Contributors

A New Venture  Rachel Piatii  .................................................. PAGE 3
Redeemed  Israel Ellis  .......................................................... PAGE 6
A Nightmare  Sam Hoffer  ....................................................... PAGE 10
The Rehab Patient  Rita Wilder Craig  ...................................... PAGE 11
Janusz Korczak  Sandra Schachter  ......................................... PAGE 11
The Man with Red Hair  Fiona Gold Kroll  ............................... PAGE 12
Seasonal Rehearsal  Brandon Marlon  .................................. PAGE 14
Avraham  Alvin G. Winestock  ................................................ PAGE 16
Czernowitz  Kenneth Sherman  .............................................. PAGE 17
A Bagel with Flavour  Alvin Abram  ....................................... PAGE 18
A Life Worth Living  Judy Weinryb  ........................................ PAGE 22
Walking on Eggshells  Maurice Krystal  ................................ PAGE 24
The Anniversary  by Wendy Joan Ungar  .............................. PAGE 26

The Hardships of a Jew Having No Job  David Stern  ............... PAGE 29
A Day in the Life of Molly  Elina Guttenberg  ......................... PAGE 30
Eternity’s Greatest Love  Yosef Liss  ....................................... PAGE 33
Written in a Few Minutes After Leaving Auschwitz  Marcia Shuster PAGE 33
Secret Sister  Shirley Muhlstock Brodt  ................................ PAGE 34
Ode to the Hebrew Language  Carey M. Knight  ................... PAGE 36
Karnel Ha-Shemesh  Pearl Adler Saban  ................................ PAGE 37
Are There Any Jews Here Besides Rapoport?  David Rapoport  PAGE 38
The Onions of my People  Jenny Roger  .................................. PAGE 40
My Imaginary Friend  Norm Spatz  ....................................... PAGE 42
Vital Signs Absent  Julie Schwartz  ........................................ PAGE 44
Dear Otto  Lee Schwartz  ..................................................... PAGE 46
Zayde’s Haggadah Line  Len Phillips  ..................................... PAGE 47

Supplement edited by  Michael Fraiman
Cover concept  CJN Staff, illustration by Avi Katz.
Inside photos  Shutterstock, Wikimedia Commons, Pixabay, Freepik,
All-free-download.com and CJN archives.

Magen David Adom, Israel’s national ambulance, blood services
and disaster-relief organization, serves as emergency medical
first responders for the country’s 8.8 million people.

Magen David Adom cannot do this alone!
Your donations will guarantee the continuity of Israel’s emergency
services and will ensure the safety of all Israelis.

Magen David Adom maintains a nationwide fleet of more than
1,850 life-saving vehicles, ambulances and emergency medical scooters.
MAGEN DAVID ADOM CANNOT DO THIS ALONE!
Magen David Adom, Israel’s national ambulance, blood services
and disaster-relief organization, serves as emergency medical
first responders for the country’s 8.8 million people.

DO YOU KNOW THAT...

- MDA maintains a nationwide fleet of more than 1,850 life-saving vehicles, ambulances and emergency medical scooters.
- MDA responds to 900,000 plus calls a year, including daily emergencies, accidents, attacks, and child births.
- MDA collects more than 300,000 units of blood annually, supplying all of Israel’s blood needs.
- MDA employs 2,200 dedicated medical professionals.
- MDA has 22,000 volunteers who represent all areas of Israeli society.
- MDA maintains 166 medical stations throughout Israel.
A New Venture

RACHEL PIUTI

It was September 1955, and after four years in Canada, Paul and I were embarking on a new venture, a grocery store. It would be very different from what we had done until now. We knew nothing about the grocery business, but we were young, energetic and optimistic. After all, we didn’t know anything about carpet binding when we began doing that four years ago. Yet we became accomplished carpetbinders. I could finish a nine-by-12-foot rug in half an hour, and it became a lucrative enterprise. But we had to give it up because the store that supplied us with most of the work closed. The few other clients we still had did not give us enough material to continue with the business. So we decided to move on. We sold the house on Brock Avenue.

We moved not too far away. Our cousin Martin owned a building on Elm Grove Avenue, just south of Queen Street West. It had an empty store, once used as a grocery, with living quarters in the back and a rented five-room apartment on the second floor.

“Why don’t you take the place, live in the back and open a grocery? You can live rent-free until you make a go of the business. People are doing very well in groceries,” Martin suggested.

It’s not a bad idea, Paul and I thought. We had a nine-month-old baby boy and an older boy. A store with rooms behind it would allow me to stay at home and look after the two children, as well as help out in the store. We had visions of working the business up; sure, we would start small, but there was no reason we couldn’t develop it and become, if not like the Weston’s of Loblaws and the A&P or the Blacks of Dominion, then maybe like the Goodwills or the Kidekels. After all, our friends Isaac and Rela, who had come to Canada only two years ago, had a thriving grocery store on Dundas Street near Bathurst.

So we hired a carpenter to make new shelves. A handyman put new linoleum tiles on the floor. There was already a refrigerator and a service counter, and we bought a used adding machine. We also fixed up the back apartment, a bedroom and a very large kitchen with a tiny room and bath behind. Not too bad, we thought.

Our friend Isaac advised us about wholesalers, bakeries and dairies. Finally, the day came when we opened the store. We sent out fliers in the neighbourhood: “PAUL’S GROCERY NOW OPEN”, printed in bold black letters.

The shelves were neatly stocked with all kinds of cans, jars of coffee, tea and jams. At seven in the morning the baker’s truck arrived to deliver bread and doughnuts, the dairymen brought a case of milk, butter, cheese and eggs. Schneider’s meat packer, the best, we were told, brought some meats. Another truck delivered fruit and vegetables.

They had to be paid, papers had to be signed. We tried to make sure, as we were warned by Isaac, that all was delivered as ordered. It was bedlam.

A moment after everybody left, the newly installed doorbell rang. It was Dorothy, the lady from upstairs. She wore a pink housedress that emphasized her ample figure, pink mules on her bare feet and curlers in her blond hair.

“I will be your first customer, for good luck,” she said. “I would like six chocolate doughnuts and six bottles of Coca-Cola for our breakfast.” She paid 66 cents, 30 cents for doughnuts and 36 cents for the Coke.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

I was surprised. Is this what she feeds her family for breakfast? She continued to do this every morning, as long as we had the store.

I had met her for the first time only a couple of weeks earlier. She knocked on our door and introduced herself. “I am Dorothy. We live upstairs, my husband and I, and our five children. Our youngest is one year old and our oldest, Steven, is 12. Then there is Bonnie, 10, and all the rest of them. My husband is Jewish,” she added, as if to reassure me.

She offered to do a weekly cleaning of my apartment for seven dollars. I told her that I was sorry, but I could not afford it. But we did make an arrangement. Steven and Bonnie would take Kobi, our five year old, to kindergarten every day.

Dorothy made it a habit to come to the store at odd hours for a chat. The doorbell would ring and I would rush in from the back thinking that a customer had come, only to discover that it was Dorothy. She would buy a chocolate bar, eat it leisurely and engage me in conversation. I needed badly to be in the back, there was so much to do. Often, the baby would cry while I was with her in the store.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

137-139 Queen St. W. on the southwest corner of Queen and York streets in Toronto, the current location of the Four Seasons Centre.
Dorothy would say, “Go on, go in to him. I’ll stay in the store.”

And I would say: “It's OK, it's healthy for babies to cry a bit. It's good exercise for their lungs.” (Where I got this idea, I don't know.) The truth was that I didn't want to leave her alone in the store. I had money in the till that I put in every morning to make it look as if there were some sales in case a client came and I had to give change. The sad fact was that hardly any clients came. Only in the evening, when all the other stores were closed, someone would come for a bottle of milk or a loaf of bread. I didn't know Dorothy well enough to trust her, and what I knew wasn't very flattering. She was obviously too lazy to prepare a good breakfast for her family.

During our daily chats, I hinted to her that for the price of the cokes and the doughnuts she could feed her children a healthy breakfast of oatmeal, eggs, bread and milk. But she continued in her way. She also went every afternoon to play bingo and left her preschoolers alone upstairs.

When we first opened the store for business, a number of our friends came and made a big shopping. Each one did it once and no more. There were very good reasons for that. First of all it was inconvenient. They had to drive over from wherever they lived, some quite a distance away, instead of shopping in their neighbourhoods.

The second and more important reason was that we were expensive. I found this out when a customer complained that I charged too much for a jar of coffee, that the Dominion store on Queen Street, almost across the road from us, sold it for much less. I went to the Dominion store the next day to check out their prices, and sure enough, everything was much cheaper than in our store. But it wasn’t only less than we charged – it was less than what we paid for the products wholesale. The obvious reason was that we bought one case at a time while Dominion bought cases in the hundreds. What chance did we have? We could not compete with giants.

The store was turning out to be a failure. We were losing money on the unsold and spoiling fruits and vegetables as well as the drying, shrinking meats. Paul went back to binding carpets because we needed the money. He worked away from home and this meant that I was alone in the store with the kids. I knew that this could not go on.

About every second evening, a Polish lady came to the store on her way home from work to buy some groceries. We usually had a polite chat in Polish. She was a librarian by profession, but she couldn't do that here because her English was not good enough. She was an older lady, soft spoken and neatly dressed.

“I like this store,” she said to me one evening. “I would like to own such a store. I could prepare various salads and sell them. It would be convenient for me to live in the back. This is a Polish district and I would do well here. I don't mean to offend you, but you understand, I could do better here than you. Would you consider selling?”

Would we? Of course we would! The woman bought the building from our cousin Martin. We were extremely happy to throw off the yoke and get back the money we invested in the business. I am sure that the Polish lady did very well there. I never went back to find out.
Redeemed

ISRAEL ELLIS

During a European cruise with friends, we disembark to an idyllic German town called Warnemünde. I would imagine that what Georgian Bay and the Muskokas are to Torontonians, this quaint seaside town is to Berliners. As I walk through the pretty Cape Cod-type oceanfront, I cannot help my anxiety building. Any time I find myself in Germany I see the streets through different lenses. Superimposed images of Nazi-era authority populate the streetscape. I would not be walking these streets in another time.

I once came upon a photograph hanging in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. A streetcar turning between two main thoroughfares, a Woolworth store prominently in the background, cars, people in business attire, mothers pushing baby carriages – the photographer’s click of the shutter happens while the wholesale murder of Jews is taking place. This could be downtown anywhere anytime.

We disembark at this town, Warnemünde, and we walk along a scenic view sidelining the beach, our shoes shuffling along the wooden slats of a boardwalk that has borne the time of history. We happen upon a small inn and we stop to enjoy a wonderful lunch on its veranda overlooking the summer beach scene. My friend and I are surveying our German lunch companions. It is all just so pleasant. Our wives plead with their eyes not to vocalize what we are thinking. I decide suddenly that I will make a bracha and I do so out loud on the drink I am holding. I say it with a certain conviction. You have not quieted me!

Lunch is actually settling, but the anxiety within me builds. We take a walk through the beautiful picturesque tree-laden streets of the town, and I cannot help but glance over at the doorframes of homes. I am looking for the unmistakable indentation where a mezuzah might have once been. My mind turns back to imagine a darker time when this place was one of the first “cleansed” of its Jews. I’m such a pleasure to travel through Europe with.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Best Wishes for a Happy and Healthy Passover

CANSEW INC.
&
THE SCHACHTER FAMILY

www.cansew.ca 1-800-361-7722 info@cansew.ca

MONTREAL – TORONTO – WINNIPEG – CALGARY – VANCOUVER

ZIM INTEGRATED SHIPPING SERVICES (CANADA) CO. LTD.
www.zim.com

MONTREAL
Tel. 1-844-454-5072
Fax (514) 875-2746
TORONTO
Tel. (416) 703-7301
Fax (416) 703-7310
HALIFAX
Tel. (902) 422-7447
Fax (902) 429-1515
VANCOUVER
Tel. 1-604-283-3957
Fax (604) 693-0094

Modern+Sleek @ Sherbrooke & Peel

Enjoy modern, sleek designer suites featuring king size beds and black leather sofas with walnut and chrome accents in the centre of Montreal at Sherbrooke and Peel.

Reserve now online at www.hotelcantlie.com
Call 1-800-567-1110 or 1-888-CANTLIE
We stop for a coffee and danish in the most classic of corner bakeries you can imagine, an aroma of cinnamon overcoming your senses and dragging you in. We take a seat outside overlooking the town square. I cannot help myself. I try to engage the two older women sitting at the next table: “Oh, hello,” I say with a smile. *I can be pleasant. Let bygones be. My attention lingers for a few seconds too long. “By the way, I have returned!” I cannot help myself. They look at me weirdly, quickly finalize the last proper slurps of their teas and promptly leave. One of my friends, Eli, is holding back. Barely.

We are on the move again. As the girls walk in and out of designer boutique clothiers, I continue down the street and randomly happen upon an antique dealer’s shop, which we enter mindlessly, walking through as you would in such a place, fingering this and that – not really paying through as you would in such a place, we enter mindlessly, walk randomly happen upon an antique deal- er’s shop, which we enter mindlessly, walk randomly happen upon an antique deal-

I am known for by my kids in restaurants: my hands waving, demanding her immediate presence, as if I am the reason she came in to work that day. I am excitable.

The clerk is a middle-aged woman who looks as if she got stuck behind the counter, forgotten some time ago, the years just streamed by. We point to the silver object of our interest in the encasement and she casually acknowledges in her crisp German tongue and with a single descriptor she almost shouts: “Juden!” I pause while the breath is quietly knocked out from under me.

In a slightly heightened tone, I say, “Oh, is that so?” The heat rises in my chest. “Well then,” I say through my gritted teeth, “bring us all the Juden out, please!” She does not understand, and I try to motion with my hands and use the little German I know (sorry, is that Yiddish?) to express my eagerness. The sudden urgency of the matter at hand is rising in my throat.

A young scratchy, academic-looking traveler who had entered the store earlier becomes part of the scene now playing out. He explains to the clerk in perfect German, and the cabinet is open. Five pieces appear on the counter in front of us. Once again, she exclaims, “Juden!” I am not sure if I imagined it, the curt directness of her voice – was I hearing, perhaps a feign of some form of surprise as to who could possibly be interested in these derelict objects?

She lays out the objects on the etched glass countertop: a leather-bound siddur in its original case from 1898, something a groom would give to his bride; a beautiful large silver and filigree yad with a sculpted boy supporting a world upon which sits an eagle; a small yad encased in colourful stones; a ring with a house on top that was used at Jewish weddings; and the most striking pair of silver salt and pepper shakers I have ever seen.

I start in on her – “Where did you get these things?” – as my young bystander starts to translate. She is just staring at me, becoming increasingly uneasy by my tone. I ask again, the agitation more obvious. “The Juden,” I stammer, “is this all you have?” She nods her head and picks up the phone. I hear her talking nervously with someone who I assume is the owner of the store. Is she reporting me? Are they coming? She puts down the receiver, an impassive look. I sweep my hand impatiently over the cache of items. “We will take it all” – our young translator seems to understand the intensity of the moment. She looks up at us and for the first time in fair English she announces the most unexpected of questioned statements, “Will you buy them or take them?”

*Did she really just say that?* I am feeling as if I just found something I lost and I don't want to lose it again. The girls see us through the window from the street and join us. They immediately see what it is we are so animated about. We pay for the pieces with fierce determination. We walk out into the sunlight and in a moment I get the sense that Eli and I just observed and shared a rare mitzvah, the commandment of *pidyon shvuyim*, redemption of the captive. This is a duty in Judaism to bring about the release of a fellow Jew captured or unjustly held by the authorities. The release is typically secured by a ransom paid by the Jewish community.
CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

I walk out of that store feeling as if we needed to hurry away. I am feeling protective of our acquisitions. And irrationally fearful. For the remainder of our trip, we lay out the pieces, speak about their significance and imagine the stories these objects were witness to but would never be spoken of.

The salt and pepper shakers that I would return home with now adorn my Shabbat table. There is very little I can tell about the vintage of these two pieces. The pair is most unique and ornate. Three crafted Hasidic musicians support a globe laden with a single jewel on top.

Every Friday night, as our family and friends gather around the table to welcome in the Shabbat, these objects are placed in a position of honour by the challah board. I give a few moments to pay attention to these silver pieces and ask for everyone sitting around the table to imagine who may have first owned these and how they came to end up in some antique store. Was the Shabbat table that once hosted these shakers not much like our own?

We have imagined the stories of the family who like us would sit around the Shabbat table and sing Shalom Aleichem, recite Kiddush and make the blessing over the challah. I can imagine a father, much like myself, with his wife, children and invited guests brought together by the gift of the Shabbat. When I shake the salt on the now-cut challah, I think of him. I have made a new friend – we are tied by tradition. His history brought me to where I am today. Here, at this table, my family. Could it happen again? I have this feeling that perhaps in some way we have brought their Shabbat table back to life. My imagination takes me to a scene, a family torn from their home, these two pieces left orphaned behind. Alone. Maybe my imagination is working overtime. For all I know, these were eagerly traded and made their way legitimately to that unassuming shop. No matter. I marvel that some 70 years later, here we are, having redeemed these objects. And in some existential way, the souls of the family who once owned them may find rest as once again these pieces adorn and beautify the Shabbat experience.

It is highly unlikely that I will ever know for sure who he was, my friend who used these shakers as I do now. I will likely never know where this ornate pair has come from and how far they have travelled. I will never really know under what circumstances they arrived at the place where I found them. But this is what I do know; although I paid for them, I do not own them. These are not mine; they cannot be owned. I am only the caretaker. I am a part of the wheel that turns time with the precious traditions of what preceded me that protects the continuity of who we were and what we will be and what is to come.

I am the caretaker of these unassuming objects, void of voice; they are a symbol of our resilience and continuity. Reflecting off the silver globe is a glint from the light of the Shabbat candles burning nearby. This focuses me. I am sending a message to my brother from another time who, like me, has salted his challah. My dear friend, know this wherever you are and whoever you may be: we have not forgotten you. We have flourished. We have thrived. You are back with us now. We are together. You are redeemed.
Wishing you peace, good times, good health, and happiness on Passover and always.
A Nightmare

SAM HOFFER

They were carving a dirt road into the field of wheat on the other side of the gravel highway that ran past our farm. I watched from our yard and wondered at the mess of trucks and tractors moving large metal shapes that made less sense to me than my own scattered toys.

Days later, as if by magic, tall, round tanks stood shiny and bright beside an oil well pump that mindlessly, repeatedly, nodded its head. At the top of a towering pipe, a yellow and orange flame billowed in the wind. From the peak of the flame, black smoke twisted into the clear blue sky.

The trucks and crews were gone. There was only silence. Once in a long while a tanker truck paid the pump a visit.

From time to time, my mother talked about the oil well.

About the constant flame that escaped from that tall, tall pipe. She said that someone might throw us into that flame.

I said nothing, too afraid to ask for more.

Who, I wondered, would do such a thing? Why was she even thinking such thoughts?

I saw in her face that she believed it really could happen.

I saw that it had happened before.
The Rehab Patient

RITA WILDER CRAIG

I was born in Czechoslovakia, she tells me. When the Nazis came they took me away together with my parents and younger sister. You know how they sent people to the left or to the right – to live or to die – well my father was young but had grey hair so he went directly to the gas chamber. They sent my younger sister to that side also but she ran to mother and me on the other side. A guard put his hand on her arm ready to drag her back but for some reason stopped saying what does it matter – you will die anyway.

My sister and I were sent to an aircraft factory in Leipzig. Germans who were anti-Nazi were there also but they were treated better than us. A German woman took pity on us bringing sandwiches – so we survived.

You know that factory is still operating. I wrote to them years ago telling what happened to me. They invited me to visit – said they would like to give me an award but I never went.

Janusz Korczak

SANDRA SCHACHTER

Janusz Korczak was a Jewish-Polish writer and educator, head of a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. Though offered help to leave the ghetto, he refused to abandon the children when they were deported to the Treblinka death camp.

he chose to go with them to showers waiting poison dry he held them to his breast falling as one into fading footsteps and he held them to his breast with a love humanity knows so little of
The Man with Red Hair

FIONA GOLD KROLL

Yankef heard the crack as he hurried toward his tavern on Kowalska Street in Lublin. When the second pop echoed around the cobblestone square, he knew it was a gunshot. Only steps away from his inn, Yankef ducked inside a doorway, his breath rapid. He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the sweat from his forehead before he ran head down the street toward the tavern, holding his kippah on top of his red hair. With trembling hands, Yankef guided the key in the lock and turned the handle. Once inside, he bolted the door and stood for a moment, his back against the wall, eyes closed, heart pounding.

In the storeroom, Yankef poured water in the white basin and splashed his face several times, wondering if the gunshots were merely a bad dream. It was too early for a drink, but he poured a glass of whiskey to settle his nerves. Suddenly he heard someone pound on the back door.

“Open up, it’s Moshe!” Yankef ushered Moshe inside and locked the door behind him. Moshe looked ashen, his hands trembled. “Was anyone hurt?” “No, but the robber stole money from the butcher.” Yankef poured another shot of whiskey, and they both sat down in the storeroom. Moshe downed the whiskey in one gulp. “Yankef, the police want to talk with you.” Yankef stood up and paced the floor. “What do they want with me? I’ve done nothing wrong.” Moshe looked at his friend. “Someone said they saw a man with red hair running across the square with a gun.”

“I started running when I heard the gunshots,” Yankef’s voice quivered. “I don’t even own a gun. But the police won’t care if I’m guilty or not, they just want to make an arrest.”

Still, he thought as he walked back and forth, he was a respected member of the community, the police trusted him. But he couldn’t prove he didn’t hold up the butcher. “Moshe, I need your help.” He grabbed a piece of paper and scribbled a message to his wife.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
**My dearest Shaindel,**
The police are looking for me. They think I robbed the butcher and assaulted him with a gun this morning. I didn’t do it. I don’t own a gun, and I wouldn’t know how to fire it if I did! I have to hide for a while. Do you remember the cave near the river? I’ll go there. Bring me food and water when you can, but don’t tell anyone where I am, and don’t let anyone follow you. Just tell them I went to Warsaw to purchase Passover wine for the tavern and you don’t know when I’ll be back. Help Moshe when you can; he’s looking after things while I’m gone. May Hashem forgive us for lying!

Yankef

He stuffed the letter inside an envelope, ran his moist tongue around the flap, sealed it and handed it to Moshe.

“Here are the keys, but before you open the tavern, take this letter to, Shaindel. She will know what to do. If anyone comes looking for me, tell them I went to Warsaw to purchase wine for Passover.” Yankef grabbed Moshe’s hand and shook it, and then pulled him to his chest and hugged him. “Thank you, my friend.”

Yankef and Moshe slipped out the back of the tavern and locked the door. Yankef ran toward the river, and Moshe walked to Fumanska Street and knocked at the door. Shaindel looked puzzled when she saw Moshe but invited him inside, wiping her hands on her apron, as they walked toward the kitchen. A loose strand of hair hung over her forehead, and she tucked it inside the kerchief covering her head.

“Come sit down,” said Shaindel pointing to a chair.

Shaindel took the letter from Moshe and read it through twice.

“Moshe, we both have a job to do. Can you manage the tavern yourself?”

“Of course. I’ve worked with Yankef for years.”

“But if you need help, ask me.”

Moshe smiled as he walked to the door. He had known Shaindel since they were children. It seemed like yesterday when her long wavy black hair shone in the sunlight when she played with her younger brothers and sisters. As they grew up, Moshe hoped Shaindel’s parents would consider him as a match for her. But who could blame them for choosing Yankel? He excelled in his studies and became a respected member of the community. Everyone liked Yankel, including Moshe. And when he offered Moshe a job at the inn, he accepted.

Moshe walked back to the tavern and swept the floors before he opened the doors for business. The first person to enter was a crusty, ruddy-faced policeman.

“Where’s Yankel?” he said officiously.

Moshe cleared his throat and hid his shaking hands behind his back.

“He’s in Warsaw. He went to buy Passover wines for the store.”

Yankel sank into Shaindel’s arms when she ran to tell him the news. Relieved, they walked home hand in hand.

“Tatti!” the children cried out as they ran toward the kitchen. A loose strand of hair hung over her forehead, and she tucked it inside the kerchief covering her head.

“Come sit down,” said Shaindel pointing to a chair.

Shaindel took the letter from Moshe and read it through twice.

“Moshe, we both have a job to do. Can you manage the tavern yourself?”

“Of course. I’ve worked with Yankef for years.”

“But if you need help, ask me.”

Moshe smiled as he walked to the door. He had known Shaindel since they were children. It seemed like yesterday when her long wavy black hair shone in the sunlight when she played with her younger brothers and sisters. As they grew up, Moshe hoped Shaindel’s parents would consider him as a match for her. But who could blame them for choosing Yankel? He excelled in his studies and became a respected member of the community. Everyone liked Yankel, including Moshe. And when he offered Moshe a job at the inn, he accepted.

Moshe walked back to the tavern and swept the floors before he opened the doors for business. The first person to enter was a crusty, ruddy-faced policeman.

“Where’s Yankel?” he said officiously.

Moshe cleared his throat and hid his shaking hands behind his back.

“He’s in Warsaw. He went to buy Passover wines for the store.”

Yankel sank into Shaindel’s arms when she ran to tell him the news. Relieved, they walked home hand in hand.

“Tatti!” the children cried out as they ran toward the kitchen. A loose strand of hair hung over her forehead, and she tucked it inside the kerchief covering her head.

“Come sit down,” said Shaindel pointing to a chair.

Shaindel took the letter from Moshe and read it through twice.

“Moshe, we both have a job to do. Can you manage the tavern yourself?”

“Of course. I’ve worked with Yankef for years.”

“But if you need help, ask me.”

Moshe smiled as he walked to the door. He had known Shaindel since they were children. It seemed like yesterday when her long wavy black hair shone in the sunlight when she played with her younger brothers and sisters. As they grew up, Moshe hoped Shaindel’s parents would consider him as a match for her. But who could blame them for choosing Yankel? He excelled in his studies and became a respected member of the community. Everyone liked Yankel, including Moshe. And when he offered Moshe a job at the inn, he accepted.

Moshe walked back to the tavern and swept the floors before he opened the doors for business. The first person to enter was a crusty, ruddy-faced policeman.

“Where’s Yankel?” he said officiously.

Moshe cleared his throat and hid his shaking hands behind his back.

“He’s in Warsaw. He went to buy Passover wines for the store.”

Yankel

Though it seemed like weeks, Yankel spent seven days in the cave.

The policeman grunted, walked out the door and headed down the street toward Yankel’s house. Moshe knew Shaindel would give him the same story, and she did. Though it seemed like weeks, Yankel spent seven days in the cave. Before dawn each day, when dew still covered the grass, Shaindel carried food and water to Yankel, looking over her shoulder, ensuring no one followed her.

One morning, word quickly spread that the police arrested a man with red hair who had terrorized towns and villages from Lublin to Radom. Police captured him after he assaulted the rabbi in Kazanov and tried to rob the small synagogue of its Torah crowns and finials.

Yankel sank into Shaindel’s arms when she ran to tell him the news. Relieved, they walked home hand in hand.

“Tatti!” the children cried out as they ran toward the kitchen. A loose strand of hair hung over her forehead, and she tucked it inside the kerchief covering her head.

“Come sit down,” said Shaindel pointing to a chair.

Shaindel took the letter from Moshe and read it through twice.

“Moshe, we both have a job to do. Can you manage the tavern yourself?”

“Of course. I’ve worked with Yankef for years.”

“But if you need help, ask me.”

Moshe smiled as he walked to the door. He had known Shaindel since they were children. It seemed like yesterday when her long wavy black hair shone in the sunlight when she played with her younger brothers and sisters. As they grew up, Moshe hoped Shaindel’s parents would consider him as a match for her. But who could blame them for choosing Yankel? He excelled in his studies and became a respected member of the community. Everyone liked Yankel, including Moshe. And when he offered Moshe a job at the inn, he accepted.

Moshe walked back to the tavern and swept the floors before he opened the doors for business. The first person to enter was a crusty, ruddy-faced policeman.

“Where’s Yankel?” he said officiously.

Moshe cleared his throat and hid his shaking hands behind his back.

“He’s in Warsaw. He went to buy Passover wines for the store.”

Yankel
Seasonal Rehearsal

BRANDON MARLON

We, the people, reenact our salvation, recollecting over matzah and merlot the tide of events escorting us forth from servitude to liberty; perennially imperiled, we dismiss millennia and return to the sea – pulsing, swelling, heaving, churning, surging – and visualize pillars of cloud or fire, feeling jagged wilderness underfoot.

We scent anew the Tabernacle’s myrrh, shiver from the chill of desert at night.

Downing mouthfuls of kreplach and squab, who can help wonder if even manna from heaven ever tasted this savoury, and of what sauce complements quail?

Eventually Nirtzah nears, and it occurs to those bibulous but moderately alert that from that time to this, queries differ little: How long till we reach our land of promise? Will providence purvey along the journey?

Song closes the eve once all have received just deserts, deified tyrant and angel of death alike, in the storied order that restores, reviving survivors, heartening the young, renewing hope in spirits that yearn.
happy

pesach

Wishing you and your family a

healthy and happy Passover

Mount Sinai Hospital and Bridgepoint Active Healthcare together with the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute and Circle of Care create Sinai Health, Canada’s leading integrated health system. Sinai Health Foundation together with Arthritis Research Foundation and Bridgepoint Foundation raise and steward funds to support Sinai Health. The generous support of our community fuels everything we do from world-class care to scientific discovery.
Avraham

ALVIN G. WINESTOCK

You sit comfortably,
Arrayed in your essential keppel –
A lofty black satin headpiece,
Prominent, ceremonial –
Supplemented by pious black robes
In this posed photograph
From some studio in Lithuania
Circa 1915.

The table before you
And the well-thumbed books upon it
Appear to fit with the kindly bearded face
And soft eyes,
Portraying a devout and possibly learned man.

But the hands, one positioned down by your lap,
The other holding an open book,
Suggest an added dimension to your makeup.
These are the hands of a workman
Not those of a scholar.

Who were you then?
I am your great-grandson and namesake. I must know.

According to family lore,
In the town of Birzh
Your occupation was that of horse dealer.

Were your devotional robes
Provided for this sitting
As part of a standard studio façade,
Like so many cap-and-gown photos,
To portray you as more learned
Or more pious
Than your life’s circumstances allowed?

Along with your worldly responsibilities
To family and community
Were you somehow able to fulfill
The commandment to spend time
In sacred learning?
Or was the portion of your adult life
Originally intended for study
Chronically usurped
By duties of livelihood,
Between which you may have managed
To insinuate your heartfelt daily prayers?

In other words
Is this photograph representative
Or aspirational?

Surely,
Whether portraying who you were
Or projecting who you longed to be,
Even to this day,
Are you not authentic in either case?
Czernowitz

KENNETH SHERMAN

I

She’s ninety-two with dementia and wants to know when they’re evicting her. When I remind her, “This is your apartment, you own it,” she blinks back at me in disbelief.

On her worst days she relives her adolescence in the camps, telling me she’s afraid to take a shower, afraid to cry because in this place, she insists, they punish you if you cry.

II

I remember her younger self, the thick accent she brought from Czernowitz, birthplace of Paul Celan.

Once I asked her if she preferred his poetry to Rilke’s, and her response, “Different birds, different songs,” was a classic bit of Mitteleuropean wit.

In Czernowitz, she went to lectures, befriended the Yiddish actor Sidi Thal, attended concerts by the immortal tenor Joseph Schmidt, who by all accounts, including hers, “sang Mozart like an angel.”

III

Weeks before the Germans stormed in she had the chance to flee to Bucharest, but stayed thinking she’d be safer in the provinces.

Many in Bucharest survived, while those in Czernowitz…

IV

The camps.

She spoke of them reluctantly, preferring to recount her liberation, the trek west to a refugee camp near Naples, the transatlantic crossing to Halifax and her Canadian romance, then marriage, years of hard work followed by decades of what she called “the good life” – children, grandchildren, season’s tickets to the symphony, ballet.

What do those decades add up to, now that the worst of her past has overtaken her present?

Why, I’d like to know, doesn’t Memory provide her with an aria sung by her beloved Schmidt, or at the very least with a few dark, confirming lines by her countryman, Celan?

V

Art, we are told, is long. Terror, it seems, is longer, more deeply etched.

And all anyone can wish for her now is a mind as calm and blank as the snow-filled farm field she used to watch from behind the barbed wire fence.
**A Bagel with Flavour**

**ALVIN ABRAM**

In the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s, the intersection of Spadina Avenue and College Street in downtown Toronto was the hub of the Jewish community. Holocaust survivors moved into the area to forget the past and build a new future. Predominantly, the part of the city from Queen to College streets, from Chestnut Street to Dovercourt, was where most of the Jewish population lived. In this area was the famous Kensington Market – that was where people shopped, but College Street was where they ate. It was a period of rebirth, a binding of companionship and a place to heal.

After public school, I worked for Koffler’s Pharmacy delivering items on a bicycle. I also worked at the Garden Theatre as an usher, at the bowling alley as a pin boy and even for Switzer’s Deli for a while. I also worked at the Garden Theatre delivering items on a bicycle and a place to heal.

Let me tell you a couple of stories. A young girl entered the restaurant at lunchtime. She seemed a bit unsure of herself. She stood by the door, apparently deciding if she should enter or turn around and leave. Ben Posner noticed her standing by the door and smiled. She hesitantly moved over to the counter and sat down.

“Whatever that will buy,” she said softly. Ben counted the small change on the counter and placed several nickels, dimes and a quarter on the counter. “Whatever that will buy,” she said softly.

Ben counted the small change on the counter. “Are you from the neighbourhood?” he asked.

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**

---

**HAPPY PASSOVER FROM LEXUS ON THE PARK**

**2019 ES 350 SIGNATURE PACKAGE**

**$47,953**

- Lexus Enform
- Power Moonroof
- Backup Camera
- Standard Lexus Safety System 2.0
- Pre-Collision System with Bicycle & Pedestrian Detection (low light)
- Automatic High Beam
- Dynamic Radar Cruise Control
- Lane Tracing Assist
- Safety System+ 2.0
- A/C climate control
- Power steering
- Anti-theft system

**LEXUS ON THE PARK IS PROUD TO BE OF SERVICE TO THE HEART OF TORONTO**

1075 Leslie Street • Toronto, ON

**LEXUS ON THE PARK**

**LEXUS ON THE PARK**

Vehicle shown for illustrative purposes only. Complete Lexus Price includes freight ($2,075), EHF Tires ($29), EHF Filters ($1), A/C charge ($100), DMV/Cele($10), and dealer fees ($148). 1 year free/trm coverage, nrs, 5 year theft registration included. Taxes, license, registration, and insurance are extra. Offers are subject to change or cancellation without notice. Price indicated above is for ES 350 Signature Package only and may be subject to change based on the current month program, offers and incentives. Offers expire April 30, 2019. Please call for current program details.

**CANADIANS: IT IS TIME TO MOVE TO THE USA**

**ALEX BARAK**

Licensed, Experienced Attorney Since 1981

Law Offices Of Alex T. Barak, P.A.

Call for a free phone consultation

954-961-6200

**Website:**

www.baraklaw.com/Canadian

E-mail: alex@baraklaw.com

- RELOCATION WORK VISAS; RELOCATION GREEN CARDS
- CREATE MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANY TO BE GRANTED GREEN CARD
- INVESTOR WORK VISA, E-2
- SUBSIDIARY MANAGER WORK VISA, L-1
- TN PROFESSIONAL WORK VISA
- E-1 TRADING VISA

The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience.
“I live in Ottawa. I’m attending University of Toronto. I want to be a nurse. My allowance is late. This is all I have.”

Ben nodded his head, smiled and scooped up the change. “I’ll be back shortly,” he said and trudged into the kitchen.

The young woman turned her head and watched the people at the table eating. She didn’t notice Harriet come out of the kitchen and place a napkin, knife, fork and glass of water in front of her and leave.

About 10 minutes later, Ben reappeared with a small plate in his hand that held a bowl of soup. The young woman watched as he placed the soup in front of her.

“Es, es,” Ben said. “It’s good for you.” He turned and went to the cash register to punch out those leaving.

The young woman finished the soup and stood to leave.

“Where are you going?” Ben asked. “The food is coming.” He pointed at her that she should remain in her seat, which she did, a puzzled look on her face. Ben went into the kitchen and came out with a large white plate and a small plate and placed both in front of her. On the large plate was a complete dinner and on the small plate was a bagel.

“All this?” she asked.

“Enjoy and come back any time,” Ben said.

Well, the young lady did come often over the years she was studying to be a nurse, and every time, no matter how much money she placed on the counter, Ben served her a full meal. When she graduated, she asked Ben if he would give her the recipe for his outstanding soup.

“Are you married, dear?” he asked.

“No.”

“When you are married, I will give you the recipe.”

The young woman returned to Ottawa, practised her profession and married. She never pursued the recipe for the soup until she saw my ad I’d placed in the local newspaper and called to tell me her story. “Could you get me the recipe?” she asked.

I told her the Posners were both deceased, but I will call the son of Ettie Kay, the soup-maker. I made contact, told him my reason for asking for the recipe and asked for his help. He said he would get back to me. One day, he called me and gave me the ingredients.

I then called the young woman in Ottawa to tell her that knowing the ingredients would not give her the recipe for the soup because Mrs. Kay used a unique method: a pinch of this, a shlep of that and a shpritz here and there. Unless her hands were the same size as Mrs. Kay’s, she could never have a perfect recipe.

***

My older brother Murray and I went to The Bagel for dinner. We both loved liver and onions. We sat almost in the middle of the restaurant and sopped up the atmosphere.

Our waitress, a heavy-set woman with legs like tree trunks, wearing an apron that had seen cleaner days, took our order.

A few minutes later, Dorothy Million, wearing a smock filled with large round buttons, appeared carrying two white plates. She marched over to two young boys at the next table, literally threw the plates onto its surface and trudged away without a backward glance. One of the boys rolled his eyes as he stared at the liver, while the other kept shaking his head.

Dorothy appeared at the kitchen door and one of the boys waved his hand for her to come over.

“Yes?” she asked.

“Uhh, Miss. We ordered liver and onions . . .”

“That’s what you got.”

“Yes, I know. But I didn’t order the whole cow,” pointing to their plates with the liver so large it hung over the edge.

Without a word she stomped away, but as she passed our table we could see a trace of a smile.

***

It was Sunday, and Leo Goldhar and his wife came to The Bagel on Sundays when their schedule allowed for brunch. The food portions were always large and Benny Posner made eggs and onions like no one else.

Not too far from where they sat, a neighbour of Leo’s also sat with his family. Leo ordered eggs and onions. His neighbour ordered onions and lox. In both cases Benny took the orders. Leo didn’t notice that Benny had placed the onions and lox in front of him and his neighbour got the eggs and onions.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
They both began eating and talking. About half way through the onions and lox, Leo realized what he was eating. His neighbour also realized what he had been eating. They both waved their hands at Benny at the same time.

“What's the problem, Leo?” Benny asked.

“I ordered eggs and onions. I've been eating onions and lox.”

Benny looked down at his half-eaten plate.

Leo's neighbour had been frantically waving his hand while he was at Leo's table. Benny went over to the neighbour. There he heard the reverse story.

Benny returned to the counter. “I was a latecomer to The Bagel,” Al Wax - returned to the counter. “Enjoy,” he said and eaten plate of eggs and onions and placed a few minutes later, he returned with a half plate. “The problem is solved,” he said as he walked away with the food. A wave his hand while he was at Leo’s table. Benny went over to the neighbour. There he heard the reverse story.

Leo's neighbour had been frantically waving his hand while he was at Leo's table. Benny went over to the neighbour. There he heard the reverse story.

Benny returned to Leo's table and picked up his plate. “The problem is solved,” he said as he walked away with the food. A few minutes later, he returned with a half eaten plate of eggs and onions and placed them in front of Leo. “Enjoy,” he said and returned to the counter.

An elderly couple entered the restaurant and took a seat. They had been to The Bagel many times before. Their waitress left them a menu and went about her business. She returned later and asked if he was ready to order. He seemed a bit upset at the delay but began to recite the meal he would leave her a $20 tip. This happened quite a few times. One day, after the meal, he beckoned for her to come to his table. “What can I give you instead of the $20” he asked.

Dorothy thought a few minutes, not sure if he was kidding, and then replied, “Sing me something from Fiddler on the Roof.” He smiled, stood up and, with his beautiful voice, sang “If I Were a Rich Man”. The restaurant was packed and, as was normal, very noisy. As soon as he sang the words, there was immediate silence and a resounding round of applause when he finished. Mostel smiled, placed a $20 bill on the table as a tip and left the restaurant.

An elderly couple entered the restaurant carrying a tray with steaming food. Frances' s apron. “Help him,” she pleaded. Frances looked down at the man and rolled on the floor, the wife clutched at button waitress passed the struggling man rolling on the floor, the wife clutched at Frances's apron. “Help him,” she pleaded. Frances looked down at the man and gently stepped over his body. “I'm sorry,” she said. “I have to deliver the latkes before they get cold.” She continued on her way.

Every time Zero Mostel, famous for portraying Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, came to The Bagel for dinner, he would ask for Dorothy Million to serve him, and after the meal he would leave her a $20 tip. This happened quite a few times. One day, after the meal, he beckoned for her to come to his table. “What can I give you instead of the $20” he asked.

Dorothy thought a few minutes, not sure if he was kidding, and then replied, “Sing me something from Fiddler on the Roof.”

He smiled, stood up and, with his beautiful voice, sang “If I Were a Rich Man”. The restaurant was packed and, as was normal, very noisy. As soon as he sang the words, there was immediate silence and a resounding round of applause when he finished. Mostel smiled, placed a $20 bill on the table as a tip and left the restaurant.
WANT TO LOOK GOOD AT YOUR PASSOVER SEDER?

THEN DON’T “PASS-OVER” OUR DEALS!!!

TBBS
Toronto Barber and Beauty Supply Since 1937

NEW! Shop Online at:
www.SHOPTBBS.ca

NORTH YORK
112 Orfus Road
416.787.1211

RICHMOND HILL
9737 Yonge Street
905.508.7089

DOWNTOWN TORONTO
100 Dundas Street West
416.977.2020

MISSISSAUGA
5700 Mavis Road
905.712.4449
A Life Worth Living

JUDY WEINRYB

Jonathan Birnbaum decided he wanted to become a rabbi early on in his life. Young and idealistic, he sang in the shul choir, attended Torah study and led youth services every Shabbat. After graduating from the University of Toronto with a bachelor’s in psychology, and prior to attending rabbinical school, he trained in a postgraduate counselling program that he believed would enhance his skillset for his chosen career. Now nearly 35 and established as the junior rabbi of a traditional downtown congregation, he had also helped found a clinic serving families and youth in crisis. Somewhere along the way, he discovered that his congregants, like many people in today’s complex, urban society, were far from immune to developing personal and marital problems.

Alex Kantor, Jonathan’s former Sunday-school teacher and a longtime member of the synagogue, came into his office one day and poured out his heart to Jonathan about a very difficult problem that he was experiencing.

“Rabbi,” he lamented, “Sonya and I have been married for 15 years. I was as devoted a husband as any woman could ask for, and raised her kids as though they were my own. I go away for just one short week, and she’s moved in with Sol Bernstein, our longtime family dentist. How could she do this to me – just throw me away like an old shoe?”

Alex was clearly very distraught. He began to stare into space as he sat slumped over in his chair. His eyes were red from crying. Jonathan could see that it was all too much for him to bear and wished that he could take his pain away. He would try, over time, to help him understand the circumstances that had led to the end of his marriage and to develop inner strength so he could move on with his life. Clearly, Alex had been ignoring all the red lights flashing at him for a long time. When Sonya walked out, it came as a total surprise to him.

Later that evening, Jonathan visited his mother, who lived in an upscale condo building at Yonge and Bloor. She enjoyed living downtown and had moved there from Bathurst Manor a year after Jonathan’s father passed away. Over dinner she went into her usual spiel.

“Mom, Jonathan, I won’t be around forever. It would make me very happy if you met a nice girl and settled down already. Being alone is no life for a rabbi. You’d think the girls would have eaten you up by now.”

Precisely, thought Jonathan. That was what he wanted to avoid: being eaten up. As a single man, he was an outsider looking in when it came to the trials and tribulations of married life. Tall and lanky with dark brown eyes and a seductive smile, Jonathan had no trouble attracting women. However, he tended to keep the ones he met at arm’s length in order to avoid being entangled in the hopeless web of spousal relationships that he now encountered, on an almost daily basis, in his professional life.

After dinner, Jonathan had plans to go to a klezmer concert at a nearby Jewish community centre, with his friend Maxine, whom he’d known since his high school days. A guidance counsellor at a private boys’ school, she was tired of being single and longed to get married and have children. She liked to share her stories about the men she met with Jonathan, and tended to go into detail about her struggles to find the right guy.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
In the car, Maxine confessed that she was, once again, head over heels over a fellow she had recently met at a singles’ mixer and told Jonathan she was hoping he would call before the week was out.

“How do you know he’s the marrying kind?” Jonathan asked. “You’ve been through the mill, Maxie, so don’t rush into anything head first. It would be nice to go out with him and see if you actually like each other.” Stuck in her fantasy world, she was waiting for Prince Charming and was hoping that the fellow she had met might finally be the one.

Following a lively concert of klezmer music, Jonathan and Maxine stopped into a popular kosher coffee house on the way home. After ordering drinks, they began wandering down memory lane.

“We’ve had such great times together, haven’t we?” Maxine asked. “You know, I think you know me even better than my parents. I feel I can tell you almost anything.” She began sipping on her capuccino and studying the menu. “They say this place has the best cherry cheesecake in town. Wanna split a piece?”

As she looked up from her menu, her eyes appeared to dance and her voice had a lilt that Jonathan found to be almost musical. He felt relaxed being with her. No complications, just a warm friendship that he really cherished. Could life get any better than that?

“Hold on, Maxie,” Jonathan said as he stood up from the table. “It’s been a long day and I feel a bit grungy. I’m just going to wash my hands.”

As he began to run the water in the men’s room sink, Jonathan sensed that someone was standing behind him and turned around to see a tall, middle-aged and somewhat ordinary-looking man in a dark-blue business suit hovering over him. He wondered if, in spite of his conventional appearance, the man might be drunk or on drugs. As he began to formulate a get-away plan, should he become aggressive, the man began to speak to him, excitedly.

“Rabbi Birnbaum, I can’t believe it is really you?” he exclaimed with gusto. He was impressed that he had seen something in the man’s face. “Last time we met I was 50 pounds heavier, had a scraggly beard and wore a perennial frown on my face. It’s me, Sam Rubenstein, remember? Dumped, disgusted and depressed. Hey, Rabbi, I really learned my lesson, that’s for sure. I’d been having an affair and my wife, Sara, left me the same time my mistress did, went back home to Albany and took the kids with her. I was really on my last legs when I started seeing you, but after our sessions, I began losing weight, started going to a self-help group for men with self-esteem issues and stopped drinking, cold turkey. A year later, after much begging, Sara decided to give me one last chance.

“We’ve been doing great, Rabbi, since then, really great. Would you believe my son Larry is starting law school in the fall and we’ve just moved into a new house? Life has never been better.” With that, Sam gave Jonathan an awkward hug and left.

Jonathan stood and stared at himself in the mirror. He was impressed that he had been such a light in Sam’s life, and was pleased that it had taken a turn for the better. How wonderful it was to hear such good news. As he stood, thinking about it, he saw that his eyes seemed to have a tinge of sadness in them. After staring into them for a few minutes, he realized that the person he was looking at was, in fact, a very lonely man.

The impact of this realization jolted him to his core. He began to feel as though something was creeping up inside him, exposing him to a whole new perspective on life. This sensation perplexed him but it also excited him. It was not clear to him what was happening but he was certain that he was not ill. Then it hit him.

He was tired of being alone. Avoiding relationships was not working for him and he understood that he wanted to experience life to the fullest in spite of the risks that came with the territory. He wanted what Sam had found for himself: a life worth living.

As he left the men’s room and began to walk back into the coffee house, he saw Maxine sitting at their table, across the room. She had a big smile on her face as she waved to him and looked very happy to see him, even though he had just been in the men’s room for a few minutes. As he smiled back at her, he began to pick up his pace until he was practically running so he could get to the table faster.
Walking on Eggshells

MAURICE KRYSAL

Stalling on our way home from school, we paused at the door, smelled burnt Sabbath chicken, heard pots and pans furiously clanging

my brother and I tiptoed to our room down the long hallway which lay like a minefield

as always, Mother heard those who entered her den

the ovens of Auschwitz had left her orphaned

she railed against God in the world we knew

she wasn't like other mothers who smiled on our Zenith TV

when I was seven I hit my brother his head fell against the wall with a hollow thud

an accident

I’m sorry, I cried, cowering in a corner as her towels turned pink, she hissed

her burning words, a legacy which still aches in my heart—

This is what I raised? You’re worse than a Nazi!
Jewish Community
Organizations, Synagogues and Schools join our brothers and sisters in Israel in celebrating a Happy and Kosher Pesach.
We pray for peace with security and honour.

Happy Passover

Adath Israel Congregation
Beit Rayim Synagogue & School
Bernard Betel Centre
Beth David Synagogue
Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue
Beth Sholom Synagogue
Beth Tikvah Synagogue
Beth Torah Congregation
Beth Tzedec Congregation
Camp B’nai B’rith of Ottawa
Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation: Speakers Action Group & Israel’s Legal Rights
Canadian Council Conservative Synagogues
Canadian Friends of Bar-Ilan University
Canadian Friends of Herzog Hospital-Ezrath Nashim
Canadian Friends of Tel Aviv University
Canadian Friends of The Hebrew University
Canadian Friends of the Israel Museum

Canadian Hadassah- WIZO (CHW)
Canadian Magen David Adom for Israel
Congregation Beth Haminyan
Congregation Darchei Noam
Holy Blossom Temple
JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services) Toronto
Living Jewishly
Na’amat Canada Toronto
OneFamily Fund
ORT Toronto
Pride of Israel Synagogue
Shaarei Shomayim Congregation
Temple Emanu-El
Temple Har Zion
Temple Sinai Congregation

 Hog Shemot!
The Anniversary

WENDY JOAN UNGAR

Rachael Silverman stood in the thickening throng waiting for the speeches to start. To start – and to be over with already. It was almost 11 in the morning and the wind was sinking its sharp teeth into the tops of her ears. She despised ceremonial remembrances of 9/11. She didn’t need a teary crowd and a bunch of dismal city officials making speeches about sacrifice and strength to remember Danny. But her daughter Shira had insisted and Rachael didn’t have the energy to protest.

Shira picked Rachael up from her Brooklyn brownstone at 10. Rachael had insisted on a cab. She allowed her daughter to think her refusal to take the subway was the fear of an anniversary terror attack. But it wasn’t so. As a civil engineer, Rachael knew exactly how old the city infrastructure was and the corrosion in the supporting beams knew? Who cared.

The line was closed overnight for repairs. But how does one repair a thing that was already beginning to decay? Rachael knew. She despised ceremonial remembrances of 9/11. But it wasn’t so. As a civil engineer, Rachael knew exactly how old the city infrastructure was and the corrosion in the supporting beams knew? Who cared.

The line was closed overnight for repairs. But how does one repair a thing that was already beginning to decay? Rachael knew. She despised ceremonial remembrances of 9/11. But it wasn’t so. As a civil engineer, Rachael knew exactly how old the city infrastructure was and the corrosion in the supporting beams knew? Who cared.
Loud static sliced the air and a woman’s voice burbled, “Hello? Hello?” as she tapped on the mic.

“Ahem,” she cleared her throat loudly. “Please join me in welcoming our mayor, Mr. Michael Rubens Bloomberg, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.”

Finally, Rachael thought to herself, let’s get this show over with. She counted the number of people sitting in the front row on the stage, calculating that if each of them spoke for no more than 10 minutes, she might be out of there in less than an hour, and before the endless naming of the victims.

Within seconds of the mayor’s opening words, Rachael stopped listening and began considering what route she would use to exit the plaza and where the best place would be to hail a cab. Or maybe she would walk for a few blocks. Shira wouldn’t want her to, but she could handle it. There were some new condominium developments she was eager to check out on East 10th Street, not that she had much interest in condo buildings – they were all equally horrid – but these were constructed from tenements in what was once a completely Jewish neighbourhood, the very one that she and her father had first lived in when they arrived 78 years earlier. Rachael had few memories of those years before they moved to Brooklyn. She remembered there was a cat that she was enamoured with, and she vaguely remembered the neighbours.

There was one in particular…. What was her name? That yenta who always had her hair in curlers tucked under a kerchief and who smelled of schmaltz…. Oh yes, “Mrs. Finkelman!” Rachael said aloud when she recalled the name.

Shira, Abe and the old new Mrs. Silverman, all turned abruptly to look at her.

“Shh!” Shira nudged her mother in the elbow. “Who’s Mrs. Finkelman?” she whispered, looking around to see who her mother was talking about.

“Nobody, nobody,” Rachael waved her hand dismissively, noticing the Old Mrs. New continuing to stare at her, her lip curled in a smirk, as if Rachael was demented.

Not demented yet, Rachael thought, laughing to herself. You want him? You can have him, Rachael mumbled under her breath as she returned the woman’s look with a mocking stare of her own.

An hour later, Rachael was climbing the stairs to the entrance of her Brooklyn brownstone apartment. She congratulated herself on her escape from the 9/11 memorial spectacle. She snuck away with the barest of goodbyes to her daughter, quick hugs for her grandchildren and one last glare in Abe’s direction between the speeches and the endless naming of The Names. Thanks to her careful planning she beat the crowds who would soon be scrambling for cabs, and, most importantly, evaded the small talk that would have necessarily ensued after the ceremony with Abe and the Old Mrs. New. She was content to have only her memories of Danny, silent and still, for companionship.

After checking on the yizkor candle still burning on the kitchen windowsill, Rachael made herself some tea and sat down at the table beside the window. She sipped from the chipped pink and blue porcelain cup and looked around at her living space. Her second-storey flat in the renovated brownstone apartment was small, but it fit her. How the place had been repurposed, the newly imagined usefulness of it, made her feel good. But at the same time, Rachael felt the slap that came with living in someone else’s imagination. The brownstone, built in 1903, had been someone else’s dream, and someone else’s home. Perhaps it was the fate of architects and engineers to never be completely happy in their living space – to instead design in their minds some better place to reside in one day in the future and forever. But for Rachael, the place where she felt most comfortable residing in was not the future, it was the past.

Rachael sighed. Abe seemed happy now, finally, after all these years. She searched for the anger that she’d maintained, even cultivated in her heart for so many decades. She had bitterly resented his attempts to control her, to force her into his concept of a Jewish wife and mother. If only he hadn’t been so demanding, so needy, she might have eased up on her work hours and spent more time at home. If only, if only. For so many years Rachael blamed Abe for driving her away.

And what about today? Today she was an old grandmother with sore joints, an ex-husband, a living daughter and a dead son. And so she felt most comfortable dwelling in the past, in someone else’s idea of a home. CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Not because her past was happy – who says one needs happy memories to live in the past? – but because it was familiar. And because it felt safe. There she could call on her faithful companions: anger, sorrow and guilt. When had she stopped blaming Abe? She couldn’t remember exactly. She just knew that she didn’t blame him anymore. Now she blamed only herself.

She thought more about the memorial. More than a decade after 9/11, she was still astounded by people’s reactions to losing loved ones. All of the grovelling, be-seeking voices that had formed a chorus of Why me? You could see it in their faces, in the way they grabbed onto each other, in the foundations and monuments they erected in the names of their lost ones. Each one of them believing that they had been mistakenly targeted, ill-treated by God, forced into an undeserved victimhood but languishing in its perks just the same. She envied them their feigned innocence. They really believed it. Not for a moment had Rachael believed that losing her son was an inexplicable Act of God, a bad thing happening to a good person. Not for a moment did she stare into the heavens with a fist or wring her hands in self-pity. She refused to play The Ag-grieved like all the others. They used their dead son daughter sister brother wife husband as a reason to be made special, to be anointed. To be sainted.

As guilty as Rachael felt about her fail-ings as a wife and mother, she couldn’t bring herself to say the words, to provide structure to the thought that skirted her consciousness like a delicate shadow – that Danny’s death was her punishment. But the passing years – instead of bring-ing some peace, some understanding – only made her feel worse. Rachael closed her eyes and concentrated on bringing back the sound of Danny’s voice. It had been slipping away from her this last year, to her great alarm. But no sooner did she bring back his voice, did she hear the words she didn’t want to.

I have cancer, it’s a kind of lymphoma, they’ve started me on chemo. Her only son telling her that he may die. It was God getting in her face, questioning her skills as a mother, questioning her absence from her son’s life for all those years she insisted on working instead of being at home. It was her fault if anything bad happened, it must have been. So it was her fault that Abe left her and her fault again when Danny got sick. No matter how much her rational side tried to con-vince her that one thing had nothing to with the other – that cancer was impos-sible to predict – her heart knew better.

And here was the part she really didn’t understand. Her son had not died; he had lived. He survived cancer. And so did she, along with him. He grew healthy and happy again. So why would God give him back life only to punish her later with an even greater vengeance? This was the riddle that agonized her – that closed in on her like a tunnel gradually crumbling overhead, with no exit or escape.
The Hardships of a Jew Having No Job Before Purim and Passover

DAVID STERN

Since Chanukah, I have no job and am wondering why it’s happening to me.
Sent out so many résumés since then identifying my experience, ambition and degrees.
Yet I do not get any more interviews. Nobody calls me back when they are free.
I really want to work, which is really the key.

Passover is weeks away and Purim is so near.
While many Jews will understandably be rejoicing, I will be worrying about my career.
Sometimes I wonder when things will get better? Or will they become more severe?
I feel depressed and ask myself, ‘Am I needed anymore within this atmosphere?’

To upgrade my skills
I went back to school at night twice a week, feeling I am doing this against my will.
Also I am also studying for another technical certificate that I am ambitious to fulfill.
Yet still nobody recognizes me for what I can do. What am I, some kind of poison pill?

Many fellow Jews think of me as a success,
falsely believing that I make lots of money, having riches beyond what many possess.
So when you see me, you don’t see my suffering, my budgetary concerns nor my stress.
Just what you can get out of me, money-wise, for an event or donation, more or less.

Would it surprise you to know that I now eat at times at a kosher food-bank kitchen?
Get food baskets, will attend a community seder this year and even wear torn mittens?
In the winter months I got colds, felt numb and on occasion frostbitten,
only to make sure I get out my résumé on time when it was written.

Remember the good old days when you mailed a resumé and got back a reply?
Today we have to connect on Wazzup, LinkedIn, Facebook and Jobs-on-the-Fly.
No longer are resumés read by a human, but a computer programmed to be cut and dry.
So it is all a numbers game, my friends. It’s sink or die.

I end this poem to each one of you with some thoughtful and wise advice.
Don’t ask probing, personal questions. Don’t judge or bemoan me. Kindly think twice.
If you know a job that fits my education and background, thank you, that would suffice.
May you all have a wonderful Purim and Passover. Please be friendly, caring and nice.
A Day in the Life of Molly

ELINA GUTTENBERG

Molly glances at the clock: 6:05 p.m. She tells herself she is not tired, she had a long nap today. It is the day before Pesach and all of her three children and six grandchildren will be coming over the next evening to celebrate. Two of her children, along with their families, would be arriving from other parts of the world tomorrow midday and staying with her. Usually by now she would have managed to cook the soup, brisket, meatballs, haroset and apple cake. But she is in trouble – she has only made the soup and apple cake so far. At least the brisket was in the oven, but she was running out of time for the rest. And tomorrow morning she has an appointment at the hairdresser.

She had started early that day, around 8 a.m. But by the time she peeled and cored 10 apples, chopped them by hand, made the cake batter, baked the cake and cleaned up, she was exhausted. She had gone downstairs to sit in her favourite chair in the den and turned on the TV to relax for a half-hour and rejuvenate. Before she knew it, she had fallen into a deep sleep for nearly three hours and woke to hear the barely audible ting-tong of the oven timer that had already been sounding for at least a solid hour. She hoisted herself out of the chair and yanked her little four-foot-10 body up a little too quickly, for she saw stars and saw with horror the faint smoky film in the air giving off the scent of burning cake. She speed-walked upstairs as quickly as she could, breathing heavily, panicking. She ran to the oven, turned it off and stopped the timer, then whipped open the oven door and fanned away the smoke. Her eyes confirmed the worst, a shrunken black brick lay in the Pyrex dish. By the time she had thrown out the cake, cleaned the pan, aired out the kitchen, gotten dressed, went to the grocery to buy 10 more apples, baked the cake all over again and cleaned up, it was already 3:45 p.m.

Then it was time to marinate the brisket, which involved chopping onions and celery, scraping carrots and rubbing spices all over the meat. By the time Molly placed the brisket in the oven, it was close to 5 p.m. It was around that time that her daughter Sarah, who lived an hour’s drive away, called to see if Molly needed anything. Molly assured her daughter that everything was fine, under control, while Sarah’s eldest daughter, Nira, could be heard screaming with glee in the background in some hyper, overtired state. Satisfied, Sarah said she was going to prepare dinner. It then occurred to Molly after she hung up the phone that she hadn’t eaten anything since breakfast. She made herself some scrambled eggs with cheese and some toast.

Now at 6:05 p.m., with the brisket cooking away in the oven, she turns her mind to making the haroset. She climbs the stepladder two rungs to the top, her feet firmly secured in her cozy sheepskin slippers (a gift from her daughter Sarah, she would never spend money on such luxuries), and stands on the top ledge. She reaches for the highest cupboard and tugs at the brown, wooden octagonal knob of the cupboard door, a once-envied signature of modern kitchen decor. The Cuisinart, a relatively new appliance in the kitchen at just 20 years old, sits on the third-highest shelf above the counter, just where she had left it last Pesach, wedged in with the crystal drinking glasses.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Every year she does this and remembers that she had meant to move that machine to a more sensible location but never got around to it. She leans forward to get a good grasp of the machine to lift it. Her arthritic fingers, lately becoming a little crooked at the top joints, hold the sides and she tries to pull the heavy machine forward – but it doesn’t budge. Stuck! Must have not cleaned and dried the rubber buds properly last time. She summons all her strength and tries again but this time her left hand grip releases and whips out to the side from the inertia of her futile efforts, whacking two of the crystal glasses straight to the floor, shattering into a puddle of sparkly beads.

She gasps and says, “Oy vey ist mir!” out loud from the top of the stepladder, pinching the first shelf with her right hand while she surveys the destruction on the floor. The truth is that her first urge is to yell at someone, but she would never confess this. She eyes what is left of her beautiful, irreplaceable drinking glasses, a wedding gift (from whom?) 58 years ago, now after all these years, reduced to a set of 18. She turned to look down at the mess on the floor – where was that broom? What did Cilla do with it? Cilla, whom she loved dearly, was putting things in strange places lately. She carefully climbs down the ladder and steps down gingerly onto the floor, the crystal beads crunching under the thick soles of her slippers. She doesn’t want to scatter broken crystal crumbs all over the house while she searches for the broom, so she steps into a clear looking spot in the kitchen floor, takes off her slippers and carefully cleans off the bottoms, dropping any chunks into the garbage can nearby.

She puts her slippers back on and embarks on a hunt for the broom. Outside of the kitchen the sprawling house is completely dark. She presses the light switch. Nothing happens; this hall light has been temperamental lately. She makes a mental note to call the electrician, which she will continue to forget to do for a few more days. She returns to the kitchen and finds the flashlight a reliable relic leftover from the kids’ camp supplies. Once home to three children, two parents and of course Cilla, now the empty home seems more like a museum commemorating snippets in time of a growing family in the ’60s and ’70s. In Sarah’s room, the startling psychedelic wallpaper displayed multi-coloured flower wheels that overlapped each other and appeared to be floating like bubbles if you stared long enough. In Ira’s room, the walnut bedroom set had its shelves crammed with National Geographic magazines and comics, a treasure chest for his son Ronnie when he came to visit. In Howie’s room, a record player with Magneplanar speakers set up on each side took up most of the tiny room, with the shelves of his own walnut bedroom set still filled with albums. The walls of the kids’ bathroom were bathed in purple, with two sinks, a tub and toilet to match, and lavender guest soaps in the shape of flowers still sitting in a shell-shaped bowl untouched from 1969.

Molly trudges through her spacious back-split home in her cozy slippers and plum velour housecoat, peeking in each room tentatively with her flashlight. She arrives at the dining room. The Tuscany set in cherry finish with matching upholstered chairs is still Molly’s pride and joy. She shines the flashlight over the furniture, enjoying the shadowy effects that seemed to bring extra glamour to the decor.

The hutch was typically ornate for its time, with a silver tea set visible through the glass door together with other silver Judaica, none of which were ever used. Molly sweeps the chairs with the light and suddenly gasps, spotting a tall silhouette near the dining room chair at the head of the table – then exhales dramatically once she recognizes the broom.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
It is now 6:47 p.m. She has cleaned the broken glass off the floor, after carefully
seeking and locating bits of glass. God forbid the children should hurt themselves!
She decides that she will do the haroset tomorrow morning after her hair appoint-
ment. With Cilla’s help, the rest of the work could be done.

She stands in the middle of the spotless brown and beige kitchen, leaning on
the broom, thinking to herself in Yiddish, “What am I still doing, exactly? I am 81 years
old.” Always thinking and preparing for the future (she has even arranged and prepaid
her own funeral). Molly knew the moment would arrive when she would have to close
this chapter of her life. She knew that one day her reign as active matriarch would
begin to fade and she would have to retire to the role of respectful participant at
shul in beautiful spring weather and walk home leisurely, without worrying about
this dish and that dish that needed to be prepared. It would be an amazingly easy and
even pleasant time of year. She would also increase her tzedakah for Pesach going forward, thinking of those
who did not have the luxury of choice.

Would be so much easier for me, she
continues to fantasize. No more dish-
washing for hours, no more cooking and
cramming the fridge. It would be so
much easier for me, she
would say. The kids can make their own
money. You worked hard your whole life!
She would also increase her tzedakah for Pesach going forward, thinking of those
who did not have the luxury of choice.

It would be so much easier for me, she
continues to fantasize. No more dish-
washing for hours, no more cooking and
cramming the fridge, shopping for an
army... It would be an amazingly easy and
even pleasant time of year. I would go
to shul in beautiful spring weather and walk
home leisurely, without worrying about
this dish and that dish that needed to be
prepared. I would even consider finally
accepting a lunch invitation – no, no, I am
going ahead of myself: I couldn’t bear to
do that knowing I couldn’t reciprocate.

Molly sat down at the table with a cup of
fresh, hot tea and a small plate of kichel.
She called Ethel and they mulled it over
for hours on the phone, analyzing the
juicy new chapter from every angle, just
as though they were 18 again when they
first arrived in Canada. After the call, Mol-
ly decided she would talk to the account-
ant once yom tov was over.

It was 11:11 p.m. She placed the brisket
in the fridge and went to get ready for bed.
Even though tomorrow was going to be a
long day, for the first time in a long while,
she felt lighter.
Eternity’s Greatest Love

YOSEF LISS

Joy, rise above your problems and feel joy! Even if your situation is an oy! Be grateful for all that has been given to you. To our magnificent creator, stay true.

For by following His commands does make us better, perceiving the authentic, we cast off the profane’s fetter and dive into the knowledge that is wisdom. That acting according to Torah, an improved person do we become.

Seeing the holiness of our dimension we climb the heart’s and soul’s ascension. To a higher power we connect and, without trying, we gain people’s respect.

Keep learning and keep growing, for that is what you are meant to do. Every day, right up until the day you’re through. For the learning never ends, new insights do we continuously comprehend.

In the invisible sun of this dream fantasy we call life, rising above the den of tribal strife, we direct our spirits above and connect with eternity’s greatest love.

Written in a Few Minutes After Leaving Auschwitz

MARCIA SHUSTER

We left them behind alone without love and caring without that which they had in life but not in death.

We left them behind cold against the angry wind whistling through the gates of hell.

We left them behind without a farewell a kiss goodbye to comfort them as they went on their journey into the dark abyss.

We left them behind with no time for the lone bugler to announce their ascent to heaven.

We left them behind only to remember who they are .... They are us.

HAPPY PASSOVER
 Hog Bush Shemot

Wishing you a Happy Passover

HARKELOFFICE

1743 Creditstone Road Vaughan, Ontario, ON L4K 5X7 905-417-5335 www.harkeloffice.com

FOCUS OPTICAL LABS

Happy Passover

877 Sheppard Ave. West (across from Kensington Place)
Phone 416-630-7911

GOODMAN & ASSOCIATES LLP
Chartered Professional Accountants

45 St. Clair Ave. West, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario M6V 1K6
(416) 967-3444
(416) 967-3945
www.goodmanca.ca

IMPERIAL COFFEE AND SERVICES INC.

Best wishes for a Happy & Healthy Passover to all our customers & friends

www.imperialcoffee.com

416-628-7404

PAISLEY MANOR INSURANCE BROKERS

PMI

NAVACORD

Local Touch. National Strength.
SHIRLEY MUHLSTOCK BROT

I am Rachela, daughter of Mordechai and Leah. I am here with my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. I am relieved to be reunited with my family, but until recently I was not at peace. I am forever 15 years old. I am Rachela, neshamah of my departed namesake. I was born in 1946 in the Foehrenwald displaced-persons camp in Germany. As the camp was scheduled to close in 1949, my dear parents decided that we would immigrate to the United States.

I knew nothing of this, however. I was born with porencephaly. I could not suckle at my mother’s breast, I was blind, I had been refused – rejected because of me, their incurably damaged child.

My parents had a desperate decision to make, one shared by hundreds of parents in a similar situation: Should they leave me in the care of the German hospitals and move to the U.S., or should they stay? They didn’t have the luxury of time to decide, due to the camp’s imminent closure. My mother told me that the doctors and childcare workers were relentlessly pressuring them and other parents to keep their disabled children in hospital and to get on with their lives. So conflicted were my parents that when they made their fateful decision to leave for the U.S. without me, they failed to fill out the legal documents required for my care. So my papers were stamped “abandoned child”. There was a hospital at the DP camp, and that was where I was placed. From there I was transferred from one hospital to another. As we were about to leave for the U.S., my parents learned that not only did American immigration authorities place them in their new land. My mother wrote frequently to St. Phillips Hospital in Goddau, where I lived most of my short life, to enquire about me. A few years later, my mother gave birth to another daughter, Annie, my healthy and happy sister. My mother stopped writing to the hospital.

Annie was never told of my existence, and our parents went to their graves with their nightmarish and unfathomable secret. I spent my life, such as it was, in a state of unawareness – though in death I am aware and comprehend it all. Ludwig Joseph, a Jewish man from Frankfurt, was appointed my legal guardian. It was he, along with the Jewish community of Frankfurt, who ensured that my body was buried in the city’s Jewish cemetery. No one came to my grave, no one said Kaddish for me, no one lit a yahrzeit candle, no one remembered me during yizkor services. It was as if I’d never existed. I, the soul of Rachela, was in anguish.

***

Annie’s cousin Salina, or Sal as she was called, lived in Montreal. She thought often of her father, who was sick during most of her childhood and had died too early. What did she really know about him other than that he had been sick and died and that she still missed him terribly? It was as a result of her melancholic reflections that she began her genealogical research. The wonders of the Internet! Here she found her father’s father, Chaskel, who had escaped Europe and made his way to, of all places, St. Louis, Missouri! And here were his death certificate and a photo of his gravestone. Here was her father’s mother, Reisel, murdered in the Sobibór death camp, and here was the exact date that she was murdered! Hitler, yimshach shemo ve’zichro, may you rot in hell and your name and the memory of you be obliterated! This hobby of hers was no longer a hobby, she realized. She was now on a mission: to find as many relatives as possible and document their names and lives so that they’d never be forgotten.

“Zadie Chaskel, I’m sorry that you died alone,” she lamented. “I didn’t know about you, I didn’t light a yahrzeit candle! And dear Bubby Reisel, I beg you to forgive me for not knowing!” How many others had died alone and their names and lives forgotten? Her research took on an urgency of such magnitude that she felt that her neshamah had been imbued with a higher purpose. She spent weeks online feverishly hunting for the names and fates of uncles and aunts and cousins, finding one name and a link to another and then another and yet another.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Sali would phone her cousin Annie before yamim tovim and sometimes in between. They often joked about knowing that they were cousins, but not how they were related. And now, through her research, Sali found the connection: Annie’s mother’s father and Sali’s father’s mother were brother and sister – one mystery solved! She phoned Annie about her discovery and was a bit disappointed by Annie’s lukewarm reception of the news.

And then came another mystery, one that for Sali turned out to be the mystery of all mysteries, the solution of which transformed her. On a DP card from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee were typed Annie’s parents’ names and another name, Rachela, all at the Foehrenwald DP camp in Germany. Who was this Rachela, and why were her birth date and birthplace recorded there? Time to phone Annie, who was sure to point her in the right direction. Curiously, Annie had no inkling as to who Rachela was, and she didn’t enquire further about the name or why it existed on her parents’ card. Sali was perturbed by her cousin’s seeming apathy, and she felt a sense of unease overtake her.

Back to the computer and another site this time, that of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Amazingly, there appeared Rachela’s name! Sali completed the online form, requesting Rachela’s file. Weeks went by, but no file. A sense of foreboding overtook her and increased with each day’s non-receipt of the file.

Then, one morning, there was the dreaded email with attachments. Porancephaly. Congenital idiot. St. Philomena Hospital. The last of the documents were copies of medical documents, letters from Rachela’s mother, a photo of the child and notifications of Rachela’s death and burial. Sali wept for sweet Rachela and the horror of it all.

***

Today was my yahrzeit, and Sali lit a candle for me. The first time in my eternity that I was remembered and my existence honoured. I visit Sali almost daily now. I hover near her as she pores over the many documents she’s received about me. Among these is a copy of a photo taken of me when I was about three years old. I am being held by Ludwig Joseph, my legal guardian. You can see part of his arm wrapped around me and a bit of his face. Sali is mesmerized by the photo. She is smitten with me and thinks to herself, “What a beautiful child!” She is unaware that I am with her, unaware that her soul and mine have become intertwined.

What she does know is that she now has her own moral dilemma: should she tell my sister, Annie, about me, so that Annie could light a yahrzeit candle and tell her grown children they had had an aunt? Perhaps, Sali reasoned, when Annie’s children had their own children, they could name one of them after me. Who was she, Sali asked herself, to withhold such crucial information? Sali spoke to a rabbi, who advised her not to tell. What good would it do now, he said, and might the danger be that Annie would think badly of her beloved parents because of their abandonment of me? The rabbi advised Sali that she herself should light a candle.

She called Annie today, my yahrzeit day, and asked Annie what our parents had told her about their time in the DP camp. Annie said that our parents didn’t talk about those days and that she’d never been curious enough to ask. Or maybe too afraid to ask, thought Sali in a mean-spirited moment. She knew she’d been disingenuous during the phone call, and she despised and berated herself long after the call had ended. I was there with her but could not console her.

So here I still am with Sali, who thinks about me constantly, unaware that I have embodied myself in her neshamah. There is nothing that my heavenly spirit can do to assuage her pain. She cries over me, her sleep is disturbed because of her sadness about me, her in the right direction. Curiously, Annie had no inkling as to who Rachela was, and she didn’t enquire further about the name or why it existed on her parents’ card. Sali was perturbed by her cousin’s seeming apathy, and she felt a sense of unease overtake her.

Then, one morning, there was the dreaded email with attachments. Porancephaly. Congenital idiot. St. Philomena Hospital. The last of the documents were copies of medical documents, letters from Rachela’s mother, a photo of the child and notifications of Rachela’s death and burial. Sali wept for sweet Rachela and the horror of it all.

***

Today was my yahrzeit, and Sali lit a candle for me. The first time in my eternity that I was remembered and my existence honoured. I visit Sali almost daily now. I hover near her as she pores over the many documents she’s received about me. Among these is a copy of a photo taken of me when I was about three years old. I am being held by Ludwig Joseph, my legal guardian. You can see part of his arm wrapped around me and a bit of his face. Sali is mesmerized by the photo. She is smitten with me and thinks to herself, “What a beautiful child!” She is unaware that I am with her, unaware that her soul and mine have become intertwined.

What she does know is that she now has her own moral dilemma: should she tell my sister, Annie, about me, so that Annie could light a yahrzeit candle and tell her grown children they had had an aunt? Perhaps, Sali reasoned, when Annie’s children had their own children, they could name one of them after me. Who was she, Sali asked herself, to withhold such crucial information? Sali spoke to a rabbi, who advised her not to tell. What good would it do now, he said, and might the danger be that Annie would think badly of her beloved parents because of their abandonment of me? The rabbi advised Sali that she herself should light a candle.

She called Annie today, my yahrzeit day, and asked Annie what our parents had told her about their time in the DP camp. Annie said that our parents didn’t talk about those days and that she’d never been curious enough to ask. Or maybe too afraid to ask, thought Sali in a mean-spirited moment. She knew she’d been disingenuous during the phone call, and she despised and berated herself long after the call had ended. I was there with her but could not console her.

So here I still am with Sali, who thinks about me constantly, unaware that I have embodied myself in her neshamah. There is nothing that my heavenly spirit can do to assuage her pain. She cries over me, her sleep is disturbed because of her sadness over my life and death as well as her having concealed from Annie the fact of my having existed. The knowledge of me is tormenting Sali, but my knowledge of her is consoling me. A celestial paradox.

What I, Rachela neshamah, do know is that even in death, I have experienced a type of t’chiyat hameitim, a resurrection of my being, a restoration of my existence. May Hashem in His infinite mercy grant Salina, my sister-soul, comfort in that knowledge. Amen.
Ode to the Hebrew Language

CAREY M. KNIGHT

If Russian is a language of snow
With its soft, whispering sounds
sh, sheh, tz,
Rocking, subtle, calming,
That evoke snowflakes falling on endless plains,
Grandmothers singing lullabies,
Secrets exchanged under staircases
Careful not to be overheard by ever-present informers,
And the heavy, resonant sounds like oo, yoo, p, g
Are like the thudding footsteps that sink into snowbanks
Under a grey winter sky
Wrapped in a thick fur coat

Then Hebrew is the language of the sun
Clear, simple and direct
Almost without exception
Rough and brusque like its Arabic cousin
But attenuated by ripe dates, honey and sweet oranges
Confident, warm, always conscious of feminine and masculine
Assertive (future is used instead of imperative – if Moti or Sharon or Kobi
tells you to do something, you surely will!)
Connected to the past, like the sign telling you to give your seat on the bus elders
That is lifted word-for-word from the Bible:
מְפֻלֶּחַ נשֶׁר, תִּקָּפֶּה
Yet full of new modern words created by the Academy.
Mekarer: a cold-maker instead of fridge; mahshev: a think-counter for computer,
Echoes of the prophets, peppered with hints of Greek and Persian
Aspaklaria, reflection, or Pardes, the orchard, which also lent its name to paradise...
Compact, efficient, without declensions or complicated tenses.
Everyone has a nickname, every army term has an abbreviation
Every word has its three-letter root (shoresh) and every verb type is an “edifice” (binyan).
We must be on alert for the next war, for an uncertain future.
No time to dally with four or five synonyms
We have deserts to make bloom, seawater to desalinate,
Neighbourhoods to build, a society to craft, curly-haired beauties to seduce...

Come hear the shouting in the marketplace, hear the prayers wafting upward on Friday night,
A reborn language, the heritage of a stubborn, miraculous, resilient people.
Karnei Ha-Shemesh

PEARL ADLER SABAN

On the textured, cobblestoned pathways surrounding the ancient buildings of the Old City
a young cat saunters by –
its white paws, like four matching miniature mittens,
stepping effortlessly on the warmed-by-the-sun stones.

He stops upon seeing me, then approaches –
his coal-coloured body wrapping around my legs,
his head rubbing against each ankle,
his tail curling around me
as he weaves in and out,
‘round and ‘round,
casting his feline spell.

I bend down to stroke his fur.
“Who do you belong to, chatul?” I ask.
A contented purr is his only response.

The cat sits on his haunches and proceeds to wash his paws,
his pink sandpaper tongue lapping repeatedly
at imaginary dirt.
First one front paw, then the other.
Perhaps he is simply comforting himself, having no mother nearby to do so.

He arches his back, stretches to full length, then settles down on the stones,
bathing in the natural light.
He closes his eyes... content and relaxed
as the rays of the midday sun spread their glow
upon this little citizen of Jerusalem – and beyond.

On behalf of Walter Roberts
Insurance Brokers we extend
a warm, and Healthy Passover
Greeting to all of our Clients, Friends
and the Jewish Community.

WALTER ROBERTS
INSURANCE BROKERS
Serving the community since 1965.

110 West Beaver Creek Road, Suite 22
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1J9
www.walterrobertsinsurance.com
info@walterrobertsinsurance.com | 905 764-8061

Montreal - Quebec City - Ottawa - Toronto - Halifax
Winnipeg - Calgary - Edmonton - Vancouver

A

Very

Happy Passover

Faigie & Rubin Zimmerman
and Family

Browns

wishes
all our clientele and friends
a very
Happy and Healthy
PASSOVER
Are There any Jews Here Besides Rapoport?

DAVID RAPOPORT

My cover was blown. The jig was up. I had been stigmatized at age 14. After two weeks as one of the guys, I had been ousted as a Jew at cadet camp at the Royal Ontario Museum. I guess that Nathan was a brat. I kept my head down.

The first exposure to anti-Semitism in Parkdale was not long in coming. The first time we had recess, I noticed a peculiar game called Geronimo. Nathan was face-down on the concrete, while a few of our classmates were lined up to do a hop-skip-jump routine, running about 10 feet to plop on his butt then leap forward, saying, “Geronimo!” Did I commiserate with poor Nathan? That is a rhetorical question. I was asked to participate but I wisely declined because I was unsure whether I would be a jumper or the launching pad.

My classmates were a diverse group. At the time, Catholic students did not join the Protestant school system until Grade 9, so in Grade 8 at Queen Vic my “friends” were either Canadian-born Protestants; immigrants from the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; or Lutheran Germans. Most of their parents had fled eastern Europe ahead of the approaching Russian army in 1945 and were accepted into Canada in the late ’40s or early ’50s. They must have taught their children the anti-Semitism I was to face 10 years later.

The nicest kids as far as anti-Semitism was concerned were immigrant Germans. My classmates were a diverse group. At the time, Catholic students did not join the Protestant school system until Grade 9, so in Grade 8 at Queen Vic my “friends” were either Canadian-born Protestants; immigrants from the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; or Lutheran Germans. Most of their parents had fled eastern Europe ahead of the approaching Russian army in 1945 and were accepted into Canada in the late ’40s or early ’50s. They must have taught their children the anti-Semitism I was to face 10 years later.

The nicest kids as far as anti-Semitism was concerned were immigrant Germans. Of course they were keeping a low profile, their parents having slaughtered Jews and Poles and countless other ethnic groups from 1939 to 1945. This shameful crime was rather more recent than that falsely blamed on Jews nearly 2,000 years before.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
My first friend at Queen Vic was Estonian. His attitude was that the millions killed were mostly just Jews, no great loss. I now have learned that the Baltic countries were particularly savage. In particular, Estonia, which had fewer than 100 Jews before the war. They were handed 2,000 Jews by the Germans for safekeeping, sort of storage for the excess accumulated by the Germans.

When they heard the rumble of Soviet artillery in 1945, they had to decide on the fate of those Jews who they had starved and tortured in local concentration camps. Before the collaborators fled they chose to shoot the families who were still alive. I presume the option of leaving them to be liberated a few days later never occurred to them.

Things got even worse for me in Grade 9 when we were joined by immigrant Catholics, chiefly Poles and Ukrainians. They had centuries of vicious hatred and warfare between them in Europe, but they got along in Parkdale. They were on the same page as far as Jews were concerned. Long before Polish jokes or Newfie jokes took hold, I heard a litany of Jewish jokes, chiefly about money. I kept my head down.

These were among my classmates who did not defend me when things got rough in my barracks at cadet camp. The most hateful remark I heard after a heated argument between two of them, said in my direction: “You can call me anything, but don’t call me a Jew.” This was from a kid twice my weight but half my scholastic ability. He once threatened to beat me up unless I told the group that I had no interest in his girlfriend, who had surprisingly sent me a letter. He came over to my metal bunk bed and swayed it back and forth until I nearly fell from the top bunk.

Every Friday afternoon we “privileged” Jews were marched past A-Company, where I remember catcalls and the occasional punch in the arm. The narrative was that none of us were non-commissioned officers (NCOs), ignoring the cadet captain leading us. We were bussed to Sarnia but the rabbi never showed up. We kept coming every Friday. What 14-year-old could resist this freedom? I returned to Camp Ipperwash as a cadet corporal two years later.

One day, at Camp Ipperwash, I overheard one of my fellow cadets from outside our communal washroom utter a somewhat sympathetic word. “Don’t worry about Rapoport. He’s a Jew; he’ll be rich some day.” They were right, but in a different context. Once my family moved to Cedarvale in North Toronto, and I was in school with many Jewish students, I was no longer a pariah. Later, my family medical practice attracted many Jewish families. I married a Conservative Jewish woman, and many of our friends are Jewish.

I have become rich in Jewish values. Leading a good life is the best revenge.
The Onions Of My People

JENNY ROGER

I love onions. There, I've said it – it's out in the open, no going back. This humble, inexpensive vegetable that makes me cry also makes me swoon with joy when I cook with it. It's not trendy like avocado, cauliflower or kale; in fact, it is the opposite of trendy, a utility vegetable that adds a background note. When's the last time you've heard anyone talk about how much they love onions? Avocado toast, that's another story.

So where did my obsession come from? My family, of course. It must be heavily imprinted in my genes by now.

I grew up on a mixture of Ashkenazic and Canadian food. Brisket followed by Jell-O for dessert. It's from my east European forebears that I share their love of onions.

I close my eyes and see my grandfather Max visiting my family and staying for lunch. He lived in Brantford, and it was difficult 50 years ago to get kosher food there. When he came to Toronto, he loved nothing better than sitting down to freshly baked pumpernickel bread topped with a thick layer of kosher cottage cheese. A large green onion would fill up half the plate – the larger and more pungent the bulb, the better – with a small pile of salt on the side into which he'd dip the onion and eat it raw.

My mother continued the onion love with her eggs and onion, a Friday-night forshpeis, an appetizer, made from chopped hardboiled eggs and raw cooking onions, bound together with homemade schmaltz. She was never timid in her application of onions.

Another well-loved eggs-and-onion dish would appear for breakfast, lunch or a light supper. Onions would be diced up, cooked slowly and caramelized, then beaten eggs would be added, turning it into succulent scrambled eggs. This dish also was a favourite on fresh rye bread with kimmel seeds.

But the love of onions in our Jewish lives goes further back in history than the shtetls of Europe. In Spain, during the Inquisition, Jews could be denounced if the smell of cooked onions came from their homes. Onions and garlic, using either or both of these alliums, was an indication of Jewishness.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
My favourite night of the year to cook with onions is Passover. In ancient times, the Israelites would have loved seeing them in their seder plate. They were also well loved by our ancient ancestors. Scientists are only now beginning to understand what our ancestors knew about onions. We are all familiar with the natural sweetness brought forward, the perfect foil to the pungency of sautéed chicken livers. Blended together, they harmonize perfectly.

I could not conceive of cooking the brisket without having it totally enrobed in onions and slathered with crushed garlic cloves. The onions play a background note in the potato kugel, always there, never the same without them.

Whether you like your gefilte fish sweet or salty, they all contain onions both in the fish balls and the broth to cook them in. Scientists are only now beginning to understand what our ancestors knew about onions. We are all familiar with sweet, salty, bitter and sour as primary tastes; scientists have discovered we have taste receptors (taste buds) for umami. Umami is a Japanese word that refers to a savoury, pleasant taste. These taste buds respond to foods that have glutamates and other amino acids in them. Soy sauce and Parmesan cheese contain high levels of glutamates, and, by adding a small amount of these foods to a dish, they elevate the flavours.

Onions are a good source of glutamates, and cooking them enhances their umami. Garlic has even higher levels of glutamates. So the Israelites and my grandfather were onto something when they enjoyed their onions. Onions haven’t made it into desserts yet, but when they burst into the world of dietary trends, I’m sure they will find their way into sweet cakes, too.

With the seders over, I’ll have time to think of new ways to cook with onions. I’d like to further explore Sephardic cuisine and make some sweet-and-sour dishes with onions, dulce y agrio. I’ve got to try an onions-only kugel, no potatoes needed. And make some baked stuffed onions.

When the summer comes, I’ll be able to buy some of the new types of brightly coloured onions our local farmers are bringing to market every year. I know it, I can feel it coming – a new trend is being born and catching up to what my people have known all along.
My Imaginary Friend

NORM SPATZ

The train ride to Auschwitz was not very long, only 250 kilometres from Asher’s hometown. But it was a much longer road if you were travelling in circles. Asher and his family had run from one seeming refuge to another. Asher was returning to Poland from Hungary, where they had found refuge for a few months, but now, as a prisoner, he was returning to the hell that Poland had become for its Jews.

The train coming from Budapest was really a prison of cattle cars. There was a corroded metal pot in the corner of the car, but there were so many people there that Asher had to push his way through the crowd to get to where he could relieve himself. The odour was nauseating, but it had been so long since he had eaten anything more than scraps that there was nothing left inside of him to bring up.

Luckily, he was young, only 19 years old, and he had the energy to push his way back to the exterior wall of the cattle car that the Nazis from the Hungarian administration were using to transport members of the Jewish community. Pushing his way back to the outside wall of the wagon, where the air was a bit fresher, Asher bumped into Shlomo the barber from his hometown.

“Hey! Watch where you’re going,” Shlomo said, sounding more scared than angry. “Oh, Asher, it’s you. Have you seen Batya?” he asked, sounding fearful that he would never see his wife again.

“I did see her a few minutes ago,” Asher replied. “She was looking for you.” He was relieved that he didn’t have a wife to worry about. Asher also could breathe a sigh of relief over the welfare of his family. They had been smuggled into Romania and were on a boat going to Palestine. Asher turned to Shlomo and said, “You’re really lucky she’s on the same car as you. My entire family has been broken up, splintered.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Shlomo looked at the young man and said, “I guess we should be thankful for what little Hashem has given to us.” Asher did not have a reputation for being the most pleasant of personalities in the small community, often getting into abrasive discussions with others about their beliefs and traditions. In these trying circumstances, he did not wish to make a response that would lead to more unpleasantness.

What was happening to the Jews of Lodz was hardly a gift from God. Asher had just graduated from business school and had little patience with the passivity and fatalism of much of the traditional Jewish community in his town. Although he didn’t totally reject the notion of a God, he felt challenged to find a way of accepting what he was doing. If the Nazis had not destroyed their business, Asher probably would have ended the partnership that his father had established.

“May Hashem protect us all,” Asher said, continuing to push toward the fresher air coming in from the gratings on the outside walls of the wagon. Asher was also afraid, but he was angrier than Shlomo. He came from a different tradition. Business school had taught him to think critically, to seize opportunity and to resist those beliefs that didn’t produce results. He was a no-nonsense kind of guy and he had little sympathy for those who were foolishly swayed by baseless assumptions.

As Asher arrived at the outside wall of the wagon, he heard a train whistle in the distance. In the light of the late afternoon, the two trains would be crossing the bridge. He wondered whether the opposite direction and his was slowing to a speed not much faster than that of a fast bicycle.

In jail, awaiting his transport to Auschwitz, a number of the inmates had hatched a daring plan. A Ukrainian captain had pushed softened bread into the lock of the railroad car that he and Asher had been loaded onto as they entered. A seemingly innocuous gesture, the bread created just enough of a block to keep the lock of the door from shutting. Once the train went from Hungary to Czechoslovakia, the men pushed open the door and jumped.

Asher looked at the ground in front of him. Those around him were too depressed, too weak and too scared to understand what had just happened. If he waited much longer the train would be crossing a large river on a bridge. He hesitated for only a minute, wondering if he could survive in the country where so many people were willing to cooperate with the Nazi administration. Asher weighed his alternatives. He didn’t feel the Germans had put him on the train for his own benefit. “Take your future in your own hands!” he thought to himself. He let go of the door and jumped to the ground.

Although Asher was not the only one who jumped from a train that day, he was one of the lucky ones. Of the 70 people who tried to escape the Nazis on that same day in 1943, only seven survived. They were the ones that the Nazis didn’t see, and their relative discretion left them alone on one of the most frightening and difficult days of their lives.

Asher jumped and rolled on the soft earth alongside the track. Suddenly he felt a sharp pain. His forehead had hit the track. He nervously got up and said to himself, “Well, I seem to still be alive. I wonder if anyone else will follow me.” He looked around. Growing alongside the track were raspberries. He grabbed a bunch of the ripe berries in his hand and ate them. The taste was delicious. This was the first food that he had eaten that day. “God is smiling on me. God is rewarding me for taking things into my own hands!” Then he thought, “Why do I ever assume God has anything to do with me?”
I remember it was a Tuesday when you called to say you had the afternoon off since you got all your deliveries done in the morning. It was around 2 p.m. and you said you were going home to take a nap. When I arrived, the house was quiet and your shoes were at the door. I went grocery shopping, and when I came back, my friend dropped off photos of our trip to Israel. After she left, I noticed a blue-and-white EMS van idling in front of the Zuckers’ house. I remember feeling bad that poor Mr. Zucker probably had an other heart attack. I went to our side door to bring in the mail and found it open and surrounded with piles of stained, rumpled orange blankets. I bolted to the EMS van and it was running but empty. Through the driver’s window I saw that the computer screen read MALE – 25 yrs.

My phone rang again, and this time it was Dad screaming at me to come to Sunnybrook because you had a seizure. It was Dad screaming at me to come to the quiet room where they tell you they did everything they could and are very sorry for your loss. I began to feel like I was watching us all on TV. The mother in the show seemed calm and stoic. My heart went out to the father as he sobbed and shook. The young man on the stretcher looked peaceful, but had food bits crusted around his lips and a tube still stuck in his mouth. The nurse apologized about the mess and warned the mom that the floor was still slippery from when they pumped the young man’s stomach. The mother held her son’s hand. Was he ever going to stop biting his nails? She saw that one of his eyes was a little open, closed it and sat with him until the nurses said it was time for her to leave.

The TV show ended abruptly when the coroner showed the mother the empty bottles of medicine the EMS guys found at the house; and said that her son had consumed a fatal dose. I numbly walked back toward the sad, dark, wood-panelled room where Dad was sobbing and the EMT team and ER doctor had gathered to mumble condolences. I wanted them to know we believed they had all done their best and made a point of telling them so. It seemed only fair to let them off the hook.

At the hospital, death is death for only a moment. Then the post-death workings begin. Will organs or body parts be donated? Will there be an autopsy? Where will the body be moved? Who will call the funeral home and notify the rabbi? When and how will family and friends be told? Somehow all this happened and we exited the hospital right next to where you had entered it. The evening was very still. Dad fell apart when we said it was our son. The dog went over and sat at his feet. When he pulled himself together, he took us to the coffin room so we could select a container to hold your body for eternity.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
On the way, he explained the different casing options, some water-repellant and others not, then ushered us into a vault with about 50 different coffin styles laid out for us to inspect. He left us alone for a while. A man in a dark suit stood guard by the door. He looked like Uncle Fester from the Addams Family.

There were so many options, it was like shopping for furniture; when Dad moved toward a flimsy-looking casket, Jonathan told him we were not going to send you underground in an IKEA box. There was another made of mahogany with lots of ornate carvings. We giggled out loud thinking that someone rich and famous would be heading underground in that one. In the end, we chose one that would be heading underground in that der in which our bodies would be buried.

Then we had to decide on the or-

Almost a thousand people came to say goodbye to you. The funeral at Holy Blossom Temple was like a reception for a guest of honour who couldn’t attend. Jonathan told everyone how humbled he felt to be a guest of honour who couldn’t attend. When you like.

We had our heads in the clouds preparing an obituary for you and our feet on the ground buying a plot of it to put you in. Real-

After everyone had a turn, Jonathan continued shovelling and would not leave till there was a mound of earth that rose well above the perimeter of the grave itself. When I walked back to the limousine, a religiously observant man approached me to offer his condolences. He told me he had lost a five-year-old grandson several years ago and hoped it would comfort me to know that God sends very special people into the world and leaves them to people who are dif-

The funeral director returned. Perhaps the man at the door signalled to him that we made our choice. He informed us that rose well above the perimeter of the grave itself. When I walked back to the limousine, a religiously observant man approached me to offer his condolences. He told me he had lost a five-year-old grandson several years ago and hoped it would comfort me to know that God sends very special people into the world and leaves them to people who are dif-

Wishing you a Healthy and Happy Passover.

Chag Sameach!

www.canadasportswear.com
Dear Otto

LEE SCHWARTZ

This is a letter Lee Schwartz wrote for his Grade 6 school assignment. The assignment was to write a letter from the perspective of a Jewish boy in Europe in the 1930s to a friend who managed to escape before the onset of the Holocaust.

Dear Otto,

It's been a long time. I think it would be a good time to update you on everything that has happened since you left. It has been a dark, dark time. Hitler and the Nazi party have made new laws called the Nuremberg Laws, which prevent Jews from living a normal life. It's as if Hitler has no heart and is trying to persecute the Jewish religion across the world.

My family is in horrible shape. My mom and dad had to get divorced because of the new Nuremberg Laws. My mom now has to work extra hard because my dad had the job in the family. Now she needs to do both her work and my dad's work. Our housekeeper just got fired because she is only 21. One of the laws is that a housekeeper for a Jew has to be 45 or older! It's completely absurd! But enough about my family. Let's get into some of the Nuremberg Laws.

Some new laws that have been introduced in Hamburg are that Jews are not allowed to have a housekeeper under 45 years old. That's not good because my mom has to go to work so I have to take care of the house. It's not easy and I don't get paid. Another law is that Jews can't just not marry Germans, they can't have relationships with them either. For that reason my mom and my dad had to get divorced because my dad is German.

These new laws have made my life difficult because we don't have a housekeeper, so I have to act as one because my mom works all day. My mom and my dad got divorced so I will never see my dad again because he is German, and if he were to take care of me, he would get in trouble. My mom works all day, so when she gets home she is super-stressed, so we can't play our favourite game, Rummikub.

Rummikub is a game with tiles that are coloured blue, yellow, red and black. The tiles have numbers on them from one to 13. The aim of the game is to get rid of all of your tiles. You have to put tiles of the same number and different colours, or you can put numbers in a run (one, two, three, four), but the tiles have to be the same colour. Sometimes I play it with myself just out of sheer boredom. The last thing is that I have to go to bed much later because of all my chores, which is dreadful because the chores are exhausting!

Now enough about me. I don't know anything about you. How is Heinrich? I heard he is much happier now that you have moved to Canada. I wish my family had moved to Canada before these horrible laws were put in place. Although, isn't it different not being able to speak the same language as everybody else? Also, I don't know much about Canada, but there are blond-haired people there too, right? Anyway, what matters is that you and your family are happy.

I hope you and your family are very happy with your living situation because I am not. It must be great waking up every day knowing that you are safe and protected. If you get this letter, I beg of you to write me back. I need someone to tell me that all of this will end and everything will go back to normal. Right now, I'm running out of hope and I want to keep it. Please write back.

PLEASE be safe Otto. I hope one day I can see you again.

From,

Lee
Zayde’s Haggadah Line

LEN PHILLIPS

“How does Zayde do it, Mommy?” asked my 10-year-old daughter, Dahlia.

We were on our way to the large family seder, which was going to be at Uncle Jacob’s house this year. Jacob was my father’s brother.

“How does he do what?” I asked her.

“You know”, she said, “how every year, no matter how many people are at the seder, he gets to read the same paragraph from the haggadah, the one that contains the words ‘pass over’ for the first time.”

I smiled and said, “Aha! You’ve noticed. Your Zayde is quite tricky.”

Our family, like many others, took turns after the Four Questions were asked, going around the table with each person reading one paragraph from the haggadah. For as long as I could remember, when I was just a little girl, my father always seemed to be the one to utter the words “pass over” when they first appeared in the haggadah. I’d see the twinkle in his eye growing, as his paragraph was coming up, and he would slowly and loudly read: “The Israelites were to mark their doors with the blood of their animal sacrifices so God would pass over their homes.”

Some years he would shout those two words out, and some years he paused just before he came to those words, and asked everyone to do a drum roll before he proudly said, “pass over”.

When I asked his sister, Aunt Anne, how he always got that line, she said, “Shira, watch him closely at next year’s seder to learn the secret.”

Some years I noticed he had to go the bathroom before his turn, and stayed away from the table while others continued to read, missing one or two of his turns, which somehow enabled him to be the one to read the paragraph with “pass over”.

It didn’t matter how big or small the seder gathering was, or where he would be sitting. The seder was always at his brother Jacob’s house, or his sister Anne’s house, and he did not have control over where he should sit. I noticed how he would discreetly and quickly count paragraphs in the haggadah before we started the shared reciting of the story of the exodus from Egypt.

After years of watching him get the honour of reading that line, I was still in awe of his technique. As he got older, though, I noticed he wasn’t alone in excusing himself from the seder table. Sometimes his brother or his sister would excuse themselves, and once again my father got to read aloud the paragraph that was so important to him.

But now my father was in his 90s, and despite a perfect record of getting the honour of reading that paragraph each year, his health was failing, and it always seemed to be up to others at the table to do something so that my father would continue to get his special turn.

This particular year, because of Zayde’s declining health (everyone, including his children, referred to him as Zayde now), all his immediate family made the effort to attend the seder, wondering if it might be the last time all of us could celebrate it while he was still alive. My husband, Gil; my sister, Rebecca, and her husband; my brother, Noam, with his wife and children; and most of Zayde’s nephews and nieces were all going to be there tonight.

I was so proud of my aunts and uncles and cousins when I first figured out how they were all discreetly honouring my father. They gave him some dignity when he himself was no longer able to independently manipulate the reading of the haggadah, to ensure that he would get that line all to himself.

Each year, when we neared that paragraph, I could see everyone quietly looking around the table, counting how many turns it would take if my father was going to read that paragraph. Sometimes one or two people said they had to go to the bathroom, and sometimes someone would instantly get laryngitis, skipping their turn, to make sure my father could continue the tradition.

“So, Mommy,” said Dahlia, breaking my daydreaming about past seders. “How is he tricky? What does Zayde do?”

“Just watch closely tonight,” I said to her, “and I hope you’ll figure out his secret, just like I had to figure it out by myself when I was around your age.”

When we arrived at Uncle Jacob’s house, my father seemed in good spirits. He loved telling the grandchildren all about seders from long ago and the traditions we had.

“You were alive when the Leafs actually won the Stanley Cup!” Dahlia asked him while he was telling the other grandchildren how he used to sneak into the den when he was a youngster, during the dinner part of the seder, and try to watch the game.

“Yes”, Zayde proudly said, “the playoffs always seemed to happen during Pesach, and there were only six teams back then.”

“Six teams?!” said Dahlia. “Oh my! Zayde, you really are old!”

“Old, but happy,” Zayde replied. “Come, children, let’s start the seder. Dahlia, you’re the youngest one here tonight. Sit beside me, because my hearing isn’t as good as it used to be, and I want to hear you ask the Four Questions.”

Tears welled up in my eyes as I heard Dahlia recite, “Why is this night different from all the other nights?” With all of Zayde’s family here for the first time in years, it was a seder that was different from all the other seders.

Dahlia was watching Zayde like a hawk, hoping to figure out how he was going to read the “pass over” paragraph. When he excused himself from the table at one point I saw a small smile form on her lips. She’s figured it out, I thought.

As we got closer to that line in the haggadah, I noticed everyone start to flip pages and do some counting, a look of fear appearing on someone’s faces. The line was not going to fall on Zayde’s turn. It was going to happen on Dahlia’s turn.

“So, Dahlia? Not?” said my father, when her turn arrived. “It’s your turn. Read the next paragraph.”

Dahlia looked around at everyone but did not read. She started to, but then pointed to her throat, to indicate nothing was coming out. She pointed to Zayde to say to him that he should read it instead. But Zayde couldn’t read it either. He looked at Dahlia and started to cry. He had realized what she was trying to do, and he hugged her.

“Why is this night different from all other nights?” Zayde said. “It’s because tonight we have a new seder tradition. Tonight, everyone reads the line out loud together. Not just me.”

And so, for the first time ever, together we all said aloud, “The Israelites were to mark their doors with the blood of their animal sacrifices so God would pass over their homes.”

That was the last time I ever heard my father recite that line. He died a few months later. But a new tradition had been added to the seder. It was called “Zayde’s line”. It was a moment when everyone attending the seder shared the memory of my father, Zayde, and his joy for so many years being the one to recite why we call the holiday “Passover”. ■
A CHAG KASHER V’SAMEACh FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS.

Traditions are the strongest of bonds: they are the core values that unite a family. For over 93 years, we have been investing in our community and cherishing our clients as esteemed members of our own family.

As we approach the Passover, let’s celebrate steadfast relationships and continue to pass cherished traditions on to future generations.

RICHTER

RICHTER.CA