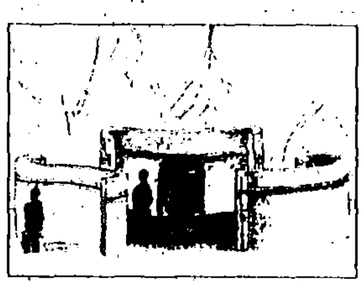
Neil Loomer's EDMONTON

January 2002 Tevet/Shevat 5762

JEWISH LIFE

Memorial to the victims of the Holocaust



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Dr. Alfred Fisher coming to Beth Shalom in January

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Beth Israel Synagogue Dedication

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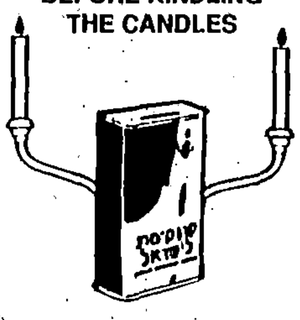
JNF Candle Lighting Times

Jan. 11 - 4:21 p.m.
Jan. 18 - 4:32 p.m.
Jan. 25 - 4:43 p.m
Feb. 1 - 4:57 p.m.
Feb. 8 - 5:11 p.m.

BEFORE KINDLING THE CANDLES



REMEMBER ISRAEL THROUGH YOUR BLUEBOX

York-Western Canada relationship exceeds expectations

In February 2000, an initiative was launched to recruit and prepare future Jewish day school teachers for Western Canada. The program, based at York University, is funded by a coalition of day schools in western Canada, (the Edmonton Talmud Torah, the Vancouver Talmud Torah, and Winnipeg's Gray Academy) together with New York's Covenant Foundation. Participants receive stipends of up to $4000 per year towards their university tuition as well as travel grants. In return, they commit to teaching for at least three years in western Canadian Hebrew day schools.

At the time of its launch, it was planned to recruit a cohort of three students in the programme's first year and then further groups of four or five students every other year. Demand for the program has, however, far exceeded expectations. As a consequence, a second cohort of five students was admitted in September 2001, with two members electing to spend a year of study in Israel before coming to York. Next year, too, because of so many inquiries about the program, another group of four to five students will be admitted.

Professor Alex Pomson of York University, one of the programme's coordinators, comments: "at a time when communities across North America are struggling to recruit young people to careers in teaching, we seem to face a different challenge - how to satisfy the enormous interest in this program".

The relationship between York University and the Western Canadian Coalition of Jewish Educators (W.C.C.J.E.) which supports this program has born additional fruits. Next spring, while the first group of program participants conducts a field study of western Canadian day schools, a professor from York's Jewish Teacher Education Program will be providing professional development sessions for teachers in partner schools. For Joshua Bensimon, coordinator of the Coalition, this is evidence of the ways in which all involved are benefiting from a relationship that spans four of Canada's provinces. He explained that the relationship will be further strengthened next fall when it is planned for teachers from Coalition schools to participate in the first courses being offered by York University's new virtual centre for Jewish teachers. In this project, supported by a grant from the L.A. Pincus Fund, teachers from western Canada will join colleagues from Toronto day schools in a pilot program of on-line professional development courses. Bensimon agrees that the relationship with York has exceeded everyone's expectations. "It promises to produce a new generation of teachers as well as to provide previously inaccessible resources to today's teachers". He has initiated contacts with the Jewish Federations of western Canada in order to secure the long-term future of the relationship. The initial response has been very positive.

For further information about the York University - Western Canada Jewish Teacher Education Initiative, please contact: Joshua Bensimon, Coordinator of the Western Canadian Coalition of Jewish Educators, (780) 444-2467, e-mail - Jbensimon@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca and/or Professor Alex Pomson, York University, (416) 736-2100, e-mail - apomson@edu.yorku.ca

Participants and professionals in the York - western Canada program met recently in Toronto. (Back row L-R) Professor Marty Lockshin, Director, Centre for Jewish Studies, York University, Professor Alex Pomson, Jewish Teacher Education Program, York University, Joshua Bensimon, Coordinator, W.C.C.J.E., (Middle row L-R) Naomi Pfeffer, Winnipeg, Catherine Chochinov, Winnipeg, (Front row L-R) Carla Girvitz, Calgary, Samantha Fried, Edmonton, Paula Campbell, Vancouver. Not in the photo are Stefan Gislason and Janelle Devere of Winnipeg who are presently in Israel.

Mayor Bill Smith & Lt. Governor Lois Hole Join Talmud Torah students at the official opening ceremonies for the new Beth Israel Synagogue

Fred Katz photo

Mr. & Mrs. M. Shector
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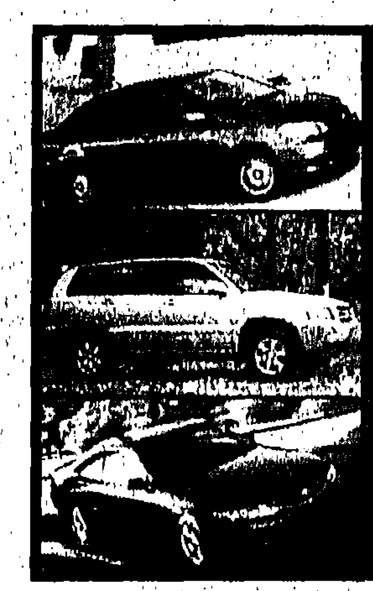

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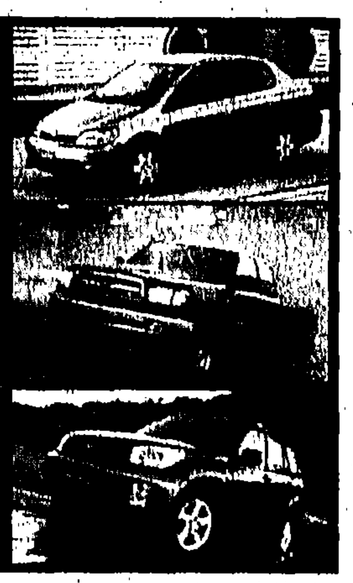

Beth Israel's Official Dedication and 95th Anniversary Celebration A Rousing Success

The official dedication and 95th Anniversary Celebration of Beth Israel Synagogue was held on December 2nd, 2001. Esther Starkman and Marilyn Cohen chaired the evening, with support from over 30 Beth Israel congregants. The foyer beautifully decorated with blue and white balloons and fragrant flowers was filled as the guests, many in formal wear, sipped on champagne and enjoyed hors'd'oeuvres while waiting for the official dedication to begin.

A large number of dignitaries were among the crowd of over 450 people in attendance. They included the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Lois Hole who joyfully cut the ribbon to officially open the new synagogue. Rabbi Reuvan Bulka of Ottawa, spiritual leader of Congregation Machzikei Hadas of Ottawa, recognized as the dean of Canada's orthodox rabbis, was the keynote speaker. Brig. General Edward and Sharon Fitch of Ottawa who were members of Beth Israel prior to their move returned for the gala. (Shortly after their visit word was received that Edward has been promoted to Major-General). Politicians present included the Honourable Mark Norris, Minister of Economic Development and MLA for Edmonton McLung, Ian Mclellan, MLA for Edmonton Rutherford, Drew Hutton, MLA for Edmonton Glenora, Bob Maskell, MLA for Edmonton Meadowlark, Dr.Ken Nicol, MLA for Lethbridge and Leader of the Official Opposition, Dr. Kevin Taft, MLA for Edmonton Riverview, Mayor Bill Smith, Stephen Mandel, newly elected City Councillor and Karen Leibovici, newly elected City Councillor. Also attending were Edmonton Chief of Police Bob Wasylyshen, Kathy Grieve, Chair Edmonton Police Commission, and Superintendent Ulysses Currie, West Division, Edmonton Police Service.

President Howard Starkman gave a warm welcome to everyone and set the stage for Rabbi Ari Enkin to come forward to provide an emotional blessing and prayer for the ongoing success of the congregation and use of our the synagogue. Mayor Bill Smith provided greetings and read the wording from a proclamation that he presented on behalf of the city to Howard Starkman. Her Honour Lt. Governor Lois Hole provided heartwarming comments of congratulation recalling her own connection with the Jewish community. Herschel Bookhalter and Marvin Abugov listed the contents for a time capsule which included materials found behind the cornerstone at the 119th Street Synagogue such as 1912 official minutes and donations made to the 95th Street Synagogue, news clippings and the official program booklet from the opening of the 119th Street Synagogue. New additions include the official history of the new synagogue, news clippings including some from *Edmonton Jewish Life* about the dedication and celebration and news clippings from the *Edmonton Journal* about Dr. Joseph Shoctor Z"l, the building chairman.

A children's choir from the Edmonton Talmud Torah headed by Emma Oskin provided a selection of uplifting Jewish songs that culminated with singing of O Canada. The opening ceremonies concluded with Master of Ceremonies Mike Sobel asking everyone to raise their champagne glasses and say Mazel Tov!

Then, all the guests and dignitaries went into the social hall for a sit-down/plated three-course kosher dinner catered by the Westin Hotel who did the job with precision and excellence. Rabbi Enkin recited the Motzi and Shoshana Pollack gave the Toast to the Queen and the Toast to the State of Israel. During the meal President Starkman provided an historic overview of the importance and relevance of the congregation in Edmonton, particularly mentioning people who had been very significant in the past history and growth of the congregation. Rabbi Bulka gave an inspiring talk on the past, present and future of Judaism entitled "Meaning of the Moment". Mr. Sine Chadi did a remarkable job of auctioning off a surprise donation of a three-hour police helicopter ride from Chief Wasylyshen that was purchased by Barry Zalmanowitz. The dinner tables included centrepieces from Graham and Lane, the Hole family provided flowers and The Balloon Gang provided 95th anniversary balloons. Following dinner Past President, Ron Levin chanted the Birkat Hamazon. The entertainment portion of the evening began as Robin Marcus introduced Cantor Paul Kowarsky of Toronto and his accompanist Nathan Rosen. They provided a wonderful concert of Cantorial, Yiddish and Israeli music in the sanctuary, which concluded with a standing ovation and the singing of Hatikvah. Guests went home with wonderful memories as well as a beautiful souvenir program that will be a keepsake for years to come.

Marvin Abugov and Raye Dolgoy contributed to this article.

EDMONTON
JEWISH LIFE

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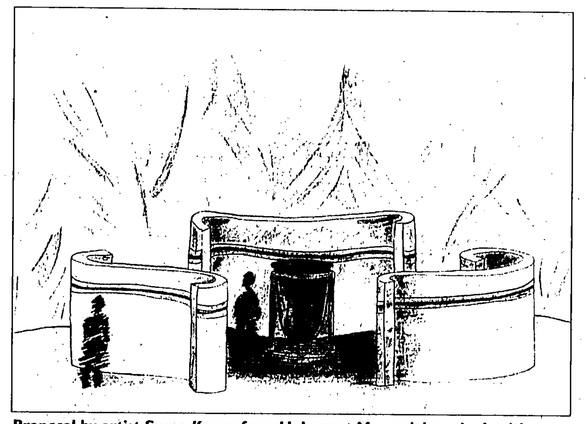
Donation for memorial to the victims of the Holocaust announced

Edmonton's Holocaust Education Committee, is pleased to announce that a very generous donation by Wayne Pertman will go towards erecting a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, on the site of the Alberta Legislature. "This exciting venture has finally become possible through this wonderful gift of $125,000.00", said Abe Silverman after he met with Mr. Pertman and spoke to him about this important project. Gillian Horwitz (Chairperson of the Holocaust Education Committee) and Gayle Tallman (Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton), will meet with personnel from the Alberta Infrastructure Department early in January to discuss the details of this venture. After approving her proposal and interpretation of this Memorial, the Holocaust Education Committee assigned Edmonton artist Susan Kagan to the project. Edmonton's survivor community is eternally grateful for the generosity of Wayne Pertman and his family. His financial commitment will make their dream of seeing a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, specifically to those members of their families who were murdered by the Nazis, become a reality.



Proposal by artist Susan Kagan for a Holocaust Memorial on the Legislature grounds

The Edmonton Holocaust Education committee, is one of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton's most vital programs. Every year for the past eleven years this committee has organized the Holocaust Education Symposium on the campus of the University of Alberta. This Symposium is designed specifically for all Grade 12 students in the city and its surroundings. This year the Symposium will take place over a three-day period on May 8, 9 and 10th. Funding for this program is designated by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. However due to the success of this program and the fact that it has grown from a one-day program (with 450 students participating) to a three-day program (with 2100 students), costs for the running of the program have risen. Therefore donations to the Edmonton Holocaust Education Fund are very much appreciated. One such donation made recently will significantly contribute to ensuring that this Symposium continues to function successfully. A donation was made by Arna Macklin on the occasion of her Bat Mitzvah in November 2001. Arna's gift to the Edmonton Holocaust Education Fund was made in memory of her grandmother Helen Macklin, a survivor of the Holocaust.

"I wanted to do something significant on the occasion of my Bat Mitzvah, I wanted to give a portion of my Bat Mitzvah gifts to a worthy cause and Holocaust Education is very important to me and my family. I am glad that I was able to do this in memory of my father Eric's mother Helen," said Arna.

"Donations such as this one are greatly appreciated," said Gillian Horwitz.

Recent programs presented and coordinated through the auspices of the Edmonton Holocaust Education Committee, were the Kristalnacht program on November 8 at the Jewish Community Centre and a meeting of the "Second Generation Group". Peter Owen, who was a witness to the events of Kristalnacht in Frankfurt, spoke at the Kristalnacht Service of his memories of that infamous night. One of his vivid recollections was seeing a discarded Torah lying in the gutter near the smoldering Synagogue in which he had had his Bar Mitzvah just a year earlier in 1937. Peter left Germany three weeks after that fateful night in November 1938. He came straight to Edmonton and has lived here since. He is married to Violet Rose. Their four married children and their grandchildren all live in Alberta. A short film recognizing the courage and bravery of a "Righteous Gentile", was part of the evening's program. The "Second Generation Group" had held two successful meetings recently at the homes of Debbie Goldsman and Anita Vinokoor. This group plans to meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and concerns specific to Second Generation Survivors. If anyone who is a Second Generation Survivor would like to attend the next meeting, please call Debbie Goldsman for further information.

The Holocaust Education Committee is one of Federation's most active committees. "With the upcoming Holocaust Symposium in May, I anticipate that we will be needing more than the usual amount of volunteers to assist with the program", said Gillian Horwitz. "If anyone is interested in helping, please call her or Gayle Tallman at the Jewish Community Centre at 487-0585.

A donation to the Edmonton Holocaust Education Fund was made by Arna Macklin on the occasion of her Bat Mitzvah

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Viewpoints

The plight of Jewry in the new South Africa

by Laurey Forman

The Rainbow nation. A place of racial and cultural tolerance. A New democratic state complete with a constitution boasting equality for all and human rights.

This rose tinted view of South Africa is the one that most of the world is familiar with, but the real picture is somewhat less glorious. In this article, I, an ex-South African will endeavour to shed some light on the reality of this place which I used to call home. The problems facing South Africa Jewry are overwhelming and vast but I will attempt to focus on just a few.

The most imminent problem that South African Jewry face is the constant threat to their lives. This fear is based on statistics which state that in South Africa a car is hijacked every few minutes and a woman is raped every 28 seconds. The hijacking are frequent occurrences where the victims are "lucky" if all they lose is their motorcar. In the Jewish community alone, hundreds if not thousands of people have been prey to this criminal act. People live in constant stress over the possibility with women avoiding driving at night by themselves and teenagers restricted for safety reasons. Other precautionary measures have been taken such as the installment of electric wire fencing and personal armed guards which morph the suburban landscape into somewhat of a prison. Arriving in Canada to be greeted by open lawns and tiny picket fences if any, was refreshing to say the least.

The high crime rate in South Africa that has escalated in recent years has impacted the fragile economy and beggars are in abundance. At , literally, every traffic light or stop street there is a beggar, sitting with a child and a cardboard cut out which reads, "no job; no food; please help; G-d bless you." Moreover the crime rate has affected the middle to upper class people as well and business is in a downward spiral .

However the plight of the upper class people is not the main source of my complaint, but rather I intend to shed light on the effect all this is having on the South African Jewish community and institutions who are unable to support themselves and find themselves in dire straits.

Firstly the Chevra Kadisha is a Jewish society that handles two thirds of the expenses of the community as a whole. Due to the financial debt that these old aged homes find themselves in, Our Parents Home and Sandringham Gardens have merged their activities under the management control of the Chevrah Kadisha. The total annual expenditure is ,Cdn$9,000,000.00. In an attempt to relieve this debt the organizations have merged in the hope that consolidated resources such as accommodation, services, finances and medical care would produce more streamlined care for the community. Our Parents Home is in debt of $1,000,000,00 and thus the Chevra Kadisha now bears the responsibility of Thousands of Jewish senior citizens. Many of these elderly people have been deprived of their families through the emigration "epidemic" and have become unwitting victims of the communities shrunken coffers.

Sandringham Gardens, the other organization which has fallen under the Chevra Kadisha, currently houses 300 patients who require constant medical attention. This number excludes the many elderly in the frail care section. The majority of patients are not in a position to pay for their care, and are all too often not members of the medical aid. It is truly a huge burden, under which the Chevra Kadisha would surely collapse without external help. The government however provides absolutely no subsidiary.

Another organization in this predicament is the Jewish Women's Benevolent Society. This organization employs social workers who provide full financial assistance to 795 Jewish families at present. Moreover, 2000 additional Jewish families receive partial assistance. Their resources are extremely limited as they have about 20 social workers, 4 of which work full time, to attend to the communities needs. These social workers are paid by the afore-mentioned, overburdened Chevra Kadisha.

As I have tried to show, South African Jewry are in a predicament which, like other Jews in exile, leaves them hopeless and abandoned. As fellow Jews, I hope you can sympathize with their plight. Armed with the facts I have given I hope you will be able to sympathize with South African Jewry. Furthermore, as knowledge is a powerful thing I pray it will produce pro-activity in Jewry the world over.

[written by Laurey Forman based on the speech given by Gertie Forman at a recent fundraiser]

Why Palestine?

by Rabbi A. Enkin
Beth Israel Synagogue

What is that special piece of land in the Middle East called? Originally, the name of the land of Israel was "Canaan". That was the name that appears in the Bible, and that is the name by which the land is first introduced to us. It has many other names, "The Promised Land", "A Land flowing with milk and honey", "The land that the eyes of G-d are always upon her" and many others. Sometimes, it is called by its various regions: Yehudah, Shomron, the Galil, the Arava and so on. When the land is referred to as a whole, it is called "the land of Israel" corresponding to the people to whom G-d gave this land for eternity, and who developed on that soil one of the civilizations of greatest importance in the world. The most common name, however, is the Holy Land.

So what is the origin of the name of "Palestine" being bandied around by the Arabs and their sympathizers worldwide? This word is Latin, and was used by the Romans for one purpose: to eradicate the memory of Israel from the land just as they renamed Jerusalem, "Aelia Capitolina". They could not find a better name than "Palestina," the land of the Philistines, the barbarian warriors who populated the areas near Gaza and wrought havoc upon Jews for hundreds of years. The Philistines themselves were new to the land, stemming probably from the peoples who had been evicted from Greece by the new invaders, the Hellenes, in the century. This is the time of the Books of Joshua and Judges, where the struggles between the Israelites and Philistines are recorded. The word comes form the Hebrew word palash, meaning "invader". The Philistines were long gone by the time of Alexander's conquest, and there is no trace of their existence for at least 500 years before the Romans named the land after them.

Why did they call it "Palestina"? So that the world would not remember Israel any longer. The very word contained the purpose. In today's world, we are confronted by a similar goal; the destruction of the people and land of Israel. The Arabs are not excited about giving the Palestinians a place of their own. If they had been interested in this noble goal, they had ample opportunities to do so since 1947. If the goal had been to five the Palestinians a country and a flag, they could have had a Palestine rise along-side Israel in 1948.

The Arabs waged war against the State of Israel in 1967 not to create a state for the Palestinians but to destroy Israel. That purpose remains the same today. And as they were unsuccessful in 1967, and in 1973, 1992 and 1993, they will be unsuccessful today, with G-d's help. No power on earth can undo G-d's will: "G-d said (to Yaacov): 'I am the L-rd. The land upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendants." Make no mistake! There is no "Palestinian" nation or nationality. They are part of the general Arab nation. The war in Israel is not merely a war for territory or the demise of the Jewish state, it is a war against memory, the re-writing of history, and the rightful ownership to the Land of Israel.

Based on reflections by Rabbi David Algaze of Cong. Havurat Yisrael

Thriving in exile

by Rabbi Ari Drelich

At the end of the portion of Chumash Breishis we read of the passing of both our forefather Yaakov as well as his son Yosef who was viceroy in Egypt. We find that Yaakov insisted on being interred in Israel while Yosef was content to be laid to rest in Egypt until the Jews would leave many years later at which time his remains would be taken with them.

Our sages explain that although there were many practical reasons for these decisions, there was a more profound purpose to their choices. Yosef knew that with his passing the Jewish people would be reduced to slaves who would have to engage in the physical and mundane world of Egypt. As such, he recognized that remaining in Egypt would serve a s support and encouragement to the downtrodden Jews not to lose hope and the faith that they would one day be redeemed. Yosef was a living example of how a Jew could find himself in a spiritually bankrupt environment and yet not only maintain his faithfulness but even rise to higher levels of commitment in spite of his surroundings.

We too can learn from Yosef that living in Galut doesn't have to distract us from our ultimate goal of thriving Jewishly despite our environment.

Rabbi Ari Drelich

ChaBaD
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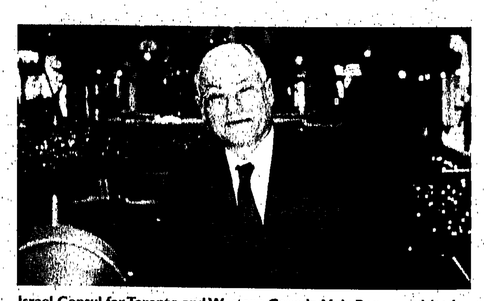
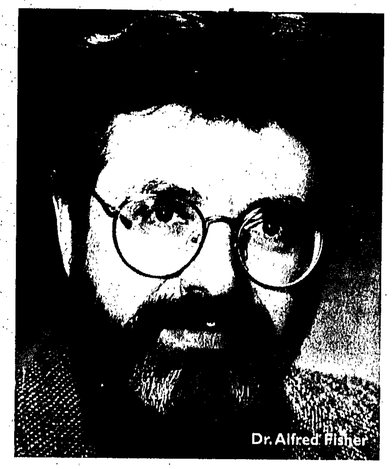


Israel Consul for Toronto and Western Canada Meir Romem, visited Edmonton in late November. During his stay he met with the President of the University of Alberta to discuss further cooperation with Israeli universities. He also held meetings with the Jewish Federation, the Edmonton Journal, U of A Hillel, and members of the local Israeli community. He stressed the need for Jews to continue showing their support for Israel with missions and personal visits

Dr. Alfred Fisher at Beth Shalom January 25-27



Dr. Alfred Fisher

The Beth Shalom Scholar-in-Residence Program takes a musical turn in late January as the synagogue celebrates Shabbat Shira, the Sabbath of Song with former Edmonton resident Dr. Alfred Fisher.

Dr. Fisher is currently a Professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, teaching in both the School of Music and the Programme in Jewish Studies.

Previously Alfred Fisher taught at the University of Western Ontario, Acadia University and the University of Alberta. He has served as Department Chair at Alberta and Director of the School of Music at Queen's.

His record as a composer includes commissions from radio Telefis Eirann, Wayne State University, the Cork International Choral Festival, the International Suzuki Association, Canadian Music Centre, the Canada Council, CBC and others. His works have been performed and broadcast throughout Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Republic of Ireland, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Western Europe.

Maintaining a balanced commitment to scholarship and creative work, Fisher has lectured widely at universities in Canada, the U.S.A., Europe and at meetings of a number of learned societies. He has published in Perspectives of New Music, Journal of Native Studies, Journal of Sociology, and European Judaism. Recent lectures have been at the International SEFER Conference in Moscow and the Conference on Central and Eastern European Jewish Culture in Minsk, Belarus. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the International Institute for Art, Culture and Communication at the State University of Belarus.

Dr. Fisher is the recipient of a number of awards including the Presser Foundation Prize (piano), and the Medal of Honour from the Karol Szymanowski Conservatory in Poland.

There will be four opportunities to hear Alfred Fisher during the weekend. Alfred Fisher will speak during services on Friday evening which begin at 8:00 p.m., on Shabbat morning and following mincha/maariv at 4:30 p.m. Saturday afternoon.

Dr. Fisher's final presentation will be at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 27th. All of his presentations are open to the entire community. Beth Shalom Synagogue is at 11916 Jasper Avenue.

The talks will be on the following themes:

Friday evening, 8:00 p.m. Jewish Spirituality and its Expression: How Jews Sing to God

Shabbat morning Is There a Jewish Music: History, Denial, and Renewal

Shabbat afternoon, 4:30 p.m. Reaching Out, Reaching In: Becoming a Jewish

Sunday 1:00 p.m. Music as Racist Medium: Jewish Body and Jewish Language in Wagner

For further information contact the synagogue at 488-6333.

Beth Shalom and Temple Beth Ora Purim party February 23rd

Temple Beth Ora, Beth Shalom Synagogue and Beth Shalom Women's League are co-sponsoring a community Purim party on Saturday, February 23rd. It will be a "Friendraiser" as everyone is invited to put on a costume and join with other adults who love to party.

Organizers are promising a delicious deli dinner, entertainment, dancing and singing and the opportunity to bid on fabulous items at both silent and traditional auctions.

The party will take place at Beth Shalom, 11916 Jasper Avenue and begins with Havdallah at 7:00 p.m.

Tickets are only $13 a person or $25 a couple and include dinner. They are available at Beth Shalom and Beth Ora offices and from members of the congregations.

Non-perishable food items are being collected for Mishloach Manot. There will be several sites where donations can be made prior to the event. Watch for posters or call Francie Nobleman for more information.

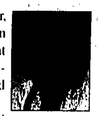
"Take home" kosher deli meats can also be pre-ordered and picked up at the party.

Contact Debby Remis at remisd@hotmail.com

Watch for more information in the next issue of *Edmonton Jewish Life.*

Time for a thoughtful dialogue

by Rabbi Y.L. bat Joseph



In December, I had occasion to speak at Robertson-Wesley United Church. Reverend Bruce Miller and I have served on a number of interfaith committees during the years that I have lived in Edmonton. As I have worked with him on several social justice causes and watched him grapple with his own changing theology, I have come to admire and respect him enormously.

The invitation to speak was prompted by the United Church's ongoing attempts to divest itself of strains of anti-Jewish/anti-Semitic sentiment that have long plagued church doctrines and teachings. The church's own discussion paper, "Bearing Faithful Witness" and its resolutions on the elimination of anti-Semitic elements to liturgy, a critical appraisal of New Testament translations, and the willingness to embrace Jesus of Nazareth's Jewish heritage as an integral part of who he was as a human being is bold, to say the least. I find this change in approach to Judaism refreshing and far different from the often baffling, not to mention cruel, anti-Semitic nonsense I was exposed to as a child.

But as I discussed the document and the proposed new liturgy with the good Reverend, it became quite apparent that the most significant response to the document was not going to come from the Jewish community, but from the laity of the United Church itself. If the Church is truly committed to moving beyond the anti-Semitic slant of much of the gospels and accepting the Jewishness of their messiah, then the lay members of its congregations are the key. Like the anti-Semitic doctrines of old, this new "embrace" of Judaism, is coming from the top of the church's hierarchy down.

Anti-Semitism is centuries old and so deeply ingrained sometimes that I don't think people are even aware that their behaviour is anti-Semitic. How many of us have been stung by non-Jewish friends using phrases like "Jewed-down" in our presence and then equally infuriated when they try to excuse the slur by reassuring us that "it's only an expression"?

As I addressed the congregation on that Sunday morning, I pointed this out to them -- the need to educate themselves and to be open to change. But we must also be open to their changing. We must be willing to, if not pardon the past, at least agree to put it behind us and make a fresh start.

If the United Church is truly trying to reach out to us, not to convert us, but to engage in thoughtful dialogue about beliefs and the worthy exchange of ideas, then it behoves us to be receptive and encourage that change.

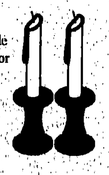
While we will never agree on theology, we nevertheless share a common text, TaNaKh -- although we're the only ones who call it that -- and we share common ethical commitments as well. As many of us know from working in the interfaith community, we share a common commitment to tzedakah and gemilut chasadim, even if we describe our desire to heal the world in different terms. Setting aside the pain of the past, making a commitment to a better future, and reaching out a hand in friendship today.... it's a promising start.

B'vrakha v'shalom,
Rabbi Y.L. bat Joseph

Speaker and Shabbat dinner at Chabad February 1

Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton is sponsoring a Friday night program with Dr. Ed Susskind on February 1st. Dr. Susskind is a psychologist in full time private practice specializing in both marital and family therapy. He received his Ph.D in clinical psychology at Yale University in 1969. Dr. Susskind was a faculty member in the graduate training programs of three universities including three years at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is past president of the Maryland Psychological Association. He has written one book, 14 articles for scientific publications and appears frequently on radio and TV.

Dr. Susskind will speak following a full course catered Shabbat dinner at the Chabad House in the Westridge Shopping Centre, 502 Wolf Willow Road. The evening begins with services at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m. There will also be a special program for children. The cost for the dinner is $18 per person, $36 a couple, and $50 for a family. Sponsorships are available at $100 each which includes dinner for a family and a $50 tax receipt. Accommodations are also available at no cost for anyone who wishes to be in walking distance to Chabad House. Payment is required in advance by January 28th. Arrangements can be made over the phone with Visa or MasterCard: Call Chabad at 4-TORAH-4 (486-7244). There is limited seating so you are urged to make your reservation immediately.



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GENERAL SETTLEMENT FUND FOR VICTIMS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Allgemeiner Entschädigungsfonds für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus

The Republic of Austria has established a General Settlement Fund endowed with **USD 210 million,** which will be administered by the **National Fund of the Republic of Austria.** The **purpose** of the Fund is to acknowledge, through voluntary payments, the moral responsibility for losses and damages inflicted upon Jewish citizens and other victims of National Socialism as a result of or in connection with the National Socialist regime.

Eligibility: Persons and associations who/which were persecuted by the National Socialist regime or who left the country to escape such persecution and who suffered losses or damages as a result of or in connection with events having occurred on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria during the National ocialist era are eligible to file an application. **Heirs** of such persons and legal successors of defunct associations are also eligible.

OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM?

CATEGORIES OF PROPERTY: Applications for compensation of losses or damages may be filed in the following categories:

- liquidated businesses, including licenses and other business assets
- real property
- bank accounts, stocks, bonds and mortgages
- movable property unless such property losses are covered by the payments for apartment and small business leases, household property and personal valuables and effects
- insurance policies
- occupational or educational losses
- any other claims for losses or damages unless those claims are already covered by the Austrian Reconciliation Fund for former slave and forced labourers or by *in rem* restitution

***IN REM* RESTITUTION:** Applications for *in rem* restitution of real estate (land) and buildings (in case of Jewish organizations also tangible movable property) which were owned by the Federal Government or the City of Vienna on January 17, 2001, may be filed with an Arbitration Panel established with the Fund.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: You may file applications in writing **until May 27, 2003.**

For **additional information and application forms** please contact the General Settlement Fund at:

ALLGEMEINER ENTSCHÄDIGUNGSFONDS FÜR OPFER DES NATIONALSOZIALISMUS
Parlament – 1017 Wien, Österreich
Telephone: +43/1/408 12 63 **www.nationalfonds.org** **Fax: +43/1/310 00 88**

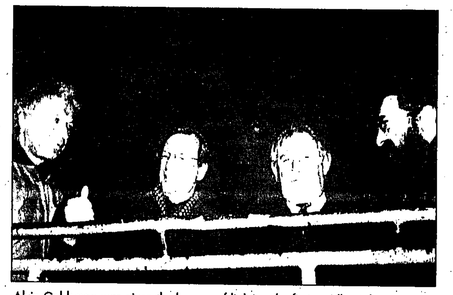
ADDITIONAL SOCIAL BENEFITS: Upon achievement of legal closure (dismissal of all US class-actions against Austria and/or Austrian companies related to the National Socialist era) disbursement of "Pflegegeld" (nursing allowance) will be improved, and the prerequisites for the preferential right to retroactively purchase pension rights, as well as for the entitlement to a pension under the Victims Assistance Act ("Opferrente") will be eased. For further **information** please contact:

PENSIONS/"PFLEGEGELD":
Pensionsversicherungsanstalt der Angestellten, Friedrich-Hillegeist-Straße 1, A-1021 Wien
or Pensionsversicherungsanstalt der Arbeiter, Roßauer Lände 3, A-1090 Wien
or Sozialversicherungsanstalt der gewerblichen Wirtschaft, Wiedner Hauptstraße 84-86, A-1053 Wien

"OPFERRENTEN":
Amt der Wiener Landesregierung, MA12 – Referat Opferfürsorge, Schottenring 24, A-1010 Wien

Chanukah Memories

Gathering in the Premier's office before the candlelighting were L-R Hon. Gene Zwozdesky, Rabbi Ari Drelich of Edmonton ChaBaD, Premier Ralph Klein, Federation President Alvin Goldsman, Councillor Stephen Mandel, Councillor Karen Leibovici



Alvin Goldsman was given the honour of lighting the first candle at the ceremony sponsored by ChaBad Lubavitch of Edmonton

Premier Klein lights his own Chanukiah in his office

Councillor Karen Leibovici spoke on behalf of the city of Edmonton to the crowd gathered in the Legislature rotunda

The Talmud Torah choir under the direction of Emma Oskin delighted an appreciative gathering

Some of the hundreds who gathered at the Legislature for the community candlelighting sponsored by ChaBaD Lubavitch of Edmonton on December 9th

Photographed by Neil Loomer

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Jewish community part of Fort McMurray prayer service

by Jaci Leibovitch

Just over one hundred McMurryites packed a multipurpose room in Fort McMurray's downtown senior's community association on Monday, November 12, 2001

The event was titled "An Evening of Prayer" and included representatives from Fort McMurray's many communities including our Hindu, Mormon, Muslim, Christian, Baha'i and Jewish community. The audience was treated to a variety of music that included piano, santoor and vocals interspersed between prayers, explanations and short stories.

A stocked dessert table extended the length of the room.

My husband, daughter and myself chose to sit in the back - probably because those seats where given up for us, but more likely because as newcomers, we hoped to maintain some level of anonymity. Many people knew each other by name, however, and approached to introduce themselves to us almost immediately.

Our presence at this function was twofold: Firstly, to show our support for a peaceful multicultural existence and secondly, to find out exactly who was representing our local Jewish community.

Fortunately, we didn't have to wait long, as following the first speaker we were greeted with a "Shalom" and a small portion from the psalms of David.

The remainder of the evening was both enlightening and fulfilling: a local effort for a global cause.

We were glad to be in attendance.

Following the formalities of the event we met up with our representative to find out that she is actually a former McMurryite currently residing in Montreal. Like many of us here, work brought her back to the Wood Buffalo region for a short period of time and we were grateful to have had the opportunity to find out more about the local scene and people.

Chava Alberstein's latest recording now available

Internationally renowned singer-songwriter Chava Alberstein's new album "Foreign Letters" was released by Rounder Records on December 11th.

Known as one of Israel's greatest and most accomplished singers, with over 50 albums to her name, and a career that has spanned three and a half decades, Chava Alberstein is immensely popular for singing and writing powerful music to Hebrew and Yiddish lyrics, while embracing various folk, traditional and world beat styles from all over the globe.

Her album, Foreign Letters, reflects on her years of traveling the world and features her warm vocals in Hebrew, Yiddish and English, accompanied by intimate, acoustic instrumentation, and produced by Grammy Award winner Ben Mink. It was recorded in Vancouver at Factory Studios in January 2001. Most notably, Foreign Letters breaks new ground for Chava as it moves between Israel's two languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, rather than being devoted to one language. It's a first for Chava, and a first for Israel, to have an artist sing in both languages on the same record. Chava's work with the cutting-edge New York band, The Klezmatics, which culminated in their successful 1998 collaboration The Well, bringing Chava to a huge world

continued on page 15

JNF emissary to speak at U of A International Week

Rami Kleinmann, Jerusalem Emissary, Central Canada, for the Jewish National Fund, will be speaking at the University of Alberta, Wednesday, January 30 in conjunction with International Week 2002.

This year's theme for International Week, which runs from January 28 to February 1 is "Living as if the Planet Matters". His talk is sponsored by the Jewish chaplaincy at the university. International Week is an annual event that represents an intensive effort by the International Centre to promote global awareness and positive social change throughout the University of Alberta and surrounding community. International Week is the largest annual extracurricular educational event on campus. Approximately 3,000 attendees participate in 40 events involving over 160 speakers and performers. Events are open to the public and almost all are free of charge.

Mr. Kleinmann's topic will be "Water Reclamation in Israel". He will address the major and alarming water crisis and water shortage and how the sharing of this precious resource affects peace in the Middle East. Of all of the activities of the Jewish national Fund (JNF), an international development organization striving to improve environmental quality and values in Israel, none has become more critical than the harvesting of water. Mr. Kleinmann will relate how this issue is being addressed through establishing new reservoirs, recycling water, restoring rivers and streams, harvesting floodwaters, and leading the study of critical irrigation and lands research.

The presentation will take place at noon on Wednesday, January 30th in the Faculty Lounge of St. Joseph's College, on the university campus at 11325 89th Avenue. It is open to the public and there is no charge.

Block Tenants Warned After Thieves Raid Mail

"Police and Canada Post officials are warning apartment residents about a spree of recent mailbox thefts."
-Edmonton Journal Article Thursday 2001, Jan 18

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For further information call 481-7881

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Historical video planned by JAHSENA

In keeping with its mandate to collect, catalogue, preserve and reflect the ongoing history of our Jewish community, Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (JAHSENA) president Dan Kauffman and the Board of the Society have begun the planning process for the production of an historical video documenting the early life of our community with special emphasis on its exciting business and cultural aspects.

As Uri Rosenzweig noted in editing "The First Century of Jewish Life in Edmonton and Northern Alberta", "They came to western Canada with the promise of free land; would be farmers who were not permitted to own land in the "old country". From homesteading they moved on to small towns in northern Alberta, opening general stores, and from there on to Edmonton, to assure their children had both Jewish and higher education, and to be closer to Jewish institutional life."

1903 through 1914 were the boom years in Edmonton. Our Jewish population increased from 17 in 1901 to 171 in 1911, and many were involved in the dynamic retail business life of the city.

Garfin Department Store, 101 Street and 103 Avenue, circa 1925

Photo courtesy Provincial Archives Alberta 76 192

The proposed twenty-minute documentary is planned to incorporate historical photos in JAHSENA'S collection, excerpts from oral histories, old film footage and new interviews with senior members of the community who can recall stories and memories of the era. After its premiere showing, hopefully in late 2002, the video will be made available to organizations, schools and both the Jewish and general community. As president Kauffman notes, "we have a rich and vibrant history here and we hope this video will reflect that dynamism and help us remain in touch with our heritage."[1]

Members of our community are asked to contribute any photos they may have in their homes of businesses their families may have been involved in in those early years. Please contact archivist Debby Shoctor at JAHSENA's office at 489-2809.

The Society is approaching granting foundations to help with the financing of this project.

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ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 1, 2002.

If more than eight correct entries are received then they will be entered in a draw with other correct entries. Winners names will be published in the next issue of *Edmonton Jewish Life*.

One entry per person please. Only one winner per family. Answers can be mailed to:
Edmonton Jewish Life
#107 -10342 107th Street.
Edmonton, AB T5J 1K2

Fax your answer to (780) 484-4978
or e-mail to ejlife@shaw.ca

ANSWER: _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

The grade 9 students of Talmud Torah would like to send you to the next Oilers game!

Purchase RAFFLE TICKETS for the January 28th game against the Detroit Red Wings

Support the Grade 9 class at Edmonton Talmud Torah and send them on a year end trip to Israel in the spring of 2002.

Tickets available from Talmud Torah grade 9 students or call Rhonda at 487-6571

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Letter to the editor

Thanks for the support

Letter to the editor,

For the past three months, our AZA chapter has been running its annual sponsorship drive. This year, a letter was sent to several businesses in the community stating specifically what the donations are used for and how they are able to benefit the Mandel Bloomfield chapter and the Jewish Community.

Thank you to all sponsors who were able to donate to the Mandel Bloomfield chapter of AZA.

Thanks to these donations, we raised over $1300 and are able to continue to run community service, educational, athletic, social and Judaic programming. We do this in order to provide an enriching experience for both our members and the Jewish community. We've been able to reach our goal of providing a well-rounded environment for Jewish youth to interact thanks to the support of many members of our community. Following are the names of those people who contributed to our campaign this year, we would like to once again thank you for your generous donations.

Kevin Jordan Swersky
Gizbar, Mandel Bloomfield AZA

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Winter Series of New Classes begins on Wednesday, January 16th at 10 am
JCC Community Centre, 7200 - 156 Street
Wednesday - 10:00 a.m.
Thursday - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday - 10:30 a.m.

Awareness Through Movement®
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Anything You Can Do You Can Do Better!

by Jacquie Ogg

"We can... make the impassible possible, the possible easy and the easy elegant"

The Feldenkrais method is named for its brilliant originator, Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, D.Sc, (1904-1984) - physicist, judo expert, engineer, movement scientist and soccer player. He developed his method during the Forties as rehabilitation from a crippling knee injury, and taught himself to walk again without pain. Exploring the link between the brain and the body he developed hundreds of unique exercises designed to access the movement learning centers of the brain. "The method is the only movement system designed to increase body awareness specifically by improving an individuals ability to learn 1."

Classes in *Awareness Through Movement®* offer low effort exercises that create immediate dramatic improvements in flexibility, coordination, posture and self-image. Your brain can guide your nervous system and therefore your muscles to improve your movement in ways impossible with exercise systems that rely on strenuous effort.

Bones For Life™ is a new evolution in the Feldenkrais Method. Its developer, Ruth Alon, is a senior Feldenkrais trainer and one of Dr. Feldenkrais' original trainees. She developed the work in response to physicians' requests for Feldenkrais exercises to reduce the risk of or enhance the treatment for osteoporosis. *Bones For Life™* teaches *"Organic Movement for Strengthening Bone Tissue"* Exercises stimulate the body to strengthen its bones through establishing harmonious coordination patterns based on organic locomotion and well-integrated vertical alignment. 2

A recent article in the Globe and Mail mentioning Feldenkrais is headed; *"Good posture is wonder cure of the 90's. Correct alignment can improve sleet, sex, back pain and pot bellies."*

"Back pain has become so common it's virtually normal... Bad posture both results from his problem and exacerbates it.

"Postural problems tend to kick in the moment an individual embraces desk culture. Sitting is second only to the common cold as the reason for lost days' work. 3

In my experience, ATM and FI improve your doby's alignment, range of movement and posture. *Bones For Life™* helps strengthen bone density. While these improvements in balance and coordination are certainly gratifying the ***most important thing in the work is to awaken your own capability to fin the easiest and most efficient way to move to accomplish everyday activities and work or to learn the extended range of moves demanded by chosen arts or sports.***

"If you know what you are doing you can do what you want."
MOSHE FELDENKRAIS

There are ongoing classes in Awareness Through Movement and private lessons *(Functional Integration®)* offered by local practitioners, Joan Stanley, Sherry Ogg-Kabatoff, Arnie Hayne and myself.

Sherry Ogg-Kabatoff and I have developed and produced a new CD-ROM based largely on Feldenkrais -***WORK'ERCISE** Relieves Stress Instantly* (in lieu of Repetitive Strain Injury) see ad on page 11

1. The Movement Studies Institute, Berkeley, California.
2. Ruthy Alon, Bones for Life.
3. Polly Vernon, The Globe and Mail.

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 8:00 P.M.

ISRAEL THE JEWISH HOMELAND
AS REFLECTED IN THE TORAH
RABBI ARI ENKIN,
BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE
TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 7:30 P.M.

WOMEN IN THE BIBLE
RABBI LINDSEY BAT JOSEPH,
TEMPLE BETH ORA CONGREGATION
THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 7:30 P.M.

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Jewish Federation of Edmonton at 487-0585
Beth Israel Synagogue at 488-2840
Beth Shalom Synagogue at 488-6333
ChaBaD Lubavitch of Edmonton at 486-7244
Temple Beth Ora at 487-4817

The Jewish Federation of Edmonton would like to wish a Nesiyah Tovah (Good Trip) to the Birthright Israel Edmonton participants.

The group of 9 participants and 1 staff left for Israel, Dec. 26 for a 10 day Israel Experience

Channukah at the JCC

Thank you to 'Catering By ED' For The Fantastic Sufganiyot and To Isabel Rodnunsky for showing us how to make those beautiful Channukah Candles

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BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE

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GENERATION to GENERATION

Lt. Gov. Lois Hole cuts the ribbon marking the official dedication of the new Beth Israel synagogue building

Cantor Paul Kowarsky entertained in the beautiful sanctuary

Guests including Stephen Mandel and Paula Weil browsed the silent auction tables

Meeting in the boardroom before dinner were L-R Edmonton Chief of Police Bob Wasylyshen and Mrs. Wasylyshen, Marvin Abugov, Synagogue President Howard Starkman and Esther Starkman, event co chair, Herschel Bookhalter, Lt. Governor Lois Hole, Marlene and Mayor Bill Smith, event co-chair Marilyn Cohen and Jack Cohen

Jack Cohen helped Sine Chadi raffle a 3 hour ride in the police helicopter donated by Chief Wasylyshen

Keynote speaker Rabbi Reuvan Bulka of Ottawa

The Talmud Torah choir directed by Emma Oskin

L-R Jack Cohen, Marilyn Cohen, Esther Starkman and Howard Starkman

PHOTOS: FRED KATZ

Drop-In Centre News

Tuesday January 15, 2002
"I Remember, I Remember" with Queena Klein at 10:30 a.m. Refreshments & cookies served. No charge.

Line Dancing with Billy Anders - (Gold medallist, 35 years teaching experience) Wednesday January 16th - Wednesday February 20th (6 lessons): 10:00 - 12 Noon. Fun and easy to learn, meet new friends, good exercise, learn new steps or brush up. Cost $5 per 2-hour class. Tea, coffee, cookies included. Cut off date January 9, 2002.

Tuesday January 15, 2002
Talk on "Depression" presented by Tina Kafka of Jewish Family Services. Time 12:15 p.m.

Wednesday January 23, 2002
"Let Me Decide" - information presentation on Wills, Enduring Power of Attorney, and Personal Directives - Mr. Philip J. Renaud of Duncan & Craig Lawyers & Mediators. Time: 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. Register early for this very informative session. No charge. Last date to book Thursday January 17th. Call 488-4241

Tuesday January 29, 2002
Tu B'Shevat Seder conducted by Jack Chetner. Cost: $4.00 for lunch.

Saturday February 9, 2002
Saturday Night Open House at the Drop In Centre. Enjoy an evening of socializing, cards, coffee, TV, music, games. Doors open from 7:00 p.m. onwards. Refreshments served. No Charge.

Sunday February 3, 2002
Mameloshen: Yiddish musical called "Song & Dance in the Great Synagogue in Moscow." (English subtitles). Time: 2:30 p.m.

Tuesday February 12, 2002
Meet the Pharmacist - Health Awareness #1 - Osteoporosis Detection & Prevention. Learn all about Osteoporosis from our patient care pharmacist, Sonia. What is Osteoporosis? What are the complications/concerns Can it be treated? How can I prevent it? How is it detected? If you have any of the above questions, feel free to attend to find out the answers.

Tuesday February 26th, 2002
"Mad Hatters Parade". Join in the fun at our Purim Lunch/Party Bring your own home-made hats. There will be prizes for the best Purim hat creations. Cost $4.00 for lunch.

Computers
Beginner Level 2: Tuesday January 15th - Thursday February 14th, 2002. Cost: $55.00 for the 10 classes. Times: Tuesdays 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. and Thursdays 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

"Fit for Your Life"
Classes commence Thursday January 10th - Thursday March 21st. 11 classes for $17.50. Time: 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. If anyone is interested in a second class this will take place on Mondays from 12:15 - 1:15 p.m. A minimum of 10 people is required for this class to take place.

Sunday Club and Mameloshen programs are as follows:
Sunday January 13th - Sunday Club New Year Celebration - 5 p.m.
Sunday January 20th - Mameloshen 1 - 4 p.m.
Sunday January 27th - Sunday Club Birthdays 1 - 4 p.m.
Sunday February 3rd - Mameloshen 2:30 p.m. Movie a Yiddish musical called "Song & Dance in the Great Synagogue in Moscow" (English subtitles).

All Occasion Cards
During Paula Snyder's absence from January through March 15, please order your All Occasion cards from Alice Abells at 483-5846 or from the Drop-In Centre office at 488-4241

THE DROP-IN CENTRE's
"Mad Hatters Parade"
Tuesday February 26th
Join in the fun at our Purim Lunch/Party
Bring your own home-made hats.
There will be prizes for the best Purim hat creations.
Cost $4.00 for lunch.

Dr. Fred Beck, Doreen Grobman, and Bev Cooper were pleased to be in Shirley Siress's Memoir Writing Class. Come and join the next writing session.

Volunteer Latka makers arrived at 7 am to cook the outstanding Chanukah lunch for Drop-In members (in the foreground) Anna Shapiro, Amelia Silverman (Background left to right) Anita Vinokoor, Jean Oshry, Shana Fefferman, and Dasha Zottenberg, food services coordinator

The Drop-In Centre's Shalom Goldenaires gave members a wonderful musical Hannukah treat to go along with the wonderful latkes. The choir is directed by Bella Brenman

Birthday Thursday happy celebrants Hanna Pollack, Harry Nolan and Clara Kagan

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If you decide not to come in prior to the date please use the coupon attached.

This applies to brides maids, mother of the bride/groom and bat mitzvah.

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Chava Alberstein's latest recording now available
Continued from page 8

audience, is echoed in, 'Back Home', 'Mirele', and 'Liar'. The poignant song and title track, 'Foreign Letter,' composed in English, focuses on Chava's exchanges as a world traveler.

Calling someone her country's greatest singer would be a huge compliment to most performers. In the case of Chava Alberstein, however, it only tells a small part of the story.

Alberstein is Israel; her development as an artist mirrors Israel's development as a country; her growing pains are Israel's growing pains. Alberstein and Israel are even the same age, and they both share a tiny but powerful stature. But Chava Alberstein sees herself as much as a singer of the world as just a singer of her beloved Israel. "Even though I have lived in Israel nearly my entire life, I am constantly questioning my place in the world," said Alberstein. "Maybe this searching comes from being an artist, maybe it comes from being a Jew. I'm not really sure." This bittersweet tension between the national and the universal is most evident in all of her recordings. From tender love songs to defiant songs about peace and oppression, there are prayerful songs celebrating the beauty of the human form and more melancholy songs about loss, poverty, and solitude.

Yiddish was the mother-tongue of Alberstein's family in the small town in Szczecin, Poland, where Chava was born. Her family moved to Israel when Alberstein was only 4-years-old, but Chava says she has never totally lost the feeling of being a stranger. "No matter where I am, even if it's in my own country, I feel like a bit of a guest," she said. "People can appreciate this today, because they move around so much. Every country you go to in the world is filled with so -called foreigners." Since the very first time she ever sang in public - a four-song set, which included songs in French, Spanish, Yiddish, and a gospel standard in English - Chava Alberstein has been a performer of "World Music."

Chava has released more than 40 albums in Hebrew, six of which have been awarded the Kinor David prize, Israel's Grammy. She has also released six albums in Yiddish, and an English album of standards ranging from Gershwin to Lennon and McCartney. A dozen of the records have gone gold, six platinum, and one triple platinum. Alberstein's early Hebrew recordings, with names like "Songs of My Beloved Country," "Beaches," and "Like a Wildflower," speak to Israel as a fledgling country. They are external, almost frontier. "Israel was like a little child in those days," Chava recalled. "Discovering all the parts of her body.." "If we have a true folk singer, it is Chava Alberstein," Yediot Aharonot, Israel's largest daily newspaper said about Alberstein, naming her the most important female musician in Israel's history. With a half century of life and song under her belt, Chava Alberstein, like Israel, has come to understand that good art, like good state craft, is best achieved by looking inwards and outwards. She is a is a singer who accomplishes that greatest, most precious rarity of all: she speaks for a culture, a tradition. "Everything is good only in the proper measure," Chava sings in one of her songs. It seems her career is yet to see tremendous achievements.

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Purchase RAFFLE TICKETS for the January 28th game against the Detroit Red Wings
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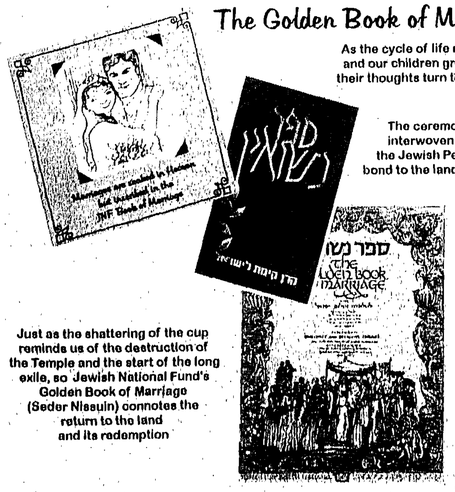
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UJA's Ben Gurion Society meets in New York City

by Michael Saouli

The national Ben Gurion Society's (BGS), First Annual Retreat was held in New York City in early December. Delegates from across Canada participated in this event. I attended the retreat as Edmonton's first representative to the BGS. The Society is a leadership development program for young community members who participate in their local United Jewish Appeal campaign with a donation of $1000 or more.

Originally the retreat was aimed at thanking all BGS members for their participation in the recent fundraising campaign and for their level of commitment to their respective communities. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the agenda took a slight change.

After a series of conference calls to discuss whether New York was an appropriate location for the meeting, BGS National Committee members decided that the retreat, despite the more solemn atmosphere, would further establish the Society as a young yet responsible and committed organization that can adapt itself to the unfolding events of our tumultuous world.

Among some of the activities was a cocktail reception attended by Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Director, Conference of Presidents and a representative of the Joint Distribution Committee. He arrived late due to a phone conversation he was having with Prime Minister Sharon concerning the latest wave of suicide bombings in Israel. During his address, he was interrupted by a call from Senator Hillary Clinton.

The next day, the group visited a very touching and moving Jewish Heritage Museum tour led by a Holocaust survivor. The new museum is located in Battery Park with a superb view on the Statue of Liberty but also a devastating view of the remains of the World Trade Center.

I spent time at Ground Zero twice while in New York. The first visit alone during the day, and the second time with the group at night when we held a memorial for those who perished on September 11, 2001.

continued on page 20

Na'amat Edmonton - News and Notes

NA'AMAT AND CHANUKAH – BOTH BRING LIGHT AND JOY!

Na'amat members host their annual Chanukah Party for the Jewish residents at Canterbury Court. Na'amat members' children always participate, helping to set the table, light the candles, sing traditional songs and serve food.

NA'AMAT IS THE LARGEST WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN ISRAEL WITH CHAPTERS IN MANY COUNTRIES. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NA'AMAT EDMONTON, PLEASE CALL SYLVIA ALPERN, CO-ORDINATOR, AT 481-5986

Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation

EJCCF

Building our Future...

Introducing Five of our Directors

Catherine Miller

Valda Levin

Michael Paull

Marshall Shoctor

Howie Sniderman

CATHERINE MILLER
Catherine received her nursing degree and law degrees from the University of Alberta. She currently is the fund development officer for the faculty of Law at the U of A. Catherine's community involvements have included Directorships with Congregation Beth Shalom, Alberta College, UJA and EJCCF (co-chair). She is married to Len Dolgoy and has five daughters.

VALDA LEVIN
Valda is a professional volunteer who has given countless hours to our Jewish community. Valda has served as President of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Holocaust Education committee and, currently, is co-chair of EJCCF. She is married to Sol and has three children.

MICHAEL PAULL
Michael has been in the financial business for 15 years and heads Paull Financial Services. Michael's volunteer work has included the Canadian Cancer Board, Junior Achievement and local school boards. He is married to Colleen and they have three children.

MARSHALL SHOCTOR
Marshall received his law degree from the University of Alberta. He is a senior partner at Lynass, Ferguson & Shoctor. Marshall's many community involvements have included extensive work at The Citadel and Presidency of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. Marshall is married to Debby and they have two children.

HOWIE SNIDERMAN
Howie received his law degree from the University of Alberta and is a senior partner at Witten LLP. His many community involvements over the years include Camp BB-Riback, Maccabi Canada, UJA, Jewish Federation of Edmonton and Beth Shalom Synagogue. He is married to Debbie and has two children.

"I'm interested in working with EJCCF as I believe that the future growth of the community is rooted in strong financial seeds that are sown today. We have an idea, but no certainty, about what the needs of our Jewish community will be in the future. No matter what those needs turn out to be, we must plan and act now to make sure we have the financial strength to meet them."
– Howie Sniderman

"The secret to successful charity campaigns is it's long term thinking. By looking at a 10, 20 or even a 40 year plan a charity can guarantee the financial success of the community in the future."
– Michael Paull

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***Partnership 2000 (P2K) is a special program whereby the Jewish Community of Edmonton is twinned with Israel's Northern Galilee Region under the umbrella of P2K. Funded by United Israel Appeal Federations Canada and your local United Jewish Appeal, the "Living Bridge Program" of P2K provides funding for mutually beneficial educational exchanges between the Edmonton Talmud Torah and two Northern Israeli Day Schools.**

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Mazel TOV

MOR BARZEL and DR. GARY WOLCH wed August 19, 2001 at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton.

Rabbi Hillel Goelman of Vancouver officiated.

The couple resides in London, Ontario where Gary is a physician at the London Regional Cancer Centre and Mor is completing her Ph.D in Clinical Psychology at the University of Western Ontario.

Proud parents are Gershon and Tslila Barzel and Ron and Naomi Wolch of Edmonton.

IRIS SHARIR and JOEL GURALNICK were married September 2, 2001 at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton.

Rabbi Eli Lagnado officiated.

The couple resides in Vancouver where Iris is completing her Ph.D in Clinical Psychology from the University of Windsor and Joel practices law.

Proud parents are Dr. Shmuel and Naomi Sharir of Edmonton and Perry and Marsha Guralnick of Montreal.

MOE AND SANDY LITMAN of Edmonton and MICHAEL AND SARA SOIBELMAN of Calgary are pleased to announce the engagement of their children CHLOE AND FELIX.

The wedding will take place May 19, 2002 at Beth Shalom Synagogue. Rabbi Elana Zaiman of Seattle will officiate. Chloe recently achieved degrees at the University of Alberta in both Education and Physical Education. Felix completed Pharmacology and Medical degrees at the U of A and is doing his residency in Internal Medicine in Kingston, Ontario where the couple will reside.

DR. ALLISON RITCH and IAN GLICK celebrated their wedding on July1st, 2001 at Beth Shalom Synagogue.

Rabbi Robert Miller, Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth Avodah in Newton, Massachusetts officiated.

Allison and Ian reside in the Boston area where she practices dentistry after earning her degree at New York University. Ian is completing his dental degree at Harvard.

Proud parents are Ron and Carol Ritch of Edmonton and Hy and Charlotte Glick of Newton, Mass.

Menorah Curl-A-Thon set for February 17

Everyone can relive the glory days of Jewish curling in Edmonton when the 1st annual Menorah Curling Club Curl-A-Thon takes place on Sunday, February 17, 2002.

The Edmonton Jewish community has a proud history of ice curling. For decades starting in the 1950's many of our men and women curled regularly in Jewish leagues at the community's own Menorah Curling Club.

On February 17th, the 1st Annual Menorah Curl-A-Thon will give former members, their families and friends and anyone whether they've curled before or not, the opportunity to participate in this 1st annual event. Proceeds will be donated to the outreach projects of ChaBaD of Edmonton. Founders and former members of the Menorah Curling Club including Shim Laskin, Abner Rubin, Shelby Smordin and Herschal Bookhalter will be participating.

The Curl-A-Thon emphasizes fun. It's geared both for novices and curlers. There will be several short games starting at 3 P.M. The day continues with a play-off, awards, and a delicious kosher meal served at 6 P.M. It will be held at the Avonair (formerly the Menorah) Curling Club, 10607 Princess Elizabeth Avenue, northeast of Sears at Kingsway Garden Mall. The registration fee is $54.00 per person, includes three short games, the kosher meal, and a tax receipt for $36.00. There is also a special offer of free curling for youth who register in advance. There will be day-care and entertainment for small children. Curling brooms and shoe-sliders are available.

Organizers are offering different ways to participate. Anyone can register for the curling or organize a team of 4 players from your family, business, friends or an organization.

Companies are invited to sponsor one of the 8 sheets of curling ice. The cost is just $180. A sign acknowledging the sponsorship will appear on the ice, in the event program, at the banquet and in a thank- you ad published in the *Edmonton Jewish Life* newspaper.

Donations are also being requested of prizes or gift certificates, which will be awarded at the curling or at a silent auction.

Donations in support of ChaBaD are always appreciated and will also be acknowledged with a tax receipt. Cheques are payable to "Chabad of Edmonton" and can be mailed to Bernie Estrin: 158 Westridge Road, Edmonton, AB T5T 1B8.

To register, be a sponsor, donate a prize or for more information, please call Bernie Estrin at 481-8535 or e-mail estrin@powersurfr.com,

Emunah Women of Edmonton Unveils Logo specially designed for Life Members

The sentiment "Ancient Wisdom - Modern Miracles, encased in a Zebra patterned Torah has been chosen to represent the Brunch honoring Life Members.

Designed by Laurey Forman, the logo encompasses the idea of remembering the past and using that guidance and wisdom as we look to the future. Always in the forefront, of course, and central to both our organization's philosophy and Judaism itself, are the teachings of the Torah.

We gain knowledge, strength and commitment from studying Torah and performing Mitzvot. Likewise, we gain knowledge, strength and commitment from our past leaders. As we look forward we use this knowledge to support our Jewish family around the globe and in Israel, creating miracles of the most tangible kind.

These miracles shine on the faces of the young children in our daycare centres, the glow of contentment in the Seniors drop-in centres, and the din of Torah Studies in our many Seminaries, Yeshivas and high school and children's homes.

We are proud to bring you such a thoughtful and poignant logo. Yasher Koach Laurey and thank you.

The brunch and Fashion Show will take place on January 13, 2002 at 11 a.m. at the Fantasyland Hotel. For tickets and information please call: Gertie Forman 443 3790 or Leah Goldford 487 6591.

Jewish Wedding Customs and Their Origins

by Judy Lewis

Traditional Jewish weddings are replete with a variety of rituals. The origins of these traditions find their roots in both Bible-related customs, traditions carried down through generations, and vestiges of superstitious beliefs. Jews were traditionally admonished not to believe in superstition. The attitude of many Jews, particularly in the Middle Ages, can best be summed up in a quotation from the Sefer Hassidim, The Book of the Pious, a scholarly 13th century German-Jewish publication which dealt with the everyday lives of traditional Jews: "One should not believe in superstitions, but it is best to be heedful of them."

A widespread beliefs not only in the Jewish community, but throughout the word, is that demons or evil spirits are especially prolific and present during times of joy and life-cycle events such as wedding. Many wedding customs, with Jewish customs being no exception, have at least a part of their origins in an attempt to ward off the envy andrage of the spirit world and the belief that the bride needed protection again the keayn eyein hara (the evil eye). The custom of veiling the bride (badecken) is traditionally explained by the reference to Rebecca in Genesis (24:65) "Rebecca took her veil and covered herself" upon her first meeting Isaac. Popular legend attributes the badecken to the Biblical story of Jacob and his wives. After working seven years for permission to marry Rachel, Jacob was tricked on his wedding day into marrying Leah, instead (Genesis 29:25). To avoid such a mishap, according to legend, the groom "checks" to be sure than it is, indeed, his bride, before her veil is lowered over her face.

Students of Jewish folklore believe that the use of the veil by a Jewish bride may be an adaptation of a Roman custom. Among Romans the bride wore a full-length veil, which was used when she died as her burial shroud. Among Oriental Jews, the veil is made of opaque material. It is so designed to serve as an affirmation that the bride is placing her complete faith and trust in the man whom she is about to marry. There once was a widespread belief that demons were frightened of fire and scared away by light. This belief formed the basis for many couples, of a variety of religious backgrounds, to walk down a protective aisle of torches and candles. The custom continues today in many Jewish weddings where two candles are carried to escort the bride and groom to the wedding canopy. The more traditional explanation explains that the numerical value for the Hebrew word candle (ner)

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UJA's Ben Gurion Society meets in New York City
Continued from page 16

Rabbi Niles Goldstein, a National Police Chaplain, led the memorial service (Edmontonians who went to Connect@Ottawa this year will remember him and the book that was offered to all Connect@Ottawa participants).

Although I didn't see any different sights than the ones I had seen too many times on TV, being there was very important for me. I was able to see the devastation with my own eyes, to breathe it through my own nostrils and to be able to feel it through my own skin. Seeing the ruins, the testimony left by so many in shock, the messages, the flowers, the fragility of life and the greatness of life, allowed me to move on in both conscious, but more importantly, subconscious levels.

The same day, prior to the Memorial, we attended the famous musical 'Cabaret' in an even more famous place, Studio 54. I had already seen Cabaret in Toronto many years ago, but seeing it again and at Studio 54 (especially after seeing the movie '54' featuring Canadian Mike Myers) was quite an experience.

Business commitments prevented me from attending the last day's activities including a breakfast and media panel on the United Jewish Communities. The panel consisted of Ido Aharoni, the Israeli Consulate's media relations director, Tom Gross, Chief reporter in Israel for the Sunday Telegraph of London and Larry Cohler, International Affairs reporter for the New York Daily News.

The group then proceeded to a meeting with the Canadian Mission to the United Nations, led by Andras Vamos-Goldman, Counselor, Legal Affairs.

This was followed by lunch with Charles Bronfman and then the program concluded with a meeting with Ambassador Aharon Jacob of the Israeli delegation to the UN.

The Ben Gurion Society is just being established in Edmonton. I am contacting community members to join in organizing our first local event hopefully this Spring, with the presence of leaders of the national Society and the United Jewish Appeal.

To get further information about the Ben Gurion Society, please contact the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, myself and watch for more information in the next edition of *Edmonton Jewish Life*.

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Jewish Wedding Customs and Their Origins
Continued from page 19

has the same value as the biblical phrase in Genesis (1:28) "Be fruitful and multiply."

During Jewish ceremonies, it is traditional that males wear kippot (Yarmulkes in Yiddish), skullcaps, as a head covering. The covering of the head is a demonstration of the awareness that there is something which is infinitely above our intellect and symbolizes our sense, respect and humility in the presence of such a Being.

The chuppah or bridal canopy is perhaps the central tradition at Jewish weddings. Usually it is made of ornamented satin, or velvet — supported by four poles. Marriage ceremonies in the Middle Ages customarily took place outdoors, as an omen that the marriage should be blessed with as many children as stars in the heavens. To make a space separate from the surrounding marketplace, the rabbis sanctioned the use of a chuppah.

Time and creativity have turned it into a variety of other similar structures. The original meaning of the word was "room" or "covering" from the phrase in the Bible: "Let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber and the bride out of her pavilion (chuppah) (Joel 2:16). The chuppah symbolizes the new Jewish home that the couple creates together. It may also have origin is in the reference in the Bible to the bridal bower in which the newlywed couple were confined at the end of the wedding ceremony. In the Middle Ages the custom evolved into a cloth, or outer covering, that was spread over the bridal couple as a means of protecting them from demonic harm and the evil eye. Some believe that it is reminiscent of the tents of the ancient Hebrews.

The tradition of having honor attendants also has some Jewish roots. Legend has it that Michael and Gabriel, two angels, attended the "wedding" of Adam and Eve. Honor attendants are thus considered to be model friends of the bride and groom. Hakafot, is the custom of the bride circling the groom, in some traditions seven times, in some three. This circling is bride's way of demonstrating how central the groom is to her thoughts and to her very being.

Another interpretation is based on the belief that evil spirits seek to keep the young couple from the fulfillment they look for in their marriage. The "walking around" may serve to protect the husband from the demons which seek to find him. The seven hakafot corresponds to the seven marriage blessings and may well also refer to the seven verses in the Bible which says: "... and when man taketh a wife." The three hakafot may be based on the verses in Hosea (2:21-22) in which the word "betroth" is used three times in an analogy of G-d as the bridegroom speaks to Israel, the bride.

The Seven Blessings (sheva berachot) mark the completion of the wedding ceremony. The blessings are recited over kosher wine or grape juice. It is the seven blessings that join the new couple to their community. A "new custom" has been added to add even more symbolism. The two mothers and then the two fathers (of the bride and of the groom) pass the wine goblet to the bride. This symbolizes the joining not only of the bride and the groom, but also of their two families. It should be noted that in Hebrew and in Yiddish there are specific words to "name" the relationship between the bride's and groom's families (mechutaneem), as opposed to the somewhat pejorative and perhaps distancing expression "in laws."

Every Jewish wedding ends with the traditional breaking of a glass. The traditional explanation is that the smashing of the glass adds a social component to the ritual and dates back to Talmudic times when Rabbi Mar de-Rabina felt that his disciples had become too frivolous at the marriage of his son.

Legend has it that he grabbed a costly glass and threw it to the floor. This had a sobering effect on his guests and gave the clear message that in celebration there should always be awe and "trembling, " as well. Some believe that even in the height of their joy, the couple must pause in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The shattered glass is a reminder to all in attendance that the world is replete with imperfection and it an imperative to all to partake in Tikkun Olam, the mending of the world. Smashing of glasses also has origins in superstition.

Throughout the Near East smashing of glasses or dishes was a common gesture thought to have magical powers, symbolizing the smashing of the powers of demons and any ill-wishers. In Germany, during the Middle Ages, the marriage glass was thrown against a special stone called a traustein, which was commonly embedded in the outside wall of the synagogue. The heaving of the glass, it was believed would fly in the face of demons that traditionally descended from the North. This act was thought to be a powerful antidote to their evil abilities.

There are other rituals and traditions that are practiced at a Jewish wedding. Many depend on the level of observance of the couple. The ones discussed in this article should be considered "the basics."

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Emunah in Action

Emunah, an international women's organization has a long history of providing children in Israel with a broad education and strong Torah and Jewish values. Where there are children in Israel to be cared for, there are EMUNAH child-care centres, high schools, special homes and children's villages. Where there is adult illiteracy, there is remedial education. Where there are older people at risk, there is aid for the elderly. There is instruction for disadvantaged boys and girls who prepare to celebrate their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and there are summer rest camps for over-burdened mothers.

Nearly 140 Emunah day-care centers and nurseries across Israel provide for more than 8,000 children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years. Nearly 2,500 young women receive religious, vocational and academic training at one of Emunah's high schools in Israel.

Emunah helps olim in their new country. Emunah's hands-on direct absorption program includes seminars on Judaism and Israel using siddurim, chumashim and printed explanations of holiday observance in various languages including Russian and Amharic (Ethiopian). The program also involves the organization and celebration of joyous events such as Bris Milah, Bar Mitzvah and Weddings.

Young people from problem and disadvantaged families, as well as needy new immigrants are loved, protected , educated and enriched at our 4 children's homes. Emunah Canada supports two children's homes: Neve Michael Children's Village and Beit Elazraki Children's Home.

Emunah's goal is to spread and strengthen the ideals of Torah Judaism and to foster and encourage strong Jewish identity here and in Israel. In Canada, and in Edmonton, Emunah sponsors study groups for women and lectures on Jewish issues. "We work together with other groups to deal with concerns such as divorce law (the get), proper Orthodox conversion, the poor an needy in our community", says Leah Goldford, President of Emunah Women of Edmonton. "In fact, we are now planning our campaign to send each needy person in our Jewish Community gifts of Mishloach Manot for Purim and special food baskets for Pesach." Emunah Women are part of a worldwide Jewish sisterhood whose members in 23 countries are acting on their beliefs. "We are all committed to the strengthening of Torah observance, promotion of the land of Israel, traditional Jewish values and Torah education both in Israel and in our home communities", says Mrs. Goldford. "Won't you join us?" For more information on Emunah Women of Edmonton, or to find out about our many programs please call Leah Goldford at 487 6591 or Gertie Forman at 443 3790.

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The Diligent Almond Tree

by Batsheva Pomerantz (IPS)

As spring approaches, the mountainous Israeli landscape awakens after three months of winter rains. Almond trees are the first to shower generous bouquets of white and pink blossoms from their boughs; dotting the slopes of Israel's mountains and plains.

The almond tree has become the symbol of Tu b'Shevat, the 15th day of the Hebrew month Shevat, also known as the New Year of the Trees, due to its early and abundant blossom.

Hebrew language reflects the quality of the almond, as the word for "diligence" in Hebrew is shkida, derived from sha-ked (almond), and, likewise, "persevered" is shakad.

In fact, both diligence and perseverance were needed to cultivate the almond tree in the late 19th century after Baron Edmond de Rothschild recommended planting it in addition to vineyards to bolster the economy. High quality almond species were introduced, but it soon became evident that citrus orchards were more profitable.

After the founding of the State of Israel, more groves were planted, mainly in the Upper Galilee and the northern Negev, with the mass planting of almond trees, using mechanized methods, being introduced in the 1970's.

The almond was considered a superior fruit even as far back as Biblical times. Jacob's sons were ordered by their father to include almonds in the offerings they were taking to Joseph in Egypt in order to win favor in their powerful brother's eyes. (Genesis 43:11)

During a revolt challenging the leadership of Moses and Aaron, the almond blossom played a significant role. The leaders of the twelve tribes, including Aaron who represented the tribe of Levi, agreed that whoever's staff blossomed overnight would be elected leader. Not only was Aaron's staff the only one to blossom overnight, but it then immediately produced its fruit, the almond. This was quite remarkable considering that the almond tree's fruit usually appears about five months after its flowers.

Yehuda Feliks, an Israeli professor of botany, writes in his book Plant World of the Bible that the almond, known in Latin as prunus amygdalus, is related to stone fruits such as peaches, apricots, cherries and prunes.

Two types of uncultivated almond trees are found in Israel: the sweet almond, which has white and pink flowers, and the bitter almond, which has only white flowers.

The fruit of uncultivated almond trees consists of the bitter substance amygdaline. Cultivated sweet species, made by grafting, result in a thin shell and a large sweet seed.

Almonds were a treat for children in Talmudic times, along with nuts, peaches and pomegranates, while their shells were utilized for heating. The almond fruit actually consists of three layers of shell and skin, including a tough gray-green hull, which splits open at maturity to reveal the almond shell, which encloses the nut.

It has been noted that the branches of the almond tree in full bloom appear, from various angles, to resemble the branches of the Menorah, Israel's national symbol, radiating light with its fusion of pink and white petals.

In his book Nature and Landscapes in Israel's Heritage, Nogah HaReuveni, founder of Neot Kedumim, the Biblical Landscape Reserve in central Israel, finds another connection between the almond and the Menorah: In the Biblical description of the Menorah, its cups are described as "mishukadim" (from shaked - almond). Commentators note that mishukadim can mean decorated with specks, as the wooden shell of the almond, or almond-shaped cups. The almond, upon ripening into fruit, indeed resembles the cups of the Menorah.

A large Menorah faces the Knesset, Israel's parliament, which marks its birthday on Tu b'Shevat. The Knesset convened its first session in the Jewish Agency building in 1949 on this day. [In 1950, the Knesset moved to the building that now houses Israel's Ministry of Tourism, moving to its current location in 1966.]

Today, the nutritious almond, popular with vegetarians, is made into pastes, drinks and sweets, like marzipan. In fact, the Kfar Tavor visitors' center in northern Israel contains an unusual sight - a marzipan museum that includes a showroom with imaginative and elegant marzipan creations, and an area where children can make marzipan items. The marzipan, it should be noted, is imported from the almond groves of California, which now provide most of the almonds used to make local marzipan.

As we approach Tu b'Shevat, Israelis stock up on almonds and other treats, while the popular children's song, Hash'kediyah Porachat - "The Blossoming Almond Tree," can be heard emanating from schools and kindergartens all over Israel. Almond trees in full bloom herald the spring, like a long-awaited guest, extolling the beauty of the land of Israel:

THE ALMOND TREE

The almond tree is growing.
A golden sun is glowing.
Birds sing out from tree to tree.
And this is what they say to me.

Tu Bishvat is coming
The birthday of the trees. x2

Hash'kediyah Porachat
Hash'kediyah porachat,
V'shemesh paz zorachat,
Tsiporim meirosh kol gag,
Me-vas-rot et bo hachag.

Tu Bishvat higi-ah
Chag la-ilanot. x2

The almond tree has become the symbol of Tu b'Shevat, the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, also known as the New Year of the Trees, due to its early and abundant blossom.

Community Calendar - January 2002

Thursday, January 10	Jewish Federation Executive Meeting 7:15 pm.
Saturday, January 12	Talmud Torah Sock Hop
Saturday, January 12	Beth Shalom New Members Shabbat
Sunday, January 13	Emunah Women Brunch honoring Life Members at the Fantasyland Hotel
Tuesday, January 15	Talmud Torah Board 7:30 pm.
Friday, January 17	YAD/Hillel Dinner with Moshe Shur
Saturday, January 18	Federation Moshe Shur Dinner and Performance
Saturday, January 19	Beth Shalom Women's League Shabbat
Sunday, January 20	Talmud Torah Parents Aux. Mtg. 7:30 pm.
Thursday, January 24	Jewish Federation Board Meeting 7:15 pm.
Sunday, January 27	JNF Tu Bi'Shevat Telethon
Sunday, January 27	Beth Shalom Judaica Shop Sale 10am-5pm.
Sunday, January 27	Beth Shalom Guest Speaker - Alfred Fisher
Monday, January 28	Beth Shalom Judaica Shop Sale 10am. - 3 pm.
Monday, January 28	Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation Mtg.
Friday, February 1	Chabad Lubavitch Shabbaton
Saturday, February 23	Beth Shalom/ Temple Beth Ora Purim Party

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What Causes Assimilation?

New Bar-Ilan University Center Seeks to Find Answers and Identify Alternatives

Why, at a time when more doors and opportunities are open to Jews than ever before, do some Jews choose to drop out of Jewish life and assimilate? This perplexing question is behind the creation of the new Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

Established in January 2001 through the generosity of Ruth and Baruch Rappaport of Geneva, the Center seeks to go beyond the disturbing statistics of recent decades to understand the root causes of assimilation as well as the factors that motivate Jews to affiliate. Armed with this information, the Center will then strive to propose ways to combat assimilation and strengthen Jewish life throughout the world.

"There is no doubt that assimilation, by which we mean people opting out of Jewish affiliation and Jewish life, is taking place on a wide scale in the Jewish world," says Dr. Zvi Zohar, head of the Rappaport Center and a senior fellow in the University's Faculty of Jewish Studies. "There have been enough studies done and statistics gathered to show this. But there has not been sufficient research done as to why this is happening."

Zohar says that unlike in the 19th century, when many Jews assimilated in order to enhance their personal success, 21st century assimilation has entirely different causes.

"In virtually all countries where Jews reside today, people can advance without relinquishing their Jewish identity," he notes. "Look at Senator Joe Lieberman in the US or Daniel Kurtzer, the present US Ambassador to Israel and former ambassador to Egypt. Both these men are Orthodox Jews. And there are numerous other examples of successful, committed Jews who have succeeded in the arts, film, politics, journalism, the professions or industry. They did not have to renege on their Jewish identity to succeed. By Jewish identity, I do not necessarily mean just religious affiliation. Jewish identity can also be (and is for many) cultural, philanthropic, and/or national."

So why do Jews assimilate when attachment to Jewish life entails no significant barriers to success in the modern world? "The hypothesis is that for these Jews, Jewish life and affiliation is less attractive than other options that are available," says Zohar. "In other words, we must recognize that it's unreasonable to expect many people to want to be Jewish, when there are so many things that seem to be unattractive within today's Jewish communities and cultures."

The Center believes that only by understanding what disaffiliated Jews see as these shortcomings can effective solutions be formulated.

The Center has set for itself a three-stage initial program. "The first order of priority is for our researchers to identify various aspects or areas of Jewish life and activities not working as they should - that is, to prepare a critique of the current state of affairs. Then we want to identify the directions or options which can be employed to remedy the situation. We are optimistic. We feel we have the resources and potential in our reservoir of Jewish life and culture upon which we can draw to provide remedies. Assimilation is not a terminal situation. The Jewish people can respond positively to the problem. In subsequent stages of the program we will move to outline a variety of remedies, and then design pilot projects to try them out."

Initial first-phase research, on several areas within contemporary Jewish life and culture in the Diaspora and in Israel, is almost completed. By January 2002, Zohar plans to convene a think tank that will discuss the findings and enable researchers to write up the final version of the position papers based on the preliminary research.

One major area of research conducted under the auspices of the Rappaport Center is led by Prof. Mario Mikulincer of the Psychology Department at Bar-Ilan University. Together with a team of researchers, Prof. Mikulincer heads a study on the psychological motivations and considerations behind choosing to affiliate or disaffiliate. Conceived of as an ambitious five-year study of four very different Jewish communities around the world - Mexico City, Palm Beach (Florida), Marseilles and Tashkent - the first year pilot study focused on factors that contribute towards consolidation of Jewish identity in adolescents ages 13 to 18.

"We have statistics on intermarriage, synagogue attendance, etc.," says Mikulincer, "but we have very little research on why people disaffiliate and drift away. Also, almost nothing exists on the psychological and sociological aspects of Jewish identity in communities outside the US."

To gather this information, Rappaport Center research teams went out into the four communities to conduct in-depth interviews in order to identify motivation to affiliate and issues that contribute to disaffiliation. Each team conducted 60 interviews, meeting with religious, educational and community leaders as well as with youth in Jewish schools

"Adolescence is a critical stage in the formation of our identity," says Mikulincer. "It is a time when we deal with such questions as: Who am I? What is my place in the world? What does it mean to be a Jew? Do I want to be a Jew? Do I feel Jewish?"

The researchers asked questions concerning what attracts and what repels teens and community leaders about Judaism. They asked about Jewish schools, the synagogue, community, family, Israel and Jewish history. "We hope to get a complex picture of both positive and negative feelings in these communities," says Mikulincer.

Mikulincer sees this initial pilot as laying the foundation for more ambitious surveys over the next few years. "Next year, we want to reach even larger groups of adolescents and intend to use questionnaires to find out about family, friends, personality, internal conflict, etc. We believe that all these factors contribute to Jewish identity. We also intend to question parents about Jewish identity and how they contribute to their children's Jewish identity. In five years time, we plan to do a follow-up with the teens interviewed initially to see where they are in the world."

Zohar hopes that by March 2002 the Center will begin publishing its critiques. He is already planning two innovative conferences for 2002 - one to focus on assimilation in Israel and the other on Jewish education in French-speaking communities.

"We are trying to provide a global perspective on the problem," he concludes, "and would welcome coalitions and links with other Jewish groups around the world."

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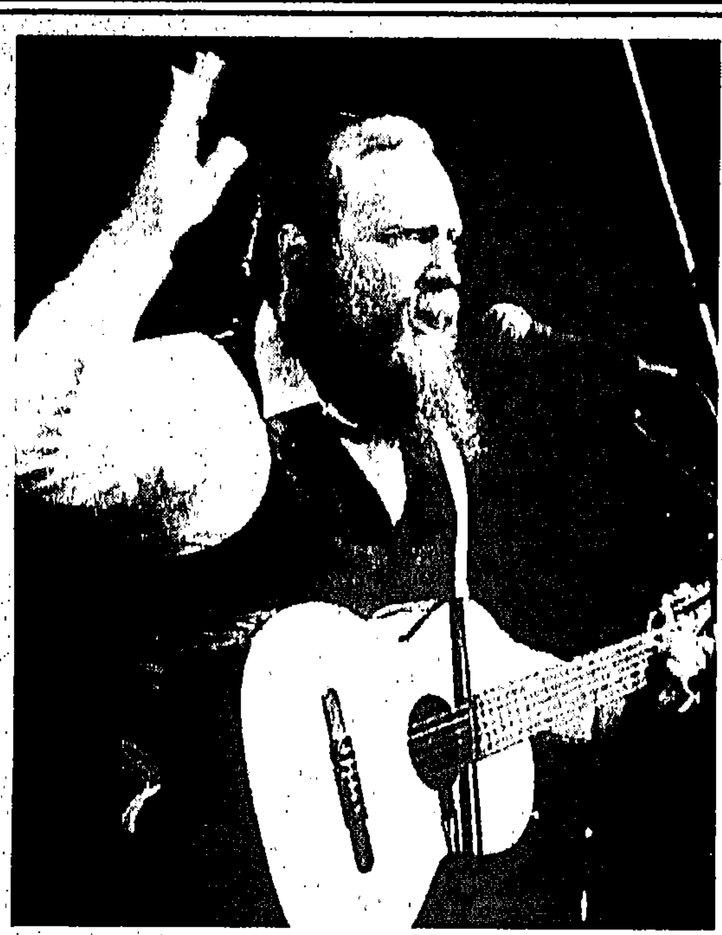
Local young artist Vadim Budman to open for the Rocking Rabbi

Vadim Budman will be the opening act for the Rocking rabbi, Moshe Shur, at the gala dinner and concert, January 19 at the Fantasyland Hotel. Born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1972, Vadim moved to Edmonton with his parents in 1981. His interest in avant-garde and roots music started after leaving the seminal alternative roots band "The Naked & The Dead" in 1994. Early influences include the late John Coltrane, Cecil taylor, and John Fahey.

In May of 1998 Vadim traveled to London, England to record with the British improvisational guru, Derek Bailey. This was released in May 1999. Vadim was also fortunate to play with reedman John Butcher at the 1998 Edmonton Jazz City Festival and at the 2000 Vancouver Jazz Festival with Phil Durrant.

Vadim has been concentrating on rediscovering his Jewish/Russian roots with a new solo album entitled "Hebrew Hoedown", a collection of improvisations and compositions influenced by Jewish life on the prairies, borrowing from the blues, bluegrass and klezmer music. It has been described as John Fahey meets Doc Watson at a Jewish wedding.

Vadim Budman will be the opening act for the Rocking rabbi, Moshe Shur – his music can be described as John Fahey meets Doc Watson at a Jewish wedding.



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