Jewish Independent

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Independent

90 years & beyond

jewishindependent.ca
PM 40051198
Best Wishes to Everyone
for a Happy, Peaceful, Healthy
and Sweet New Year

Jewish Independent
Formerly the Jewish Western Bulletin
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I was introduced to the Sephardi and Mizrahi tradition of a Rosh Hashanah seder by a dear friend, at whose home I celebrate most of the Jewish holidays. This New Year’s, given the pandemic and that we are not in each other’s immediate bubble, I will join their seder on the first night of Rosh Hashanah either outdoors, weather permitting, or on Zoom. Already missing the in-person, happily crowded and chatty table, I was looking, perhaps, to prepare myself mentally for this year’s socially distanced gathering, and a Zoom with my family in Ontario, when I thought of the idea for the cover, which is created using watercolour and ink (and surprisingly little Photoshop).

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Shana Tovah
from JFS
Wishing you and your loved ones a healthy, sweet and peaceful new year.

Helping Israel’s lone soldiers

Daniel Ben-Tal

Michal Cotler-Wunsh was an 18-year-old new immigrant from Canada when she enlisted for the Israel Defence Forces some 30 years ago. Unlike most of her fellow recruits, she had no home to go to on weekends.

“I was a ‘lone soldier,’ without close family or friends,” she said. “I grew up in a very rugged anti-tank base at Nitsanim. The company slept in tents and went on marches in the dunes.”

The army gave her rent support and, on weekends, she stayed in a room in a Jerusalem apartment. “I lived with an elderly man who usually went away on weekends, so I was alone in the apartment,” she said. “To this day, I have connections with people from the Machane Yehuda market, especially the owner of the marzipan shop and the Tzidi-ktyahu delicatessen. These two would prepare boxes of food for lone soldiers at the end of Friday business, and we would get to Jerusalem after everything was already closed, go through the market and take the boxes of food prepared for Shabbat. To this day, I don’t forget them and they don’t forget me.”

Beyond material needs, she recalled the psychological hardship of being far from home.

“I knew how important it is for lone soldiers to have their parents accompany them,” said Cotler-Wunsh, who served in the days before digital communication. “One aspect that has changed is parents’ involvement in day-to-day matters. Nowadays, it’s possible to convey to the lone soldiers’ parents a reality that they do not understand – and there’s no chance that they will understand – but they’re very concerned about. This communication calms both them and the lone soldier throughout their military service.”

“Lone soldiers need somewhere to live, a hot meal on Friday night … things other soldiers take for granted,” Michal Berman, chief executive officer of the Lone Soldier Centre in memory of Michael Levin, a nonprofit organization that looks after their welfare, explained.

The LSC, established in memory of an American immigrant soldier killed in the 2006 Second Lebanon War, currently operates nine apartment homes, offering low-rent housing to about 100 soldiers in Jerusalem, Petach Tikva, Herzliya and Ramat Hasharon, as well as soldiers in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Petach Tikva, Herzliya and Ramat Hasharon, as well as soldiers in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Petach Tikva, Herzliya and Ramat Hasharon, as well as soldiers in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Petach Tikva, Herzliya and Ramat Hasharon, as well as soldiers in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Petach Tikva, Herzliya and Ramat Hasharon.

The organization’s staff also provide advice on how to navigate Israel’s bureaucracy, and attend military ceremonies, taking the place of their parents who cannot be there.

“They say this means the world to them,” Berman said.

“To this day, I don’t forget them and they don’t forget me.”

Beyond the social-psychological aspects, soldiers’ needs are often prosaic. “They need basic things like clean underwear, a toaster, somebody to look after them when they are sick,” Berman explained. “We have hundreds of volunteers who cook and do their laundry for them — many of them former lone soldiers or others immigrants.”

The organization’s staff also launch campaigns to help lone soldiers get through the toughest time of their lives. For more information, visit charity.com/FSC.

Daniel Ben-Tal was a lone soldier serving as a paratrooper before becoming a journalist. Over three decades he has penned hundreds of articles in a host of journals and websites around the world. Formerly an editor at the Jerusalem Post and the English version of Haaretz, he is now an Israeli-based freelance writer, editor and translator.
Dogs aiding recovery
Sheba sees success with a variety of therapies.

SHARON GELBACH IMP

Nathaniel Felber is an Israel Defence Forces soldier who suffered a critical head injury in a terror attack in December 2018. He has been slowly recovering, against all odds. After being in a coma for several months, he was moved to Sheba Medical Centre, where he’s been receiving intensive rehabilitation. After a brief setback following brain surgery last May, Felber has made remarkable progress, and a lot of the credit goes to Sheba – not only the hospital but its namesake, a trained physiotherapy dog.

“The dog helps him maintain a nonjudgmental way, happily accepting the food that Nathaniel offers or any other attention,” said Judi Felber, who has been at her son’s side almost constantly since the attack that upended their lives.

Prof. Israel Dudkiewicz, who heads Sheba’s orthopedic rehabilitation program, has noted a marked improvement in compliance, strength and endurance in patients like Felber, when performing physical therapy exercises with the dog.

“The dog takes attention away from the pain and difficulty of the exercise, enabling the patient to try to do more and to do it better,” explained Dudkiewicz. “I’ve watched patients who ordinarily wouldn’t be able to stand for just two or three minutes, but, when they pet the dog, they can be standing for 30 minutes and more without even realizing it.”

Felber builds strength and balance in his legs by standing and petting Sheba. He also throws a ball for the dog to retrieve, a game that repeatedly causes him pain.

Sheba is a trained physiotherapy dog. One of the patients he’s helping at Sheba Medical Centre is Nathaniel Felber, who suffered a head injury in a terror attack in December 2018.

“Neurorehabilitation is slower than anything else I’ve ever experienced,” said Judi Felber. “Nathaniel is not walking, or talking, or eating even independently – yet. But I try to focus on the positive: he’s responding to people, to us, his family. He’ll turn his head and give us his hand. He can nod yes and no and show us the number of fingers that we ask. We’ve still got a long way to go, but I’m hopeful.”

— Courtesy International Marketing and Promotion (IMP)
With the growth of ancestry services like 23andMe, we are more aware than ever of our genes and how important they are. What we may not know is how our Jewish ancestry puts us and our children at greater risk for health issues.

Join BRCAinBC for a virtual event Oct. 1, at 7 p.m., to learn about your Jewish genes and the tenfold increased risk for Jewish people for certain cancers, including breast, ovarian, aggressive prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer and melanoma. Not only will you learn more about your risk, but you will learn where and how you can get tested and what you can do to prevent cancer.

BRCAinBC is a group of individuals concerned about the effect of the BRCA genes on the Jewish community in British Columbia. The project was born out of the realization that many members of the Jewish community are not aware of the risks of carrying the BRCA genes and the risk of genetically linked cancers – BRCA 1 and 2 is the code for variant mutations of two genes known to increase the lifetime risk of several serious cancers in both women and men.

Your Jewish Genes: A Virtual Learning Event will feature speakers from across North America, including Amy Byer-Shainman, aka “the BRCA Responder,” and author of Resurrection Lily: The BRCA Gene, Hereditary Cancer and Lifesaving Whispers from the Grandmother I Never Knew; Matt Seaton, peer navigator with FORCE (Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered); as well as members of the B.C. Cancer Agency’s Hereditary Cancer Program and High Risk Clinic, including Dr. Rona Cheifetz, surgical oncologist, and Allison Mindlin, genetic counselor.

For more information about BRCA genes and BRCAinBC, visit brcainbc.ca. To register for the Your Jewish Genes event, go to yourjewishgeneswebinar.eventbrite.com. Tickets are by $1, $18 or $36 donation towards the BRCAinBC bursary program, which supports access to genetic testing for Jewish people in British Columbia. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

– Courtesy BRCAinBC

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Health

Jewish genes and cancer risk

Amy Byer-Shainman, left, Matt Seaton and Dr. Rona Cheifetz are among the speakers to be featured at Your Jewish Genes: A Virtual Learning Event Oct. 1.

In-Person, Virtually and Everything in-between

Read what we have to offer in our Fall Digital Program Guide

Jccgv.com/guide

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Dear Friends
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Your J will always be here for you.

J
Want to be a therapist?
Book teaches through master-student exchange.

REBECA KUROPATWA

Therapist Avrum Nadigel’s latest book hit the shelves this month. Co-authored with the late Dr. David Freeman, Where Would You Like to Start: A Master Therapist on Beginning Psychotherapy with Families is structured as a conversation or interview between veteran therapist Freeman and then-newish therapist Nadigel.

Nadigel is a family marriage therapist based in Toronto. Originally from Montreal, where he had worked for the Jewish community for years, he moved to Vancouver for a spell. It was there that he met Freeman (who passed away in 2010).

Freeman had brought in various therapists to speak on marriage, love and respect at different events. Attending these lectures, Nadigel found what the therapists had to say “redundant and I didn’t find it very helpful for me. I had a pretty severe case of fear of commitment, and they all rambled on about the same thing. But, when David spoke, it blew my mind.”

About a year after hearing Freeman speak, Nadigel met, online, the woman who would become his wife, Dr. Aliza Israel. “She is from Vancouver, but was staying in Toronto at the time,” said Nadigel. “Now, we’re married and have three kids. And that all started because of David’s talk in Vancouver. David’s talk introduced me to a type of therapy called family systems theory.”

Nadigel read many books on the topic, including Freeman’s, which made Nadigel rethink his previously held suppositions about relationships and marriage. “I changed the way I practice with my own clients,” he said.

Nadigel moved to Toronto when he was accepted into a residency there. He started up a private practice and began to look for someone to mentor him. At his wife’s suggestion, he reached out to Freeman in Vancouver, who, although semi-retired, was happy to supervise Nadigel via Skype.

Nadigel recalled some of the game-changing ways in which Freeman changed his way of thinking. “When I was single, if I felt anxious or not good in a relationship, I was taught that this meant there was something wrong,” said Nadigel by way of example. A relationship “should be lovely, giving and with good communication, but, as soon as I get anxious, I bolt. Then, David comes around and goes …”

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Perhaps your own internal states of anxiety have nothing to do with the people you’re dating, but with your own internal struggle itself. “It really changed how I saw disappointing feelings in intimate relationships. It helped me sit with them longer.”

Thinking about his eventual marriage to Israel, Nadigel said, “I often think back to that time and think, ‘How did all this work?’ Maybe, it was one part luck, one part theory and one part having a good therapist in my corner.”

In addition to Freeman’s counsel, Nadigel has done much study on family systems, notably he did postgraduate training with the Western Pennsylvania Family Centre, which teaches Bowen family systems theory, as formulated by the late Dr. Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist and founder of the theory.

Recalling his conversations with Freeman, Nadigel said, “David was very worried about two things. Number one, that people were fo
The reasons for making aliyah are many, however, some of the big questions holding back potential olim (immigrants), especially those who are 50+ and are already settled, may include the following: “My Hebrew is almost nonexistent; what am I going to do with myself when I get to Israel?”

One of the ways to help solve these concerns is to join the English Speaking Residents Association (ESRA). My wife, Ida, and I are good examples. We made aliyah in June of 2016 from Toronto when we were in our early 60s. We had two immediate priorities: to find an English-speaking community to live in and to get involved in Israel by finding meaningful volunteer opportunities. Fortunately, we found ESRA.

ESRA was founded some 40 years ago. It has about 2,700 members in 21 different chapters in north, south and central Israel, stretching from Eilat to Nahariya and beyond. The members come from North America, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. The programming, all of which takes place in English, encompasses social activities, outings (when conditions permit), educational mentoring and tutoring programs, charitable and welfare activities and volunteering. In addition, and because of COVID-19, a majority of the social activities, talks, visual tours and cooking classes have been and will continue to be presented on Zoom.

ESRA is not just for those planning on making aliyah. Many people living abroad want to be able to see and hear about Israel generally and/or participate in English-language programs and ESRA’s calendar features talks on a range of topics, from finance, current events, history, the environment and entertainment, as well as clubs, such as bridge, photography and knitting. These programs are accessible around the world and, of course, people can join in ESRA programs when visiting Israel – the group’s monthly hikes have recently restarted.

For more information on ESRA, visit esra.org.il.

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In this three-part series, the author recounts some of his experiences on Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil, the Path of Abraham the Friend, which he visited in 2019. The articles have been adapted from a few of the letters he wrote home to family. The events and people described are real but, for reasons of privacy, the names are fictitious.

I’m writing this from a rooftop deck in the small community of Arraba, about 15 kilometres from the West Bank’s northern border. We walked two days to get here along the Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil, the Path of Abraham the Friend, a 330-kilometre trail from Rummanah in the north to Bayt Minim in the south. We’re here as part of a guided tour with the Siraj Centre; for 15 years, Siraj has organized walking, cycling and hiking experiences in Palestine.

Tonight, all eight of us will be staying at this villa. It’s unusual for a host to have so much room, but the Hassan family specially renovated their home to accommodate large groups. Noor, her husband and their five children have been hosting hikers on the Masar for five years. Throughout the hike, we’ll stay in homes like this, as well as hotels, guesthouses, Bedouin tents, and even a night in a cave.

Dusk has arrived; the evening view is clear and beautiful. The sun has set over the peaks and valleys of the West Bank, the lights of Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements shimmer around us. Beyond the hill ahead of me, backed with shades of peach, rose and grey, lies Israel, Netanya and the Mediterranean Sea. A half-moon rises above.

The villages and settlements may seem quiet and peaceful, but are walled off from one another with concrete and hostility. The sea be-
yond means, for some, Europe, North Africa and its opportunities; for others, impassable waters. What is this place? How did we get here?

Five of us will walk all 25 days from Burmanna to Bari after Felix and Thomas, Quebecois hiking companions in their 40s and 50s; Oliver and Eve, two 50-something activists from the United Kingdom; and myself, a 30-something freelance writer from Toronto. The remaining three will walk one to two weeks: John, a real-estate project from California. Neil, a retired British doctoral student, hopped off yesterday and will be back for short stints in the coming weeks. Ines, an old Swede, walked with us for just the day.

After the hike, I plan to visit a friend in Beirut. In light of the protests against the government, I shared my reservations with Ines, who lived in Lebanon for two decades. “I lived in Beirut through the civil war,” she said, smiling. “You’ll be fine.”

If not all of us are quite so hardcore, we’re all mostly hikers. Sue and Howard walked 1,000 miles on the Camino de Santiago, Spain’s well-traveled Catholic pilgrimage-turned-hiking trail. I walked the Camino at 18 but at half their age and half as far. Felix and Thomas are also Camino veterans: we all seem to have an affinity for long-distance trails in places of importance and meaning.

We are and aren’t here for the hiking. We’ve come to see Palestine for ourselves and hear directly from Palestinians. For my part, it felt like something of a responsibility. Like many Diaspora Jews, I have supported the state of Israel, especially in the context of conflict. But I’ve never felt awkward about being Jewish on the Camino and rarely thought about politics; here, every day is political. I never felt aloof about being Jewish until the Camino.

In the evening after a home-cooked meal, we sipped sweet sage tea in the Hassans’ living room and listened to their story. Noor sat beside her husband Yusuf, who spoke to us in Arabic while their son, Rayan, a young man with kind eyes and short hair, translated. If memory serves, Rayan was studying in the United States, which explained his excellent English.

Two years ago, Rayan’s brother, Nader, attended a rally at his university in support of Palestinian political prisoners on hunger strike. Five weeks before we arrived, Israeli soldiers entered the home where we were now staying, at 2 a.m., and arrested him. Nader was taken to prison without charge, where he’ll likely remain without trial for up to seven months. At the end of his time, he could be released; or, he could be detained again after seven months, without explanation. According to his family, this cycle can repeat indefinitely.

The practice is both common and permitted under Israeli military law, which is still in effect in the West Bank, 53 years after the Six Day War. Noor was quiet, eyes downcast, hands folded in her lap. This was a mother who had lost her son, taken in the middle of the night, who wasn’t sure if or when she would see him again.

As I understood from them, adults over 18 are restricted from visiting prisoners: they plan to send their teenage son, Muhammam. As we walked through towns and villages, small children yelled, “Hello! Hello!” and waved to us, their parents replying to our greetings of salaam aleikum (peace be upon you) with waualaikum salaam (and peace upon you) and ablan wa aublan, you are welcome here. In these moments, of which there are many, I’m buoyed by unimpeachable hospitality.

This is, however, different from the 18 minutes in other ways. I walked 40 days on the Camino and rarely thought about politics; here, every day is political. I never felt aloof about being Jewish on the Camino; I was, but it’s difficult to find a venison that isn’t thievish with narrative. It’s different when you carry so little on your back and so much in your head.

The walking is both easy and hard, metaphorically, I have no blisters, but I’m still uncomfortable.

When Israel occupied Gaza and the West Bank in 1967... That’s true, but Israel occupied the territories as an outcome of the Six Day War, which raises questions of how it started and who provoked it. (The answer, as with most things Israel and Palestine, is hotly debated and too extensive to rehash here.) Yesterday, we didn’t talk about the Six Day War, nor the nuances of what came before it. The conflict doesn’t justify the occupation, but to leave out relevant context, to drop the “why” behind the “what,” I’m not sure that’s helpful, either.

On Birthright, we visited an Israeli military base. One of our trip’s soldiers was a pilot in the air force; in the common room, rows of flat, black, air-plane-shaped medallions were pinned to a wall. Someone asked what they were. “Those are enemy aircraft,” the pilot said. “Each one marks a plane we shot down.”

The group erupted in applause. I froze, horrified. It reminded me of the story we tell at Passover, when the Heavenly Hosts rejoiced at the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. “My creatures are perishing,” God silenced them. “And you sing praises!”

It’s dark now. Stars are appearing in the night sky. Crickets chirp and trucks rumble low in the distance. No doubt carrying goods along labyrinthine backstreets to avoid Israeli-controlled roads, or the possibility of a checkpoint rejection or closure. So much time and life wasted. Tomorrow, we walk. It’s day two, I’m not sure where this road will lead. But all I can do is keep walking.
This new year, King David sends our sincere wishes for a worldwide return to good health.

Together may we continue to build relationships on the foundations of care and empathy.

**Shanah Tovah U’metuka to all!**
Jewish diversity exists
Jews of Colour Canada hopes to extend its reach.

SAM MARGOLIS

The spirit of openness and inclusion that many Jewish organizations express in their literature and social media posts is frequently not felt by Jews of colour, according to several members of the community.

Jews of colour, who are said to represent about 12% of the overall Jewish community, constitute a broad spectrum of people, including those of African, Middle Eastern, East Indian, Asian, Indigenous and Latin American descent, yet they are vastly underrepresented in congregation attendance, on organizational boards and throughout the community as a whole.

Rivka Campbell, a co-founder of Jews of Colour Canada (JOCC), says the unwelcoming feeling happens immediately upon entering a Jewish institution. She refers to it as the “question or questions” that are asked: Do you know this is a synagogue? What made you decide to visit? When did you convert?

“These are not the sorts of questions that most Jews who attend a synagogue or other places associated with Judaism have to answer, and it is really none of anybody’s business,” Campbell told the Independent.

In a recent Jews of colour webinar run by Moishe House Montreal, participants related numerous negative and often disturbing experiences, some of which caused them to distance themselves from Jewish circles.

“I have withdrawn from synagogue life and gone into online mode,” Deryck Glodon, Campbell’s JOCC co-founder, stated. “I don’t want to be in a position where people make you feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. People don’t know that Jewish diversity exists.”

Another participant mentioned a rabbi who once told him to choose between being black and being Jewish. Yet another recalled several untoward remarks made in Jewish settings about Filipino people, which happened to be part of this person’s heritage.

“It’s driving many Jews of colour away from any involvement within the broader community,” noted Campbell, who is executive director for Beit Rayim, a Conservative synagogue and school in Richmond Hill, Ont.

Campbell, the sole Canadian recipient of the Union of Reform Judaism’s JewV’Nation inaugural fellowship – a leadership development program – has had numerous encounters with misconceptions.

She is often asked if she is Ethiopian. Once, at a Kiddush, she had to explain to someone that being a person of colour does not correspond to a fondness for fried foods.

A noticeable thread during the Moishe House webinar was the wide disparity between the progressive causes supported by Jewish leaders and the experiences of people of colour within the community.

Many Jews of colour feel that, despite some good intentions by Jewish organizations, there are always those moments when they have to prove who they are, when they just want to be, Campbell explained. The hope, she said, is that, one day, Jews of colour won’t have to spell out what Jewish diversity is.

"Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s solidarity with Dr. Martin Luther King happened 55 years ago – we need to do something now and not rest on our progressive laurels,“ said Campbell.

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Shanah Tovah
FROM THE BC GREENS

Sonia Furstenau
Cowichan Valley

Adam Olsen
Saanich North & the Islands

Please see JOCC on page 18
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Join us virtually on Zoom at our Annual General Meeting, which includes the election of directors. Voting will be conducted via Zoom.

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 | 7:00 p.m.

Zoom details will be sent when we receive your RSVP.

Happy new year

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Jewish Federation

Literary Arts

Word Vancouver online

Festival brings readers, writers together Sept. 19-27.

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

“W e believe that Word Vancouver is a vehicle for community connection. It is important on so many levels right now to provide a space for collaboration, discourse, and a safe and accessible platform for people to share their stories,” festival executive director Bonnie Nish told the Independent.

Normally, the annual event takes place in Downtown Vancouver and people drop in to see author talks and participate in other activities. This year’s festival will be online, running Sept. 19-27.

On the down side, she said, “We were working with a great site management team last year and we are sad we aren’t able to have them on our team for this festival.”

There have been other challenges, as well. “We have had to prepare for the decrease of revenue from the exhibitor booths by reducing our staffing substantially,” said Nish. “Our board is very supportive of our new situation but they are also very risk averse, as they should be. We have found the most amazing volunteers and, for that, we are truly grateful. Programming is reduced somewhat, but we still have managed to book 140 authors and schedule over 50 events. Our community collaborations are stronger than ever. We have reinvented the exhibitor platform and now offer online exposure both on our website and during the events. It is a hard sell to some, but we honestly think the reach and return for exhibitors will be close to on par with the in-person version.”

Of the 140 authors participating this year, many are members of the Jewish community, and the Independent was able to speak with two of them – Alex Leslie and Rhea Tregebov – in advance of the festival.

Leslie writes poetry and short fiction, but is working on her first novel. Her latest collection is Vancouver for Beginners (Book*hug, 2019), and its poems are filled with powerful imagery and strong views about her beloved city, where she was born and raised. Leslie’s unique use of language, infused with obvious passion for her subject matter, is energizing to read.

Every one of these poems is political in that they call on readers to think about the way in which they inhabit the world, how they think of ownership, place, community and many other concepts. Most of the entries are short narratives (or microfictions) that, in a page, encapsulate the feeling of being in a certain neighbourhood; what we lose when we normalize poverty alongside great wealth; the opportunities we miss when we forget our past, or the misery in our present.

The down side, she said, “We were working with a great site management team last year and we are sad we aren’t able to have them on our team for this festival.”

There have been other challenges, as well. “We have had to prepare for the decrease of revenue from the exhibitor booths by reducing our staffing substantially,” said Nish. “Our board is very supportive of our new situation but they are also very risk averse, as they should be. We have found the most amazing volunteers and, for that, we are truly grateful. Programming is reduced somewhat, but we still have managed to book 140 authors and schedule over 50 events. Our community collaborations are stronger than ever. We have reinvented the exhibitor platform and now offer online exposure both on our website and during the events. It is a hard sell to some, but we honestly think the reach and return for exhibitors will be close to on par with the in-person version.”

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JI: Could you share a bit about your background, both as it pertains to writing, and to your involvement with the Jewish community?

AL: I’ve wanted to be a writer since I was a very young child. In my early 20s, I started taking short fiction more seriously as a writer and trying to publish in literary journals. It took awhile to place my first story, through a long period of reading, frustration, rejection and editing. From there, I published stories until I had enough to put together a manuscript, and that book, People Who Disappear, came out in my late 20s. I’ve essentially continued in the same way – working on mate-

Happy new year

From the members of the Hospital Employees’ Union, a critical part of your health care since 1944.
rial for long periods of time, attending readings, drilling away at projects around the time I spend on my paid work in the mental health field. I’ve always been a wanderer between fiction and poetry communities.

I’m a member of Or Shalom synagogue in Vancouver and co-curate a storytelling series there…. The Jewish side of my family is originally Ashkenazi, from shtetls in Ukraine, in the regions around Lvov and Odessa (when they immigrated they wrote down they were “Russian”). We’re what is called diasporic, as the communities we came from were lost to the Shoah (Holocaust).

JI: Jewish characters have appeared in your writings. What are some of the ways in which our Jewishness informs your political, cultural or other views/actions?

AL: Yes, my book of stories that came out in 2018, *We All Need to Eat*, centred around a young Jewish woman named Soma, and Jewish identity is a backbone of that book, as she processes the current rise of the alt-right and her family history that’s bound up in fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe.

For me, a core Jewish value is tikkun olam, which translates roughly to “repair of the world/universe.” Tik’kun olam influences my work in the mental health field, as there is the prerogative there of contribution and not turning away from difficult areas of the mind and the concept that energy and goodness can be found in dark places. Persistence and dark humour — humour where others may not find humour! — are practices I’ve taken from Jewishness as well.

JI: Do you still co-curate Koreh at Or Shalom? Why is it important for people to have a platform to publicly read their work?

AL: Yes! Our next Koreh is on Saturday, Sept. 12, for Selichot. We have 10 readers! I curate this with Or Shalom’s Rabbi Hannah Dresner. This Koreh is centred on the idea of the pandemic as a crossing or transformation and everyone is welcome to be part of our audience. Here is the link with the Zoom information: or-shalom.ca/event/leil-selichot-a-koreh-event-with-high-holiday-melodies.

This is our third year of curating Koreh. I feel it’s a special space for people who may not consider themselves “writers” to share stories, poems and reflections on their experiences and how they relate to the world. We’ve had Korehs focused on the natural world, on repose/restoration, on sanctuary. Rabbi Hannah asked me to co-curate it with her when we started it up. It was really her concept in the beginning and it’s been a pleasure to get to know so many writers and listeners adjacent to Koreh.

JI: What compels you to write and publish?

AL: My love of writing coincided with my love of reading. I’ve honestly wanted to be a writer since kindergarten. I remember writing stories about our neighbours, and my mother copying them out again in her handwriting. As I got older and wrote more and more, publishing emerged as a natural goal. I read constantly and loved that I could see the world precisely from another’s point of view.
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The first tenants at the Ben and Esther Dayson Residences started moving into their new homes in late August. Managed by Tikva Housing, the 32 townhomes are located west of the River District, on East Kent Avenue North, a block from Riverfront Park.

The residences comprise four two-bedroom units (1,045 square feet), 24 three-bedroom units (1,175 square feet) and four four-bedroom units (1,305 square feet). The units were open to Vancouver-based families with one to six children, within a range of income levels. The site includes two towers that will be managed by the Fraserview Housing Co-op.

A part of the Vancouver Land Trust project, the residences share a number of amenities, such as green space and a playground. Rent will be targeted to approximately 30% of gross household income to a rent maximum. Tenants are expected to pay for hydro, phone, internet and contents insurance.

Anat Gogo, Tikva Housing’s manager of programs and donor relations, expressed her enthusiasm upon the launch. “I feel so excited for the community,” she said. “It will be a concentrated Jewish community. When you build neighbourhoods, you build community.”

“The residences will also provide a home for essential workers, such as teachers, in our community,” she added.

The Dayson Residences are situated close to several daycares, elementary and high schools, as well as banks, shopping centres, grocery stores, libraries and hospitals.

The strong need for affordable housing in the region has been a prevalent concern for many years. A 2011 survey of the Greater Vancouver Jewish community identified more than 4,000 people (or Tikkun Olam New residences open

Tikva Housing’s latest project to open has 32 units.

Samantha Margolis

The Ben and Esther Dayson Residences, on East Kent Avenue North, opened its doors to tenants last month.

The Ben and Esther Dayson Residences, on East Kent Avenue North, opened its doors to tenants last month.

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NADIGEL from page 7

cuing too much on hacks and beha

vioral changes, and that the sys

tem was much more powerful than

that … and that the system would

often, not always, but often, thwart

any attempts the individual would

try to make the change. So, he was

very concerned that there were so

many therapists offering a larger per-

spective about human suffering.

“The second thing he was very

worried about – I think this is be-

cause he was a grandfather at the

time of his death, he had two grand-

kids – was about the disconnect

from wise elders in society. I think

that’s really coming home to roost

right now, the fact that we have the

hashtag on Twitter, where it says,

‘BoomerRemover.’

“Some people are thinking that,

well, it’s good about this coron-

avirus – it’s going to kill off all the

old people and there’ll be more

condo. I don’t know what the hell

they are thinking but we really do

see the elderly as an inconvenience

in a lot of cases, and David thought

this creates an impoverished culture

—that, when you think of tradition-

al society, it’s the elders who share

life lessons that can only be ac-

quired over time, through adversity

and history. You can read a book,

but it’s very different to sit down with

you what it was like to survive the

Blitz in Britain. And David thought

that young people in their mar-

riages were impoverished, because

of their lack of connection.

“So, with those two things,” said

Nadigel, “I thought, maybe, if I
can somehow convince David to

write another book, I could be the

young green therapist and he could

be the senior guy. He could speak
to me and motivate the next gen-
eration of therapists.

“I thought to myself that it should

be snappy and quick. … I threw him
the idea and I think the same day he
got back to me and said he thought
the format’s viable – except that, in

this case, it would be Skype calls be-

tween a young therapist and a senior
therapist. … We quickly started
working on this once a week.

“Then, David had the manu-
script and was going on vacation,”
said Nadigel. “We had a few more
chapters to write; he really liked
where the book was going. Then, I
got an email from him, a very brief
email, which was odd, because he
was much more verbose. It just
asked if I could call him.

“I thought, that doesn’t sound

good, that maybe he was going to

say the book sucks. I called, and it

was his now-widow [Judith Anaста-

sia], who answered, and she said,
‘Avrum, I’m sorry to tell you, but
David died of a heart attack while

we were cycling in Crotia.’ I could-

n’t believe it. It was a crazy summer.

My dad died, my son was born and

David died.”

Several years later, with Anastasia’s

blessing and to honour Freeman’s

memory and work, Nadigel started

to complete their book.

“The book gives you a taste of a

master therapist, to experience the

wisdom and thinking he brought to

thousands of families and cou-
ples he’s worked with over 40

years,” explained Nadigel. “And,

once you finish the book, you

might feel it’s your responsibility

to go and further your training in

this area.

“David’s life work was helping

people understand that, if you want
to do well with your own personal

goals and struggles and gridlock,

you have to understand what you’re

up against,” said Nadigel. “And you
don’t do that by just talking about

your neurotransmitters and sero-
tonin and dopamine, or medita-

tion. … It’s about certain ways of

the here and now, that you either
distance or connect through rela-
tionships that are happening right

now – that are happening with

your mother, your father, your sis-
ter, your aunt, your cousin. The

work is staring you right in the face

right now.”

And Nadigel himself is an exam-

ple of how the approach can work.

“I’ve often thought that, if I was

reading about this book, the inter-
esting angle I always found was that

I was a punk rock alternative

musician in Montreal. I was com-

mitment-phobic and really saw

marriage and family, marriage con-

siderably, as the death knell of all

that’s good in life – [that it’s] bor-
in and sucks the nectar out of a

good life. Then, David comes along in

Vancouver and he just cre-

ates a profound paradigm shift in

me, and I have come to a wildly

different understanding. I’ve be-

come a marriage therapist myself,

a father, all this kind of stuff, so a

pretty fundamental transition.

“I was one of these people that,

once upon a time, really had a

strong distaste for the very thing I’ve

embraced,” said Nadigel. “It

really is all credit to this one little

talk in Vancouver in the JCC.

There’s hope there. It doesn’t take

years and years. It could be a 50-

minute talk.”

Nadigel has created a blog and

cast to supplement the new book.

To access it, visit nadigel.com/start.

Electronic and hard copy versions

of Where Would You Like to Start are

available at amazon.ca.

Rebeca Kuropatwa is a Winnipeg

freelance writer.
other person’s emotional perspective. I suppose that I wanted to replicate that experience, and share in it. Also, for me, it was about language, and using and manipulating language as a medium. Selecting, ordering and controlling words is a fascination for me, the way I suppose a mathematician may feel about algebra, or an investor might feel about predicting stocks. It’s a system.

JE: What is the importance to you of words?

AL: I think that words can put you in another person’s mind, so the power here would be empathy, radical transportation. Words also have a power of deep-layered description – so the power would be complex evocation, mixing emotional and physical parts of reality, making something 2-D into something 3-D, like a life-giving power.

Words can also move us to action. During the pandemic, I have been reading a lot. Endless online stuff is tiring and alienating after a long period of time. I’ve read a few extraordinary novels during this time – two are Bream and Eggs by Mieko Kawakami and Lost Children Archive by Valeria Luiselli. I also read Norman Doig’s two books about neuropsychiatry. I’m grateful for how these books moved me and took me out of this moment and showed me something I couldn’t have imagined on my own.

Born in Saskatoon and raised in Winnipeg, Tregoev moved to Vancouver from Toronto in 2004 to teach in the creative writing program at the University of British Columbia. Though she retired in 2017, she holds the position of associate professor emerita and continues to teach a bit. She has written several children’s books and is working on her eighth collection of poetry. Rue des Rosiers (Wolsak & Wynn, 2019) is her second novel.

Based on events leading to the 1982 terrorist attack in Paris on Goldemberg’s Deli, which killed six people and injured many more, Rue des Rosiers is a poignant and lyrical story about two women with vastly different backgrounds but both trying to figure out who they are and their place in the world. Canadian Sarah Levine makes decisions by flipping a penny that she carries with her, and at 25, she is already lost, for a number of reasons. When she has a chance to go to Paris, she does and, while there, her story crosses over with that of Lalaa, an Arab immigrant living in one of the city’s slum neighbourhoods. In the author’s notes, Tregoev writes that she hopes her novel will “act as a memorial to the six people who died in the attack.” It does that, and more.

JE: Rue des Rosiers has so many layers and motifs, tightly woven, not a phrase seems superfluous. Can you share some of your creative process, from the idea of the novel to its publication last year?

RT: The novel began with two impulses: to explore the relationships among sisters and to understand the impact of terrorism on perpetrators as well as victims. Both are rooted in personal experience. I am one of three sisters, and I was living in Paris in 1982 very near where the attack on Rue des Rosiers occurred. Working through these issues was a long, sometimes joyous, sometimes exhausting process.

JE: Could you speak a bit about how Judaism or Jewish community infuse your work and/or life?

RT: I grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust and the moral issues the Holocaust raises are core. I also grew up in a vital Winnipeg community that modeled ethical commitment and progressive values that I still find of immense value.

JE: Coteau Books, which initially published your novel, has closed. What are some of your thoughts on the future of publishing?

RT: Small presses like Wolsak & Wynn (who, happily, have picked up the novel) are a mainstay of literary publishing. We still have an infrastructure of support that allows these smaller presses. I’m concerned that the consolidation that characterizes the larger presses may contribute to a narrowing of available voices and perspectives.

JE: In an interview, you say, “I’ve said that the book is trying to ascertain the humanity in inhumanity.” Are there any risks in doing this, in finding the humanity in inhumanity?

RT: It can be difficult to attempt to empathetically understand behaviour that is anathema to one’s own moral schema. I didn’t want to justify or validate acts or attitudes that dehumanize the Other. But, as one of the characters in the book says, “I’m interested in goodness, the mystery of goodness.” And, to examine goodness, one has to examine evil as its corollary.

JE: In another interview, you mentioned being “intrigued by the problem-solving involved in writing a novel.” Can you flesh out that idea?
JOCC from page 11

defs,” she said. “Nor should we forget that Rabbi Heschel was not universally praised from within the Jewish establishment for his civil rights stand.”

As for what clergy and lay leaders can do, Campbell pointed to the resources found on Union of Reform Judaism website regarding diversity, equity and inclusion for all members of the community.

For the broader community, she said, “It is not a big deal to be welcoming. Treat me the same as anyone else. You have to see me as a Jew first. ‘Shabbat Shalom’ should flow off the tongue as easily with me as anyone else.”

She continued, “Our diversity as Jews of colour adds to the diversity of Judaism. This can be turned into a very positive thing.”

On this hopeful note, in 2017, Campbell started work on a documentary that shares several stories of people from various backgrounds within the Jewish community and is designed to show the richness therein. Its objective is “to discuss how we are starting to embrace our differences and how we can do a better job of celebrating our diversity.”

Campbell’s first involvement with Jews of colour groups began at the time social media was gaining momentum. After locating ones on Facebook, she found their focus to be American-centric. In 2012, she started her own Facebook group, A Minority Within a Minority: Jews of Colour, a Canadian-focused group.

The need to move beyond Facebook ensued and, together with Glodon, she started a website and reached out to “people in the real world to have gatherings and lunches.”

“The aim was to have an in-person connection, to do things like teaching, research and advocacy,” said Campbell. The group was incorporated as a nonprofit and, at some point, she would like it to be a charitable organization.

JOCC hopes to expand its presence outside of Ontario and Quebec, and would like to have more exposure in British Columbia. Campbell spoke at Beth Tikvah in July.

For more information about Jews of Colour Canada, visit jewsofcolour.ca or their Facebook page, facebook.com/joc.canada.

Sam Margolis has written for the Globe and Mail, the National Post, UPI and MSNBC.
Rallying for democracy
Israels living in Diaspora show solidarity in protest.

ADI KARAZO AND HILLA KARAZO

Local Israeli Jews gathered at Vancouver Maritime Museum Aug. 29 to join groups around the world in supporting rallies in Israel for democracy.

In recent years and with greater intensity during COVID-19 and the current “emergency” coalition in Israel, many believe that the foundations of Israeli democracy are being challenged by a prime minister indicted on several criminal counts. On Aug. 29, several dozen Israeli expats, members of the Metro Vancouver Jewish community and others joined gatherings in 18 cities around the world to support the growing protests in Israel.

Hundreds of supporters, standing in unison with protesters in Israel, took a stand at their respective locations in Atlanta, Amsterdam, Basel, Berlin, Boston, Cambridge, Chicago, Copenhagen, Los Angeles, Madrid, Miami, New York, Oslo, Paris, San Francisco, Toronto and Washington, D.C. Another Canadian city, Calgary, has held a rally or two. On other weeks, protesters as far as Sydney, Australia, have expressed their support.

From the outset, Vancouver organizers drew inspiration and guidance from UnXplitable, a grassroots movement launched by a group of Israeli residents in the San Francisco Bay area.

This tightly knit, completely self-funded team of volunteers put together position papers, crafted marketing materials and created social media channels that seeded the formation of similar groups dotting Western Europe and North America.

The prime minister’s official residence is located on Balfour Street in Jerusalem, making it and the neighbouring squares and streets the epicentre and namesake of the protests. Meanwhile, thousands of miles away from Jerusalem, the more serene and isolated location of the Vancouver Maritime Museum served as our venue. It was the third time we have come together to hold signs, wave the Israeli flag, chant and sing in solidarity with the countless protesters, of all stripes, on the ground in Israel. In contrast to local gatherings in previous weeks, this global rally saw a significant increase in participation. Whether this was due to the broad media coverage of police violence at Balfour the week before, the global nature of this particular event, or the remarkable planning, the result was a palpable level of energy and a sense of unity.

It was a windy day, which forced us to relocate from our usual spot on the north side of the museum to the warmer grass at the front of it. The venue was chosen over more central locations out of consideration for the safety of the people involved and other sensitivities. The goal of our gathering was, after all, to support the people in Israel, while reducing the chance of friction with anti-Israelis or with those who would mistakenly claim that our actions were akin to “airy dirty laundry.”

Over the years, Israelis living abroad have faced significant pushback from many parts of the Diaspora community who have had difficulty understanding and accepting their criticism of Israel. As Diaspora Jews and others learn more about the serious challenges that Israeli society faces today, they may become a little more sensitive to the internal conflicts of many Israelis living abroad – people who have given some of the best years of their lives to defending the country they love and who are genuinely concerned by what is currently taking place.

Assembled in the various cities for more than an hour, the Vancouver group joined their peers around the world in a simultaneous Zoom-powered broadcast of the rally, dubbed “Halev BeBalfour” (“the Heart is in Balfour”). This coordinated event, quite possibly the first of its kind in Israeli history, took place at precisely 9 p.m. Israeli time, was streamed on the new independent channel DemocratTV and, most importantly, screened on the side of a building at the neighbouring Paris Square for the protesters to see. Ducting an allotted two minutes, each location was given the opportunity to express its support through speeches, chants or songs. As the cities took their turn, Paris with the Eiffel Tower in the background, Berlin with its Brandenburg Gate, in front of it.
What’s new at the cemetery? Not a question one tends to ask, but the Schara Tzedeck cemeteries in New Westminster and Surrey have seen some significant upgrades and additions in recent months.

At the New Westminster cemetery, which saw its first burial in 1929, 50 graves that did not have headstones have received permanent markers. More than 100 others will ideally also see stone markers added in the coming years as the cemetery board’s Chesed Shel Emet Fund is replenished.

There are plenty of reasons why a grave might not have a permanent headstone, according to Howard Jampolsky, executive director of the Schara Tzedeck Cemetery Board. “Sometimes, somebody had no family, maybe they were destitute, alone in the world,” he said. “Sometimes, the families just don’t have money; sometimes, one spouse dies and they get a headstone and the other spouse dies and there is no one to put the headstone.”

Whatever the reasons, the graves, some dating back to the 1950s, had temporary markers. The Chesed Shel Emet Fund was set up primarily with donations from cemetery board members, Jampolsky said, and the first batch of 50 headstones was purchased for these unmarked graves and placed in the last few months.

“We were hoping to do a big unveiling ceremony, where all the graves would be unveiled and we would invite the community,” he said. But COVID intervened. He hopes such a ceremony will occur in the future.

The headstones cost about $525 each and the board is welcoming donations from the community to the fund so they can proceed with placing more stones.

Also at New Westminster, a new black granite memorial wall has been created to commemorate people who are buried in other places. “Sometimes, someone lives in Vancouver their entire life and they die and get buried in another place, maybe they’re sent to Toronto or Israel or somewhere else,” Jampolsky said. “This is an opportunity to memorialize somebody who lived in the city and contributed to the city’s life and they don’t have a headstone here. The other possibility is people who have parents or family buried in other places where they live and don’t have the ability to go and visit. If you want to come on the yahrzeit, you can come and put a rock on top of that.”

The New Westminster cemetery also has seen a green irrigation initiative recently completed. “We spend a lot of money irrigating our green grass here, a lot of water,” he said. “We used potable city water.” They have now drilled a well and are also capturing rainwater, which is pumped through the irrigation system. Not only is this better for the environment, Jampolsky said, but the $150,000 cost will be recouped in about eight years at current water rates.

He sees the greening initiative as in keeping with Jewish burial tradition, which is respectful of the land, rejects concrete casings and does not include embalming.

In other significant news, the Surrey cemetery, which had its first burial about a dozen years ago, now has a chapel. Until now, funerals at the Surrey site were graveside only. A sad irony is that the pandemic has meant that, after the first couple of funerals in the new chapel, services had to be again curtailed to graveside only, with limited attendance.

The $500,000 structure was completed in late 2019 and reflects the philosophy of the board, Jampolsky said. “We used potable city water.” They have now drilled a well and are also capturing rainwater, which is pumped through the irrigation system. Not only is this better for the environment, Jampolsky said, but the $150,000 cost will be recouped in about eight years at current water rates.

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16% of the total community who were low-income; the number included 600 children and 550 single-parent families.

To many local renters, Vancouver holds the unenviable distinctions of having the highest rents and the lowest vacancy rates in the country. At the start of the year, the rent for an average one-bedroom apartment in the city was more than $1,500 per month, while vacancy levels hovered around one percent.

Tikva Housing helps those who would be deemed “working poor” and cites the limited “life options” available to them in this expensive city. For example, to a person earning $2,000 a month, the affordable level for their rent should be a maximum of $600 per month. For the past decade especially, rents in the Lower Mainland have risen far beyond that level – thus leaving little money to set aside for food, medicine, utilities, transport or education to improve job skills.

“They save people from being on the streets. They save people from unsafe situations,” said Steve, a tenant at Tikva Housing’s Diamond Residences in Richmond. “It’s given me security. I don’t have to worry about making rent. It’s affordable. I buy our groceries. It puts me in a wonderful frame of mind. It allows me to be a good father. Without Tikva, I would not have been able to give proper care to my children.”

Tikva Housing’s stated mission is to provide a safe, stable and affordable home to every Jewish person in Metro Vancouver who needs one. Its services are geared primarily at low- and moderate-income adults and families.

It also operates the 11-unit Dany Guincher House apartments in Marpole and the 18-unit Diamond Residences cited above. Opening in early 2021 is the Arbutus Centre on the West Side – as part of a partnership with the City of Vancouver, the YWCA and the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia – which will bring another 18 studios and 19 one-bedroom units to low- and moderate-income members of the community.

As might be expected, the number of people turning to Tikva Housing has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. In July alone, it approved a record number of eight recipients for the Tikva Housing Rent Subsidy Program. “The subsidy allocation for the past five months amounted to just shy of $27,000 in addition to the existing allocations, and the need continues to grow,” Gogo said.

In August, Alice Sandberg, Tikva’s director of operations and housing, announced, “I am in conversation with a few private developers and nonprofit housing providers regarding potential projects in Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond and Surrey. I can’t say more about these opportunities at this time.”

Ben Dayson was a prominent figure in Vancouver and Richmond real estate and a philanthropist. Together with his wife Esther, they worked to help many charitable causes. Helping those in need find affordable housing was one of their primary objectives, through funds provided by the Ben and Esther Dayson Charitable Foundation.

“Our family is focused on providing funding to areas of basic needs,” said their daughter, Shirley Barnett. “Obviously, housing is one of these areas we choose to support. As my parents, Ben and Esther Dayson, were in real estate development, it seemed natural to fund a complex such as this in their memory.”

For more about the Tikva Housing Society, visit tikvahousing.org.

愉快的犹太新年！

Shana Tova!

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould 王州迪
Vancouver Granville

Help make a difference this Rosh Hashanah for the women, children and families in Israel.

For information on how to get involved contact naamat@naamat.com or call 1-888-278-0792
Moving to a new city and starting a demanding and highly visible new job would be a challenge in the best of times. For Rabbi Susan Tendler, the recently arrived spiritual leader at Richmond’s Beth Tikvah Congregation, and her family of four, it was a little more complicated.

Not only has the COVID pandemic added complexity to every detail, the family was moving from the United States. This meant that, once they made it to British Columbia after a long, though enjoyable, drive across the continent, during which they took in some national parks and historical sites, they had to go into two weeks of quarantine in their new home.

The lemons of COVID were turned to lemonade by the reaction of the Beth Tikvah community. Tendler calls their reception “extraordinarily unbelievable.”

They arrived at the house, which had been equipped with bedding, toiletries, kitchenware and small appliances, a stocked pantry and refrigerator, and almost everything the new arrivals could want.

“People would from a distance greet us and somebody brought us dinner every single night that week. And people checked on us and would just drop off some milk or whatever we needed for the next week,” she said. While her husband, Ross Sadoff, returned to the States to collect their other vehicle, the rabbi and her daughters, 10-year-old Hannah Sofia and Daniella, who is 8, settled into quarantine.

“My girls and I sat in kind of a tent in our driveway,” she said, while congregants brought socially distanced greetings. “They drove by, honked at us and welcomed us. They had signs and balloons to make us feel welcome. The community, honestly, has gone above and beyond and really demonstrates what a caring community could be and just really made us feel welcome.”

The family moved from Chattanooga, Tenn., where Tendler had been rabbi for eight years at the Conservative B’nai Zion Congregation. She also served on the faculty of Camp Ramah Darom, in the foothills of Georgia’s Blue Ridge Mountains.

She grew up in Virginia and previously held positions in congregations there and in North Carolina. Her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia is in religious studies with concentrations on Islam and Judaism. At the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, she received her rabbinical ordination and her master’s of education in informal Jewish education. She also completed a two-year rabbinic track at the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. She describes herself as “an ardent Zionist.”

Coming to Canada generally and Beth Tikvah specifically seems serendipitous. Tendler and Sadoff met at a wedding at the Richmond shul. In fact, that was one of three coincidental meetings that happened before Tendler decided maybe she should consider them an omen.

“I started thinking, wow, maybe...
An Israeli-Moroccan kitchen

Ofra’s on Denman serves up great food and community spirit.

JAN LEE

Ask Ofra Sixto what makes her Israeli-Moroccan restaurant successful and she’ll unabashedly tell you: it’s keeping a positive attitude. But it takes a whole lot of moxie, too.

After all, it isn’t easy to launch a new restaurant in the midst of an unexpected economic shutdown and to create enough recognition that patrons are willing to line up at your door for takeout. But that all speaks to the allure of Ofra’s Kitchen, which opened this past December, just as the holiday season was coming into full swing. Sixto, who owned a Moroccan restaurant on Hastings Street with her brother years ago, said it’s been her dream to open another restaurant – this time centring on vegetarian and vegan dishes.

Her previous restaurant was called Jacqueline Moroccan Food and was named after her late sister. When her brother was forced to return to Israel, the two siblings realized they would have no choice but to close the restaurant. Jacqueline’s “was very successful. Very,” Sixto acknowledged.

It was the venue’s eclectic Israeli-Moroccan cuisine that later gave her the idea for a vegetarian follow-up focusing on classic Israeli dishes and flavorful specialties from around the Middle East.

“There is a great need, I think, for good vegetarian cuisine,” she said.

As a “flexible vegan,” Sixto said she often has trouble finding truly appealing food when she eats out.

“When I go to a restaurant and I ask, ‘Do you have anything vegetarian?’ they push a salad. I’m not a rabbit, I want something substantial, right? So, when you come to my restaurant, you actually eat food. You eat really, really good and healthy and fresh and made-on-the-spot food that makes you feel good.”

The choices run the gamut from iconic falafel and pita, shakshuka and Israeli salad to lesser-known Iraqi koubbe and delicately spiced Moroccan beef salad. Diners can also enjoy an array of traditionally made desserts and Turkish coffee.

In addition to feeding customers, Ofra Sixto is helping feed people who are homeless.

“And, of course, my falafel is the best in town,” she said. “Not only by what I say but everybody else who eats it. It’s fresh, it’s crunchy outside, it’s moist and soft inside. It’s beautiful.”

But cooking isn’t the only exceptional quality that she brings to Denman Street. A big heart and an innate sense of civic responsibility are helping mobilize a small movement to ensure that those who can’t afford to eat at Denman’s restaurants also have food to eat.

Earlier this year, Sixto noticed that the number of individuals on Denman who were homeless was growing. She said the economic shutdown, which closed many establishments and sections of streets in downtown Vancouver, exacerbated the homeless problem, forcing many people onto Denman from Robson and Granville. Rather than ignoring the issue, Sixto decided to do something to help.

“When I would walk [to work] I would see so many homeless people. I decided, you know, I need to do something about it. I have the means and I could help – whatever my capacity is, right? So, I started feeding the homeless by giving away soup and falafels.”

And her reputation began to grow. “I mean, they are hungry,” said Sixto. “They get drinks, they get food, whatever they need.”

In time, she decided she could do even more. “I decided to make it a social thing and make people be a part of the solution.”

She began letting customers
The Victoria Shoah Project has launched a virtual exhibit of an autograph book compiled by Mænni Ruben, a Danish violinist and graphic artist held prisoner at Terezin (Theresienstadt) concentration camp outside of Prague.

The 1945 Theresienstadt Autograph Book Exhibit features panels and the 40-page book itself, which is replete with signatures, sketches and aphorisms from Ruben’s friends and acquaintances who were also incarcerated at Terezin.

The book records the closing period of the war as survivors were being liberated. It is a story not only of the horrors of Nazism, but of long-lasting friends, and the music and art that united them during dreadful times.

Ruben died in 1976 in Copenhagen. Though he never lived in or visited Canada, the book remained with his widow, Susi, who remarried after his death and settled in Victoria. Upon her passing, in 2018, the book came into the hands of Rabbi Harry Brechner of Victoria’s Congregation Emanu-El. He subsequently showed it to member Janna Ginsberg Bleviss, who became the coordinator of the exhibit project.

“When the rabbi showed the book to me last year, I could see right away that it was special and should go to a museum. It is in remarkable condition for being 75 years old and is a tremendous addition to Holocaust studies,” Ginsberg Bleviss said.

“A poignant message comes from Rabbi Leo Baeck, an intellectual and leader of the German Jewish community and the international Reform movement, who wrote: ‘What you forget and what you don’t forget, that is what decides the course of your life will take.’”

“Pianist Alice Sommer Herz, the subject of the 2007 book A Garden of Eden in Hell and the 2013 Oscar Holstein book, is the focus of a new online exhibit launched by the Victoria Shoah Project.”

Susi and Mænni Ruben, Copenhagen, 1960s. Mænni Ruben’s autograph book, compiled in Theresienstadt, is the focus of a new online exhibit launched by the Victoria Shoah Project.
NCSY Vancouver Learn & Earn, for youth, started Sept. 10. Runs Thurs 7-8pm. Register via vancouver.ncsy.org.

Koosch Selichot. Sept. 12, 8pm; Even Shabbat Rachahamim with Rabbi Dresner, Sept. 18, 8:15pm; Rosh Hashanah services Sept. 19-20, Shabbat Shiva, with Rabbi Dresner, Myrna Rabkinowitz & others, Sept. 26, 10am. Full Or Shalom Zoom and limited in-person attendance holiday calendar at orshalom.ca/event/category/high-holidays.

Selichot with Beth Israel: Havdalah (8:30pm); Inside-Out — Jews of Colour, Does This Community Need to Apologise? with pandit/ereson Esther Moses, Far Green, Rosita Yona, host Audrey Chan, moderator Ben I digital (8-5pm); musical service with Rabbi Stein, Ba’al Tefillah Penney, Helena Rothstein (10pm). Sept. 12, Zoon 992 5797 5925. berfhslaw.ca/event/selichot.

JACS Vancouver: Here to Help, online recovery support group every 2nd Thursday, 7-8pm; family support group, every 2nd Thursday, 7-8pm. Other online therapy sessions & support groups available. Contact Shelley@jacs.vancouver.ca or 778- 882-2994.

Jewish Community Centre: Community Calendar

Jewish Writers: various online exhibits at jewishmuseum.ca/exhibits/online-exhibits; help IMABC document this moment. July 24, 2020. kabbalah series, taught by Rav Ben David. Sept. 29, 11am. $36 (partial donations accepted).

Jewish Seniors Alliance: webinar series hosted by the South Vancouver Seniors Network includes Grace Hann, trainer & supervisor, JSA peer support. Tues, 10:30am. on Zoom. Contact 604-660-3830 or michael.lee.mfr@bc.ca.

Or Shalom services & other programs online: orshalom.ca.

Peretz Centre: Shalom Aleichem Speakers Series, with various guests, Fri, 1am register at gydchad@hotmail.com. Exploring Jewish Writers, with Al Stein, Sat, 10am. 30am, register to alstein577@gmail.com. Moving Conversations, with Claudia Balielevsky, explores embodied moments of creativity, conversation & performance. Tues, 2pm, register to fabulous@hotmail.com. Contact shelley@jacsvancouver.com or 778-622-5400.

Shara Tzeck: The Sweep of Jewish History online course, taught by Rabbi Rosenblatt. Wed, 1pm. Register via sharatzeck.com; Learn One Page of Torah weekly online with Cohen Quay using realmahjongg.com game; canasta classes (Fri, 9:30am); walking, biking, virtual dances & more. To receive help or to volunteer to help: covidhelpvancouver.com or 778-280-8666.

Ongoing

Days 55+ at JCCGV: Senior Men’s Discussion Group (Mon, 5pm); Circle of Friends (Tues, 1pm); monthly Syn shabbat; Shirley Stein’s Body & Voice Current Events Discussion Group with Dan Elkan (Wed, 10am); Rhea Tregebov, Aren X. Tulchinsky & Michael Cohen Quay using realmahjongg.com game; cooking classes (Wed, 3pm, with Chef Lior), including delivery of kosher groceries for meds, pre-registration required, by donation; Name That Tune (1 Tues/month, 2pm, with pianist Bob York); online arts.

The Batay Shabbat Together with Morah Mitans, for Kids, Fri, noon, live on Google; Brunch & Learn, Wed, 10:30am; Talud class, Thurs, 8pm; other online happenings: thebayit.ca.

Beth Israel: daily & weekly online events schedule, including Shabbat Connection sing-along & storytime for families, with Michu Schwartzman & Bl choir (Fri, 4:30pm); Shabbat Zacharim for young families program, 1am, & preteen/pre-prog, 11:30am; Sat, Musar study (Mon-Fri, 10am); High Tea (Tues & Thurs, 4pm); World Affairs Discussion Group (Tues, 3pm); Zoom & Learn (Wed, noon); Youth Zoom Nights for And Ruth & Scholom grades 4-7 Wed, 7pm, & USY (grades 8-12) Thurs, 8pm (contact: rabbiadlalibrahim@bethisrael.ca); & Zoom & Talmud (Thurs, 7:45 pm).

In-person weekday services, 6pm. bethisrael.ca.

Chabad of Richmond: Munyarras West Hastings Times of Doctors class, Talmud class & other online offerings: chabadrichmond.com/templates/events.htm.

Jewish Academy: Insight, a course for women, led by Malky Birton (Sun, 7-9pm); kabbalah series, taught by Rabbi Bitton (Mon, 7-9pm.), Talmud study with the rabbi (Tues, 7-8pm); & other Zoom events & classes: chabadrichmond.com.

JCSY Vancouver: Learn & Earn.

Building communities and enriching lives since 1986. To learn more about our services visit: www.porte.ca 604.732.7651

Wishing our community a happy and healthy New Year!

Market Meats Team

ART DOWN TOWN: V ancouver V isual Art Foundation & the Vancouver Business Improvement Association showcase artists, who share & express their talent, as well as sell their work, at Lot 19 655 West Hastings, Wed & Fri, 11am-5pm, until Sept. 30.

Jewish Federation AGM via Zoom. Sept. 30, 7pm. Register via jewishvancouver.org/zoom20.

Your Jewish Genes includes Amy Byer-Shaitman, aka “the BRCA Responder,” author of Recovering Little Lily. The BRCA Gene, Hereditary Cancers & Lifesaving Whispers from the Grandmother I Never Knew. Matt Samsin, peer navigator with FORCE (Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered); members of B.C. Cancer Agency’s Hereditary Cancer Program & High Risk Clinic, including Dr. Rosa Chefariz, surgical oncologist, & Allison Mardin, genetic counselor. Oct. 1, 7pm. Register at yourjewishgenewebinar.eventbrite. Tick- ets by donation towards the BRCAnet bursary program, which supports access to genetic testing.

Children and youth programming at Or Shalom starts in October: Shabbat Shuli (ages 5-9), Bright Lightings (ages 6-9) & Bybunch (simulcast micro-mitzvah program). In formation & registration: orshalom.ca.

What We See: photos by people who have continued to be isolated at home & stories about those images & the experi- ences individuals have lived during this time. Until Nov. 10 at Zuck Gallery: gallery@jccgv.bc.ca for viewing options.

20 Meaningful Moments: ask a Shara Tzeck rabbi a question on Jewish law, current events, community concerns, etc. To schedule a time: info@ sharatzeck.com.

COVIDHelp Vancouver connects at-risk individuals of COVID-19 to low-risk volunteers who help with tasks like grocery delivery, walking, virtual dances & more. To receive help or to volunteer: covidhelpvancouver.com or 778- 280-8666.


Women's Giving Circle of Vancouver: total of $45,000 donated to over 100 female-led organizations and small businesses. Women’s Giving Circle of Vancouver: total of $45,000 donated to over 100 female-led organizations and small businesses.


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La Shana Tova 5781 May it be a happy and healthy New Year!

Market Meats Team
In addition to feeding customers, Ofra Sixto is helping people who are homeless. Sixto said the idea is catching on. “It’s amazingly successful,” she said. So far, Sixto estimates she has given out in excess of 1,300 meals. She admitted that the donations she receives don’t fully cover the out-of-pocket expenses. “But it doesn’t matter to me,” she said. “It’s not about that $5 that people give. It’s about the acknowledgment of the situation. “You know, I speak with [the people living on the street],” Sixto said. “I stop and say, how are you today? Did you eat anything? How are you feeling? They are people. They were babies. Somebody loved them or not when they were babies, you know? Something happened to these people along their lives [before they got to where] they are. Nobody chooses to live on the street because it’s fun, right?”

In June, the province of British Columbia issued a revised health order to guide restaurants in how they can operate safely during the coronavirus pandemic. Sixto has taken those rules to heart. Her seating is about half-capacity, with tables situated two metres apart. And she has some gentle ground rules: patrons must agree to sanitize (either with hand sanitizer or by handwashing) when entering the restaurant and wear a mask when walking to and from the table.

Sixto also supports the province’s request to record the contact information of at least one customer per table. According to the province’s health office, the information is retained only in case COVID-19 contact tracing is necessary. Sixto said most people appreciate the effort that restaurant owners are making to keep their venues safe and comfortable.

When it came to navigating the recent shutdown, Sixto said her landlord played a big role. “My landlord is amazing,” she said. The temporary rent reduction allowed her to keep operating – “I never closed, not even for one day.”

Ofra’s Kitchen, located at 1088 Denman St., in Vancouver (604-688-2444, ofraskitchen.com), is open Israeli hours, starting at 11:30 a.m. and closing at “8ish” in the evening.

“As long as there are people, I'm feeding them. If you come by and I am there, I will open the door and seat you,” Sixto said. “Just like Israeli hours.”

Jan Lee’s articles and blog posts have been published in B’nai B’rith Magazine, Voices of Conservative and Masorti Judaism, Times of Israel, as well as a number of business, environmental and travel publications. Her blog can be found at multicultural-jew.polestarpassages.com.
I should pay attention to this,” she said. “Why do I keep running into him?”

She had first met Sadoff in New York, when she was en route to Israel and he was rooming with a friend of hers. On a different trip to Israel, for a cousin’s bar mitzvah, the pair met again. The Beth Tikvah meetup was third time lucky.

Relocating to Canada was not in the cards until recently, but it was something like a long-held dream. “My husband used to say to me years ago, hey, do you think we can move to Canada?” Tendler recalled. “I’d say, Ross, I’m a female rabbi. The chance of that, at this point in time, is very slight. A decade ago, there were many fewer female rabbis in Canada.”

In fact, Tendler is the first female pulpits of a Conservative shul in British Columbia. A few factors account for the family’s attraction to Metro Vancouver. For one thing, they wanted a Jewish day school, which Chattanooga has not had for a number of years. “We are very excited about RJDS [Richmond Jewish Day School] because we think it will offer the flexibility that our kids will greatly benefit from,” she said.

The family loved Chattanooga, but even at one of the most diverse public schools in town, not being Christian was sometimes an issue. “We say things are going to be different but nothing changes,” she said. “I went to Washington, D.C., after the shooting in [Parkland Florida and we say things are going to change but nothing changes. At some point, you have to do something different. The lobbies are too strong and we can’t even talk in the States about gun safety. It’s all like, you’re taking away my rights. Well, what about public safety?”

The community, honestly, has gone above and beyond ... and just really made us feel welcome.”

Possibly above all, the family just thought that British Columbia would feel like home. “I think that, in many ways, my family moved here for holistic health reasons,” she said. “We just wanted a place that felt healthier and was more aligned with our values.”

Even comparatively small things like an efficient recycling program make Tendler feel kinship with her new hometown. “It’s a small thing but, in general, I just feel that our values and what we want to teach our children are more in line with Canada, at least with British Columbia and Vancouver, with open-mindedness and, I would say, respect for other people.”

While the transition to their new hometown was complicated, they made the best of it. During the transcontinental road trip, they stopped at sites like the St. Louis Arch, the Badlands, Yellowstone and Mount Rushmore. “We took some little hikes and saw bison and prairie dogs,” said Tendler. “It was fun.”
CEMETERY from page 20

said, that all members of the community be treated equally. Those being buried in New Westminster had funerals in a chapel, while those in Surrey did not. The new Surrey chapel was funded within the existing budget, but, if a community member wanted to contribute to the chapel, Jampolsky said, naming opportunities could be considered.

“The other thing we’re doing in Surrey is spending more time and effort and money to make Surrey look a lot nicer,” he said. “We are doing more landscaping work, we’re planting flowers and doing things that make it look very, very nice. We’re putting a lot of effort into that property.”

The Surrey cemetery contains about 2,000 plots while the much older New Westminster site has about 10,000. While approximately 5,000 of the New Westminster plots are filled, Jampolsky acknowledges that he can’t accurately predict how long the cemetery has before it is full.

“It really depends,” he said. There are about 80 burials annually in New Westminster. That would suggest about 60 years before it is full. But the community is growing quickly, so perhaps it would be only 50 years. At the same time, a plot may be purchased and not used for decades, he said. If a young family purchased plots today, it is reasonable to assume some burials might not occur until the 22nd century.

Sam Margolis has written for the Globe and Mail, the National Post, UPI and MSNBC.
The Vancouver group joined their peers around the world in a simultaneous Zoom-powered broadcast of the rally, dubbed “Halev BeBalfour” (“The Heart Is in Balfour”).

San Francisco with the Golden Gate and so on, Vancouver had its share of the focus.

Anyone who is interested can watch the video, available on Democrat TV’s Facebook page. It shows how Israelis worldwide have joined together to express their concern about the situation in Israel. In the video, you can hear people from Vancouver speaking about the need for the Israeli people to come together again and recover from the many years of divisiveness, the culture of corruption and the fear-mongering. The Vancouver group ended its two-minute segment calling for internal peace, and singing the late Arik Einstein’s “You and I Will Change the World”) and “Kol Ha’olam Kulo Gesher Tzar Me’od” (“The Whole World is a Very Narrow Bridge”).

It’s no secret to anyone following Israeli news that, in past years, the country has suffered from growing internal tensions and political instability, which resulted in three elections without the outcome of investigative case No. 3000 (aka the “Submarine Scandal”) still pending, Netanyahu was indicted in October 2019 on three counts of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Demonstrations, gatherings and marches spanning hundreds of locations in major cities, road junctions and highway bridges near the prime minister’s private residence in Caesarea and in Balfour itself have consistently grown in attendance, culminating in weekly events at the end of Sabbath since June. Fueled by the unity of more than 20 grassroots movements, notably Ein Matan (Unacceptable), Protest of the Individuals, Crime Minister, and the Black Flags, the assembly at Balfour drew an estimated 45,000 marchers and protesters at the end of August, much higher than the numbers reported by major media outlets such as Walla News and Ynet. While the protesters appear to come from all political factions, age groups, religious backgrounds and Jewish ethnic divisions, Netanyahu and his supporters have referred to them as “anarchists,” “aliens” and even “traitors.”

It’s quite possible that by the time you read this, the outcomes of the protests, the fragile political balance and the situation of the health crisis in Israel may be quite different. What won’t change, with time or distance, is that Israelis around the globe will continue their struggle to protect and defend the unity of more than 20 grassroots movements, notably Ein Matan (Unacceptable), Protest of the Individuals, Crime Minister, and the Black Flags, and the Vancouver group’s rally is a testament to the global connection and solidarity shared by Israelis worldwide.
Schara Tzedeck Cemetery Board

Listed below are the names of those who have been buried in the Schara Tzedeck Cemetery in New Westminster, Surrey, and Mountain View in the last year.

May their memories be for a blessing.

Michael Abramskey
Byron Aceman
Igael Amreny
Anna Bakalinsky
Sheyi Barkin
Elka Beigel
Daniel Benbassat
Salomon Bichin
Dorothy Chechik
Yakov Chudnovskyy
Ian Clyde
Herzel Cohen
William Davids
Diana Edelman
David Feldman
Freda Feldstein
Michael Felkrantz
Bernard Freeman
Beverly Freeman
Lenore Garfield
Irving Glassner
Shelley Goldberg
Michael Goslin
Monty Gracen
Dov Grazier
Montague (Monty) Grant
Joseph Grossman
Yehuda Harari
Noel Jampolsky
Lila Kantrowiz
Rhona Karsusky
Avraham Katz
Daniel Kauffman
Fajwel Kow
David Krougman
Miriam Lazar
Lloyd Mallin
Rose Markis
Magda Markus
Shirley Morris
Alan Moses
Israel Moskowitz
Feiga Niskina
William (Bill) Ornstein
Shlomo Parpara
Lev Pirkes
Nan Raviv
William (Bill) Rosen
Ernest Rothschild
Yuriy Ruben
Leah Shafarson
Freda Sher
Bernard Shoub
Margaret Stark
Wen Hsun (Peter) Tuan
Gregori Tutelman
Michael Waisman
William Benjamin Davids
Marvin Wosk
Louisa Yehia
Ralph Yorsh
Marc Youngson
Israel Zwecker

In an effort to keep all members of our community safe, there will be no in-person memorial services taking place this year between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur as is our custom.

A telecast ZOOM memorial service will take place on SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 at 11:30 am.

Please follow this link to attend this service:

www.zoom.us/join
Meeting ID is: 778 836 7607

Those wishing to visit our cemeteries between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are welcome to do so, but we ask you to maintain appropriate physical distance from others while on the property. Properties are open daily except Shabbat and Jewish Holidays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

On behalf of the Schara Tzedeck Cemetery Board, we wish you and your family a meaningful and safe Shana Tova!
Evolution of the Jewish calendar

DEBORAH RUBIN FIELDS

The Jewish calendar is an amazing conceptualization that evolved over time. In his blog on the Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hafutsot website, Uri Dorman relates that, originally, the Jewish calendar was a solar calendar. But it was not just a solar calendar, it was a holy solar calendar, delivered by angels to Enoch. (See the Rabbinical Assembly’s Machzor Lev Shalem for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, published almost a decade ago.)

In a bold move, the scholars declared that G-d had handed religious authority to humans. “Each month, moons and intercalate years. But, until now, the reckoning of new year. In fact, it points out four such dates on the Jewish calendar:
• The first of Elul is the new year for tithing of animals (some say the first of Tishrei);
• The first of Tishrei is the new year for years, sabbaticals and Jubilee, for planting and vegetables;
• The first of Shevat is the new year for trees, according to the House of Shammai, while the House of Hillel (which we adhere to today) says the 15th of Shevat, or Tu b’Shevat.

With its thrice daily prayers, the synagogue came to replace the Temple. Excluding Yom Kippur, synagogue attendance is higher on Rosh Hashanah than any other time of year. Rosh Hashanah prayers are compiled in a special prayer book, or Machzor.

Amid COVID-19, the following words about Rosh Hashanah have heightened meaning: “The celebration of the New Year involves a mixture of emotions. On the one hand, there is a sense of gratitude at having lived to this time. On the other hand, the beginning of a new year raises anxiety. What will my fate be this year? Will I live out the year? Will I be healthy? Will I spend my time wisely, or will it be filled in a way that does not truly bring happiness?” (See the Rabbinical Assembly’s Machzor Lev Shalem for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, published almost a decade ago.)

Sounding the shofar is one of the special additions to Rosh Hashanah services. According to Norman Bloom — in a 1978 article on Rosh Hashanah prayers in Tradition: A Journal of Orthodoxy Jewish Thought — the timing of the shofar blowing weighed in the physical safety and comfort of the congregation. Hard as it may be to comprehend today, scholars considered potential attacks from both local enemies of the Jews and from Satan himself. They also considered the comfort of the infirm, who might not be able to stay through a long service.

Rosh Hashanah has other curious customs. For example, there is a tradition of having either a fish head or, among some Sephardim, a lamb’s head as part of the Rosh Hashanah meal. This is meant to symbolize that, in the year to come, we should be at the rosh or head (on top), rather than at the tail (at the bottom). Vegetarians and vegans substitute a head of lettuce.

Both Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews have Rosh Hashanah seder traditions. The symbolic foods include beets, leeks, pomegranates, pumpkins and beans. As Rahel Musleah writes in Jerusalem: The Politics and Theology Behind Jewish Time, the Jewish calendar is an “amazing conceptualization that evolved over time.”

Rosh Hashanah greeting cards from the author’s family’s collection. The cards are almost 100 years old. The translation of the one in which people are walking into the synagogue is, “It is signed by Chaim Goldberg, a well-known artist who also illustrated many children’s books. The party postcard, also done by Goldberg, is a printed rhyme, which translates as, “Boy, girl! Dear, refined! Who is like you! Happy letters, dear want to write for you!”
Rosh Hashanah

Celebrating world’s birthday

DVORA WAYSMAN

One of the many names of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is Yom Ha’Aton, the birthday of the world. It is the day on which our tradition says the world was created.

Before we can begin to celebrate this “birthday,” however, something is required of us. During the month prior to Rosh Hashanah, we prepare ourselves spiritually for forgiveness and, in the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, we are meant to ask forgiveness of anyone we may have hurt during the year, even unintentionally. We are required to atone for wrongs between people, in contrast to the sins that arise between us and G-d. We cannot make a spiritual “return,” if we remain shackled with unresolved guilt and resentments.

More Jews attend synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, the Book of Life is examined, our acts in the preceding year weighed and judged. On this basis, it is decided “who shall live and who shall die … who shall be brought low and who shall be exalted.” For this reason, we wish for another, “May you be inscribed for a good year.” We are taught that the only way to avert a severe decree is by “penitence, prayer and charity.” According to Rabbi Kutsoppel, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan, three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah – one for the wholly righteous, one for the wholly wicked and one for most of us, those in between. The wholly righteous are inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life, the wicked in the Book of Death and the rest of us are held suspended until Yom Kippur, when we are judged worthy or unworthy. The zodiacal symbol for the Hebrew month of Tishrei is, fittingly, a balance – the scales of justice.

Many people accompany all meals at this time with apples and honey. In addition to its other symbolism, the apple represents the Shechinah (Divine Presence), which kabbalists refer to as an apple orchard.

With the emphasis on creation at this time, it is customary to eat an apple dipped in honey on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, after the blessing on the wine and bread, and say: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the tree.” This is followed by: “May it be Your will, our G-d and G-d of our fathers, to renew unto us a good and sweet year.”

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we eat a new fruit – one we have not yet tasted this season – and we recite a blessing over it.

How do we know on what day of the year the world was created? We know that the first word of the Torah is Bereishit, in the beginning. When the letters are changed around, they read: aleph b’Tsibor, the first of Tishrei, when G-d began to create the heaven and the earth.

May we all be inscribed for a good year.

Dvora Waysman is a Jerusalem-based author. She has written 14 books, including The Pomegranate Pendant, which was made into a movie, and her latest novella, Search for Sarah. She can be contacted at dwaysman@gmail.com or through her blog dvorawaysman.com.
The danger in certainty

RABBI DR. DONNIEL HARTMAN

Like many of you, I approach the New Year and Yom Kippur with a heavy heart. Ashamnu. We have sinned. Much is not well, not as it should or can be. Our communities are filled with anger, fear, hatred, pain, and acrimony.

Our tradition placed a heavy burden on us. Atonement is only attainable when accompanied by a commitment to change one’s behaviour. The burden is doubly heavy, for we are not merely responsible for our individual failings, but for our societal ones. Ashamnu. We have sinned. Yom Kippur is not merely a day of prayer in search of Divine forgiveness, but a day of taking responsibility for the world that we have created.

There are so many places to start this process and, for those who don’t know where, the Jewish prayer book provides guidance. Ashamnu. Bagadnu. Dibarnu dofi. We have sinned. We have betrayed. We have taken that which is not ours. We have spoken evil.

This year, I will begin with the sin of certainty. The certainty that I have the truth and others do not. The certainty that I am right and others wrong. The certainty that I am good and others bad. The certainty that I love my country and others do not.

“Ours is the God and God of our ancestors, we are neither so obstinate nor so obstinate as to claim in your presence that we are righteous, without sin; for we, like our ancestors who came before us, have sinned.” (Yom Kippur Machzor)

Inherent to every social structure is the reality of difference. Members, adherents, citizens, who join or are joined together by blood, race, gender, ideology, religion, culture or nationality, inevitably find themselves disagreeing over issues both minor and major. Differences are a permanent and inevitable reality of life. By themselves, they do not undermine social cohesion. What threatens unity is how we respond to the reality.

The three conceptual tools for reflecting on difference are pluralism, tolerance and deviance. When those who are different are classified as deviant, the possibility of a shared society with them comes to an end. It is here that the sin of certainty spreads its destructive poison. The habits of certainty allow one to shun and shame those who do not share in the truth as you know it, and to move them to the margins of society, if not outside it. Armed with certainty, acts of blatant aggression are clothed with the garments of self-preservation and sanctioned as acts of group loyalty.

A certainty of a different form is played out in the category of pluralism. We are pluralistic toward those differences that we assume to be of equal value to our own positions – “These and these are the words of the living God.” With pluralism, we accommodate difference that we believe to be wrong.

The danger that lies with the sin of certainty is that it attempts to create social life around the categories of plurality and deviance alone. Difference to which I ascribe value is accommodated and welcomed as my friend.

Wishing you a Happy New Year
CERTAINTY from page 33

Difference that I do not, is rejected and ostracized as my enemy. I and my certainty are the ultimate arbiters of who is in and who is out, who is valued and who is not, who is to be cared for and who is not, who is to be respected and who vilified.

It is tolerance, the often-derided category, that is most absent in much of contemporary social discourse. One does not tolerate that which one values, but rather that which one thinks is wrong. Tolerance can only take root where the answers will be stored. The annual 10Q questions are not intrinsically religious and are focused on life, personal goals, plans for the future, relationships, our place in the world and more.

For 10 days, starting Sept. 18, and coinciding with the traditional period of reflection during the High Holidays, participants of all backgrounds will turn to the individual to ask big questions about what we can learn to take us into the future.”

To find out more about 10Q and to register, go to doyou10q.com. Find out more about Reboot at rebooters.net.

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Rosh Hashanah

Reboot helps take stock

Reboot’s annual 10Q reflection project, which sends participants a question a day for 10 days will return for the 13th year this month. But, with the challenges, grief and fear of COVID-19 weighing heavily on the world, this year’s 10Q will include additional questions to offer a space for exploring and preserving feelings and experiences of this unique time in a digital time capsule.

Each year, for 10 days, the 10Q project from the nonprofit Reboot captures daily insights, experiences and beliefs from tens of thousands of people, many of whom have been participating since 10Q’s founding in 2008 and have amassed a personal archive.

“It has been found again and again that, when difficult circumstances hit, the simple experience of taking a pen and paper and allowing our inner voice to speak through our pens is in itself a healing and regenerative act,” said Nicola Beridman, 10Q co-founder (in partnership with writer Ben Greenman and educator Amelia Klein). “We know from 13 years of answers just how meaningful the 10Q experience is for so many, but, this year, when the foundation of everyday life has shifted so seismic-ly and we are desperately attempting to find meaning in the madness, this simple act of reflection is both anchoring and essential.”

For 10 days, starting Sept. 18, and coinciding with the traditional period of reflection during the High Holidays, participants of all backgrounds will turn to the individual to ask big questions about what we can learn to take us into the future.

To find out more about 10Q and to register, go to doyou10q.com. Find out more about Reboot at rebooters.net.

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Pictures by Hartman and author of the 2016 book God Second: How to Save Religion
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I'm here to boldly encourage you to try something entirely different at your Rosh Hashanah table this year. No, not a porcupine. A new food. Serve it, to the non-vegetarians. And, if anybody asks what they're eating, confidently tell them it's a family secret. Don't forget to mention that, if you tell anybody, you'll have to kill them. That generally stops people in their tracks. Let me be perfectly transparent: the food I'm about to suggest is on the meat spectrum. Alright, meat adjacent. Isn't it enough that everyone's coughing and aching off the unparalled tender-ness of the dish? The specifics are on a need-to-know basis. And no one needs to know. Except your butcher, OK, enough. It's beef tongue. You heard cor-rectly. I'm aware it's not politically correct – after all, some farmer is clearly stifling free speech. Even if it only belongs to a cow. And, technically, they can't speak anyway. So, moot point.

Just so we're clear, beef tongue is defini-tively not vegan. Or vegetarian-friendly. Not by a New York mile. I'm simply pro-viding you with an alternative to screaming chicken, Coca-Cola brisket and mayo-slawed, onion soup-mix salad.

If you're a man, chances are you can't relate to what I'm about to describe. You ladies, personally, I prefer to just boil it, cool it and peel it, people are still enthusiastically scarfing it on white bread. I can see the lynch mob that forms on top. When tender, serve as is, or slice and serve with the sweet and sour sauce.

At the end of the day, a well-cooked beef tongue is all you need and nothing you don't. But, that some of you are dis-gusted at the thought of eating tongue. So, for you finicky folks, I offer up another old school recipe – short ribs. This one is decades old and was handed down from my father's cousin, Bertha Bloom. Nobody said it was diet food, so if you're not fancy about calories, go for it. Short ribs are no-thing for being fancy, but therein lies mos-of their charm. Alright, all of their charm. You'll die tomorrow. And, hopefully, not die of clogged arteries tonight. But, have your cardiologist on speed dial, just in case.

BERTR BLOOM'S BARBECUE SHORT RIBS
Season two pounds of short ribs with salt, pepper and garlic salt then broil them until brown and half cooked. Transfer them to a covered Dutch oven (or similar deep roasting pan). For the sauce:
- 1 cup chili sauce
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 4 tsp dry mustard
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 clove minced garlic, crushed
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- small tin of crushed pineapple

Mix the ingredients together – the juice from the pineapple tin, but not the pineapple—put in a pot and bring to a boil. Pour the sauce over the ribs and cover. Cook in an oven pre-heated at 300°F to 325°F for one-and-a-half to two hours, basting occasionally. Add the crushed pineapple after 20 minutes under the other ingredients. Bring to a boil, lower heat and let simmer until tender. Taste Edwards cooking and leave uncovered. Prepare to be awed by the yumminess factor. For your guests who prefer healthy food, you might want to direct them elsewhere for Rosh Hashanah dinner. Or, if you're a really nice and accommodating host, make them a marinated tofu mock-rost. Or a Tofu brisket. But, for those of you indulging in the short ribs, now might be a good time to loosen your belt or unzip your skirt, and prepare to stuff your belly. It's Rosh Hashanah. Celebrate with some new ar-reatinal steals! Tell Dr. Saul I sent you.

Shelley Cirkvin, aka the Accidental Balabusta, is a happily retired librarian and communications officer. For 17 years, she wrote a weekly book review column for the Rich-mond Review. She's currently a freelance writer and volunteer.
A history of sweetness

Although beekeeping as an occupation is not mentioned in the Bible, bees are mentioned four times, honeycombs are referred to eight times, and honey is referred to 26 times. Archeologists actually have discovered proof that there was beekeeping and honey 3,000 years ago in a site in northern Israel.

Among Ashkenazim, sweet desserts for Rosh Hashanah are customary, particularly lekach, or honey cake, and teiglach, a hard, doughy, honey and nut cookie. Some say the origin of the sweets comes from a passage in the book of Hosea mentioning “love cakes of raisins.” There is also a passage in II Samuel, which talks about the habititude of Israel, “to everyone a cake of bread and a cake made in a pan and a sweet cake.”

It was Ezra, the fifth-century BCE religious leader who was commissioned by the Persian king to direct Jewish affairs in exile, who, as a political leader and cup bearer of the king in the fifth century BCE, who told the returning exiles to eat and drink sweet things.

Honey cakes traditionally include honey, spices, coffee and brown sugar as major ingredients, but some contain cognac, brandy, orange or lemon peel and nuts. In Curacao, for example, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, raisins, nuts or currants, lemon or orange peel is added. In Zimbabwe, Jews include allspice, cinnamon, cloves, raisins, chopped nuts, brandy and chopped candied fruit in their honey cake.

In That Hungarian in My Kitchen, Linda Radke includes a Hungarian recipe from her family, which includes the basic ingredients and orange juice. A cookbook of Russian recipes includes a Ukrainian honey cake, medovik, with the basic ingredients as well as cardamom, orange peel, raisins, walnuts and apricots.

In The Jewish Book of Food, Claudia Roden writes that honey cake was a favourite in Germany as far back as the Middle Ages, and that lewkuchen, honey gingerbread, was also mentioned as early as the 12th century.

According to John Cooper in Eat and Be Satisfied: A Social History of Jewish Food, references to honey cake were made in the 12th century by a French sage, Simcha of Vitry, author of the Machzor Vitry, and by German rabbi Meir of Rothenburg in The Jewish Cooking from Boston to Baghdad that Crypto-Jews in 16th-century Latin America ate honey cake at weddings, in memory of the honeycomb that an angel gave to Avinah when she married Joseph.

In The Complete International Jewish Cookbook, Evelyn Rose (z”l), a maven of Jewish cooking from England, wrote that the first cakes made with artificial raising agents were honey cake, and honey was the chosen sweetener because sugar was not widely available until the end of the 19th century. As an aside, she also recommended keeping a honey cake in a closed container for a week before serving it, so it will “mature.”

Among the Chasidim, it was customary for the rebe to distribute lekach to his followers, and others would request a piece of honey cake from one another to Ezra Yossi Kipput.

This practice developed as a substitute for any charity the person might choose to receive.

Gil Marks (z”l), in The World of Jewish Dessert, says flourden, a layered yeast cake, was traditional for Rosh Hashanah among Franco-German Jews. Made with a cheese filling, it could be eaten after a meat meal, since they only waited one hour between meat and dairy.

Strudel, from the German word for whirlpool, was also common for Rosh Hashanah among European Jews.

The most traditional cookie for Rosh Hashanah is teiglach, the dough pieces dropped into a hot honey syrup and simmered until brown then left to cool. It has been suggested that this Eastern European sweet was probably invented by some housewife who had dough left over and dropped the pieces into a boiling honey syrup.

Many Jews of Sephardi background make teighash for Rosh Hashanah.

This cake with walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts or pecans, has a hot syrup poured over it. The syrup can be made with sugar, water and liqueur, according to Rabbi Robert Sternberg in The Sephardic Kitchen. Sternberg also points to rodanchas as a popular Sephardi Rosh Hashanah sweet. These spiral-shaped pastries of phyllo dough contain a pumpkin or squash filling because these vegetables and their shape symbolize the cycle of life and the ascent of the soul into heaven.

Here are some honey cakes to try this year.

**TISHPISHTI**

Jews who lived in Turkey after being expelled from Spain in 1492 adopted this dish, whose name means “quick and done.” Some say it was always served on Rosh Hashanah, but it was also popular for Passover because it has no flour.

2 cups ground almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios or walnuts
1 cup cake meal
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp ground cloves or allspice
6 separated eggs
1 cup sugar
2 tbsp orange juice
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 tbsp grated lemon or orange peel

3/4 cup honey
1/2 cup sugar
2/3 cup water
1/4 lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease a rectangular baking pan.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine nuts, cake meal, cinnamon and cloves or allspice.
3. In another bowl, beat egg yolks with sugar. Add to nut mixture along with orange juice, oil and lemon or orange peel.
4. Beat egg whites in another bowl until stiff. Fold into batter. Pour into cake pan and bake 45 minutes.
5. Place honey, sugar, water and lemon juice in a saucepan. Stir until sugar dissolves. Increase heat, bring to a boil and cook for one minute. Let cool.
6. Cut cake into squares or diamonds. Drizzle syrup over cake. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**MOM’S HONEY LOAF CAKE**

I don’t recall my mom baking this, but it was in my collection of recipes as being hers.

3 1/2 cups flour
1/4 tsp salt
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp tapping soda
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1/8 tsp ground cloves
1/8 tsp ground ginger
1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
4 eggs
3/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup vegetable oil

2 cups honey
1 1/2 cup strong coffee
1 1/2 cup raisins
1 1/2 cup chopped nuts

1. Preheat oven to 325° F. Grease two loaf pans or a rectangular baking pan.
2. Combine in a bowl flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, ginger and nutmeg.
3. Beat eggs and sugar in another bowl until fluffy. Add oil, honey and coffee.
4. Stir in flour mixture. Add raisins and nuts. Pour into pans. Bake for 1.5 hours.

**Sybil Kaplan** is a journalist, lecturer, book reviewer and food writer in Jerusalem. She created and leads the weekly English-language Shuk Walks in Machane Yehuda, she has compiled and edited nine kosher cookbooks, and is the author of Witness to History: Ten Years as a Woman Journalist in Israel.
A husband competes with his oldest daughter for his wife's affections, a man ponders whether he is more attracted to a 10-year-old girl or their divorced older sister, a woman has an abortion she didn't necessarily want, a young man writes a dozen plays against his abusive father. Jonah Rosenfeld tackles difficult subject matter in his short stories, with no compulsion to solve any particular problem and no desire to explore the thoughts and feelings of his characters, and thereby offer insight into parts of humanity that we may shy away from contemplating. English readers can now access these stories and ideas, originally conceived in Yiddish, thanks to a newly published translation by Langara College's Rachel Mines.

The Rivals and Other Stories (Syracuse University Press, 2020) comprises 19 of Rosenfeld's stories. Born in Chortorysk, Russia (now, Chortorysk, Ukraine), he moved to the United States in 1881 to 1914, immigrating in 1921 to New York, where he was a major contributor to the Forverts. In total, he wrote 20 volumes of short stories and three novels. Rosenfeld's "stories provide a corrective to the typical understanding of Yiddish literature as sentimental or quaint," writes Mines in the book's preface. Mines said, "Although the stories were written decades ago for a Yiddish-speaking audience, they are surprisingly contemporary in flavour."

The first Rosenfeld story Mines read, in Yiddish, was The Rivals (Kunkevaren), six or seven years ago. "I'd only been studying Yiddish for a few years at that point and was reading to improve my language skills," she said. "I was so impressed with the story that I decided, just for practice, to translate it into English. Later on, I found out that an English translation had already been published in [Irving] Howe and [Eliezer] Greenberg's A Treasury of Yiddish Stories, but, by then, I was hooked on both Rosenfeld and Yiddish translation."

Mines poses several reasons why Rosenfeld's stories resonate today. "I think of his exploration of the psyche that attracts Mines to Rosenfeld's work. "I'm interested in psychology—always have been—and particularly in people's unconscious, and sometimes counterintuitive, reasons for thinking and behaving the way they do. So Rosenfeld's insight into the darker corners of the human mind was an instant draw. I should say that his stories stand up very well to many current theories of human thought and behaviour. For example, the protagonist of The Rivals is a classic malignant narcissist—he ticks all the boxes. It's interesting to note that Rosenfeld's story was first published in 1909, several years before Otto Rank's and Sigmund Freud's theories of narcissism came out. Rosenfeld was an intuitive psychologist, and a very perceptive one."

"Another reason Rosenfeld's stories appeal to me is that they work very well in a 21st-century, multicultural setting," she said. "I've taught a number of the translations to first-year students at Langara, because of his characters' takes on immigration, women's rights, male-female relationships, generational conflict, cultural clash—this list goes on. I chanced on his background, my students found the stories interesting and engaging, so I gradually added more and more stories with Jewish content. The last few years, I've been teaching Rosenfeld's stories exclusively. My students love the stories and readily identify with (or at least understand) the characters and their predicaments. We've had many lively discussions!"

In an introductory chapter to The Rivals, Mines poses several questions she hopes students or other researchers will take on, including where Rosenfeld's place might be in the American literary canon. With the disclaimer that she is "just a lowly translator," Mines said, "But, if pressed for an answer, I'd have to say it's Rosenfeld's psychological insights. He's not entirely unique—other Jewish and/or American authors of his time were psychologically astute and wrote compelling character studies. But Rosenfeld went a bit beyond, in that his stories are almost Greek tragedies—his protagonist fail in their quests (for love, belonging, security, etc.) not because of external forces, but because of some internal, self-defeating habit of thought that they may not be consciously aware of. Rosenfeld isn't the only author to explore this type of psychological dichotomy, but he does so very consistently."
Thank you so much to everyone who has given to the *Jewish Independent* over the years, and especially since COVID-19 hit. Donations allow us to keep producing an award-winning publication that is committed to building a vibrant, growing Jewish community by connecting members from across the religious and political spectrums – something no other organization can do. To continue this unique and important service, we need community support.

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BOOKS

A testament to free speech

PAT JOHNSON

A new book on an incendiary topic turns out to be not quite as expected. The Conflict over the Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate, by Kenneth S. Stern, may be the most comprehensive assessment of the (at least) 20-year battle on North American campuses between pro-Israel and anti-Israel forces.

Jewish and pro-Israel readers picking up the work might anticipate a litany of horrors, anti-Zionist if not antisemitic, for all Jews, many American colleges have divorced from Israel.

“Many seem surprised when I say ‘zero,’ “he writes. “There are relatively few campuses where Israel is a burning issue, and every year the number of pro-Israel programs is usually at least double the anti-Israel ones. There are over 4,000 campuses in the U.S. – in the 2017-18 academic year, 149 had anti-Israel activity… So the campuses aren’t burning.”

He does not dismiss the extreme tensions on a few campuses, however. “[O]n some campuses where anti-Israel activity is prominent, pro-Israel Jewish students may feel marginalized, dismissed or vilified, sometimes with antisemitic tropes.” Identity politics and the conflation of Jewish people with “whiteness” creates racial conflict. “[T]he labeling of Jews as white becomes a problem when shared victimhood becomes a sacred symbol, a badge of honour, a precondition to enter a club of the oppressed. Antisemitic discrimination is rendered invisible.”

Though bigotry may play a role in the discussion, Stern does not see constructive resolutions in neologisms like trigger warnings, safe spaces and microaggressions.

“Faculty should have the right to give trigger warnings if they want, but I never do, and I think the idea is a horror one,” he writes. “I teach Mein Kampf. It’s disturbing – get over it. College should prepare one to be an adult, and there are no trigger warnings after graduation day. Why are we encouraging students to be ostriches? Shouldn’t they, rather, be learning how to navigate things that will likely unsettle them over the rest of their lives?”

He quotes CNN commentator Van Jones, a strong civil rights opponent, who opposes “safe spaces” on campus: “I don’t want you to be safe ideologically. I don’t want you to be safe emotionally. I want you to be strong. That’s different. I’m not going to pave the jungle for you. Put on some boots and learn how to deal with adversity. I’m not going to take the weights out of the gym. That’s the whole point of the gym.”

Stern contends a fundamental error has been made in defining terms. We want campuses that are open to expression – including, perhaps especially, difficult and disturbing ideas – but which protect students from real harassment and intimidation. Hate speech codes were efforts to say that ideas themselves can harass and intimidate. Ideas can and should make one uncomfortable (a comfort zone). White supremacists,” writes Stern. “It’s no coincidence that the white nationalists in recent years have wrapped their racist and antisemitic messages around the concept of free speech. Why would progressives allow these haters to steal the bedrock democratic principle of free speech, disingenuously saying that this is what their fight is about? By trying to deny alleged racists platforms, progressives are helping white supremacists,“ writes Stern. “It’s no coincidence that the white nationalists in recent years have wrapped their racist and antisemitic messages around the concept of free speech. Why would progressives allow these haters to steal the bedrock democratic principle of free speech, disingenuously saying that this is what their fight is about? By trying to deny alleged racists platforms, progressives are helping white supremacists.”

Strategically, he argues, trying to censor hateful ideas is self-defeating and advances hate agents by martyring them.

“By trying to censor, rather than expose and combat, speech the students perceived as hateful, they were actually helping the alt-right and white supremacists,” writes Stern. “It’s no coincidence that the white nationalists in recent years have wrapped their racist and antisemitic messages around the concept of free speech. Why would progressives allow these haters to steal the bedrock democratic principle of free speech, disingenuously saying that this is what their fight is about? By trying to deny alleged racists platforms, progressives are helping white supremacists.”

Another strategic failure, he argues,
Two compelling reads

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

Last year, I requested two books from Simon & Schuster Canada. Both contained strong female protagonists and stories that sounded compelling. While it took the pandemic slowdown before I had time to read them, I enjoyed both and would recommend them, albeit one with a caveat.

Let’s start with the debut novel, the one I breezed through even though I found the premise tenuous. I wanted to know how Samantha M. Bailey’s thriller Woman on the Edge ended, even as I cursed aloud at the two main characters – Nicole Markham, founder and head of a widely successful athletic wear company, and Morgan Kincaid, a woman who has rebuilt her life after her husband was caught swindling people and then killed himself.

For reasons not revealed initially, Nicole hands her baby to Morgan at a subway stop, then jumps to her death, though video of the incident makes it seem like Morgan may have taken the baby then pushed Nicole into the tracks. Alternating between Morgan’s attempt to clear her name and how Nicole came to give her baby to Morgan, the read is thrilling, even as it is too obviously contrived. At any point in time, a question or revelation from Nicole or Morgan could have shed light on their respective situations and cleared up critical matters. Yet, both women – unrealistically – keep their suspicions to themselves. The silences are necessary for the plot to work, so I chose to go where I was being led and relish the craziness of it all.

While there is no overt Jewish content in Woman on the Edge, Teennon-based writer and editor Bailey is Jewish. In her first novel, she shows a talent for creating dramatic tension, if not overall story structure. Despite its weaknesses, I found this novel a good escape read.

An absolute pleasure to read, and just as page-turning, is veteran author Alice Hoffman’s latest novel, The World That We Know, set during the Holocaust. In it, there is magic. It is tangible – the golem Ava, created by Ettie, the precocious daughter of a respected rabbi, to protect Lea – and more abstract, in the loyalty of Ava to Lea and the beautiful friendship that develops between Ava and a blue heron along their journey.

After her husband is murdered and her daughter Lea is almost raped, Hanni knows she must get Lea to Paris, but she herself cannot leave Berlin. So, she turns to the rabbits for help, but making a golem is risky business and he won’t do it. Ettie, though, plans to escape with her younger sister, and Hanni’s payment will help her do that. Ettie has observed her father at work, and is able to bring Ava into being. As Ava becomes more seemingly human, however, and forms a bond with the blue heron, the main tension of the novel arises – will her appreciation for her own life and its possibilities outweigh her responsibility to Lea?

Many other tensions and relationships mingle with history, which I found particularly rich. Both contained strong female protagonists and stories that sounded compelling. While it took the pandemic slowdown before I had time to read them, I enjoyed both and would recommend them, albeit one with a caveat.
A mong the many things this year has brought us is a reconsideration of race, equality and justice, spurred in part by racism and racially moti-vated violence, not least that perpetrated by police. In response, the Jewish community has stood solidly in support for the Black Lives Matter move-ment, despite some concerns by some about antisemitism in small parts of the movement. Whatever we have done, as we read the news from Kenosha or Louisville or other cities run by racist and civil unrest, is con-sidered, the issue perspective that is closer to home. 

Ealier this year, three Jews of colour began a modest movement to specifical-ly raise this topic more visibly, forming a group called No Silence on Race, which issued an open letter “from Black Jews, non-Black Jews of colour and our allies to Jewish organizations in Canada.” (See story at jew ishindepen-dent.ca/working-to-advance-equality-and their website, noshenceence.ca.) The letter asked organizations in the community to take tangible steps based on nine pillars they outlined: allyship, education, Indigenous education, equity consultancy, employment, anti-racist advisory, JOC leadership, programmeing and partnerships, and JOC voices. The Jewish Independent endorses this letter.

The letter went on to explain that organizations in the community consider mak-ing a statement detailing tangible ways they will seek to hear, engage with and empower Jewish people of colour. In response, the editorial board of the Independent has met as a group and also individually considered these issues. We offer this statement in an effort to voice our commitment to equity and justice for Jews of colour within our community and within the Jewish community as a whole, the community newspaper of Jewish British Columbians. We be-lieve that not all nine pillars are specifical-ly applicable to our community at this time, but some of these ideas will serve as a platform for the community to take part in the conversation.

In demonstrating allyship, in par-ticular, there are several specific, tan-gible, realizable goals we have identified and we add our own commitments to undertake. These include:

1. Redoubling our efforts to feature stories involving Jews of colour, their experiences, lives, accomplishments, challenges, specific issues, and events, as well as addressing intra-community conflicts and reconciliations between Jews of colour and the broader Jewish community.

2. Continuing to advance a model of journalism that encourages recon-ciliation between Indigenous Cana-dians, Jews and all Canadians;

3. Offering new and less frequently heard voices, including prioritizing writers who are Jews of colour and gender-diverse peo-ple, and actively seeking such voices, recognizing the deep well of experience and expression that has not traditionally been heard or amplified;

4. Partnering with other groups to provide a roadmap for other partners with individuals and organizations that elevate a diverse range of Jewish diasporas, histories and experiences;

5. Undertaking to learn and exem-plify diverse ways to understand lan-guage, gender, ability and other forms of identity difference for all; and

6. Amplifying, through our cover-age, resources from other community organizations dedicated to these goals, in ways that advance education and shar-ing resources;

7. Encouraging, in our reporting and commentary, inclusive and pro-gressive decision-making around com-munity allocations and fundraising, and engaging in educating about a vision of community philanthropy that advances these objectives.

We make these commitments con-scious of our shortcomings as individ-uals and as a small, struggling community institution, and strive for their fruition to the best of our abilities.

We recognize and appreciate the emotional labour required by Jews of colour, and of others who are self-adversely affected, and the emotional burden this places on the self and community. We are committed to minimize this burden through self-education and using existing resources to advance our understanding.

We aim to work together to provide a framework for discussion, and to share the emotional burden that comes with having to discuss the positions of others. We believe that the work of reconciliation and repair is essential to our community, and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to address the issues that face us.

We are committed to ensuring that our stories and perspectives are shared in a way that is respectful and inclusive. We will continue to work towards this goal, and we encourage our readers to join us in our efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable community.

Please note that due to the COVID pandemic, the J will be publishing twice a month:

**Correction**

In the article, “Holidays unlike any before,” (Jewish Independent, Aug. 28) it was mistakenly written that Or Shalom is affiliated with the Reconstructionist movement. In fact, it is affiliated with the Jewish Renewal movement.
Community stronger

JUDY ZELIKOVITZ

P

osh Hashanah is a time of new beginnings, a time to reflect on a year gone by and on the new year ahead. As is often the case with new beginnings, it is a time of uncertainty. Last Rosh Hashanah, we wished one another a sweet year, un

sure of the future but hopeful of things to come.

As we herald the arrival of this new year, we do so understanding that we control far less than we had thought. Normally, the uncertainty that comes with a new start is imbued with hope for the possibilities ahead. This year, however, it is un
certainty itself that dominates. As 5780 draws to a close, we have learned that we must seek what we can rely on: the strength of our community and our resolve to face these unprecedented challenges together.

In 5780, the challenges were many, and our community met them with an empowering, inspiring and united response.

When urgent help was needed, social service agencies and not-for-profits mobilized, delivering food, providing services remotely and offering support to those who needed it most. Jewish federations shifted their focus to emergency fundraising campaigns to meet the immediate needs of agencies on the frontlines, ensuring that the changing needs of our most vulnerable were met.

When COVID-19 hit, Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver immediately released $505,000 in emergency funds to meet these urgent needs and continue working with donors to generate additional funds for community agencies. CJIA advocated for the inclusion of not-for-profits in government support programs, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, and helped ensure that Jewish schools were eligible. Volunteers mobilized by the thousands, responding to calls for assistance, helping the many seriously impacted by COVID-19. Our community was tested in other ways, as antisemitism, the crafty shapeshifter that is always on the move, found new outlets during the pandemic. With Statistics Cana

da reporting a rise in antisemitic incidents through 5780, our community from coast to coast con

tinued to unite, offering support where it was needed most. Indeed, this was the year we learned the many ways we could help and, for far too many, how to reach out to ask for help ourselves.

As we move forward into 5781, we control far less than we had thought. Normally, the uncertainty that comes with a new start is imbued with hope for the possibilities ahead. This year, however, it is uncertainty itself that dominates. As 5780 draws to a close, we have learned that we must seek what we can rely on: the strength of our community and our resolve to face these unprecedented challenges together.

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Depression insidious

DOLORES LUBER

I

t was mid-March. All I had been hearing and seeing on the news were the words and im

ages related to contagion, epi

demics, China’s wet markets, people suffering the delays of crafting for the pandemic and COVID-19. It was getting louder and closer, somehow it traveled from China across the Pa

cific to Vancouver. We were now dealing with the pandemic in Van

couver, we were in lockdown, even if the government never called it that.

In a flash, my household emptied out. My eldest daughter, a University of British Columbia student, went back home; all her courses were now online. My boarder, a psychiatric nurse, feared getting infected and me and her immune-compromised partner, took a six-month leave of absence from her work and joined him on a sailboat off the coast of Van

couver Island. I cleaned and orga

nized and then it hit me—I was alone in the house with my Standard Poodle puppy Kesem. His name means “magic” in Hebrew and he truly is a won

derful companion, but…..

Lockdown, what was that? We

weren’t even sure of the future but hopeful of things to come.

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This crisis poses an existential threat to our community.

A seismic shift calls for an unprecedented response.

GIVE NOW AT JEWISHVANCOUVER.COM