

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES AND EVENTS

Friday, March 27 7:00 pm Family Kabbalat Shabbat Service With Eli

Friday March 27 9:15 pm Shabbat eve Service And Oneg Shabbat

Tuesday, March 31 8:00 pm Alec Gelcer Memorial Cocert Miles Nadal Center

Saturday, April 4 10:00 am Bar Mitzvah of Grant Adam, Son of Susan and Nathan Roth

Thursday, April 9 6:00 pm Passover Seder for Congregation And members of Homeless Community

Thursday, April 16 10:00 am Pesach Yiskor Service

Saturday, April 18 10:00am Bar Mitzvah of Oren, son of Ariela and Harvey Weisfeld

Saturday, April 18 p.m. Bat Mitzvah of Monika, daughter of D.L. D'Aguilar and Arthur Reinstein

Friday, April 24 7:00 pm Family Shabbat Service

Friday, April 24 8:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Service And Oneg Shabbat

Saturday, April 25 10:00am Bat Mitzvah of Dana Tough, daughter Of Karen Galler and John Tough

HABONIM & VE'AHAVTA HOLD THEIR 10TH ANNUAL PASSOVER SEDER

On the second night of Passover, Congregation Habonim and Ve'ahavta: The Canadian Jewish Humanitarian and Relief Committee will host the 10th annual Ve'ahavta / Habonim Passover Seder for the Homeless. We expect 125 individuals to be present and would love you and your family to join us.

Our guests will have the opportunity to enjoy a warm, spiritual evening full of good food, laughter and learning. As we celebrate the transition from slavery to freedom, we will also traverse the way between strangers and friends. The cost of the evening is \$36.00 and the date is Thursday April 9th, 2009. Please contact Elizabeth at 416-782-7125 to make your reservation. The Seder will be led by Avrum Rosensweig and Eli Rubenstein.

IMAGINE: YOU WERE A SLAVE & THEN YOU WERE FREE

By Avrum Rosensweig

Pesach is on our doorstep once again. Happy Pesach Congregation Habonim.

The most significant line we read on Pesach in the Haggadah is "We were slaves in Egypt." The message emanating from this very short sentence is that, as hard as it is to imagine, we, the Jewish people were once controlled by wicked task masters and that we no longer are. We are free!

The idea that we were once slaves is startling because we are such an independent people. Yet there was a time when our ancestors were forced to live lives that were not their own but instead were based on the whims of a pharaoh, a man who believed he was a god and was unaware of his cruel nature and the unequal culture in which he lived.

Living in Toronto in 2009, in one of the most peaceful and comfortable places and times in history, how do we therefore process this message of "slavery" and then freedom? The only thing we can do really is to imagine ourselves as slaves, remember those moments when we were mentally 'enslaved' by someone else or by asking ourselves some questions to clarify the meaning of such an idea.

Ask yourself: have you ever felt hunger, that knowing physical discomfort that a slave feels all the time? Can you imagine even for a second somebody subjugating you, hitting you, telling you regularly what to do? Can you fathom what it would be like to be told you must ask for permission to touch your wife/husband, hug your children - a right frequently denied slaves?

Ask yourself: How am I responding to the reality that today there are 12 million slaves in the world, many of whom are chained to sewing machines by people with evil intent who are prepared to allow a human being, a child, to suffer for profit?

Ask yourself: how empathetic am I to the plight of Jews living in Southern Israel, enslaved to fear, bound to their bomb shelters by fear of missiles fired at them day and night by our enemies; how sympathetic am I to the innocent in Gaza who are unable to flee a terrible environment?

At your Passover Seder, close your eyes for a long moment and meditate. See yourself standing in a Jewish chain-gang as we Jews have been several times in history. Picture the multitudes of enslaved people of the world today and resolve to fight all forms of slavery always. We are fortunate, surrounded as we are by infinite possibility to practice Judaism and actualize ourselves as human beings. Our lives are blessed with freedom.

So when Pesach arrives and we are sitting at the table saying the words "we were slaves in Egypt," how are we to make these words feel real? How are we truly supposed to be thankful to God for bringing us out of slavery? How can we maximize our appreciation for what we have today and for what the Canadian Jewish community has today - a gift of freedom that has never been so great?

Picture slavery then, and you will sense freedom now. Recognize that we were once slaves in Egypt, whether you accept this metaphorically or in reality, and that what is in Canada today, hasn't always been thus.

Remember that the reason the Jewish people are so fiercely independent is the fact that we were once slaves, and that we are being regularly reminded of it.

This Pesach, embrace your ability to fly high as a Jew and remember there was a time when we were not able to do so. These are special times. We have to cherish and protect our freedom through remembrance of our past.

Happy Pesach.

Bring some friends to join in the fun.

"THE HEART BROKENLY LIVES ON"

A few months ago I attended a program at Habonim co-sponsored by "Bereaved Jewish Families of Ontario." The program was called "Storytelling & Grief: The Heart Brokenly Lives On", and it was led by our own Eli Rubenstein.

Throughout the evening, Eli led us through different examples of storytelling, prose and poetry dealing with the loss of a loved one, mostly from Jewish origins, but from other religious and literary sources as well. I thought it was both an emotional and a

very important evening that gave us a chance to discuss the topic of death. It is through the topic of death, that for me, gives us an opportunity to examine, dissect and define the beauty of life.

The part of the evening that resonated with me most profoundly were the words spoken by bereaved parent Ned Levitt, who rose to thank Eli for his remarks.

He said:

"Cheryl shared with everyone the connection you have had with my family. But I feel particularly close to you, because you taught Stacey her Bat-Mitzvah portion, not knowing that 5 years later she would be gone.

I have come to know you as a man of great humour (sometimes), someone who "gives of himself", but most of all I see you as being fortunate to do everyday what you feel passionate about.

Your stories tonight were wonderful. The poem about the boy who always says there are 7 people in his family, when all have perished, resonated particularly with me, as it reflected the conundrum that newly bereaved parents have when asked, "how many children do you have?". What is the right answer? If you count the living members of your family only, you will feel guilty because you deny the existence of your child who has died and, in so many ways, continues to be part of your life.

Grief is often treated as an illness in our society. You are expected to "heal" from it. Doctors offer you pills to "cure" it. Therapy is sought to "treat" it. And everyone exhorts you to "get over it". You reminded me tonight that, in reality, recovery from profound loss is in fact a philosophical journey. You will need to ask yourself many simple yet incredibly deep and soul searching questions: Why continue? Why try to make a life, not just exist? Why seek happiness, even joy gain? You brought back a memory of my own words when I tried to help other newly bereaved parents with these philosophical struggles. I told them that, "after the death of a child, your grief is like a searing wall of pain that you cannot get over, under or around. At the beginning you cannot even touch it, but, eventually, you must and will go through it.

When I went through my wall of searing pain, much

to my amazement, Stacey was waiting for me on the other side. What I mean by that is I could see her image, hear her voice and not break down in uncontrollable grief spasms. Then, she was back in my life, where she rightly belongs."

If grief were an illness, the medicine would be words, images and stories. Tonight, you have ministered to our illness in the most beautiful, articulate and effective way. For this we thank you."

By Fern Levitt

BECAUSE GOD LOVES STORIES: THE ALEC GELCER MEMORIAL CONCERT

Tuesday, March 31 8:00 pm

Alec Gelcer was a founding father and cornerstone of the Toronto storytelling community and a respected storyteller worldwide. Born in Cape Town in 1936 of Jewish heritage he had a natural affinity for Jewish and South African stories, but more importantly he loved any well told tale. In his early days as a storyteller, he discovered that the right story at the right moment could touch someone's soul and perhaps even change a life. Because God Loves Stories is an annual storytelling concert to honour the memory and spirit of a great storyteller and a great man.

FEATURING: Ralph Benmergui with Eli Rubenstein, Mayumi Seiler, Ernie Tollar and Dan Yashinsky.

LOCATION: Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, 750 Spadina Ave (at Bloor) Room 318

ADMISSION: \$15 / \$12 students, seniors, unwaged

PERSONALIA

Congregation Habonim expresses its deepest condolences to our Cantor, Esther Ghan Firestone, to her husband Paul, and to their entire family over the loss of their beloved daughter Hillary Firestone. Donations may be sent to The Hillary Firestone Ovarian Cancer Research Fund at Princess Margaret

Hospital, tel. 416-946-6560.

Four young Habonim members will be taking part in the March of the Living to Poland and Israel this April: **Emily Friedman; Jennie Greben; Joel Kadish and Samantha Shier.**

We wish them a safe journey and return, and look forward to hearing about their experiences upon their arrival home.

We wish to express our sympathy to the family of **Dr. Ladislaus Vogel**, who passed away recently.

**KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY OF THE
ESSLINGEN RESIDENTS. THE STUMBLING
BACK IN TIME: MEMORIES OF ESSLINGEN**

Susan Liebel

In January 2008, through the wonders of the Internet, I received an email from a teacher at the Georgii Gymnasium in Esslingen, Germany, asking whether I was the daughter of the late George Liebel. At first, my husband, Gabor Herczeg and I thought that it was a hoax, but after some web research, we realized that the communication was, in fact, legitimate. Over the course of the next 8 months, I corresponded with the grade 10a history class and their teacher, Ernst Kuhnle. They were fascinated by the fact that my father was the only Jew who had attended the Georgii Gymnasium at the time, wished to learn more about his life, and wanted to honour him by laying a Stolperstein (stumbling block) in front of his school, his sister Anne's school and the family's last residence on 11 Silcherstrasse. The Stolpersteine is a project started by the artist and Cologne native Gunter Demnig in the 1990's, who wished to commemorate those who were persecuted, killed or fled Nazi Germany. They are concrete blocks which are covered with brass, and laid on the sidewalk or pavement in front of schools, houses, with the inscription "Here lived" or "Here studied"; over 13,000 stolpersteine have been laid in cities in Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Netherlands. The school(s) wished to sponsor the cost of 95 euros for the stolpersteine and their request had been approved by the artist.

What followed was months of correspondence with the Georgii Gymnasium, research on my part, searching through the many documents/photos which I had of my father, and hours of discussion with my mother Greta and Aunt Anne (who is still living in Florida). In mid September my husband and I flew to Stuttgart, full of anticipation, but not really knowing what emotional journey lay ahead for us. We were greeted by Herr Kuhnle, and another history teacher, Frau Gerda Eller of the Morike Gymnasium, who had also joined the project with her students, to commemorate my Aunt Anne. My Aunt Anne's granddaughter from Washington, Carie Lemack, also joined us.

The next four days in both Esslingen (a charming medieval town 14 kilometres from Stuttgart with a population of approximately 90,000) were jam packed with meeting students and staff from the two schools, touring Esslingen, and visiting the heart wrenching Memorial at the Train Station in Stuttgart from where my grandparents were deported to Izbica in April 1942, where they perished. We know what excellent records the Germans kept during the Holocaust, something that was clearly reinforced on two occasions. The first was when we had the opportunity to meet executives of the Daimler Factory where my grandfather had worked as an engineer from the 1920's-1930's and viewed his wage cards and photos; we discovered that he had been paid even when he was no longer allowed to work there. The second was when we viewed my father's report cards (still part of the school records) at the Georgii Gymnasium from 1927-1936, our eyes drawn to the asterisk in 1933, noting that he was a non Aryan.

The students of both schools were bright, fluent in English, and very inquisitive. I spoke to them about my father's life. He had fled Germany in February 1939 after no longer being allowed to continue his chemistry studies at the Stuttgart Technical Institute; my aunt had already been sent to England, and a cousin had helped him to get a visa to study at the University of Leeds. In May 1940 he was rounded up as enemy alien, sent to the Isle of Man and in July was sent to Farnham Quebec, where he was interned for two years. There my father became a camp leader, tutoring students in chemistry, fighting for better food and living conditions, and working with Senator Cairine Wilson to end the injustice of classifying Jews as

prisoners of war and not refugees. He was released in 1942 and worked in a war machinery camp in Lachine, Quebec. Eventually George retook his science degree at Montreal's Concordia University and eventually became vice president of a fragrance and aromatic chemical company, met and married my mother Greta (who had a similar background) and raised my brother and me. My father sadly died of a heart attack at the age of 64 before knowing his three grandchildren.

The students' questions were thoughtful – how did we feel being in Germany; had my father rejected or embraced his religion after the war; did I resent Germans? I tried to convey to them that it was important to never forget, but to not continually harbour negativity; it is important to remember history, but to be accepting of change. Being a teacher myself, this is something that I try to convey to my own grade 7 and 8 students. I encouraged them to go to the primary source while they still can, to learn about their own history as well as the history of others, to be willing to be accepting of different cultures and religions, and to stand up to intolerance, because it is they who are the future.

I had the opportunity to speak to three large crowds during our time there, attended by the press all three times – once in a public ceremony at the Town Hall where the artist spoke as well, once to the students of my aunt's school and finally, at the most emotional, the ceremony in the gym of the school where my father had once exercised. The care and planning of the event was so evident and it was hard to say what moved me the most - the banner which greeted us over the school's archway *Er war einer von uns George Liebel 1916-1981* (he was one of us), the headmaster's thoughtful speech carefully stressing to the students what must be learned from this day, the staff string quartet playing the thoughtfully selected Viktor Ullmann's *Streichquartett* (Theresienstadt 1943), the poems written by survivors, read by students and their displayed artwork reflecting their student trip to Dachau, the student choir and musicians playing *Peat Bog Soldiers*, the chestnut on the school grounds lovingly given to me from the same chestnut tree where my father had once lingered, the actual laying of the *stolperstein*, accented by a rose a student had brought from her family garden the crowd gathered to watch the four *stolpersteine* laid for Julie, Victor, George

and Anne in front of the family residence or meeting still living classmates of my father.

During the four days in Esslingen, I tried to imagine my father in front of his house, playing soccer in the local parks, on the steps of his primary and secondary school, wandering the streets of the charming town, feeling the strength of his classmates who fought the headmaster for his right to graduate with them from the Georgii Gymnasium, and feeling his own inner strength and fear when he left his parents behind in 1939.

I returned to Canada with many emotions. I am buoyed by the willingness of the new generation of teachers and students in Germany to teach and learn about the Holocaust. I am proud to be George Liebel's daughter and so grateful for the opportunity to visit my father's past. I am grateful for the hard work, dedication and inspiration of Herr Kuhnle and his students, and for the artist Gunter Demnig who says that "Humans are only forgotten if their name is forgotten." I am so grateful to have had this opportunity because it has helped to ensure that the names and the lives of my father George Liebel, his sister Anne, as well as my grandparents Victor and Julie Liebel have not been forgotten.

DONATIONS

On behalf of its board and membership, Congregation Habonim has made a donation in memory of Hillary Firestone to The Hillary Firestone Ovarian Cancer Research Fund c/o the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation.

In Memoriam:

To the Firestone Family - My deepest sympathy to you on the loss of your daughter, Hilary - Erika Erdos

It was with much sorrow that I learned of the death of your daughter, Hilary. My deepest sympathy. - Edith Rosen

Our deepest sympathy to you on your recent tragic loss - Vivian and Gina Rakoff.

The Morton and Small families are remembering with love and sadness our dear son and brother Richard Morton.

OUR WEBSITE:

www.congregationhabonim.org

OUR E-MAIL ADDRESS:

office@congregationhabonim.org
 To **SPONSOR AN ONEG SHABBAT** call
 Sandra Levy at (905) 780-9425

**To SEND GREETING CARDS and
 DONATIONS**

call Rhoda Sion at (416) 782-9663 or write to
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 or e-mail to: dijer@sympatico.ca

TO BUY A LEAF FOR EITZ CHAIM for any
 occasion call Miriam Ostrow at (416) 661-0949
 Leaf \$175

QUESTIONS OR NOTICES RE JAHRZEITEN?

Call Linda Brager at (416) 488-0282

JAHRZEITEN

To be read at Services in April, 2009

Louis Libman	Nisan 7	April 1
Hettie Goldberg	Nisan 8	April 2
Oskar Hastofsky	Nisan 8	April 2
H. Bob Medline	Nisan 9	April 3
Dr. Joseph Spitzer	Nisan 11	April 5

Julius Jekel	Nisan 11	April 5
Maurice Goodman	Nisan 12	April 6
Michael Herstatt	Nisan 12	April 6
Maria Paula Clavir	Nisan 13	April 7
Morris Buium	Nisan 14	April 8
Nathan Ostrow	Nisan 14	April 8
Elvira Weiss	Nisan 14	April 8
Olga Spitzer	Nisan 15	April 9
Fillip, Lucia, and Tommy Gottlieb	Nisan 15	April 9
Joan Blidner	Nisan 16	April 10
Helene Joy Grossman	Nisan 17	April 11
Hyman Ormsby	Nisan 17	April 11
Jerry Zweig	Nisan 17	April 11
Leon & Marie Urstein	Nisan 17	April 11
Evelyn Wilchesky	Nisan 18	April 12
Sarah Bell	Nisan 18	April 12
Annie Hastofsky	Nisan 18	April 12
Leonard Vyner	Nisan 19	April 13
Samuel Shatz	Nisan 22	April 16
Morris Lams	Nisan 23	April 17
Fritz Heichelheim	Nisan 24	April 18
Earl Greenberg	Nisan 28	April 22
Elizabeth Klein	Iyar 1	April 25
Jack Van Der Hout	Iyar 1	April 25
Alfred Laufer	Iyar 1	April 25
Freda Ain	Iyar 1	April 25
Daniel Buium	Iyar 3	April 27
Willy Lobel	Iyar 5	April 29

In mourning:

Ken Kagan, Mary Slomen, Abraham Nachamovitz,
 Sam Cukier, Rae Steuermann, Jack Litvack, Joyce
 Kuttner, Peter Barsony, Ben Mandell, Sylvia Van Der
 Hout, Bella Tiefenbach, Celia Fischer, Eve Baxter,
 Arnold Jussem, Kaethe Ritter, Aron Kravchik, Kate
 Freeman, Dr. Ladislaus Vogel

Information and contributions to THE BULLETIN?
 call Erika Erdos at 416-787-0527
 e-mail eerdos@sympatico.ca

Deadline for contributions to the next Bulletin:
Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Beth Habonim	5 Glen Park Ave.	416-782-7125
	Toronto, ON M6B 4J2	
.....		
President:	Samantha Goldman	416-483-1277
Religious leaders	Eli Rubenstein	416-398-2615
	Avrum Rosenzweig	416-964-7698
.....		
Cantor:	E. Ghan-Firestone	416-665-6927
Treasurer:	T. Rechtshaffen	416-322-0749
Editor:	E. Erdos	416-787-0527