

SHORESH

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**Congregation Etz Chayim
Community News**

JUNE 2020

סיון תש"פ | SIVAN 5780

**Honouring
the Legacy
of Holocaust
Survivors**

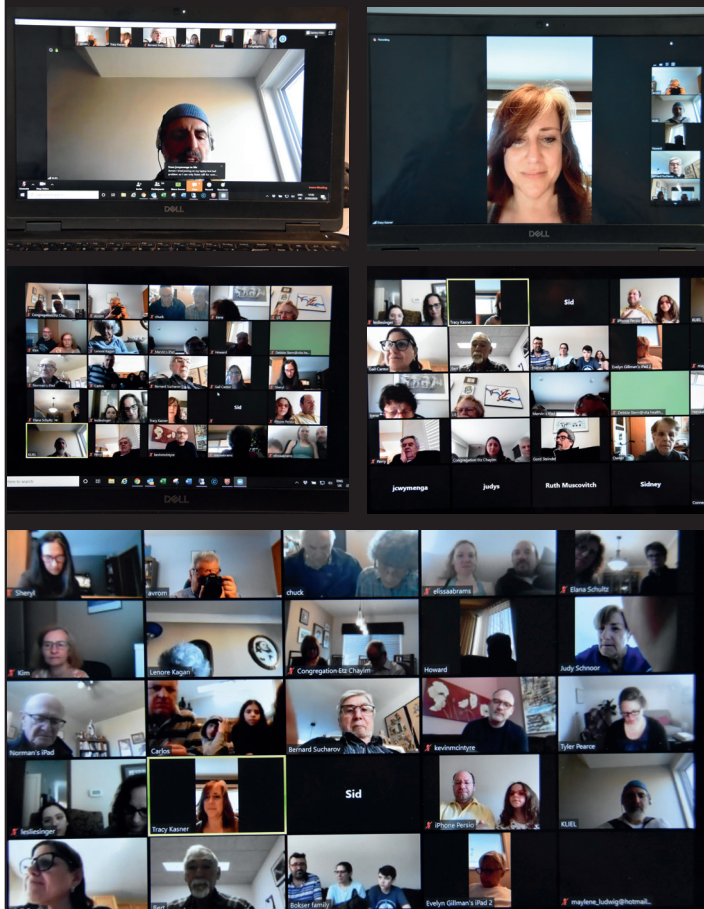
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Tisha B'Av: Mourning the Spiritual Loss of an Ideal

Often called the saddest day of the Jewish calendar, *Tisha B'Av*, the 9th day of Av, is a mid-summer *chag* (holiday), which begins this year at sunset July 29, and ends at nightfall July 30. On this day, we mourn the destruction of both Holy Temples in Jerusalem, and various other tragedies that occurred throughout the history of the Jewish people. We fast on *Tisha B'Av*, we deny ourselves other pleasures, and we pray.

"On *Tisha B'Av*, I don't mourn the physical structure, which many believe was the *Beit Hamikdash* (the Holy Temple). I mourn the spiritual loss of the ideal the temple represented," says Rabbi Kliel Rose. "It was a place of communion, unity, and peace, and the epicentre of Jewish spiritual life."

"How can we re-establish a foundation of being more harmonious, more collaborative with one another?" Rabbi Kliel asks.

He says he mourns the loss of the Temple for two reasons: "It would serve the Jewish community well to have spiritual centrality again. Also, it is incumbent on all Jews to know the origins and evolution of significant facets of our history and tradition. Many of us long for that unified, quintessential gathering space. Perhaps that's more of a spiritual longing," he considers.

For many Jews, the state of Israel now serves as a place of centrality, notes Rabbi Kliel. "But there's still work to be done to achieve what the Temple represented, as far as I am concerned."

"Some of us long for a third Temple—not a physical building but that utopian ideal. However, we haven't done enough to bring this about. That's part of the work of being a



Jew, a person, in this lifetime—bringing the world to a place of attunement, balance, and equanimity. We haven't achieved that; we're working towards it."

"It may sound simplistic, but overcoming poverty, racism, xenophobia, sexism—those are enormous hurdles for us as a society," he continues. "For me, the absence of those would lead to creation of a third Temple."

Rabbi Kliel is open about the fact that he fasts for only half the day on *Tisha B'Av*. "I celebrate the establishment of the state of Israel; at the same time, that isn't enough, we are not living yet in a state of peace." He points to Alex Sinclair, a teacher in Israel, whose words explain his own practice of observing the fast for a half day:

"Our hunger during the first part of the day will sensitize us to the tragedies that have befallen us. But our return to reality in the latter half of the day might help us, as a people, get over the psychosis of victimhood that warps our identity and our politics."

Rabbi Kliel says he can't ignore the fact that there is a state of Israel, which he celebrates. "In some ways, acknowledging this reality offsets the bitterness that *Tisha B'Av* has come to represent for the Jewish people for nearly two thousand years." ■

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Above: The Western Wall (the Kotel) in Jerusalem is the last remnant of our Second Temple. Jews from around the world gather here to pray.

Photo Credit: Shlomi Kakon



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JUNE

Richard and Diane Boroditsky (55); Bernie and Gina Chodirker (40); Mark and Natalie Newman (25); Evan and Audra Roitenberg (25); Darryl and Colette Segal (50); Hymie and Shaaron Weinstein (55)

JULY

Phil and Susan Kahanovitch (45); David and Sherrill Levene (50); Phil and Janet Simon (45)

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Morris Chapnick
Marion Golfman
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Laurane Schultz

LIFE FORCE: PEOPLE WHO ROSE UP

Honouring the Legacy of Holocaust Survivors

This year we mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two. As time marches on, voices of Holocaust survivors fade, even as the echoes endure. Ultimately, the tragedy of our past will transform from collective living memory into shared history. Jewish Child and Family Service (JCFS) Winnipeg recognized that before this happens, descendent generations of Jewish Holocaust survivors are obliged to find out exactly how survivors want to be honoured and remembered in the future.

Limmud Winnipeg

Last year, Limmud Winnipeg and Jewish Child and Family Service discussed the possibility of building a Limmud session featuring Holocaust survivors. Adeena Lungen¹ and Sonja Iserloh were selected to create this presentation: both women are case workers with JCFS Older Adult Services; both also have expertise working with Holocaust survivors through the JCFS Holocaust support program.

Together with Executive Director Al Benarroch, Adeena and Sonja decided that rather than focusing on the trauma of the Holocaust, the presentation would focus on what survivors can teach us and what they want future generations to know about the horrors of their past, so we can ensure they are neither forgotten nor repeated. They felt they owed it to survivors to understand “what would make them feel like we are living in a never-again-never-forget way,” Adeena says.

“One hundred years from now, what did they want people to know?”

Having Holocaust survivors educate the public, as providers of knowledge, wisdom, and recommendation, can be very empowering, Adeena says.

“Any time people take action, they are empowered,” she explains. “They are empowered when we ask them to share stories about how they



Photo credit: Skeeze

rebuilt their lives ‘from the ashes.’ We are telling them they matter, their experiences are respected, that what they have to say and what we can learn from them is vital for us as a Jewish people. They are not victims anymore and they have demonstrated that in how they live their lives.”

Betty Kirshner

Betty Kirshner² is one such Holocaust survivor. She says she is proud to have transcended the horrors of the Holocaust and made a good life for herself—a life that includes 34 years of successfully owning and running a local grocery store, Coni-Serve Solo, with her late husband, Michael (Morris) Kirshner. (The couple sold the business in 1987). The life she built also includes a thriving family: four children, all with successful careers as adults, and three grandchildren. As well, Betty’s life includes a large ensemble of friends, which she attributes to her optimism.

“I am very positive, and I think this is why I have a large circle of friends. Because of my positive attitude, people are comfortable in my presence,” she says.

Betty has given testimony about her Holocaust experiences in the book *Voices of Winnipeg Holocaust Survivors*, by Belle Millo (2010). (The book was the result of the Manitoba Holocaust Heritage Project, collected histories of Manitoba Holocaust survivors.) She also gave testimony at schools, and to the USC Shoah Foundation (established in 1994 by Steven Spielberg to make video-interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust).

“We have to give testimony,” Betty says. “If we do not talk about it, do not tell our stories, then people like Zündel and Keegstra win, claiming the Holocaust never happened,” she states,

referring to notorious Holocaust deniers Ernst Zündel and James Keegstra.

"This is part of history, this is what happened, and people have to know about it."

Ner Tamid

With all this in mind, Adeena and Sonja set out to create a Limmud presentation that "could integrate the monumental, horrible genocide of the Holocaust, generations later, but still move forward to address how we can honour survivors," says Adeena. They hoped to show how we can "learn from their example and take those lessons forward once there are no living survivors left to remind us; to help keep us attuned to societal blights like racism and prejudice."

"We wanted to visit the past but not dwell there," she says. "We have to look at the past, have it inform us to move forward. What is our collective responsibility to learn from the tragedies of the Holocaust?" she asks. And how do we ensure the legacies of survivors help to educate future generations?

"We wanted to learn about the ways individuals, families, and communities develop positive engagement with life after the Holocaust."

After some research, the pair decided to carry out three sets of interviews; feedback from the interviews would be the basis for the 2019 Limmud presentation. They asked the first set of interviewees, a cluster of 40 Winnipeg Holocaust survivors, one set of questions, some collectively, others individually, Adeena says. The questions included: How do you hope your experience of the Holocaust is remembered? Also: What do you think is the most important message of the Holocaust that future generations should understand? Results learned in five principal areas were presented at Limmud: Holocaust Education; memorialization and commemoration; intergenerational trauma; social action; and never again, never forget.

They had also asked a second set of interviewees, 10 second-generation (2G) survivors, a different set of questions, such as: How do you honour your parents' experience in concrete ways? They tapped into intergenerational trauma as well. To 7 third-generation (3G) survivors they had asked a third set of questions; 3G, politically and socially astute, had questions of their own: Is "never again, never forget" only for Jews? What about the Rwandan genocide? What about the Indigenous peoples?

Adeena explains that while they had hoped to interview more 2G and 3G participants, they ran out of time.



Ner Tamid 2019, Limmud
Winnipeg

An augmented version of the Limmud presentation, "Ner Tamid: Honouring the Legacy of Holocaust Survivors," had been slated to repeat at Etz Chayim at the end of April 2020 but had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Survivor Resilience and Strength

Adeena speaks with admiration about Holocaust survivors she has known.

"Most of them just put the Holocaust behind them and got on with living. To me, that is a testament to their resilience and their strength. Because as awful as it was and how horrible their lives were because of Hitler, and all the losses they suffered, they came to a new country with nothing and they rebuilt, and they had families. And they were active members in their communities and their synagogues and in Jewish affairs and business. To me, that is a real sign of their empowerment."

Adeena is well familiar with survivor-strength, and what she refers to as "life force," both from her work with Holocaust survivors, as well as from personal experience. "One of my parents was a survivor," Adeena says. "I remember, as a child, my parents had a card game at our house once a month, and they had all their survivor friends over. And I remember yelling and screaming into the night, there was vodka, and they were up 'til two in the morning."

"They had this lovely life force in them, and that was my sense of many survivors," she continues. "I think survivors like to be seen that way, rather than downtrodden people who never rose up from the victimization. Because really, most of them have. Even with the trauma and the mental health issues, and even with those people who still cry regularly about what happened; they still have incredible life force in them. When we recognize that, we empower them." ■

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1 Please see profile of Adeena on page 6.

2 Please see profile of Betty on page 8.

Embracing the Richness of Life

Active, spirited, strong-minded, and dedicated,
Adeena Lungen is bent on taking a giant bite out of life.

There is an old truism: If you need something done, ask someone who is very busy. By this measure, Adeena Lungen would be a good person to ask for help.

"I have a pretty busy life," Adeena concedes. "I have a lot of friends, and I love to participate. I like to take a bite out of life."

I love learning, growing, not standing still, really engaging with life.

It's not a FOMO (fear of missing out) thing, she laughs. "It's just that when there is something of interest, whether it is a lecture, a speaker, a dance concert, theatre, music, whatever, I want to do it," says Adeena, a

counsellor with Jewish Child and Family Service (JCFS) Winnipeg, Older Adult Services, who also works with Holocaust survivors through the JCFS Holocaust support program.

Kindhearted and passionate with a strong feminist background, Adeena is a fierce advocate for the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, and not intimidated to speak out.

Adeena, on Cancelling Public Speakers With Controversial Politics

In the past few years, a few lecturers lined up to speak in Winnipeg have been cancelled due to public protest from within the Jewish community. Adeena opposes the protest.

"How dare we?" she proclaims. "Is our community not strong enough to hear another point of view different from ours? These people should not be uninvited, and it speaks poorly about our community that we can't tolerate another point of view."

Rather than prohibiting the speaker from coming, Adeena says, "let's hear them. Let's challenge them. Let's ask questions. Let's protest outside if you

think they should not be here. But don't say you cannot come, because it reflects poorly on our community that we cannot tolerate difference."

By allowing different voices and hearing other points of view, even if we do not support them, we are in a position to educate people, says Adeena, who is married to lawyer Murray Trachtenberg and has four sons and six grandsons between the two of them.

"It gives us a chance to respond, to say, 'No, that's not ok,' she says, adding, "We can use that as a learning tool. We can use it to help promote tolerance and anti-racism."

On Learning From Survivors

"Holocaust survivors have plenty to teach us about resilience, tolerance, standing up against injustice, and moving on," Adeena says.

"Survivors want us to learn from their experience. They want to be able to say, 'we had to go through something no one should have to go through. Do not let that be in vain. Educate. Rail against bigotry and intolerance, because they are all connected. Stand up when you see injustice.'"

Holocaust survivors can teach us how to move forward in a positive way, Adeena says, not minimizing the awfulness, but still moving forward. "What can we learn that helps us live differently, live better?" asks Adeena, who went to Talmud Torah, Joseph Wolinsky, and Camp Massad and remains connected to all of them.

When we ask survivors, "'Tell us, what have you learned? Tell us how to be good Jews. Tell us what you want us to know,' it is empowering for them—to know that they matter, their experiences are respected, that what they have to say is vital for us as a Jewish people," she says.

On Living a Full, Rich Life

"There is so much in life, so much to partake and participate in, so much richness, and I want to engage with it as much as possible," Adeena says.



"Then I feel like I'm living fully. I feel like my life is enriched by engaging with organizations, opportunities, people. I love learning, growing, not standing still, really engaging with life as much as I can."

A second-generation Holocaust survivor (one of Adeena's parents was a Holocaust survivor), this attitude continues the survival-instinct legacy demonstrated by her own parents, and other survivors of the Holocaust.

"These were people who were alive. They had parties, they were intellectuals, they talked, they yelled, they went travelling. They were not victims, though I think we have this notion a little bit, because they certainly were victimized. But these are some of the most alive people I have ever met," says Adeena, who works four days a week at JCFS; Fridays are devoted to a private practice, where she counsels individuals and families and also does Employee Assistance plan counselling for another organization.

On Sitting on the Etz Chayim Board

In her last year of a second 3-year term sitting on the Congregation Etz Chayim board, Adeena will step down in the fall after six years. She has also co-chaired the *shul's* Adult Program Committee, together with Mary Ann Rosenbloom, for several years.

"I am concerned about the future of synagogue life, and I see that there is room to make it more interesting, more attractive, to build on it. I am committed to that. And I thought, one way to do that is to sit on the board. Instead of being one of those people who complains but doesn't do anything, I thought it was a way to translate my thinking and affection for the synagogue into action." ■

Honouring Our Unique, Covenantal Relationship With God

Eating as a Jew means observance of *kashrut*, the dietary laws which God gave to the Israelites in the Sinai Desert. Moses recorded these in the Torah and the details were later documented in the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*.

Kashrut is a set of rules which fall into the *chukim* set of commandments—the super-rational commands which generally “transcend human logic”¹. This means we, as Jews, must observe these laws without knowing why—simply because God commanded it. By fulfilling the Divine Will, we connect to God.

“I think ultimately, God gave us these rules in an attempt to create a sense of holiness, or *kedusha*, so that we will have greater awareness about each moment, bringing us to sense the Divine in everything we do, all we’re a part of,” says Rabbi Kliel Rose.

Being *kadosh* means having distinct behaviours from other nations, continues Rabbi Kliel. “It’s part of a whole series of *mitzvot*, observances, which honour the covenantal and unique relationship with God.”

Many of these commandments are hard and can be challenging to uphold on a consistent basis, he allows. “Part of being in the system is understanding there will be moments when you don’t live up to that highest standard, like any other spiritual discipline. There will be times when you feel doubt, and moments when you can’t achieve that ideal on a spiritual level.”

“However, to be a Jew means to wrestle with the tradition,” he continues. “It also requires an understanding that we have standards that give us a unique foothold in the world. It does not make us better, but we are being challenged to lead a different lifestyle.”

There will be periods in our lives when this will be easier to comprehend, and likely other times when it will raise deeper existential questions about what matters most to us, he says. “Being committed to Jewish principles and behaviours is much more difficult than ever before, especially for those of us living in an open, tolerant society where Jews are no longer viewed as pariahs.”

Quick Guide to Keeping Kosher

- We eat only certain animals (see below) and their eggs and milk; others are forbidden.
- No meat and milk together. We use separate dishes, utensils, and cookware for meat and dairy; we observe a delay between eating meat and milk.
- Kosher animals chew their cud, have completely split hooves. Animals must be slaughtered in a specific way (details below).
- Kosher fish have fins and scales.
- Fruit, veggies, grains—always kosher, but must be bug-free. Wine and grape juice must be certified kosher.
- Restaurants and processed foods must be certified by a rabbi or a kashrut supervision agency.



photo credit: Robert Couse-Baker

Kosher Animals

- **Mammals:** Only animals with split hooves and which chew their cud are kosher: cows, sheep, goats, deer. Not kosher: pigs, rabbits, squirrels, bears, dogs, cats, camels, and horses.
- **Fowl:** Domestic chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, and pigeons—all kosher. There are 24 non-kosher bird species, primarily predators and scavengers.
- **Reptiles, amphibians, worms, insects:** not kosher (except for four types of locust, if you’re interested).
- **Seafood:** Fish with fins and scales—kosher: salmon, tuna, pike, flounder, carp, herring. Not kosher: catfish, sturgeon, swordfish, lobster, shellfish, crabs, all water mammals.
- **Shechitah:** Kosher mammals and birds must be killed by a special, painless procedure, *shechitah*: a *shochet* uses a sharp knife, a *chalaf*, to cut the animal’s throat quickly and precisely. An animal that dies or is killed in any other way is not kosher.
- **Blood:** We must not consume blood of mammals or fowl. Within 72 hours of slaughter, all blood must be drained from meat by a soaking and salting process.



Milk, Eggs, Honey

- Only milk and eggs from kosher animals are kosher. Eggs must be inspected to ensure there are no blood spots.
- Honey is not considered an animal product and is kosher, while bees are not.² ■

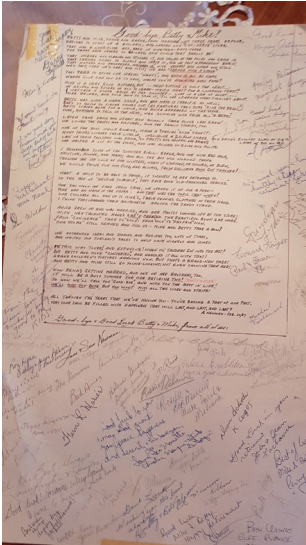
¹Rabbi Pinchas Taylor, Chabad.org

²Source: <www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/113425/jewish/What-Is-Kosher.htm#Basics>

Kosher Catering Service

Congregation Etz Chayim Catering offers a variety of Kosher Shabbat, *Kiddush*, dinner, and party menus. We also cater home events, office meetings, shiva meals, and more. Let us know how we can help you: (204) 589-6305.

When Betty and Morris Kirshner announced their retirement in 1987, having sold the Coni-Serve Solo grocery and butcher that had been their livelihood for 34 years, their Norwood, Winnipeg customers were disappointed.



Betty's sign board

"Where else can you go to shop where you've achieved such fame?"

That's one line in a poem recorded on a sign titled 'Goodbye, Betty and Mikel', written for the couple on poster board by a customer. Betty and Morris set the board on the front counter for other customers to sign. "In this age of 'helping yourself' they gave good 'old fashioned service,' Ann Newman had written on the board, followed by a bid for Betty and Morris's future:

"May your days be filled with happiness that will last and last and last."

"I think that said a lot about how customers felt about us," Betty says, proudly. "My husband had a very good relationship with his customers, they really loved him," she says, modest in that moment about taking credit for herself.

When the couple first bought the store, there was a lot of competition, says Betty, who was born in Poland. "Somehow we managed. Slowly, Safeway left, another grocery store closed."

"It helped that we had a good, loyal clientele," she explains. "We were honest with our customers and they were honest with us." She says they kept in touch with many of them long after closing shop.

Betty and Morris each had their own job at the store—Morris behind the meat counter, Betty up front, on cash. "We also offered delivery," she says. "Many customers were looking for that, then. It was convenient for people without cars."

"Things have changed," she muses. "There are a lot of cars... and people go bargain shopping."

She says that although the grocery store was private—not part of a multinational chain—buying into the Payfair-Solo franchise gave them better buying power.

"If you joined up with them you could offer deals, they had specials," she explains.

Holocaust Survivor

A survivor of the Holocaust, Betty was 11 and her sister, Carmela, 9 when their family went into hiding for a total of 22 months. Most of that time was spent with another family in a closet-sized bunker by day, dug into the ground under a spare room in the home of the couple who hid them. The bunker was damp, dark, and cramped. "We just sat on a

bench made of soil."

At night, Betty's family would emerge from the bunker into the room. "We covered the windows with blankets," she says, so the light would not appear to be on.

"When I saw my grandchildren at that age, how rambunctious they were, and how they had a hard time sitting still, I was amazed that my sister and I were able to stay quiet," she marvels. "It must have been a survival instinct," she explains. "And my parents were strict, so that helped," she laughs.

One Thousand Tiny Miracles

Betty says surviving the Holocaust with both parents and her sister was a miracle. She believes many more tiny miracles helped keep them alive.

"The couple who hid us had a five-year-old boy, and even though we were just in the room behind their door, he never mentioned anything to anybody," she says.

There were other miracles. Once a month, when there was no moon at night, her father would go out looking for food, Betty explains.

One time, tired, her father decided to nap before returning to his family. When he awoke, it was daylight, and unsafe to move about. He'd had to wait until nightfall again before he could return to his waiting family, Betty says. "You can imagine," she says, "we thought he'd been caught." What she doesn't say: it was a miracle that he wasn't.

Liberation

When liberation came, the family cried for days, she says.

"It was wonderful to breathe in the fresh air again. That was the first time in a long time we were in the sunshine. We couldn't thank the family enough, and my parents kept in touch with them for years after," says Betty, recalling that her

Betty with her family



family could barely walk, upon liberation. "After 22 months, our muscles were atrophied."

The couple who'd hid them convinced Betty's family to stay for another month, to regain their strength. Then, they travelled to Limburgh (Lvov) Poland to look for family and see who survived. They found very few.

"We'd had a very large family, but only five of us survived," Betty says—her own family of four, and one cousin. The family spent three years in Germany at a displaced persons camp, emigrating to Canada via Halifax in 1948. Betty was 17.

Family

Betty's husband, Morris Kirshner, had been part of a Polish division of the Russian army, the battalion that liberated Auschwitz. "He had many stories to tell," says Betty, with a twinkle in her eye, adding that the pair met in Winnipeg, not Poland.

Though the couple's Winnipeg grocery store was in Norwood, Betty and Morris lived in the North End with their four children, all former Talmud Torah/Joseph Wolinsky students: Anita, the eldest, now lives in Calgary with her four kids and three grandchildren, retired from a career in home economics. Jerry, a retired industrial arts teacher, lives in London, ON with two kids, while David, an illustrator and zoologist, lives with his daughter in Sydney, Australia and is a curator of reptiles at the new Sydney zoo. Rena, the youngest, is a graphic artist who lives in Florida.

Although Betty says she didn't talk to her kids much about her experiences of the Holocaust, she and Morris were mindful about teaching them tolerance.

"I brought up my kids with positive outlooks and very much without prejudice," she says. "They're all very open minded."

Glass Half Full

Although life isn't perfect, Betty prefers to see the glass as half full.

"I am very fortunate," she says, admitting that it's hard having none of her children living in Winnipeg. But "my sister lives at the Portsmouth," she says, "so I'm so lucky to have her with me, and I've got nieces and nephews that I'm very close to, my 'surrogate' kids," she laughs.

She takes pride in her approachability and her desire to help.

"When Morris died seven years ago," continues the Winnipeg North-End senior, "one of the first things I did, after a month or so, was to phone Etz Chayim and offer to volunteer for *minyan*. I asked what day they needed the most, and they said Thursday. So, every Thursday I go for *minyan*, and I also go regularly on Saturday.

"I consider Thursday and Saturday *minyan* my support group," smiles Betty. "*Minyan* helped me deal with the loss."

Betty is happy living in Canada and has no attachment to her birthplace of Poland.

"Canada is a wonderful country, the first place I could call home," she says.

"A lot of people ask me, 'do you ever go back home?' meaning Poland," she continues. "And I say, 'No, this is my home.' I have no desire. I can call Canada home, and I can call Israel home," she says. ■

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Uncovering the Monument of the Deceased

The Jewish Practice of Unveiling

It is customary for Jews to hold an unveiling ceremony at the graveside of a loved one at some point within the first year following death, between the end of *shiva* and the first *yahrzeit*. This observance is marked by formal removal of a veil, handkerchief, or piece of fabric covering the gravestone; tradition informs us that this uncovering of the monument is something the mourner is only now capable of grasping.

"On the *yahrzeit* of a person's passing, we traditionally say to a mourner, 'May (Name of loved one) continue to be a blessing to you,'" says Rabbi Kliel Rose. This bidding is one which can only be properly understood by a mourner after enough time has passed for them to comprehend that their loved one will not return, he adds.

Why do we have this custom, which might reopen a wound that has perhaps only recently scabbed over?

Rabbi Kliel says the unveiling ritual has become an important part of Jewish practice, albeit a later evolution within our history.

"The unveiling is to honour something that we have not yet been ready to reveal, the fact that our loved one has been buried," he says. "We are obligated to mark that reality, because practically speaking, our loved one has passed, there's no denying that fact. It isn't something we do with enthusiasm, nor is it simply a perfunctory ritual, like the funeral, *shiva*, and *shloshim* (30 days of mourning). The unveiling offers the mourners opportunity for emotional and spiritual healing."

Rabbi Kliel believes there's nothing wrong with reopening the wound of sorrow at our loved-one's passing. "If we're numb to all feelings in our life, *that* might be concerning. It certainly can reopen the wound, and at the same time it serves to highlight the legacy of the deceased. It might also help a mourner begin to create closure, which we know is gradual," he says.

The unveiling usually includes reading of several Psalms, a eulogy, the *El Malei Rachamim*, and *Kaddish*. It is also customary for Jewish mourners to place stones at the grave of their loved one at the unveiling. This ritual likely originated before we had tombstones; natural objects like stones would have been left to identify the grave for mourners returning later. Today, the pebbles signify for others that someone has visited the grave and represent the enduring nature of the memory and spirit of the deceased. ■

Funeral and Cemetery Services

Congregation Etz Chayim operates three cemeteries: Bnay Abraham, Hebrew Sick Benefit, and Rosh Pina Memorial Park. To arrange a funeral or for more information, please contact Etz Chayim Funeral Director Shelley Sklover at (204) 589-6305 ext. 214 or ssklover@etzchayim.ca.



Photo: H. Hach

Minyan and Social Distancing

The Jewish tradition of *minyan* has recently come into question among Jews worldwide. As the Covid-19 pandemic lingers, there has been dialogue among members of the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) about the requirement for *minyan* (10 Jews) in order to recite Mourner's *Kaddish*. If someone needs to say Mourners *Kaddish*, how can we support them in fulfilling this *mitzvah*, which necessitates a *minyan*, while upholding the mandate to social distance?

Advances in technology make remote participation possible, and Rabbi Kliel Rose says discussion has arisen around use of Zoom (a live video communication platform) to facilitate daily *minyan* or to say *Kaddish*. "Jews are deeply analytical, so there is debate. Some say, 'You need 10 people *physically* in the same space before the 11th person, who needs to say *Kaddish*, can participate in the *minyan* remotely,'" he reports.

Rabbi Kliel says the minimum requirement of 10 for *minyan* comes from Psalm 82, which begins: "God stands in the congregation of God." The word *congregation* is also used in the Torah to refer to the 10 spies who delivered unfavourable reports of Canaan to Moses and the Israelites; this reinforces that a "congregation of God" comprises 10 men or more, he says.

"I understand why debate exists, it happens within any legal system," he states. And the impetus towards community is a constructive goal, he adds. "We don't just live for ourselves personally. We live for the sake of community."

"The tradition of *minyan* creates a dynamic where you need others, and it forces us into community," he continues. "Today, many people don't feel commitment to anything outside themselves and those within their particular silo. That's unfortunate."

Rabbi Kliel says the majority of CJLS members firmly believe the 10-Jew requirement for *minyan* should remain the rule even in this *she'at hadehak* (crisis situation). Others say, during the current health emergency, a more lenient position on forming *minyan* remotely may be acceptable, since we are discouraged from gathering now.

Currently, Congregation Etz Chayim regards 10 (or more) Jews who gather remotely for public prayer by Zoom (or another video conference platform) to be a full *minyan*, making it possible for people in mourning to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish*. ■

Junior Chazzanim

This new Etz Chayim program helps pre-B'nai Mitzvah students gain familiarity on the *bimah* and in the synagogue.

It's one thing to prop a kid up on the *bimah* on the day of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Quite another to offer them a year or two of experience on the *bimah* in *shul* before their special day.

A new children's program launched recently at Congregation Etz Chayim aims to help younger kids become comfortable on the *bimah* at synagogue before their B'nai Mitzvah. The Junior *Chazzanim* program was but three weeks old when Etz Chayim was forced to put programming on hold as Canada began to navigate the Covid-19 crisis. Hopefully, the program will be resurrected as soon as the crisis is over.

Junior *Chazzanim* is a chance for kids beginning their B'nai Mitzvah journey to come to synagogue and learn to lead the service with the clergy, explains Cantor Tracy Kasner.

"It's an opportunity for them to participate and gain familiarity in the synagogue and on the *bimah*. They won't have to sing on their own yet, but they're going to lead as a group with me," she says. The target group for Junior *Chazzanim* is grade 6 and up, says Tracy, although some may begin the program in grade 5, since they're encouraged to join the B'nai Mitzvah program two years before the date of Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

The program is modelled after a one-time Shaarey Zedek program that had been under the guidance of the late Rabbi Louis Berkal Z"L (Executive Director of Etz Chayim Jonathan Buchwald participated in Rabbi Berkal's class four decades ago). Participants learned how and were encouraged to lead services from the *bimah*, Tracy says. The hope is the program will also stimulate excitement among families about being in synagogue, she adds.

Kids in the Junior *Chazzanim* program will learn to lead *Shacharit*, the morning prayer, chanted both weekday and Shabbat mornings.

"We'll try to teach them how to actually lead *Tfila* (prayers)," she says. "They don't have to know how to lead to be literate Jews, but it's good for them to know the service so they can participate if they want."

Tracy says understanding the *nusach*, the melodies for the prayers, helps her students learn the service.

"Music is the language of the service," she says. Once they learn the method, "it becomes comforting and soothing and triggers feelings of Saturday morning. We attach the way something sounds to the way we experience it, and the pattern of music has a certain spirit for Shabbat morning."

"And the kids get it, they totally get it," she says enthusiastically. ■

ETZ CHAYIM PEOPLE

Favourite Whereabouts

Shoresh asked Etz Chayim members:

"Where is your favourite place in the world, and why?" A little theme emerged: our members love cottaging, oceanside, and being outdoors!



Bryan Borzykowski

I've travelled to many countries, but I'll take Winnipeg Beach over anywhere else. It's the only place I can truly relax and with so many friends having cottages there as well, it's what I imagine an adult camp would be like. We like it so much that we spend our entire summer out there.



Leah Craven

My favourite place to be is anywhere hiking with my family. We have had amazing family adventures hiking throughout Canada, and in Mexico and Israel. It is something my entire family enjoys, regardless of age. It's a chance for us to be off grid, outdoors, get exercise and be connected to each other.



Evan Roitenberg

The oceanside or seaside is my favourite place. Having been to many different coastal locations throughout Canada and the world, the feeling of calm I get by the water is constant. I love listening to the water, watching its movement, and marvelling at the tide. I love to walk in the surf and experience the sea-life, but it really is about the feeling of serenity it brings. I can sit by the ocean for hours.



Nata Spiegelman

My favourite place is my cottage at Winnipeg Beach. I enjoy the peace and serenity and the time spent with family and friends.



Gilad Stitz

My favourite place is my cottage in Gimli. It is relaxing to be surrounded by nature and I love being so close to the beach. I have been going to Gimli every summer since I was born, and I could not imagine my summers without it. The air outside the city makes everything calmer and time seems to move slower out at the beach.



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