

Calgary officially observes Holocaust Remembrance Day

By Richard Bronstein

(AJNews) - For the first time, the City of Calgary officially observed International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27 with an emotional commemoration that drew hundreds of people to city hall.

This date was designated Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2005 by the United Nations. The date coincides with the liberation 75 years ago of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp by soldiers of the Soviet Union. Over one million Jewish people were murdered by the Nazis at Auschwitz out of a total of six million Jews killed in the Shoah. Many Polish civilians, Roma, people with disabilities and LGBTQ people were also murdered in the Nazi death camps.

The observance of the UN's Holocaust Remembrance Day was made possible through the efforts of city councillor Diane Colley-Urquhart. Concerned that many Canadians, especially the youth, are unaware of the Holocaust, she put forward a motion that was adopted by city council last November to acknowledge January 27 as an annual city-wide day of commemoration. Calgary is only one of several municipalities in Canada to do so.

The observance at the city hall atrium was organized by Calgary Jewish Federation and coordinated by civic employees. A special Yad Vashem exhibit about the Holocaust was on display. Children's choirs from both the Halpern Akiva Academy and the Calgary Jewish Academy performed for the occasion. Cantor Russell Jayne sang *El Maale Rahamim*, the prayer for the departed.

Dahlia Libin, a volunteer with Calgary Jewish Federation, and a third generation Holocaust survivor welcomed the audience. She talked about how her own grandparents – all four from both sides of her family – were lucky enough to survive.

"I am very moved and proud of my city today that we are remembering those terrible events." She said it was critical to keep educating people about the evils of hatred and tyranny.

Holocaust survivor Sid Cyngiser, frail but still able, spoke about his personal experiences as one of those targeted for extermination by the Nazis. He was skin and



Participants in the City of Calgary Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration on January 27, 2020, gather on the steps at the city hall atrium. Participants included Holocaust survivors and their descendants, members of the Jewish community, and representatives of Calgary Jewish Federation. Mayor Naheed Nenshi is shown in the middle. Top left is Councillor Diane Colley-Urquhart who was responsible for bringing a motion to city council to declare January 27 an official day of Holocaust commemoration in Calgary.

bones when the war ended and he was liberated from the camps.

His mother and three younger sisters were murdered in the Treblinka concentration camp. His father had died of starvation.

Near death and abandoned by the world, Sid Cyngiser somehow managed to survive, met his wife to be – Bronia - also a survivor, and they managed to make it to Canada where they rebuilt their lives and became proud contributors to Canadian society.

Both Sid and Bronia have been very active over the years in Holocaust education efforts by digging into their personal pain to serve as witnesses so others will know exactly what actually happened in those dark years in Europe. They and other survivors serve as an inspiration for members of the Jewish community and others to embrace hope and combat hate and intolerance wherever it is found.

"I am so grateful to Canada for providing us a safe home," Cyngiser said. "We all have a responsibility not to allow the seeds of intolerance and hatred to take hold in Canada."

Mayor Naheed Nenshi built on the theme of sanctuary by reminding the audience that the work of inclusion, tolerance and understanding still goes on today.

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Chanukah celebrations across Edmonton



Edmonton Chabad Rabbi Ari Drelich lit the giant menorah at the Alberta Legislature Grounds with MP Kelly McCauley. Chanukah parties were also hosted by Temple Beth Ora, Beth Shalom and Beth Israel Congregations.



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New rabbi installed in Calgary

By Richard Bronstein

(AJNews) - It will be a bit of a family reunion when the House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel congregation in Calgary celebrates the installation of Rabbi Binyomin and Rebbetzin Malka Halpern at a gala dinner on Sunday, February 9.

That's because the evening will feature guest speaker Rabbi Aryeh Rockove, the father of Mrs. Halpern. For Rabbi Rockove it's a chance not only to meet members of Calgary's Orthodox shul, but to renew ties with his three Calgary grandchildren – Sarah, age 7, Ahuva, age 6, and Shneur, age 3.

The gala dinner taking place at the Carriage House is also honouring donors who participate in the Life & Legacy program of the Harold Greenspoon Foundation, that promotes after-lifetime giving to support important Jewish institutions, such as schools, synagogues and other

Jewish entities.

While the actual installation is a significant event, Rabbi Halpern and his wife Malka are certainly no strangers to Calgary. They came here late in 2017 to teach at the Halpern Akiva Academy. Rabbi Halpern also became assistant rabbi at the House of Jacob, under the tutelage of the retired Rabbi Yisroel Miller.

“I’ve long been an admirer of Rabbi Miller . . . I’ve read many of his books . . . so when the opportunity arose to come to Calgary, we seized on it with great enthusiasm,” said Rabbi Halpern.

Malka Halpern, a teacher by choice and by training (as a child she used to give “lessons” to her mother), loves her work at the school and is very pleased at how the dynamic young couple have been received in Calgary.

“It just seems to me that people here have a very wholesome attitude and take a well-rounded approach to life,” she said. “People are not so much in a rush like in the



Rabbi Binyomin and Rebbetzin Malka Halpern. The installation ceremony for House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel takes place on Sunday, February 9 at the Carriage House in Calgary.

big cities in the eastern U. S.

“Here they will actually stop and listen to what you have to say. People are very willing to work together on projects. If anything needs doing people are very eager to help each other out.”

Rabbi Binyomin Halpern met Malka when he was studying at New York's Rabbinical Seminary of America (Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim). After their marriage he joined the Yeshiva's Kollel program for six years. Upon receiving his rabbinic ordination (semicha) Rabbi Halpern went on to become a founding member of the Kollel at Yeshiva Tiferet Moshe at Hillcrest, New York.

Malka holds a dual major in education and special education, with a concentration in Judaic studies. As well, she has a master's degree in literacy and a teaching certificate from Misrad HaChinuch in Israel. She started teaching and directing programs at the Hebrew Academy of Nassau County in Long Island, a position she held for nine years.

Both Rabbi Binyomin and Malka Halpern come from rabbinic families where the stress was on building Jewish community.

“Seeing the path that my parents took in pursuing careers in Jewish leadership and the fulfillment that they received from those decisions, inspired me to want the same for myself,” he stated.


Rabbi Halpern was raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which like Calgary, is a bit off the Jewish main street in North America. But he learned to appreciate the tight-knit community and shared in the passion of most Wisconsinites – the Green Bay Packers.

Malka Halpern grew up in the Queens borough of New York city in a community of largely German Jews who escaped Hitler just before the war. Besides his rabbinic duties her father took a special interest in working with children who needed help with learning. He was also involved in summer camp, which gave the family a real love of the outdoors.

Rabbi Halpern is also a certified mohel and a sofer (scribe). He is the author of several books on Halacha (Jewish law) and topics including Hilchot Sta”m (scribal laws) and kashrut.

“Our HOJMI family has welcomed us from day one,” said Rabbi Halpern. “We love being part of such a warm community that is focused on spiritual growth and serving Hashem – each person in their unique way.

“If you are not yet part of it, please come and see for yourself.”



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Celebrating 10 years in YEG



On January 23, Chabad of Edmonton honoured Rabbi Mendy, Chaya Sarah Blachman and family for their 10 years of service to Judaism and the community in Edmonton. The event featured a number of pop-up speakers from the community who all spoke beautifully about how much the Blachmans have impacted their lives over the past 10 years.

B’nai Brith Lodge honours Brad Wall

(AJNews) - For years he has been heralded as one of Canada’s strongest political leaders, and on Thursday February 27 former Premier of Saskatchewan Brad Wall will be honoured at the 69th Annual B’nai Brith Dinner. In a conversation with Deborah Yedlin - Chancellor of the University of Calgary - Wall will discuss the lessons he has learned over a lifetime public service and his thoughts on the future of Canada. Wall’s strength as a leader is well known to most who follow politics in Western Canada, and since deciding to leave politics in 2018 Wall’s voice and opinions are continually asked of and respected.

Wall is able to speak directly to and tap into what many Canadians are feeling in the current landscape. He discusses the state of politics in Canada, as well as the economy, and he provides a refreshing Western Canadian perspective.

Each year an honouree is selected who has made a significant contribution to the community and Brad Wall is an excellent choice. “Mr. Wall’s accomplishments as Premier of Saskatchewan speak for themselves.” explains BB Dinner Co-Chair Perry Feldman. “We were very interested to learn about his philanthropic activities and have been keen readers of his various opinion pieces.”

Through Project Cypress, this year’s Dinner Featured Charity, Wall has been able to raise funds and help

support the RCMP National Remembrance Fund and Heritage Centre.

Brad Wall was Premier of Saskatchewan from 2007-2018. Since his departure from public life, Wall keeps himself busy operating his own consulting business that spans strategic, government relations and communications advice as well as a very small foray into the cattle business with his son. He is also a special advisor to the national law firm Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt LLP. He is an itinerant columnist for the BOE Report and the National Post and was recently named to the Advisory Board of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

Wall is the latest to join an illustrious list of recent honourees that includes former Alberta Premiers Klein, Stelmach, Prentice and Notley, Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi, and even National Hockey League Commissioner Gary Bettman.

The BB Dinner not only gives attendees a chance to see a political heavyweight in action, but also the strength of the young leaders in the Jewish Community. This year the Co-Chairs of the Dinner are Jordan Balaban, Perry Feldman, and Michael Men. “We were first exposed to B’nai Brith as teenagers during our time in the B’nai Brith Youth Organization,” says Feldman, and the three young

men are excited to keep the traditions they’ve learned alive and instill them in others as well.

“Each of us believes it is important that the younger adult members of our community take on leadership roles and co-chairing Calgary’s B’nai Brith Dinner was a great opportunity to put that belief in action. The Lodge has played a unique role in Calgary’s Jewish community for a very long time, and we are proud to be contributing to its legacy.”

The Annual Dinner is not only the Lodge’s major fundraiser for the year, but also one of the city of Calgary’s longest running fundraising events. A successful Dinner provide the Lodge with the resources to help support many of Calgary’s most beloved Jewish and non-Jewish community institutions and organizations.

In addition to dinner the evening will include a live auction, wine raffle, and a silent auction in support of BBYO.

On Thursday February 27, 2020 please join the B’nai Brith Calgary Lodge 816 in honouring former Premier of Saskatchewan Brad Wall at the 69th Annual B’nai Brith Dinner at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue. Doors open at 5:30 pm with a cocktail hour and dinner is served at 7:00 pm. Tickets are available by calling the BB office at 403-255-6554 or e-mailing bbcalgary@telus.net.

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Diane Colley-Urquhart is the 2020 JNF Calgary Negev Gala Honouree

By Cheryl Gurevitch and Elliott Steinberg

“If you see something...say something. If you say something...do something.”

(Calgary) - Diane Colley-Urquhart, a 20-year veteran of Calgary City Council, lives by these words. Diane has time and again been a voice for Jewish Calgary in City Council. Most recently, she has put her words into action by bringing forth a motion to Council to adopt International Holocaust Remembrance Day, observed on January 27th. As well, she is working on the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. In light of her history of support for Jewish causes, Jewish National Fund of Calgary has chosen Diane Colley-Urquhart as their 2020 Negev Gala Honouree.

Prior to her work on Council, Diane was deeply impacted by her extensive nursing career, spanning areas such as emergency, intensive trauma, and cardiac care.

“My 50 years of nursing experience brings a strong sense of compassion, fairness and helping to do what is right and do all I can to improve the quality of life of our citizens.”

Befitting her history in nursing, Diane will be honoured at the Negev Gala in order to raise funds for the Trauma Resilience Centre, in Sderot, Israel, just 8 kilometres from Gaza.

“When Elliott Steinberg, the Executive Director of JNF Calgary, told me about the Trauma Resilience Centre that provides therapy for children and adults suffering from PTSD – I was all in. Having run the Trauma Unit at Foothills, and having a deep understanding and insight into how traumatic incidents on youth and children can impact mental health for a lifetime, this was a perfect fit to make a tangible difference. Thousands of families in Israel are affected every day by the terror of living in emergency mode, and with little notice.”

The current Resilience Centre is located in a building that is neither reinforced for rocket attacks, nor accessible to those with disabilities, and is too small to accommodate the growing number of clients. Elliott was in Sderot last December and is delighted about this new partnership.

“JNF Calgary is very pleased to be honouring Diane Colley-Urquhart at our annual Negev Gala. Diane has proven to be a stalwart friend and supporter of Calgary’s Jewish community for more than two decades. The Trauma Resilience Centre will benefit tremendously from our collective philanthropy, in honour of Diane.”

Negev Committee co-chair, Gayla Rogers, who is the former Dean of Social Work and professor emerita at the University of Calgary, agrees.

“It’s not just Diane’s support for the Jewish community that I find compelling. Her commitment to human rights and the well-being of those who are vulnerable resonates with my values as a social worker. Her project will contribute to the mental health of many.”

Gayla’s husband, Brian, a Calgary lawyer and Negev Committee co-chair, concurs.

“Our relationship with Diane spans three decades, both as colleagues working together on fundraising initiatives and as close friends. I know her to be an honourable and trusted friend to the Jewish community, exemplified by her various actions on behalf of the people and causes she cares about deeply.”

Diane’s relationship with the Jewish Community dates back to her early nursing days at the Foothills Hospital, where she worked with a number of notable Jewish doctors. During this time, she joined the JCC, where she met many new faces and utilized the fitness facility and other amenities.

Diane’s son Bruce was enrolled in both ‘Jean’s’ Daycare at the JCC and the Calgary Jewish Academy, where she developed many friendships. At about the same time, she was hired by the Martin Family at the Beverly Nursing Home, where she helped arrange for the JCC Daycare children to come over every Friday to celebrate Shabbat.

Diane recently worked with Calgary Jewish Federation to advance a change in zoning for the Calgary Jewish Centre land, at both the provincial and municipal levels. Bruce Libin, past president of Calgary Jewish Federation, describes the collaboration with Colley-Urquhart.

“In each case, Diane was advisor, supporter and friend for our efforts with the City - quiet, behind the scenes, and of significant value.”

When asked about her motivation for the motion to recognize an International Holocaust Day in Calgary, and the working definition of antisemitism, Diane reflected on her interactions with Jewish community members over the years.

“I became more intimately aware of the impact and devastation of the Holocaust. I’m left speechless and breathless every time I meet survivors. I brought forward



Reading the declaration of January 27 as the city of Calgary’s official Holocaust Remembrance Day are (l. to r.) Mayor Naheed Nenshi, CEO of Calgary Jewish Federation, Adam Silver, and Calgary JNF 2020 Negev Gala Honouree Councillor Diane Colley-Urquhart, who was primarily responsible putting forward the motion to council to proclaim this as a solemn day of remembrance and education.

the Charter to Council which received unanimous support.”

Diane gained significant insight into antisemitism as a Police Commissioner for 13 years, and feels very strongly about educating youth so they understand antisemitism as it manifests itself today, in acts and words of hatred toward Jews.

The JNF Negev Gala honouring Diane Colley-Urquhart, will take place on Thursday, May 7th, 2020, at Beth Tzedec Synagogue. For information on tickets, advertising and sponsorship opportunities, please contact JNF Calgary at calgary@jnf.ca or 403-255-0295, or visit jnfcalgary.ca. Watch for more information in the *Alberta Jewish News* and JNF Facebook (@calgaryjnf)

Cheryl Gurevitch is currently serving as president of the JNF Calgary Board of Directors. Elliott Steinberg is the Executive Director of JNF Calgary.

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Serving lunch at the Bissell Centre

By Netta Phillet

The Inner City Pastoral Ministry (ICPM) is an ecumenical Christian organization serving the people of Edmonton's inner city. It began in 1978 and is now jointly sponsored by four denominations: United, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran. A Sunday morning worship service is held in the Bissell West building, followed by lunch served to anyone who wishes to come in for a meal; they do not have to attend the service. We refer to it as the Bissell lunch for simplicity. Different churches take turns through the year, supplying the food and servers.

In the mid 1990's we found out that the Sunday before Christmas was the most difficult to find a church to volunteer, and the Jewish community stepped up. Barbara Bushewsky was the initiator as I recall. For the first few years we made the sandwiches at Beth Shalom, 300 each of meat, egg and tuna, plus baking, desserts, cutting up fruit and vegetables, and more. It was a huge effort to organize, necessitating a large number of volunteers on Saturday night and/or Sunday morning. We needed someone who knew quantities, Dasha Goody (z'l) and Josie Peters both helped with this. And being in the shul of course all ingredients had to be kosher, increasing the amount of money that had to be raised. We couldn't even save time by bringing in eggs hard-boiled at home. It was wasteful to spend hundreds of dollars more to serve kosher food to non-Jews.

After a few years we developed the model still in use: up to 45 people make 2 (or often more) loaves of sandwiches at home and deliver to one of two drop off points, and baking as well. Ready to serve fruit and vegetables are



Members of Edmonton's Jewish community once again volunteered with the Inner City Pastoral Ministry to prepare and serve a pre-Christmas lunch at the Bissell Centre.

bought. Eighteen people arrive at 9 a.m. at Bissell West to prepare and serve. The picture shows our wonderful volunteers, with Anglican Pastor Rick Chapman in the front row, second from the right. ICPM is his full time ministry.

Everyone who takes part in this *mitzvah* finds it very meaningful, it is a hands-on, face-to-face experience, a rare opportunity to meet some of our less fortunate neighbours. Teens in particular find it eye opening. Participants often

asked if we couldn't do this more than once a year and were told to go ahead. Nikki Hayden and her kids helped many times, and about 8 years ago she began the Thanksgiving Sunday Bissell lunch, with mostly Beth Israel participants, but for both lunches there have always been volunteers from the entire Jewish community. Please watch for the notices next year if you would like to be involved.

Holocaust Remembrance

Cont. from page 1

"It is a solemn day, but we should also feel hopeful," he said, "because we have all come together here at city hall, the living room of our community.

"We are here today to say that all people are safe here, you're all welcome here. We have to keep recommitting ourselves to that struggle."

Tyler Shandro, MLA for Calgary Acadia and Minister of Health, brought a message from the provincial government to declare that Alberta is a welcoming province that rejects anti-Semitism and stands with survivors, their families and friends to mourn, acknowledge this unfathomable crime, and to educate future generations about the Shoah.

Yannai Segal, president of Calgary Jewish Federation, said one of the significant things about the date January 27 and the liberation of Auschwitz is that the world finally saw and acknowledged for the first time the true extent of the Holocaust. Although Jews and others had been trying to tell the world for several years of the mass killings and atrocities, their pleas were largely ignored or not believed.

"Never again can we be blind to such evils," he said. He stressed the importance of education about the Holocaust and other genocides.

Segal also expressed thanks to city of Calgary staff and staff and volunteers of Calgary Jewish Federation for creating a significant ceremony of observance.

One of the other speakers at city hall, Melanie Schmoll, carried on the discussion later in the day at the Calgary Jewish Community Centre to a standing room only crowd.

Dr. Schmoll is a German citizen who taught Holocaust education in Hamburg. She is now an adjunct professor of history at both Bar Ilan University in Israel and the University of Calgary. She has recently completed a comparative study of Holocaust education in Hamburg and in Alberta.

She says that while Holocaust education is a mandatory part of the curriculum in her native Germany, teachers are often not well trained in the topic and there are often not enough hours devoted to the subject. In Alberta Holocaust education is not mandatory, although some teachers do include it in their own lessons.

Dr. Schmoll said that because the Holocaust is such a deep, difficult and emotional subject, it can often frighten teachers.

Students can find the topic hard to deal with: for some it's like talking about the Roman Empire or something that happened thousands of years ago that has no relevance today. In Germany there is an added problem that many parents are fatigued, they just don't want to hear about these horrible aspects of World War Two.

Despite the challenges, Schmoll repeatedly stressed the importance of studying the Holocaust and its valuable lessons. She said that schools are important places where memory and culture are transmitted but that it is not only up to the schools – other institutions of society need to play a role to help create new values for a shared world.

In response to a question from the audience, Adam Silver, CEO of Calgary Jewish Federation, said a committee has been established to work with teachers, school boards and the provincial government to establish Holocaust education as a mandatory subject in the Alberta curriculum. He said he was hopeful the work would progress but there is no definitive outcome yet.

Calgary Jewish Federation on its own has a very active Holocaust education program. One of the pillars of the program is the Holocaust Education Symposium that it sponsors in partnership with Mount Royal University.

Each year hundreds of Calgary and area high school students are brought together for lectures, documentaries and seminars about the Holocaust. Calgary survivors participate in the program by telling their personal stories. Over the years some 30,000 Calgary high school students have participated in this unique program.

Richard Bronstein is a Calgary based writer and former publisher of the Jewish Free Press.

IT'S A BOY!

Dr. Regan Treewater-Lipes and Dmitriy Lipes welcomed their new arrival Jacob Avram Treewater-Lipes on December 24, 2019 much to the delight of his big brother Benji, and a loving group of family and friends.

It's a Girl!

Megan and Gabe Mandel welcomed Daniella Elizabeth (Elisheva) to their family on December 9, 2019. Mazal Tov to Bubbie Barb Mandel. Parents, family and friends are gushing over their precious baby girl.

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Burnstein’s ode to Robert Burns

by Maxine Fischbein

(Calgary) - The Bard is back as Beth Tzedec Synagogue once again rolls out the red carpet for one of Calgary’s best loved cultural fusions . . . Robbie Burnstein.

Burnstein originator Leonard Seidman, who built the quirky Scottish-Jewish party into one of Calgary’s – and Canada’s – biggest Burns Night celebrations is reprising the well-loved event after a three year hiatus, taking Burnstein back to its roots on February 13, 2020 with an intimate Burns Dinner for 100 lads and lassies.

As usual, the event will include all the iconic features of a traditional Burns Night Supper, including an *Address to the Haggis*, *Toast to the Immortal Robert Burns*, *Toast to the Lassies*, *Reply to the Lads*, and the always poignant *Toast to Absent Friends*.

Everything will take place in the pop-up *Schnapps and Schmaltz Pub* on Beth Tzedec’s lower level, the spot where Burnstein was first launched in 2012. While Seidman does not recall the exact source of his inspiration for the popular céilí, he acknowledges that “. . . some whisky may have been involved.” Any way you look at it, the enduring poetry and inspiration of Scottish National Poet Robert Burns – not to mention his preferred libations – are great excuses for a party.

Following the time-honoured piping in of the Haggis by members of the Calgary Police Services Pipe and Drum Band, attendees will enjoy a Highlands-inspired four-course gourmet and kosher dinner featuring prime rib carved at tableside and an array of sides including the ultimate culinary fusion – haggis knishes. The meal will be complemented by fine spirits and wine. As always, the décor and fashion for the event promise tartan as far as the eye can see.

While black tie is welcome and kilts are most certainly encouraged, anything goes, from plaid jackets to tartan ties, scarves or pantyhose (Yes, that IS a thing, lassies!). Those preferring to rent their kilts, complete with sporran,



Burnstein veterans Markham and Lisa Silver (L), Elaine and Stuart Myron, and Eddy and Nathalie Lang.

socks and other traditional accessories can do so at the Highland Shoppe, early supporters of the Burnstein Dinner who offer discounted rental rates for ticket holders.

While the original intention of Burnstein was to attract a younger crowd with one heck of a party, the event quickly attracted the attention and participation of a diverse cross section of folks within and beyond the Jewish community. Guests have gravitated to Burnstein from Edmonton, Red Deer and even New York City. By all accounts, it has been well worth the trip.

Members of the local Scottish community, in particular, have embraced the event, affirming its authenticity and appeal as a Burns Night celebration. Following the first Burnstein Dinner, Beth Tzedec partnered with other organizations in the community at large in order to raise significant funds for worthwhile causes including Calgary’s Prostate Cancer Centre and the PREP Program, a Calgary-based organization supporting children with Down Syndrome and their families.

“The 2020 Burnstein Pub Night will be short on formalities and more about FUNraising than fundraising,”

promises Seidman.

While there will be no silent or live auction this time around, the evening is the prelude to a much larger 10th Anniversary Burnstein Dinner and fundraiser in 2021.

“The Burnstein Dinner is a great way for Burnstein virgins [those who haven’t previously attended the Burns Night Dinner] to experience the fun of an event that’s been drawing crowds, first in Scotland and then worldwide, for more than two centuries,” says Seidman.

Due to the popularity of Burnstein amongst previous attendees, organizers are expecting a sold-out event.

The Robbie Burnstein Dinner will take place on Thursday February 13, 2020 at Beth Tzedec Synagogue, 1325 Glenmore Trail SW. For tickets and sponsorship information, please go to www.RobbieBurnstein.com.

Maxine Fischbein is a Calgary-based freelance writer. Thanks to Burnstein, she now loves Burns poetry with a side of single-malt whisky and a good cigar. Oy vey . . .

Jewish newspaper expands across Alberta

(AJNews) - Welcome to the inaugural edition of Alberta Jewish News. Calgary Jewish Free Press and Edmonton Jewish News have come together to bring a more cohesive and comprehensive news media to the Jewish communities of Alberta.

Building on the 30 years solid foundation that Judy Shapiro and Richard Bronstein built with the Jewish Free Press in Calgary and that Deborah Shatz and David Moser built with the Edmonton Jewish News, a rebranded Alberta Jewish News will now provide a platform for both communities.

“This is our soft launch combined edition with another coming out at the end of February,” noted Shatz. “Our Holiday editions (Pesach, Chanukah and Rosh Hashana) will remain separate with a Calgary edition reaching the Calgary community and an Edmonton edition reaching Edmonton.”

The rebrand was announced in the December 20 edition of Jewish Free Press in “A love letter to the Calgary Jewish Community” by Richard and Judy. The power couple described a bit about the history of the JFP and thanked the many people in Calgary who helped make the paper an integral part of the community.

“We’ve thoroughly enjoyed serving the Jewish community – but it’s time to retire,” write Judy and Richard.

“So, we are glad to say that there will continue to be a Jewish newspaper in Calgary. We have sold the assets of our business to Deb Shatz and Dan Moser, the mother and son team who publish the Edmonton Jewish News. This Chanukah edition will be our last. Deb and Dan will begin their journey with an edition in January.

“We’ve gotten to know them both over the last few months and even got the good word from our daughter Talia who went to Camp BB-Riback with Dan. We know them to be honest and hard working. They share our passion for creating a publication that supports Jewish community building. And Dan has the smarts and energy to create a full digital presence.

“It’s not going to be easy for them to bring the two newspapers together while still maintaining the strong identity of each city, so give them some room and please show support.”

Edmonton Jewish News is a treasured institution, well known and highly popular with all organizational groups and individuals, as part of the Edmonton Jewish Community.

“Our challenge will be to establish legs on the ground in Calgary so we can cover all the important events that take place in the Calgary Jewish Community,” said Shatz, “and we will need the participation of the Calgary business community. Calgary voices are vital, and we are looking forward to hearing and providing a solid platform for them in addition to the amazing community in Edmonton.”

Deb Shatz has been an active member of the Edmonton Jewish Community since the 1970s and involved with the Edmonton Jewish News since 1990. She also has strong ties to the Calgary community. Her father, Harry Shatz was Executive Director of the Jewish Community for over 20 years and he was in fact the first editor of the Calgary Jewish News.

“The fact is that my whole childhood revolved around the Jewish community of Calgary. My sisters and I attended every event and in our formative years, we worked for the community wherever possible.

“A strong, vibrant Jewish community is important to me,” noted Shatz, “and we’ll work hard to continue to build on the solid foundation that Richard and Judy have developed – one that reflects our energetic Alberta Jewish community.

Editor Dan Moser brings the perspective of young leadership into the mix. He explained that a print newspaper is not enough to get the word out to the whole community. In the last five years he has been at the helm of developing the online presence of the Edmonton Jewish News and has elevated it to one of the strongest Jewish voices in the city – across all age groups.

“We plan to maintain the high degree of excellence that the community has received through the Jewish Free Press and expand it to include an active presence in social media including a website, Facebook, twitter and weekly email newsletter,” added Moser.

“We’ve found that engagement levels with our readership have risen astronomically with the addition of our online presence in Edmonton and we are excited to bring that level of engagement to Calgary.”





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A MESSAGE FROM ADAM

Shalom Chaverim! Hello Friends! Before sharing a few thoughts about Inclusion and, specifically, JDAIM (Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month), I want to acknowledge the transition of the Jewish Free Press (JFP) to a joint publication now being distributed as Alberta Jewish News (AJN). The JFP has been a longstanding fixture in Calgary, and a primary resource for the Jewish community to learn about events, issues, and successes within, and related to, Jewish Calgary. I am confident that AJN will continue in the footsteps of the JFP, and will enhance exposure to its content through even broader distribution and through its digital efforts. As well, I am excited to see a strong Jewish Alberta community on display, since Calgary, Edmonton, and other communities will be included in one publication. Not to fear, though. I have been told that Calgary and Edmonton will also be covered under separate *Chagim* (Holiday) editions from time to time. I'd like to say *Todah Rabah* to the JFP, and wish AJN much success in their expanded venture.

Inclusion. Not excluding someone is significantly different than including them. The difference might seem like semantics, but I believe that the two intentions are quite different. To not exclude someone suggests that we are willing to have them present, to remove some minor barriers, and to recognize that an event, an opportunity, a group should be open to all. However, to include someone requires us to go further, to be mindful of engaging them, seeing their strengths, and valuing and enabling their participation.

Too often, we think that we are doing enough by simply opening doors. Unfortunately, once people enter those doors we do not always show that we value them,

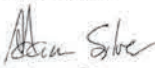
appreciate their strengths, or view their participation as critical to the whole experience. While Calgary Jewish Federation continues to be mindful of being even more inclusive year round, February and its annual reintroduction of JDAIM provides all of Jewish Calgary with a time to recommit to inclusion throughout the year.

In recent years, our community has seen greater efforts to be more welcoming to those who might need some accommodation to fully participate. We have seen a commitment by our community's organizations to coordinate professional and volunteer skills development in this area. We have experienced a greater breadth of programming and services which take different needs

and abilities into consideration. We have not simply been opening doors as a community, but have also made strides in taking that next step to being welcoming, inclusive, and thoughtful about how we might (and should) integrate people with diverse needs into our community.

However, we still have a long way to go, and not every place, program, or person is as welcoming as we would hope. As JDAIM launches again this year with an amazing essay contest for students, many arts and social programs, and with our community's organizations providing education and awareness programming on inclusion, let us all hear the call to action. Let us all renew our commitment to being more welcoming and more aware of the small or big things we might do to authentically and more fully include others. Let's not only open the door, let's invite people in and offer them seats at our table.

B'Shalom,



Adam Silver
CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

JDAIM

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Calgary Jewish Federation

MOVIE: INTELLIGENT LIVES

Wed. Feb.26 • 6:30PM • JCC • jewishcalgary.org

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Focus on Finance

Tax changes faster than Halacha

By Michael Sadovnick

(AJNews) - It's been an interesting year in tax. While I expected more changes than other years, it was actually quieter than anticipated. For those who are not aware, tax rules change much faster than Halacha where we still discuss the right way to do a Passover seder. I enjoy tax because of the constant change; I also enjoy my Jewish life for its consistency -a great counterbalance. With that, let's get into what I've seen the past year and what's coming.

CRA Tightening The Screws (on you – not the mythical foreign tax evader). Do you know who CRA sees as a tax evader? Anyone who has evaded tax. Did you pay cash and not pay the GST? TAX EVADER! Did you get a tip in cash and not declare it? TAX EVADER! As the saying goes – the only thing two taxpayers can agree on is how much a third should pay in tax – they call it their “fair share.” In the past year, I have seen increased focus on auditing vehicle expenses and in the next few years I expect audits on salaries to spouses. This is on top of the routine audits of childcare deductions, foreign tax credits (US taxpayers know about this), donations (I'm sure most have seen this one) and any “other deductions.” CRA probably makes a good chunk of money by taxpayers just not responding – hint: Get an Accountant.

More Income Games. The reliance on tax return income figures (gross and net income) is only going to increase. This is because the incremental tax revenue of each “income” dollar is growing faster than tax rates.

Raising money for the TTELC

The Talmud Torah Early Learning Centre had a great turn out to their Chanukah party and silent auction event on December 19th. Irene St. Savard, Director of the ELC said that, thanks to many wonderful families who donated items and/or bid on items, they raised nearly \$4,000! Proceeds will be used to support the Early Learning

Let's take a family with two children making \$62,000. If they earn an extra \$1,000 of additional income, they must pay 20.5% to the Federal Government, 10% to the Alberta Government, and incur a 13.5% reduction in Canada Child Benefit Payment for an effective rate of 44%! This is before any other non-tax world income tested items such as rent subsidies (income tested) or even community-based income tested programs come in to play. So, one can see the income trap families can get into: the more income tested benefits, the more incentive there is to reduce tax income. As a result, expect a greater increase in the games that are played to reduce income and increased audits by the CRA.

Greater Attempts to Tax Wealth. Given the above and incentives to move away from earning income, expect more government policies that will try to tax wealth, opposed to income. The common tools for this are tax on housing, tax on death, and luxury sales tax (i.e. Increased tax on sale of cars above a certain threshold).

Now, How About Alberta?

There are some tax changes to be aware of for 2020. Do you own a corporation that pays the ‘general’ corporate tax rate? Phasing in over four years you can expect to see a drop of Alberta’s ‘general’ corporate tax rate as it goes from 11% to 8% by 2022.

Are you an individual? Your taxes are going up in a subtle way. Generally, the tax brackets increase each year by inflation to ensure earning \$10,000 this year is the same tax as earning \$10,000 + inflation next year. However, that is not happening for 2020.

There has been an elimination of various tax incentives for corporations, including tax support for research and development, venture capital, and interactive digital media.

If you are a student resident in Alberta, you will no longer be able to get a tax benefit from the tuition you pay in 2020. Carbon tax rebates are coming in 2020 – a family of four in 2020 will get \$888 (not income tested)!

Federally?

There is a new Journalism Tax Credit for Digital Subscriptions. If you have a qualifying digital news subscription (t.b.d), keep your receipts. You can get up to \$75 back – and probably a CRA review of the claim.

Increased CPP contributions by you and your employer (5.25% each, 10.5% combined).

If you own an active business in a corporation making over \$50,000 in investment income, expect much more complicated corporate tax filings as the new passive income grind rules come in to play. Get a good accountant for this one!

And, last year's tax on split income rules will still be a pain. Get a good accountant for this too!

Now how about the US Tax Changes... just joking! No space for that.

If you're still reading – MAZEL TOV! If you want some help, feel free to reach out (michael@smllp.ca). If you want to discuss Halacha – speak with your Rabbi.

Michael Sadovnick CPA, CA, CPA (AZ), TEP, FEA is Partner at Sadovnick Morgan LLP, Founder of www.TaxForDoctors.ca.
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Best wishes to the Jewish Community, from

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Centre with brand new tables in the one year old room, as well as help with future programming that will continue to make the ELC an outstanding Centre. Families enjoyed delicious latkes, bagels and sufganiyot. A wonderful movie of each age group performing Chanukah themed songs and activities were thoroughly enjoyed by the nearly 200 who participated. Kids enjoyed face painting, cookie making, lego building and other activities, while the families bid on incredible artwork and other amazing items, including a signed Conner McDavid jersey, Oilers tickets, Century Hospital Group gift card, Vivo gift card, Wolf Willow Dental gift basket, among others. Thank you to all who participated to make this yearly event a success!



Proceeds from the fundraising will go to support the Talmud Torah Early Learning Centre.



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Focus on Finance

Are your investments getting enough exercise?

By Edward Jones

The New Year is a perfect time to get a head start on setting personal goals and to take part in physical activities you enjoy. The more active you are, the more efficiently your body will work.

This conventional wisdom can hold true for your investments: The more "exercise" they get, the more potential they have to work on your behalf.

Just how can your investments get more exercise? Through lots of activity in at least two ways: systematic investing and dividend reinvestment.

When you participate in systematic investing (also known as dollar cost averaging), you're continually putting your money "in motion." In other words, you put the same amount of money into the same investments at regular intervals. For example, you invest \$100 per month in Company ABC stock. You could even have the set amount sent directly from your chequing or savings account.

Of course, as the price of ABC stock, like those of all stocks, is constantly changing, your \$100 investment will most likely buy different numbers of shares each month. This can work to your advantage, because when ABC stock price goes down, your \$100 will buy more shares. When the price goes up, you'll automatically buy fewer shares, just as you'd typically buy less of something when its price goes up.

Over time, systematic investing typically results in a lower average cost per share than if you were to make sporadic lump-sum investments. If you can lower your investing costs, this may help boost your investment returns. This also can be an effective way to fund your retirement account(s) each year. (Keep in mind that systematic investing doesn't guarantee a profit or protect

against loss. You'll also need the financial resources available to keep investing through up and down markets.)

Dividend reinvestment is similar to systematic investing in that it lets you build more shares of an investment. But when you reinvest dividends, you don't even have to take money from other sources to increase your shares. Instead you can simply request that the cash dividend be reinvested into more shares of the same stock or mutual fund. It's an effortless way of adding shares. Similar to systematic investing, dividend reinvestment imposes investment discipline — you automatically keep putting money in the market during up and down periods. (Don't forget that dividends can be increased, decreased or eliminated without notice.)

Exercising your investment dollars in these ways can help you keep your portfolio in good shape, which can enable you to make healthy progress toward your long-term financial goals.

Chris Nelnor, CFP is a Financial Advisor at Edward Jones in Calgary. For information contact chris.nelnor@edwardjones.com.

What happens to your Digital Information if you are no longer here?

By Esther Allman Silberg

Have you ever thought about how you may access a spouse, parent or child's digital property if they were no longer able to do so? There are so many new privacy laws now that it may become a huge problem for you, your estate or executor.

Canada currently lacks legislation to give someone automatic authority to deal with your digital assets and although it's often easy to access paper versions, it is not so simple when records, documents, statements or even contracts exist only in digital form.

To save on "killing trees" many people do not ever print this information and it may be difficult to find out about an asset with a financial value, a bank account that is used infrequently, or any type of "trail" to suggest these accounts exist. Once you find them you may not be able to access them!

This is a fairly recent issue that may require you to re-do your Will or Power of Attorney documents to specifically authorize your executor or lawyer to have access to your digital assets.

I recommend that in order to help your executor or representative identify and deal with your digital assets you update your Will so your executor has the authority to access, modify, delete and preserve any digital assets, and perhaps have the power to hire and pay a computer expert.

You should also update your Power Of Attorney (POA) document for finances so your executor has the authority to access, modify, control or delete any digital assets in the event of mental incapacity and prepare a personal digital inventory that lists your digital assets, passwords, and gives some kind of guidance to the person responsible for accessing them. Make sure you include any digital assets with financial value because some companies delete a digital account and its content if it is not used for a period of time.

You can store the information or guide to your personal digital inventory with your will or important papers, but it is also imperative that you update them on a regular basis!

Since you should change your passwords frequently, you should get into the habit of changing the information on this document to update the information periodically.

It may be counter-intuitive to write this information down as we are all told not to do this – consider the consequences though if you don't. One possible solution might be to encode and encrypt your passwords as well as

store them separately from your master digital inventory and log book.

Ask yourself – if I got hit by a bus tomorrow, how or where would anyone find or know about my email, online banking, social media accounts, cloud storage, blogs, or anything else that I do online, on my phone, tablet, or computer that requires a login.

You should obtain your own legal advice for the current wording to use in your province.

Common types of digital assets include email accounts, social media accounts, banking and finance, Cloud storage, subscription accounts, photo storage and digital photos, blogs and websites, personal computer and other electronic devices, loyalty cards and other online accounts.

Currently there is no "best practice" method to complete and continually update digital information, but there is inherent value in gathering the information and keeping it secure.

Make sure that you let someone know that the document exists and where it is located similar to any other legal or important document. Tell your significant other, attorney, family member or executor; knowing that this will help them should there be some catastrophic event happen to you in the future.

Esther Allman Silberg is currently a practicing Financial Advisor and is co-owner of Insight Wealth Management Inc. in Calgary



Purchase Greetings for Passover

Our March 2020 edition will continue the tradition of featuring Passover greeting pages from individual community members wishing their family and friends a chag sameach.

Greetings are just **\$36** plus gst and a portion of the proceeds will go to covering subscription costs to Alberta Jewish News

To purchase your greeting visit:

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A Just Measure

by Eliezer Segal

The talmudic sages liked to muse about the ingenious wonders that manifest themselves in our world. In the bold idiom of the rabbis such items were designated as matters “that G-d thought of creating—but even if they had not arisen in his thoughts, reason dictates that he should have thought of them”!

Rashi explained that they were referring to things that are essential for human welfare, such as our emotional ability to resume our lives after intense mourning; or the way most edible produce is perishable in order to preclude monopolistic hoarding. Evidently the Almighty programmed those features into the creation so that they would eventually become advantageous to human society.

One opinion in the Talmud included among those items the institution of coinage—or, as Rashi understood it, the fact that money is accepted as currency.

Rabbi Samuel Edels (“Maharsha”) objected that this economic convention was too prosaic to be juxtaposed with more impressive instances of active divine tampering with the laws of nature or the human psyche. He therefore suggested that there must indeed be something miraculous in the universal consensus that is a prerequisite for the acceptance of money as the means of commercial exchange.

In a similar spirit, Rabbi Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad, the “*Ben Ish Hai*,” described the unlikely constellation of political and social conditions that are necessary for the introduction of a money-based economy. This is most apparent when we observe how the populace recognizes the government’s authority to mint coins whose intrinsic worth (as defined by the price of the metals from which they are fashioned) has no correlation with their official value. Although everyone is aware of this discrepancy, people accept the currency at its official value by virtue of its being the coin of the realm. He concluded that it must be by divine agency that society has accepted these improbable conventions.

This analysis dovetails well with the norms of commerce that were in force in the rabbi’s own generation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the talmudic era, however, the metallic content of coins was crucial to their functionality. Aside from the natural processes of erosion and deterioration, people were wont to

shave off and recycle imperceptible amounts of silver or gold, which would eventually lead to those debased coins being rejected as payment.

The Talmud discusses the legal status of eroded coins; how far they must be worn down before one may refuse to accept them or must remove them from circulation; and what are appropriate uses to which such coins may be put. In fact the Babylonian sage Rav Pappa criticized “wicked souls” who are overly scrupulous about the integrity of coins accepting only those that are in pristine mint condition.

It would appear, at any rate, that when the Talmud ascribed celestial guidance to the creation of a money-based commercial system, it had in mind something closer to the Maharsha’s interpretation than to the *Ben Ish Hai*’s—that there is something miraculous when an entire society agrees to ascribe value to an arbitrary-seeming means of exchange that does not seem to have any inherent usefulness.

The use of coins is taken for granted in the Torah. They are required for the fulfilment of several religious precepts, such as those involved in the “redemption” of sacred items—a process that usually consisted of the transfer of the sanctity from its original bearer to the coin.

Historians generally date the introduction of coin-based commerce at around 700 B.C.E. in Greece. According to the scriptural narrative, the earliest mention of a monetary transaction might be when Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah as a burial site for his wife Sarah for “four hundred shekels of silver.” However, if we look carefully at the wording of the text, we see that the patriarch “weighed out for him” (*vayyishkol*) the price of the field. Notwithstanding its familiar use as the name of a coin (as in modern Israel), the term “shekel” originally designated a measure of weight and not the denomination of a coin.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Halabo expounded G-d’s blessing to Abraham “I will make thy name great” in the sense of “his coinage [using the Roman term “moneta”] will be widespread in the world;” and proceeds to describe the images engraved on Abraham’s coins.

A rabbinic tradition assigned Abraham’s grandson Jacob a role in the origination of coinage. The Torah recounts

that he paid a visit to the town of Shechem where he “encamped before the city.” The Hebrew word rendered as “encamped” (*vayyihan*) is similar to a root meaning “favour” or “benefit,” which inspired rabbinic homilists to infer that Jacob was a generous benefactor to the town. The Babylonian teacher Rav explained that the benefit he bestowed upon the citizens of Shechem was the introduction of coins.

Rabbi Ezekiel Landau considered it implausible that a civilized town could ever have functioned without a monetary system. He therefore preferred to interpret Jacob’s contribution in a narrower sense: what he did was alter the physical form of coins. Hitherto the citizens had made their purchases with square coins—until Jacob came and replaced them with round discs.

According to Rabbi Landau the virtue of this new shape lay in its moral symbolism. A square evokes notions of solidity and permanence, stimulating the wealthy to smugly trust their material affluence.

A circle, on the other hand, is an apt image for the vicissitudes of existence, as human fortunes are subject to cycles of financial booms and busts. People whose change-purses are constantly reminding them of the vulnerability of their present affluence will not place excessive reliance on their material acquisitions; and as a result, they will be less susceptible to overbearing pride.

All this leads me to wonder whether the perceptible decline in ethical decline in recent times might be linked to our shift from round metal coins to paper, e-cash and bitcoin.

‘From the Sources’
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Education is key in the monument discussion

By Abraham Silverman

In the November 2019 edition of the Edmonton Jewish News Daniel Moser wrote a front-page article about a monument that was erected at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Center Complex in north Edmonton back in the mid-70s. This monument is erected in honor of a Ukrainian military leader Roman Shukheyvich. This article unleashed a flurry of activity in our community, both Jewish and non-Jewish, many who called me wondering what I was going to do about it. Recognizing that this was a very sensitive

issue that had the potential to do damage to the warm relationship that the Jewish and Ukrainian Communities in Edmonton enjoy I decided to proceed with caution.

I recruited some very capable members of our B'nai Brith Canada team and after exhaustive research these are our findings. The monument- partially funded with public dollars- pays homage to a man considered by many to be a national hero in the fight for Ukrainian independence, as well as a man who fought against the Soviets, Poles and Nazis alike. However, it is an inescapable fact that Shukhevyh had served as a willing leader- a Captain no less- of the Nazi Nachtigall battalion, alongside many Ukrainian Nationalists, and fought under the Nazi Flag, for Nazi interests and as part of Nazi Germany's elite military units.

Not only did Shukheyvich become the highest ranking officer in the battalion, he was in this position when the battalion was engaged in the murder of thousands of Ukrainian Jews, with estimates ranging between 4000 - 6000 in Liv alone, along with ethnic Poles, and innocent civilians of all backgrounds in Ukraine and neighboring countries. A practice which continued when Shukheyvich became a member of the Nazi Schuttmannshaft battalion 201 after the the dissolution of the Nachtigall battalion. Only after years of willful participation in wanton murder and destruction with both battalions did Shukheyvich distance himself from Nazi Germany.



B'nai Brith Canada’s position is clear. As a monument funded in part by the Canadian taxpayer, it is only right that history be laid bare. While removing the monument would be an avenue to consider, we appeal to the leaders of the Ukrainian Youth Unity Council Complex to do the right thing and have a plaque affixed to the monument elucidating Shukheyvich's history, so that those who visit the monument can learn the role Shukheyvich played in the destruction of lives of countless of people from all walks of life.

Abraham Silverman is Manager of Public Affairs – Alberta for B'nai Brith Canada.

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JNF Bike Mission: There is no better way to see Israel

(Edmonton) - In November 2019, fourteen cycling enthusiasts participated in JNF Edmonton's 2019 Israel Bike Mission.

The cyclists were all kitted-up in their brightly coloured cycling gear as they alighted from their bus at the Tzora Forest Planting Center on November 3. This was the first day of their second week in Israel and the only time since arriving that they did not start the day pedaling to some distant site. They were here to connect to the land with their hands for a change by planting some trees.

Waiting to meet them was KKL-JNF Forester Eran Zabadi, who warmly welcomed the group and led them up the hill to the tree planting location. Zabadi explained to his Canadian guests why tree planting in Israel was so important and so challenging.

"During your travels over the past week I am sure you cycled through several of our forests. Canadians forests are not new to you; however, unlike in your country, someone physically planted almost every tree you see in Israel. From the beginning of the last century, KKL-JNF has been very active in afforestation. We plant by hand and irrigate the saplings for several seasons until their roots are long enough and strong enough to support them. To date, we have planted almost a quarter of a billion trees."

Before handing out saplings to his guests, Zabadi told them they would be planting either pistachio or oak. "These are both native species that adapt well to our local conditions. In about twenty years' time, this plot with your trees will have developed into a fully-fledged forest."

When it was JNF cyclist Lisa Davidson's turn to receive a sapling, she asked specifically for an oak. "The oak is known for its strength and longevity," she said. "I want to plant a tree that will be around for a long time."

Jason Cairns, the Executive Director of JNF Edmonton, recited the *Planters' Prayer*. The participants then made their way to the pre-dug holes prepared for them alongside the drip irrigation tubes, where they placed the saplings into the ground and covered the roots with soil.

Cairns, the organizer of the Bike Mission, explained that while touring Israel by bike was a top priority for the participants, the tree planting ceremony was also high on their agenda. "Everyone on this mission is thrilled to be in Israel and was looking forward to this ceremony. This is our third biennial Israel Bike Ride and 10 out of the 14 participants have come along at least once before. All are residents of Edmonton except our oldest member, who is from Niagara Falls."

Cairns said that he came up with the Bike Mission to Israel idea some four years ago when he was looking for a unique way to present Israel to first-time visitors. "The response was phenomenal. We found that this was an exciting way to see Israel. Look at this group, for example. The ages range from 25 to 82. Not all are bikers, and their skill levels vary greatly. In fact, they vary in every way possible and that promotes interesting dialogue. After our arrival on Monday last week, we rode throughout the



Fourteen cycling enthusiasts participated in JNF Edmonton's 2019 Israel Bike Mission. The trip was magnificent. "I have never experienced Israel so intensely," noted Gary Wolch.

north of the country daily until Friday. It was tough but loads of fun and very interesting and educational. We spent the Sabbath resting in Jerusalem and today, after the tree planting and a brief visit to the Tzora Winery, we will be back on our bikes heading south."

One of the enthusiastic Israel Bike Mission first timers was Gary Wolch, who is married to an Israeli and has been to the country many times before. "I have never experienced Israel so intensely. Riding in the open air together with others on an organized tour is a winning combination. Everything is up-close and in your face. I saw places and scenery that my wife's Israeli family has never been to."

Edmonton resident Ken Soroka was another first timer on the tour. Ken said that his most unforgettable experience so far was while riding on the Golan Heights. "We came across soldiers of the Golani Brigade in training. It was magnificent watching those youngsters in action. Later they literally held their fire so we could ride across the area."

Incoming JNF Edmonton President Erin Wright said, "This is a fabulous way to experience Israel. From the vantage point of a bike saddle, one can see, touch and smell the country. There is nothing like it." Erin and his 80-year-old father Harvey Wright from Niagara Falls have both participated in all three Bike Missions. Erin said that his father is an avid bike rider and has had no difficulty whatsoever in keeping up with the group. "Dad cycles long distance regularly at home," he added, "and I think he could still outride many of us."

Harvey, who was wearing a 2017 Israel Bike Mission

riding shirt, said that in the early days, he brought his son on trips to Israel and now Erin brings him along. "Our first trip to Israel was in 1980 when the family came to celebrate Erin's Bar mitzvah at the Kotel, the Western Wall. Since then we have been countless times. Last year we were at the Kotel once again to celebrate my youngest granddaughter's Bat Mitzvah. In between all that I manage to take part in the bike rides and I hope that I will manage to continue visiting Israel in the years to come."

Retired Edmonton accountant Jerry Glasser, who was filming the entire trip with his helmet-mounted video camera, said that he was looking forward to start viewing and editing the material. "We have been on the most beautiful routes. Some were quite difficult as well. Probably the most difficult site to reach by bike was the ascent of Mount Bental overlooking Syria. However it was so beautiful that the tough climb was worth it."

After the new trees were safely ensconced in their new home, Jason Cairns presented each participant with a personalised KKL-JNF tree-planting certificate.

The group was then ushered back onto the bus by Dolev Arbeiter, their KKL-JNF tour guide, for their next stop that morning: A short visit to the nearby Tzora Winery to sample the local wines. Arbeiter warned them not to drink too much and not to linger because they still had a rough 30-kilometer cross-country ride ahead. "We plan to mount our bikes and ride across the beautiful KKL-JNF British Park and then continue west to the area of the Masmiya Junction. And that," he told them, "is all before lunch."

For more information about Edmonton JNF contact Jason Cairns at edm@jnf.ca.



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Calgary Jewish Academy's Grade 8 students spending some quality time with the Kindergarten class and CJA students taking part in the annual Ski Day at Calgary Olympic Park.



Why Jewish Day School?

By Lesley Machon

(AJNews) - At Calgary Jewish Academy (CJA), students walk down the halls on Friday hearing the prayers of Shabbat, the sounds of locker doors and zippered binders creating a chorus with prayers thousands of years old. In this way, generational legacies are forged and nurtured, ensuring traditions and teachings of centuries past continue to find their place in the Jewish homes of tomorrow.

“Culture” as an umbrella term, refers to the practices, languages, values and world views expressed by a social group. Questions of culture are questions of community, belonging, and identity. All parents want to raise healthy, resilient children, though we often underestimate the role that culture plays in an individual’s developing sense of self. Being rooted in cultural identity offers us the structure and support needed to engage in meaningful ways with the world and find each of our places in it. At CJA we offer a dual curriculum, which expands beyond

provincial mandates to cover important gaps missing from the Alberta history curriculum (such as the history of Europe). Our approach also incorporates a full Judaic curriculum which explores the history, and the heart, of the Jewish people. Our educators strive to offer students a broader understanding of the world, so they may anchor their personal histories and experiences inside those of the collective.

Learning the stories and histories of Jewish people is important because as a broader Canadian culture, the lives and experiences of minorities are often sidelined and skimmed over. As humans, we seek to make meaning of our daily experiences by linking events together in a particular sequence across time, and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them. This meaning forms the plot of the story we tell ourselves, use to construct societal norms. In the retelling of stories, there are always events that are not selected, based upon whether or not they fit with the dominant plots. The experiences of various cultural and minority groups are often sub-texts and seeking them out expands the story we tell ourselves

about the world. This creates more room for unique experiences and diverse expression, both in our communities and across the globe, which leads to less isolation and more room for differences. Only people who are connected to their own cultures, and willing to listen to the stories of other cultures, can truly build an inclusive multicultural nation.

In addition to the benefits of belonging to a community with a strong sense of cultural identity - such as security, trust, and access to social networks which provide support and shared values - students at CJA are given the opportunity to learn three languages: French, English, and Hebrew. They are also invited to participate in various celebrations and assemblies for Israel’s birthday (dressed in blue and white), Hanukkah (the smell of latkes clinging to sweater threads), and Passover. These celebrations connect us to Israel’s history as a nation and remind us of our responsibility to learn from and incorporate the teachings of our ancestors. In this way, by honouring the past, we begin to build a future.

Ms. Lesley Machon is the Junior High Humanities teacher at the CJA.

Contemplating Earth-focused Judaism: Should we plant trees on Tu B’Shevat?



Rabbi Gila Caine

By Rabbi Gila Caine

In honor of Tu B'Shevat, I'm going to point us in the direction of “*Forest gardens*” which is an alternative, tree affirming agriculture. Adding a layer to that, I'd like to introduce you to the “*Shmita network*” and to ways in which many contemporary Jews are reconnecting to the ancient practice of Shmita, out of respect and care for our land (be it Canada, Israel or Australia).

Let’s begin by stating the obvious – I’m not a farmer, and so cannot speak to the experience of farmers, here or elsewhere. But I am a rabbi, a mother, a human living on Earth, and so – I must make my voice heard and use all my creativity and care, so future generations have a livable world to enjoy.

On Tu B'Shevat we celebrate our connection to trees and notice our dependence on their fruit. This celebration has taken on many forms over the generations, and some key elements that have prevailed are a ritual eating of fruit and, where it makes sense and is timely, by planting saplings.

I would like us to focus on this practice of planting new trees, and ask ourselves, at this time – what is more urgent: planting new trees or protecting older trees from being cut down. This isn’t an either/or situation and of course we must do both. But what is more urgent?

“Humans have been cutting down forests for thousands of years, practically since they invented agriculture,” write the Union of Concerned Scientists. “Although forests themselves can be a source of many kinds of foods and useful products, fundamentally forests and agriculture are in conflict since, in many parts of the world, trees must be cleared to grow crops or graze livestock.” (From: *What is driving Deforestation today?*)

We are currently cutting down trees to make room for agriculture at a faster pace than any previous time in human history. Our needs are great and so is our hunger, and nothing seems able to stand in our way of gaining more tree-free land for our food and cattle (which are also our food). And on the other end, we are planting so many millions of trees, as a form of compensation for the trees

we are cutting down, and out of a hope and belief that these baby saplings will help us reduce the levels of carbon in our air.

But that’s not exactly how it works.

Not all trees capture carbon in the same way, and trees in tropical regions apparently capture carbon more efficiently than those in more temperate climates. And, returning here to Tu B'Shevat and to our tree-planting efforts – trees must be mature in order to arrive at their best carbon-capturing abilities. Baby trees are not as strong at this job as adult trees are.

So, for this and for many other reasons, most environmental thinking nowadays urges us to act towards protecting trees we already have, before spending time and money on planting new one.

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? (Deuteronomy 20:19)

Trees cannot run away from us, and even in times of war and great need we are commanded to protect them. This often-quoted verse from Torah reminds us, once again, to pause before acting, and to know that not all the world is ours to use. This is a basic Jewish understanding of our relationship with the world and lies at the very foundations of our definition for what makes something Kosher.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya recalls in the Talmud, how he had only ever been defeated in argument by a woman, a young boy and a girl. Here is the story of his encounter with the girl:

“One time I was walking along the path, and the path passed through a field, and I was walking on it. A certain young girl said to me: My Rabbi, isn’t this a field? [One should not walk through a field, so as not to damage the crops growing there.] I said to her: Isn’t it a well-trodden path [in the field, across which one is permitted to walk?] She said to me: Robbers like you have trodden it.” (Talmud Bavli Eruvin 53:b)

Our current behavior of over - consumption has trodden proverbial and actual paths in the forests. And since we’ve been doing it for so long and in so many places, it seems like the paths have always been there. But the fields of our world are growing thinner, and the flat trodden paths wider, and we are behaving like robbers.

And no number of trees we might plant will help replace the trees we are cutting down.

Looking on the bright side, I know and believe that we humans are better than that, and that like Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya, we can pause and notice our actions in this world. And stop.

Two things we can research when we stop and think this year on Tu B'Shevat:

Forest gardens: The practice of planting fruit and nut trees together with various vines, vegetables and other beneficial plants is not a new one. This is what forests look like, and humans probably knew long ago how to re-create eco-systems where a variety of plants supported each other in growth. In the 1980s this system was redeveloped and adapted for temperate climates, so that people in many places could enjoy a sustainable form of agriculture. Even here in Edmonton we have groups working at developing local forest gardens, for the benefit of all of us who live up here.

Our need to eat and be nourished is as important as any other living creature on earth, and by finding sustainable and respectful ways of doing so we are living better human lives, and better Jewish lives. If this catches your imagination, I encourage you to go and research forest garden, and see what you can implement in your own life. The trees will thank you.

Which leads me to the Shmita Network: One thing I can learn from trees is to take things slowly, and to periodically stop growing. To just be.

Torah is the Tree of life, and from that tree I also learn about periodically resting – we do this every Shabbat, on the seventh day of the week, and the Earth should be doing this every seventh year, on the Shmita. Originally Shmita took place only within the land of Israel, but in the past decade (ever since the previous Shmita year and leading up to the next one in 2022) - Jews all over the world are working on making Shmita happen in other places as well. We gave the gift of Shabbat to the world, thus making human life better, and now we are ready to teach ourselves and others about Shmita thereby helping to heal our Earth. Some of us at Temple Beth Ora are starting to learn and explore this, and I would like to invite anyone from within our Jewish community, who might be interested in learning about Shmita and what that might mean in Alberta, to join us.

May this Tu B'Shevat help us reconnect to trees around us and to our Tree of Life.

Rabbi Gila Caine is the spiritual leader at Temple Beth Ora, Edmonton's Reform Jewish Congregation.

This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School



It has been a busy month for teachers and students at Edmonton Talmud Torah. Students are currently getting ready for their big Tu B'Shvat celebration, where they partner each year with JNF Edmonton to raise money for tree planting in Israel. Pictured above the students' art projects are for Tu B'Shvat - Festival of Trees.

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Project Warmth Society, Alberta Champions Society and Operation Kickstart Society would like to express our thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers, supporters, sponsors and partners who helped to make our 21st Annual Christmas Carol Gala the best ever.



Gordon Hoffman, Kim Falk and Assistant Deputy Chief Guido Falk, City of Calgary Fire Department



(left to right) Eva Hoffman, Her Honour Lois E. Mitchell, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Gordon Hoffman, Chairman Project Warmth Society of Alberta and His Honour Douglas Mitchell



Gordon Hoffman, Eva Hoffman and Gary Strother, Chief Superintendent, Calgary Catholic School District

The 21st Annual Theatre Calgary production of “A Christmas Carol” benefiting Project Warmth Society, Alberta Champions Society and Operation Kickstart Society has brought together, in the happiest of Christmas traditions, 450 disadvantaged students from schools across the city of Calgary. The students were bussed to and from the venue at The Arts Common to view the presentation of Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol”.

In addition to the live theatre presentation, which many of the students and parents had not had the opportunity to previously see, they were treated to a sumptuous, catered buffet, various goodies from the magnificent Candy Lane, chocolate covered caramel apples, gift certificates and presents.

To witness the wondrous gleam and joy in their eyes, brought a fulfillment of happiness and spirit of undeniable goodwill to all involved. Many of the students have written to say that the evening was the very best day of their lives. It truly doesn’t get any better than that.

As stated at the Gala, by the Chairman of the Societies’ Gord Hoffman:

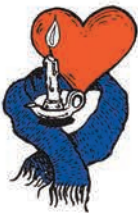
“Theatre Calgary’s production of “A Christmas Carol” poignantly reminds us all of the difficulties encountered by many in eking out a bare existence and the struggle of mortals to secure the most basic of necessities for their survival. It also warmly relates the pleasure felt in giving, sharing and being charitable, and the strong sense of satisfaction and fulfillment realized in helping others.”

“It is the 21st Anniversary of Project Warmth hosting the Christmas Carol Gala and in that time, over 10,000 children and their families have attended the Gala. We are honoured to be sharing and celebrating this milestone with you on this evening.”

Our thanks go out to the hundreds of very generous people who support our worthy charities throughout the year.



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