

# The Jewish VOICE

Informing and Connecting Jews in El Paso-Las Cruces

Nissan-Iyar-Sivan  
April/May 2020

# Wishing You All a Peaceful Passover



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# Up Close: Tibor Schaechner

As we mark *Yom HaShoah*, the Holocaust Day of Remembrance, on April 20, 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 and killed. "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.

"Hungary was a haven compared to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other Eastern European countries," he said. "Friday nights we used to go to synagogue and have all these young people who had escaped these atrocities with Christian papers, falsified papers. People would have them in their houses for supper."

## The lucky ones

Then on March 19, 1944, the Germans took over Hungary. His father was taken to a forced labor camp and they never heard from him again. "The whole world as we knew it collapsed," Tibor said.

The next year brought a nightmare. Hungarian Nazis killed Jews at random in the streets and rounded them up to shoot them on the banks of the Danube River. Antisemitism had been strong in Hungary for centuries. Tibor thinks that many Hungarians, such as those in the far-right Arrow Cross Party, were as cruel or even more ruthless than the Germans.

His mother saved Tibor and his sister Magda with forged Swedish passports purchased with gold. They first found refuge in a house bearing a Swedish flag, thanks to the work of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. Later they lived in a house with a neutral Swiss flag. Tibor dodged certain death, at times taking risks by removing his yellow star and hiding in attics.

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 1945, 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.

## Post-war 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 twin brothers, Otto and Ference, 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 13 Hungarian relatives 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 UTEP 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 the 1990s, the brothers had 250 people in their families. Now there are many more!

**Born:** Budapest, Hungary, 1928

**Parents:** Alexander and Sara Schaechner

**Siblings:** Magda

**Married:** Agnes Klein in 1956. After her death, Tibor married Ann Schwartz Goodman in 1999.

**Children:** Lillian Schaechner (Elaine Weisman); Audrey Lavi (Eitan) and their children Yomit, 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

# Food for thought



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 "normal" that I took for granted. After this, I am committed to getting out more and being more involved.

### 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](http://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](http://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 Dana and Adam Frank's home and delicious treats at the Alamo Drafthouse

while a noted documentary maker shared clips from his film on Israeli food. That same weekend, I enjoyed Congregation B'nai 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 Batt, 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



Cindy Graff Cohen with James Beard Award-winning Israeli chef Michael Solomonov

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](mailto: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



L-R: Sam Ellowitz, Dede Oppenheimer, Bobby Goldfarb, Steve Rosenberg, Ira Batt, Sam Kobren

## The Jewish VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

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](mailto:thevoice@jfedelpaso.org)

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Executive Director: Robert French  
Campaign Director: Sue Bendalin  
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 Piñon  
Printing: PDX Printing

## Today 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

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# 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 Hornedo 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.



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### 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](http://www.jewishelpaso.org) and must be received on or before Friday May 15th, 2020, for distribution by August 1, 2020.



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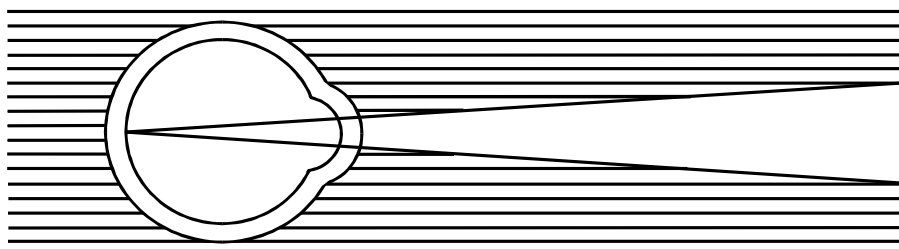
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# Compassion in the time of the coronavirus



Janet Kent Wechter

As I write this in March, each new 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 corona virus.

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



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# Zooming in to stay connected



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

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 children but now all the more so.

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,

also going to be recording our weekly Shabbat celebration so families can enjoy that in the same way – whenever is best for them.



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.

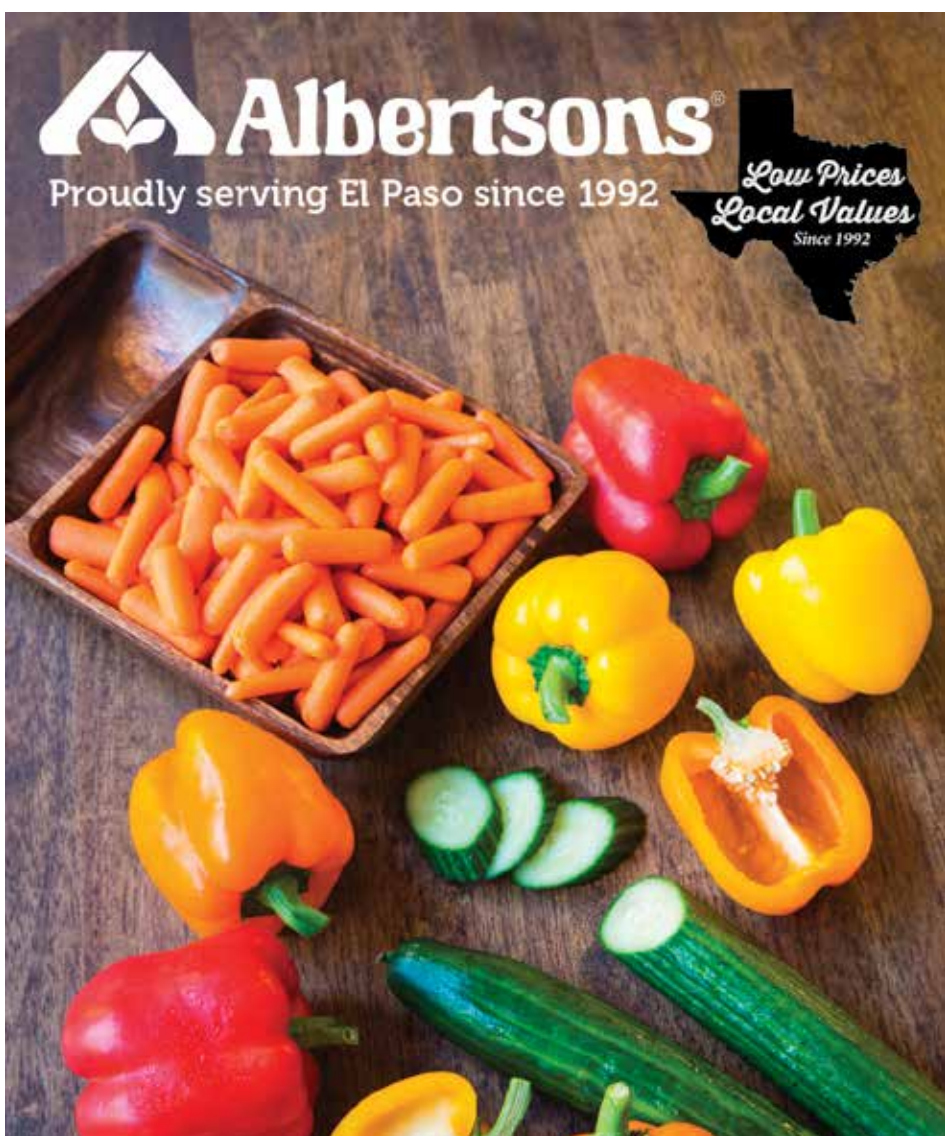
### Materials:




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!








## ONLINE STORY\* TIME!

FACEBOOK.COM/PJLIBRARYELPASO

Ongoing March-April 2020  
Tuesdays at 11am - Preschoolers  
Thursdays at 11am - Early Elementary

\*And Crafts, Cooking and More!  
Watch our Facebook Page for materials lists!  
All Times Mountain



# Let's Connect...

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](http://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.

Please email us your events to [LetsConnect@JFedElPaso.org](mailto:LetsConnect@JFedElPaso.org) and we will add them to our page.

Monday March 30	Tuesday March 31	Wednesday April 1	Thursday April 2
<p><b>7am</b> Congregation B'nai Zion Tefilla prayer with Rabbi Rosenberg <a href="https://zoom.us/j/509426785">https://zoom.us/j/509426785</a></p> <p><b>10am</b> Congregation B'nai Zion Coffee, Conversation, and Kavanah <a href="https://zoom.us/j/465040997">https://zoom.us/j/465040997</a></p>	<p><b>1pm</b> JFED PJ Library Charoset activity with families <a href="#">Click here to register</a></p> <p><b>7:30pm</b> JFED Crafters Conversation <a href="#">Click here to register</a> <a href="https://zoom.us/j/720080642">https://zoom.us/j/720080642</a></p>	<p><b>10am</b> JFED 20-min Chair Yoga with Gillian <b>Facebook Live:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/events/260255859987061/">https://www.facebook.com/events/260255859987061/</a> <a href="https://zoom.us/j/776423255">https://zoom.us/j/776423255</a> Password: 605266 <a href="#">Click here to register</a> Release form</p>	<p><b>7am</b> Congregation B'nai Zion Tefilla prayer with Rabbi Rosenberg <a href="https://zoom.us/j/509426785">https://zoom.us/j/509426785</a></p> <p><b>1pm</b> JFED PJ Library Matzah Brittle Creation <a href="#">Click here to Register</a></p> <p><b>6pm</b></p>

### We're there for you...

Out of an abundance of caution and care for our Jewish community and the community at large, we have made the difficult decision to postpone April Federation events until further notice. Should you need assistance with getting food or medicines, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at 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](http://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.

**Who? What? Where?**  
Complete your  
**Greater El Paso Jewish Community Demographic Study!**  
Watch your email for link to Federation's UTEP Sociology Department research project!

**Let's Connect Concert  
With Larry Lesser**

Sunday, April 19  
6:00 to 6:30 p.m.

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El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center's

**Yom HaShoah  
Commemoration**

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EPHM's Yom HaShoah Commemoration will be broadcast virtually in light of current health concerns.

Please join EPHM's Facebook Event and tune in  
**Sunday - April 19, 2020 - 2:00pm**  
to take part in our virtual community commemoration

More details coming soon:  
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# A path toward freedom and peace



Rabbi Ben Zeidman

Genesis is a story of creation for the world. Our history as slaves who lived through the miraculous displays of God's power has been told and retold by each generation.

Beyond that, every parent has told the story to their children in keeping with the commandment: "Every person is obligated to see themselves as if they went forth from Egypt" (Pesachim 116b). We share the story by reliving the fear and the wonder of transitioning from slavery to freedom.

The Passover story suggests that

we have lived through the worst and come through to the other side of things. We know what it is to be slaves, and so we recognize how lucky we are to be free. Free to make our own destinies. Free to worship God and to see God's presence in our lives. Free from despotism or anarchy, from the whims of those who would do evil.

And yet, though it should be, it is not the case. While it shouldn't be, we remain optimistic. It is the Passover experience which is the cause for the Jews' optimism throughout the generations. Not only the story itself, but the process of retelling the story, reliving it. The inspiration to live our lives as if the trauma of slavery were personal inspires a sense of awe in God and a sense of potential in humanity.

The founder of American Reform Judaism wrote in his article in *The Israelite* published on April 10, 1857:

*...Israel faithful to its vocation, has told, every Pesach-night, the story of liberty and independence, the glory of justice and*

*humanity to its attentive children, and still tells the same story; but mankind would not listen to it. When oppression and violence ruled supreme, the Israelite barred his door, and shut his windows, and related in secret to his children the grand story of liberty, justice and equality, his message to mankind, and felt, that the time must come when the nations would listen to his long told story, cast off their idols of silver and their idols of gold, their priests and their despots, ("God alone be exalted that day!") and learn to appreciate the message of justice, liberty and piety. Among the millions of human beings there are but few who comprehend and appreciate this message; the rest are yet enslaved.*

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 pillar of fire from the dismal sea of Egyptian darkness. So the nations, so the individuals must awake and resurrect out of the night of ignorance, 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 Pesach.*

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

Rabbi Ben Zeidman  
Temple Mount Sinai



Rabbi Levi Greenberg

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. "G-d saved us from the Cossacks, He will surely save us from Moshiach as well."

It is one of the fundamental Jewish

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

beliefs and yet Moshiach 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 Moshiach. After describing the persona 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 L-rd, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9). The main role of Moshiach is to serve as the ultimate teacher for all of humanity. Nations will not be coerced to lay down their arms, nor will we be forced to treat each other with respect. Moshiach will reveal the truth of reality to all and peace will be the automatic result. If anyone resists these changes, you will know that Moshiach has not yet arrived.

The message of Moshaiach 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 Baal Shem Tov would celebrate the conclusion of Pesach with a festive dinner in tribute to Moshiach. Rather than only learning, praying and yearning for His arrival, Moshiach 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 Moshiach (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 l'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 Moshiach



Rabbi Bery Schmukler

Freedom is the most valued aspect of the human race. Slavery, the antithesis of freedom, on the other hand, is the most abhorrent idea of a free-thinking society.

But what's wrong with slavery? Is it just because you are forced to do things against your will? Is it because you are subject to torture, or is it because you are robbed of your inalienable rights?

And what's so great about freedom? Is it because you are free to do as you wish? Or is it because you are able to determine your own destiny?

All of these and more are true. Yet, there is another aspect of the meaning of slavery and freedom which is often overlooked.

Freedom is the most valued aspect of the human race. Slavery, the antithesis of freedom, on the other

Slavery is not just a physical condition. Rather, and what's worse, it is a mental condition. As the saying goes: You can take a slave out of slavery, but it's a lot harder to take slavery out of the slave.

Just as Moses began relating G-d's message to the Jewish people regarding the exodus, he said, "Aaleh eschem me'once mitzrayim - I shall uplift you from the affliction of Egypt" (Exodus 3:17). The word once in Hebrew, in addition to the translation of suffering or torture, also connotes poverty.

What's wrong with bondage is the poverty. It robs a person of their capacity to see, think, or consider beyond their immediate needs. As is the nature of the poor and destitute, so desperately wanting of their immediate needs, they are controlled by and become subject to circumstances imposed upon them, as a shaking and tossing ship helplessly

directed by stormy waters.

Freedom, on the other hand, is the mindset of the "rich," allowing a person the ability and capacity of vision beyond the present circumstances - being able to reach out to the stars and beyond. One may be physically imprisoned but all the while be personally free. On the other hand, there can be one who is physically free, but mentally enslaved - not being able to see or consider beyond himself and his present needs.

Right at the outset of G-d's message of freedom, he conveyed to the Jewish People that not only will they be relieved of their back-breaking slave labor, suffering and torture, but he immediately announced that he will grant them "a land flowing with milk and honey" - a state of mind completely unimaginable to them at the time.

In the Haggadah we read, "In each

and every generation one must see himself as if he himself left Egypt." Chassidic philosophy explains that we must exit and leave behind our personal Egypt - the constraints we put on ourselves - to achieve true freedom.

As we prepare for Passover, let's unshackle ourselves from our status quo, each of us from our pettiness. Let's broaden our horizons to explore fields which, yesterday, we thought were beyond us. Lastly, let's begin with doing at least one more good deed. Let us continue growing in our commitment to a complete and full Jewish way of life, free of the constraints of habit and that which is caused by social pressure. Let us experience true freedom.

Best wishes for a happy Kosher Passover,  
Rabbi Bery Schmukler  
Chabad of Las Cruces





Rabbi Larry Karol

## A Passover Invocation

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 Shabbat and Seder tables  
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 Pesach – the celebration of the birth of the Jewish nation – should revolve around this idea.

The highlight of Pesach, 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 Pesach to our children is self-understood, why is Pesach'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?

Perhaps 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 Pesach 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 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 Pesach, 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 never be truly 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 Pesach and merit very soon to experience ultimate freedom with the imminent arrival of Moshiach.

Rabbi Yisrael Greenberg  
Chabad Lubavitch



Rabbi Yisrael Greenberg

## 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 Kiddush, the same theme presents itself: remembering the exodus and our journey to free peoplehood.

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 Zion



Rabbi Scott Rosenberg

# Israeli universities, institutes lead the fight against coronavirus

Israeli universities and institutes—and their affiliated academics, 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 (Beersheva)

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's president Professor Daniel Chamovitz recently announced a task force to "harness the university's vast brain power, research skills and ingenuity to help cope with the coronavirus pandemic," maintaining 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 "this is not Armageddon, and these situations can lead to innovation."

"Since we have national health insurance, we have excellent electronic records and integration between clinic and community," he added.

"Israel has been preparing for this kind of event for at least two decades with the establishment of an epidemiological response and intervention team," said Davidovitch. "We have a very strong system for lab testing, a strong surveillance system for influenza outbreaks and a strong public health system well-trained to do

epidemiological investigations."

## Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and Rambam Health Care Campus (Haifa)

Researchers at Israel's Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and Rambam Health Care Campus have successfully tested a new method called "pooling," which they claim will dramatically increase the country's ability to test for COVID-19 efficiently.

Applying the test when the frequency of infection in the population



A view of a laboratory at the Migal Galilee Research Institute. A newly developed Israeli vaccine for coronavirus will likely be ready for testing in less than 10 weeks, said Migal's CEO David Zigdon.

is low, Idan Yelin, a researcher in the Technion Faculty of Biology, told JNS, will "allow for identifying infection cases very early on, before an outbreak is apparent."

"The great thing about this method is that it can be used immediately," he said, as "it uses the same equipment and kits that are being used routinely, while conserving scarce reagents."

"Many people throughout the world found our method interesting and have contacted us," added Yelin.

"As far as we know, this method is not currently being used anywhere [else]," he further maintained, noting that "the idea itself is not new; it is just that a proof of concept was lacking."

"We showed that it works for this virus with the commonly used test and believe that implementing it can be extremely useful in the months to come for pandemic surveillance," he continued, "both for identifying the scope of infection in the wide community and for routine monitoring of populations at risk."

## Migal Galilee Research Institute (Kiryat Shmona, Israel)

A newly developed Israeli vaccine for coronavirus will likely be ready for testing in less than 10 weeks, said Migal Galilee Research Institute's CEO David Zigdon.

Funded by the Israel's Ministry of Science and Technology and in cooperation with Israel's Ministry of Agriculture, the research institute has been working for four years towards a vaccine that can be adapted for various

viruses, which is now being focused to create a vaccine against COVID-19, the human strain of coronavirus.

According to the institute, this possibility was identified as a byproduct of Migal's development of a vaccine against IBV (Infectious Bronchitis Virus), a disease affecting poultry. Now, Migal has made required genetic adjustments to adapt the vaccine to COVID-19, and is working to achieve the safety approvals that will enable in-vivo testing.

According to Zigdon, the institute's goal is to produce the vaccine during the next seven to nine weeks, and to achieve safety approval in another few weeks.

"This will be an oral vaccine, making it particularly accessible to the general public," he said in a press release. "We are currently in intensive discussions with potential partners that can help accelerate the in-human trials phase and expedite the completion final product development and regulatory activities."

## Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer (Ramat Gan)

Rated among the 10 best hospitals in the world in 2020 by Newsweek, experts at Israel's Sheba Medical Center are currently on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic with doctors who have innovated telemedicine in treating the virus, while protecting medical staff and setting the standard of care for telemedicine during this time.

"Sheba Medical Center has emerged as a global leader when it comes to telemedicine in the fight against this pandemic," Dr. Galia Barkai, head of telemedicine at Sheba Medical Center, told JNS.

Barkai laid out the three main ways Sheba is using telemedicine to treat and save patients, while protecting vital health-care workers. First, the facility is "transitioning standard services, such as outpatient care, to virtual visits."

Secondly, Sheba is using telemedicine to support isolated coronavirus patients in a special facility. "We have created a new standard that has now become a national standard in Israel," she said.

"We do this via telemedicine kits containing innovative technology patients can use at home, which report to doctors in real time."

The third, she continued, is for critically ill patients. "We designed our new dedicated COVID-19 Critical Care ICU so that nurses and physicians can treat the patient continuously at a safe distance, using various methods such as AI (artificial intelligence) to predict patient deterioration, robotics and even a minicar that allow them to get close to the patients."

"It was only possible to implement these new services so quickly at Sheba because we have been working on advanced telemedicine capabilities for years," said Barkai. "This allowed us to scale quickly at the moment of crisis."

*Eliana Rudee  
Jewish News Syndicate (JNS)*

*Excerpted from The Daily Syndicate, JNS,  
March 26, 2020*

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(915) 566-2410

ROBERTA L FENNIG D.O.  
Psychiatry & Osteopathic Therapy  
Phone: 915 494-1237  
Fax: 575 332-4545  
LOCATION: 5290 McNutt Rd  
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**El Paso Holocaust Museum's fundraiser at Top Golf**



**EIPasoConnect Top Golf Night**



# Faces & Places



**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





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