessment of the deceased was very wrong. He was no miser. On the contrary, he was a great and saintly person who practiced the giving of charity on the highest level."

See **MORE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING** page 7



Federico Treguer, 20, who leads tours at Buenos Aires's Jewish museum, represents the city's thriving and pluralistic Jewish community. Photo by Wendy Schneider

The Jews of Argentina

The history of Argentina and its Jews reflects the complex and fascinating character of a country once envisioned as the new Jewish state while Russian and Eastern European pogroms were raging, but whose traditions of liberalism and leniency allowed for an influx of Nazi war criminals in the 1940s and 1950s. At least 250,000 Jews live in Argentina, making it the seventh largest community in the world and the largest in Latin America. Its heart is the vibrant city of Buenos Aires, where Jews have played a prominent role in the arts, journalism, commerce and politics throughout the ages. Exploring Buenos Aires through a uniquely Jewish lens is the subject of our travel feature, found on page 22.

Moved by moral imperative

SYRIAN REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY



Members of Beth Jacob Synagogue's Refugee Sponsorship Committee include those seated above: Back row, l to r, Yael Reznick DeMarco, Ahmad Musa, an interpreter from the Muslim Association of Hamilton; Middle row, l to r, Judi Caplan, Elissa Press, Shelley Sender; Front row, l to r: Marvin Caplan, Rabbi Hillel Lavery-Yisraeli and Laura Ludwin.

Story and photos by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

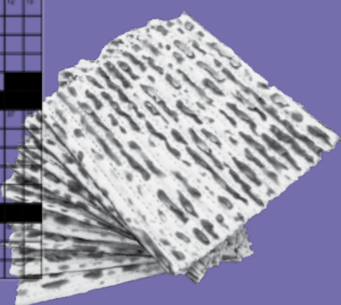
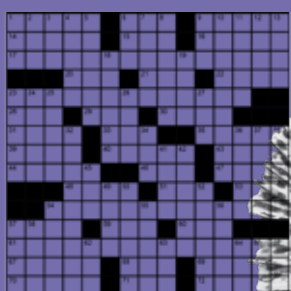
It was the photograph that changed everything. The image of drowned Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi lying face down in the sand on a Turkish beach that appeared on the front page of newspapers throughout the country virtually overnight changed the way Canadians thought about the Syrian refugee crisis last September.

Suddenly, Canadians from across the country were galvanized into action, either offering to volunteer or trying to find information about privately sponsoring a Syrian refugee.

The plight of Syrian refugees has had a particularly strong impact on Jewish Canadians, many of whom see their own past reflected in the surge of mostly Muslim refugees fleeing war and tyranny in the Middle East. While some have questioned the wisdom of taking in a population from a country that is both hostile to Israel and

overrun by radical Islamists, for the most part, the Jewish community is playing a significant role in bringing Syrian refugees to Canada, according to the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), under whose auspices some 35 Jewish organizations, including synagogues, schools, private groups and individuals have submitted applications for private sponsorship. Here in Hamilton, two synagogues and a book group are also doing their part.

See **MOVED BY MORAL IMPERATIVE** page 7



Passover Fun

Crossword Puzzle

P12

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PERSPECTIVES

ELISSA PRESS



The story of Passover is the most well-known refugee story in the Bible. Even greater than the story of the large-scale exodus itself are the themes relating to social justice: oppression, homelessness, hunger, redemption and salvation. And Hope. Just as slaves need not always be slaves so too is there an alternate reality for refugees. The story of Exodus is the story of the triumph of social justice.

But how do we understand deliverance and the fight against modern-day oppression?

How do we address issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, child labour, hunger and poverty? What can we do to help end the refugee crisis?

According to the UNHCR, worldwide displacement has now reached the highest level ever recorded. One in every 122 human beings is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. (<http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>) While the conflict in Syria currently accounts for the largest number of displaced people, conflict in other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Republic of Congo, and Sudan to name but a few, has also led to hundreds and thousands of refugees. Over half of the world's refugees are children. (<http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>)

We start our Passover seder by reading "This year we are slaves. Next year may we all be free." We are taught "In every generation all of us are obliged to regard ourselves as if we ourselves went forth from the land of Egypt." We are commanded to imagine ourselves present in the Passover story. The Passover story is an ongoing call to action against injustice and tyranny. We remember not to seek revenge, but rather to shape how we act in the present. Until we are all free, we are slaves. One cannot truly be free while another is being oppressed. In the words of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

Through the Passover story we learn that each one of us has the power to be a 'deliverer.' Our collective experience/memory is called on to make us better people. We can change the future, or at the very least, a future. Through our actions the world can become a better place. Thirty six times in the Torah we are commanded to love the stranger, because we were once strangers in the land. Social justice in Judaism is central to our faith and our obligations as Jews.

As we eat the bread of affliction, taste the bitter herbs of slavery, and think about our journey to freedom, let us not forget the journey that so many others have in front of them until they too can call themselves free. Let our actions shape a better future.

Elissa Press is chair of the Social Justice and Syrian Refugee Committee at Beth Jacob Synagogue.



At the seder table we recline. Many have no bed.
We taste bitter herbs. Others face grim hardships.

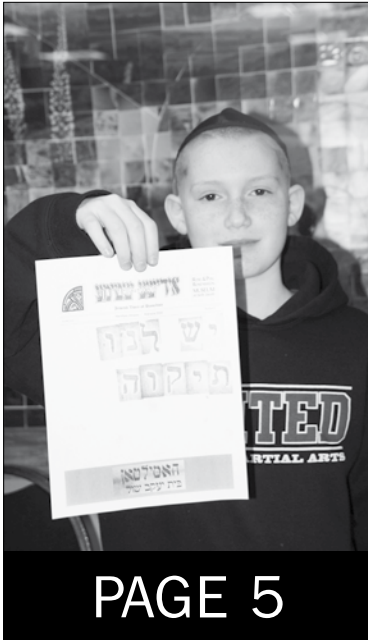
The Jewish Federation is the safety net for our community. Through our efforts and with your help, shelter is provided for homeless families. Change hardship into hope today. Give now at www.jewishhamilton.org.



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Photos courtesy of Beth Jacob Synagogue

90 YEARS YOUNG

Paul Hanover celebrated his 90th birthday at a Sunday morning breakfast organized in his honour at Beth Jacob last month. Known to generations of Hamiltonians as the "Mayor of the Morning," Hanover was a fixture on CHML Radio's morning show from 1945 to 1982. Asked how he felt about turning 90, Hanover proved that he is still the master of the one-liner with these two quips: "I'm dancing with tears in my eyes because the girl in my arms is a boy," he said, about his impromptu dance with Rabbi Hillel Lavery-Yisraeli to the accompaniment of hand clapping and the singing of Siman Tov u' Mazel Tov during morning minyan; followed by, "Here I am 90 years of age and I don't know all the words to 'Siman Tov U' Mazal Tov.'" Above: A youthful looking Hanover with Helen, his wife of 68 years.

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SUMMER ISSUE

- Deadline for booking ad space
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May 20, 2016
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Miriam Sandilands displays her Tu B'Shevat mobile at a community-wide program on Jan. 24.



Aaron and Dylan Ginsberg and Shalom Village resident Russell McLelland show off their their "Mitzvah" crafts on Feb. 7.



Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison holding James' Purim mask in place at Jewish Social Services on March 10.

Photos by Elaine Levine

Join us at an upcoming events and meet other families with young children! To make sure you are on the PJ Library email list, contact Elaine at elvine@jewishhamilton.org. Federation-sponsored PJ Library month events are open to everyone.

PJ Library is a gift from the Hamilton Jewish Federation, the Lions of Judah Division, the Shirley and Morris Waxman Family, an anonymous donor and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Community is...

- Restoring hope to families who have lost their footing and to Holocaust survivors who deserve to live out their lives in comfort and with dignity.
- Awakening Jewish identity through the PJ Library program and by supporting Jewish education.
- Strengthening Israel's promise through vital job training and by mentoring at-risk Israeli teens and enabling them to rejoin the mainstream.

Support the Community Campaign
Donate at www.jewishhamilton.org



McMaster Hillel director, Judith Dworkin

Photo by Wendy Schneider

JEWISH LIFE ON CAMPUS

by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

The basement office of McMaster Hillel may be windowless, but there's plenty of light coming from another source. A hub for Jewish student groups and filled to capacity during Wednesday afternoon bagel lunches, the space, says new Hillel director Judith Dworkin, is well loved. "It's actually rare for a student group to have space on campus. They've had that office for 20 or 30 years."

Toronto-born Dworkin and her family moved to Dundas last spring when her husband, a geneticist, was offered a position at McMaster. Dworkin's prior experience as a Hillel director at two American universities made her a perfect fit for McMaster Hillel. Dworkin sat down with the HJN recently to share the good news that is happening on campus this year for Jewish students: Shabbat dinners that regularly attract a crowd of 70, twice-weekly shipments of kosher sandwiches from Toronto's Hermes Bakery, a well-attended interfaith dinner, and an Israel Day that showcased Israeli food, culture and technology. At the latter, Hillel and Israel on Campus (IOC) students handed out USB ports to passersby in the Student Centre atrium, asking them if they knew that the ports were made in Israel. "No I didn't know that. That's amazing," was the most common response.

"Most students at Mac ... don't know anything about Israel except for what they hear on the news. So we present this positive image of what Israel is really like that's not what the media portrays. It was very successful."

The extent to which anti-Israel activity at McMaster appears to have quieted down significantly was clear by Dworkin's reaction to the question of whether there were any incidents during the Israel Day program. "No, of course not," she responded. "Why would there be?"

Another successful program was a dinner and discussion held last fall, in the wake of an outbreak of random stabbings taking place throughout Israel. Students were very affected.

"Students were very upset," said Dworkin. We held a vigil and discussion ... where people could come and talk about their feelings, whether it was left, right or in the middle. Everyone and their perspectives were welcome.

Dworkin says she's extremely impressed by the work done by Jewish students groups on campus this year. "They care about their community ... and they take ownership of their community."

Hillel's Interfaith Shabbat Dinner

DALYA COHEN

More than 100 Jewish and non-Jewish students, professors, university administration and community members celebrated Shabbat together on Feb. 5 at McMaster Hillel's annual Interfaith Shabbat dinner. We were honoured to welcome Dr. Irvin Studin, editor-in-chief of Global Brief Magazine and president, Institute for 21st Century Questions, as our speaker for the evening. Studin's talk was insightful and thought-provoking, as he spoke to the crowd about what Canada would look like with 100 million people by the century's end. He posed many interesting questions to guests about how we can see Canada within such a culturally diverse landscape.

Interfaith Shabbat dinner is an important evening for the McMaster Jewish community, as it brings together students from across campus

of different faiths and cultures. It affords all in attendance the opportunity to reflect on ideas, such as those suggested by Studin, and engage in meaningful discussions about how we can come to create a more inclusive community. The dinner itself facilitated this opportunity to discuss the varying experiences from different cultural backgrounds, in the context of being Canadian. We hope that this dinner was a catalyst to opening up new conversations about what multiculturalism means in Canada today, not only among Jewish community members, but also among the diverse group of individuals who make up the fibre of Canadian citizenship.

Dalya Cohen is a fourth year student in McMaster University's Arts and Science program.

Campaign Report

by YVES APEL,
Community Campaign Chair

As Community Campaign chair, I'd like to answer the question our volunteers are constantly asked: "How are we really doing?"

As a community, we are doing pretty well: we deliver a multitude of wonderful services – mostly with the aim to educate, entertain, sustain, and provide relief. We are a community that values resourcefulness, volunteerism, family, and tikkun olam. In my professional life, I work in an office of about 50 staff, and I am proud to declare that from my observation, there isn't another ethnic or religious community in Hamilton that is as coherent and as dynamic as our Jewish community. We have a rich tradition supported by vibrant institutions, and we continue to evolve.

The Community Campaign is not doing as well as we'd like. Still, we must celebrate the fact that, despite so many demographic and economic changes, we continue to raise a significant amount of money, more than \$1 million every year (with the aim to raise \$1.2 million). We are working on appealing to new younger donors, and continue to recruit canvassers. We continue to tweak the campaign, borrow best ideas, and introduce modern fundraising approaches.

The Community Campaign is still ongoing—we haven't contacted all of our donors, but we've got a long way to go to reach last year's level, as by this time last year we had already received pledges of \$1,028,000 compared with about \$875,000 today.

Sceptics say, and they are not wrong, that we've tried for many years to grow the Campaign, without much to show for it. Well, all I can tell you is that we are trying! We are relentless in our desire to raise more money for all the beneficiary agencies. New obstacles continue to come up, but they are not insurmountable.

This is a very generous community. But the money doesn't just raise itself. I am especially grateful, and, really, I'm in awe of a few super-star volunteer canvassers who make their calls early, and who selflessly give of themselves. The work of a volunteer canvasser is a study in contradictions. From inspired conversations, to stories of heartache, to outright slapstick situations, our fundraisers experience some pretty interesting calls, and it is through their effort that Hamilton's Jewish donors connect to Jewish beneficiary agencies.

Raising dollars in our community is hardly a walk in the park. If you are a Jew in Hamilton, you should be donating to the Campaign. Please make this a deliberate act. We need you and you need us, and your annual donation is very much appreciated! We simply cannot do it without YOU. Please call the Federation office at 905-648-0605, ext. 305 to make your gift. Thank you.



Aaron Yellin signs the guest book at the Rosenshein Museum at Beth Jacob during a joint Temple / Beth Jacob Hebrew School program

CROSS-COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING AT ITS BEST

RINA RODAK

With support from the Federation’s cross-community programming fund, 60 Beth Jacob and Temple students spent an afternoon in February learning about a fascinating chapter in Hamilton’s Jewish past. Upon arrival, the students joined Wendy Schneider in the Richter Chapel to hear Hamilton’s one-time Yiddish language newspaper and its publisher, Henry Balinson. They learned about the Yiddish language, about “typesetting,” and were then asked to find one thing in the exhibit that really stood out to them. After the students had a chance to wander through the Rosenshein Museum, many cited Henry Balinson’s front page eulogy for his son Alex, an air force pilot shot down during the Second World War, as the story that stood out for them the most. Others really appreciated the sample typesetting plates on display. One student could not get over the family photos. An arts and crafts activity had students use different

types of English and Hebrew alphabet stamps to create their own newspaper headline. These days, computers make the task easy – type, highlight, creatively edit, save and print as many copies as you like. The task here was slightly more challenging as the students had to carefully ink each stamp, align each letter, any error forcing them to start over. The students were intrigued.

“I thought it was cool that they used all those tiny stamps to make a whole newspaper and that they had to make a lot of them by hand,” said Toby Hemsworth, age 10. “I also liked the project we did after – we got our own stamps and made our own news headlines.”

In the coming months, Kehila and Hamilton Hebrew Academy will be participating in the same program. The Balinson family should feel proud that their patriarch’s labour of love is no longer just a memory.

Canadian Jewish Federations and the Jewish Agency

by LINDA KISLOWICZ Jewish Federations Canada

The Hamilton Jewish Federation is part of a large Jewish enterprise devoted to caring for Jews who need help wherever they live. Federation is also part of a network of strategic relationships that connect and care for Jews in Israel and all over the Jewish world. This work holds dear to the value that “Yisrael Arevim zeh b’zeh – we are all responsible for one another”.

Since 1929, the Jewish Agency has been responsible for immigration and resettlement of significant waves of olim to Israel. Its strategic partnership with the Canadian Federation system, of which the Hamilton Jewish Federation is a part, serves as a living bridge between Israel and Diaspora Jewish communities.

The mission is two-fold – building a better society in Israel with support for social programs and dealing with contemporary identity challenges facing the Jewish people in Israel and worldwide.

The Jewish Agency connects the global Jewish family, bringing Jews to Israel, and Israel to Jews. This is accomplished through many programs and strategies. I will highlight three.

1.The Partnership Together platform (P2G) continues to twin Diaspora communities with their Israeli counterparts for the purpose of building peer to peer relationships, strengthening health and education services, and seeding new and innovative projects that would otherwise not be possible.



Ethiopian teens and youth. Photo Credit: JDC-Israel

2.The regional emissary programs provide meaningful Israel engagement opportunities by exposing diaspora communities to young emissaries in schools, synagogues and summer camps. These emissaries are the contemporary face of Israel. And they offer exciting personal experiences in Canadian communities and they in turn, discover that Israel is in the hearts and minds of their host families.

3.The Jewish Agency provides a rich platform of Israel experience programs designed to inspire, educate and empower our young adult generation to own their heritage and become a part of it.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation is part of this collective effort and can be proud of all of its accomplishments. Its contribution together with that of all of the Canadian federations and diaspora communities, make it all happen.



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Rabbi Jordan Cohen with Irwin Rodin, who heads up Temple Anshe Sholom's social action committee.

More sustainable funding drives new policy

OUR FUTURE from page 1

The Hamilton Jewish Federation is a bit like the rich miser. Since 1916 the Federation has been allocating funds to Jewish community organizations that restore hope for the vulnerable, awaken Jewish identity through Jewish education, and help Israel realize its promise.

Each year, we appeal to you during our community campaign. Our beneficiary agencies request an allocation based on their individual operating budgets. The Allocations Committee then makes a recommendation to the Federation board of trustees to distribute the funds to individual agencies and programs. We support two day schools, two afternoon schools, the JCC, the JSS, a home for developmentally challenged adults, the Va'ad Hakashrut, a high school program, PJ Library, Holocaust education, a shuttle bus to Toronto supporting families who choose to send their children to Jewish high schools, and special needs programming – in all, more than 25 agencies and programs.

If Federation were to “pass away” like the rich miser in the story above, this support would cease and agencies would be left to fundraise on their own, with the potential that total giving would be reduced. For more than a decade, our campaign has been relatively stable from year to year. However, this year our campaign is lagging over last year. In addition, we estimate that we will experience a decrease of more than \$50,000, due to an aging population, the economy, retirement planning, and health reasons. The reality is that the demographics of Jewish Hamilton have changed. The face of Jewish Hamilton is changing. The JCC is closing its doors and will re-emerge in a different configuration. The Federation and JCC will be moving together, taking the first baby steps toward a campus concept.

For decades, the Federation has been allocating funds based on pledges instead of dollars actually received. Further increasing the amount to be allocated were pledges recorded based on a presume letter. This model is not sustainable as, for various reasons, some pledges are not collectible. This year, our board voted to allocate only funds that have been received or can reasonably be expected to be received. This change in policy is a step toward making Federation a sustainable source of funding for the community into the future. The net result in the short term, however, will be a reduction in the amount available for allocations.

We live in an incredible community, generous in the extreme. You built the Jewish Hamilton that exists today, but if the community is to continue to thrive, we need your help. It is your gift that will enable us to fund our beneficiary agencies. It is you who have the power to shape our community into the future. If you have not made your pledge this year, please consider making it now. You can donate online at www.jewishhamilton.org or call Barb Babij at 905-648-0605, ext 305.

Syrian refugee sponsorship in the Jewish community

MOVED BY MORAL IMPERATIVE from page 1

For Beth Jacob board member, Elissa Press, the decision to act on behalf of Syrian refugees came from a small voice from deep inside herself as she was reading the morning newspapers one day last fall.

“This is horrible, this is really the crisis of our time ... People really need to do something,” she recalled thinking, but in the next moment it dawned on her that she herself could do something. “And that’s when I brought it to the board.”

Around the same time that Press was seeking support for refugee sponsorship from her fellow board members, Jerome Bergart was putting the same question to members of his book club. In both cases, the response was enthusiastic. Within a very short period, Press’s committee of 11 had submitted a private sponsorship application through JIAS and identified a family of seven that needed a sponsor through the Hamilton based Immigrants Working Centre’s family unification program. Bergart’s book club, meanwhile, had grown, by word of mouth to 35 people from diverse background. They found a family of four through the Anglican Diocese of Niagara. In both cases, a great deal of money was raised in a very short period of time through each member’s personally canvassing friends and family – \$50,000 in Beth Jacob’s case, and \$40,000 by Bergart’s group.

“People have just been incredibly generous,” said Press. “I think the reality is we were able to raise as much as we did because people wanted to help.”

Both the Beth Jacob and book club-sponsored families are currently residing in Lebanon,

and have a family member currently living in Hamilton, who is acting as a co-sponsor. Bergart and his wife, Maureen, have already had several meetings with the sister of the mother of the family they’re sponsoring, through whom they’ve been able to learn a little about the ordeal the family has faced. The woman, who is herself a recent immigrant, told the Bergarts that her sister’s family has had to travel back and forth between Syria and Lebanon several times over the last year.

“They don’t have a permit to allow them to stay in Lebanon longer than 30 days,” said Bergart, “so they’re forced to go out and come back in.”

At one point, the husband was kidnapped by a group in Syria, but has since been released.

“It’s unbelievable what people have gone through,” said Bergart. “I don’t think they can believe it themselves.”

As of this writing, both committees are still awaiting the arrival of their families, when their subcommittees will kick into action, assisting with areas such as housing, education, medical and assisting with filling out documents. Bergart, who is a member of both groups, expects to be particularly busy. With such dedication, the two refugee families can expect to be well-supported for at least a year after their arrival. As traumatic as their lives have been up to this point, that makes them the lucky ones.

More than half of the 25,000 Syrian refugees who have been brought to Canada since the Trudeau government came into power are having their resettlement expenses picked up by the government. It is government-assisted refugees who have been

“Our values are absolutely clear. As Jews, we have an obligation to help.”

Rabbi Jordan Cohen

settled in Hamilton to whom Temple Anshe Sholom will direct its humanitarian efforts through a partnership with Wesley Urban Ministries.

“We found out that the government sponsored refugees are probably going to need more help than the privately sponsored ones,” said Irwin Rodin, chair of Temple’s social action committee. “By working with Wesley ... we hope to help with ... filling out forms, taking kids to school, shopping, and basically adapting to Canadian society.”

The Temple board has also discussed the possibility of creating an after-school program for refugee children to get assistance with homework and English language tutoring.

“We have this facility which is centrally located, so why not share it in a way that can be beneficial to the settlement process,” said Rabbi Jordan Cohen, who envisions Temple Hebrew school students sharing snacks and recreation time with refugee children on Wednesday afternoons.

Not everyone in the Beth Jacob community has been supportive

of the synagogue’s decision to sponsor a Syrian family. In her role as committee chair, Press has fielded conversations with a small number of concerned congregants.

“People are worried primarily about security ... and that’s something that we’ve taken very seriously,” she said. Her attempts at reassurance basically come down to one essential point. “During the Holocaust people thought that we were a threat to society,” she tells them, “and still there were those who ... risked their lives to help. To be paralyzed by fear isn’t the right answer.”

Beth Jacob Rabbi Hillel Lavery-Yisraeli has been an enthusiastic member of the sponsorship committee from the very start. In arguing the case for the synagogue sponsorship initiative, he looks to the tradition itself.

“Judaism enjoins us to care for our fellow human beings, especially those who have been displaced from their homes,” he wrote to the HJN. “In an era and a world-atmosphere where people are reluctant to extend to these refugees a helping hand, our moral and religious obligations are significantly increased, as we believe God intended us to be a ‘light unto the nations.’ Our participation in this project is simply correct and proper; the Hebrew term for charity is ‘tzedakah,’ meaning justice. As citizens of the world, this is a minimal responsibility.”

For Rabbi Cohen, extending a helping hand to Syrian refugees is a moral imperative.

“Our values are absolutely clear. We have, as Jews, an obligation to help.”

Wishing you peace, health and happiness on Passover and always.

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TOUCH OF KLEZ BAR MITZVAH BASH

Touch Of Klez is celebrating its Bar Mitzvah year. Conceived 13 years ago by Michael Glogauer at Beth Jacob Synagogue, Touch of Klez has been performing traditional klezmer music to appreciative audiences all over Ontario ever since. Based on Eastern European Jewish tradition, the music is infused with elements of cantorial, Gypsy, Turkish, Mediterranean, Latin and even swing to create something that is at once unique and universal. Some of the faces have changed over time but the musical repertoire continues to evolve. On April 10 at 2 p.m., it is party time! It's going to be different from anything the band has done before and it promises to be entertaining! Lots of music, a few surprises and even some nosh will make this a Bar Mitzvah bash for all to enjoy. Contact Beth Jacob Synagogue at 905-522-1351 or email hanna@bethjacobsynagogue.ca to buy tickets for the party.



Touch of Klez band members: Back row, l to r: Rick Black, Alan Livingston, Charlotte Price, David Ludwin; Front row, l to r, Ron Richter and Jordan Abraham.

Ron Foxcroft headlines Negev Dinner



Photo courtesy of Hamilton Spectator and Fox 40

This year, JNF Hamilton is pleased to honour Ron Foxcroft at the 64th annual Negev Dinner on May 16, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. at Liuna Station on James St. North.

As an NCAA basketball referee, Foxcroft invented the "pea-less whistle," later becoming Chairman, Founder, and CEO of Fox 40 International, as well as CEO and Chairman of the Fluke Transportation Group. Foxcroft has made great contributions to the business, sporting, educational, and cultural framework of Hamilton and Burlington.

Foxcroft has received many awards, including an Honorary Doctorate from McMaster University and the Queen's Jubilee

Medal. He was named by Profit Magazine as one of the top 10 Canadian entrepreneurs of the decade, and inducted into the Burlington Entrepreneur Hall of Fame, the Canadian Basketball Hall of Fame, and the Hamilton Sports Hall of Fame. Foxcroft is also former Honorary Colonel of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's).

He is an outstanding Canadian, an internationally respected businessman, and a great friend of the Hamilton Jewish Community, as well as an ongoing supporter of the State of Israel.

The proceeds of this year's dinner will support the construction of the recreation site at Yad LaYeled – a children's

museum at the Ghetto Fighters' Museum complex in northern Israel.

Because the Negev Dinner would not be complete without memorable, internationally acclaimed entertainment, we are excited to have Canadian comedian and impressionist André-Philippe Gagnon, known as the man of a thousand voices, who has enthralled audiences the world over with his impersonations of the world's best-known singers.

Don't miss out on this year's dinner event, co-chaired by Bill Morris and Tom Weisz. For more information, or to purchase tickets, please contact our office at 905-527-5516, ext. 1.

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Epic Yiddish novel about the Lodz ghetto subject of McMaster lecture

Chava Rosenfarb was one of the great Yiddish writers of the second half of the 20th century, as well as a survivor of the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. The Tree of Life is her three-volume novel about the Lodz ghetto, based on her own experiences of incarceration in that ghetto. The Tree of Life has been called one of the seminal works of Holocaust literature, but it is not widely known, because it was originally written and published in Yiddish and was not available in English until 2006.

On June 9, 2016 Rosenfarb's daughter, Dr. Goldie Morgentaler, a professor of English at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, will discuss the novel, her mother's life and and the implications of writing in Yiddish.



A 2006 photo of Morgentaler with her mother Chava Rosenfarb. Photo credit: Joanne Marquis

The lecture, "Chava Rosenfarb's The Tree of Life: An Epic about Life in the Lodz Ghetto," will take place at the Great Hall, University Club at McMaster University at 4:30 p.m. For more information contact John Cunningham at cunningt@mcmaster.ca.

Chava Rosenfarb's Tree of Life

Goldie Morgentaler recalls her two famous parents

by GOLDIE MORGENTALER, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

I had two famous parents. My father was Henry Morgentaler, the abortion rights advocate. My mother was Chava Rosenfarb, one of the major Yiddish writers of the second half of the 20th century, whose novels portray the Holocaust and life in Poland between the two world wars.

Whether or not one agreed with my father about abortion, it was hard to argue that he lacked the courage of his convictions. After all, he was jailed for them. But what my mother accomplished also required courage, albeit of a quieter kind. For her there was no applause from committed followers, no headlines in the newspapers, no demonstrations in the streets.

My mother, who died in 2011, was 22 years old when the Second World War ended. For the next 25 years, she would devote herself to writing The Tree of Life, a three-volume novel based on her experiences during the war, when she was incarcerated in the Lodz ghetto and later in the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Sasel and Bergen-Belsen. That experience left its mark on her, as it did on my father, who also survived the Lodz ghetto, as well as Auschwitz and Dachau.

My father's way of dealing with the trauma was to pretend that he was not affected, to claim that he lived in the present and was not a hostage to the past, an attitude belied by his frequent horrific nightmares. My mother's

way was to write about what she had lived through, to face the horror in order to come to terms with it. And, just as importantly, she wanted to memorialize the Jewish community of her native Lodz, Poland, which in five long years of drawn-out genocide had ceased to exist. She wanted the world to know what she and the members of her community had lived through. Since this Jewish community had lived its life in Yiddish, she wrote about it in Yiddish out of fidelity to that lost world – a problematic choice, given that Yiddish limited the number of readers.

On one level my mother lived with her family as an immigrant in Montreal, took care of her ailing mother, who had also survived the war, and raised her children. On another, she lived in the Lodz ghetto. Through all the years that I was growing up my mother wrote about her life in the ghetto. My childhood friends remember her as always writing. When they came over to play, she would shush us, because she was busy writing. Whenever one of us said something clever, she would jump up and write it down for possible use in her novel. She was unpredictably moody during those years. It was only when I became an adult that I realized that this moodiness was related to the painful events she was remembering and describing.

When the three volumes of The Tree of Life were published in Yiddish in 1972 she received

a flood of letters from all over the world hailing her achievement. She won the Manger Prize, Israel's highest award for Yiddish literature, as well as a host of other awards. But it took 30 years for the English translation to be published.

In the meantime, she had written another novel, Letters to Abrasha, which I am now translating. Unlike The Tree of Life, which ended with the liquidation of the ghetto, followed by blank pages, indicating that what came afterwards was impossible to describe, Letters to Abrasha enters the belly of the beast. It describes unflinchingly what it was like to be in a stifling boxcar with 70 other people headed towards Auschwitz. It describes the horrors of going through the selection for life or death – and underlines the randomness of the choice. To have lived through this experience and then to recreate it on paper required a fortitude that I know I do not have.

My father's contribution to changing Canadian abortion laws occurred at the end of a protracted and controversial public campaign, widely covered by the media. My mother, like all writers, toiled in silence, propelled by private demons, encouraged by few readers and yet determined to recreate what had been so violently destroyed, so that at least on paper it would continue to exist. That is no small accomplishment.



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ORA MARKSTEIN

The beautiful stone carvings on display in Ora Markstein's Shalom Village apartment could just as easily grace the rooms of the world's most prestigious galleries. The work of her own hand, Markstein's pieces represent the universal human experiences of pain, loss, love, and spiritual renewal. Strong-willed, tenacious and an inspiration to all who know her, Ora Markstein is indeed ...

One of a Kind

A series that profiles our community's most interesting people

Story and photo by Wendy Schneider, the Hamilton Jewish News

Darkness and light have always coexisted in Ora Markstein's life. As children, she and her sister lived seemingly charmed lives in the warm embrace of a close-knit family in a small city near Budapest. But Ora's carefree adolescence was shattered at the age of 15 with the Hungarian government's alliance with Nazi Germany.

"I always say that until the Holocaust, I was just dreaming and I woke up in Auschwitz," she said.

Somehow, and against all odds, Ora and every member of her immediate family survived the war, as did the young man who captured her heart just four months before he was sent into forced labour. Francis Markstein was near death when Ora's mother nursed him back to health after the war. The two were married just days after Ora's own miraculous return from Bergen Belsen, at a wedding in which "there were hardly 10 Jewish men for a minyan."

Ora found life in Hungary after the war unbearable, but with the birth of the State of Israel still two years away, there were few options. In the immediate post-war years emigration opportunities for displaced Jews were extremely limited, and, in one of history's great ironies, Germany became a major destination for Jewish refugees fleeing violent post-war anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. The Marksteins would end up in a UN sponsored refugee camp in Germany, where they would stay for a year. Ora's son, Igor, was born in a German hospital. The year in the camp was destined to be providential, for it was there that the Marksteins befriended a 16-year-old orphan by the name of John Hirsch. Some 30 years later, Hirsch, then a well known theatre director at Stratford, would be instrumental in kick-starting Ora's art career.

In 1949 Ora and Francis finally reached Israel, but there too, life was filled with challenges. Israel faced a deep economic crisis in the early years of statehood. As well as having to recover from the devastating effects of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, it also had to absorb hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe and the Arab world. The Marksteins found it very difficult to eke out a viable living, and spent their first years in the country moving from place to place. It was during this period that Markstein began dabbling in clay and casting in plaster under the tutelage of a fellow Hungarian refugee and well known sculptor. Eventually, the Marksteins moved to Holon where Igor, who was by then demonstrating considerable musical talent, would be able to study with a master teacher.

The Marksteins stayed in Israel for 26 years until their

“

Her legacy silently restores faith in humanity after her painful experiences during the Holocaust in Hungary, and defies Theodor Adorno's famous idea that "it is impossible to write poetry after Auschwitz."

Sarah Knelman
Curator

son's move to Illinois prompted them to try and make a go of it in Canada. In 1975, they moved to Montreal, where Ora's chance encounter with well known Polish Canadian sculptor Ethel Rosenfield would mark a turning point in her life. Ora met Rosenfield at a dinner party, and after showing her photographs of plaster casts she had made in Israel, Rosenfield exclaimed. "But you are thinking in stone! You feel in stone!" When Ora replied that she had never even put her hands on stone, nor could she ever afford to work in that medium, Rosenfield reassured her. "I'm going to help you," she said, and, true to her word, arranged for Ora to receive a scholarship at the Saidye Bronfman Centre.

"Make something," her instructor said at Ora's first class, as he handed her a used piece of soapstone and a couple of blunt carving tools. When he returned after an hour, he looked at what she had done and said, "You don't need me, just work."

"I'm still crying when I think of it," said Ora, "because I felt so elevated. I felt so happy."

It was a job offer at Beth Jacob Synagogue's Hebrew school that brought the Marksteins to Hamilton within a year of their arrival in Canada. When their old friend John Hirsch heard they would be moving to Hamilton, he said, "Now, you will be alright. I have my best friends in Hamilton."

Larry and Sharon Enkin would welcome the Marksteins into their lives like long-lost family. The latter would become Ora's greatest champion, arranging for a show at the Delaware Avenue JCC, that would set her career in motion.

Over the next 30 years, Ora worked prolifically, her sculptures sought out by collectors and galleries alike. In 2008, at the age of 83, the Art Gallery of Hamilton organized a one-woman exhibit featuring Ora's stone carvings. The transcendent quality of her sculptures was beautifully captured by curator Sarah Knelman at the time when she wrote,

"Carved by hand from blocks of soapstone, marble and alabaster in every imaginable colour, Markstein lets the shape of the sculpture slowly reveal itself, transforming unwieldy slabs of stone into images of beauty. Her legacy silently restores faith in humanity after her painful experiences during the Holocaust in Hungary, and defies Theodor Adorno's famous idea that 'it is impossible to write poetry after Auschwitz.'"

At 83, Ora had reached the pinnacle of her career, but her sense of accomplishment was tempered by the fact that her beloved Francis had not lived to see it.

A poet, writer and accomplished linguist who translated poetry from 45 languages into English, Francis died in 1991.

"Without him I would never have gotten anywhere," she said. "He supported me, encouraged me. He helped me in every possible way because he believed in my talent."

In the eight years that have passed since the Art Gallery of Hamilton show, health challenges made it necessary for Ora to move to Shalom Village. The transition has been difficult, but the fact that she was able to bring along her most precious possessions "makes it possible for me to stay here."

As one's breath is literally taken away by the way Ora's pieces are illuminated by the late afternoon sun the thought arises, "These are not inanimate objects." Indeed, Ora has heard it again and again. "It's almost as if they're alive."

What does it mean to her to live out the final days of her life surrounded by her work, each piece the result of months and months of physical and emotional labour?

"I made something that made it possible for me to live after the Holocaust," she replies. "To try to get rid of all the horrible ugly days that I have seen ... It's always there of course but these have been a balance in my life. With all the terrible memories, they have made my life beautiful."

WEB EXCLUSIVE

Watch *One of a Kind* online: An interview with Ora Markstein at www.hamiltonjewishnews.com.

Let my People **P**LAY! PASSOVER FAMILY FUN

by Yoni Glatt
Difficulty Level: Manageable

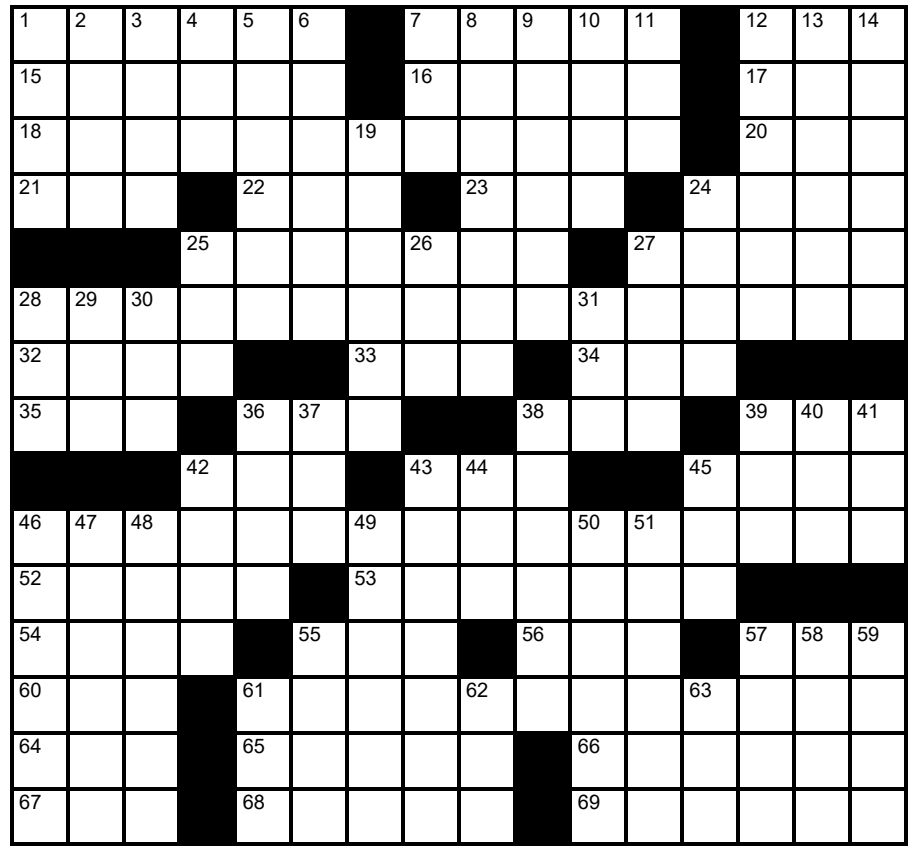
Across

1. Room that might be good for a chuppah
7. Casey ___ ___ Bat
12. Fed. property manager
15. "The ___ Identity", Damon role
16. Sew a tallit again
17. Some alien extras in 18-Across
18. Star Trek about the ninth plague?
20. Jacob's was hurt by an angel
21. Sequel to "Angela's Ashes"
22. Poetic tribute
23. Ave. crossers
24. Model/actress Delevingne
25. Stir-fry pod veggie
27. Space in 18-Across
28. Daniel Day-Lewis film about the first plague?
32. Clif makes them
33. Steven's Jaws star Scheider
34. Like an active havdalah candle
35. You might visit one at the Dead Sea
36. It goes with most years of the Second Temple Era
38. Common summer camp abbreviation
39. Battery size
42. US org. in 15-Across
43. Sitcom costar of Betty and Estelle
45. Keepah attachment
46. 1989 rock bi-opic about the 7th plague?
52. Like King Saul, but not Napoleon
53. Stomach related
54. Land measurement
55. Brown and Pepper
56. Eve, once
57. Long, crosser

60. A daughter of Zelophehad
61. Brad Pitt/Jeffrey Tambor film about the 10th plague?
64. ___ Air, 42-Down flick
65. Use some social media
66. You ___ worry
67. Tolkien's Treebeard, e.g.
68. Foe of Stan Lee's S.H.I.E.L.D.
69. Some prisoner releases

Down

1. Not much
2. Author Morrison
3. Dead-end jobs
4. Displaced persons' group, once
5. Foiled
6. Notable role for Jamie-Lynn (Sigler)
7. Biblical boat
8. One way to be wound
9. It's generous to pick it up
10. Pianist Dame Myra
11. Hatzolah letters
12. Dessert one can buy in the Roman ghetto
13. Record player
14. Where Thor lives
19. Bring up to code, electrically
24. Scientology, to some
25. Many Fl. Jews
26. Mahmoud Abbas's grp.
27. Life lines?
28. Atlanta-based channel
29. Death of a Salesman character, for short
30. Second Temple ___
31. Father of sinful sons in the book of Samuel



Answers on page 12

36. Nosh
37. Subway alternative
38. Big Cuban name
39. Aladdin prince voiced by Scott Weinger
40. Jordan preceder
41. Big lug
42. Star of 64- Across
43. Han Solo carried one
44. Writer Doctorow, and others
45. Ozone pollutant, for short
46. Peek
47. Rocket of Guardians of the Galaxy
48. Off the mark
49. Thought the same as Leonard Maltin
50. Familiarize with YU
51. Storyteller
55. Wet, as morning grass
57. Diane in Polanski's Chinatown
58. Teen affliction
59. NYC Booth that might have "Fiddler" at a discount
61. Cheshvan or Iyar: abbr. (var.)
62. Int'l. news service that often covers Israel
63. Local for young Moses or David

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה...?

WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT?

Just one year ago...

Abba, Ima, and 5 glowing children rejoiced together at the Seder table, basking in the warmth of their happy family.

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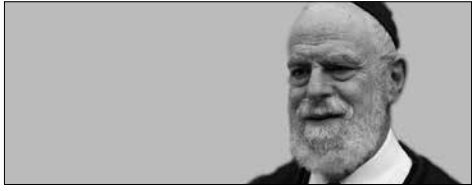


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Passover: Enjoy the journey and the destination



Lester Krames

Passover is a family holiday with many happy memories. At the Seder, we are joined by our family observing traditions that may vary little from year to year.

What is not immediately apparent at the Seder, is the time and effort that went into creating this beautiful event. Preparing for Passover is a demanding experience. Weeks before the Seder it's "spring cleaning time." Perfectly good dishes, pots and pans used during the rest of the year are put away and replaced by "the Passover dishes." Shopping becomes a major chore as we

search out the kosher products we use to help re-create those wonderful family memories. A mad search of the house the night before the Seder assures us that there is no bread anywhere, and to be sure we ceremoniously burn any left over.

No wonder when the Seder finally arrives we feel drained and tired. Can this work and effort be part of Hashem's plans we wonder? We are supposed to be celebrating our freedom, but work like slaves.

Perhaps we can gain some insight from a story told about the legendary Inca Trail located in Peru. As you navigate the trail, you come to a fork in the path. If you choose right, you follow a scenic river and arrive at the beautiful city of Machu Picchu a 6-hour journey.

If you choose left, you follow a trail 26 miles long and reach Machu Picchu

four days later. This route includes walking over four mountain passes and up about nine miles of stairs. When escorting visitors, native guides choose the long road. They observe that when people travel the shorter direct route when they arrive they are overwhelmed by its beauty and are ready to leave after a brief visit. When visitors come via the longer more arduous route, they too are overwhelmed by its beauty. However, they stay longer and express a greater appreciation of the city. The simple lesson is that when we work hard to achieve something we value it far more.

In the Passover story, the Children of Israel were freed from years of slavery by divine miracles. They crossed the Sea of Reeds on dry land while their pursuing enemies drowned. Following their escape, they came to a fork in the road. One path was to enter the promised land directly. Apprehensive they sent

spies who described a land of milk and honey.

However, it all came too easy; and they were overcome with doubt and fear. The children of Israel were forced to take the other path and journey another 40 years after which, they eagerly crossed the Jordan and entered Israel.

Preparing for Passover is work. There are times when it seems we also have to climb nine miles of stairs and think there has to be an easier way. However, we must remember the Seder relies on solid preparations as well as a spirited delivery. May Hashem continue to give us the strength to prepare for Passover.

Happy Passover-- enjoy the journey and the destination!

Lester Krames is a clinical psychologist, whose work has been influenced by his exploration into mindfulness and self-compassion.

A Passover Recipe

Louise Algranti shared the following Turkish Jewish recipe that was a tradition with her family while she was growing up in Turkey. "Ashkenazis begin their seder with soup and sliced eggs in salt water, but our minhag (custom) is to begin the seder with leek patties, zucchini kugel and hardboiled eggs," she told the HJN. Her grandmother would include a spinach kugel in the mix, she recalled, since leeks, zucchini and spinach are considered to be bitter herbs. To this day, the Sol and Louise Algranti host "Turkish style" family seders for their four children and five grandchildren.



Leek and Potato Patties

A Turkish recipe

2 bunches of leeks, white part only, washed, sliced in half lengthwise and then into thin slices
 3 large potatoes
 4 - 5 eggs
 2 tsp salt
 1 1/4 tsp fresh ground black pepper
 2 tbsp oil or more for frying

- Soak the chopped leeks in salt water and rinse. Drain well.
- Over medium heat, sauté the leeks in the oil, until the leeks are wilted and the juice has evaporated. Remove from heat.
- Boil the washed and unpeeled potatoes until fork tender.
- Grate the potatoes or use a potato ricer for a smoother texture.
- Combine the leeks, the potatoes, 2 eggs and seasoning and form them into patties.
- Beat the remaining eggs and dip each patty in the egg mixture.
- Fry the patties until golden brown and serve.
- Freezes well.

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THE JEWISH HAMILTON PROJECT 2.0

The Jewish Hamilton Project Committee would like to add to its collection of interviews with long-time Hamiltonians. If you have any stories about Hamilton shuls, Jewish organizations, communal institutions, social life, personalities, community leaders, families, historical incidents, etc., that you'd like to share on video, or you would like to be interviewed about your recollections of Hamilton Jewish life and history, please contact Wendy Schneider at wschneider@jewishhamilton.org.

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Rediscovering the treasure of Camp Ramah

Former camper laments the decrease in Hamilton enrolment at the Jewish summer

by ARI LEVIN, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

Towards the end of June each year in the parking lot of the Beth Jacob synagogue there was a frantic rush as scores of children swarmed the bus. Duffel bags were tossed around, kids screamed excitedly as they reunited with their friends, and teary eyed parents waved their goodbyes. Then the bus drove off to Camp Ramah in Canada with a full complement of Jewish children from Hamilton and the surrounding areas. This scene, so prevalent for many summers throughout the 1980s and early '90s, has vanished. As an alum of Ramah and a parent with young children who will shortly be of camp age, I can't help but ask myself the question ... where have all of the Hamilton campers gone?

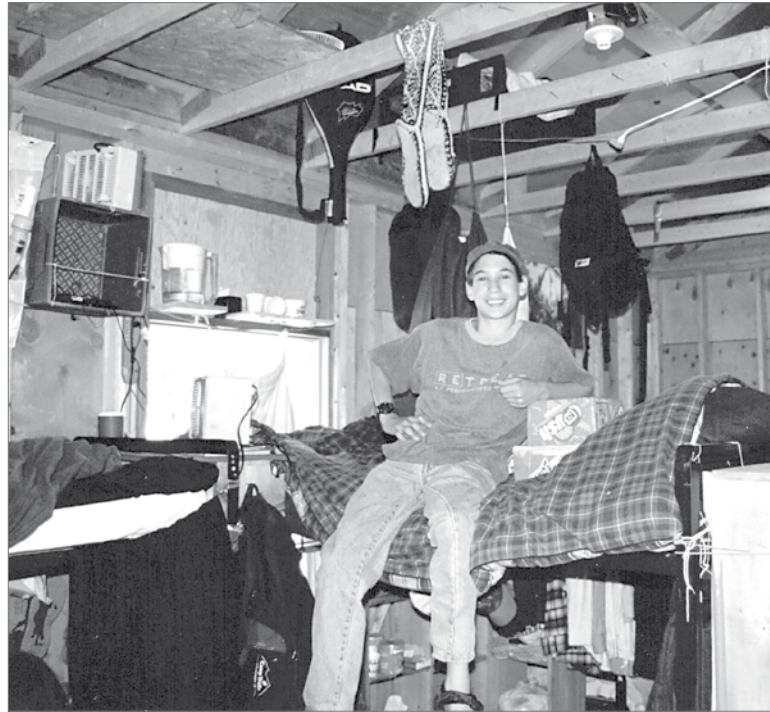
Today, Camp Ramah is booming. With state of the art facilities and a beautiful campus on Skeleton Lake in the heart of Muskoka, the camp is seeing more activity and excitement than ever. Enrollment continues to rise and Ramah will sit near capacity this summer, thanks in part to large increases in campers from cities such as Toronto. Yet despite the increasing enrollment numbers, campers aren't coming from Hamilton like they used to. Why?

At its peak around 1990, Hamilton was sending more than 50 children each year to Camp Ramah. Matthew Ogus, alum and parent of a current Hamilton Ramah camper, reminisced that at one point so many children from the area were going that "people would tell you they were from Dundas rather

than Hamilton just so they could differentiate." But by the late '90s the busses stopped coming to the Beth Jacob, and the Ramah population in Hamilton went into decline. So what happened? A look at some anecdotal evidence might suggest that what happened to the Hamilton Ramah population is a microcosm of some of the challenging trends we see today in the greater Hamilton Jewish community.

Local demographics have changed since I first attended Ramah at the age of seven. Throughout the course of my eight years as a camper, at least 10 local children of the same age attended. Not one of those Hamilton campers still lives in the area today. What can our community do to ensure we keep young Jews living in Hamilton?

Much of the traffic to Ramah was fostered and orchestrated at the time through the Beth Jacob, and particularly by Rabbi Israel and Gloria Silverman. They were a large part of the Ramah community and present in camp each summer. "Our family had quite a legacy at Ramah", says Lanie Goldberg, alum and parent of four Ramah alumni. Her mother Gloria, would encourage children at the Beth Jacob Hebrew school to spend their summers at Ramah. At the time, there were hundreds of children attending the after school programs at the Beth Jacob. Those numbers dwindled in the late '90s and throughout the following decade until a recent resurgence in the last few years.



A 1996 photo of Ari Levin sitting on his bunk at Camp Ramah. Photo courtesy of Ari Levin

"The decline of the after-school movement in Hamilton was a big hit to Ramah" says Goldberg.

It's more than a coincidence that the Hamilton Ramah population steadily declined as the school numbers did. Can we do more in our Jewish schools today to encourage families to send their children to Jewish summer camps?

Perhaps most pertinent has been the dramatic rise in the cost of Jewish education and programming, which forces parents to prioritize the dollars they spend. Ramah fees are \$8,400 for the entire summer and \$5,400 for one month (not including HST).

With two children, and a third on the way, I am staring at large bills in the near future for Jewish day school, summer camp, and other community programs and obligations. Thankfully, there are scholarships available through the camp that can help to reduce the financial burden on families. Can we, and should we do more in our community to fund Jewish summer camp experiences despite competing priorities?

For me, Ramah was a chance to completely immerse myself in a Jewish life, an experience that can be difficult if not impossible to achieve in the city. Matthew

Ogus describes this as the "everyday Jewish experience". Lanie Goldberg remembers that her parents truly believed in Ramah as an educational model to impart a sense of Jewish identity to children. Ramah teaches the idea that "living a Jewish life is not just a separate little part of turning your brain on at certain times, it can be your whole being."

For me, this experience manifested itself not just in summers spent on the waterfront, playing sports, or camping (it had those experiences in spades), but in lifelong friendships and a strong sense of social responsibility within the Jewish community. In Ogus's words, "Some of my most favourite times of my entire childhood were at Ramah, and I don't think that would have happened at a different place".

And so I lament the decline of Ramah campers in Hamilton, yet at the same time, I express my cautious optimism. Sending our kids to camps like Ramah are a perfect opportunity to continue revitalizing this community and is well worth the investment. Half a dozen Hamilton campers will be attending camp this year and my own children will join them in a few short years.

Ari Levin and his wife Laura, moved to Hamilton three years ago with their two children (with one on the way). Levin is a senior manager at Accenture, a global consulting firm.

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Queen's Park to Pay Tribute to Helene Goldflus

On April 14, 2016, Shalom Village resident, Helene Goldflus, will be honoured by Premier Kathleen Wynne in Queen's Park Tribute to Ontario Holocaust Survivors. For more than 20 years, Holocaust survivors have been recognized for rebuilding their lives after the Shoah and for their contributions to the Province of Ontario at the Queen's Park Tribute. The initiative is jointly organized and sponsored by the Premier's office and the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem. The Consul General of Israel will also be in attendance.

Helene Cantkier Goldflus and her family spent the war hidden in France. They were saved by neighbours, farmers and nuns in a convent — all at great peril to themselves.

Goldflus recalls her last hiding place was at a farm near Arquian, France, where

she was reunited with her younger brother. They remained together with the family for three and a half years. "They treated me like their own," she said. "I am alive because of their courage".

The Talmud teaches us, "He who saves a single life, saves the world entire." It is through the kindness of these righteous gentiles that Helene Goldflus enjoys the love of family and friends and the freedoms of her adopted country, Canada.

"I am truly blessed to have the love of wonderful children, grandchildren and a new great-grandchild," she said. At this stage of her life, Goldflus feels very fortunate to be living at Shalom Village because of the care and support she receives from the staff and her friends.

Goldflus has demonstrated a profound commitment to Holocaust education and



Helene Goldflus and her daughter Suzanne share a moment with photos from the past



Helene Cantkier Goldflus in grade school photo before the Holocaust

remembrance, educating and passing the torch of Holocaust remembrance to future generations by sharing her personal story in classrooms, at commemorations and with community groups.

"Through the years, Shalom Village has been home to many Holocaust survivors. Shalom Village is deeply privileged that our resident, Helene Goldflus will be among the recipients of this great honour. We are proud to support her nomination," said Shalom Village CEO Jeannette O'Leary

Yasher Koach to Helene Goldflus and all the past honourees.

Past Honourees from Shalom Village:

2010 Ora Markstein
2015 Lore Susan Jacobs

Past Honourees from Hamilton:

2005 Anne and Mark Mandell
2011 Dr. Arthur Weisz
2011 Dr. Nadia Rosa
2012 Emmy and Erich Weisz
2013 Frank Junger

Shalom Village Chai Tea: Save the Date

Save the Date!

The 35th Annual Ladies Auxiliary Tea will be on **July 6, 2016**. Watch for news from the Shalom Village Charitable Foundation for updates and information about this annual tradition.



Chai Tea Celebration

Tea and scones, elegant desserts, tiny sandwiches and beautiful hats mark the height of the summer social season at Shalom Village. You won't want to miss the 35th Annual Ladies Auxiliary Tea at Shalom Village.

Support a Good Cause

Proceeds from the 35th Annual Ladies Auxiliary Tea have been earmarked to acquire mission critical lifts for our most vulnerable residents.

Resident Care and Safety

Maxi Move Lifts are the most complete mobile lifter system, with its unrivaled flexibility, stability, and reliability. These lifts will provide Shalom Village residents with safer, more comfortable transfers, ensuring a safer and more secure environment for residents and staff.

Hope to See You There!

For more information about the 35th Annual Ladies Auxiliary Tea, or to offer your support, please contact the Shalom Village Charitable Foundation Office at 905-529-1613 ext. 264 or email kathleen@shalomvillage.ca.

Thank You

Grateful thanks to the families of **Mary Shields, Sally Lax, John Kelly, Eleanor Mitchnick, and Joey Cohen** for requesting donations to Shalom Village in lieu of flowers.

Memorial donations support the *Possibilities Fund* at Shalom Village, making many special programs and services possible for our residents.



Shalom Village

shalomvillage.ca
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Dr. Goldie Morgentaler
University of Lethbridge

PUBLIC LECTURE

Chava Rosenfarb's
The Tree of Life: An Epic about
Life in the Lodz Ghetto

Thursday, June 9, 2016 at 4:30 p.m.
Great Hall, University Club
McMaster University

Passover Cards

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Just send us your list and we will take care of the rest for only \$10 per card.

We are offering beautiful Holiday cards featuring original art created by our residents. You will be proud to have your friends receive these attractive and colourful cards.



All proceeds from card donations support the Possibilities Fund at Shalom Village.

Chag Sameach from your Friends at Shalom Village!

Pirate stories, Shalom Village, Memory and Yiddish

by GARY BARWIN, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

A few years ago, I decided to write a novel about Jewish pirates. So nu, you have a better idea? Most nights, I'd walk my dog and think about what the book would be about. My regular route took me past Shalom Village, lit-up, large and ship-like against the dark. To me, each window seemed like a porthole into a life and it made me think about how each of us is a book, an encyclopedia, an entire library of memories, emotions, and stories. Sometimes we can't put it all into words. Sometimes the words begin to disappear, become vague, or are difficult to retrieve.

Memory is an important concept for Jews, but it's also a feeling. We feel deeply that we should "never forget" and we do our best to pass on our stories and culture, from great tragedies to kugel recipes to jokes and family stories. But we also pass on that "sense" of Jewishness.

In time, I realized that, because it was a pirate story, my novel would be told in the voice of a parrot. A parrot learns language from its owner and remembers. And, alluding to the Torah, my parrot would be the orating "Aaron" to my protagonist's "Moses" (though I call him Moishe). And when we first meet him, he'd be an alter kaker, a cantankerous old Jewish coot of a bird.

And naturally, he'd speak Yiddish. Why? Because of its vitality, its humour, its ability to sum up the richness of experience and Jewish being-in-the-world. Wherever Jews went, with or without possessions, they also brought their language. And for me, Yiddish expresses a quintessentially Jewish irony and a fatalistic yet celebratory humour. They tried to kill us but instead we lived and celebrate with good food and family. Life is hard but still, we're around and can tell jokes about it. We're often a pessimistically optimistic people. Is the glass half full or half empty? Full-shmull. As long as we have a glass.

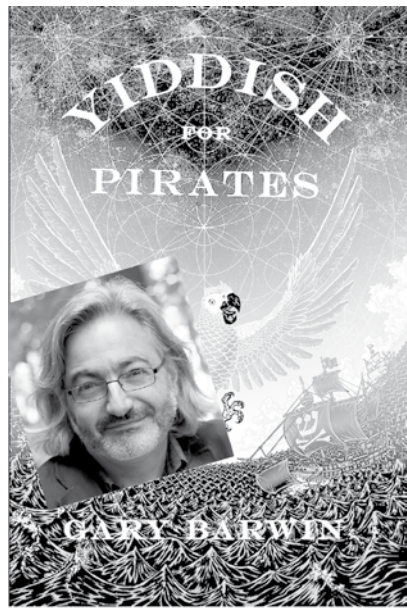
Yiddish is a library of our experiences and it has travelled with us through time and space. Somehow, even if you don't know much Yiddish, you can still get a sense of its way of engaging with the world. In my novel, I engineered a way to have my main characters speak Yiddish even though much of the story takes place in Inquisition Spain where the Jews spoke Ladino.

On my walk, I'd recall how my own children used to go to Shalom Village to visit their great-grandparents. Grandpa Frank used to deprogram his remote control so he could pay my eight-year-old son to come over and fix it. I also remembered those Hebrew school assignments where kids must interview an aging relative about their family history. So, my story would begin with a boy going to a place like Shalom Village looking for information from his grandfather, but instead, because Zaide is sloffing, he'd encounter the spicy nautical Yiddishkeit of his grandfather's bawdy ex-seafaring parrot.

Here's an excerpt from near the beginning of the novel:

Hello? If you want the story of a life, don't wait for your alter kaker old gramps over there to wake up. Maybe he'll never wake. But me? Listen to my words. They tell some story. Because I remember. Sometimes too much, but I remember.

So, nu, bench your fat little oysgepasheter Cape Horn tuches down on that chair and listen to my beaking. Come all ye brave lads, and so forth. I'll tell you the whole megillah



story from fore to aft.

What's it about? Pirates. Parrots. Jews. Jewels. The Inquisition. Gefilte fish. Gold. A girl.

Boychik, I was a pirate's parrot, and had I not noshed from the Fountain of Eternal Youth hundreds of years ago, I would rest beside my scurvy captain and Davy Jones hisself at the bottom of the sea where the soulless creatures crawl. And then where would you be?

Without a story.

That life. It was a book made into a life. A wonder tale. The glinty waves. The deep jungle. A world I wouldn't have believed if I hadn't sailed right into it. And for a time, that world had but one shoulder, blue and fussy with epaulettes banging off the rigging of a stolen frock coat, a cutlass of a collar-bone covered in flesh like mangy beefjerky.

My captain's shoulder.

Feb, these days no one wants to hear. Maybe not even you. They treat us like left-overs—wizened chicken-gizzard pupiklech in this birdhouse of leftover Yids. But nu, it's true, most of us look like yester-day's chicken or its gizzards. Though look at these feathers. A young bird would be proud of such grey.

The Shalom Home for the Aged.

Shalom? In Hebrew, "shalom" means hello, goodbye, peace. Imagine the crazy farkakteh waving of some poultry-skinned geezer on the fifth floor, squinting out from between the orange curtains. Is he waving hello or goodbye? Ptuh! It's an old age home, so who knows? Maybe the shlemiel thinks he's in a crow's nest and is warning of an invading armada. Alav ha'shalom. Peace be upon him, old nudnik.

Too often, stories in this library of lost people are told in the farmisht confused language of forgetting, but I speak many languages and I'm fluent in both remembering and forgetting. Though, nu, it's easier to tell the stories you remember.

Or pretend to. And what you don't remember, the stories tell for you.

And what did we find? Ach, this is a pirate tale I'm telling you, so it has to be treasure. So, nu, you ask, what is this treasure and where is it buried?

This I'll try to answer. As well as another, the big question of all stories: And then what happened?

Yes, it brings mazel for a pimply boy like you to hear about blood, kishkas—guts—dangerous books, and shtupping. It puts some hair between your ears and above your skinny-dick shmeckel. You'll like it.

So, nu, in the beginning what was there? A beginning.

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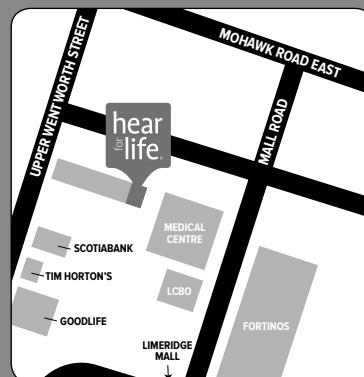
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For more information please contact
lwolfson@anshesholom.ca

Tikkun Olam in Honduras

WENDY SCHNEIDER

Dr. Benjamin Klein, a specialist in pediatric developmental rehabilitation, is traveling to Honduras this April for his fourth year as part of a medical team providing care to Honduran children from remote areas. Established by London, Ontario pediatrician Dr. Fabian Gorodzinsky, the team includes pediatricians, dentists, a nurse, a translator/administrator and medical residents from the Children's Hospital of Western Ontario.

Born and raised in London, Klein's interest in Latin America dates back to his years as an undergraduate at Dalhousie University, where he took a couple of courses in Spanish. Klein's Spanish improved during a medical elective he took in a rural hospital in Bolivia in 2004. To this day Klein keeps up his language skills by listening to Spanish language radio shows on a daily basis.



Dr. Benjamin Klein examines a Honduran child
Photo by Omar Enamorado

What kind of problems do you see?

We see kids with really basic medical conditions like skin infections, asthma, pneumonia, malnutrition, infectious diarrhea, parasites and iron deficiency. If a child needs ongoing treatment, we'll leave them with medication to cover a longer term basis and try to connect them with local services. We've arranged for kids to have cardiac surgery and rehab equipment.

What's the long term impact of what you do?

This year we hope to establish a connection with a local rehabilitation centre in Honduras that serves kids. We'll be joined by a pediatric occupational therapist from Lansdowne Children's Centre in Brantford, and our intent is to operate clinics, do assessments and see how we can help, which will depend a lot on what their needs are and what they want. At the end of the day we want to deliver our equipment to patients and see people who need assessments and treatment. I feel like we've accomplished that one way or another. The vision would be to establish an ongoing connection between their centre in Honduras and

Lansdowne, and to exchange knowledge, experience, and expertise. The world of pediatric rehabilitation has undergone a change towards optimizing people's function and participation rather than trying to cure their disease which in many cases is just not possible.

Is there one particular encounter you've had that stands out?

A lot of images of parents and kids as they go through the clinic, of people eager to be seen come to mind; of treating people's infections and asthma. I recall taking a break and a couple of the local elders sitting and talking with us, just expressing that they were happy we came to their town and that it was a good thing to do. It was a real, genuine interaction, and I felt a real sense of solidarity with them. For me it's exhilarating just to be in a foreign country and have something to offer and get to know what people are like.

How people can help

To keep abreast of the 2016 Honduras Mission, visit <https://hondurasmission2014.wordpress.com> or email Benjamin Klein at benjamin.klein@medportal.ca.

Hamilton teens experience Israel

URJ/NFTY-EIE HIGH SCHOOL IN ISRAEL

Nathan Apel and Samuel Gencher of Temple Anshe Sholom are part of a cohort of 63 teens from across North America on the NFTY-EIE (Eisendrath International Experience) High School in Israel program from January through May.

Based on Kibbutz Tzuba, the NFTY High School is a semester long program for high school students in grades 10-12. With very small class sizes, students take an advanced Jewish history class, an advanced Hebrew Ulpan, and their regular general studies courses to fulfill the requirements of their home high schools. Approximately three days a week are spent outside the classroom on field trips. There are also numerous week-long trips throughout the semester, including a trip to Poland to study the Holocaust, a week in Gadna

(a simulated Israeli army training experience), and a hike across the country from sea to sea.



Samuel Gencher and Nathan Apel
Photo credit URJ/NFTY-EIE High School in Israel

"I chose to participate in EIE because I feel as if it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to spend time in Israel while simultaneously learning about myself, Israel, Judaism, and other people," says Gencher

"Going on EIE is important to me because it allows me to connect more with my Jewish culture and heritage while interacting with peers that have similar views. I believe that I will form bonds with others that will last a lifetime, something that is very important to me." Registration is open for EIE's Summer 2016, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017 sessions. More information can be found at www.nftyie.org.

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TAS choir then and now

PAULA BARUCH

Temple Anshe Sholom is very proud of its long musical history. The Temple's first choir was formed around 1865 and was led by choirmaster Bernard Daniels. A photo from the 1870s shows a serious choral group comprised of men and women, adults and children, posed formally before the organ. At that time, the choir specialized in ornate and rich choral pieces by outstanding German Jewish composers such as Louis Lewandowski and Salomon Sulzer. Traditionally, accompaniment was provided by organ or piano, but during the 1970s the guitar moved from the Reform movement's summer camps and NFTY retreats to become an accepted presence in the synagogue.



Today the members of Temple Anshe Sholom are delighted to witness a renaissance of choral and instrumental music during services and special events. Seven years ago, inspired by the spirit of a family retreat at Camp George, a number of instrument-playing members banded together to form the Temple's popular Jam Band. The Jam Band accompanies the music of our Family Shabbat services, which take place on the third Friday of each month, usually followed by a

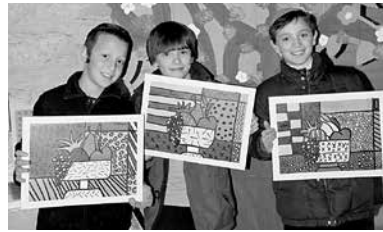
community dinner. More recently, the Temple's cantorial soloist, Paula Baruch, has reformed the TAS Choir, bringing together a wonderful group of men and women, adults and young people, whose spirit and soaring voices have stirred the congregation throughout the High Holy Days and monthly Shabbat services. The music tradition continues to inspire at Anshe Sholom.

Great artists come alive at the HHA

YAACOV MOREL

What does Grade 5 French have to do with Spanish painter Salvador Dali? Or, Tu Bishvat with the Brazilian artist Romero Britto? Or, geometry with Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky? Just ask the students at the Hamilton Hebrew Academy (HHA)!

reality. Students were exposed to the artist's rendition of "soft" watches as



Mendel Zaltzman, Emet Mendelson and Aaron Ginsberg with their renditions of Romero Britto's famous painting of flowers

This past academic year, the HHA has woven arts and Ontario curricula together to create a richer learning experience. Under the leadership of Eiora Wolfe, M. Ed. Harvard University, experienced Art Instructor, Gila Lawton, as well as incredible home-room teachers, core curricula comes alive in an engaging and multi-sensorial way.

they studied time in French. Students then identified their favourite hour in French and created their own renditions of Dali-inspired soft watches.

In delving into the history and art of Dali, Grade 5 students learned about how surrealism blends dream and

During Tu Bishvat students examined a painting by Romero Britto

depicting flowers and fruit, while integrating lessons of the holiday and inter-disciplinary studies in science.

HHA students are currently learning about Cornelius David Kriehoff, the great Canadian painter of the 19th century, famous for his Canadian landscapes, as they integrate their French studies of seasons.

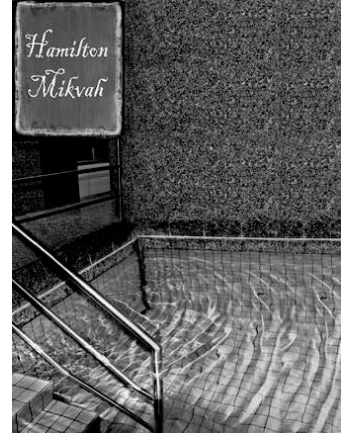
Research has shown that art integration improves comprehension and memory retention. When students create visual expressions of the content they are learning, the information becomes more embedded in the brain. For online galleries of the magnificent art of HHA students, visit the photos and videos section at www.hamiltonhebrewacademy.ca.

The miracle behind the Hamilton mikvah

In the early 1960s, the Hamilton community had three large congregations, but no mikvah. Those wishing to immerse themselves in a ritual bath were forced to travel to Toronto, which could be a great inconvenience, particularly in the winter.

In the summer of 1962, Rabbi Mordechai Green travelled to New York to interview teachers for the newly established Hamilton Hebrew Academy. While visiting Yeshiva University, he met with the famed Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz zt"l, and told him of the great accomplishment of establishing the magnificent new Adas Israel Synagogue and the daunting challenge of establishing a mikvah. Lifshitz listened intently and then told Green that when the rabbi returned home, the money would be waiting.

Back in Hamilton, Green was walking towards the old shul on Cannon Street, when he saw Hershel Siegal, an older gentleman, sitting on its front steps. When Siegal saw Rabbi Green he quickly got up and rushed towards him. "I've been waiting for you Rebbe," he said in Yiddish. "After minyan please take me home. I must speak to you." There was a sense of great urgency in his voice. Rabbi Green agreed.



Together with Harold Bornstein and Max Hoffman, Green went to Siegal's house where the older man proceeded to give them \$4,000 in dollar bills. The contribution was a great start, but obviously not sufficient to construct a mikvah.

A few weeks later, Rabbi Green found himself back in New York meeting with Lifshitz. After hearing Green's account of what had transpired, Lifshitz assured the rabbi that more money would be waiting upon his return home.

Sure enough, the next time Green went to shul, Siegal was waiting on the steps, insisting that the rabbi accompany him to his house, again filling more bags filled with dollar bills. By the time Bornstein and Hoffman arrived the count had reached \$15,000, sufficient money to start building. The project was still short \$5,000. Rabbi Green went to Toronto and visited with Dr. Julius Kuhl who was instrumental in rescuing many Jews from extermination during the war. With Kuhl's contribution, the construction of the mikvah was completed.

Today, the entire community is the beneficiary of this incredible accomplishment. All of the synagogues in Hamilton and surrounding communities utilize this facility. Currently, the annual operating budget for the Hamilton mikvah is \$25,000. The Adas Israel's annual mikvah fundraising event raises just over half of that. Donations are appreciated via paypal to mikvah@adasisrael.ca or by calling 905-528-0039.

Adapted from Rabbi Mordechai Green's memoirs





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na'amat WELLNESS DAY

RONIT MESTERMAN

Na'amat Hamilton held its second annual Wellness Day at Temple Anshe Sholom on Sunday, Jan. 24. The theme was: "Take care of yourself so that you are stronger to care for others."

The first part of the event was dedicated to our physical selves. Led by professional trainer, Tracey Kornblum, who is a bundle of energy, we all got sweating with a mix of kickboxing, salsa and Bollywood dancing. This was followed by a contrasting relaxing and 'feel good' time, through an introductory session to Tai Chi, Yoga and Pilates, led by certified instructor Hadas Gabizon. The enthusiasm and high energy level made it difficult to divert enthusiastic participants to our delicious snacks for yet further needed energy.

Our speaker, Valerie Spironello, provided us with a stimulating talk on 'mindfulness' and walked us through some wonderful exercises. Spironello, an assistant professor of the department of medicine at McMaster University and a social worker by training, provides group and individual trainings in mindfulness and 'compassion fatigue' through her company ChooseWellness.ca.

Feedback from all participants was excellent and the request for a next round in 2017 was clearly heard. We would like to make it known that, despite Na'amat being a women's organization, we would encourage male participation in the future at our Na'amat Wellness Day, and would love to see spouses as well as male friends and colleagues.

A big thank you to all our Na'amat members who contributed to the organization of this event, and our warm appreciation to all the participants who came out on a cold winter day to have fun.



An ESL class at Jewish Social Services

Photo by Wendy Schneider

JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICES

CAROL KRAMES

More than 45 years ago the Ministry of Community and Social Services approved a grant to Hamilton Jewish Social Services to operate a "workshop" for seniors. With the arrival of seniors from the Former Soviet Union, the program progressed to meet new needs. These seniors needed a place where they could meet other people who spoke Russian and Yiddish. JSS arranged ESL classes, and brought in speakers to teach them about Canadian culture. The workshop supplemented what help they could get from their families and guaranteed that they would get at least one hot meals each day. The people felt productive working on the various workshop projects. This year the Ministry announced that within five years all workshops in Ontario will be phased out, so that people with special needs can be integrated into the public workforce. Fortunately, the Ministry has recognized that our program is not a traditional workshop. We offer our seniors a day program where they spend time, get a meal, meet people, and get out of their homes. To comply with the new vision of the Ministry and reflect what our program actually accomplishes we are changing our name to the "Day Program." The typical day begins with our participants engaged in various activities ranging from playing cards, doing puzzles designed to maintain cognitive competence, working with English workbooks and painting. At 10 a.m. a hearty brunch is served prepared by JSS staff members and volunteers. Two days a week we offer ESL classes and two days a week we play Bingo. When offered a Russian-speaking cable station on our big screen TV, they declined, saying that active socializing was preferable to passive entertainment. The JSS is very thankful to the Hamilton Jewish Federation and the Government of Ontario for recognizing the importance of this program and continuing our funding so we can continue to service this vulnerable population.

Jewish Genealogical Society

HAZEL BOON

Jewish Genealogical Society (JGSH) member Moishe Gold recently copied me on an email chain. His family immigrated to Canada from Ozarów, Poland and his knowledge and contacts in regard to that shtetl are well known. In the original email, a woman contacted Gold hoping he could lead her to more information about Ozarów and perhaps about her family. After the exchange of many emails, this woman was brought into the fold and is now in touch with others whose families come from Ozarów, which had a Jewish population of 2,557 in 1898.

There are many groups, both formal and informal, which serve to memorialize the many towns from which our ancestors came. Some groups have worked to restore their town's cemeteries, a further tribute to those who lived and died in those towns. Mostly these groups, sometimes known as Special Interest Groups (SIGs), serve to allow their members to pool information, research, and ask questions of others whose ancestors lived in the same shtetl. One can join such a group with no information about their ancestors other than a belief that one's family lived in that particular shtetl. Part of our mandate at JGSH is to help our members find such groups, if that is of interest to them.

Our last regular meeting of the season will take place at 7:30 on Wednesday, May 11 at Temple Anshe Sholom. We will welcome Dorion Liebgott who will delight us with "Stories That Objects Tell and How they Enhance Our Family History: From the Beth Tzedec Reuben and Helene Dennis Museum Collection". More information can be found at www.jgsh.org or by phoning Hazel Boon at 905-524-3345.

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TEMPLE YOUTH PROGRAMS

LAURA WOLFSON

TASTY is the name of the group for high school aged Temple kids. This year TASTY has participated in five weekend retreats in Rochester, Cleveland, Erie, Toronto, and at Camp George. In addition, they ran a blanket-making workshop for our religious school students, teaching them about the Jewish value of providing for needy people, and about efforts in Hamilton to support people who are homeless. They've held a movie night, had a potluck youth Shabbat dinner, and are planning to lead a youth service at the Temple. Next month's program is called "Love Letters to Strangers" and will take place in Kensington Market in Toronto, together with their peers from Temple Kol Ami.

Youth programming for kids in the JYG (Junior Youth Group – Grades 5 to 8) age group is also really bumped up this year. Starting with "Cupcake Wars" to the "Iron Chef Pizza-Making" with celebrity guest chef Sean Davis, to "Seriously Fun Hamantashen Baking" – the kids are really mastering the art of fun in the kitchen! But they don't just do cooking activities... in February they went to SkyZone indoor trampoline park and in April they are going to LaserTag. JYG Activities take place once a month on Sunday afternoons and Jewish kids who are not Temple members are welcome to join in. TASTY also hopes to welcome new members to the group. To find out more please contact Laura Wolfson lwolfson@anshesholom.ca.



The TASTY delegation at the Winter Kallah Regional board meeting. Front (l to r) Carl DeLeon, Arielle DeLeon, Hannah Byrne-Wolfson. Rear (l to r) Matt Sampson, Shelby Frank-Davis. Photo by Laura Wolfson

Kehila: Where are they now?



Leeav Lipton



Sarah Goldberg



Amiel Kollekk



Talia Kollekk



Ethan Rogers

NAOMI BERNSTEIN

Kehila opened 17 years ago to widen our community's educational opportunities. Here's what some of graduates are doing now:

Leeav Lipton graduated from Toronto University's Department of Astrophysics and Astronomy. He was hand-picked to help build SuperBIT, a high altitude balloon-borne telescope, designed to measure

dark matter distribution around more than 100 galaxy clusters.

Sarah Goldberg is currently in Israel, interning in fashion design. She also runs her own Judaica fabric design company, sarahtova.com.

Amiel Kollekk is studying Mathematics and Computer Science at McGill University. This summer he'll be working at Facebook's

headquarters in San Francisco as a software engineering intern, one of only 400 picked worldwide each year.

Talia Kollekk graduates this year with an A average in history from McMaster University. She landed an opportunity to pursue her passion for Soviet history and Russian at the School of Higher Economics in Moscow this fall.

Ethan Rogers is an honours graduate of the George Brown Advanced Culinary Apprenticeship Program, and working towards his Red Seal Chef Certification at Toronto's Barbarian's Steak House.

Want the Kehila experience for your child? Find out more at kehilaschool.com or call Michele to book a tour at 905.529.7725.

Comic book author coming to Hamilton

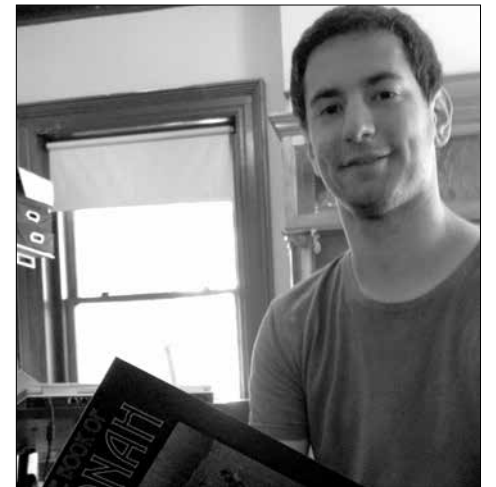
Tasked with the challenge to provide programming for the kids during Yizkor two years ago, Beth Jacob education director, Rina Rodak, found Dov Smiley's comic book, *Jonah and the Whale*. Armed with copies for about a dozen, she was thrilled by the response of the children. There was discussion, debate and the children were entertained.

The following year, Smiley released a new comic, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. The overflow crowd of children during the High Holiday program asked thought-provoking questions and once again, were genuinely entertained.

There was genuine excitement at Beth Jacob when Smiley announced the release of two new comics in 2016, *The Book of Ruth* for Shavuot and *Hannah and Hagar* for Rosh Hashanah and would be open to offer school visits.

When Rodak extended an invitation to Smiley, he replied, "Of course, I will come. I can't say no to Beth Jacob!"

Why couldn't he say no? Because Dov Smiley is one of the late Rabbi Israel and Gloria Silverman's grandsons, and he has a soft spot for Beth Jacob. At the end of each of his stories, Smiley explains that his versions of the stories are based on sermons given by Rabbi Silverman. His work provides an alternative approach to traditional



Dov Smiley with his comic book *Jonah and the Whale*. Photo courtesy of the Canadian Jewish News

Torah learning: an opportunity to explore text through a kid friendly medium. This is exactly the kind of learning that Beth Jacob Hebrew School teachers and students love.

Smiley will be speaking at Beth Jacob on Wed. May 4 from 4:30 - 6 p.m. All are welcome. For more information contact Rina Rodak at school@bethjacobsynagogue.ca or call 905-512-4036.

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Lawyers in your Corner

The Jews of Argentina

NO NEED TO CRY FOR A VIBRANT COMMUNITY WHOSE HISTORICAL ROOTS RUN DEEP

Story and photos by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

Everything I know about the history of Argentine Jewry I learned from a Conservative rabbi turned tour guide. That would be Ernesto Yattah, a native of Buenos Aires, who received his ordination at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Yattah served as an associate rabbi of Houston's largest conservative synagogue for nine years before returning to Argentina in the late 1990s to find his true calling.

My husband and I found Yattah on Trip Advisor in the months leading up to our six-day trip to Buenos Aires last December, attracted by the rave reviews about his Jewish tours of the city. The five hours we spent in his company were time well spent – Yattah is a master storyteller whose depth of knowledge and passion for his subject kept us on the edge of our metaphorical seats. When told as much, he joked that his chosen profession was a dream job for a former pulpit rabbi whose congregants would start looking at their watches 10 minutes into his sermons. "Here," he told us, "I have a captive audience." If so, we found ourselves willing captives, soaking in Yattah's fascinating account of how both Argentina and its Jewish citizens, were shaped and influenced by their interactions with each other.

An American rabbi's heroism during Argentina's Dirty War

The Plaza de Mayo, Argentina's most famous public square, has been the focal point for political demonstrations throughout hundreds of years, but the painted white kerchiefs on its pavement evoke a particular period. Between 1976 and 1983, thousands of people deemed political threats by the country's ruling military dictatorship were arrested and vanished without a trace. A disproportionate number of "the disappeared ones" were students and young intellectuals, and 20 per cent of the total number of victims, according to Yattah, were Jews. At great risk to themselves, a group of women – soon to be known to the world as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, gathered every week in the square, in silent protest over the unknown fates of their missing children. Often seen marching by their side was an American rabbi, a fearless and outspoken advocate for the victims of Argentina's "Dirty War." Rabbi Marshall Meyer already possessed legendary status even before the military took power. A disciple of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the esteemed Conservative theologian and civil rights leader, Meyer accepted a post in Buenos Aires in 1959 with the goal of bringing the most successful institutions of Conservative Judaism to Argentina's assimilated Jewish community. Charismatic and idealistic, Meyer would go on to found an enormously popular Conservative synagogue, Camp Ramah-style summer camps and Latin America's only rabbinical seminary. When the military junta took power in 1976, Meyer's attention was diverted from his own

community to the alarming deterioration of human rights that was spreading across the country. In her introduction to a book containing Meyer's speeches and sermons, author Jane Isay describes the impact of Meyer's activism.

"He was a lonely voice against the government, preaching against the dictatorship, welcoming the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo into his synagogue at great risk, and visiting the prisons weekly. He ran a virtual underground railroad, helping people escape the country, hiding others until they could get out, working tirelessly to locate the disappeared," she wrote.

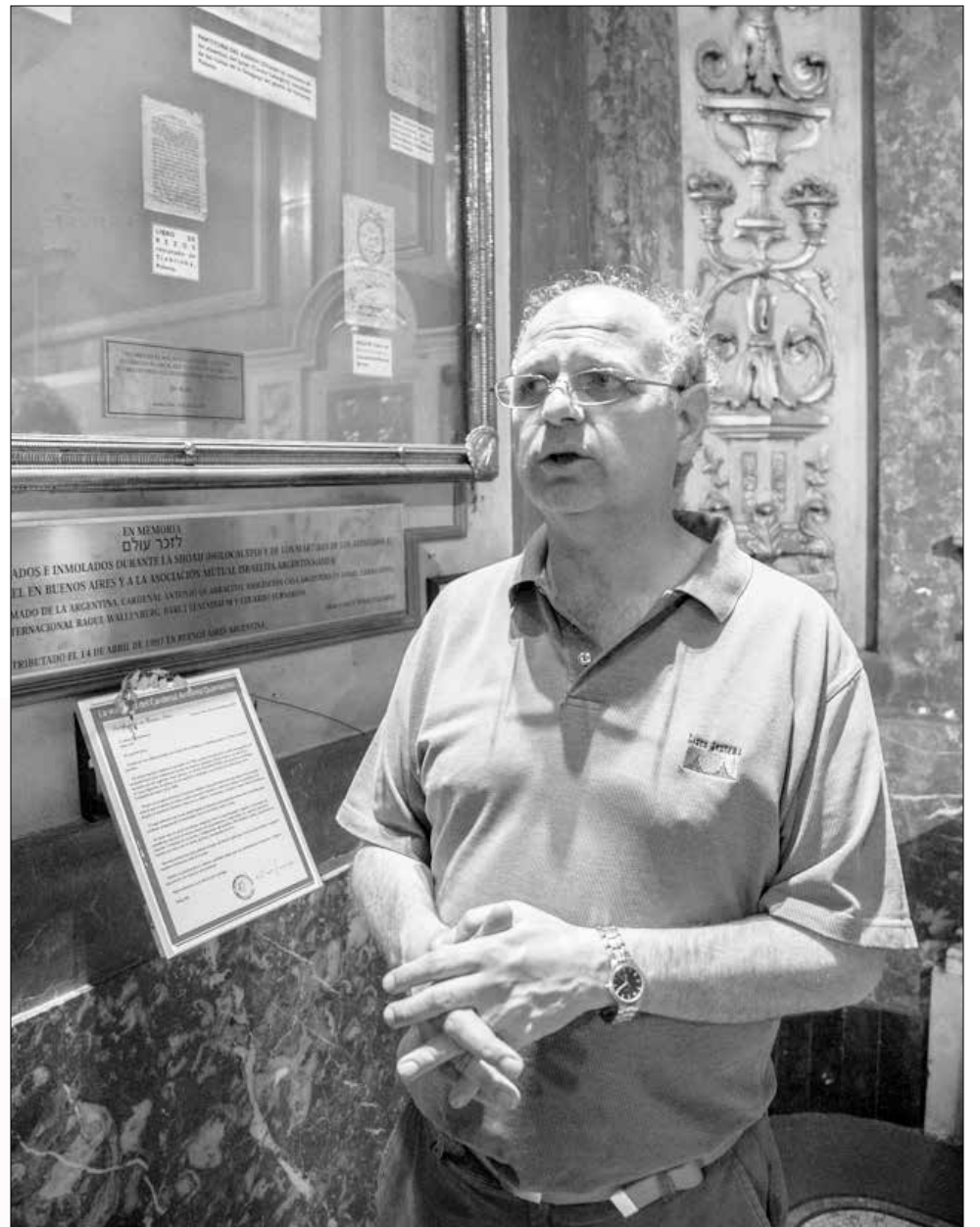
When democracy returned to Argentina in 1983, Meyer was awarded the country's highest honour by President Raul Alfonsín. He returned to New York the following year, where he went on to transform the Upper West Side's B'nai Jeshurun synagogue into a centre of spirituality and activism. Ten years later, Meyer was dead, his life tragically cut short by liver cancer. But throughout Latin America his spirit lives on through the Marshall T. Meyer Latin American Rabbinical Seminary, whose 80 graduates are continuing his work of strengthening and sustaining Jewish communities.

Peron, Israel and the Jews

The elegant pink-tinged government house that overlooks the Plaza de Mayo, is known to many Andrew Lloyd Weber fans as the site of the famous balcony scene in Evita, but the Peron era is widely associated with a period in which Argentina provided a warm welcome to hundreds of Nazi war criminals. According to Yattah, however, Juan Peron's pro-German foreign policy was less about being fond of Nazis than it was driven by a desire on the part of the dictator to exploit German technological and scientific know-how to further his goals of transforming Argentina into a strong industrial power. In this, Peron was certainly not alone. Britain and the United States's clandestine recruitment of Nazi scientists during the Cold War has been well documented.

The great paradox of the Peron era lies in the fact that at the same time that Argentina was actively recruiting former Nazis, the presidential couple was engaged in very public demonstrations of their affection for the Jewish community in newsreels depicting them bringing Rosh Hashanah greetings. They were also stalwart supporters of Israel. In the Evita Peron museum in Buenos Aires' tony Palermo district, an Israeli orphanage is listed among the beneficiaries of the Eva Peron Foundation, alongside a photograph of the first lady having a tête-à-tête with future Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir. Furthermore, Argentina was the first country to set up an embassy in the fledgling state, and signed a trade deal that offered exceptionally favourable terms.

While Peron was widely portrayed in the international media throughout the 1950s as a Hitler admiring antisemite,



Tour guide Ernesto Yattah standing before the memorial to Holocaust survivors and victims of terrorist bombings at the Israeli embassy and Jewish community centre inside Buenos Aires' Metropolitan Cathedral.

"He was a lonely voice against the government ... welcoming the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo into his synagogue."

From Jane Isay's introduction to *You Are My Witness, The Living Words of Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer*



The painted white kerchiefs on the Plaza de Mayo

Yattah claims otherwise. What antisemite, he asked, would appoint a rabbi as his religious affairs advisor? That same rabbi, Rabbi Amram Blum, would stand by the dictator's side during Evita's funeral, softly leading the dictator in reciting the Mourner's Kaddish.

The Crypto Jewish roots of the Buenos Aires aristocracy

The neighbourhood of Once (pronounced On-say) is the Jewish quarter of Buenos Aires, or, as Yattah likes to call it, Latin America's version of the Lower East Side. Over a delicious lunch of hot pastrami sandwiches served in one of the quarter's numerous kosher delicatessens, Yattah explained how immigrants from Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay have mostly replaced the neighbourhood's earlier Jewish immigrants. And yet the mezuzahs on the doorposts of the Syrian Jewish-owned textile stores that line Once's crowded streets, along with the elegant facades of synagogues built during a bygone era and the ubiquitous Chabad Hassidim give this mixed neighbourhood a distinctly Jewish feel.

Most of the Jews of Buenos Aires, numbering approximately 240,000, reside elsewhere in the city. The mostly secular Ashkenazi majority are either unaffiliated or identify as Conservative Jews. Fifteen per cent are Sephardic, descended from Syrian and Moroccan Jews who immigrated to Argentina at the beginning of the 20th century. There is also a large Chabad presence. But nowhere among Argentina's Jewish population, is there any genealogical connection to 16th century Portuguese Crypto Jews, the first Jews of Argentina. Their descendants can indeed be found in today's Buenos Aires – in the most improbable of places.

The role played by Jewish "New Christians" in transforming Buenos Aires from an insignificant outpost on the fringes of the Spanish empire into a key player in the global silver trade was only recently discovered, thanks to a Jewish Yale student's discovery of Sephardic names among the 16th century benefactors of Buenos Aires's Franciscan convent.



A typical scene in Once (On-say), home to a high concentration of Lubavitch Hassidim and the largest concentrations of synagogues, Jewish schools and kindergartens. It is also the home of the new building of the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina: the Central Jewish Community Centre.)



Golda Meir in a meeting with Eva Peron

Source: Public Domain

Weaving a tale populated by Crypto-Jewish Franciscan monks and prosperous Jewish merchants trying to stay one step ahead of inquisitors from Spain, Yattah held us in rapt attention with a story that could rival any bestselling mystery novel. Ironically the safety, acceptance and prosperity that Crypto-Jews would find in Buenos Aires was the exact thing that led to their complete disappearance. Within a generation their integration was so complete, that it wasn't until the last decade that genealogical research connected Buenos Aires's oldest, most established Catholic families with the Portuguese Crypto-Jews.

The Cardinal, the Pope and the Jews

One doesn't expect to wrap up a Jewish tour of Buenos Aires inside a Catholic church, but, on Yattah's insistence, we couldn't leave the city without seeing the Holocaust memorial at the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral. Inaugurated in 1997 by the archbishop of Argentina, Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, the memorial to Holocaust victims and those murdered in the 1990s terrorist attacks at the Israel Embassy and the AMIA (for Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina: the Central Jewish Community Centre), is a powerful symbol of the remarkable steps taken by Argentina's Catholic church towards reconciliation with the Jewish people. Among the fragments of Jewish texts displayed in the glass enclosed mural is a page from the Book of Esther rescued from the ruins of a Berlin synagogue destroyed during the Second World War, a copy of the Book

of Samuel found in the ruins of the Israeli embassy, and a book of Yiddish fables recovered from the AMIA bombing. Beneath the mural a framed letter written by Quarracino just two months before the cardinal's death to his good friend Baruch Tenenbaum, founder of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, contains these words.

"I have no doubt that my current coadjutor archbishop Monsignor Jorge Bergoglio, when the moment comes to succeed me, will walk the same path of reconciliation and fraternity with our elder brothers."

Monsignor Jorge Bergoglio, known to the world as Pope Francis, would not only walk the path modeled by his predecessor, he would bring the spirit of reconciliation between Jews, Catholics and Muslims to the world stage.

When Pope Francis was about to embark on his historic trip to the Holy Land in May 2014, he invited fellow Argentinians Rabbi Abraham Skorka and Muslim leader Omar Abboud to be part of the papal delegation. At a time of unprecedented violence throughout the Middle East, the shocking brutality of ISIS and rising global antisemitism, the photograph of the three men embracing in front of the Western Wall had stunning symbolic effect. It was, said Yattah, the first time that representatives of the three Abrahamic religions had shared such a moment in the place where it all started. And it made perfect sense to him that "three Argentinian guys" made it happen.

An unplanned visit to the Jewish museum

A late afternoon flight home on our final day in Buenos Aires would give us just enough time to catch an English-language tour of the famous Colon Theatre – or so we thought – until discovering on our arrival that the tour was cancelled due to ongoing renovations. Instead, we crossed the street to have a look at the Templo Libertad, a majestic synagogue built by prosperous European Jewish immigrants in the late 19th century that has recently been



An exhibit at the Jewish museum of Buenos Aires.

made a national monument. Gazing up at the prominent Magen David above its elegant wooden doors, we almost missed a small sign on the adjacent building indicating that a Jewish museum lay within. Why not, we thought, as we spotted a nearby diner where we could spend the hour before it opened having a leisurely breakfast. That spontaneous decision was the first of two that morning that would make our last day in Buenos Aires one of our best. The second was choosing to take advantage of a guided tour included with the admission price, a choice the Israeli couples who arrived at the same time opted to forego. That left my husband and I and a Spanish-speaking couple the only participants on a tour of the museum's small collection of artifacts that depict the history of Jewish migration to Argentina. Of particular interest were items connected to the agricultural colonies set up by the German Jewish philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch for persecuted Russian Jews, the forebears of the famous Jewish Gauchos of the Argentine pampas. But it was our young guide's eloquence, depth of knowledge, and the way he seamlessly alternated his explanations between English and Spanish that we found most captivating, and I was curious to learn more about him.

His name, I later learned, is Fede Treguer, a 20-year-old history major, who grew up with little connection to the Jewish community. It was during the year leading up to his Bar Mitzvah that Treguer

began delving into his family history, specifically, the details surrounding his grandmother's miraculously escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, unlikely survival of an Allied bombing raid in Germany, and perilous journey to Argentina, via Paraguay.

Our Facebook conversations after my return home revealed more interesting details about Treguer. A part-time docent since the age of 18, Treguer revealed that the source of his greatest satisfaction is seeing Jews from abroad react with surprise when they learn about the museum's successful outreach initiatives with the Catholic and Muslim communities.

"I feel that the most important thing of working with non-Jewish people is to destroy the walls that can tear us apart," he wrote.

If Fede Treguer is truly representative of today's Argentine Jewry, there is much to celebrate: A community that knows its history and lives its values – something we can all strive to emulate.

IF YOU GO

Ernesto Yattah's Jewish tours of Buenos Aires:

Five-hour tours on the history of Argentina's Jewish community.
++54 (11) 4811-0108;
Email: eyattah@hotmail.com

Museo Judío de Buenos Aires Jewish Museum of Buenos Aires

Housed inside the administrative offices of the gorgeous Byzantine-style Templo Libertad, the small museum displays items related to Argentina's Jewish community in Buenos Aires. Admission is generally open to the public with proper passport identification. Hours: Monday to Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Fridays: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Guided tour included with price of admission. Libertad 769 between Córdoba and Viamonte, on Plaza Libertad. +54/11-4123-0832.



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