Wishing You All a Peaceful Passover
Up Close: Tibor Schaechner

As we mark Yom HaShoah, the Holocaust Day of Remembrance, on April 29, we remember a time when dozens of survivors lived here. Their stories live in our memories and many are recorded in the online video archives of the El Paso Holocaust Museum, which was founded by a survivor, Henry Kellen. One of those stories belongs to Tibor Schaechner.

For 60 of his 92 years, Tibor Schaechner has lived in El Paso, where he raised three daughters and worked at The Popular department store for 36 years. He’s been active in the Jewish community, supporting the El Paso Holocaust Museum, Congregation B’nai Zion, Temple Mount Sinai, and the Jewish Federation.

Yet after all these years, he remembers his childhood in vivid detail. Born in Budapest in 1928, Tibor saw his world change from a tight Jewish community full of family and friends to a time of terror and immeasurable loss. By 1945 he had lost his father, sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles—everyone, except his mother and five of his cousins.

Tibor Schaechner’s story is one of courage and close calls; it is a story he has shared with thousands of soldiers at Fort Bliss, students at area high schools, and others.

A sheltered life

Like many Holocaust Survivors, Tibor organizes his story with indelible dates, starting with June 9, 1941, when he was 13 and his Polish-born grandparents were taken to Nazi-occupied Poland. “That’s when I started to feel what the Holocaust was,” he said.

“These deportations went on for two months and then everything became normal again,” he recalled. “Budapest was very cosmopolitan, with culture and freedom. We were so assimilated that we didn’t speak Yiddish, only Hungarian. We figured it wasn’t going to happen here.”

With his father’s successful down and feather export business, his family enjoyed a comfortable home with maids to help out. Tibor attended a Jewish school, living what he called “a sheltered life” among the 6,000 to 7,000 Jews in his neighborhood.

“Friday nights we used to go to synagogue and have all these young people in the back. Of course, because of religion, I never went to a church in Budapest. I was always interested in Orthodox. When we visited Israel, I was always in the Orthodox community.”

Finally they were forced into the Budapest Ghetto with 70,000 other Jews, all that remained of 250,000 in Budapest. Yet they were the lucky ones: nearly all of the 500,000 Jews in the country’s provinces were sent to extermination camps.

Tibor credits his staying alive to his survival instincts and luck. He narrowly escaped deportation and was put to work doing manual labor at the Shell refinery. One morning, he missed the refinery’s transport vehicle and had to take the city bus. After a few miles, the driver suddenly told him to get off. Minutes later, the bus stopped: everyone wearing a Star of David was taken off to be killed. He later learned that those Jewish boys and men heading to the refinery never made it that day; they were all sent to Auschwitz.

In December 1943, the Russians invaded Hungary with tanks and house-to-house fighting. His sister and four relatives were killed by a Russian bomb, but Tibor and his mother were able to climb out of the rubble. Budapest was finally liberated by the Russian Army on January 17, 1945, two and a half months before Tibor turned 17.

Postwar life

Tibor moved to the United States in 1949. When he lived in New York City, he met another Hungarian Holocaust survivor: Agnes Klein. They met at Jones Beach in Brooklyn.

Agnes, her mother, aunt and two brothers, Otto and Ferenc, had been deported by cattle car to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the boys were taken out of line for Dr. Mengele’s horrific twin experiments. Miraculously they both survived.

After the war, Agnes was among Hungarian refugees that the Schwartz family in El Paso was able to locate and bring to the United States. Nandor Schwartz was her uncle. Agnes and Tibor married in 1956 and moved to El Paso in 1960, the same year his mother and stepfather emigrated from Budapest. In the 1950s and 60’s, around 75 Holocaust survivors lived in El Paso.

Tibor began working right away at the Schwartz family business, the Popular Dry Goods Store. Agnes earned her bachelor’s and master’s degree in social work and had a rewarding career with the Texas Department of Human Services.

After her death, Tibor married Ann Schwartz Goodman. For 20 years, they lived a busy life in retirement, until Ann passed away in November 2019. Today, Tibor lives at Monte Vista retirement community and sees his middle daughter Audrey and Ann’s daughters frequently.

In spite of all that has happened, Tibor has kept his mind sharp and his wit ready. He’s a unique man, he noted with a smile: “I’m probably the only husband who had two wives from the Schwartz family!”

What do you value the most in your friends?

Support.

What might we be surprised to learn about your interests?

I like to swim. I swam almost every day at the UT EP swimming pool for 30 years.

Who’s your favorite Jewish hero?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. I know that a lot of people don’t like him, but he has kept Israel safe and secure all these many years.

What is your favorite Passover memory?

It is a story my mother told me. After my parents got married, my mother, who was not Orthodox, went to their first Seder at my father’s parents’ house. All the other women were wearing wigs and my mother was not. My grandfather threw her out of the house! She was pretty angry and ended up going to a psychiatrist about it. He advised her to go to her kitchen closet and get her best china and throw it against the wall!

What’s the best thing about being part of El Paso’s Jewish community?

It is a very unique and close-knit community. There can be any celebration and a lot of people show up. Everyone is welcome.

If you were speaking at the El Paso Holocaust Museum’s Yom HaShoah program this year, what two things you would talk about?

I would tell the story of my family and what happened to us.

I would emphasize educating young people about the Holocaust. Every high school should teach this history, but many young people do not know anything about it.

How can we best honor the memory of the six million Jews who perished?

We can honor them by watching out for prejudice and discrimination of any kind today. We can also say Kaddish. Every Shabbat at Temple, before Rabbi Zeidman leads the Mourner’s Kaddish, he adds that we also say it for those who did not have anyone say it for them. That includes those who died in the Holocaust.

The worst thing for me is the one and a half million children who died. All those families that never happened. But I know some good news. In the 1970s, three relatives that the Schwartz family brought over from Hungary to escape the Holocaust emigrated to Israel. These three brothers had lived in El Paso since 1939 and were Hasidic. When we visited Israel in 1998, the brothers had 250 people in their families. Now there are many more!

Born: Budapest, Hungary, 1928
Parents: Alexander and Sara Schaechner
Siblings: Magda
Children: Lillian Schaechner (Elaine Weisman); Audrey Lavi (Eltaan) and their children Yamit, Moti, Danny; Susie Schaechner. Stepchildren: Bob Goodman (Joanna) and their children Trude, Peter, Charlie, and Andrew; Ellen Goodman, Susie Novick (David), and Rebecca Krasne (Alan)

The family took a group portrait in 1944 to send to Tibor’s father after he was deported to Germany, but they never heard from him again.
I’ve been thinking about food in a whole new way lately. Would you have ever imagined a time when you
• went to a grocery store and saw empty shelves?
• wanted to eat out with friends, but could not?
• studied your pantry to count out meals and days?
• sat at a Seder table without your usual family and friends?

As I write this in the last week of March, I’m like everyone I talk to on the phone in this dystopian crisis. We are staying at home to self-isolate and “flatten the curve.” We’re having trouble remembering what day it is. We know a lot, but we know nothing about how long this frighteningly fatal virus will last. I am used to living alone, but I miss everything outside the house – seeing friends, attending services, playing Mah Jongg, catching a concert or movie, enjoying enchiladas at my favorite Mexican restaurant, boarding a plane to see my parents and family members. I have a new appreciation for the usual family and friends?

Let’s Connect
To help ease this temporary isolation, the Federation just developed a cool new platform, “Let’s Connect,” which brings all kinds of livestreaming opportunities to get together virtually. Visit jewishelpaso.org and click on “Let’s Connect” for the schedule – you’ll find lots of activities. For instance, from that site this weekend, I’m tuning into Temple Mount Sinai’s Shabbat services Friday night and “taking” a Pilates class Sunday morning.

As a Federation employee, I am staying connected in a different way: I have a list of members of our Jewish community to call this week just to check on them. If you haven’t already, you too will be getting “check-in” calls from others in the Federation, including board members.

For Passover, I’m ordering a complete Seder dinner for one from the Federation with everything from gefilte fish and matza ball soup to potato kugel and macaroons. I even created and printed out my own Haggadah (I picked the comedy version – I could use a laugh) at haggadot.com.

Speaking of food, I’m getting a lot of mileage from remembering three meals in one incredible week in February. Two featured Israeli cuisine with the Federation’s Jewish Film Festival: the banquet-of-a-lifetime with celebrity chef Michael Solomonov at Dona and Adam Frank’s home and delicious treats at the Alamo Drafthouse film on Israeli food. That same weekend, I enjoyed Congregation Beth Zion’s Moroccan dinner after services. Wonderful!

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. The Jewish Voice is not responsible for the kashrut of any product or eating establishment advertised herein.

Executive Director: Robert French
Campaign Director: Sue Bardin
President: Janet Kent Wechter
Office: 915-842-9554
7110 North Mesa, El Paso, TX 79912
Editor: Cindy Graff Cohen
Layout and Design: Beatriz Garcia
Advertising Rep: Robert Piron
Printing: PDFK Printing

The Jewish Voice of El Paso, published ten times a year, is dedicated to informing, educating, and uniting the Jewish community by providing news items of local, national, Israeli and international concern.

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and have relevance and appeal to the El Paso Jewish community. Articles are subject to editing at the editor’s discretion and are subject to space limitations. Letters cannot be longer than 150 words and articles must be kept to a maximum of 300 words. Please email to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org

Opinions are those of individual writers and not necessarily those of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso.

March Federation Community Assistance Volunteers
Michelle Bernstein, Aydyn Bush  Lindsay Jaffee, Susan Jaffee, Mary Kirschenbaum, Rochelle Saks, Jane Snow, Aaron Weislow and Isaac Weislow

Want to submit an ad? Call (915) 842.9554

Food for thought

while a noted documentary-maker shared clips from his film on Israeli food. That same weekend, I enjoyed Congregation Beth Zion’s Moroccan dinner after services. Wonderful!

The Lunch Bunch
One Monday in early March, I had the pleasure of sitting with a group of men who know how to make lunch fun. They call themselves the ROMEO group: Retired Old Men Eating Out, and they’ve been meeting for more than ten years. These guys are old friends – some go back to grade school together. They joke that they “tell stories that everyone’s heard and no one believes.”

The group varies but often includes Ira Bart, Sam Ellowitz, Bobby Goldfarb, Shelly Gopin, Sam Kobren, Dede Oppenheimer, Steve Rosenberg, and Tibor Schaechner. The late Jay Heins, who passed away in March, had been a regular member for years. Ira says that they welcome new members. “We sit around talking for about an hour and a half at Applebee’s and everyone pays his own lunch tab,” he says. “We’re trying to get a few new members over 70 who are just looking to get out of the house for a little while. I know they will like the fellowship.”

The group is on hiatus at press time, but if you’re interested in later joining them Mondays at noon at the Applebee’s at Mesa and Mesa Hills, reach out to Ira and he’ll keep you posted or email me at thevoice@jfedelpaso.org and I’ll connect you. I have to say – these guys have a good time. I was completely entertained and we all can use laughter this spring!

Instead of focusing on “closed” signs on restaurants and “sold-out” tags on online grocery sites, I’m thinking of one word: gratitude. Just glad to be here, folks, and thankful for an adequate food supply and all that is good in our lives.

Wishing everyone good health and good food this Pesach season,
Cindy Graff Cohen
Editor, The Jewish Voice

The Lunch Bunch
One Monday in early March, I had the pleasure of sitting with a group of men who know how to make lunch fun. They call themselves the ROMEO group: Retired Old Men Eating Out, and they’ve been meeting for more than ten years. These guys are old friends – some go back to grade school together. They joke that they “tell stories that everyone’s heard and no one believes.”

The group varies but often includes Ira Bart, Sam Ellowitz, Bobby Goldfarb, Shelly Gopin, Sam Kobren, Dede Oppenheimer, Steve Rosenberg, and Tibor Schaechner. The late Jay Heins, who passed away in March, had been a regular member for years. Ira says that they welcome new members. “We sit around talking for about an hour and a half at Applebee’s and everyone pays his own lunch tab,” he says. “We’re trying to get a few new members over 70 who are just looking to get out of the house for a little while. I know they will like the fellowship.”

The group is on hiatus at press time, but if you’re interested in later joining them Mondays at noon at the Applebee’s at Mesa and Mesa Hills, reach out to Ira and he’ll keep you posted or email me at thevoice@jfedelpaso.org and I’ll connect you. I have to say – these guys have a good time. I was completely entertained and we all can use laughter this spring!

Instead of focusing on “closed” signs on restaurants and “sold-out” tags on online grocery sites, I’m thinking of one word: gratitude. Just glad to be here, folks, and thankful for an adequate food supply and all that is good in our lives.

Wishing everyone good health and good food this Pesach season,
Cindy Graff Cohen
Editor, The Jewish Voice

The Jewish Voice of El Paso, published ten times a year, is dedicated to informing, educating, and uniting the Jewish community by providing news items of local, national, Israeli and international concern.

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and have relevance and appeal to the El Paso Jewish community. Articles are subject to editing at the editor’s discretion and are subject to space limitations. Letters cannot be longer than 150 words and articles must be kept to a maximum of 300 words. Please email to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org

Opinions are those of individual writers and not necessarily those of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. The Jewish Voice is not responsible for the kashrut of any product or eating establishment advertised herein.

Executive Director: Robert French
Campaign Director: Sue Bardin
President: Janet Kent Wechter
Office: 915-842-9554
7110 North Mesa, El Paso, TX 79912
Editor: Cindy Graff Cohen
Layout and Design: Beatriz Garcia
Advertising Rep: Robert Piron
Printing: PDFK Printing

The Jewish Voice of El Paso, published ten times a year, is dedicated to informing, educating, and uniting the Jewish community by providing news items of local, national, Israeli and international concern.

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and have relevance and appeal to the El Paso Jewish community. Articles are subject to editing at the editor’s discretion and are subject to space limitations. Letters cannot be longer than 150 words and articles must be kept to a maximum of 300 words. Please email to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org

Opinions are those of individual writers and not necessarily those of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. The Jewish Voice is not responsible for the kashrut of any product or eating establishment advertised herein.

Executive Director: Robert French
Campaign Director: Sue Bardin
President: Janet Kent Wechter
Office: 915-842-9554
7110 North Mesa, El Paso, TX 79912
Editor: Cindy Graff Cohen
Layout and Design: Beatriz Garcia
Advertising Rep: Robert Piron
Printing: PDFK Printing

Todah Rabah to Our Volunteers
Café Europa Guest Speaker
Debra Kanof, Chair, Jewish Community Relations Council
March Federation Community Assistance Volunteers
Michelle Bernstein, Aydyn Bush  Lindsay Jaffee, Susan Jaffee, Mary Kirschenbaum, Rochelle Saks, Jane Snow, Aaron Weislow and Isaac Weislow

Want to submit an ad? Call (915) 842.9554

915-842-9554 | www.jewishelpaso.org
Hitting it out of the ballpark

Ethan Martinez, a member of Chabad El Paso and alum of Chabad’s Camp Gan Israel, won first place at El Paso’s 23rd Annual History Day competition. Ethan is the son of Erin and Raymond Martinez, brother to his twin, Benjamin, and older sister, Devin, and grandson of Mark Riden and Honey Phelps.

Ethan created an exhibit about Jackie Robinson, the legendary baseball player who became the first African American to break Major League Baseball’s color barrier. He and a fellow Horneodo Middle School student, Andrew Freeman, partnered in developing the presentation which followed this year’s national theme “Breaking Boundaries in History.” Their exhibit, titled “Swinging for Equality,” looked at how Robinson’s character, talent, and courage challenged widespread segregation and discrimination in the 1940s.

The History Day program encourages more than half a million students to conduct historical research on a topic of their choice. Students enter these projects at the local and affiliate levels, with top students advancing to the National Contest. Ethan and Andrew will advance to the Texas History Day contest in Austin.

Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund

• Accepting applications for Fall 2020 semester

The Beatrice L. Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund was established in July of 2001. It was the wish of Ms. Weisz that proceeds from the fund would be given to one or more needy and worthy Jewish college students in the Greater El Paso area to enable them to pursue their studies. Applications are available online at www.jewishelpaso.org and must be received on or before Friday May 15th, 2020, for distribution by August 1, 2020.

TEXAS NEURODIAGNOSTIC, HEADACHE & SLEEP DISORDERS CENTER, P.A.

BORIS KAIM, M.D. F.A.A.N., FAASM
Board Certified in Neurology, Psychiatry and Sleep Medicine

PRACTICE LIMITED TO CONSULTIVE NEUROLOGY, PSYCHIATRY, ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHY, NERVE CONDUCTION, EMG, SLEEP DISORDERS, AND TESTING FOR DIABETIC NEUROPATHIES.

2311 N. Mesa, Bldg. F • El Paso, Texas 79902
Phone: (915) 544-6400

CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE SENIORS!

Email your graduation information to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org by May 11, 2020
Send your name, school, post-graduate plans, family (parents, siblings, local grandparents), and a photograph.

THE CATARACT & GLAUCOMA CENTER™

LOUIS M. ALPERN, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S., F.I.C.S.
DIPLOMATE OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

4171 N. Mesa, Bldg D, Ste 100 (915) 545-2333 1030 N. Zaragoza Rd, Ste Y El Paso, TX 79902 Fax (915) 544-4808 El Paso, TX 79907

NEED PRINTING?
WE ARE A FULL SERVICE PRINTING SHOP
FLYERS • BUSINESS CARDS • POSTCARDS • CATALOGS ENVELOPES • COUPONS • TICKETS • AND MANY MORE

PRINTING PDX
NEW LOCATION!
208 Octavia St. • El Paso, TX 79901 915.544.6688 • www.pdxprinting.com

RIVER OAKS PROPERTIES
915 225 5700
NOW LEASING
GREAT RETAIL SPACE THROUGHOUT EL PASO
915-225-5700
Compassion in the time of the coronavirus

As I write this in March, each day brings unsettling information and uncertainty. While our desert community brings hope with the blossoms of spring and the time to enjoy our mountains and beautiful landscapes, these unprecedented times have forced us to adapt to the rapidly-changing realities of the coronavirus. I know it is critical for our mental and physical health to keep to a routine, regardless how the routine has changed. For myself, that is meditating, walking the dogs, eating healthy (for the most part) and interjecting humor into my day however it comes.

During this time, I am especially grateful to be involved in an organization that truly cares about people. Recently, I participated in a Zoom conference call with 216 Jewish Federation lay leaders and professionals from across the country and in Israel. This was the first of many which will take place to help each other navigate this crisis in our communities. It was empowering to learn what other communities are doing and how we, as a collaborative network, can take care of the vulnerable, engage the young and not so young and stay connected. I am proud to be a part of the collective that is mobilizing innovation, creativity and problem solving in our schools, synagogues and other communal institutions.

Federation outreach
As many of you may know, your Jewish Federation is working remotely with staff and our board to inform, engage and serve the needs in our community and learn how we can better help one another. Please read our e-blasts – newly retitled “Let’s Connect” – and stay connected.

Each week we are convening a Zoom conference call meeting with representative leaders from all of our local partner agencies in order to communicate and share best practices and how we may lead and conduct business in this surreal time. We are reaching out to community members to see how you are doing; please do not hesitate to call for help you need groceries or medicine or whether it’s just someone to talk to if you are alone and isolated. And remember to complete the Jewish community demographic study that can be found on our website so we may truly know our entire Jewish community, both affiliated and unaffiliated. We are in this together.

Passover is the time when we come together and celebrate our freedom and this year is no different, except without the crowded Seder tables that we so enjoy with extended family and friends. Even if we need to celebrate virtually to safeguard some of those we love, we will still read our worn Haggadahs with one another and send our love over the airwaves.

I keep thinking of how we need to reach out with our hearts this year instead of our hugs. My thoughts echo the words of Jewish poet Lynn Ungar in her recent poem “Pandemic,” which I would like to share with you here. I hope it will touch you, too.

We are grateful to all those who are essential to our wellbeing, from healthcare professionals to those who patrol the streets, stock grocery stores, cook take-out meals, drive garbage trucks. We are grateful to all those who put themselves at risk for us.

May you and your loved ones be healthy and safe. To those who are ill and suffering, I wish you a Refuah Shleymah, a full and speedy recovery. I also wish you all a very happy Passover holiday!

Janet Kent Wechter
President
Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

Pandemic
What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath-The most sacred of times?
Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray.
Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down.
And when our body has become still, Reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.) Know that our lives are in one another’s hands. (Surely that has come clear.) Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, Where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love—For better or for worse, In sickness and in health, So long as we all shall live.

- Lynn Ungar, 2020

Janet Kent Wechter
Hunkering down at home, hiding from COVID-19, has given all of us more “family time” but it’s also been very disruptive and isolating for our young students. Shortly after the shelter-in-place order began, we heard from our parents just how much the children were missing their classmates, their teachers — their “J” family. To provide some sense of routine and social connection and to continue learning and exploring together, The J Center for Early Learning has, like most other schools, moved our classes online.

At the same time each school day our teachers and students have a Zoom meeting. They are all able to see one another and to interact, too. The daily lessons include songs, fingerplays, stories read aloud, art and science projects and more. But the real fun for the children during the first week of class was showing their teachers and friends all about their life at home: their rooms, their pets, their siblings, and their favorite stuffed animals too.

Some families can’t meet at a set time during the day, so our teachers are recording classes enabling these families to watch at a time that’s convenient for them, so no one has to miss out. We are also going to be recording our weekly Shabbat celebration so families can enjoy that in the same way — whenever is best for them.

It’s not just our children who need support at this time; it’s our parents, too. We have turned to our early childhood expert, Susan Glaser, who will be setting up one of her beloved parenting workshops online. There are always so many questions when raising young children but now all the more so.

Our hope is that children and their parents will feel less stressed about the dramatic change in routine we are all experiencing and will find comfort as they see familiar faces each day. We want to be sure they know that although we have to be apart right now, we are all in this together.

Meg Birk
Director
J Center for Early Learning

Name Tracing Activity

This is similar to a teaching activity a teacher modeled on Zoom with instructions for parents to do at home. Designed for The Chipmunks Class (two-year-olds), it reinforces learning letters with a tactile twist.

Materials:
A common object such as a spoon, twig, or other small item — child’s choice; a marker and paper; optional: water-based paint, such as tempera or finger paint.

Instructions:
1. Invite your child to look for a small item around the house or backyard that they can hold.
2. On a piece of paper draw the first letter of their name and on another sheet write out their first name.
3. Sound out the first letter and the letters of the child’s name and show them how to trace them with your finger.
4. Invite them to use their found item to trace their name.
5. Optional: After tracing with the found object, you could have them trace the letters with dot painting, using a Q-tip and paint, or finger painting to trace the first letter and their first name.

Please share pictures of your child doing the activity with us!
We may not be sitting side by side in services, classes, or meetings, but the good news is that we CAN get together virtually!

**ONE Place. ONE Stop. ONE Resource.**

Our Online Community Resource Now Live

Just visit www.jewishelpaso.org and click on “Let’s Connect” to join live online get-togethers, classes, and programs for teens, parents, seniors, and more. You’ll see a new calendar of happenings throughout our Greater El Paso Jewish community that you can take part in from home.

What does it mean to connect? Our local congregations and Jewish organizations are hosting livestreamed coverage of Shabbat services, Torah study, book discussions, PJ Library story times, and more.

See what’s happening in real time online in our El Paso and Las Cruces Jewish community... @ Temple Mount Sinai, Chabad El Paso, Temple Beth El, Chabad Las Cruces, Congregation B’nai Zion, PJ Library, Jewish Federation and more.

Some events are Zoom conference calls, where we can see one another and share our thoughts. Some are on Facebook. Some are purely for fun, like yoga and Pilates classes, crafts conversations, and exercise sessions. Questions? Call our new toll-free number: 877-257-6506.

If you have time, you can volunteer to help others in our Jewish community who may need help with errands. Sign up online at jewishelpaso.org or call our new, toll-free number at 1-877-257-6506 to let us know when you can be on call to volunteer if needed.

Our network, phone systems and entire office can be accessed and used remotely 24/7 so that we intend to be completely accessible to you throughout these challenging times.

Please know that you are not alone. Your community is with you!

- We remain committed to providing safe, secure, and meaningful ways for you to connect with us, each other, and our community. Our board and community leaders will continue to meet by video and teleconference.
- We keep adding more community gatherings and programs on the online Let’s Connect! platform. Try it!
- We’ll look for every opportunity to reschedule, and we are exploring creative virtual solutions where appropriate. It’s a time for adjusting plans, so stay tuned.

**Let’s Connect Concert**

Enjoy Original Jewish songs!

Visit jewishelpaso.org/letsconnect

Want to request a song from “SPARKS,” Larry’s 2020 album?

Visit larrylesser.com/sparks to stream or download album.

Email your request to LetsConnect@JFedElPaso.org
There is a meaningful way of contextualizing the greatest challenges of our time. It can be found in Judaism, and most transparently in the celebration of Passover. Our shared experience in ancient days reminds us to stand firm in our commitment to right and truth.

The Passover story encourages us to remember that there is always a path toward freedom and peace. The Exodus from Egypt suggests that even in the depths of despair there is a reason to have hope.

Nearly thirty years later in the same newspaper Isaac Mayer Wise would call Passover the day of resurrection:

'It is the resurrection of a nation and its independence, the resurrection of national liberty and personal freedom, the resurrection of right, truth and freedom, rising like a beacon of light, shedding its radiance, superstition, fanaticism, physical and mental slavery, to light, truth and freedom, to establish the kingdom of God on earth, to prepare the souls for happiness on earth and the enjoyment of true bliss in life eternal. This is resurrection, this is redemption, this is the old and venerable Passover.'

May this Passover be for you and those you love a holiday of peace, joy, righteousness and redemption!

Rabbi Ben Zeidman
Temple Mount Sinai

A path toward freedom and peace

Rabbi Bery Schmukler

Rabbi Levi Greenberg

A simple Jew in an Eastern European shtetl came home from services with exciting news.

"Moshiah is coming soon to take us all to Israel! Can you imagine? No more problems from the anti-Semitic landowner or pogroms from the Cossacks!"

"How can we move to Israel now?" his wife cried. "We just finished renovating the barn!"

The farmer's excitement dissipated and there was an awkward silence. "Not to worry," said the woman with a smile. "God saved us from the Cossacks, He will surely save us from Moshiah as well."

It is one of the fundamental Jewish beliefs and yet Moshiah remains a frightening mystery to so many. Do we really want this enigmatic messianic phenomenon to change our lives against our will?

What type of world do we wish to live in? What type of future do we want for our children and grandchildren?

Humanity yearns for a world free of war, famine, disease and hatred. On the final day of Pesach (Acharon Shel Pesach) we read a section from Isaiah about the era of Moshiah. After describing the personas of the future redeemer, the prophet envisions the utopic era he will deliver as a time when "the wolf will dwell with the lamb," a time when all peoples will dwell together in peace. Jewish mysticism explains that when humanity will be cleansed of all character impurities, nature will also be cleansed of all impurities. No more illness and disease - a reality we all so desperately seek especially now in the midst of the worldwide COVID-19 crisis.

How will this be possible? "For the earth will be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9).

The main role of Moshiah is to serve as the ultimate teacher for all of humanity. Nations will not be corrected to lay down their arms, nor will we be forced to treat each other with respect. Moshiah will reveal the truth of reality to all and peace will be the automatic result. If anyone resists these changes, you will know that Moshiah has not yet arrived.

The message of Moshiah is so relevant to Pesach because the exodus from Egypt was the beginning of the long road to ultimate redemption.

At the Seder we commemorate the accomplishments of the past and at the conclusion of Pesach we focus on reaching the finish line.

The Real Shmoe TV would celebrate the conclusion of Pesach with a festive dinner in tribute to Moshiah. Rather than only learning, praying and yearning for His arrival, Moshiah should also be a culinary experience – similar to how the Seder brings the message of freedom to all our senses.

Every year, at the conclusion of Pesach we host Seudat Moshiah (Moshiach Meal) at Chabad. This year we cannot congregate in person, so I encourage you to do this at home on Thursday, April 16 towards the evening.

Eat some matzah and toast (Chaim on four glasses of wine in anticipation for a better world to come.

Best wishes for a Kosher and joyous Pesach!

Rabbi Levi Greenberg

Chabad Lubavitch

Let’s Talk About Moshiah

Rabbi Ben Zeidman

Rabbi Levi Greenberg

Rabbi Bery Schmukler

Chabad of Las Cruces
A Passover Invocation

Rabbi Larry Karol

Eternal God, Our Creator and Companion,
Lift our voices to sing a song of freedom
So that we will support the rights of others
To speak their minds and to pursue their life’s desires
In a way that will lead to mutual respect and increasing equality.

Strengthen our spirits to sing a song of understanding
So that we can approach one another with curiosity and compassion
Turning seemingly contrary concerns into a shared mission
That will sustain a community and a world.

Grant us the sensitivity to sing a song of comfort
That will touch the depths of fear and pain
Within our fellow human beings
And bring us all healing and hope.

Challenge us to overcome our differences
To sing in a chorus of coordinated harmonies
Where the divergent paths on which we tread
Will intersect and resonate one with another
As if each personal song was but one part in a vast musical score of existence.

Enable us to hear the cries for assistance of people in need in our day
As if they were echoes of the songs of our ancestors in Egypt
Calling to the Eternal One to end cruelty and bondage
To fashion for them a path to deliverance.

Activate now our songs of praise and thanksgiving
Our declarations of remembrance and resolve
To remind us how we are part of one family
When we sit at our Seder table and in our synagogues and Temples
for worship and study and connection.

Demonstrate to us how our melodies and harmonies
Add to the symphony of all life
Enabling us to reach out in love to each other
And guiding us to allow Your holy song to penetrate into our minds and hearts.

Eternal God,
Our Creator and Companion,
Lift our voices to sing a song of freedom.

Rabbi Larry Karol
Temple Beth-El

Learn from the kids

Educating our youth is the foundation of Jewish life. It is only appropriate that Passover – the celebration of the birth of the Jewish nation – should revolve around this idea.

The highlight of Passover, the Seder, revolves around the children. The entire Haggadah is a response to the questions asked by the children. And the Haggadah is quite specific about the message we are to give our children, providing tailor-made responses for four different types of children.

In fact, despite the importance of education, and though we certainly make a point on Chanukah to gather the children for the menorah lighting, and Purim just wouldn’t be the same without the masquerading children, only Passover requires the participation of the youth, and actually makes them the featured center of attention.

While the importance of transmitting the message of Passover to our children is self-understood, why is Passover’s message deemed more important for the children than the messages carried by other festivals? Torah, joy, unity, repentance - some of the major themes of the other holidays - are they any less vital for the future of our nation?

One of the reasons for this extra attention is because while we are intended to teach our children a certain message on every holiday, on Passover we are supposed to take a message from our children. And perhaps this is because we are trying to reenact the Exodus, a time which symbolized our nation’s youth.

Adults may have a monopoly on maturity, experience and wisdom, but in the realm of truth they have much to learn from the young. Because adults lead such complex lives, their decisions are inevitably colored by many factors how will this affect my career, my family, my vacation plans or social status?

Youth on the other hand naturally seek truth, and when they find it - or when they think they have found it - they will leave all behind and follow their inner compass. There’s nothing binding them to any one particular course, so they are ready at the drop of a hat to change course.

On Passover, the Jews exhibited a youthful disposition. They were willing to leave behind their previous lifestyle, homeland and habits, to chase the truth in a barren desert.

In our personal lives we, too, seek liberation. We wish to experience true freedom, to escape the many bonds of habit and nature which limit us. The lesson we learn from Passover is that to experience liberation we must reconnect with our inner child. As long as we refuse to make the big leap, to completely disengage from our past, we will be truism-free.

This is especially true with regard to our pursuit of spirituality. Leading a truly spiritual life demands the courage to make a complete reversal to follow G-d “into the desert,” leaving behind a lifestyle that we may have been comfortable (but not happy) with, and jumping into G-d’s embrace through complete dedication to His Torah and Mitzvot.

It’s great to be an adult with maturity, wisdom and experience. But it’s only worth it if these qualities assist us - instead of impeding us - in our quest for freedom.

May we all be blessed with a Kosher and happy Passach and merit very soon to experience ultimate freedom with the imminent arrival of Moshia.

Rabbi Yisrael Greenberg
Chabad Lubavitch

Remembering and honoring

As Jews, memory is an essential part of our faith. Twice daily as we recite the Sh’ma, we say “Then you will remember and observe all My mitzvot…” and in the same thought we recall the exodus from Egypt and its importance to us on both a personal and communal level.

Every Shabbat (whose observance we are commanded to remember) when we recite the Kiddish, the same theme presents itself: remembering the exodus and our journey to freedom.

Ever since the Temple was destroyed in the year 70 CE, we as a people have remembered its destruction along with its spiritual significance to our ancestors. And perhaps most familiar to us is Passover where we gathered around our Seder tables, surrounded by family and/or friends to recall the exodus and discuss the meaning of freedom. Every one of these observances is linked to memory and the deep connection that binds one generation of Jews to the next.

Tragically, in our generation another event has joined the list of essential memories for our people. Remembering the millions of Jews and other innocent victims of the Nazis has become an essential memory for our people. Just five days after Passover, just as our lives have returned to normal after a week of matza and memory, we recall the attempted destruction of our people at the hands of Hitler and his followers.

In deep contrast to Passover, on Yom HaShoah, we remember and mourn those who had their freedom taken away. We recall the six million of our brothers and sisters who were enslaved and murdered for no reason other than their faith.

As we recall those who perished, we also honor those who survived. We hear remarkable stories of survival and wonder if we ourselves would have the strength to endure what so many were forced to endure during this dark period of our recent past.

The observance of Yom HaShoah this year begins on Monday night, April 20, and continues through the day on Tuesday, April 21. This year the entire El Paso Jewish community will be gathering, though most likely virtually, for our annual Yom HaShoah commemoration Sunday, April 19 at 2:00 p.m. when the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center will orchestrate our program focusing on Courage, Community and Change. I hope our entire community will join us for this program of reflection and remembrance.

Rabbi Scott Rosenberg
Congregation B’nai Jamin
Israeli universities, institutes lead the fight against coronavirus

Israeli universities and institutes—and their affiliated academies, researchers, doctors, scientists and students—are leading the fight against the coronavirus. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Technion–Israel Institute of Technology, Rambam Health Care Campus, Migal Galilee Research Institute and the Sheba Medical Center are each at the forefront of medical technologies and innovation, task forces, methods and vaccines in the making that are working to protect the spread of the COVID-19 virus that has become a global pandemic over the last few months.

**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Beer Sheva)**

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health and remote triage system.

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”

In a meeting attended by 50 scientists from diverse departments within the university, ideas were presented and the task force broke into several groups working on the most promising projects and collaborations, including self-sterilizing facemasks, medical emergency drones, a coronavirus test that could take just five minutes using chip technology, and a telemedicine and remote triage system.

Professor Nadav Davidovitch, director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; shared his optimism with JNS that it is “our moral obligation to contribute to coping with this pandemic.”
El Paso Holocaust Museum’s fundraiser at Top Golf

ElPasoConnect Top Golf Night

Temple Mount Sinai Cooking Class

Temple Beth-El members presented a Purim Spiel written by Stuart Kelter

Temple Beth-El Youth Group’s game night on March 1 drew players of all ages

PJ Library kids and parents stretched their skills at the climbing wall
The POWER OF COMMUNITY

If you need assistance during these challenging times call us toll-free at 877-257-6506

www.jewishelpaso.org/let'sconnect
www.jewishelpaso.org • www.jcfep.org