

Introduction by Amir Lavie

## **Reflections/Réflexions**

The cover of the first volume of the *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, published in April 1977, was adorned with the Hebrew phrase, והגדת לבנך, “Ve-higadtah le’vinchah” [Exodus 13:8: you shall tell or “draw out” your son]. According to Victor Sefton, president of the then-newly formed Canadian Jewish Historical Society, the Passover motto was chosen to reflect the historical society’s, and its journal’s overarching goal: to ensure “that our children know who we are, and why we are what we are.”

Although the journal was established by a group of community activists and amateur historians, it also offered itself as a publication venue for the ‘intellectual children’ of its founders – the generation of young, Canadian-born, emerging academics who decided, and were able, to dedicate careers to researching Canadian Jewry. By 1994, these scholars helped transform the journal into a fully academic, peer reviewed, and bilingual publication. They expanded its disciplinary scope beyond history to include scholarship to any field or discipline and, fittingly, changed its name to the one it still bears today – *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes*.

Today, more than forty years after the publication of the Canadian Jewish Historical Journal’s first volume, the editorial team decided to revisit its initial vision. In installments over the next several volumes, we will publish reflections by the scholars who made up the founding generation of Canadian Jewish Studies, now nearing retirement, as they share their personal accounts about their career journeys as scholars of Canadian Jewry. Our hope is that by publishing these reflections, we help ensure that we, as an academic community, know more of the history of our field and remember, in Sefton’s words, “why we are what we are.” With no specific guidelines as to how or about what to write, we ask from our contributors to maintain an informal tone while sharing stories both personal – achievements, obstacles and challenges faced – and synoptic – broader insights on the past, present or future of Canadian Jewish Studies and Jewish life in Canada.

As much as we hope these contemplations will inspire the younger and emerging generation of scholars and researchers, this section can also be seen as a token of gratitude – to those who established the field, toiled to create its archival and published infrastructure, and produced the critical texts which we all rely on today.

Morton Weinfeld, a leading scholar of the sociology of ethnic and cultural groups in Canada, Chair of Canadian Ethnic Studies at McGill and Professor of Sociology at the university since 1977, and one of the founding fathers of Canadian Jewish studies, inaugurates the new sub-section, “Reflections.” We thank him for taking the time to share his insights with us and trust our readers will find his reflection inspiring and compelling.