



# ALBERTA Jewish NEWS

Publication Mail Agreement Number: 40050628

Volume 32, No. 6

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June 21, 2021

## Camp BB-Riback unveils its summer plans

The Alberta Government's announcement that overnight camps could open with restrictions during "Stage 2" of the province's reopening plan was some good news for Camp BB-Riback.

"It is with immense relief and excitement that we have moved forward with our plans to provide the community with some much-needed camp experiences this summer in the form of the first-ever BBRLTC (BB-Riback Leadership Training Conference), as well as Family Camp," announced Camp Director Stacy Shaikin.

The BBRLTC is a new program spanning 4 weeks, from July 15 to August 15, for campers who have just completed grades 6-11. The cost is \$4500 per camper, plus GST.

"This will be a one-time, unique camp experience and we will be cramming 2 years of leadership training, staff training, and camp experience into 4 weeks," stated Shaikin. "We are so excited about it and hope that you are too!"

If you are interested in the BBRLTC and in need of financial assistance, contact the Federation in your city to discuss the Integrated Bursary Program (IBP), noted Shaikin. This program has been extended and can take into account extenuating circumstances related to the pandemic. Additionally, if the fees are an issue, feel free to reach out to Shaikin directly (403-471-5547) and he will help you through the process.

Camp will send out the protocols for the summer, along with the parent manuals, to everyone who has registered for the BBRLTC. However, here are some guidelines you can expect, said Shaikin.

The program will be limited to 70 campers to ensure Covid-19 protocols can be followed and enforced. All participants must have at least one dose of an approved Covid-19 vaccine, unless a doctor has determined by examination that is not possible for health reasons. Proof of vaccination or a doctor's note must be provided.

A PCR Test, which is a test for Covid-19 available through private labs, will be required in the 72 hours before your child's arrival on camp, and negative test results must be provided. The cost of this test will be paid by families.

## Grade 4 TT students take science outside



Edmonton Talmud Torah grade 4 students take their science class outside.

Each camper will be driven up by their parent or guardian and directed to a rapid test centre on camp. Once a negative test is determined, the camper will be escorted to their cabin and the parent/guardian must leave the grounds immediately. If they test positive, the camper must leave camp right away as well.

Cabins will have a smaller number of campers in them than in regular years and campers will be separated into 2 pods. This will be their programming pod and the group they will eat with in the chaddar.

On day 3 of the BBRLTC program, each camper will be tested again with a rapid test.

The program will include: swimming, water skiing, filmmaking, yoga and mindfulness, leadership and staff training sessions as well as First Aid and CPR. Each participant will go home a certified First Aid/CPR provider.

"I am so excited about these plans and think this is

going to be an incredible summer for those who can participate," added Shaikin.

"With all that said, I know there are campers and staff who won't be able to attend this summer for various reasons. I am still heartbroken that we aren't able to have you all out at Pine Lake this summer. Please know that I am thinking of you and doing everything I can to help navigate camp through these unprecedented circumstances and ensure many incredible summers for everyone in years to come. I can't wait to see you again soon!"

"For the 70 of you who want the most unique camp experience in 65 years...we are ready to give it to you," concluded Shaikin. "See you at the lake."

Family Camp is fully booked from August 17 – 22 but there is still availability from July 1 to July 12 with both the pool and the boat running and available to participants.

For more information visit [campbb.com](http://campbb.com).

## Alberta announces new Hate Crimes Unit

The Alberta government has announced the creation of a new provincial Hate Crimes Coordination Unit. This unit will work with law enforcement to improve and harmonize hate crime mitigation efforts across the province and facilitate training opportunities, intelligence gathering and investigative supports. This includes strengthening the approach to successfully prosecuting individuals charged with hate-motivated crimes.

The government will also appoint a community liaison on hate crimes - an advisor based out of the ministry of justice. That person will consult with ethnic, religious and LGBTQ communities, as well as the Anti-Racism Advisory Council (ARAC).

"Hate-motivated crimes and racism are unacceptable – full stop," stated Alberta Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Kaycee Madu. "We're taking action to help support and empower the communities and groups most affected by this deplorable behaviour. In light of the recent attacks on Canadians simply because of their chosen faith, I hope the new community liaison and Hate Crimes Coordination Unit show Albertans our province is

fully committed to protecting those being targeted."

"We applaud the decision of the Alberta government in the creation of a Hate Crimes Unit in Alberta," stated the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. "This is an important step to make sure that all vulnerable Albertans, including our own community, are safe. No Albertan should have to live in fear simply because of their race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation."

A new Alberta Security Infrastructure Program that will help protect targets of hate-motivated crime with funding for security upgrades was also announced.

Starting this fall, religious and ethnic organizations and Indigenous groups that are at risk of being targeted by hate-inspired violence or vandalism will be able to apply for grants for security and technology improvements.

"As we've tragically witnessed, religious and ethnic minorities in Canada remain at risk of being targeted with hate-motivated crime," stated Alberta Premier Jason Kenney. "These cowardly acts of bigotry have no place in our province. Alberta's government stands shoulder to

shoulder with these communities and is proud to deliver on our election commitment to help keep them safe."

Funding for upgrades to facility infrastructure, including security and monitoring systems, will help protect both individuals and property from vandalism and other criminal acts. The program will be flexible and accessible enough to address a range of protective measures, such as security planning, education and training.

"Complex problems such as hate crimes and racism place an incredible burden on vulnerable Albertans," added Minister Madu. "The Alberta Security Infrastructure Program will empower these Albertans and their communities by providing additional layers of protection for those in need."

The initial call for grant applications will take place this fall. A total of \$500,000 will be available, with applicants eligible for up to \$10,000 to assist with training and security assessments, as well as up to \$90,000 for security infrastructure. More information will be available in the coming months.



## Outdoor Play Areas at the CJA

**By Lesley Machon**

It is with great excitement that CJA is announcing our new outdoor play spaces! These new spaces include sections dedicated to our youngest students (nursery to ECS), as well as special considerations for outdoor learning specific to grades one to nine. The space was created with many developmental considerations in mind, to support discovery and exploration for all ages, and structures are crafted entirely of wood and natural materials. For what it's *Earth*, nature is our original medium for self-directed play! Natural play areas provide so many possibilities for imagination, inventiveness and creativity.

Many contemporary theories of education speak about the environment as a “third teacher” in supporting children’s learning. A child’s physical surroundings make a critical contribution to their wellbeing, creativity, developing independence, and expanding social skills. Natural resources, with their complexity in shapes, textures and colours, provide a diverse range of experiences that promote children’s learning and development. The outside playground will also facilitate children making meaningful connections between the theoretical and the practical, by relating classroom concepts to the tangible, sensory, and aesthetic elements of nature. For example, JK students have an entire unit exploring the life cycle of the butterfly and insects. Engaging in free play outdoors, students can discover spider webs stretched across vine climbers, or hunt for beetles under the shade of a slide, connecting real life to what they’re discovering in class.

The Calgary Jewish Academy Nature Space provides

opportunities for hands-on learning, sensory stimulation, and a safe learning space for students. The natural outdoor play area is a space to explore, experiment, have fun, and play together. The space will focus on supporting physical development including motor skills and coordination with a wood stump pathway, and multi-level logs as an outdoor bridge. Sensory play elements incorporate a mud kitchen, water table, and sand box separated by sections of grass and bark mulch. Artistic considerations within the space include a wooden stand-up easel, an outdoor art aisle, and a wooden picnic table for crafts and snacks. The kids will also have a garden space to grow their own vegetables, and flowers, learn about plants, and practice nurturing new life. There are also many elements of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) built into the space, such as the water table where children experiment with manipulating the flow of water. The entire design of this space supports creativity and inquiry-based learning, teaching kids about art and science the way young children learn best: with lots of fresh air and hands-on activities.

CJA also branched out to include three outdoor classroom spaces for our grades one to nine students. The opportunity to learn outdoors in a safe learning environment is hugely supportive for CJA children, especially after a year of isolation and so much screen time. This includes stump seating areas sheltered by trees, as well as a large gazebo to weather-proof our learning. Being outdoors and providing a natural environment for children to interact with is also important for self-regulation and mental health. Giving students a chance to escape fluorescent bulbs and blue light to be in nature is a great source of relief for our nervous systems, helping to



reduce stress and improve focus. This is especially important post-COVID, and also for children who are neurodivergent, or have complex learning needs.

There are so many benefits to this new space! Simply being outdoors is a great way to offset the cumulative impact of our sedentary lifestyles and traditional learning environments. Nature is such a powerful resource for our minds and mental health that there is a whole field of therapy dedicated to being in relationship with the natural world (ecotherapy). Facilitating outdoor play and learning is just one of the ways the students at CJA are treated and taught as whole humans, with attention to their mental, social, relational, and emotional wellbeing.

These outdoor learning spaces have been generously supported by the Calgary Jewish Federation through the Jewish Together Fund.

We look forward to seeing your child out in these learning spaces more in September!

*Lesley Machon is a Humanities Teacher at Calgary Jewish Academy.*

## Jewish leaders express solidarity with the Muslim community

Jewish leaders across Canada joined politicians and other community leaders in solidarity with the Muslim Canadian Community in speaking out against the horrific hate crime that took place in London Ontario on June 6.

In a pick-up truck, twenty year-old Nathaniel Vertman struck a Muslim family of five on Sunday evening in London while they were out for a walk, and all but one of them were killed. The deceased were described in a statement as “pillars of their community, who attended mosque regularly, volunteered and were kind and helpful to everyone,” Salman Afzaal, his wife Madiha, their daughter Yumna and Salman’s mother. Nine-year-old Favez Afzaal survived the attack and “is on the road to

recovery from serious injuries.”

The Jewish community in London issued a statement that they were united in grief over the hate filled incident.

"The London Jewish Community is horrified by this murderous act of Islamophobia. Our hearts are heavy and we mourn along with the Muslim community of London Ontario at this unspeakable loss of life. No person should have to live in fear because of their faith or beliefs. Our prayers are with the family and all of Canada's Muslim communities."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Doug Ford were among the leaders who spoke out against the hate crime, along with many officials across Canada.

Speaking in the House of Commons Tuesday, Prime Minister Trudeau referred to the incident as a “terrorist attack.” Both he and Premier Ford attended a vigil in London.

Politicians and other faith based communities also sent expressions of grief and solidarity.

“Our hearts are broken by the horrific attack on a Muslim family in London Ontario which left four family members dead and a nine-year-old child with serious injuries,” stated the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) in a statement.

“Canada is not Canada without its vibrant Muslim community. We join Jewish Canadians across the country to affirm that an attack against one of us is an attack against us all.”

Bernie Farber, chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, called the killings “absolutely horrifying.” It’s a “worst nightmare” when people “are targeted for the colour of their skin, or for (the) G-d that they pray to, and someone believes that they shouldn’t live,” Farber said.

*Continued on page 3*

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# Todah Rabah Sylvia Benjamin

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

As Edmonton’s premier religious Jewish day-school closes its doors, sending its final class of graduates out into the world, there is much to lament, but also to celebrate. Menorah Academy families are taking the opportunity to share all the good memories accumulated over the past decades. But perhaps there is no one with a longer memory for Menorah Academy than its Office Manager, Sylvia Benjamin. “Look,” she would often say to Vice-Principal Michelle Smith holding up a paper clip, “I’ve been here since the very first paper clip.”

During a month hiatus from her job at the former Jewish Community Center, Sylvia was recruited to approach families in the community to stir up interest in a new religious Jewish school. “They sat me down in the Triple Five office with the Edmonton Jewish phone book, and I started dialing,” she recalled in a recent phone interview. “By the time I was finished, we had around one hundred families sign their kids up for Menorah Academy.”

The school started out in an open space of the West Edmonton Mall with dividers to create working classroom environments. “Mr. Ghermezian asked me to stay on,” Sylvia explained with an audible smile. “So, I left the job I had been doing, and started at Menorah.” The rest is history!

“My role was in the office, but it was everything, and I was one person; ordering books, payroll, keeping track of teachers.” When asked what inspired her to make such a big change, Sylvia revealed a fascinating personal history.

“Education was always very important in my family. I grew up in India; we are Jews from India, and my great-grandfather founded the first Jewish school in the country.”

Named for Sir Elly Kadoorie, the school still stands, and operates today. “Because education has always been so valued in my family, I felt the need to be a part of Menorah.” Her passion for education coloured a long successful career at the school.

Sylvia’s own two children attended Menorah Academy. “It was so important that we could give our children the best of religious and secular education. It is so important for kids to know the history and the religious part that we parents cannot always give. I can see, even now, how what they learned here influences their lives.”

Recent Menorah Academy graduate Moshe Pesin (class of 2021) commented: “Sylvia was affectionately known as the mother of Menorah Academy due to the warmth and care that she showed towards every single person.”

Since the early days Sylvia’s responsibilities at the school have only grown. She herself described it saying: “I wear many hats. If the cook was sick, I’d be in the kitchen preparing meals for the kids,” she mused playfully.

“If there is a need, Sylvia knows how to fix it,” explained Vice-Principal Smith. “You’ll never hear her say that it can’t be done.” From nursing boobos to liaising with parents and teachers, Sylvia Benjamin does it all. “She makes sure that we are all able to do what we need



Sylvia Benjamin and her granddaughter Zoe.

to, to make this a successful place.”

Smith, who has worked alongside Sylvia for six years explained, “She’s our frontline – the first person everyone speaks to. And she is such a good listener; she always knows when to listen, and when to offer advice – and her advice is gold.” Perhaps Sylvia Benjamin should count ‘unofficial school counselor’ among her many other roles.

Sylvia is not yet sure what is in store for her after the Menorah Academy chapter closes, but she is adamant that: “I don’t just want a job. I need to be doing something

*Continued on page 12*

## Solidarity *Cont. from page 2*

In an interview with the *Toronto Star*, Farber added that the decision by the London Police Services to quickly state there was evidence the deaths were hate-motivated “offered a model as to how to deal with horrible hate crimes.”

B’nai Brith Canada also condemned in the strongest possible terms “what appears to be a hate-motivated mass murder.” It is reported that the family was specifically targeted because they were identifiably Muslim.

“Hatred and violence targeting anyone based on their religion, ethnic origin or heritage is an abomination – including hatred against Muslims, Indigenous people, LGBTQ+ people, Black Canadians, Asian Canadians, Jewish Canadians, and other minorities,” stated B’nai Brith CEO Michael Mostyn.

“The perpetrator of this shocking attack must be punished to the fullest extent of the law.”

According to B’nai Brith Canada, “contrary to incendiary speculation and dangerous misinformation spreading online, the suspect in the attack is not Jewish.” B’nai Brith Canada is concerned that disinformation of this type could fuel attacks against innocent Canadian Jews, and it must be called out.

“Canada needs to be a place where everyone feels welcome and safe,” said Mostyn. “The Jewish community and B’nai Brith want our Muslim brothers and sisters to know that we are with you in this struggle and we

will not be silent.

“We call on all communities to offer their support for the loved ones of the victims, and to add their voices to the calls for justice in this case and in preventing acts of incitement and extremism which are now all too prevalent online.”

“No Canadian should live in fear because of any aspect of their identity,” added CIJA. “There must be zero tolerance for Islamophobia, and we expect the perpetrator to face the full weight of the law. Our prayers remain with the victims, their families and Muslim Canadians.”

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# A tale of two foundations

By Maxine Fischbein

Endowment funds are increasingly critical when it comes to the future vibrancy of our Jewish community organizations. With that in mind, the leaders of the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF) are seeking to further promote endowment giving in Jewish Edmonton.

An important step toward that goal was the December 2019 vote endorsing the EJCCF board recommendation to entrust the management of its donor funds to the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF).

As of August 31, 2020, funds held by the EJCCF totalled approximately \$1.5 million. The capital yielded some \$37 thousand in grants to Jewish organizations last year.

While the funds are not huge, they enrich Jewish communal life, supporting some much loved initiatives, says EJCCF Chair Stephanie Hendin. Recent examples include a grant supporting the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, a substantial grant to Camp BB Riback earmarked for the purchase of hand washing stations and PPE (a sign of the COVID times), and the purchase of guitars to augment the music program at Edmonton Talmud Torah.

Prior to the decision to transfer EJCCF funds to the Edmonton Community Foundation, a small volunteer board handled all business pertaining to the management and investment of donor funds. Over the years, successive EJCCF boards had the assistance of trusted investment advisors, occasional part time help, and, in recent years, administrative assistance by the bookkeeper at Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

The EJCCF and Jewish Federation of Edmonton are linked, though the EJCCF board has functioned independently for many years, notes long-time board member Michael Paull.

While successive EJCCF boards have ensured good rates of return on the endowment gifts entrusted to the EJCCF, Hendin says the decision to partner with Edmonton Community Foundation makes sense on multiple levels.

“It is hard to administer, market and grow endowment funds if you are not big enough,” adds Hendin who characterizes the EJCCF’s partnership with the ECF as a win-win situation.

The ECF was managing some \$640 million in funds as of December 31, 2020. Last year alone they disbursed close to \$36 million in grants. They handle funds on behalf of

many of Edmonton’s most prominent charitable organizations including hospital foundations, places of worship, theatres and other major arts organizations. The ECF also manages myriad funds established by individuals and families.

Now that ECF handles the business end of endowment gifts raised within the Jewish community – including such specialized tasks as the drafting of fund agreements – the EJCCF will be able to concentrate its efforts on development and disbursement of funds, Hendin says.

The synergy has been enthusiastically embraced by fund holders, Hendin told AJNews, adding that donor funds have already been transferred to the ECF and new fund agreements established.

Together with EJCCF Board members Michael Paull and Catherine Miller-Dolgoy, Hendin will continue to promote endowment giving in the Edmon-ton Jewish community. Both the EJCCF and ECF will play an active role in the stewardship of donors, Hendin said.

Edmonton Community Foundation Counsel and Philanthropy Advisor Kathy Hawkesworth has been instrumental in ensuring a smooth transition and a wonderful working relationship between ECF and the EJCCF, Hendin told AJNews.

Hawkesworth has similar high praise for the efforts of the EJCCF and says the partnership between the two foundations will allow each organization to shine in its area of strength. ECF has an economy of scale, time-honoured procedures and a professional staff to carry them out. For its part, EJCCF is better positioned to initiate conversations with Jewish donors and potential donors about their hopes and dreams for the Jewish community; to assess where funds are most badly needed; and to make disbursements in accordance with fund agreements.

“We can’t reach into the [Jewish] community as well as they can, but because we have processes and staff, we can do some of the logistical stuff. It is just better consolidated so that energies can be placed where the value really is,” Hawkesworth says.

She exudes passion for the work.

“You get to talk to people who are committed to their community and want to make a difference,” Hawkesworth says. “Folks that place their money in an endowment fund

## Recess Fun in the Sun



Edmonton TT students enjoying recess!

get those dollars recycled over and over because they are invested instead of spent, and then it’s a portion of the fund that is granted each year. It creates this engine that can be counted on year over year to provide support.”

Funds can be named in honour of loved ones who will thus be remembered in perpetuity.

“To me, that is one of the wonderful and reflective components of these funds,” Hawkesworth adds.

The process is donor-centric, allowing individuals, families and organizations to support those agencies and/or causes that are important to them.

Current and potential EJCCF fund holders have the reassurance of additional transparency and checks and balances now that donor funds are overseen by both the Edmonton Community Foundation and the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation.

EJCCF Board Chair Stephanie Hendin urges community members who are interested in establishing a fund in support of their most cherished Jewish community programs or causes to contact her at [ejccfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:ejccfoundation@gmail.com) or by leaving a phone message at the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, 780-487-0585. As always, EJCCF is also on the lookout for volunteers willing to bring their time and talent to conversations with community members about gifts that will keep on giving *dor l’dor* – from generation to generation. Jewish communal and civic life.

*Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Alberta Jewish News.*



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# Halpern Akiva Academy bids farewell to Head of School

By Marina Segal

Calgary has a lot of great things going for it, from the beautiful blue skies to the awe-inspiring Rocky Mountains. One thing that Calgary also boasts is a wonderful, warm, welcoming Jewish community with many dedicated volunteers and community builders.

Halpern Akiva Academy is very sad to be saying goodbye to one such dedicated community builder, Head of School, Rabbi Chaim Greenwald.

Rabbi Chaim and Yael Greenwald came to Calgary in 2009 with a vision to see the community grow, and were dedicated to building Halpern Akiva Academy into the thriving school it is today. The school is now celebrating its 40th anniversary, and boasts a nursery through grade 9, with such notable programs as a Montessori preschool, Renert BrightMinds Math program, Hebrew immersion, and a dual curriculum which integrates an excellent general and meaningful Torah education.

This school year proved to be challenging, but ultimately very rewarding, with many exciting learning outcomes. A number of students placed very high in the Calgary Youth Science Fair, winning numerous awards and one student advanced to the Canada-Wide Science Fair and won a bronze medal. The school has also worked hard to engage with the community at a time when many people found themselves isolated. Two notable projects included: a partnership with Jewish Family Services of Calgary to

deliver Purim gift bags to seniors and vulnerable community members, and a special project in Rabbi Greenwald's junior high Jewish History class which had students collaborate with grandparents on a personal Jewish History project that encouraged deeper intergenerational relationships.

Rabbi Greenwald has always been community-minded and contributed to many Calgary Jewish causes -- from *leining* the weekly Torah reading at House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel, to actively promoting Life and Legacy in partnership with Calgary Jewish Federation, to playing in the Jewish Hockey League. His contributions to these organizations will be missed.

Most of all, Rabbi Chaim Greenwald is a *mensch*. During his 12 years in Calgary, he led by example, always working to create enduring relationships across all religious affiliations. He took time to really connect with prospective students, existing school families, community members, and donors alike. The Greenwald family will be relocating



Hatzlacha Rabba to Rabbi Chaim Greenwald and his family. After 9 years in Calgary, they are relocating to Cherry Hills, NJ.

to Cherry Hills, NJ later this summer and a search committee is actively seeking out candidates to fill the vacancy. Rabbi Greenwald leaves big shoes to fill, but the strength of Halpern Akiva Academy and the beauty of the Canadian Rockies will surely be a draw for the next Head of School.

We wish the Greenwalds Hatzlacha Rabbah in their new community and are sure they will have great success wherever they go!

# Natanyahu is replaced

By Ben Sales and Shira Hanau

(JTA) — After 12 years, seven elections and three corruption charges, Benjamin Netanyahu is no longer the prime minister of Israel.

Netanyahu, who served as Israel's leader continuously beginning in 2009 and holds the distinction of being the country's longest-serving prime minister, was removed from the job in a razor-thin vote in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, on June 13. The vote, 60-59, installed a new government with the narrowest of majorities, composed of eight parties spanning Israel's political spectrum and dedicated to one goal: ending the Netanyahu era.

The new government is headed by Naftali Bennett, a right-wing former deputy of Netanyahu who broke away from him. Bennett is the son of American immigrants to Israel and as an adult lived for a time in New York City. He speaks fluent English.

In an address before the vote, Bennett thanked Netanyahu for his years of service, even as members of Netanyahu's Likud party heckled him and shouted in attempts to drown out his speech. Bennett pledged to work on behalf of all Israelis and extricate Israel from the electoral crisis that has frozen its politics for two years, sending Israelis to the polls in four largely inconclusive elections since 2019.

"We are facing an internal challenge, a divide in the people that is being seen at these very moments," he said as the shouting continued.

Bennett's governing coalition is remarkable and unprecedented in ways that also make it appear precarious. It is the first government in Israeli history to include an independent Arab-Israeli party, the Islamist Raam, as a partner. It includes parties that are both staunchly right wing and staunchly left wing, in addition to two centrist parties. It has a record number of women serving as ministers. It was made possible only because several former close allies of Netanyahu joined his rivals.

That group of Netanyahu defectors includes Bennett, whose Yamina party holds only six of the Knesset's 120 seats but served as a linchpin for the new coalition. The largest party in the coalition is the centrist Yesh Atid, which is headed by Yair

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www.valentinegroup.ca



# Little Synagogue on the Prairie brings history to life in Calgary

By Jeremy Appel

Visitors to Calgary’s Heritage Park living history museum will find an important piece of Jewish-Canadian and western Canadian history — the Little Synagogue on the Prairie.

Irena Karshenbaum presented to Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada in Winnipeg via Zoom on May 30, detailing her work to bring the old rural synagogue to Calgary.

“When you go in, it’s as if you’re going back into that time period,” Karshenbaum said of the living history concept. “In Heritage Park, you’re going back in time to what Calgary and southern Alberta was like between the 1860s and the First World War.”

Rather than learning history through paintings, artifacts and writing on plaques, you learn through immersing yourself in the time period — the attire, buildings, transportation and activities.

Back in the mid-aughts, Karshenbaum noticed there was no synagogue at Heritage Park and decided to rectify that. Her first step was founding the Little Synagogue on the Prairie Society and bringing on about 60 volunteers to the project. They ended up raising \$1.1 million.

Their initial plan was to build a replica of a building they thought had been “lost on the prairies” called the Montefiore Institute, Karshenbaum added. But after their proposal was accepted, a society board member drove to Hanna, Alta., and found the building, so their task became moving the building.

“We restored the exterior, we restored the interior, we developed a furnishing plan, we developed programs and we gave it as a gift to Heritage Park,” she said.

They also contributed a \$250,000 endowment to maintain the building indefinitely.

The shul, which was built in 1916, was originally located in a Jewish farming colony near the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. It only lasted as a synagogue until the colony was vacated about 12 years later. In 1940, the building was taken to Hanna and converted to a family home, where it remained until 2008.

“It was a tremendous amount of work,” Karshenbaum says of the process of getting the building to Calgary. First they hired a moving company who brought it to a feedlot near Strathmore to refurbish it. “They slid these giant wooden beams under the building... and they rolled the beams and the building cut off from the foundation, because we only wanted the building and we only bought the building, not the foundation or the land it was on.”



Photo by Tony Wasserman

The restoration work took about five months, she added.

Karshenbaum says the Montefiore shul is one of the oldest surviving synagogues in western Canada.

“It’s an amazing story from the perspective of how a group of people came together and did this project really having no money,” she said. “(The shul) was found, it was moved, it was restored and it was gifted to the largest historical village in Canada, and through this synagogue it tells the Jewish chapter of Alberta history.”

“The Jewish story resonates for many ethnic groups that came to settle western Canada.”

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

# About volunteers

By Colin Muscat

Before I settled in Edmonton, I lived in a small town in rural Southern Alberta, for 5 years, where the Jewish population was officially 2. During that time my wife and I had a baby boy, which increased the population to 3. We would drive to Edmonton for High Holidays and Pesach. My son’s only other Jewish experience was reading the PJ library books his Bubbe would drive down from Edmonton once every other month.

Fast forward a few years and another child, Edmonton has once again become our home. We are both active

volunteers with different Jewish Community organizations. We understand that for our community to survive and to thrive, we need to chip in. The volunteers in this community ensure that our institutions and organizations continue to run. Having lived in a community with no Jewish life at all, we recognize how good we have it here.

Being a volunteer in these organizations is a lot of work and worry. To be honest, more than we both had expected. The time commitment is time away from our family, time away from each other, and from doing things for ourselves. We both find it worthwhile and have a lot of respect for the contributions of other volunteers in this community.

We need to be better as a community to our volunteers. Every decision made by a volunteer board is made with the

best intentions and with the best interests of the community in mind. Some decisions work out, some do not. Some decisions you will agree with and others you may not. We are a diverse community and it is impossible to please everyone, all of the time.

I am asking community members to remember that we are all on the same team and have the same goal – to ensure that our Jewish Community will continue to thrive into the future. Consider the hours of personal time that volunteers are contributing for the betterment of our community. Let’s keep discussion respectful and feedback constructive. If there is something that you would like done differently, participate in the process rather than undermine it. We need to remember that without volunteers, this community could not function.

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This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School



It has been a busy June at Edmonton Talmud Torah. Grade 4 and Grade 1 students are enjoying a hands-on education. With plants and soil courtesy of Talmud Torah Society’s Lillian and Jack Soroka Fund, students learning about plants in the science curriculum ended the unit by getting soil under their nails and nature in their minds.

Led by teacher Ben Ragosin, grade 4 students prepared the planters by weeding, tilling, planting and watering. The heavy duty security planters, funded by the Anson family in memory of Howard Anson z”l, were always intended to be used for curriculum enhancement.

Over the summer the planters will be tended to by the Out of School Care summer camp children, who get to reap (pun intended!) the benefits of their hard work by eating the tomatoes and peppers, with some basil, for a snack!

Natanyahu *Cont. from page 5*

Lapid. Lapid is slated to take over as prime minister in 2023, and until then will serve as foreign minister.

Speaking before the parliament on June 1, Lapid opted to skip his written speech and denounced the hecklers. He also apologized to his mother for the spectacle.

“I wanted her to be proud of the democratic process,” Lapid said. “Instead she and every other citizen is ashamed of you, and reminded of why it is necessary to replace you.”

The day was not without drama, a fitting end to recent weeks in which the future shape of the Israeli government was tense and uncertain.

Netanyahu, who has called the new government dangerous and fraudulent, has put heavy pressure on the incoming coalition’s right-wing members to return to his side. In his final speech as prime minister, delivered ahead of the vote, Netanyahu attempted to remind members of the parliament why he should remain as prime minister, running through a list of his accomplishments and warning that the new government would not be able to stand up to the security threats facing Israel, particularly from Iran.

“The prime minister of Israel must be able to say no to the American government,” Netanyahu warned, referring to attempts by the Biden administration to revive the Iran deal.

Under the new government, Netanyahu is leader of the parliamentary opposition, which is mostly made up of his Likud party and its right-wing religious allies. (Ayman Odeh, a Knesset member and head of the Arab Joint List welcomed the out going PM in a tweet.) In his speech, Netanyahu predicted that the new government will not last long and he would soon return to power.

Whether that prediction bears out depends on how well the new, ideologically incongruous government can hold together. It is sharply divided on nearly all of the core questions facing Israeli society, from the future of the West Bank to LGBTQ rights.

One potential area of common ground involves religious policy. This is the first government since 2015 that does not include haredi Orthodox parties. That means state funding for haredi institutions may be cut, and Israel could see liberalization of its laws regarding Jewish conversion, public transportation on Shabbat and a space for non-Orthodox worship at the Western Wall.

For now, however, the new government has accomplished its primary objective: removing Netanyahu from office. Netanyahu, who also served as prime minister from 1996 to 1999, had become nearly synonymous with Israel during his decade-plus in power.

He was known internationally for his campaign against the Iranian nuclear program and his close personal involvement in Israel’s relations with the United States — from his frosty attitude toward Barack Obama to his close friendship with Donald Trump. Within Israel, supporters hailed him for a long stretch of steady economic growth; relative security, day to day, for Israelis; close relationships with world leaders; the string of normalization deals last year with several Arab states; and, recently, a world-leading COVID vaccination drive.

Opponents in Israel derided him for maintaining the status quo regarding Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, as well as for a persistent housing crisis. He passed a controversial

law in 2018 defining Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, which critics said marginalized Israel’s Arab minority. American Jewish organizations as well as some secular Israelis also criticized him for perpetuating haredi control of Israel’s religious establishment to the exclusion of non-Orthodox Jews.

Except for a period of several years about a decade ago, Netanyahu has been a lifelong public opponent of a Palestinian state. In recent years, he had made pre-election promises to annex parts of the West Bank, which never ended up happening. And under Netanyahu, Israel conducted three major offensives against Hamas in Gaza, including the 2014 Gaza War and the recent fighting in May.

In 2019, Netanyahu was indicted for fraud, bribery and breach of trust — the first time a sitting Israeli prime minister went on criminal trial. The trial sparked a protest movement that demonstrated regularly outside the prime minister’s residence, calling on Netanyahu to resign.

Netanyahu has denied the charges and vowed to fight them. He persisted in office with a shrinking group of allies who proved too few to form a governing coalition. Last month, after considering joining a coalition with Netanyahu, Bennett instead worked with Lapid to assemble a “change government” that would remove Netanyahu from his position.



# Wishing you a Happy Canada Day!



**Heather McPherson**  
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A MESSAGE FROM ADAM SILVER

As we entered the Hebrew month of *Tammuz* this past week, we celebrated *Rosh Hodesh*, the formal recognition of starting a new month. Just as the full moon marks the beginning of that special day, let us also begin this month full of pride in our Jewish identities and of Jewish Calgary. Pandemic fears and challenges aside, the last while has been one in which we have seen antisemitic acts and narratives continue to grow, and a period in which we have felt an absence of allies and friends. The very people and groups we have previously stood shoulder-to-shoulder with have at best, been silent and, at worst, turned on us.

I recognize this experience is disheartening for many of us, and scary for most of us. It would be very easy for us to ignore our Jewish responsibility (and opportunity) to act as *Or L'Goyim* – a light unto the nations. Afterall, in such dark times where there seems to be an absence of light, how can we possibly spread any joy and meaning to others? However, I challenge us all to find even the smallest embers. I challenge us to cultivate and grow those embers into shining, caring,

and meaningful light. I challenge us to do so in two ways:

- Do not give up on others, continue to build relationships, do the right thing, and set a positive moral dugma (example) in all we do.
- Live active, bold, and meaningful Jewish lives.

Now is not the time to hide. Now is the time to engage even more actively in our Jewish community. Now is the time to shine the light of our Jewish community and our individual Jewish identities outward. Be proud. Be kind. Be good.

Jewish existence is resistance; maintaining and celebrating our culture, traditions, and identity are acts of resilience. In a world and time where we might be made to feel it is safer to hide who we are, even physically in how we present to the world, I want to remind you to have pride and love for who you are inside. If you are feeling isolated now, you're not alone in that feeling, and you have our support and that of others. Our children and grandchildren are watching us – what example do we want to set for them? We cannot and will not have them see us shrink in our Jewish shells, nor can

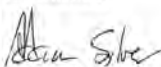
we cower in the shadow of darkness.

The version of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and world we want for the future is worth fighting for – worth pursuing with pride and confidence. It is up to us to set that tone for our children and youth, and to show our Holocaust Survivors that when we say never again, we mean never again. It is up to us to ensure our amazing Jewish legacy continues to grow from generation to generation. We cannot look around and wait for others to do it for us – it is up to US!

Together, we are strong. Together, we are a community like no other. Together, we are Jewish Calgary!

Wishing you all a safe and enjoyable summer – take care and keep safe.

B'Shalom,

  
Adam Silver

CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

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# L'Chaim: To Your Good Health

## Alberta scientist relates nutrition to mental health

By Irena Karshenbaum

People have known for centuries that good nutrition is positively correlated to good mental health. However, in the last 60 years Western society has come to believe that mental illness can only be helped through prescription medication and something as basic as good nutrition is not only overlooked but is seen as controversial.

Scientist, medical researcher, and Calgarian, Dr. Bonnie J. Kaplan has dedicated her career to researching, writing and talking about the importance of micronutrients on mental health and in her latest chapter while being semi-retired, has written a book, *The Better Brain*, with her former student, Julia J. Rucklidge. The book is an achievement in itself and a sort of vindication for Kaplan who saw her career derailed in its early years for her ideas and witnessed young scientists leave the field because they were unable to obtain funding for their research work.

Written for the general reader, *The Better Brain* found a home with a major US publisher, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, in New York. It argues through countless stories and references to studies that a diet of real, nutritious — not ultra-processed — food is the foundation for one's mental health.

Mental illness has been growing exponentially. Researchers Dr. E. Fuller Torrey and Judy Miller in a book called *The Invisible Plague* (2001), found that mental disorders were 1 in 10,000 prior to 1750 and tripled to 3 in 10,000 between 1750 and 1960. Currently, the World Health Organization estimates the rate at over 2,000 in 10,000. Over a lifetime, the CDC (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention) estimates the rate at 5,000 in 10,000, every other person will suffer from a mental illness in their life.

The book does acknowledge the roots of mental disorders — listed as anxiety disorders, depression, mood disorders, personality disorders like narcissism, psychotic disorders like schizophrenia, neurodevelopmental disorders like autism and medication-induced movement disorders — are varied and complex, but it asks the reader to look at diet first. Eating nutritious, real, whole

foods, the kind your grandparents ate and that are rich with micronutrients, in other words vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids, is what your brain needs to function optimally.

The scientists write that the brain hungers for a variety of micronutrients — there are about 30 of them ranging from B vitamins, vitamin D, calcium, zinc, magnesium, iodine, etc. — that it needs and it is this idea that is still seen as controversial and proving to be a barrier to receiving research funding with granting agencies stating that if they would only study a single micronutrient, then funding could be available. The scientists argue that when it comes to the brain there is no “magic bullet” and that the brain is not like, for example, scurvy that can be cured with a single vitamin, vitamin C. The brain needs a broad spectrum of micronutrients that are vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids, like omega-3. These micronutrients are found in real foods like fruits and vegetables of all colours of the rainbow, plain yoghurt, fish, chicken, meat, nuts with an emphasis that the best source of this good food is the Mediterranean-style diet. In contrast, the Western diet consisting of ultra-processed food is full of macronutrients like proteins, carbs, saturated fats and sodium but lacks micronutrients that the brain hungers for.

*The Better Brain* contains an entire chapter on helpful tips on how to shop for healthy food (and that it's actually cheaper than ultra-processed food) and recipes for healthy breakfasts, soups, salads, main courses and even desserts. Another chapter delves into what not to eat, which is pretty self-explanatory, like pop, sugar and ultra-processed food. They write, “It's not just the presence of healthy food but also the absence of unhealthy food that contributes to a good outcome.”

The scientists state that it is best to get your essential nutrients from whole foods, but if mental health issues persist to consider adding nutritional supplements. An entire chapter is dedicated to this topic. They write, “All the minerals and vitamins are needed for your enzymes to allow for proper brain function. Some people have inherited “sluggish pathways” because their enzymes are not efficient, resulting in the need to flood their brains



Dr. Bonnie Kaplan

with even more micronutrients than usual.” In plain English, the scientists are saying that many people with mental illnesses have brains that have been starved of essential micronutrients or their particular biochemical makeup is preventing them from absorbing the micronutrients efficiently and in such instances they need large doses of micronutrients that can only be obtained

*Continued on page 13*

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# L'Chaim: To Your Good Health

## Sharsheret supports Jewish families in their cancer journeys

By Maxine Fischbein



**Melissa Rosen,**  
**Sharsheret**  
**Director of Education**

One in 40 Ashkenazi Jews carry a BRCA gene mutation, nearly 10 times the rate of the general population, making Jewish families significantly more susceptible to hereditary breast cancer and ovarian cancers, says Melissa Rosen, Director of Training and Education at Sharsheret, a US-based non-profit organization that supports Jewish women and their families in their cancer journeys. This painful aspect of our heritage arises from the fact that our forebears lived in insular communities, sometimes by choice, sometimes as a result of antisemitism.

The question is... what do we do about it?

We need to be vigilant and proactive since the likelihood of mutations on our BRCA genes, and resultant cancer diagnoses are elevated, Rosen says. “Sharsheret is the Hebrew word for chain... we are all links in the chain of support when it comes to cancer.”

The organization provides information and support to those living with breast and ovarian cancer and those at heightened risk due to family history or a known mutation.

One of the questions Rosen most often fields is why there is a need for a Jewish organization to do this when cancer support organizations abound.

“Study after study has indicated that patients whose non-medical needs are met – needs such as not only finances and childcare, but also spiritual and cultural concerns – have better long term physical outcomes,” says Rosen.

Sharsheret can speak knowledgeably on Jewish religious

and cultural concerns. For example, sometimes people have questions about the permissibility of tattooing for radiation therapy.

It is helpful for Jewish women undergoing radiation treatments or breast reconstruction surgery to be able to turn to an organization that understands the uniquely Jewish stigmas attached to tattoos because of Jewish law; the fact that Jews were forcibly tattooed by the Nazis during the Holocaust; and the ubiquitous though unfounded belief that those with tattoos cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

“Sometimes people wonder how they could possibly celebrate the *chagim* – the holidays – or a family bar mitzvah despite their health and their mood,” says Rosen.

“In addition, a cancer diagnosis very often brings up people’s thoughts about their relationship to G-d. Some people take great comfort in that relationship... Others may feel a crisis in their faith, so Sharsheret supports women, not only as cancer patients but as members of our Jewish community, and that is one hundred percent unique.”

“One in 800 people carry a mutation on one of their BRCA genes that would raise their risk for breast cancer,” Rosen says.

“In our community, that number is one in 40. And even though these diagnoses are only 10 to 15 percent of all breast and ovarian cancer diagnoses, if someone does carry one of these mutations, their lifetime risk of a diagnosis is significant, perhaps as much as 88 percent for breast cancer versus about 12 percent in the general community and approximately 44 percent for ovarian, which is contrasted with less than one and a half percent in the general community.”

Everyone has two BRCA genes, which Rosen characterizes as “the good guys,” since their purpose is “to suppress excess cell growth and fix spontaneous mutations.”

“The problem is having a faulty BRCA gene,” Rosen says, adding that Ashkenazi Jews are more likely to have three very common mutations – known as founder mutations – on their two BRCA genes.

A basic BRCA screening test can check the three very common locations for the mutations.

“Those who test negative for BRCA mutations and have a strong family history may opt to get a full panel,” says Rosen, adding that screening for BRCA mutations is often done first since they are more common in our community and carry greater risk.

“There is a subset of people with strong family history who test negative for all mutations. In those cases, we suspect very strongly that there is a genetic component [although] the medical community has yet to identify the mutation,” Rosen adds.

Sharsheret encourages individuals in this situation to consider themselves “as if they are high-risk” and to work with a doctor to access as much screening as possible.

BRCA mutations are dominant mutations, notes Rosen, meaning only one parent has to carry the mutation to pass it down.

While recessive mutations, like those associated with Tay-Sachs disease, do not impact the carrier, a dominant mutation, like a BRCA mutation can lead to a diagnosis in the carrier.

Rosen warns women not to assume that they were screened for BRCA mutations by their doctors as a matter of course. “That’s almost always not the case,” says Rosen, adding that instead of living in fear, Jewish women must be proactive in learning as much as possible about their family’s cancer history.

The Sharsheret website ([www.sharsharet.org](http://www.sharsharet.org)) includes a fillable family tree where information should be noted for both sides of one’s family including any instances of cancer. That is because it is now believed that other forms of cancer are linked to BRCA mutations.

“BRCA... can impact risk for breast, ovarian, pancreatic, melanoma and prostate cancers,” says Rosen, who emphasizes that men can get breast cancer too.

After collecting family history, individuals can consult their doctor or a genetic counsellor to discuss whether

Continued on page 13



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# L'Chaim: To Your Good Health

## Maccabiah Games will be held in Israel July 2022

Lace up your shoes and stretch your quads: the Maccabiah Games are back in Israel next July!

The world's third largest sporting event is once again scheduled to take place from July 12 to 26, 2022 in Israel, welcoming over 10,000 athletes of all ages from 80 countries. During the past iteration of the Games in 2017, 11 Albertans represented Canada in tennis, water polo, swimming, softball, distance running and basketball.

Among those athletes was Calgarian and beloved community member Jordan Balaban. Jordan has been representing Canada at the Maccabiah Games since he was a teenager. In addition to carrying the point for Canada's basketball team, Jordan has been very involved on the organizational side as a member of the national organization's investment committee. As an alumnus of five Maccabiah Games, Jordan has many memories, but his fondest is the most recent opening ceremonies.

"It is always a special memory participating in the games, but for me, the opening ceremonies are always a highlight," said Balaban. "Walking through the stadium with 10,000 other Jewish athletes from over 80 different countries is a tremendous experience of Jewish unity and pride."

It has always been a goal of Balaban to bring more athletes from out west to the Maccabiah Games and this torch is now being shared by former teammate and CJA alumnus (2001) Matt Dichter.

After relocating to Vancouver shortly after high school, he has been teaching and coaching sports at King David High School and will return to Israel for the 2022 games as the Team Manager/Assistant Coach for the Boys U16 basketball team.

Thrilled about the opportunity to represent Canada and the Jewish community as a coach, Matt is excited to see the Jewish basketball talent across the country. About the opportunity, Matt says he loves the challenge of finding Jewish athletes who may not be connected to the Jewish community and bringing them into the fold. Matt also looks to tackle one of the other barriers for the Maccabiah Games which is team-specific fundraising.

"The Maccabiah Games are an expensive endeavour, which can be an automatic barrier for some families, but my goal is to rally community members so we can let any Jewish youth know the community is here to support them regardless of their socio-economic status," said Dichter.

To ease the financial commitment, the Krell family stepped up to this cause in 2010 when they started the Krell Family Maccabi Endowment Fund, housed at the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary. The fund supports local Jewish athletes in need of sponsorship.

About the Maccabiah Games, Barb Krell noted that "As a family, The Maccabiah Games have provided us with unique opportunities to represent Canada, connect with fellow Jews from around the world, express our solidarity with Israel and experience the thrill of competitive sport." The goal of the endowment fund is to give this opportunity back to others.

Matt will also be continuing his team's fundraising efforts with events in Vancouver and assisting selected

athletes with fundraisers in their home cities.

Elite athletes of any age group or sport can email Matt Dichter at: [maccabiahcanada@gmail.com](mailto:maccabiahcanada@gmail.com) or Jordan Balaban at: [Jordan@greengatepower.com](mailto:Jordan@greengatepower.com)

For information to the Krell Family Maccabi Endowment Fund email: [info@jcfc.ca](mailto:info@jcfc.ca)

For general information about Maccabi Canada or the Maccabiah Games visit [maccabicanada.com](http://maccabicanada.com).

We wish Jordan, Matt and all the other competitors representing Canada the best of luck in their training, fundraising, and competition!

**Albertans from the 2017 games:**

Samuel Eisenberg - Basketball - Youth Men  
Taylor Mennie - Softball - Open Women  
Maya Sohn - Softball - Open Women  
Jordan Balaban - Basketball - Open Men  
Andrew Camilleri - Water Polo - Open Men  
Josh Inhaber - Half Marathon and 10K - Open Men  
Zack Lister - Tennis - Open Men (singles and doubles)  
Alex Molotsky - Tennis - Open Men (singles and doubles)  
Cory Gelmon - Hockey - Masters Men  
Eddy Lang - Swimming - Master Men  
Nathalie Lussier - Swimming - Masters Women

Training Staff: Alana Dewar (Lethbridge) and Timothy Takahshi (Lethbridge)

## Sylvia Benjamin

Cont. from page 3

meaningful that I really care about."

Over the years she has been able to celebrate her past students' life milestones and applaud their successes from

the sidelines. "I've been invited to many weddings and brit milahs. I haven't always been able to go, but I do get pictures," she said happily.

There has not been a single person to pass through Menorah Academy who has not been impacted by Sylvia Benjamin's kindness. Her passion for education has contributed more to the school than anyone is able to adequately express.

something we all do what we can to support them – religious, or more secular, we all take care of each other."

As the big family disbands, Sylvia is collecting phone numbers and email addresses so she can keep in touch with everyone; even when Menorah Academy closes, she will still be the den-mother of the school, looking after all those who passed through her office.

Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Alberta Jewish News.



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# L'Chaim: To Your Good Health

## Sharsheret *Cont. from page 11*

genetic screening is indicated. “Learning what your status is can be a gift to your family,” Rosen says.

Red flags that beg for screening include cancer in multiple generations, early onset of cancer, and breast cancer in male relatives. “If you find any of these on your family tree or have additional concerns, you should absolutely speak with your doctor,” Rosen says.

Sharsheret recommends genetic counselling before and after screening because of the emotional and psychosocial issues related to a potential or real diagnosis. Women can access genetic counselling through their doctor or Sharsheret.

Rosen says that some women opt against screening because they would never make the decision to remove healthy body parts.

“Surgery is not the only option if one learns that they have heightened risk for a cancer diagnosis,” Rosen says. “Surgery may be the most effective way to reduce risk, but it’s not the best option for everyone and not the only option out there.”

While Sharsheret does not offer medical advice, the organization supports women in making informed choices.

“Only 10 to 15 percent of breast and ovarian cancers are hereditary. That means that 80, 85, maybe even 90 percent of the diagnoses are what are called random occurrences, caused by lifestyle or environment or simply bad luck,” Rosen says.

Even if one does not have a mutation, one should remain vigilant, says Rosen, adding that one in eight women will be diagnosed with cancer whether she carries a mutation or not.

Taking responsibility for our own health is critical, Rosen says, adding that we can reduce risk by eating well, moving more, and reducing stress.

These are “win-win behaviours” when it comes to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, dementia and more. We can reduce the risk of cancer or, if diagnosed, speed our healing while reducing the chance of reoccurrence.

“Know what’s normal for your own body,” says Rosen. “If something seems wrong, see a doctor.”

Rosen urges women not to relegate themselves to the bottom of their to-do lists. “How will our children, whether they are three or thirty-three, know to care for themselves unless they see you caring for yourself?”

Rosen exudes pride in the accomplishments of Sharsheret, which began as a peer support network in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, matching Jewish women with others sharing their diagnosis, stage of life and relationship to Judaism. Twenty years later, 35 staff members serve every US state and support women in Canada, Israel, the UK, Switzerland and Brazil.



“Our services were basically telehealth before telehealth became a thing,” Rosen says, citing a breathtaking array of supports including social workers, genetic counsellors and multiple programs to help women and families “navigate the cancer experience.”

Notably, Sharsheret offers a program for people facing breast and ovarian cancer while raising young children; a survivorship program focusing on healthy living after a diagnosis; and Best Face Forward – a program devoted to helping women with the cosmetic side effects of treatment.

In an effort to keep barriers low, no fees are charged for Sharsheret programs.

Rosen trains health care providers, driving home the importance of culturally competent cancer care and the extent to which deeper understanding of a patient’s background leads to better treatment plans and outcomes.

“Cancer isn’t just a physical experience. It’s an emotional experience. It’s a spiritual experience, and getting support for your emotional needs and spiritual needs is incredibly important. We know that people who have these needs met do better physically.”

Rosen encourages women living with cancer not to underestimate the emotional and psychosocial components of their journey and to include friends and rabbis on their care teams.

*Continued on page 15*

## Nutrition *Cont. from page 10*

through taking supplements. These supplements are not store-bought brands that contain doses too small to make a difference, but are from supplement companies, which they list in the book. Kaplan and Rucklidge consistently state they do not have financial ties to any supplement companies.

The scientist advises, “It is absolutely crucial that you *do not stop* taking meds for your psychiatric condition. We suggest you discuss options with your prescribing physician first.”

Born in Canton, Ohio, and educated at the University of Chicago, Brandeis University and completing postdoctoral training and then faculty research in neurophysiology at Yale University, Kaplan moved to Calgary with husband, Richard, in 1979.

She explains that she spent most of her career in research and supervising students and did not do a lot of regular classroom teaching. As she was going into retirement in 2016, Kaplan was considering what she would do next. “I came up with two things. I wanted raise

funds for my two charitable funds to help fund research by my junior colleagues on treating mental health with micronutrients in studies in Canada, US and New Zealand.” To date, she has raised almost \$900,000 for her charitable funds, one of which is held with the Calgary Foundation. “My second focus was knowledge translation to the public. This is why I decided I had a book in me that needed to be written.”

Kaplan continues, “I saw that the public doesn’t know *bubkes* about this subject, yet nutrition plays a key part in mental health.”

Kaplan is seeing a complete turnaround from the opposition she experienced in her early career to now when she is receiving numerous speaking invitations in Alberta and across Canada. “I am doing a webinar where they have over 1,000 registrations, which is very unusual for them. When previously the interest for this topic was in Western Europe and the US.”

Kaplan and co-author, Julia J. Rucklidge, who is in the midst of her career working at the University of Canterbury, in Christchurch, New Zealand, after selling the idea to the publisher, wrote the book in just four

months and aided by technology are busy doing podcasts and interviews. Kaplan speaks of one recent podcast where she was in Calgary, Julia was in New Zealand, and other speakers were in New York, Arizona and North Carolina.

She says the book is receiving a lot of good feedback from people reading advance copies. “The medical system is a longer road. It would be advantageous in mental health clinics to teach a class on nutrition and Mediterranean-style cooking.”

Kaplan says she and her husband rarely eat out. “We cook from scratch and eat a Mediterranean-style diet. Before the pandemic, we were eating out only as a social thing to meet with friends.”

Kaplan stresses the importance of learning to cook, but also to follow the 80/20 rule. “If you’re eating a healthy diet 80 percent of the time, don’t beat yourself up if you’re eating a cookie that is not so healthy.” For more information visit thebetterbrain.com.

*Irena Karshenbaum writes in Calgary  
irenakarshenbaum.com.*

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# L'Chaim: To Your Good Health

## Make personal health a priority

By Roxanne Droppo

As Alberta starts to “Open For Summer”, we can see the potential to return to a more ‘normal’ state of existence in the coming months. While this brings a certain sense of excitement and relief, there can also be some anxiety as many of us grapple with what ‘normal’ looks like.

Assessing and addressing our own personal health and wellness can feel challenging. While we are heading in the right direction to contain the spread of Covid, we are not at a point where our lives can fully resume. Anticipating the spread of new variants and the potential for a ‘fourth wave’ are possibilities lurking in the back of our minds. We know that now, perhaps more than ever, we need to be patient and focus on our personal health and well-being in the home stretch.

Many of us have lost sight of what health and wellness actually means to us. Health is defined as a “state of being.” Our “state of being” for the past 15 months has been unpredictable, isolating, lonely and at times, hopeless.

When we think about our own health, we generally consider our physical well-being. Are we eating properly, exercising, getting enough sleep and of course consuming enough water to regulate our bodies and nourish our skin, hair and cells? If you ask your friends and family, many will respond that during our mandated down time they have embraced their physical health and made changes to prioritize their health and lead their best lives.

Wellness on the other hand, is elusive. The World Health Organization, defines wellness as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.” The consensus is that wellness is the state of living a healthy lifestyle that enhances well-being.

Our physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual health work together to define our general well-being. Over this past 15 months, many if not all of these dimensions have been challenged by our current circumstances. This is recognized by medical and mental health professionals, and the challenge we face is that,

unlike physical health, how can we quantify and enhance our wellbeing?

There is a sense of accomplishment and a reduction of anxiety when we feel we are in control of our circumstances. Below are some suggestions on how you can take this time to work on connecting with your inner self and enhancing your well-being. These constructive exercises can help you cope with your current reality and formulate a plan to move forward for life after Covid.

In a journal, jot down your thoughts on where you feel you are right now with your health and wellness. Consider all of the dimensions of your life and assess what is working and what you would like to change: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual.

Write down your plan to address any changes and make sure to date your entry. Revisit your plan every month. Write down your progress and your challenges and maintain the journaling as a way of staying accountable and prioritizing your health and wellness.

Reach out to someone who you trust and share your thoughts. Reach out to someone in your community who may need a friend and encourage them to start the same journaling exercise.

Consider accessing physical and mental health resources if you need them: your family doctor, dietician, mental health professional, fitness trainer, massage therapist, acupuncturist, naturopath, etc.

While we cautiously anticipate recovery from Covid and a return to our ‘normal’ lives, looking into the future can cause anxiety. Take this opportunity to evaluate and work on your health and well-being for the present and into the future.

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*Roxanne Droppo is Executive Director at Jewish Family Services Calgary.*

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Volume 32, Number 6, June 2021

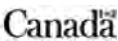
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from the

Sources

The fascination with vaccination

by Eliezer Segal

Rabbi Pinhas Elijah Hurwitz was an itinerant Lithuanian scholar whose travels took him to Galicia, Poland, Prussia, Holland, Hungary and England. In 1806 he published an expanded edition of his popular 1797 compendium titled *Sefer ha-Berit*, “the Book of the Covenant” in the Czech city of Brunn (Brno). Ostensibly a commentary on an obscure kabbalistic text, it actually served as an introduction to developments in modern science and philosophy. The author regarded knowledge of these subjects as prerequisites for the attainment of holiness, mystical perfection, and even prophecy.

In this connection Rabbi Hurwitz incorporated a detailed account of the very recent medical triumph in the battle against smallpox. He retold the tale of the English physician Dr. Edward Jenner of Gloucester who surmised in 1796 that the known immunity of dairy farmers and milkmaids to smallpox was a side-effect of their prior infections from cattle afflicted with cowpox, which was caused by a very similar microbial strain. Jenner therefore proposed to vaccinate humans with the same fluid from cowpox pustules that seemed to produce immunity in the milkmaids (he coined the term “vaccinate,” derived from the Latin for “cow”). This treatment proved to be astoundingly successful and became the basis for all subsequent inoculations in which a small quantity of a microorganism from a disease is injected into a body in order to stimulate the immunization process. Rabbi Hurwitz provided his readers with meticulous descriptions of the inoculation process and its physiological effects on the recipients, along with a firm assurance that the practice was universally effective and completely safe.

Indeed, many people were repelled at the prospect of being injected intentionally with viral matter, and hence the procedure gave rise to intense discussions among authorities on Jewish religious law. In his collection of responsa *Zera’ Emet* (“seed of truth”) published in 1795, Rabbi Ishmael ben Abraham Hakohen of Modena was called upon to settle an ongoing communal controversy: One faction supported vaccination on the grounds that it was practiced by the royalty of the time, was sanctioned by prominent Italian rabbis and had a successful track record. Opposing them were those who questioned its

effectiveness and insisted that “the portion of Jacob should not stir up the destructive powers by infecting people with a disease that is mentioned in the Torah as ‘infectious’ [*dibbuk*]” and might therefore be regarded as a form of divinely ordained retribution.”

A very similar disagreement underlay the publication of a work titled *‘Aleh Terufah* (“leaf of healing”) by Alexander (Abraham) ben Solomon of Hamburg, a scholar originally from Nancy, France, who had resided for many years in the Hague and then migrated to London. *‘Aleh Terufah*, published in 1785, was an expansion of a shorter essay written in 1768. Its author attested that his determination to devote a discussion to this topic was rooted in tragic events that beset his own family: His beloved young daughter had perished from the disease in Nancy—owing to the incompetence of the attending physician—and then a similar fate befell his son in the Hague.

Although these authors were apparently unaware of each other’s studies, the issues discussed by Ishmael and Alexander were remarkably similar. They devoted considerable intellectual effort to situating the controversy over vaccination within the complex talmudic rules governing the saving or risking of human life whether by active or passive means. For purposes of making informed decisions in critical situations, rabbinic discourse strove to define precise degrees of probability and doubt, and to distinguish between cures for existing ailments and prevention of potential afflictions in the future (though this last distinction had little relevance in an actual plague situation).

Our authors concluded that the decision ultimately boiled down to whether, based on a consensus of competent medical opinion, it would be more dangerous to administer the vaccinations or to refrain from them. Indeed, a statistic that recurred in all their discussions—and was presumably an exaggerated one—claimed that only (or: not even) one in a thousand instances of inoculation is unsuccessful (but not that it is harmful), and that any failures can likely be blamed on the patients’ failure to properly follow the physicians’ instructions.

The traditionalist religious mentality is often characterized by resistance to change of any sort, and by

an unwillingness to acknowledge innovations that were not anticipated by the authoritative texts. The exciting scientific discoveries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were thus viewed by many with great suspicion as threats to orthodoxy: If our sacred writings and wise sages did not mention smallpox vaccination, then it is not an acceptable therapeutic option.

It was in order to fend off this static perception of scientific knowledge that our authors had to remind their readers of the unprecedented progress that science had recently made in several areas. *Sefer Ha-Berit* and *‘Aleh Terufah* both cite the successful flights of manned hot-air and helium balloons as proof that science is constantly progressing, and “there was revealed to later generations what was concealed from the earlier ones.”

Rabbi Hurwitz concluded gravely that “anyone who is remiss in this matter, to the point that their children are fatally afflicted with the illness, shall be brought to justice before the [celestial] tribunal and will indeed be punished in accordance with divine law...”

Ashkenazic tradition tended to be wary of medical science because it diminishes people’s mindfulness of their ultimate dependence on divine assistance. However, Alexander of Hamburg allied himself with the position of Maimonides who had denounced those who knowingly refrain from carrying out life-saving medical procedures. He compared such irresponsible fools to starving persons who refuse to accept nourishment because it supposedly compromises their absolute reliance on the Almighty.

Alexander stressed that we ought to appreciate Dr. Jenner’s medical breakthrough as a special instance of divine compassion. We would do better to appreciate how God has alleviated the suffering of humankind by bestowing upon scientists the intelligence that enables them to discover a safe and effective cure for a deadly plague.

*‘From the Sources’ by Eliezer Segal is sponsored by the Zeisler Families of Edmonton, Calgary and New York City*

Sharsheret *Cont. from page 13*

“Health care isn’t limited to your surgeon or oncologist,” says Rosen. “It is everyone who helps to get you through.”

Thanks to the efforts of Calgarian Sandy Kogut, Sharsheret is now on the Alberta radar. Kogut, who was diagnosed with breast cancer last October, says that her recovery has been supported and enhanced by Sharsheret.

“With one phone call they provided me with a social worker, a geneticist and a breast buddy, so I wasn’t alone.”


Kogut is paying it forward, having recently become a breast buddy to a young woman in Baltimore. She is

working hard to spread the word so that other women and families get the support and information they need about cancers related to BRCA gene mutations and the critical importance of early detection.

Melissa Rosen spoke to members of Beth Tzedec Congregation via Zoom on May 20. She will speak at a virtual program for women hosted by House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel on Thursday, June 24 at 8:00pm (Contact

malkahalpern@morahrockove@gmail.com). Temple B’nai Tikvah and Kehilat Shalom are jointly hosting an online presentation by Sharsheret on July 7 at 7:00pm (Contact n\_drexler@shaw.ca or info@kscalgary.org)

*Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Alberta Jewish News.*



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