

SHORESH

שורש

Congregation Etz Chayim
Community News

APRIL 2018

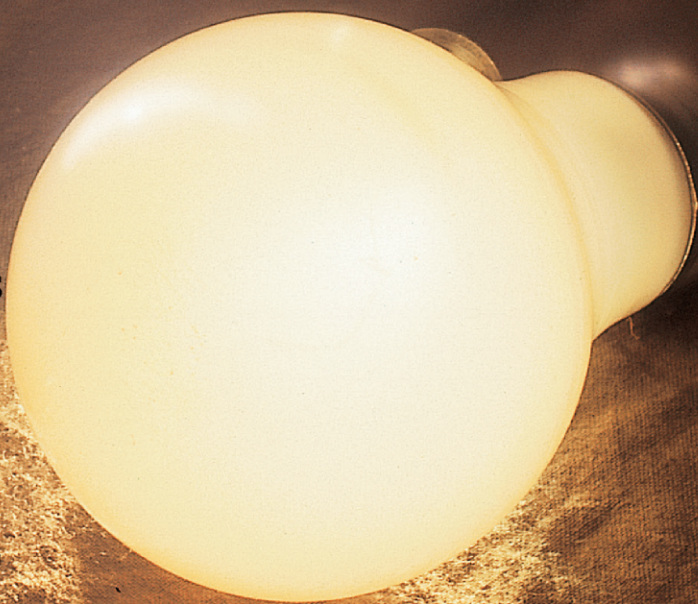
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**Unconventional
Seder Traditions**

**The Rabbi Beyond
the Pulpit**

**Tiffany Reider
Enjoying the Ride**

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**ETZ CHAYIM
PEOPLE**

CTKG: Cantor Tracy Kasner Greaves, CEC Cantor since 2004

GG: Grant Goldberg, CEC Board Member Since 2014

LS: Liat Schultz, CEC member since 2002

MZ: Marina Zolotarevsky, CEC administrative assistant since 2017

Unforgettable Song Lyrics

Everyone has at least one song whose lyrics they'll never forget—for whatever the reasons. Here are a few of those among Etz Chayim folk.

Shoresh: What song lyrics have you completely memorized (aside from any national anthems you might know), and why do you know them?

CTKG: I was never good at memorizing lyrics, not ever. I was always the one on stage looking at somebody else's mouth to remember my cues. Since I've become a cantor, I'm now used to having all the words in front of me, for everything. But in fact, I can sing the entire *Shacharit* service, the morning service, and all those Shabbat songs, from beginning to end, without looking at notes at all.

GG: I know the lyrics to "Chorshat ha'ekaliptus," by Naomi Shemer (who also wrote "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav"), which I remember learning in school and hearing in Israel. It reminds me of my childhood and the summers I spent in Israel with my siblings and parents when I was growing up. I then used to sing it to our daughters Isanne, Maya, and Noa at bedtime when they were babies.

LS: I know the words to the song "I Will Follow You Into the Dark," by Death Cab for Cutie. It's become a *Havdalah* classic in BBYO and at BB camp. Through the years I have memorized all the lyrics, and it has helped to form connections with other campers and BBYO brothers and sisters. We bond over it.

MZ: I know the lyrics to "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen. The first time I heard this song was when I moved to Israel with my family. I was very impressed with the beautiful music and lyrics. I listened to it so often that I memorized the words. For me, this song will always be related to Israel. ■

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Shoresh is a community news publication of

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etzchayim.ca

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Cover photo:
irisphoto2



Purim Palooza! There were crafts and face painting, costumes, parading, a dance, games of chance, a bouncer, a slide, TV Kids learning applied (for a "live-to-tape" mobile production). And, hamantashen, of course! (Purim, Congregation Etz Chayim, February, 2018).

Thinking Outside the (Matzah) Box

Unique and Unconventional Seder Traditions

Wonderful ways that some Etz Chayim families break from standard Seder tradition.



Photo: Yoninah

Setting the Seder table includes laying out the *Haggadot*, frequently the standard, yellow and red, Rabbi Nathan Goldberg version¹ (pages loose, missing, dog-eared, stained from years of use; often a collection of two or more slightly different editions—the language between them just dissimilar enough to generate annual confusion among Seder guests trying to keep up).

While the traditional *Haggadah* is important and useful, imparting structure, order, a script for our observance of Passover, it isn't necessarily the focal point of the Seder anymore, for some Jews. Although still honoured and respected, traditions within it don't always seem as relevant today.

A search for meaning is the intention behind the Jewish rituals Shelley Werner and her family choose to practise. For them, this sometimes means reworking time-honoured traditions to make them more relevant to our contemporary lives; “drawing threads from the past, and using that as fuel to drive new traditions,” says Shelley.

Our Duty to Tell

Our obligation at *Pesach* is to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, says Stuart Slayen. *Haggadah* means “telling;” its main purpose is to facilitate that.

“It's the most important story in Jewish history. It's our formative story as a people,” he says, adding, “but it's not beautifully told.”

So, when his family hosts a Seder, “we try to find something a bit different to share the story and make it meaningful, more relevant for today,” Stu says.

Meaning can come from infusing fun—particularly with kids at the Seder table. “We've done quiz shows to help move the story. The kids get particularly engaged, and we try to make it fun or funny, so adults get a laugh too.”

Stu and wife Shira Cohen have used Seder resources found online, “but we've had more fun writing our own stuff.” There are good ideas out there though, he acknowledges, which can be adapted for whomever is seated at your table.

The Singer-Glows have added different elements to their Seders, over the years, dependent partly on their kids' ages.

“When they were little, we included things to represent the 10 plagues—throwing little animals, sesame seeds for lice, maybe Ping-Pong balls for hail,” says Leslie Singer. But as Josh and Sari got older, “they became a bit less keen, so we had to make it more adolescent friendly.” Sometimes this meant interesting readings; one year, they downloaded a humorous *Haggadah* from Jdate. “It was hilarious, it had dating profiles for Pharaoh and Moses,” she laughs.

Another year, Josh projected Passover video parodies (remember Six13's “Uptown Passover”?) onto his grandparents' sloped ceiling. “We lay on the floor and watched—it was so much fun,” she says.

“I like to be innovative to keep my kids interested and connected,” Leslie says. “It's a little harder to draw kids in when they get to a certain age, but it's important to me to keep them engaged.”

Surprise, Change, Personalization

Sometimes, the fun at a Seder is a surprise.

“When our children were very young, there were 26 cousins eligible for the *Afkommen* money,” says Gail Hechter.

“All the children left the room for a minute and returned holding picket signs, stating they wanted more money. It was a strike, organized by my Dad's brother, Major. It was hysterical.”

Two years ago, their son, Ben Hechter, inherited the role of leader at the family Seder table, following a succession of ancestors. Ben arrived dressed as Moses, in a robe and carrying a staff, recalls Gail.

For Shelley Werner, it's participation that brings meaning to their family Seders. Shelley created an alternate *Haggadah* for Seder guests, cobbled together from various sources, including the traditional *Haggadah*. Each one is tagged with stickies, numerically marking two *brachot* (blessings), or readings. And here's where departure from the norm comes in.

“Instead of reading in order around the table, I'll say, ‘Who has number 7?’ And that person reads the prayer,” says Shelley. A minor change from the usual, but one she says her guests enjoy, and which keeps them engaged.

Shelley has organized their alternate *Haggadot* (and Seder) into four “Acts.” Each act includes prayers and readings from the traditional *Haggadah* (what she calls the “*Haggadah's* greatest hits”); readings and quotations from a contemporary *Haggadah* (JewishBoston's *The Wandering Is Over Haggadah*²); songs—both traditional, and modern Passover parodies (including several written by Shelley and younger son, Jonah); and a question for reflection,

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like, “What oppresses you?” or “How do you repair the world?”

“Everyone loves to share, and that’s what they know my Seders for—a time for reflection,” she says, calling the thoughtful questions the “centrepiece” of their Seder.

“I make the questions relevant to what’s going on in our culture” she states, adding that taking lessons from the traditions and personalizing them adds meaning for her.

Relevance and Respect

An addition which Stu and Shira made to their Seder, one year, stands out for him.

“We were trying to make the story of exodus more relevant in a modern Jewish history.” So, they invited Shira’s great aunt to tell their family story of exodus from Europe, which had been a particularly traumatic escape.

“Shira’s aunt, in her 80s at the time, spoke about her late husband’s family. She knew the family story well. We learned things we’d never known about their treacherous journey out of the Ukraine,” he says.

“This modern exodus became a real anchor for the Seder. It was incredibly powerful.”

Equally powerful is an annual tradition that Cantor Tracy Kasner Greaves and her family have incorporated into their Seders.

“I made our own *Haggadot*, but I left the front pages blank. Each guest signs their *Haggadah* at every Seder”—their name, a message, a date. In this way, “everyone around the table gets a moment of respect.”

Moreover, “when you get a *Haggadah* that a relative, who’s no longer there, signed, it’s such an amazing thing. Because you can envision where they used to sit. You see their handwriting, and it brings the nostalgia—right in your face. It’s amazing.”

Nostalgia, respect, learning, engagement, modern relevance, fun—there are numerous reasons for thinking outside the matzah box at Passover. But they all point in the same general direction: towards meaning.

“People can be dismissive, think they’ve heard that before,” says Shelley. “My goal is to bring freshness; take old ways and impart some freshness to them.

“The *Haggadah* is a living document and has meaning now. It’s up to me, the Seder leader, to illuminate that meaning in present day terms.” ■

1 *Passover Haggadah*, by Rabbi Nathan Goldberg, New York: Ktav, 1949–2018

2 JewishBoston’s *The Wandering Is Over Haggadah* is downloadable for free at <www.jewishboston.com/freedownload-jewishbostons-contemporary-and-customizable-haggadah>

Taco Night for Passover

Passover Tacos may sound unlikely—taco shells are usually made with wheat or corn, which are chametz; we don’t eat them during Pesach. The solution: a “taco shell” that can hold its own—and various possible fillings—made by moistening, reshaping, then re-baking a piece of matzah! This recipe, selected by Etz Chayim chef Boguslaw Stras, comes from the creators of The Taco Cleanse (<http://taco-cleanse.com>), who adapted it from out-of-print cookbook, Matza 101¹.

Passover Tacos

Ingredients

Yield: 4 Matzah Tacos

2 russet potatoes

1 Tbsp + 2 Tbsp coconut or olive oil

1/2 tsp + 1/4 tsp paprika

1/4 tsp + 1/8 tsp salt

1/4 tsp + 1/8 tsp pepper

4 sheets of matzah

1/4 tsp garlic powder

avocado, sliced

cilantro, chopped

Optional: cashew crema² or sour cream

Optional: whatever *Pesach* fillings you can dream up (think: anything from ‘traditional’ Mexican fillings [minus the refried beans] to Baba’s gefilte fish with horseradish to cold leftover brisket)

Method

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. **2.** Peel potatoes and cut into 1/2-inch pieces. Place on cookie sheet, drizzle with 1 Tbsp oil. Sprinkle with 1/2 tsp paprika, and 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper, and mix. Bake 20 min., stir, bake another 20 min. Potatoes are done when easily pierced with a fork. **3.** Soak a piece of paper towel with water and place on a flat surface. Run both sides of each piece of matzah under cold water. Stack matzahs on the wet paper towel; top with another soaked paper towel. Let sit 15 min., rewetting top towel halfway through. **4.** Use a bowl as a template and a sharp knife to cut a large circle out of each matzah. (Keep scraps for matzah *brei*, fried matzah and eggs.) Brush each circle with oil, and sprinkle with 1/4 tsp each garlic and paprika, and 1/8 tsp each salt and pepper. **5.** Form large pieces of aluminum foil into taco-shaped moulds about 1-1/2 in. thick, and drape wet matzah circles over moulds, keeping fold of matzah-taco parallel to dotted lines of matzah. **6.** Place shells (with moulds) on their sides onto greased baking sheet. Bake in 400°F oven 15 min. When done, shells should be lightly browned, crispy, and firm. Allow to cool on moulds; carefully remove foil when cool enough to touch. **7.** Fill shells with potatoes, avocado, cilantro, and cashew crema or sour cream, or load them up with other kosher for *Pesach* fillings, as desired.

1. *Matza 101*, by Jenny Kdoshi, Debbie Bevans, Memphis, TN: Wimmer, 1998.

2. Cashew crema isn’t as obscure as it sounds. To make your own, soak 1 cup cashews (they’re kosher for *Pesach*) in water overnight; drain; blend in food processor with 1/2–3/4 c water, and 1/4 tsp salt, about 4 min. Done.

Beyond the Pulpit

A congregational rabbi's work is more diverse than people often realize, extending in several directions beyond the very public role of life-cycle event and service facilitation.

A synagogue community can carry on comfortably for quite some time, when 'in between rabbis.' In fact, Congregation Etz Chayim has shown how well a *shul* can manage while actively looking for a new spiritual leader.

A rabbi is not actually required for technical facilitation of life-cycle events; anyone versed in the service and liturgy can lead services, says Jonathan Buchwald, executive director of Congregation Etz Chayim. So, when the rabbi is away, he explains, there are numerous lay people within the community who can and do step forward temporarily, to lead services, call out pages, or deliver a *D'var Torah* (sermon or teaching). Etz Chayim has a congregation filled with devoted, knowledgeable, and proficient people, who are more than willing to contribute some of their skills and talents for synagogue services, and other events.

This is something to be proud of, says Cantor Tracy Kasner Greaves. "Congregation Etz Chayim is a strong community of people who have taken on leadership roles in the facilitation of Jewish life for each other," she says. Avrom Charach, chair of the Etz Chayim ritual committee, agrees.

"We have solid leaders in our congregation. With support from both consulting and visiting rabbis, they are helping us transition through this temporary period in a way that should appear reasonably seamless to our average member," he says.

But while life-cycle facilitation and leading services are a rabbi's most *public* responsibilities, this is only part of their work. A rabbi serving a synagogue community fulfills many other roles beyond the pulpit.

"When a rabbi says they serve their congregation, they feel responsible for the spiritual, emotional, even social needs of the congregation," Jonathan says. "They are trying to grow the congregation, build a community of people who are like-minded in their Jewish thinking and values, and using their expertise to do that."

Spiritual Leader

Primarily, the rabbi is the community's spiritual leader, who lives their life with somewhat of a calling, making it their mission to study Torah and Jewish law on our behalf, and then teach it to us, Jonathan says.

"Something draws them to live a certain way, to embody Jewish values and then impart that knowledge to others, inspire people to live Jewish lives, to think and live Jewishly," he continues.

Most Jews within a Conservative congregation identify deeply as Jewish, with strong roots and traditions to support that. But each of us also has a personal, internal set of rules that guides what we *observe*, how we *live* as Jews. For many of us, this means living somewhat secular lifestyles,



Photo: Lawrie Cate

although we identify as Conservative in how we pray in a formal setting. The congregation depends on its rabbi to make sense of this dichotomy, for anyone who doesn't think about God daily.

"Most of us don't read the *Talmud* every day, or really understand *Pirkei Avot*, the Sayings of the Fathers, or have any idea how these fit together within the tradition. We don't live our lives thinking that way. That's why we have someone who has committed their life to Judaism and Torah and God," Jonathan explains, adding that a Conservative rabbi also helps the congregation interpret the traditions to better fit within our modern times.

It is the Conservative rabbi's task to make sense of Conservative Judaism for congregants, many of whom don't talk about Jewish spirituality and what place God has in their lives, as regularly as a rabbi does. And it is part of a rabbi's essence to want to share this with others, help them feel inspired, and support them in their understanding of some three-thousand years of tradition, teachings, and contemplation about what it means to be a Jew.

Local Religious Authority

A rabbi acts as *mara d'atra* for a *shul*, says Avrom. This means the rabbi is the local religious authority for the community, who is relied on for answers to questions about God, the Torah, and being a Jew.

"Our rabbis at Etz Chayim have always been the final authority on all matters religious, within the bounds of Conservative Judaism," he continues. "They help set our religious tone."

The Conservative synagogue depends on the education, understanding, and experience of the rabbi. "He or she is the community's prime instructor and participates in all Jewish education, the teaching of the *Talmud*, *Pirkei Avot*, the *Mishnah*, and all that's come out of them," Jonathan says. The rabbi might be thought of as a master of Jewish education and is committed to continuing that pursuit of learning throughout their life.

Halachic Authority

The congregational rabbi is also the community's specialist in *Halacha*, or Jewish law (literally, the way to walk, or way to behave). The rabbi guides the community not only in religious practice and belief, but also on a vast array of day-to-day life practices, tasks, and decisions. He or she is the decisor for all questions of Jewish law, and a lot of the rabbi's training has been devoted to learning as much as they can about this.

"You can't always just look in a book," Jonathan says. "The community needs somebody we can rely on, who can make a decision, or discuss the issue," whatever it is—be it a query of *kashrut*, a family situation, a conversion, a question about burial, something else.

"There isn't always a clear answer," he says. "But the rabbi is given that designation—the *halachic* authority—to decide." Sometimes the rabbi must interpret the law to make a decision or draw on their own opinion. The congregation relies on the rabbi's expertise to make decisions on their behalf, confident he or she has the knowledge to do so.

Pastoral Counselling

The congregational rabbi is trained in all areas of pastoral counselling, be it marital, family, or personal therapy, death and dying support, grief support, psycho-spiritual guidance, or other. A congregational rabbi also spends a lot of time in hospitals, nursing homes, and members' homes, lifting people up, offering hope, understanding, clarity. There are many points in a person's life when a counselling relationship with the rabbi can be supportive. Grief, in particular, incites many to turn to their rabbi for help making sense of the death of a loved one, understanding what is happening to the departed from a Jewish perspective, and for comfort.

Looking Forward

As Congregation Etz Chayim anticipates welcoming a new rabbi, it is inspiring and reassuring to look back over the past several months and observe how well the synagogue community coped without one.

"This has been a challenging and exciting time for our *shul*," says Avrom. "While we were sad to see a leader like Rabbi Lander leave, it offered an opportunity to re-examine our spiritual leadership and ensure we find the right rabbi for the coming years."

It is heartening to know that our *shul* can rely on a host of lay leaders within the congregation, who have the necessary training and education to facilitate synagogue services and life-cycle events during a period of transition.

Ultimately, though, and for the long term, the *shul* needs a rabbi, with the professional experience and knowledge to guide, counsel, and educate the congregation; to inspire the community in their Judaism and their connection to the synagogue; to grow the congregation, and to lead the community into the future, with an understanding of the place God has in their lives. Congregation Etz Chayim is committed to finding this rabbi. Stay tuned! ■

When Not at School... *Shul*!

Jewish Holiday Program for Kids

The Congregation Etz Chayim community hopes for a repeat of a recent children's holiday program during some of the Jewish holidays this coming year.

Last fall, for the Jewish festival period of *Sukkot*, *Shemini Atzeret*, and *Simchat Torah*, Congregation Etz Chayim co-hosted, together with Congregation Shaarey Zedek, around 100 kids over three days for a pilot children's synagogue program. Initiated by Etz Chayim, not only was the pilot successful, but the *shul* gained new understanding of the necessity for this type of programming within the larger community. So, together with Gray Academy, Etz Chayim has applied for funding from the Jewish Foundation to support hosting a similar program, for the coming year.

"We realized it's a real need in the community, not only so kids have something to do for the holidays, but also so they realize what there *is* to do on the holidays—which is, of course, to observe the holidays," says Cantor Tracy Kasner Greaves.

"We decided it was time the synagogue took those days as opportunities for children to be in the synagogue to experience these amazing holidays."

"They're called festivals for a reason," she continues. And each one is rife with exciting learning opportunities for both kids and adults.

"I mean, *Simchat Torah* is the celebration of the Torah!" she enthuses. "These are holidays that children and their families can really participate in and enjoy," she adds, referring to all three festivals.

Cantor Tracy notes that while students of Gray Academy have most Jewish holidays off school, the *shul* welcomes kids from any school for its holiday program.

"The holidays are a chance for kids to have an experience—a spiritual experience, a fun experience, however they see it. At the end of the day, we want them to experience something that will change their day."

Last fall, the synagogue brought in various specialists for unique holiday-related activities—drama, gymnastics, puppetry, artists, "anything that's *yom-tov* friendly," she says. Forthcoming programs will be equally stimulating.

"We want to make it really special," says Cantor Tracy. ■



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Millennial Vision

Bringing Fresh Ideas to the Family Business

Just a few blocks from the Corydon office where Tiffany Reider works, her grandfather Morley opened the first Reider Insurance office more than half a century ago, in 1966.

When Morley retired, his three sons, Shale, Ronald, and Ray, assumed ownership and operation of the independent insurance brokerage, which today has seven Winnipeg offices, and an eighth in Rosenort, MB.

Tiffany, Ronald's daughter, was the first of the third generation of Reiders to join the family business, in 2015. She says it was a "big deal" when she came on board. "My grandfather was so excited."

In February, Tiffany passed the last of four Canadian Accredited Insurance Brokers (CAIB) exams. With each level, an insurance broker is licensed to do more things, Tiffany explains, and with all four levels of accreditation, a broker can practise anywhere in Canada.

Building Her Future

Modest, Tiffany says she's "still learning" the business. But she's confident she has something to bring to the family company, and to help strengthen the industry.

"We didn't have social media presence at all (previously), so I started an Instagram account and fixed up the Reider Insurance Facebook page. I've been trying to work on that, because that's our future, right there," she says.

"I definitely bring that fresh-eyes millennial vision to the company," she says, adding, "now, I'm on the young brokers network, so having that presence, showing, 'hey, we're still

here!' is also helping, I think." As co-chair to the Young Brokers Committee for the Young Brokers Network of Manitoba, this is but one of a few opportunities Tiffany has to network with other millennial professionals. She is also involved with the Jewish Business Network and Chabad Young Professionals, a group of young Jewish professionals who network once a month at a *Kabbalat Shabbat* service and social evening hosted by Rabbi Shmuly and Adina Altein.

This colliding of worlds—work, social, religion—might faze some people. But Tiffany takes it all in stride—she's used to her worlds coalescing. Her workplace, of course, begins with her family. And through the Young Brokers Network, she's shared her passion for *tikkun olam* with other young brokers, bringing them to volunteer commitments she already had with Siloam mission and the Christmas Cheer Board. Tiffany has also volunteered or fundraised for Crohn's and Colitis Canada, Cancer Care, and the Huntington Society of Canada, over the years.

Deepening Jewish Identity

Tiffany grew up within the Congregation Etz Chayim community. She enjoyed several years of Junior Congregation on Shabbat mornings, later as helper and leader, and many other *shul* events and holidays. She believes this early involvement in the *shul* helped lay a strong Jewish foundation for her, a Jewish identity that continues to deepen as she gets older.

"Going to synagogue kept me connected to the community and my Jewish friends. *Obviously*," she grins. "I'm still super involved."

Finally a member of Congregation Etz Chayim Women's League in her own right, when Tiffany was little, she tagged along with mom Jane to sisterhood meetings and events.

"My mom is very involved in the Women's League, so I've grown up with it. I've always been like an honorary member, but I'm officially a member, now," she smiles. She has also volunteered as a *gabbai* at Etz Chayim for several years, during the High Holidays.

Tiffany's immersion within Jewish culture doesn't end at *shul*. She has danced with *Beyachad*: Robyn Braha School of (Israeli) Dance since she was little, and now also teaches at the school. This spring, she is thrilled to be dancing with the school's alumnae group in an international Israeli dance festival in Florida.

Loving to Learn

Tiffany also delights in working behind the scenes for Limmud Winnipeg—now as co-chair for the event.

"I love Limmud. It's a great way to connect to your Jewish identity," gushes Tiffany, who attended Margaret Park for elementary school, HC Avery for grades 7 and 8 (Hebrew bilingual program at both schools), and Garden City Collegiate for high school.

Tiffany, who has spent time both as Vice President and President of the Bat Sheva chapter of Winnipeg BBYO, also reserves a special place in her heart for B'nai Brith



Tiffany Reider

Camp, which "shaped me into the person I am," she says. Following seven years as a camper, Tiffany worked at BB for another six—one as a counsellor, another five as "Brenda's right-hand woman" (camp administrator/secretary, alongside Brenda Tessler-Donen, BB executive director).

"You learn things at camp like how to lift a canoe and how to build a fire, but you also learn lessons you keep forever, like time management, organization, and responsibility," she says.

Tiffany is one of those people who seems almost to thrive more with every new challenge she takes on. Perhaps it's because she doesn't question things too much, and just enjoys the ride.

"Everything you do leads you on a path to a different option or thing, so you don't have to worry, is this the right decision? I like living for today—don't stress about the past, or too much about the future."

"You can only plan so far," adds Tiffany, who turns 23 this year. "So better enjoy it while you're there." ■

MEMBER NEWS & LIFE-CYCLE EVENTS

SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS

MARCH

Selma Albersheim, Avrian Boroditsky, Josh Chisick, Albert Glow, Anne Katz, Doreen Merrick, Tannis Podheiser-Michaw, Carolyn Rubin

APRIL

Gail Katz, Larry Rice, Shirley Rosenfeld, Jacqui Sair, Simon Simkin, Alan Slusky, Jack Solomon, Sam Swire, Susan Tennenhouse, Michelle Tessler, Blair Word

MAY

Gino Braha, Fayanne Charach, Maxine Diamond, Jordan Farber, Sharon Ganetsky, Mel Hornstein, Cathy Itscovich, Philip Kahanovitch, Debbie Mintz, Ben Rykiss, Harry Shapiro, Malke Shore, Edith Shpeller, Edie Shuster, Earl Standil

JUNE

Robert Cohen, Doris Derbitsky, Brenda Freedman, Shawnee Greenberg, Howard Jesierski, Martin Kahan, Cheryl Katz, Sherrill Levene, Ron Reider, Elaine Schaffer, Bernard Sucharov, Murray Trachtenberg

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES

APRIL

Elaine and Allan Shinfield (60)
Shira Cohen and Stuart Slayen (20)

MAY

Denah and Frank Weinfeld (65)
Linda and Martin Kahan (45)
Debi and Michael Bass (40)
Aneita Kogan-Gunn and Bernie Gunn (25)

Jessica and Joel Cogan (20)
Sandy and Robert Cohen (20)

Lori and Jack Hurtig (20)

JUNE

Phyllis and Aubrey Himelstein (50)
Rochelle and Harvey Litman (50)
Rita and Sheldon Margolis (50)

Esther and Marvin Samphir (50)
Joanne and Sam Katz (45)
Meryl Kraut and David Wiseman (35)
Susan and Jonathan Buchwald (20)
Méira Cook and Mark Libin (20)

MAZEL TOVS

Esther and Marvin Samphir on their grandson Leo Halpern's Bar Mitzvah on February 17

Jessica and Joel Cogan on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Benjamin on March 10

Aarona and David Perlov on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson Hayden on April 14

Sylvana Fux and Carlos Benesdra on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Jeffrey on May 12

Sean Shore and Kara-Anne Yaren on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Maya on June 2

Claudia and Walter Griner on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Alec on June 9

Polina and Julius Anang on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Valentina on June 16

Jackie and Paul Winestock on the marriage of their son Benji to Gabi Kneller

Brenda and Marvin Kass on the birth of their granddaughter Ivy

Gertie Lipson on the birth of her great grandson Jacob Daniel Lipson

Resa and Sheldon Ostrove on the birth of their granddaughter Cameron Ellie

Lynne and Henry Trachtenberg on the birth of a granddaughter Bella Sara Trachtenberg

IN MEMORIAM

Irvin Greenberg
Jill Sheryl (Mintz) Hay
Hy (Herman) Keller
Sylvia Myers
Oscar Nerman
Fay Packer
Hyman Reuben
Sharon Vinsky



Jewish Traditions in Death, Burial, and Mourning

Kavod Ha-Met for the Deceased

A Jew's life is guided by a body of principles and traditions, both *mitzvot*, or commandments, and *halacha*, or Jewish law, which advise on how to fulfill the *mitzvot*. A Jew's death is shepherded similarly, with various traditions and customs to guide mourners in providing *kavod ha-met*—the respect that is owed the deceased in burial and mourning. There are many of these rituals which we perform with death; here are three.

Tachrichim – Modest Burial Shroud

Once *taharah* has been performed by the *Chevrah Kaddisha* (Jewish burial society) and the body of the deceased has been cleansed and prepared for burial, the departed is dressed in simple, white burial shrouds called *tachrichim*. A man is often buried with his *tallit*, the prayer shawl, from which one of the fringes (*tzitziyot*) has been cut, making it unusable. If a deceased woman wore a *tallit* in life, she may also be buried with it. Sometimes a *kittel* (the white garment which some men wear during the High Holidays and at their wedding ceremony) is put over the burial garments of a deceased man.

The modest *tachrichim* are hand-made, often from linen or muslin, with no pockets or adornment. "Jewish tradition recognizes the democracy of death,"¹ said Rabbi Maurice Lamm, author of various books about Jewish law and tradition. Before God, we are all equals.

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin said the simplicity of the garments used as *tachrichim* is an old custom that was instituted to relieve the poor of both embarrassment and expense.² Because

in death the deceased carries nothing, no material wealth, the shroud has no pockets.

Aron – Simple Wood Casket

In the Torah, we are guided to return the body of the deceased to the Earth: "Unto dust shall you return" (Genesis). Jewish theologians interpret this to mean the deceased should be buried directly in the ground, without casket, or *aron*. In Israel, burial in *tachrichim* but without casket is common. In North America, though local by-laws vary, we generally bury the deceased in caskets; Jewish custom informs us to make these of wood, and similarly plain and humble to the *tachrichim*. The type of wood used is not important, and the interior should be unlined, since it "adds neither 'comfort' nor dignity nor respect," Lamm said.

Washing Hands

After burial and before leaving the cemetery, it is customary for mourners, and others in attendance, to wash their hands. Before re-entering the house of mourning, again, the tradition is to wash hands; visitors, too, paying their respects during the *shivah*, the seven days of mourning, do the same before entering the home—a simple pouring of water from cup or pitcher alternately over the hands, with no blessing recited.

As with many *mitzvot*, origins of this custom are debated among Jewish theologians. A common interpretation is that the rinsing of hands comes from a time-honored tradition to cleanse after coming in contact with the deceased. Others say the washing shows that the mourner partook in the burial

Why Do We Cut the Tzitzit?

There are, once again, mixed opinions among Jewish scholars about the origin of the tradition of cutting off one of the *tzitziyot* from a *tallit* that is being buried with the deceased: some scholars say that, because it is considered inappropriate to bury a usable *tallit*, we cut off one *tzitzit*; others say it is so that the wearer, who is unable to say the *bracha*, is not required to do so. Still others say that the fringes serve as reminder of God's commandments—a reminder which the deceased no longer needs, because their soul is with God. And yet others say we do this to show that the deceased is now free of religious laws and obligations.

service and performed *kavod ha-met* to which the deceased is entitled. To be sure, *kavod ha-met* is the intention behind all *mitzvot* performed around burial, which are unique, because they normally go unacknowledged, since the deceased cannot offer thanks. ■

¹ *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, by Maurice Lamm, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 2000.

² *A Code of Jewish Ethics: Love Your Neighbor as Yourself*, by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin. New York: Bell Tower, 2009.

Photo: Jebulon

Funeral and Cemetery Services

Congregation Etz Chayim provides funeral services at the synagogue, graveside, or at Chesed Shel Emes community funeral chapel. Etz Chayim also operates three cemeteries: Bnay Abraham, Hebrew Sick Benefit, and Rosh Pina Memorial Park.

For help or information, please contact Etz Chayim Funeral Director Shelley Sklover at (204) 589-6305 ext. 214 or ssklover@etzchayim.ca.



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