

The Entertainment and
Cultural Committee of
 שַׁעְרֵי שׁוֹמַיִם
SHAAREI SHOMAYIM
presents:



The
31st
Annual

Cavalcade of Stars

Evening of Jewish Music

Sunday, March 30, 2025 / 1 Nisan 5785 • 7:00 PM

Shaarei Shomayim Congregation • 470 Glencairn Ave., Toronto

PROGRAM:

MC: **Hyim Bessin** • WELCOME: **Rabbi Sam Taylor**

The Klezconnection: Klezmer Maestro Jono Lightstone with
Lynda Batist Friedman, Lee Coplan, Abba Lustgarten, Ed Noy,
Allan Rosenbluth, Ellen Rosenbluth, Ed Segalowitz,
Ethan Shapiro, Alan Sisselman and Harold Wolfe

Eldan Cohen with **Gabe Benchetrit** and **James Kilby**
Eli Green & Dean Aivaliotis

HONOUREES: **Sol & Queenie Nayman** • PRESENTER: **Alan J. Burger**
HONOREE: **Adam Saunders** • PRESENTER: **Julius Ciss**

CO-CHAIRS: **Alan J. Burger** • **Jerry & Sandra Genesove**
INSPIRATION: **Rabbi Michael Skobac**
CLOSING REMARKS: **Julius Ciss**

Admission: **\$36/person** • **\$54/couple** • Youth & Students: **Free**

Attend online! Click the "Live" Stream link at jewsforjudaism.ca/cavalcade31

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From the age of eight, every night before going to sleep, I recited, “*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*” (Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One). With childhood purity, I would converse with G-d. I did all the talking and all the imaginative work of filling my mind with His replies to all the important points I raised. I asked G-d to prevent my stuffed animals from fighting with each other, to help me to sleep well, and to help me win the fights with my friends the following day.

I continued this practice until the age of 13 when I wanted more of an intellectual approach to Judaism. I had a lot of questions and unfortunately, the best thing that my local rabbi could offer was Herman Wouk’s *This Is My G-d*. I enjoyed the first few pages but quickly descended into boredom because this book was not intended for an intellectually gifted 13-year-old.

So for the next five years, I didn’t talk with Hashem. However, whether motivated by fear or some intrinsic connection to my heritage, I continued to say, “*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*” every night before going to sleep. But now, at the age of 18, being a mature, intelligent young man attending one of the best liberal arts colleges in the nation, I could no longer continue this spiritually and emotionally empty bedtime ritual. “*Shema*” stops now!

Freshman year was great and wild. No connection to Judaism, no guilt trips – just free sailing! However, sophomore year began with two blows. First, my beloved grandmother, who was somewhat religious, passed away. Then, I broke up with my gentile girlfriend in a most unpleasant way, to put it mildly.

So there I was, feeling quite alone and very much in need of connection. Maybe because of my grandmother’s connection with Judaism, I decided to re-examine



Thanks to
Jews for
Judaism

I'm Back Home

by Rabbi
Shmuel Levine*

"A Christian girl in my Biblical Hebrew class invited me to a party her social group was making ... Within a few weeks, I started going to church on Sundays."

Judaism and attend Shabbat services at the campus Hillel House. Unfortunately, with the electric guitar in the background and people seemingly matched up in their cliques from Long Island, I just didn’t feel any spiritual elevation, let alone friendship.

At the same time, Valerie, a Christian girl in my Biblical Hebrew class, invited me to a party her social group was making. Her friends were such calm, friendly people, interested in spiritual values and not overly materialistic. I enjoyed the novel change in my social life, and it didn’t bother me that she and the others were born-again Christians. Within a few weeks, I started going to church on Sundays, and by November, I was already hinting to my parents that I was thinking about conversion.

Frightened and not knowing what to say, they called a well-known rabbi who soon discovered that he was no match for a philosophy major at Haverford College.

His threat tactics, “Your soul is doomed!” and hanging up the phone on me, produced no results. Another turn-off was his wanting to meet with me, one-to-one, in some kosher restaurant in Manhattan. Why couldn’t I choose the venue and perhaps bring along some friends?! Did he want to kidnap me and then try to un-brainwash me from the enlightened values I recently gained from my new friends?!

A few weeks later, my parents implored me to contact Rabbi Michael Skobac from Jews for Judaism for an initial discussion, and they described him as an expert on the subject of religion. From our initial conversation, I immediately realized that I was dealing with an educated, intellectually honest person who not only let me choose the venue, but also told me to bring along anybody I wanted. Because I trusted him, we met in my home, just the two of us. Within an hour, I suddenly discovered that there were clear answers

"Today, I have the privilege of being one of the head rabbis in a Rabbinical College in Jerusalem and building a happy, new generation of Torah-literate Jews and families."

and viable replies to the challenges born-again Christians present to the unsuspecting and unarmed Jews to whom they are offering “salvation.”

Rabbi Skobac demonstrated amazing scholarship in both the Old and New Testaments. His pleasant personality and great sense of humour made it easy for me to open up, especially in the security of my own kitchen, on my own turf, within the walls that watched me grow up.

I started to believe that there must be other pleasant, intelligent, spiritual Jews who can help me find my way back into that beautiful warm house. As a little child, I always felt that “somehow, I belong here.” Maybe now, I could rekindle these feelings.

My subsequent visit to Israel for my twenty-first birthday began with many doubts and apprehensions. I was about to explore where my soul truly belongs. Allow me to summarize that two-week trip in just one word: miraculous! The happy tears that filled my eyes at the airport were only the first of many more happy tears that followed. Thanks to Rabbi Michael Skobac and Jews for Judaism, I found my way back home.

As a follow-up to this story, after finishing my degree, I went to Israel for a two-year course in the basics of Judaism and discovered that I had the potential to go far in the world of Torah. Within a few years, I became a rabbi. Today, I have the privilege of being one of the head rabbis in a rabbinical college in Jerusalem and building a happy, new generation of Torah-literate Jews and families. My parents moved to Israel a year after I made *aliyah* and began growing religiously. Today, they are finally enjoying the intellectual and spiritual satisfaction they missed out on for half a century. ■

*Name has been changed to maintain anonymity.

HONOUREES: SOL & QUEENIE NAYMAN

With deep roots in the Jewish community, Sol and Queenie Nayman are a loving couple dedicated to Jewish survival through their commitment to Holocaust education and to community service.

Sol, born in Poland in 1935, survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Canada in 1948. A passionate educator and advocate, he has spoken widely about the Holocaust, fighting antisemitism, and combating Holocaust denial. Sol has participated in several “March of the Living” and “Aish Living Legacy” journeys and shared his experiences across Canada and the USA at synagogues, universities, schools, and museums.

Queenie, born in Montreal in 1937, was a teacher and an active volunteer in health and community organizations. After marrying Sol in 1961, she became involved in numerous initiatives, including serving as President of Mount Sinai Hospital Auxiliary and volunteering with SickKids’ Children’s Circle of Care.

Together, Sol and Queenie have made significant contributions in support of meaningful Jewish causes



Sol & Queenie at his shtetl’s commemorative stone, on one of their “marches” in Treblinka.

in our community and Israel. Through Holocaust education, they seek to preserve the past while inspiring younger generations with hope for the Jewish future. ■

HONOUREE: ADAM SAUNDERS

Growing up in Toronto, Adam began to embrace Judaism in a more meaningful way in high school. A milestone of his path towards greater observance was his summer internship in 1999 at Jews for Judaism, which was a transformative experience that set the foundation for a lifelong commitment to Judaism.

Adam is currently an Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management. He previously taught



Adam Saunders

at UBC’s Sauder School of Business, where he received several teaching awards for excellence both inside and outside the classroom.

Most importantly, Adam and his wife, Galit, are proud to be raising their two daughters, Levana and Emuna, with strong Jewish values and dedication to a Torah way of life. Having lived in Vancouver for 11 years, they recently

moved to Toronto and are grateful to be part of the vibrant and welcoming Jewish community here. ■



JUDAISM

From a Jewish Sect

CHRISTIANITY

to a Global Gentile Religion

CROSS-EXAMINES

With Rabbi
Michael Skobac

In this lecture Rabbi Skobac will examine how, 2,000 years ago, a small Messianic movement within the Jewish community in Israel transformed, in a short period of time, into a radically non-Jewish world religion.

He will discuss the Jewish roots of Christianity, and how, over time, those roots became obscured and ultimately cut off.

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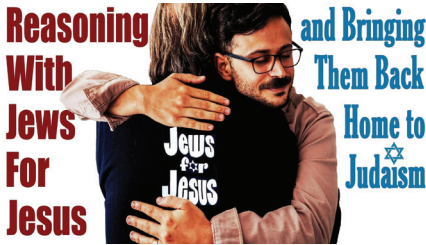
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