

Harold Troper

**A Tale of Two Pavilions: Jewish Participation  
in Expo '67**

When the Montreal World's Fair opened in April 1967, it was home to not one but two pavilions with Jewish themes.<sup>1</sup> One was the Israel Pavilion – the official Pavilion of the Israeli state; the other was a separate Pavilion of Judaism built and operated under the auspices of the organized Jewish community in Montreal. This was only the second time that there were two separate Jewish content pavilions at any World's Fair. The first time was thirty years earlier. In 1937, two years before the outbreak of war in Europe, Paris hosted the *International Exposition of Arts and Technologies in Modern Life*, commonly known as the Paris World's Fair.<sup>2</sup> As the growing threat of German militarization cast a long shadow across Europe, the 1937 Fair in the heart of Paris was less notable as a celebration of art and culture than as a statement of European division. Dominating the Paris World's Fair grounds were the towering pavilions of then bitter enemies Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union menacingly built directly opposite one another. Nearby stood the much more modest Spanish Pavilion built by Spain's beleaguered Republican government outgunned in its civil war against Fascist insurgents supported militarily by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Rather than promote Spanish industry and culture, the Spanish Pavilion bespoke the pain of war and continued resistance to fascism. The eye-catching centerpiece of the Spanish Pavilion was Picasso's mural painting, *Guernica*, depicting the suffering inflicted on a Basque village bombed repeatedly by German and Italian aircraft.<sup>3</sup>

The Spanish pavilion was not alone in denouncing the Fascist and Nazi menace. In a section of the Fair set aside for international pavilions, the *Land of Israel in Palestine Pavilion*, a Zionist pavilion, took deliberate aim at Nazi efforts to dehumanize Jews by proclaiming the social, cultural, and intellectual vitality of Jewish life in the Yishuv.<sup>4</sup> Rejecting the Nazi categorization of Jews as a pariah people, for the Zionists, the authorization of a Palestine Pavilion in the area of the Fair earmarked for state pavilions was tacit recognition of Jewish claims to a homeland in Palestine, which proved that Jews were “capable of creating useful and original works in all the domains of human culture.”<sup>5</sup>

Nor was the Zionist Pavilion alone in rejecting systematic Nazi debasement of Jews. A second and smaller Jewish pavilion, the *Pavilion of Modern Jewish Culture*, was a creation of the then growing, secular and left-leaning Yiddish-speaking émigré community in Paris. More Bundist than Zionist, the *Pavilion of Modern Jewish Culture* also took aim at Nazi anti-Semitism but, in this case, not by affirming the dynamism of a Jewish state-in-waiting but by proclaiming the significant contribution that the Yiddish diaspora continued to make to European cultural life, a contribution out of all proportion to the size of the Jewish community in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Two years after the Paris World's Fair closed, Germany invaded Poland, bringing down the curtain on Yiddish life in Europe.

Thirty years would pass before there would be again two separate Jewish pavilions at

a World's Fair, this time at Expo 67 in Montreal. Why were there two separate Jewish pavilions at Expo 67 and what distinguished one from the other? Or, put another way, what does the presence of two separate Jewish pavilions at Expo 67, an Israeli state pavilion and a pavilion hosted by the Montreal Jewish community, say about the divergent agendas of the Israeli state and the organized Jewish community of Montreal in the mid-1960s?

It might be argued that the existence of two separate Jewish-themed pavilions at Expo '67 was but another instance of a bifurcated notion of Jewish identity that marked World's Fairs and similar events in the past; sometimes, as at the Paris World's Fair in 1937, prioritizing Jews as an historic nation among nations, while at other times as a faith community akin to other major faith communities. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlet explains, for much of the early history of world fairs and similar events, Jews most often sought to represent themselves, or were represented by others, as a community united in faith rather than by secular ethnic or national interests. Kirshenblatt-Gimlet contends that Jews most often found the designation 'faith community' hospitable because it allowed them to showcase themselves "to the world in a citizenship category predicated on religious liberty" – loyal citizens of the state where they lived who embraced a universalistic faith.<sup>7</sup>

This was the case with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, commonly known as the Chicago World's Fair. The Chicago event was originally organised to honour the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the new world. It quickly became a coming of age celebration of American industrial might and political power on the world stage. Alongside futuristic exhibit halls and amusement areas, the Chicago World's Fair also hosted a series of industrial and academic conferences. One of those gatherings was the annual meeting of the American Historical Association at which Fredrick Jackson Turner famously delivered his seminal paper, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," proclaiming American exceptionalism rooted in the liberating power in what was long regarded as America's boundless land frontier.

Another Chicago World's Fair gathering was the World's Parliament of Religions, an event that organizers optimistically hoped would open the door to dialogue between faith communities from around the world. The event was not without controversy. Given its venue, there was no doubt that participation in the Chicago event would be dominated by mainstream American Protestants. However, organizers invited participation from a broad range of faith groups from around the United States and the world. Some Protestant leaders refused to attend and, instead, decried multi-faith outreach as an affront which accorded heathen religions moral and religious equivalence with Protestants. The American Catholic Church hierarchy was also sharply divided on whether or not to participate. Some American Catholic leaders objected

to Catholic participation in the Parliament on the grounds that it would grant Protestants equal standing with Catholics. Other Catholic leaders disagreed. They argued that the Catholic Church was duty bound to participate in the Parliament both so it might speak as the one true Church and so it might present itself at so important an American gathering as not just the Catholic Church but as the *American* Catholic Church. The Americanists won the day. The Catholic Church participated.<sup>8</sup>

So too did Jews participate, both as individuals and as representatives of American Jewish communal and religious institutions. Similar to those Catholic leaders who felt it essential that the Catholic Church stake its claim as an American church, many Jewish leaders welcomed the opportunity to proclaim their embrace of America, particularly as large-scale immigration into the United States by Eastern and Southern Europeans, including hundreds of thousands of Jews, was setting off a nativist, anti-immigrant and anti-Jewish backlash. Anti-foreigner sentiment was accompanied by a rising political tide of rural populism that in some areas was tainted by anti-Semitism. Fearing they would be caught up in a groundswell of nativism, American Jewish leaders welcomed the Parliament as a platform from which to proclaim their loyalty to America and, like Catholics, as a platform to present their faith as characteristically American. Did it work? Perhaps. As scholar of American religion Richard Hugues Seager noted, through their participation at the Parliament of Religions, "Jews and Catholics were becoming worthy guests at the banquet table of American religious history."<sup>9</sup>

But those who sought to ensure American Jews were seen as a faith community among many faith communities found themselves challenged by other Jews who embraced an ethno-national destiny for Jews. Following the First World War and emboldened by the Balfour Declaration, Zionists, including those in the United States, entered the political arena intent on portraying Jews as an ancient people wrongly dispossessed of their homeland. In that effort, Zionists embraced World's Fairs as an effective platform from which to promote their cause -- made all the more critical with the rise of Nazi Germany. In the spring of 1939, even as the Nazis prepared to launch their invasion of Poland, an attack that would bring millions more Jews under their heel, the New York World's Fair opened in Flushing Meadows. American Zionists, with the Paris *Land of Israel in Palestine* Pavilion as a model, constructed a *Jewish Palestine Pavilion* for the New York exposition. However, the effort to have this Pavilion included in the Fair's International Zone reserved for states, as was the case in Paris, failed. Britain insisted that Palestine was not a sovereign state and protested any notion that the *Jewish Palestine* Pavilion be accorded national pavilion status. Rather than alienate the British, the Zionist pavilion was located outside the International Zone. But even as a non-state pavilion, the *Jewish Palestine* Pavilion drew in tens of thousands of Fair visitors, especially once war in Europe broke out soon after the Fair opened and refocused public attention to the plight of European

Jews. For many, a visit to the *Jewish Palestine* Pavilion became a symbolic act of opposition to the Nazis. What of the Zionists' nation-building goal in constructing the Pavilion? In retrospect, it can be regarded as important in shifting American sentiment, including many of those in a position to influence public policy, in favour of a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>10</sup>

Twenty-eight years after the World's Fair in Flushing Meadow, Israel joined the family of nations at the Montreal World's Fair, Expo '67. It is tempting to ask whether or how Israel might have participated if the World's Fair had been held somewhere other than Montreal – for example, what if the 1967 World's Fair was held in Moscow? This is not a fanciful question. The original venue for the 1967 World's Fair was supposed to be Moscow. How then did the 1967 Fair come to Canada? In 1960 Canada petitioned the Bureau of International Expositions to host the 1967 World's Fair as the centerpiece of Canada's celebration of one hundred years of Confederation. The Canadian bid came second to one from the Soviet Union that sought a Moscow World's Fair as the crowning event of its proposed year-long celebration marking the fiftieth anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Had the World's Fair been granted to Moscow, would Israel have joined the Soviet celebration? This is an interesting question, given the increasingly adversarial relations between the Soviet Union and Israel that followed the 1956 Sinai War, Soviet military assistance to both Egypt and Syria, and growing Jewish concern over systemic repression of Jewish cultural and religious expression in the Soviet Union. It is also a question Israel did not need to answer. Two years into Soviet planning, as cost estimates for the Moscow fair escalated and Soviet relations with the West deteriorated, the Soviets decided against staging a World's Fair. The prize reverted to Canada.<sup>11</sup>

When the 1967 Fair was belatedly granted to Canada in 1963, two years of preparation time had been lost and it was unclear whether the Canadians would be able to accomplish their task in such short time. With a tight schedule, the scramble began to find a Fair venue and to build facilities. After a little jostling between major Canadian cities, the Fair was awarded to Montreal. As naysayers grumbled that a world-class event could not be organized by the Spring 1967 launch date, supporters of the Montreal event publicly acknowledged the Fair was going to be a monumental undertaking, and, privately, that it would be an expensive one as well. Just creating and servicing the Fair site and constructing roads and public transit links would be an engineering feat of staggering proportions. But it was done. Using landfill, a man-made island with a magnificent view of the Montreal skyline was created in the St. Lawrence River and a rapid transit system was built to connect the Fair site to the rest of the city. The World's Fair would have a home.

As the island home for the Montreal World's Fair, now known as Expo '67, gradually took shape in the St. Lawrence, Fair directors put their minds to actualizing and pro-

moting Expo 67's chosen theme, 'Man and His World.' Five interpretive sub-theme pavilions were planned to represent 'man' the creator, explorer, producer, provider, and man and community. With a name, theme, and stylized multicolour maple-leaf logo in place, the family of nations was invited to participate. With a few notable exceptions – China, Brazil, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Pakistan, Turkey and Argentina – many countries, including Israel, signed on to build national pavilions. An Israeli press release announcing the Israel Pavilion explained, "Israel has a dramatic story to tell. What both architecture and exhibits will try to express is the dramatic rebirth of the nation which, after 1 900 years of adversity, has recovered and restored its homeland."<sup>12</sup>

In this single sentence, planners of the Israel Pavilion made clear that Israel interpreted Expo '67's *Man and His World* theme as license to celebrate the Jew in his land. Israel would frame its Pavilion around a narrative of Jewish peoplehood and of a regenerated Jewish state that spoke to Jewish dignity, the inter-connectivity of Jew to Jew, the imperative of sustaining Israel's national integrity, and the open-armed welcome to homeless and oppressed Jews the world over.

How could it be otherwise? In the postwar era, as Jews around the world, including Canada, sought to ensure their full and equal rights within their country of citizenship, the continuing shock of the Holocaust and hope represented by the 1948 founding of the State of Israel combined to reinforce a Jewish sense of peoplehood. More and more, the responsibility for the continuity of Jewish peoplehood was relegated to or assumed by the Jewish state. And when Israel announced its intent to participate in the 1967 Montreal World's Fair, few could be surprised that central to the Israel Pavilion's message would be that Israel and Jewish peoplehood are inseparable.

In a 2007 *Canadian Jewish News* article marking the fiftieth anniversary of Expo '67 and its Israel Pavilion, Sara Ferdman Tauben noted that the Israel Pavilion installation deliberately framed a narrative of the Jewish people's unbroken attachment to their ancient homeland and the eventual ingathering of a people determined to build a nation on that land. Visitors to the Israel Pavilion could not escape this message. Upon entering, they found themselves in the subdued lighting of a corridor leading to one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, tangible symbol of both the historical link between an ancient Jewish homeland and a renewed State of Israel, and of the continuity of an enduring Jewish peoplehood. As if moving through time as well as space, visitors were then guided up a gently-sloped ramp, the walls of which depicted the Jewish people's unbroken attachment to their homeland and painful journey back to Zion. Tauben's article described it thus:

The exhibit proceeded to illustrate the sacrifices of the early chalutzim (Israeli pioneers), the destruction of European Jewry, and the emergence from darkness “into the bright light of the next hall, expressing the establishment of the State of Israel.” The challenges of nation building and integrating the multitudes of new immigrants were presented against depictions of considerable achievements in agriculture, industry, technology and culture. Finally, Israel was depicted as a nation among nations dedicated to assisting countries in the developing world. The closing statement was a message from Isaiah “stressing Israel’s fervent desire for peace.” Another level portrayed the young nation as a destination for tourism and the source of quality modern products.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, the Israel Pavilion was not constructed in a vacuum. It was constructed in Montreal during the mid-1960s, a moment of great change in Quebec and within the Montreal Jewish community.<sup>14</sup> Viewed in this light, how did the planned Israel Pavilion resonate with the Montreal Jewish community? Particularly, how did it play with the established leadership of the Montreal Jewish community? Primary documentation is scarce but anecdotal evidence suggests that the Montreal Jewish community in the 1960s, then still heavily composed of first and second-generation immigrants to Canada, including thousands of Holocaust survivors and their children, was very comfortable with the Israeli narrative of Jewish peoplehood and nation-building.

The same cannot be said of the leadership of the community. Whatever the leaders’ individual views – and there is no reason to believe they did not privately support the Israeli narrative – for larger public consumption in Quebec many in positions of Jewish communal responsibility in Montreal preferred that expression of ethno-national Jewish identity be kept in-house and under wraps. Even as many Jewish leaders elsewhere in Canada were amenable to the notion that Canadian Jews were part of a larger Canadian cultural mosaic – a pluralism-of-origins vision that in 1972 would find expression in the federal Multiculturalism Policy – the top tier of Jewish leadership in Montreal held fast to the position that Jews, at least in Quebec, would do well not to present themselves as an ethno-national community but rather as a faith community on par with Catholics and Protestants.

Why unease with public expressions of Jewish peoplehood? Leaders of the Montreal Jewish community believed that Jewish talk of ethno-cultural pluralism would not play well in the social and political climate of mid-1960s Quebec and could actually undermine the community’s relationship with the government of Quebec and ultimately have negative consequences, financially, for the organized Jewish community. As Saul Hayes, executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, explained in 1965 to a gathering of Jewish leaders from across Canada, Quebec government funding

for provincial education, medical facilities, and social services was then largely assigned along confessional lines. So long as the Quebec government acknowledged Jews as a community of faith alongside Catholics and Protestants, it was expected that Jewish funding would continue. Therefore, any undermining of the perception that Jews were part of the world's ancient faith traditions was to be resisted, at least in the public square. If the Israel Pavilion were to signify Jewish peoplehood, one might ask whether the *Pavilion of Judaism* was a counterbalancing effort by Montreal Jewish leaders to safeguard the representation of Jews as a community of faith.<sup>15</sup>

When planning for Expo '67 began there was no notion, neither among Expo 67 organizers nor among Montreal Jewish leaders, that the Fair would include a free-standing Pavilion of Judaism. It was not that faith groups were discouraged from participating – just the opposite, in fact. As plans for Expo '67 unfolded, organizers were concerned that not enough faith communities intended to participate. Under the banner of *Man and His World*, Expo '67 organizers originally envisioned the construction of a single inclusive faith pavilion proclaiming the “common unifying force of world religions.” This was not to be. Even as Vatican II opened the door to Catholics engaging with the non-Catholic world, and Protestant talk of denominational unity was much in the air, discussion of Christian ecumenism and interfaith contact were limited. As was the case for the Chicago World Fair seventy years earlier, for many religious leaders the very idea of according non-Christian faiths parity with Christians was a non-starter. Mainstream Canadian Christian denominations rejected anything that implied that non-Christian faiths had moral and ethical equivalency with Christianity, not in the eyes of man and certainly not in the eyes of God. Instead, seven mainstream Canadian Protestant denominations, joined by the Catholic Church which momentarily set aside its theological differences with Protestantism, proposed to construct a shared Christian pavilion, the *Pavilion of Unity*, which would proclaim the beneficence of Christianity. Expo 67 organizers agreed reluctantly. However, this mainstream Christian tent was not big enough to include all Christian groups. Evangelicals announced their *Sermons from the Science Pavilion*, seeking to convert non-believers rather than to proclaim shared truths.<sup>16</sup>

With two Christian pavilions under construction, Expo '67 organizers were uneasy at the glaring absence of non-Christian faith groups at their World's Fair. They approached the Canadian Jewish Congress in hopes of securing some kind of official Jewish presence at the Fair. At the very same time, Wilfred Shuchat, rabbi at Montreal's prominent Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, also became concerned that expression of religion at the Montreal Fair would be left to two Christian pavilions only. Shuchat's goal was modest. He wanted Expo '67 to include a small, functioning synagogue that could serve Jewish Fair-goers and those working on the Expo '67 site, and the appropriate place to house such a synagogue, he believed, was in the Israel Pavilion.



This would be a challenge to realize. Discussions with the Israel Pavilion organizers were fruitless. Even if Rabbi Shuchat regarded a synagogue at Expo '67 as a way to give public expression to the centrality of faith and prayer in Jewish life, the Israel Pavilion organizers had different interests. Their concern was not Judaism but Zionism and marketing the Jewish state. Though they would present Israel as a modern, democratic and secular Jewish state. At the same time, they stressed that Israel was holy to three world religions, and, with one of their goals being to encourage tourism to Israel by Jews and non-Jews alike, the pavilion planners did not want to weaken this position. In fact, they regarded it inappropriate for the Israel Pavilion to privilege one faith with a functioning house of worship. Asked if, as a compromise, they would at least agree to a path or ramp connecting the Israel Pavilion to a separately-run but adjacent synagogue, the organizers also answered no. However, in deference to the religious sensitivities of the Montreal Jewish community, the Israeli planners did allow that the Israel Pavilion's 150-seat restaurant which would offer "Jewish and Oriental cuisine and Israeli wines" would be kosher.<sup>17</sup>

Rabbi Shuchat was disappointed. Rather than change his mind about a synagogue, he changed his tactics. Shuchat took it upon himself to commission young Montreal architect Harry Stilman to hastily design a small, freestanding on-site synagogue. Stilman's initial drawings and accompanying model were for a modest six-sided star-of-David-like chapel with a bulbous dome on top in the Moorish style.<sup>18</sup> Asked why he chose a Moorish style dome, Stilman explained that "Judaism had its roots in the east not in the west."<sup>19</sup> With Stilman's hastily drawn plans for a synagogue, and accompanied by rabbis from Montreal's Orthodox and Reform streams, Shuchat approached Sam Bronfman, wealthy liquor tycoon and president of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Bronfman supported a synagogue at Expo '67 so long as it operated under the auspices of the Canadian Jewish Congress and Allied Jewish Community Services in Montreal. He also pledged partial funding for the project but declined a hands-on organizational role.

Shuchat then turned to Sam Steinberg, his congregant and Montreal grocery store magnate. Steinberg agreed to head a Foundation for Judaism that would fundraise for the project and oversee construction and programming for the proposed synagogue. Like Bronfman, Steinberg imposed conditions: He demanded that project organizers guarantee unqualified support from all religious streams of the Montreal Jewish community. Shuchat explained this support was already in hand; the project was endorsed both by the Board of Jewish Ministers of Greater Montreal and the Religious Affairs Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress.<sup>20</sup> Steinberg's second condition took Shuchat by surprise. Even though there was only a year and a half before Expo '67 was scheduled to open, Steinberg demanded the project be expanded from a small synagogue to a *Pavilion of Judaism* which would proclaim "the meaning of Judaism to man and his world." He envisioned a pavilion on a par with the

Christian pavilions, a vision that was motivated by the same concern of the Montreal Jewish leadership, that Jews in Quebec should be regarded a faith community no less than Catholics and Protestants. To Steinberg, a *Pavilion of Judaism* was not a challenge to the Israel Pavilion. It was a necessary assertion of Montreal Jewish priorities.

Though Stilman was convinced that a year and a half was barely adequate time to plan and build a synagogue on the Expo '67 site, he was now commissioned to design not just a small synagogue but an entire pavilion. He discarded the Moorish look in favour of a strikingly modern structure. With time running short, "Stilman's final design was a four-sided building formed by sweeping exterior planes. Like pages of an open book, these curved planes provided surfaces for inscriptions. The verses forming the theme of the exhibition were inscribed on the façade while two other quotations in Hebrew and one in Yiddish decorated the other sides of the building. Thus, Hebrew letters were a component of the architectural design."<sup>21</sup> The synagogue of the *Pavilion of Judaism* was small, ground-level, and with seating for about twenty-five. As agreed among Montreal rabbis, the synagogue would be open for daily prayers officiated on a rotating basis by rabbis from different Montreal synagogues. Though participating synagogues agreed to ensure a *minyan* of at least ten men was present for services to proceed, this guarantee was rarely necessary. Most often, an overflow of *doveners* (prayers) filled an adjacent outdoor courtyard and followed services which were projected on a loudspeaker. The pavilion design also set aside space for lectures, cultural activities, and fixed exhibitions.<sup>22</sup>

The initial budget for the *Pavilion of Judaism* was approximately one-fifth the budget of the Israel Pavilion.<sup>23</sup> Even with Bronfman and Steinberg putting up a considerable amount of money, raising additional funds did not come easily. With no time to lose, a *Pavilion of Judaism* campaign lead by Steinberg was intended, premised on the notion that every contributor, no matter how small their donation, would be made to feel like a stakeholder in the Pavilion. With so many other calls for Jewish community financial assistance, however, the fundraising effort was slow. And, with or without cash on hand, construction deadlines had to be met. Steinberg himself made up the financial shortfalls.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, it was still unclear what would be on display in in the *Pavilion of Judaism* then taking shape. Pavilion planners might have envied those organizing the Israel Pavilion which had a clear and exciting narrative – an ancient people's enduring attachment to its homeland, the pain of dispossession and oppression, the call to reclaim the land, pride in building community, Israel's statehood, the ingathering of exiles, and the growth of a modern democratic state.

What about the *Pavilion of Judaism*? A press release explained that the unifying theme for the Pavilion of Judaism would be Torah:

In front of the pavilion there will be a sculpture by Elbert Weinberg called “The Procession” which consists of a group of life-sized figures in bronze carrying the Torah.

In the upper area of the pavilion a series of continuous thematically staged, and artistically designed exhibits will reflect the theme “Man and His World” in the light of Judaism as a religious philosophy of life.

Programming in the pavilion will be based on six principles of Judaism

- Torah – learning, education and law
- Avodah – love of God, worship
- Gemilat Hasodim – love of man, charity
- Emit – the quest for truth
- Din – the quest for justice
- Sholom – the quest for peace

These fundamental ideals and their present-day implications will be illustrated through monumental works of Jewish thought and creativity: Masterpieces of art, paintings, sculpture, graphic pageants, ceremonial art objects of Jewish festivals and tradition, Torah Scrolls and Ark Curtains from different periods and lands, rare manuscripts, historic documents and Hebrew incunabula.<sup>25</sup>

Pavilion promotion also underscored the religious theme. Even before Expo ‘67 opened, a newsletter from the Royal Bank of Canada encouraging Canadians to visit Expo ‘67 promised that the Pavilion of Judaism would “reveal Judaism as a world faith and culture. The theme is ‘Judaism Universal – Judaism Eternal.’”<sup>26</sup>

Sure enough, the small glass-walled synagogue took up about a quarter of the floor-space of the Pavilion of Judaism. Aside from the synagogue, however, and in spite of claiming Torah as a unifying theme, the Pavilion of Judaism planners struggled with how to actually represent Torah and Judaism, and how to do it in an engaging way that would lead visitors to understand that even if most Jews in Canada were recent arrivals, Judaism was a world faith that bespoke core human values. Some organizers might have hoped they could fall back on the more obvious points of interest that featured in the 1959 bicentenary of Canadian Jewry, a celebration marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Aaron Hart, hailed as the first Canadian Jew.<sup>27</sup> But while the bicentenary celebration and the Pavilion of Judaism shared the same goals – extolling Judaism’s place as a partner faith in the spiritual life of Canada and thereby entrenching Jews as intrinsic to the religious life of the province – replacing Aaron Hart with Torah denied pavilion organizers an historical actor around which to build a narrative.

As a result, as the walls of the pavilion went up and the time to the Fair's opening drew closer, the pavilion organizing committee found itself in what Stilman remembers as "an insane scramble" to install something interesting and meaningful for visitors. A consultant was brought in from the Jewish Museum in New York, but with the clock ticking, the final instillation proved more a patchwork quilt of exhibitions than a coherent presentation. A model of the second temple in Jerusalem built by a Montreal hobbyist was given a position of prominence. According to Stilman the model was neither particularly accurate nor well executed, but it did what was required. It filled space.<sup>28</sup> So too did books, rare and beautiful examples of Hebraica and Judaica spanning the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries borrowed from the collection of Jacob M. Lowy, a Montreal industrialist and developer. Among the other exhibitions, each disconnected from one another, one honoured the contribution of Jewish theologians, philosophers, and social theorists to the "universal ideals of mankind," another extolled Judaism's place in Canada, and yet another featured a glass-enclosed and pedestalled Torah scroll.<sup>29</sup>

In the end, the space in the Jewish Pavilion was filled. When Expo 67 officially opened on April 20, five days before Passover, the two separate Jewish-content pavilions were separated from one another in location and vision – one set out to address spiritual continuity and the other national rebirth. Reviewer comments on the Pavilion of Judaism was generally polite if not positive. Private comment was less so. In his diary, Yacov Zipper, a revered Montreal Jewish educator, fiction writer, Zionist, and Yiddishist berated the Pavilion of Judaism for coming across as static and lifeless, or, even worse, backward-looking as compared to the Israel Pavilion.

Zipper was biting in his diary entry for Expo 67's opening day:

As for the Jewish pavilion – I had few expectations, since its very name, "Pavilion of Judaism," limited the whole issue. Still, one hoped that despite this it fulfilled some plan that was acceptable. The exterior is actually not bad; modest in structure with a two-sided entrance, something like a synagogue. Quotations from *The Sayings of the Fathers* paraphrased in English, French, the holy tongue and Yiddish. Within, museum-like without any plan. Ancient sacred books, a few pictures, displayed without order. Busts of historic figures, in the same way. Some antique documents and holy artifacts. A wall with Anne Frank's picture with pages from her diary. A room with a model of the Holy Temple. It was as if "Judaism" had no origin, no connection with vital Jewish life. In the small hall, there was conversation; [dignitaries] sipped wine and tasted Passover cookies, and suddenly from the small chapel someone sounded the *shofar*, and a few rabbis strutted about with glowing faces, wishing everyone a happy holiday. I never imagined such ineptness nor such ignorance of the possibilities to make this a historic occasion.

By contrast the Israeli pavilion provides great satisfaction. Modest and understated, with a broad scope, with artistic imagination and an eye for detail. From room to room the feeling grows of an intense, vibrant society, with progressive ideology and practical accomplishments that arrest the viewer and transmit the sense of dynamic growth. Even [Israel's] failures are displayed as stages in a difficult path. A mosaic of past and present amidst hints of problems and deep divisions. The *Shoah* was presented so subtly that it leaves a lasting impression: the air seems to be thick and damp in an almost empty corner. The pinkish-green light creates a mysterious aura that you cannot approach. As you enter, your eye is drawn to the picture of a child – frightened to near-death – over whom hovers an armed Nazi, while on the other side – a petrified Jewish family. On a table, only two worn-out children's shoes. The people who designed this pavilion deserve our deepest appreciation.<sup>30</sup>

What Zipper, the Montreal Jewish establishment, and the Israelis could never have imagined on opening day was that the carefully-drawn line differentiating the two Jewish-content pavilions would soon be erased, at least for most Jews visiting Expo '67. In mid-May, only a few weeks after the official opening of Expo '67, the Middle East was thrown into crisis as Egypt declared a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, the sea-lane into Israel's southern port of Eilat. As war threatened, pundits warned that without foreign military assistance, Israeli defeat was a distinct possibility. Historians now know that Israeli military strategists were confident Israel was more than a match for its enemies. But, as I have detailed elsewhere, Jews in Canada and around the world knew nothing of Israel's preparation. Instead, Jews everywhere were suddenly and inexplicably overcome by an all-consuming fear for the fate of Israel, the Jewish people, and themselves. Barely twenty years after the end of the Second World War and five years after the Eichmann trial, Jews saw Israel being goaded into a battle that could well be its last. Lucy Dawidowicz later recalled that it felt like a "reliving of the Holocaust."<sup>31</sup> As the crisis deepened, Jews in Montreal, like Jews everywhere, rallied behind Israel. Never before were Canadian Jews so simultaneously traumatized and galvanized.<sup>32</sup>

On June 5<sup>th</sup> 1967 war erupted. A week later it ended in Israeli military victory.<sup>33</sup> The full impact of the war is still being measured, but I would argue that one of the casualties of the war was the effort by Montreal Jewish leaders to keep a tight lid on public expression of Jewish peoplehood. That effort simply collapsed under the emotional weight of events in the late spring of 1967. Like Jews around the world, Jews in Montreal were caught up in a consuming embrace of Israel and their Jewishness. That embrace had an address – the Jewish pavilions at Expo '67. Without regard to their intended differences, the two pavilions were suddenly transformed into twin sites of Jewish pilgrimage. Tens of thousands visited the Jewish-themed pavilions,

some repeatedly, and they did so as an act of personal connection to the Jewish community and to Israel.<sup>34</sup> Much more might be written about the events of that spring in Montreal, but it is telling that, when interviewed about events in Montreal during the Six Day War crisis, many Montreal Jews who visited Expo '67 during those heady days clearly recalled visiting a Jewish pavilion at Expo '67. When pressed as to whether it was the Israel Pavilion or the Pavilion of Judaism, most couldn't recall.

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This article is an elaboration of "A Tale of Two Pavilions: Jewish Participation in Expo 67," delivered at Faces of Israel at Expo 67, Concordia University, May 23, 2017 and contains material drawn from Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

**2**

Nick Underwood, "Exposing Yiddish Paris: The Modern Jewish Cultural Pavilion at the 1937 World's Fair," *European Jewish Affairs* 46 (2016), 160-175.

**3**

Beverly Ray, "Analyzing Political Art to Get at Historical Fact: *Guernica* and the Spanish Civil War," *Social Studies* 97 (2006), 168-171.

**4**

In the years leading up to 1964 World's Fair held in the New York City borough of Queens with its theme of "peace through understanding," Israel's participation was uncertain. The Israeli government reserved a pavilion location in 1960, but backed out for budgetary reasons in 1962. Ultimately, the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry stepped in to create an American-Israel Pavilion. *JTA*, April 14, 2013.

**5**

As quoted in Jay Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Movements In the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 90.

**6**

Underwood, "Exposing Yiddish Paris," 163.

**7**

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Exhibiting Jews," in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 79-128.

**8**

Carlos Hugo Parra, "Standing with Unfamiliar Company on Uncommon Ground: The Catholic Church and the Chicago Parliaments of Religion," unpublished PhD. University of Toronto, 2012.

**9**

Richard Hugues Seager, "Pluralism and the American Mainstream; The View of the World's Parliament of Religion," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1982), 301-324.

**10**

In addition to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Exhibiting Jews," see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "A place in the world: Jews and the Holy Land at world's fairs," in Jeffrey Shandler, and Beth S. Wenger (eds.), *Encounters With the "Holy Land": Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture*, (Philadelphia: National Museum of American Jewish History; the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania; and the University of Pennsylvania Library, 1997), 60-82.

**11**

Robert, *Remembering Expo: A Pictorial Record* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 10.

**12**

Canadian Jewish Archives, CA box 92, file 1079, "Israeli Pavilion, 1967 World Exposition, Montreal," Consulate of Israel, Montreal, nd.

**13**

*Canadian Jewish News*, October 2, 2007, 18-19.

**14**

Troper, *Defining Decade*, 39-79.

**15**

This line of reasoning, that Jews are better served in Canada by presenting as a religious rather than ethnic group, led Saul Hayes to caution against Jews in Canada becoming advocates for what a few years later would become the federal Multicultural Policy. Richard Menkis, "A Case of Strategic Avoidance? The Canadian Jewish Congress and the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism," Paper delivered at the 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, July 2, 2004.

**16**

For a discussion of how Expo 67 came to have two Christian themed pavilions see Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebration and the Re-making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 138-156.

**17**

*Canadian Jewish News*, April 14, 1967, 12.

**18**

Interview with Harry Stilman, Toronto, December 29, 2008.

**19**

*Montreal Star*, July 22, 1966, 3

**20**

Ontario Jewish Archives, 1967, File 125. *Pavilion of Judaism*, nd. 4.

**21**

*Canadian Jewish News*, October 2, 2007, 18.

**22**

*Canadian Jewish News*, May 11, 2017.

**23**

Interview with Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, March 25, 2004, Montreal; Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, *The Gate of Heaven: The Story of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim of Montreal 1846-1996* (Montreal. Queen's McGill, 2000), 343-352; *Montreal Star*, July 22, 1966, 3.

**24**

As a Middle East war loomed in the spring of 1967, "all [Jewish fundraising] campaigns in Canada" were deferred to ensure the success the community's Israel Emergency Campaign.

Library and Archives Canada, W. Gunther Plaut Papers, MG31, F6, vol. 65. Ray Wolfe to Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, June 2, 1967.

**25**

Canadian Jewish Archives ZA 1966 box 1, file 14, Press Release of Foundation for Judaism, re: The Pavilion of Judaism nd; CJA CA box 92, file 1079; Pavilion of Judaism Project for Expo 67: Recommendations for Programming, August 16, 1966.

**26**

"The Universal an International Exhibition of 1967," *RBC Letter* 46/1, (January, 1967).

**27**

Troper, *Defining Decade*, 9-14.

**28**

Interview with Harry Stilman, Toronto, December 29, 2008.

**29**

Canadian Jewish Archives ZA 1966 box 1, file 14, Press Release of Foundation for Judaism, re: The Pavilion of Judaism nd; CA box 92, file 1079; Pavilion of Judaism Project for Expo 67: Recommendations for Programming, August 16, 1966.

**30**

Marvin Butovsky and Ode Garfinkle (eds and translators from Yiddish), *The Journals of Yacov Zipper, 1950 – 198: The Struggle for Yiddishkeit* (Montreal. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 138-139.

**31**

Lucy Dawidowicz, "American Public Opinion," in *American Jewish Yearbook, 1968* (New York. American Jewish Committee, 1968), 203.

**32**

Troper, *Defining Decade*, 122-162.

**33**

For detailed analysis of the Six Day War and the events leading up to it see Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York. Oxford, 2001) and Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East* (New York. Metropolitan Books, 2007).

**34**

An estimated two and a half million people are said to have visited the Pavilion of Judaism, eighty percent of whom were said to be non-Jews. Among those who visited the Pavilion were Montreal's Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger and Israel's President Zalman Shazar on a state visit to Canada. Shazar visited the Israel Pavilion before walking over to the Pavilion of Judaism in company with Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat. The next day the Shazar was recalled to Israel. War broke out shortly after his return. Interview with Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, March 25, 2004, Montreal; *Montreal Gazette*, May 30, 1967, 10.