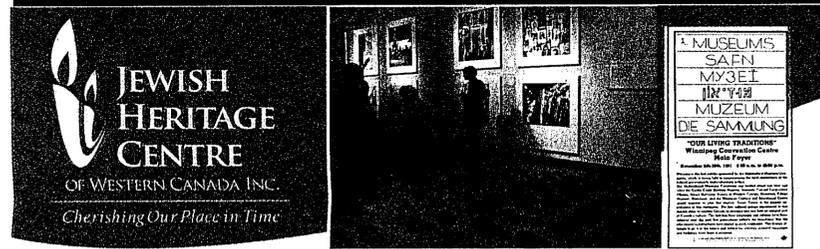


Israeli news



Fashion designer meets prime minister
Interim Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, right, meets New York fashion designer Donna Karan in Jerusalem, February 19, 2006. Karan "expressed great interest in the possibilities of manufacturing in, and exporting from, Israel," Olmert's office said in a statement. Israeli media also reported that Karan commended Olmert on his fashion sense. Credit: GPO/IBP Images/JTA.

This is the second in a series of articles to tell of the history, activities, and future plans of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada.



EXHIBITS OVER THE YEARS

Each year, close to 10,000 Winnipeggers and tourists — visit the Marlon and Ed Vicker Jewish Museum of Western Canada at the Jewish Heritage Centre to view the curated exhibits and the displays illustrating specific themes, including: farm colonies; early 20th century urban life on Selkirk Avenue; political life; the Jewish community of Thunder Bay; music; women's organizations; education; and the Sabbath. The Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre exhibits of memorabilia from Manitoba survivors are particularly poignant. The Museum has also been a highlight for distinguished visitors including Turkish Ambassador to Canada Aydin Erman who on his visit in Spring 2005, proposed a collaboration between the JHC and the Jewish Museum in Istanbul.

enquisite... fascinating... very moving... were responses to the "elegantly curated" *Mazel Tov: A Chosen* the Jewish wedding exhibit at the Museum from August 2005 through January 2006. (*Winnipeg Free Press*, 03 Aug 2005). Using text, evocative photographs from the community archival documents, and vintage clothing and fabric items, the exhibit meshed the personal with intricate social and cultural rituals. But *Mazel Tov: A Chosen* (Susan Turner, curator) was only the most recent exhibit of many presented over the years.

Abe Arhang initiated the formation of the Archives Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress, Western Region, and it organized the 1967 exhibit *90 Years of Jewish Life in Western Canada* (Shirley Finebilt, curator). An exciting treasure hunt ensued as people searched for artifacts which they then brought to L.L. Peretz Folk School on Aikins and Inkster to be catalogued for the exhibit by volunteers. Co-sponsored with and held at the YMHA, 370 Hargrave Street, 90 Years drew enthusiastic response from a community proud to see its heritage displayed.

In 1968, the Committee became the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, and its first director, Abe Arnold, began discussions to develop an exhibit about Jewish life at the soon to be opened Manitoba Museum. In 1971, the Society moved

from the New Hargrave Building to the Museum to prepare the major exhibit *Journey into Our Heritage* (1972, Alloway Hall, Manitoba Museum). *Journey* toured Canada and, in 1981, went to Beth Hatefutsoth, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv.

As chair of the JHS exhibits committee for many years, Harry Guskis planned and designed the exhibits. Significant research and the locating of many of the materials was done by Esther Nissenhot, assisted by volunteers, in particular Roz Usikin, Henry Trachtenberg, Abe Arnold, and Myra Wolch, and Babe Hershfield, JHS executive director.

For a few years, the JHS was located on Donald Street. From 1977 until 1997, the office was located in the New Hargrave Building across from the YMHA. These twenty years saw astonishing growth in programs and activities, and in the development of the collection of photos, documents, artifacts, oral histories, and genealogical records; many places in the collection found their way into JHS/JHC exhibits. Fruitful, ongoing relationships were built with researchers and academics, with people seeking genealogical information, with community organizations and heritage centres, and with government departments of culture, heritage, labour, and multiculturalism that have continued to support the JHS/JHC with project funding. In 1997, the JHS relocated to the Asper Jewish Community Campus and in the years since, as the Jewish Heritage Centre, the organization has flourished.

Jewish Historical Society
In 1979, the JHS brought to the Manitoba Museum, *Image Before My Eyes: Polish Jewry 1864-1939* (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research). Between 1985 and 1992, the following were presented at the YMHA: *The Story of Jewish Farm Colonization in Many Lands: The Life-work of Baron Maurice de Hirsch* (Beth Hatefutsoth); *A Tree Still Stands: The Last Jews of Eastern Europe* (Speratus Museum of Judaica, Chicago); and *Heritage and Mission: Jewish Vienna*. In 1980, the JHS curated *A Century of Jewish Settlement in Western Canada*

and *The Beginning of the Jewish Community in Manitoba*. Its major exhibit, *Selkirk Avenue Revisited: The Hub of the Jewish North End*, opened at the University of Winnipeg in 1982, toured, and was again exhibited in 1997 when the Asper Campus opened.

Jewish Heritage Centre
At the Campus, the Marlon and Ed Vicker Jewish Museum of Western Canada is the JHC exhibit site. Between 1997 and 2005, the JHC hosted: *Anne Frank in the World* (Anne Frank House, producer); *Mose Sadoun's photos Orthodox Images: From New York to Jerusalem 1980-1984; Remembering Lubomir* (Aaron Ziegelman Foundation, New York, producer); *Joseph, Isaac, and Schneider: Jew and His Art; Shanghai Connection*, about the lives of European Jews who had escaped to China and Japan, and lived out the remainder of World War II in Shanghai (co-hosted with Manitoba's Chinese and Japanese communities); *Holy Cross School Holocaust Exhibit; and Art and Soul of Peace Through Humour*, (Palestinian and Israeli children's art). In January 2005, Otto Ditz, the Austrian Ambassador to Canada opened *Walking On: Remembering Mauthausen*, a photo exhibit co-hosted with the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg and sent to Canada by the Republic of Austria.

Several exhibits have been produced by the JHC between 1999 and 2006: *The Players: Our Community's Contribution to Sport* (Candace Hogue, curator); *Our Musical Heritage: A Century of Jewish Musicians and Music in Winnipeg* (Stan Carbone, curator); *Untamed Earth: Jewish Farming Communities of Western Canada* (Stephanie Middagh, curator); *Treasures to Share* (Stan Carbone, Irma Penn, co-curators); and *Mame Lashyn: Yiddish in Winnipeg* (Steve Prystupa, curator) developed in conjunction with the L.L. Peretz Folk School reunion celebrating ninety years of Yiddish education in Winnipeg. In February/March 2006, three of George Bellet's nostalgic paintings of the Sowerfield Jewish farming community were displayed (Susan Turner, curator).

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ISRAELI NEWS BRIEFS

Olmert upbeat on peace

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Ehud Olmert said there is still hope for peace with the Palestinians despite Hamas' political rise to power. "Naturally, the chances of reaching a quick agreement with a Hamas government are much smaller," the interim prime minister said in an interview broadcast February 21 by Israel Radio. "On the other hand, despite the reduced chances, hope has not ended. I am responsible for two things: The struggle against Hamas and preserving the hope and opportunity of reaching an accord." Olmert, the front-runner for the March 28 general elections in Israel, has ruled out talks with the Palestinian Authority under Hamas unless it renounces terrorism and recognizes the Jewish state's right to exist. In the interim, he vowed to press ahead with security operations. "We will fight against terror with all our strength and we will do this every day," he said.

Jerusalem attack foiled

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli security forces foiled a Palestinian mortar barrage on southern Jerusalem. The Shin Bet said last week that it had arrested several members of a Fatah terrorist cell in the West Bank city of Bethlehem who had planned to fire a stolen mortar at nearby Gilo and Har Homa, both neighborhoods on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. The cell is suspected of involvement in gun attacks on Gilo, and of receiving instruction from a member of the Popular Resistance Committees, a terrorist coalition in the Gaza Strip. According to the Shin Bet, some members of the cell remain at large in Bethlehem after the Palestinian Authority refused Israeli calls to arrest them.

Israeli politician fights cancer

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Benny Elon, a veteran Israeli politician, has cancer. Elon, a rabbi and leader of the nationalist-religious National Union bloc, told Yediot Achronot on February 21 that a tumor was discovered in his vocal cords earlier last month. Though he is to begin chemotherapy this week, Elon said he does not intend to withdraw from the race for the March 28 general elections. Elon, 51, said his doctors are optimistic about his recovery because the growth was discovered early.

Islamic Jihad commander killed

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli soldiers killed a top Palestinian terrorist in the West Bank. The Islamic Jihad commander was shot dead February 20 by troops in Nablus, along with a comrade. Another three gunmen were wounded. The Israeli army has been in Nablus since February 19, searching for armed fugitives. Three local leaders of the Al-Aksa Brigade were arrested.

Peres slams Hamas

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Shimon Peres called Hamas' political rise to power a disaster. "Hamas is a disaster for the Palestinian people," Peres told Israel Radio on February 20. "They have no solutions. They spell anger and trouble. Like this it is impossible to lead a nation into the 21st century." Peres is a senior member of the Kadima Party, which is expected to win the March 28 general elections on a platform of tough pragmatism in peacemaking. Kadima's leader, interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, on February 19 ruled out any talks with a Palestinian Authority led by Hamas unless the radical Islamic group reforms.

Israel seizes Gaza-bound goods

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel seized millions of dollars' worth of merchandise bound for a Palestinian company. The Shin Bet and the Customs Authority have impounded 31 containers of goods ordered by the Gaza Strip-based company after they arrived in the port of Ashdod, it was announced last week. According to the Defence Ministry, the importer is on Israel's blacklist after it helped fund Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorism.

Israeli news

Focus on issues

Veteran Ethiopian Israeli community divided on Falash Mura's immigration

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Overlooking the panorama of Jerusalem's Old City at twilight a group of Ethiopians teenagers argue whether or not the Falash Mura community should be brought to Israel en masse.

"If they are Jewish, why not?" says Sharon Balata, a 16-year-old from Ashdod.

"But no, they are Christian," protests her friend Yardena Yamrashed, 18, from Rehovot.

Balata pauses then shoots back, "The more Ethiopians there are in Israel the better, right?" Yamrashed remains unconvinced.

The Falash Mura, who are now returning to their Jewish roots after their families converted to Christianity about 100 years ago, are considered an entirely different community by most of the veteran Jewish Ethiopians. "We don't feel a connection with them, we just don't know them," said the trendy Yamrashed, her hair dyed blond and teased into an Afro.

Israel's veteran community of Ethiopian Jews, the bulk of whom came to Israel in the airlifts of 1984-85 and 1991, are still struggling to find their way in Israeli society. Battling poverty, crime among the younger generation and unemployment, some are wary of scarce resources going to the Falash Mura community instead of their own continuing absorption. Others welcome the Falash Mura as extended members of their own families and see political and social strength in the growing numbers of Ethiopians in Israel.

Currently some 100,000 Ethiopians live in Israel. The government's plan is to expedite the immigration of 13,000 to 20,000 Falash Mura over the next two years: Some of the leaders of the veteran community had been outspoken against bringing additional Falash Mura to Israel but once the plan was approved by the government, the criticism on a public level has been largely muted.

Several prominent Ethiopian Jewish veterans refused to go on record with their views about the Falash Mura, citing the controversial nature of the issue within their community. Rabbi Yosef Hadane, the chief rabbi for the Ethiopian Jews in Israel, said the controversy had mainly to do with confirming which of the new immigrants truly had Jewish roots. "They want Jews to come, not non-Jews," Hadane said.

He also said there were stark divisions between the communities when it came to religious practice. The veterans, for example, prefer to pray in the traditional Ethiopian language of prayer called Ge'ez while the Falash Mura pray in Hebrew. The Falash Mura will also often only eat food deemed kosher by the Chief Rabbinate while the veteran Ethiopians follow kosher standards set by their elders. The two communities, Hadane said, live fairly separate lives in Israel.

One young Ethiopian Israeli activist who declined to be quoted by name said he is concerned that there is no way to determine how many Falash Mura will immigrate ultimately. He blamed American Jewish groups for pressing the issue. "It is a matter of money. I think it's the American Jewish organizations who have an interest in this," he said.

A 21-year-old soldier who would only identify himself as Moshiko said he did not see the Falash Mura as part of his community. He did not think their commitment to being in Israel was the same. "I'm here because my great-grandfather wanted to come here. My family came by foot and my great-grandfather died on the way," he said.



An Ethiopian Israeli woman gives money to the "Kessim", or religious leaders during the Sigd holiday, marking the Ethiopian Jewish desire to return to Jerusalem: Longtime Ethiopian Israelis are divided over whether Falash Mura, whose families converted to Christianity about 100 years ago, should all be brought to Israel. Credit: Brian Hendler/JTA.

Adding to the sense of alienation are rumors circulating in the veteran Ethiopian community that some Falash Mura return to Christianity once they are in Israel, even attending church services. Suspicions have been heightened by rumors that Christian missionaries who falsely converted to Judaism are among those immigrating.

Members of the Falash Mura community in Israel say they are committed to returning to

Judaism. Their ancestors converted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to Christianity.

At Mahane Yehuda, Jerusalem's open-air market, several stalls have recently opened selling Ethiopian products such as coffee and lentils imported from Africa. Aviva, a 24-year-old Ethiopian woman who would only give her first name, said she remembers a more intensive and welcoming reception when she and her family made aliyah 12 years ago. Often, she says, members of the Falash Mura community will come to the stall where she works for help with writing letters in Hebrew to government offices and for general advice. "If they are not taken care of, why were they brought here?" she asks.

At an Ethiopian restaurant and bar a few blocks away, veteran Ethiopians gather at the end of the day. Among them is a 23-year-old who calls himself Jimmy. He is bitter about his life, and says he does not understand why the country is contemplating bringing more Ethiopians here. "We don't feel like we are part of this society," he said. "If the first and second immigration waves did not work, why should the third and fourth ones work?"

He works as a security guard, he says, "like every other Ethiopian you have ever met." He then repeats a bit of immigrant humor, "They brought the Russians to clean the streets and the Ethiopians to guard the malls." Jimmy said he hopes to fly to Ethiopia in the next few months on a "trial visit" with a few other Ethiopian Israeli friends to see if, perhaps, their futures are there, instead of in the Jewish state.

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in association with **JEWISH FEDERATION OF WINNIPEG**

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Thursday, April 13
7:00 p.m.

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Children 3-11 Years - **\$14.50**
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Family tables can be arranged with ticket purchase. **Deadline to purchase tickets is Friday, March 31, 2006**

For additional information or to purchase tickets, please call the Rady Jewish Community Centre at 477-7510 or Congregation Etz Chayim at 589-6305.

This interactive Seder experience will be complete with a delicious four-course meal, traditional songs and participation of children and adults.

The generous support of the following is acknowledged:
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