

SHORESH

שורש

**Congregation Etz Chayim
Community News**

MARCH 2021

ניסן תשפ"א | NISAN 5781

**Man with the Clarinet
Seder Plate Anomalies
Hidden Blessings**

A SYLLABUS OF *SEDER* FOODS

Seder Plate Anomalies

Perhaps you know why Jews include the six traditional foods on a Passover *seder* plate—the *maror* (bitter herbs), *karpas* (green vegetable), and others. Each food symbolizes an aspect of our ancestors' bondage in Egypt and ultimate exodus. The foods help us see, taste, smell, and feel our deliverance from slavery, along with the telling of the story.

But have you ever wondered why sometimes you see unexpected foods on a *seder* plate, like an orange, or an olive? At Passover, we have an opportunity to honour various social justice themes; the 'other' foods on a contemporary *seder* plate remind us that many people around the world experience oppression. Here are some of those additional food trends (many of which seem to have originated in the US), and what each one represents. (Bonus: to round out the list, we also threw in the traditional *seder* plate foods and why we include those.)

Orange: shows solidarity for LGBTQ+ Jews and other marginalized Jews. The seeds, which we spit out, symbolize homophobia.

Banana: stands for Syrian refugees and other refugees.

Olives: are a symbol of our longing for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Fair Trade Coffee or Chocolate: symbolizes workers' rights and the demand for fair labour conditions in developing countries.

Pinecone: is a plea for prison and criminal-justice reform.

Acorn: is an Indigenous land acknowledgement.

Cashews: honour military troops.

Small red potato: honours the exodus of Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

Miriam's cup: not actually on the *seder* plate, some Jews add Miriam's cup filled with water next to Elijah's cup of wine. Highlighting the significance of women in the Israelites' redemption from Egypt, Miriam's cup is a symbol of inclusivity at the *seder*.

Traditional Seder Plate Foods

Beitzah (hardboiled egg): A symbol of fertility and the cycle of life, the egg represents the *korban* (sacrifice) offered in the days of the holy temple. We commonly eat the egg with salt water. Vegans might substitute a mushroom to represent the sacrifice or a flower to represent fertility.

Zeroa (roasted shank bone): A piece of roasted lamb (or other meat) symbolizes the lamb the Israelites sacrificed on the eve of their exodus from Egypt, and which became an annual Pesach offering thereafter, until the holy temple fell. *Zeroa* means arm, and the shank bone also points to the "outstretched arm" with which G-d freed the Israelites from bondage. Vegans may replace the shank bone with a beet.



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Karpas (green vegetable, often parsley, sometimes an onion or boiled potato): Some Jews say *karpas* signifies springtime rebirth; others say it is a symbol of the Israelites' resurrection following their exodus. Ashkenazi Jews dip *karpas* in salt water, while Sephardic Jews dip in vinegar; both represent the tears shed by the Israelites during their oppression.

Charoset (sweet fruit paste): This mixture of nuts, fruit, and other ingredients symbolizes the mortar used for building structures by the Israelites in Egypt. A cornucopia of different ingredients can be used to make the sweet paste (see "How Do I Love Thee, Charoset? Let Me Count the Ways," page 3).

Maror (bitter herbs): We eat *maror* to remind us of the bitterness our ancestors endured as slaves in Egypt. We commonly use horseradish root as *maror*.

Chazeret (second bitter herb): Jews often use bitter lettuce (like romaine) as the second bitter herb. Why are there two? Some say *maror* fulfills the *mitzvah* of eating *maror* alone, while *chazeret* fulfills the *mitzvah* of *korech* (the sandwich of bitter herbs and matzah). ■

How Do I Love Thee, Charoset? Let Me Count the Ways



Photo: Chava Goldstain/Shutterstock.com

Sometimes, we mistakenly assume our own Jewish traditions are universal to Jews worldwide. We don't mean to be limited in our thinking, but we forget, at times, to look beyond our own understanding of who is a Jew and what Jewish ritual and tradition should look like.

To illustrate just one example of the diverse traditions of Jews, look at the multiplicity of ways *charoset* is made throughout the world. (We have adapted and added to "Charosets of the World" from *Tablet Magazine's The Passover Haggadah – An Ancient Story for Modern Times*):

In **Calcutta, India**, some Jews use date syrup, or *silan*, and walnuts to make *charoset*. Another Indian *charoset* that is closer to chutney includes mangoes, raisins, dates, almonds, sugar, red wine vinegar, and kosher salt. In **Tashkent, Uzbekistan**, apples, walnuts, raisins, and persimmons might go into *charoset*, while Jews in **Aleppo, Syria** may use dates, sweet wine, and hazelnuts or walnuts. In **Greece**, ingredients might include dates, currents, raisins, pine nuts, cinnamon, and cloves; in **Montreal, Canada**, maple syrup might sweeten *charoset*, along with sweet wine, apples, walnuts, and cinnamon. In **Yemen**, *charoset* could include dates, figs, raisins, walnuts, sesame seeds, ginger, cardamom, coriander, and black pepper, while in **Iran**, you might taste dates, raisins, almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, vinegar, pomegranate juice, cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger in *charoset*. In **Suriname, South Africa**, dried coconut is sometimes used in *charoset*, with walnuts,

raisins, apricots, and pears. One **Israeli** recipe includes apples, nuts, raisins, bananas, orange juice, and wine. **Persian** *charoset* (or *chaleg*) may include walnuts, almonds, pistachios, dates, raisins, grape juice, banana, apple, cardamom, ginger, and cinnamon. An **Egyptian** *charoset* recipe combines dates, raisins, wine or grape juice, honey or sugar, and almonds. And a recipe from **Mexico** includes dried hibiscus flowers, water, walnuts, apple, pear, cinnamon, honey, and red wine or grape juice.

The great thing about *charoset* is that quantity of ingredients doesn't matter much—a little of this and some of that is always scrumptious. Which tradition will you try this year? ■

You Say Brisket, I Say *Kebbeh*

Two Etz Chayim members discuss their Passover menus.

"I am Sephardi, so we have some different food traditions. For Passover, I prepare kosher for Passover *kebbeh*, a traditional Middle Eastern dish: these are fried rolls filled with beef and onions, with dough often made of bulgur wheat. My grandmother used dough made of mashed potatoes and matzo meal, so I follow her recipe. I also prepare beef *maude*, like a beef and potato stew. I usually prepare a chicken dish, often sweet and sour (with apricots, honey, and raisins, Moroccan style), baked potatoes, and different salads. Sweets made of almond flour, nuts (pistachios, almonds), and raisins are part of a traditional Sephardi table. For *charoset* I mix apples with dates, raisins, and walnuts: yummy!"
—Sabrina Bokser

"I feel honoured and blessed to have grown up in a home that was half Eastern European (Polish-Romanian-Hungarian) and half Mizrahi and Middle Eastern (Yemenite-Egyptian-Syrian). Our Passover seder foods are similar to the Ashkenazi customs, however, seasonings and recipes might be different. We eat *Hilbeh*, a viscous condiment made of ground fenugreek—definitely an acquired taste. Also, *zhoug*, like a chutney made of ground, spicy peppers, cilantro, and seasonings. A typical Yemenite spice blend used in soups and other dishes is *Hawaiig*. *Charoset* is often made with dates, other dried fruits, and nuts. Delicious!"—Naama Samphir ■



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Kosher Catering Service

Congregation Etz Chayim Catering is open for business, still offering a variety of Kosher takeout options such as Shabbat dinners and weekly specials. We also still cater home events, office meetings, shiva meals, and more. **Let us know how we can help you:**
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Man With The Clarinet



The Black Sea Station

Myron Schultz doesn't know if he was destined to play the clarinet, or not. What he does know is that the synchronicity he has now with his instrument did not materialize overnight—he had to cultivate his compatibility to the clarinet, and to the music he plays on it. "It took quite a while for me to appreciate my relationship with it," he says. "That developed over time, as I gained greater understanding for the instrument, what I could do with it, and how I could express myself with it."

Musical Family

Myron's music education began as a young boy, at home. "Within our household, music was like oxygen. It was always present," he says. His mother, Laurane Schultz, a trained concert pianist, was a strong influence. "She gave us an understanding of music, and how to play in a way that communicates to an audience. She had a good sense of what worked for performances," he says, adding that she was his main accompanist in his earlier musical life. While Myron's father, Albert, was not musically inclined, he regularly played music at home and ensured his children had the instruments they needed and got to their lessons.

Myron shares musical kinship with his siblings: His brother, Victor, is a New York violinist; his sister, Erica, is an accomplished Winnipeg pianist, piano

teacher, and harpist; and his sister, Lois, studied flute and has worked in the concert production industry.

After trying piano and violin, Myron began private clarinet lessons at age 10 with Don Smordin, and in junior high he played with his school band. Two years later, he met Ted Oien—then, principal clarinetist for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra—who became his mentor and teacher of classical clarinet for many years.

Klezmer Music

It was through the Chai Folk ensemble, when Myron was in grade 10, that he was introduced to klezmer and Jewish music—a dialect of a language that resonated well with him. Chai was primarily a dance ensemble then, and music didn't usually take centre stage, he says. But, noticing Myron's talent with his clarinet, Chai began spotlighting him on stage.

"They entrusted me with something that had never been done," he says of Chai forces Nenad Lhotka, Shirley Goltsman, and Sam Simkin. "I became more involved in klezmer music."

In University, Myron instigated a music trio with another Chai musician, Ken Silden, on bass, and they played at private functions and concerts. "It was my first 'professional' foray into the world of klezmer music," says Myron. This connected him with other musicians, particularly Kinzey Posen, Shayla Fink, and Eli Herscovitch.

Fast-forward to 1982: Myron pitched a concept to Mitch Podolak, founding artistic director of the Winnipeg Folk Festival, to bring Winnipeg klezmer music to the annual summer music fest (two American klezmer bands had already played there). "He was enthralled with the idea," Myron says, and Finjan was born and then featured at the 1983 Folk Festival. Captivating fans in the mid-'80s and '90s with a mix of Eastern-European sounds and American Yiddish theatre music, Finjan (including Myron, brother Victor, Kinzey Posen, Shayla Fink, and Eli Herscovitch; later, Daniel Koulack and eventually, Sasha Boychouk) built a repertoire of accomplishments: five studio albums, two Juno nominations, and a Western Canadian Music Award.

Finjan also commissioned Winnipeg composer Sid Robinovitch to create a musical suite for the band and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, which is something "we're pretty proud of," says Myron. It was an interesting challenge to create the identity of a band as a solo artist and juxtapose that with an orchestra, he says. He's grateful the WSO gave its blessing to his vision, which led to Finjan playing with other symphonies across Canada and the US.

"You need to express your vision," he says. "Hopefully, you excite people enough that they come along for the ride."

Myron's musical achievements don't begin and end with Finjan. He added a clarinet track to several Canadian albums, including Bruce Coburn's *Big Circumstance*, k.d. lang's *Ingenue* (which eventually went platinum), Chava Alberstein's *Foreign Letters*, and Leaf Rapids's *Citizen Alien*. He was a founding member and second president of the Winnipeg Jazz Festival. He was a substitute clarinetist with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet orchestra. And he formed two other fan-favourite bands: The Black Sea Station (also klezmer and Eastern-European folk music, with brother Victor, Daniel Koulack, Ben Mink, and Nicolai Prisacar) and The Mayors of Sambor



Myron with (L-R) Abbie, Liat, and Dafna at a Father's Day run.

(a mix of traditional [Jewish, Eastern-European, Romanian, Armenian] and classical music, with siblings Erica and Victor, and Daniel Koulack).

Day Job

Myron's life is built on more than music. His day job is running a company started by his grandfather in the 1930s. What is now Lambskin Specialties and The Wonderful World of Sheepskin began as a business that manufactured fur trim for other clothing factories; the company evolved in the '60s when Myron's father brought in sheepskin and added slippers, coats, and eventually cleaning products to the product line. Now, the North End

Winnipeg factory store sells a huge array of sheepskin products, from outerwear and footwear to household and automotive products, plus a line of cleaning products, including the famous Dust Wand.

Myron, who studied city planning at university, says he got into the family business by accident. "It wasn't pre-determined," he says. "I think my father was settled on the fact that none of his kids would be involved in the company." But his father needed help at one point and Myron obliged... and ended up hanging out for a while.

"I developed an affinity and a place for myself there," he says. And while he jokes about the "third generation curse" (that a family business will go down in the third generation), it isn't something he worries about. Actually, he has a theory about the so-called curse:

"The third generation—you've got this kid with an MBA (Master of Business Administration) who thinks he knows business, but he doesn't know *the* business," Myron says. "I do not have an MBA, but I spent a lot of time at the company in my youth, until

the beginning of university. I knew the company from the inside," he says.

Shul and Family

Myron recently stepped down from his role as president of Congregation Etz Chayim (Avrom Charach stepped in). He says it was an opportunity he is glad to have taken.

"Being that close to a Rabbi and Cantor is pretty meaningful," he states. "You get really good insight into how their brains work, so it was enriching in many ways."

In free moments (indeed, there are a few), Myron enjoys time with his family—wife Elana, and daughters Dafna, Abbie, and Liat—participating in activities and getaways together, like running, tennis, card games, spectator hockey, cooking, going to concerts, ski trips and other travel, summers at the Gimli family cottage, and time at the Winnipeg Folk Festival. He says it was his own father who instilled in him "the importance of family. I have taken that with me as I started my own family." ■

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Miriam's Songbook

If there is a through-line to Miriam Kohn's life, it is song. A retired music teacher and vocalist, Miriam was a local musical-theatre performer and sang with the Chai Folk Ensemble. She also sang in the Shaarey Zedek and Rosh Pina adult choirs, and she was a longstanding vocal director for both Chai and the Rosh Pina junior choir.

"I always loved to sing," says Miriam, whose first solo was in a Kindergarten Peretz School Purim musical.

One of her first voice teachers was Sara Udow, the force behind the Chai Folk Ensemble vocals and soloist/choir conductor for the Rosh Pina choir in the 1960s.

"Sara Udow was a big influence in my life," says Miriam, who also had opera training with opera singer Alicia Seaborn, and musical theatre vocals training with Donna Fletcher.

Miriam was one of the Chai Folk Ensemble's original eight dancers. When singers were added, she became one of the first. When a full singing ensemble was brought in, Miriam was the first vocal director (1982–1988).

"There was a time when I'd spent more years in Chai than I'd been out of Chai; for 26 years I was involved in one way or another," she says.

The Accidental Career

Miriam says she fell into her career as a music teacher. In fact, she had pursued dental hygiene in university, which she practised for seven years. She met her former husband (Danny Bronstein) in dental school and together they had two children (Shaun is a Montreal event and talent manager and Lauren is a policy analyst for the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs).

"Dabbling" in music after having her children, Miriam took choral conducting and theory courses and was directing the junior Rosh Pina choir. A friend and music educator (Bev Aronovitch) suggested she study Orff (a developmental and child-centred approach to music education that encourages creativity and play). Miriam completed three levels of Orff training over three summers, then

borrowed instruments to volunteer teach Orff at Ramah Hebrew School and Montessori.

"I was practising teaching and prepping for my upcoming career," she says.

With her foot in the door at Ramah, when someone went on maternity leave, Miriam was offered the music teacher job, though she didn't yet have an education degree. "They knew I could sing and play piano, and I was fluent in Hebrew. The Hebrew got me in the door," says Miriam, who had attended Talmud Torah and Joseph Wolinsky until grade 11 (she graduated from Garden City Collegiate).

Miriam taught music for several years before returning to university for a bachelor-of-education degree. "Life gave me the B. Ed," she laughs. (When she did learn some pedagogical jargon during her education studies, she'd say, "I do that all the time. Now it has a name!") But she needed some practical teacher skills, she says: "I was pretty lenient." A year after Ramah and Talmud Torah amalgamated into Gray Academy, Miriam took a year off to get a B. Ed.

As music teacher at Ramah, Miriam used existing children's songs to create and direct musicals. Once the schools combined into Gray, she also directed high school musicals.

"I was always falling into music," she says. "I don't know why I went into dentistry, I should have gone into music," she laughs. "I guess it worked out in the end."

As a music teacher, Miriam realized her role in developing students' self esteem.

"If someone wants to sing, they can sing," Miriam says. "It's very important. Telling a child they can't sing or they should mouth the words is telling them they're not good enough. As I got older, I realized it was a huge responsibility, as a teacher, to give students self esteem."

On Stage

Miriam's performing credits are extensive.

"When *Fiddler on the Roof* was hot off the press, I was 12 or 13. That was



"Telling a child they can't sing or they should mouth the words is telling them they're not good enough."

the first time I played *Golde*; I played her seven hundred times since then," she jokes.

An original board member of the Winnipeg Jewish Theatre more than 30 years ago, Miriam appeared in several early WJT productions. "Early on, most of us were just talented amateurs," she says. "Now, it's a professional house theatre; everything from set building to acting is theatre professionals."

Miriam returned to the WJT board a few years ago and is now president. "I enjoy it in a whole different way," she says. "The first time, I was very hands on, because we were all volunteers. Now, they're all professionals, so it's exciting to be reading plays and involved in that way."

Miriam performed in several Hollow Mug dinner theatre shows. "We weren't professionals, but we sort of thought we were," she laughs. She appeared in a few Winnipeg Fringe musicals and a 15-minute piece about Alzheimer's. Miriam and Jane Burpee first performed *Is it Wednesday?* (brought to the Fringe by the Sarasvati Players) outside MTC

Warehouse. Later, the duo performed the play at Manitoba Alzheimer's Society meetings and conventions.

"These two women are sisters-in-law," she says. "But they meet on a bus bench and at the beginning, they are strangers to each other. By the end, they are reminding themselves how they knew each other. It was kind of poignant."

Miriam's last professional musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, was brought to the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre 13 years ago. She says she didn't have to audition for the part of Grandma Tzeitel: "They phoned and offered me the part." Artistic director Stephen Schipper had wanted authentic actors on stage, and "I come across as very Jewish," Miriam laughs.

Being on stage, Miriam learned to trust. "You have no one to depend on but the person opposite you. You trust they're going to remember what they need to say, and vice versa. Even if the right words don't come, you trust something will come to you or your partner, something that will bring you back to where you need to be," she says.

In the Community

Several years ago, Miriam helped bring Soup Sisters to Winnipeg with Harriet Zimmer and Sandy Malamud. Soup Sisters (and Broth Brothers) is an evening of kitchen camaraderie through soup-making for Willow Place, an organization that supports women (and their children) who are experiencing domestic abuse. Each event produces 100 litres of fresh soup for Willow Place, and culminates in a supper of soup, salad, bread, and wine for participants. A participation fee covers expenses like soup ingredients, equipment, the venue (Winnipeg's Fairmont Hotel), a chef, and serving staff.

"It's a completely feel-good event," Miriam says of the program, which started in Calgary and has expanded to 29 Canadian cities (and two American).

Miriam's family belonged to B'nai Abraham, and she was on the committee to amalgamate the synagogues into Congregation Etz Chayim. She has sung the Haftarah at Rosh Hashanah twice for Etz Chayim, including this past year via Zoom. A world traveller, Miriam has visited Israel several times, four to participate in Sar-el, the Israeli volunteer army program. She has also visited Africa (Morocco), South America, and Asia.

"I like to travel not too fancy," she says. "I'd rather have quantity, not quality, so I can see more," she says.

And while that may be Miriam's rule for travel, her life story is filled with examples of both. ■

ETZ CHAYIM PEOPLE

New Kids on the Board

Two new members bring knowledge, skills, and objectives to Congregation Etz Chayim's board of directors.



Paul Shur

Paul is a human-resources professional with nearly 20 years of experience working at large companies in both Toronto and Winnipeg. Growing up in the Jewish community of Edmonton, he attended Talmud Torah Elementary School and was very involved in BBYO.

After moving to Winnipeg for university in 1997 and completing his Bachelor of Arts in psychology, Paul and his wife, Tara Kozlowich, relocated to Toronto where they lived for 11 years. In 2012, they returned to The Prairies to be closer to family and a part of the Winnipeg Jewish community. Paul and Tara have two daughters, Samara and Bailee.

He says he is grateful and excited to be joining the Congregation Etz Chayim board.

"It will allow me the opportunity to give back to the Jewish community and support the synagogue's leadership in shaping its future," says Paul.



Leslie Singer

Leslie is a foods and nutrition teacher at Tech Voc High School who began her career in education teaching ESL (English as a Second Language). Instrumental in the formation of the Etz Chayim youth committee as a former board member, she has returned to the board to help ensure Etz Chayim's continuance. "This is an uncertain time," she says, citing the ongoing discussion of the shul's relocation and an aging membership. "I want to make sure the synagogue is still there," says Leslie, an avid cross-country skier who also enjoys playing Mah-Jong.

Leslie is married to Sheldon Glow and they have two children, Josh and Sari. In her youth, Leslie attended Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate and was involved in USY, BBYO, Camp Massad, and working at Jewish day camps. ■



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Hidden Blessings at Pesach

At the Passover *seder*, the youngest sings *Ma Nishtana*, asking, how is this night different from other nights? There's a certain irony to the question these pandemic days; an additional question might even spring to mind: How is this Passover different from other Passovers? (And maybe even: Why must it be this way?)

But we Jews are adaptable, resilient, persevering. Even the most-camouflaged *afikoman* is discovered with the careful pursuit of dedicated young 'detectives,' who are encouraged by faith that it *will* be found. So too will an earnest and soulful search reveal infinite hidden blessings. Congregation Etz Chayim members share recollections from their 5780 *seders*. Hopefully, some of the details bring light, warmth, and *nachas* to your 5781 *seders*.

Love, and Song

"Last year, we stayed home alone, just us five. Our families live in Argentina, so we usually have both *sederim* with 20–25 Winnipeg friends, and it is lovely.

I come from a Sephardic observant family, so there were no phone calls or Zoom meetings during the *seder*, but we had WhatsApp video calls before the *seder* to wish our families *chag sameach*.

Last year was emotional; it was the first time we were alone. But we put all our love into it and sang like we were freed from slavery and sickness, and we enjoyed our *seder*.

This year, before Passover, we'll show our friends we love them and deliver (contactless) Kosher-for-Passover sweetness in these bitter times: honey cake, brownies, almond cookies, macaroons. It's a way to be together and share. We'll thank God for freeing us from slavery and pray for better times for the world." —SABRINA BOKSER

Shepping Nachus

"Our *seder* was our first Zoom attempt. We had a dry run the night before to make sure everyone knew how to log on, which got us in the mood for the first night. The biggest challenge was when to mute, when not to mute, who to mute, and who was in charge of muting.



L-R. Henry, Sammy, and Allan Schaffer (Photo: Elaine Schaffer)

It was just over 30 people from four time zones. An abridged *Haggadah* was sent out in advance, and everyone was designated a role from our *Haggadah*; we divided *Ma Nishtana* among four of the younger kids.

All the grandparents *shepped nachus* (received pride and joy). It was a wonderful feeling of family being together. We would never have been together in person with all these people. It was joyous throughout and we felt blessed with the opportunity to share our *seder* with so many."

—DENNY HORNSTEIN

A Memorable Seder

"Our first *seder* was via Zoom with Ilana's side of the family: approximately 25 screens and participants from Winnipeg, Toronto, Virginia, and California. Each family had designated roles at the full *seder*. It was wonderful to see everyone.

Our second *seder*, via Facetime, involved us, our children, Adam and Danielle, and our parents, Sandy and Murray Hyman, and Reeva Abrams. This was a memorable *seder*: Adam (then 11) lead the *seder*! He did a fantastic job, including *Pesach* jokes, traditional and new songs, and parts for all to participate. We supplemented with materials from the *Haggadah* on the Etz Chayim website. Danielle (then 8) took every opportunity to read from the *Haggadah* in English and Hebrew. The grandparents *kvelled* (burst with pride)."

—STEVEN HYMAN AND ILANA ABRAMS

Help from Eliyahu

"We had a Zoom *seder* with two families that normally join us (Skladnicks, Almosninos). Family



(Photo: Sabrina Bokser)

members not normally at our table also joined: Faye's sister in Vancouver and our niece in Toronto. We included Avrom's parents on the Zoom and had an Etz Chayim Pesach in a Box delivered to them. We made all the favourites and set a smaller table.

We realized the children who usually attend our *seders* would not be able to find the *Afikoman* if we hid it in our home. To solve this, we enlisted help from *Eliyahu*. On Zoom, Avrom broke the *Afikoman*, wrapped it in a fancy napkin, and put it into our mailbox, with envelopes of gelt for the children. With his magic as a *Navi* (prophet), *Eliyahu* divided the *Afikoman* into three, to hide in the other homes."

—FAYANNE AND AVROM CHARACH

Editor's Note: We would never suggest tall-tale telling (nor would we want to get in Eliyahu's way). But we postulate an alternate understanding of what played out: Before anyone was awake on the seder morning, Avrom delivered to each home an afikoman (wrapped in a fancy napkin identical to the one he would later use on Zoom) along with envelopes of gelt. The parents at each home hid their afikoman, which the children later found.

Webcam Wizardry

"After being married 26 years, this was the first *seder* we were not all together. Sheldon (Glow) was feeling sick, so he went for a Covid test and ran out to the cottage—he didn't want to infect us. (He ended up being Covid-negative).

Our son, Josh, set up two computers, one for seeing family and one for "kahoot" (a game-based learning platform). Josh also made a dog-cam



Zoom screen: Cantor Tracy Kasner and Rabbi Kliel Rose. (Photo: Avrom Charach)



Adam and Danielle Hyman making meatballs (Photo: Steven Hyman).



Sari Glow (at table. Photo: Leslie Singer).

but couldn't get together. On the flipside, everybody has been healthy. We've been very lucky in our family."

—SHAARONWEINSTEIN

Small Fry Fun

"The first Zoom *seder* included Bert and me, our son Allan, his wife Mae, their kids Henry (then grade 4) and Sammy (then kindergarten), our daughter Sharon, her husband Jonathan, their sons Ben (then grade 8) and Jonah (then grade 5), and Jonathan's mother, Beth Goldenberg. We did the whole *seder*; Sammy and Henry did the *Ma Nishtana*. We ate the meal together, then sang songs

The second night, we did a short Zoom *seder* with Andrea, her husband Jordan, their children Zev (then 2) and Jessie (then 4) from Toronto, and our Winnipeg children and their families. The kids re-enacted the story of baby Moses, singing the *brachot* and the *Ma Nishtana*. This was fun and meaningful for the little ones. Afterwards, we joined a full, traditional seder with our son-in-law's family in Toronto. Beautiful."

—ELAINE SCHAFFER ■

for the dog! We had Josh and Sari here, my parents at their house, my sister at her house, and Sheldon in Gimli. It was fun but weird, the first time I was away from Sheldon."

—LESLIE SINGER

Everyone Healthy

"We had a Zoom *seder* with our son Josh and family at his house in Winnipeg, our daughter Tannis and family in New Jersey, and the two of us (Shaaron and husband Hymie) at our table. The *seder* was very pared down:

Normally, we set a table for 27 people in the living room, I rent dishes and have kitchen help; and Tannis and family usually arrive the day before.

We did the first part of the *seder* as we normally would: everybody took a turn reading, then we broke for the meal. We reconnected a couple hours later for the last couple glasses of wine, and the kids chose songs to sing at the end.

I sent *gefilte* fish to Josh's house, but it felt strange not doing the usual preparation, and it was sad knowing we have family in the city

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Judith, on a Zodiac in Greenland.



Congregation Etz Chayim book club

When Judith Putter hung up her chartered accountant hat, she didn't simply put her feet up and turn on Netflix. In fact, she might be busier now than she was while working as a financial planner.

Once she had retired, Judith was able to take in a much larger helping of the Winnipeg cultural arts offerings she so enjoys.

"I had time to go to MTC Warehouse, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Manitoba Opera, the Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, and music concerts," says Judith, who worked at Investors Group for the last 18 years of her career.

Judith says while she likes almost everything in the arts, she loves theatre, adding, "I did not miss a Fringe since it began." She volunteered at the Winnipeg Fringe for many years, until automation reduced the festival's need for volunteers.

The full slate of Judith's volunteer work has been varied. Until a year ago, she was very involved in the Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, as president and then as treasurer. She was vice president of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada many years ago and was later chair of the exhibition committee. Judith also volunteered for Folklorama, and she assisted grade 11 and 12 adult students at an adult education centre.

"We rarely do a formal literary analysis, unless it appears to impact on the book's narrative"

Etz Chayim Book Club

Judith is an ardent reader, so taking over Congregation Etz Chayim's book club a few years back was a good fit. She schedules meeting dates and (pre-pandemic) establishes a host for each meeting; and she is responsible for finding books with Jewish appeal for the club to explore.

"I look for books that I think have broad interest," explains Judith, who, in addition to her designation as a chartered accountant, has two degrees: a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

For some book club meetings (particularly once gatherings became virtual), she has brought in a guest facilitator. For instance, the book club recently explored Marra Gad's *The Color of Love*, a memoir about growing up black and Jewish. For this Zoom get-together, Judith invited her nephew's wife, a woman who is similarly black and Jewish, to lead the discussion.

"She talked about some commonalities," although her circumstances were different from the author's, Judith states. "It was a really good talk, and we had a good discussion."

Rabbi Kliel facilitated the discussion for Yossi Klein Halevi's *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*, a series of letters that shape the author's attempts to instigate Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

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The book club meets four or five times a year, and Judith says gatherings are casual. "We rarely do a formal literary analysis, unless it appears to impact on the book's narrative," she says. "We are much more interested in the content. Anyone who wants to speak has an opportunity." Before Covid, meetings finished with coffee and a nosh.

Adapting Activities to Lockdown

Although pandemic restrictions prevent Judith from attending the Rady Centre for yoga class or to work with her personal trainer, she remains fit thanks to her dog Lyla, who takes her human on long daily walks throughout their neighbourhood. And while her Mah-jong crowd has stopped meeting for now, Judith still plays bridge virtually with her group (even though "I play a lousy game," she laughs).

Together with a couple friends, Judith had at one time organized a knitting group, which has shifted to Zoom gatherings. During the summer, the friends were able to connect outdoors instead.

"At first, we met in people's yards; then we moved to Assiniboine park. We continued until it got cold, and now we're back on Zoom," says Judith, who crochets, as well.

Judith is also part of a walking group "that I mostly don't walk with," she laughs, "because I'm always walking the dog." Now, the group has a Zoom visit following their Sunday walk.

Connections and Kin

Judith's synagogue roots are tied to Etz Chayim. "My grandparents became members of Rosh Pina as soon as it was established," she says, adding her parents were also members. Judith had been attending Wednesday-evening Etz Chayim services at the Simkin Centre until Covid put in-person *minyanim* on hold; more recently, she has attended some online services. She is part of the Etz Chayim programming committee, and she sat on the Rosh Pina board before that *shul* amalgamated into Etz Chayim.

Judith has two brothers (her sister passed away), 11 nieces and nephews (several with whom she is close) and 17 great nieces and nephews.

"There are piles of them," she laughs. ■



Lap blanket donation to the Simkin Centre (Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim).

Women's League Shines Brightly

In 2020, Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim won the Jewels in the Crown award again, presented every three years to qualified sisterhoods within the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim has not lost its lustre despite a challenging and harrowing year worldwide. For the fourth consecutive time, in 2020, Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim won the Jewels in the Crown award, bestowed internationally every three years to eligible sisterhoods within the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

To win the award, a women's league chapter must participate in or sponsor two programs or projects within each of three categories during the three-year period (in this case, July 2017–June 2020). Categories include education/programming, like creation and donation of lap blankets to the Simkin Centre in 2018; community service/world affairs, like "In the Eye of the Beholder," a 2017 fundraising program for which donations of unneeded art and collectibles were solicited from the Etz Chayim community and then sold by auction; and women's league activities, like an annual Shabbat

service conducted by Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim members and other Etz Chayim women and girls.

Brenda Keller said applying for the award is revealing and heartwarming.

"It's nice to see how much we're actually doing," said the president of Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim. "It's the things we do all the time, but when you actually write it down (on the application), it's like, 'Whoa, we did quite a bit!'"

Jewels in the Crown awards are presented at the Women's League International Convention. In July of 2020, a Chicago-scheduled convention was derailed by the pandemic, and a virtual convention was held instead. Undiscouraged, the Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim remains committed to fundraising efforts, special interest programming, and educational opportunities, and members are busy planning exciting events for when we can again gather safely. Stay tuned! ■

SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS

DECEMBER

Ilana Abrams, Jeff Goldstein, Cynthia Hiebert-Simkin,
Merrill Shulman, Leo Steinfeld, Donald Stern

JANUARY

Geraldine Baker, Candice Buchalter, Mia Elfenbaum, Howard
Kideckel, Betty Kirshner, Andrea Leibl-Hochman, Hernan
Popper, Pearl T. Rosenberg, Sid Rosenhek, Alissa Schacter,
Kevin Segall, Marshall Stitz, Morley Vinsky, Morley Wiseman

FEBRUARY

Lorraine Altman, Gayle Freed, Grant Goldberg, Tracy Kasner,
Alan Katz, Cheryl Moreau, Michael Pinx, Sally Rosenbloom,
Garry Shapera, Lawrence Shiffman, Brad Tabac

MARCH

Harvey Greenberg, Sheldon Itscovich, Ingrid Neumarkt,
Stuart Slayen, Shane Solomon, Howard Tennenhouse

APRIL

Bernie Chodirker, Howard Collerman, Alec Gillman, Lil Hirt,
Edna Keller, Howard Marantz, Evan Roitenberg

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES

DECEMBER

Denny and Mel Hornstein (50); Anne and Alan Katz (40);
Rebby and Alan Schacter (55)

JANUARY

Lil and Chuck Frohlich (65); Rita and Sam Swire (55);
Esther and Sam Sztulwark (50)

FEBRUARY

Rosalind and Harry Shapiro (60)

MARCH

Susan and Jerry Cohen (20); Reva and Harold Stone (55)

APRIL

Adriana and Marcelo Josebachvili (20); Cindy Lazar and
Joel Kay (15); Rachela and Norman Selter (50)

IN MEMORIAM

Helen Atnikov, Jose Luis Benesdra, Steven Boroditsky,
Morris Faintuch, Lil Hochman, Max Hochman,
Sharon Slayen Kaplan, Marjorie Kay, Israel (Soody) Kleiman,
Evelyn Numerow, Annette Rosenberg, Mickey Rosenberg,
Ben Rykiss, Malke Shore, Phyllis Spigelman, Antoni Wierbicki,
Dr. David Wiseman, Norman Wolk

WITH GRATITUDE

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