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Yasher Koach Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne

By Maxine Fischbein

Calgary Beth Tzedec Congregation has a newly minted Rabbi, though his friendly face, remarkable voice and inspiring teaching are qualities with which the congregation and community are already well accustomed.

On December 19, 2021 Cantor Russell Jayne achieved a long-held aspiration when he received his *smicha* - rabbinical ordination - from the Pluralistic Rabbinical Seminary (PRS) after two years of intensive study in an online program geared toward individuals already serving as Jewish professionals.

After more than seven years as Chazzan at Beth Tzedec, Rabbi Cantor Jayne will now add the role of Congregational Rabbi to his other synagogue duties, after the synagogue board of directors voted unanimously to enter negotiations toward a new employment agreement.

One of six rabbis that formed the first-ever PRS cohort, Rabbi Cantor Jayne - previously ordained as a Cantor after five years of study at the Jewish Theological Seminary and its H. L. Miller Cantorial School - is the sole member of the PRS class of 2021 that will serve as a pulpit Rabbi. His classmates included a chaplain from Atlanta, a professional in the Jewish non-profit world from San Francisco, a psychologist from Southern California and a Jewish educator from San Francisco who specializes in helping Jewish couples navigate divorce. As the title of their rabbinical school would suggest, the group is diverse when it comes to their vocations, geographical locations, ages, backgrounds and personal Jewish practices.

Equally diverse was the group of scholars who taught them, including rabbis trained in Conservative and Reform seminaries and a Chassidic rabbi from Brooklyn

CJA students celebrate Tu B'Shevat



CJA students celebrated Tu B'Shevat with art, music, lessons about the environment, a JNF virtual tour of Israel and more. Bulletin boards were beautifully decorated for the holiday.

who taught them about Chassidism as an insider and personally attended their smicha ceremony at the Sleepy Hollow Inn in Tarrytown, New York.

The soporific-sounding location belies the flurry of activity in a program that condensed an astonishing breadth of subject matter and skill-building into two years.

"The Pluralistic Rabbinical Seminary provided an important pathway for me, and others like me who were already serving communities and did not have the luxury of packing up and attending rabbinical seminaries for four or five years of in-person learning," Rabbi Cantor Jayne

told *AJNews*.

"Before pursuing this program, I did look at what other accredited, established seminaries offered in terms of pursuing smicha, and none of the programs were compatible with the circumstances of individuals already serving the community who wished to continue to work while studying toward ordination."

At present, within the Conservative movement, there are no completely online programs offering rabbinical

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Texas hostage taking an act of terrorism

On Jan. 15, during Shabbat morning services, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and three congregants were taken hostage by a terrorist at the Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. After close to 11 terrifying hours where the terrorist stormed the shul with a gun and threatened to kill the hostages, all 4 hostages were able to escape. Police then stormed the shul and the terrorist Malik Faisal Akram, was shot dead.

The Jewish world breathed a sigh of relief that the

situation resolved with no hostages harmed.

Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs CEO Shimon Koffler Fogel stated, "Once again, Jews have come under attack simply because they are Jews. While Texas feels like it is far from Canada, incidents like this have a serious impact on Jews around the world who will have emerged from the Sabbath this week with two thoughts. One of horror and concern for their fellow Jews; and one of relief that this week, it wasn't their synagogue that

was targeted.

"Jew-hatred can and often does transcend hateful rhetoric and becomes violence towards Jews. This is why Jewish Canadians pay close attention to the rise of antisemitism around the world and why we invest in community security.

"Despite Canada being one of the best countries in the world in which to be Jewish (or any minority for that matter), according to Statistics Canada, the Jewish community remains the most targeted religious minority for hate crimes in this country."

Continued on page 4

JLI course helps people find new meaning in their daily lives

(Edmonton, AB) - This winter, Rabbi Mendy Blachman of Edmonton JLI will offer *Meditation from Sinai*, a fascinating new six-session course by the acclaimed Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI), exploring the nature of Jewish meditation and the profound benefits it can bring to one's daily life.

Beginning Monday, February 7, at 7:30 pm participants in the course will discover what Jewish meditation is, the pivotal role it plays in Jewish tradition, and the fundamental ideas it is based on. The course will teach crucial life tools that help us respond effectively to negative thoughts and emotions, recognize the value of each new moment, and find purpose and spirituality even

in life's most mundane tasks.

"Not many people think of meditation as a Jewish thing," Rabbi Mendy Blachman of Edmonton JLI, told Alberta Jewish News, "when in reality, Judaism has a rich and authentic tradition of meditation practices that, when implemented, can truly transform one's life for the better."

Meditation from Sinai is a revolutionary, empowering offering that unveils Jewish meditation and mindful awareness as the bedrock for a meaningful life. This course synthesizes extensive research from both the spiritual community and psychological research, forging a practical path to fully realizing life's potentials.

Like all JLI programs, this course is designed to appeal to people at all levels of knowledge, including those without any prior experience or background in Jewish learning. All JLI courses are open to the public, and attendees need not be affiliated with a particular synagogue, temple, or other house of worship.

The course will be offered in-person as well as over Zoom. Sign in information will be provided upon enrollment.

Interested students may call 780-200-5770 or visit www.ChabadEdmonton.org for registration and for other course-related information.

JFSC celebrates 60th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary: April 26

By Lisa Thomson

JFSC is celebrating its milestone 60th Anniversary and the agency is taking this year to reflect on its growth and impacts, having provided social services for tens of thousands of individuals and families in Calgary over the decades. Plans include a celebration fundraising gala on April 26, 2022, and an historical coffee table book written by local author Donna Crawford.

Harvey and Wynne Thal are the Honorary Chairs of the gala *“With Pressure Comes Diamonds: The Past, The Present, The Future.”* Active members in the community, the Thals are long-time supporters of JFSC, and regularly engage their children and grandchildren in volunteering and supporting the agency. The Thals explain, “We are thrilled to be part of JFSC, working to make a difference in the lives of people in need. JFSC staff and volunteers do a great job of working with people of all faiths and cultures to help them become self sufficient, providing security and dignity for their clients.”

Having nutritious food available for those in need holds special significance for the family, and they support the Wynne Thal Pantry ensuring it is always stocked with non-perishable food and Kosher items for clients. The Thals are also co-sponsors of the JFSC annual golf tournament, raising funds for programs and services.

“With Pressure Comes Diamonds” is JFSC’s story. The traditional 60th Anniversary gift, diamonds, are

created when carbon, a relatively ordinary element, is exposed to enormous pressure and eventually develops into a beautiful, glowing gem. In life, some of our greatest feats, works and endeavors occur when we are placed under pressure.

For JFSC, pressure refers to the adversity faced by clients and the agency since its formation in the 1960s – complex social, economic and political issues and events including wars, social unrest, Jewish immigration and resettlement, economic turmoil, antisemitism and today’s upheaval from the Pandemic. JFSC, the diamond, is the shining outcome of persevering through adversity.

Today’s agency is non-denominational, accredited, and is a leader in social services in the Calgary community, providing programs and services to thousands of individuals and families. This would not happen without the support of its founders, donors, volunteers, staff and clients.



“We are grateful for the Jewish and Calgary community at large for their foresight in creating and assisting JFSC over the past six decades. It is their support that enables us to make a solid impact in the lives of our neighbors, friends and families,” says Roxanne Droppo, JFSC Executive Director.

More information is coming about JFSC’s gala event, to learn about JFSC and its programs and services visit jfsc.org, contact Peta at petag@jfsc.org or call 403-287-3510.

HOJMI Gala honours Susan Rose: Feb. 27

Join House of Jacob-Mikvah Israel (Calgary) for a very special Zoom Gala on February 27, 2022, at 7 pm honouring Susan Rose.

It’s important that we continue to celebrate our blessings and HOJMI is pleased to celebrate the many contributions of Susan Rose – regarded in the congregation as a community legend. If you need anything, you know to “call Susan.”

We have been faced with many challenges the past two years including (but not restricted to) the COVID-19 pandemic, illness and the loss of our loved ones, and more

recently the many difficulties managing winter weather conditions but it’s important that we keep a positive attitude and appreciate the goodness in our lives. Susan Rose is a wonderful example of that goodness.

She has been HOJMI’s beloved Office Manager for over 15 years, but Susan is that and so much more! She is the proud mother to 3 wonderful sons, and bubbly to 11+ grandkids. Susan and her beshert Ian z”l ran the world-famous Susan’s Kosher Bakery for 10 years. She is a dedicated volunteer for Chevra Kadisha, an avid reader, an active member of Rimom Calgary, and a Singer Featherweight aficionado. Susan is truly an Eishet Chayil!

The Zoom Gala Gala will feature Guest Speaker Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz, whose address will focus on “Jewish Unity and the Role of the Synagogue.” HOJMI is honoured to have such an esteemed guest

for this event.


Rabbi Breitowitz is a senior lecturer in Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem. He is the former rabbi of the Woodside Synagogue in Silver Spring, Maryland and associate professor of law at University of Maryland. He received rabbinical ordination from Ner Israel Rabbinical College and his law degree from Harvard Law School.

Rabbi Breitowitz has lectured extensively throughout North America and Israel on medical, business, and family ethics. He has published widely on Jewish law and ethics. Among his articles are those on the right to die, physician assisted suicide, brain death, the status of frozen embryos, business ethics, shalom bayit and spousal abuse.

Within a general culture that questions the role of religion in modern life, Rabbi Breitowitz has the exceptional ability to show the relevance of halachic categories and Jewish values in dealing with contemporary problems ranging from cloning to giving up land for peace.

He is highly regarded for his outstanding intellectual gifts and sincere piety, as well as his openness, sensitivity and kindness.

The Gala will be held on February 27 at 7 pm. For tickets and information visit hojmi.org, call (403) 259 – 3230 or email hojmi.calgary@gmail.com.



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The Organization

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- Ensure a welcoming atmosphere at services and programs
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- Manage vendors, budgets and legal requirements
- Provide expert strategic advice and policy development
- Organize and support fundraising and membership development efforts
- Advocate on behalf of the Synagogue

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- Highly developed financial, strategic planning and policy development skills
- Experience in dealing with vendors, partner organizations and government
- Superior communication and social skills



If the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing success of Beth Tzedec appeals to you, please forward your resume to president@bethtzedec.ca or contact Lorne Pearl at 403-461-6583 for further information.



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JFED unveils beautiful mosaic art project

By Jenna Soroka, LJI Reporter

On January 12th, the community was invited to the livestream unveiling of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton’s Shine a Light on Antisemitism mosaic art piece. The live event began with a Treaty and Land Acknowledgement by Federation executive board member, Rebecca Asbell. Viewers then heard from Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, Federation executive board member Jared Paull, visual artist Lewis Lavoie, and JFED CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright while the mosaic was unveiled.

Late last year, the Jewish Federation of Edmonton applied for, and received, a \$10,000 grant from the Jewish Federations of North America to contribute to the antisemitism awareness campaign. With this grant, JFED coordinated a special project for members and friends of the Edmonton Jewish community to paint words or an image on a tile that expressed how they have been impacted by antisemitism. Tiles were distributed to several community organizations and an in-person event was also held where the broader community could participate, share and listen to stories from Jewish community members.

Individual tiles included messages that ranged from fear to hope such as Reliving my grandparents’ nightmare, Scared for my children, Disappointed, Alone, Anxious, Rejected, Heartbroken, Ghetto as well as messages such as Greater Good, Love, Resilience, Defiant.

Leading up to the unveiling, Mayor Sohi shared how his experiences with racism, discrimination, and marginalization during his formative years influenced the tile he created for the art project. He continued by expressing “there is so much we can do together to tell our stories, and listen to other people’s stories, and be empathetic towards each other’s realities.” Sohi ended with a passionate commitment to tackle oppression and hate-based violence which harms minority communities and to work towards building, together, an Edmonton for all of us.

Following Mayor Sohi, Jared Paull discussed the

importance of bringing conversations about antisemitism into the world of art. He further explained that with art, discussions revolve around emotions and experiences which are individual truths that cannot be argued. Paull is the President and Head Producer at Reel Mensch Studio and, in collaboration with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, he created a meaningful featurette to showcase the process and impact of the project.

Additionally, an interactive virtual exhibit has been produced which features the final mosaic as well as short clips and images of participants and their tiles. Viewers can scroll across the virtual mosaic and click on specific tiles which highlight the creator of that tile and their thoughts about the project. The virtual exhibit be viewed on the Jewish Federation of Edmonton’s website under Featured Events: Shine a Light on Antisemitism mosaic art project.

Artist Lewis Lavoie briefly spoke about the inspiration and process behind the mosaic art piece during the livestream unveiling of the project. He said the story of Chanukah, with its message of the menorah’s light during a dark time of persecution, provided immense inspiration for his work.

He also said that tikkun olam, the Hebrew phrase used to express the act of repairing or mending the world is one that he particularly connected with, because the process of assembling the mosaic felt like a metaphor for “trying to make the world a better place [and] trying to piece it together a little bit better.”

Once the final art piece was revealed, viewers, including



The Jewish Federation of Edmonton recently unveiled their completed mosaic art installation by Lewis Lavoie, part of the Jewish Federations of America Shine a Light on Antisemitism project.

City Councillor Keren Tang and members of the community, responded with positivity and encouragement. Comments included: *Beautiful! Stunning piece, WOW! Inspiring and beautiful. My kids and I had such a pleasure participating in painting the tiles! A creative and reflective process. A mosaic is a good metaphor to represent the importance of community diversity knitted together. Thanks to the city for supporting this.*

“The piece is magnificent,” stated Leavitt-Wright, “and it overcomes me with emotion when I look at it – both in terms of its artistry and the sentiments expressed by the individual contributors of all ages.”

The final mosaic art piece was intended to be unveiled and displayed at city hall on January 12; however, due to the current public health situation, the exhibit was postponed. Leavitt-Wright explained that once health measures begin to ease and people can gather, the art piece will be placed in various Jewish community organizations around the city, with the goal of displaying it in a more public setting for everyone to experience.

Texas hostage *Cont. from page 1*

“We call on our government to increase investment in the Security Infrastructure Program and establish a Community Security Trust (CST) modeled on the CST in the U.K.,” concluded Koffler Fogel.

In response to the Texas hostage taking, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated, “Antisemitism is not acceptable. Not in Texas, here at home, or anywhere. While I’m relieved the hostages are now safe, the situation at Congregation Beth Israel is a reminder that each and every one of us must remain vigilant and work together to

combat hatred in all its forms.”

Upon learning that the hostages at the Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas were freed uninjured, CIJA Co-chairs Joel Reitman and Jeff Rosenthal, issued the following statement:

“CIJA’s Board of Directors, alongside the leadership of Jewish Federations across Canada and Canadian Jews from coast to coast, followed the horrific situation in Colleyville, Texas yesterday with bated breath. We were deeply relieved to learn that all the hostages were rescued unharmed after a terrifying 11-hour ordeal.

“Law enforcement at all three levels in the U.S. are to be

commended for acting strategically and decisively. Our thoughts and prayers are with the hostages, their families, and the community in Colleyville as they begin to process this trauma.”

Meanwhile, on Jan. 21, top United States security officials confirmed to Jewish Americans on a pre-Shabbat call that the attack in Colleyville, Texas, was a “terrorist attack on the Jewish community” and that authorities are continuing to investigate how the British Islamist who held a rabbi and three congregants hostage got into the country.

The Friday webinar, organized by the White House, drew at least 5,000 viewers, Chanan Weissman, the White House Jewish liaison, said at its outset. It was designed in part to reassure Jews that it is safe to attend services this Shabbat. Among those speaking was the Colleyville Temple Beth Israel Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker.

It also was clearly aimed at rolling back the impression conveyed in the immediate aftermath of the attack by an FBI official that authorities were not treating this as an antisemitic attack.

“While there is still a lot of unknown details, we are committed to thoroughly investigating Saturday’s attack,” said Jill Sanborn, the executive assistant director of the national security branch of the FBI. “Let me be clear: The FBI is and has been treating Saturday’s events as an act of terrorism targeting the Jewish community.”

Sanborn said the FBI was looking through phone and other electronic media to track why the hostage-taker specifically chose the synagogue. “This was not a random occurrence,” she said. “It was intentional, and it was symbolic. And we are not going to tolerate this antisemitism.”

Leaders from all faith-based communities in Texas and across North America came together to condemn the hostage taking.

In concluding remarks on the webinar, Rabbi Cytron-Walker appealed for less toxicity in the political environment, an allusion to debates over the sources of antisemitism and synagogue security that have roiled the national Jewish community since the attack.

“I’m also, so you know, a little bit sad that it takes something like this in our world to bring people together,” he said. “If we can do a better job to remember that as I would put it that we’re all created in G-d’s image, we’re all created in tzelem Elohim; if we could all do a little bit more to maybe tone down the rhetoric and politics and all of the talk shows that exist, to remember that we can debate ideas. We don’t have to agree. We also don’t have to attack one another personally in order to get our point across.”

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Wonderful lunchroom announcement from Talmud Torah

By Talmud Torah Board Members

Last August Myrna and Don Silverberg, of Netanya, Israel, reached out to Talmud Torah in Edmonton expressing their wish to make a gift to this school that still holds a very special place in their memories and hearts. How does it happen that a family living in Israel since 1976 reaches out to Talmud Torah to make such a transformational gift? Here lies a story not to be missed.

Myrna and Don moved to Edmonton in 1968 and stayed until 1976 when Don had an opportunity to take a Sabbatical year in Israel at the Tel HaShomer Hospital's Kidney Department. They loved that year so much that they extended their stay for another few years until they reached the realization that Israel, indeed, was their new home.

The years in Edmonton were filled with activity for their three children, Monte born in 1964, Danny in 1966 and Tzvia (born Harriet) in 1969. Both Myrna and Don became very involved with Talmud Torah; Don was on the Board of Directors, serving as President the year the school joined EPSB. Myrna was an active member of Mothers Auxiliary, even serving as the Editor of the Edmonton Jewish Phone Book project.

"The lunchroom was a particular highlight for all of us," explained Myrna. "The kids went to Junior Congregation there regularly while Don and I were active in the parent's Jewish Music Group that practiced and put on their annual show in this venue. So much of our time was spent driving back and forth from our house on 81 Avenue to the old Talmud Torah on 133 St! Carpooling with the Starkmans, Pekarskys, and Weisz families plus all the extracurricular activities... that was our life!"

By the time the family left for Israel Monte had finished Grade 6, Danny Grade 4 and Tzvia Grade 1. Upon arriving in Israel, they were extremely proud of their kids' TT education. All the kids adapted to their new life, easily mastering the Hebrew language, and already having an appreciation of the country through their knowledge of Israel taught at TT. In Myrna's words, "...because they had been taught by wonderful Israeli teachers (and of course



Thanks to a generous donation from Don and Myrna Silverberg, of Netanya Israel, a new lunchroom will be constructed at Talmud Torah School, a place where students will eat, pray and gather together. Todah Rabah to the Silverberg family from the Talmud Torah community.

very good English ones as well)."

So why a donation to Talmud Torah now? The Silverberg's shared with the Board that when Myrna's younger brother, Dr. Larry Wine, passed away he left her some money. Wanting to make a gift back in Canada, Talmud Torah felt like the perfect place to make a gift that would mean the most to their family.

When the idea of creating a lunchroom/communal space for today's students to gather to share lunch, prayers and create a stronger community, it was apparent that the perfect match for their donation had been found. After decades of students being isolated during lunch time, the addition of a lunchroom/communal space will greatly

enhance the pride and feeling of ruach in the school and bring back a venue that has left indelible memories for TT children for decades.

The Talmud Torah Society is currently gathering tenders for the construction of the lunchroom. Two rooms in the southwest corner of the building (the Slawsky multi-purpose room and Hardin music room) will be combined, allowing our students to eat, pray and gather together. Truly a game-changer for our students!

Kol haKavod to Myrna, Don and the entire Silverberg family for making this transformational gift to Talmud Torah. The impact of this gift will last a lifetime.



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 **For information email albertajewishnews@gmail.com or call Deb at 780-421-7966.** 

It's a boy!
Oliver Jack Hogan-Huberman was born on September 23, 2021.

Mazal Tov to loving parents Jessica Hogan and Kyle Huberman!





Calgary Jewish Academy students experienced Tu B'Shevat through a variety of experiences, including art projects, music, lessons about environmental awareness and partnering with the Jewish National Fund, for a virtual tour of Israel led by JNF Shlichah, Yifat Bear Miller.

Tu B'Shevat at the CJA

By Joseph Tappenden

Celebrating Jewish holidays is an integral part of student life and academic programming at the CJA. Students learn about holiday traditions and customs and participate in across the school celebrations. Students

experience each holiday through learning of text, singing songs, and creating art projects. This year at the CJA, students and teachers found innovative ways to celebrate the holiday of *Tu B'Shevat*. Throughout the day students experienced *Tu B'Shevat* through multiple lenses. In science class, students used the day to promote environmental awareness. In math, students designed beautiful landscapes with their fraction colouring. In partnering with the Jewish National Fund, students were guided on a virtual tour of Israel lead by JNF Shlichah, Yifat Bear Miller. This experience made students feel as if Israel was right around the corner,

rather than over 10,000 km away. Students also had the opportunity to use the day as a way to reflect on why they are grateful for our environment and ecosystem. Drawings adorn the school hallways showing gratitude for the many ways that plant life sustains humanity, whether it be by providing us oxygen, bearing fruits or assisting in creating shelter. These meaningful Jewish experiences are ways that the CJA helps students explore Judaism and build their Jewish Identity, laying the foundation to ensure unique experiences as students continue on their Jewish journey.

B'nai Brith Canada expands Diverse Minds Writing Competition

By Maxine Fischbein

Well known for its long history of community service as well as monitoring and responding to antisemitic and racist attacks against people and property, B'nai Brith Canada is engaging youth of all backgrounds and capabilities in writing and reading stories of diversity and inclusion. The Diverse Minds Creative Writing Competition—first launched in Winnipeg in 2019 and later implemented in Toronto, Montreal, and Edmonton—is growing again, having this year added Calgary to the list of Canadian cities where local B'nai Brith lodges are promoting the competition. Students in grades nine through 12 can submit illustrated storybooks intended for younger readers in

kindergarten and elementary schools. Participation in the rapidly-growing competition is open to Canadian students regardless of their location. Nationally, students are invited to participate in either English or French. The competition is based on a similar one previously offered in the United States, said veteran educator Dr. Ruth Ashrafi, Regional Director, Manitoba, B'nai Brith Canada. “This is an excellent opportunity for students to challenge themselves a little bit,” Ashrafi told *AJNews*. “We don’t listen enough to teenagers,” says Ashrafi who adds that a powerful thing happens when teens present their ideas and hopes to younger children. This year, in addition to bragging rights, the first, second and third-place winners will respectively receive cash prizes of \$5,000, \$2,500 and \$1,000.

Winning submissions will be published in colourful hardcover editions and distributed, free of charge, to local schools, public libraries and non-profit organizations. B'nai Brith Canada retains the rights to the books which are available for purchase on the organization's website. Proceeds from the sale of winning submissions support seniors programs, affordable housing, COVID-19 emergency food drives, clothing drives and the fight against racism and antisemitism. The deadline for the 2022 Diverse Minds Creative Writing Competition is April 8. Students may work independently or in teams of two, and are asked to submit their work online. Their works must embody the themes of diversity and inclusion, though the subject matter is otherwise limitless, allowing young writers to bring their imagination and inspiration to a project that has already yielded praiseworthy works probing such topics as autism, bullying, and gender as well as racial, religious and cultural diversity. Participants in the Diverse Minds contest are invited to submit books of 16 to 24 pages including front and back covers. Each page must incorporate words and illustrations that support diversity-focussed subject matter, though the manner in which material is integrated is up to each budding artist. Judging is based on originality, creativity, skill, clarity and relevancy of the story to young readers. The national judges include political figures, teachers, artists, writers and other celebrities who will choose the winners from across the country. “B'nai Brith Canada is constantly working to find ways to bring programs to the community that bring benefit to

Continued on page 10



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JNF Edmonton Negev Gala Honourees are Robin and David Marcus

By Gaylene Soifer and Jeff Rubin

Jewish National Fund of Edmonton is thrilled to announce the 2022 Negev Gala Honourees, Robin and David Marcus, a passionate and involved couple who are part of the fabric of the Edmonton Jewish Community. Robin and David are long-time volunteers and supporters for a strong and vibrant community who have also dedicated their lives advocating for, and strengthening, connections with Israel.

David is a second generation Edmontonian whose family's roots and commitment to the Jewish and general community run deep. His many involvements include the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha, Beth Israel Synagogue, JAHSENA, Edmonton Jewish Federation, The Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation, the Downtown Parking Advisory Board, and the Edmonton Downtown Business Association.

Robin (nee Winestock) has lived in Edmonton most of her life and learned the importance and values of

engagement and involvement from her parents. She is both a Talmud Torah School alumna and a devoted and beloved teacher at the school. She is a recipient of the 2019 JNF Esther and Eric Exton Educational Award. Her involvement within the Jewish community also includes Beth Israel Synagogue, Na'amat, Edmonton Jewish Federation, BBG Advisor, Shalom Edmonton, and the Jewish National Fund.

Robin and David's son, Max, and his wife, Eliana Sutton, live and work in Toronto, and their daughter, Annie, son-in-law Corey Sobel and granddaughter, Rayna, live and work in Vancouver. Family and Jewish community are a crucial part of all of their lives.

Robin and David are humbled to be this year's JNF Negev Gala honourees and we are looking forward to a wonderful celebration! They are most deserving of this honour. Mazal Tov and Yasher Koach to Robin and David.

Mark your calendars for August 18, 2022 – the Edmonton JNF Negev Gala is going to be a night to remember!



Robin and David Marcus are the 2022 JNF Edmonton Negev Gala Honourees. The gala will take place on August 18, 2022.

UN General Assembly condemns Holocaust denial

By Cnaan Lipshiz

(JTA) — In a unanimous vote, the United Nations General Assembly has for the second time passed a resolution condemning Holocaust denial.

The resolution, coauthored by 71 countries including Israel, the United States, Canada and Germany, passed without opposition or abstentions on Thursday Jan. 20, the 80th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference. That was the 1942 meeting in which Nazi leaders decided on the “final solution to the Jewish question,” a euphemism for the systematic annihilation of European Jewry.

The General Assembly “rejects and condemns without any reservation any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part” and “urges all

Member States to reject without any reservation any denial or distortion of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to this end,” the resolution states.

The resolution is similar to a 2007 resolution passed by the General Assembly, but goes further in that it offers a definition of Holocaust denial as an action that refers “specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust did not take place, and may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation, and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people.”

The Iranian delegation, whose government sponsors competitions for caricatures ridiculing, denying and downplaying the Holocaust, said it was disassociating

itself from the text, according to the BBC. But the Islamic Republic could not vote against it in the General Assembly because its voting privileges have been suspended due to it not having paid membership fees on time, the *Times of Israel* reported. This allowed the vote to pass unanimously.

The resolution began as an effort by the Israeli delegation to the U.N. headed by Israel's ambassador to the organization, Gilad Erdan, the *Times of Israel* reported, before it was formally submitted as a joint draft by 71 countries.

“We applaud the UN General Assembly for adopting the Israeli resolution aimed at combatting Holocaust distortion and denial,” stated B'nai Brith Canada CEO Michael Mostyn. “We are proud of Canada for co-sponsoring this critically important resolution.”

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A MESSAGE FROM JARED SHORE

In a recently released archived letter written by Albert Einstein to American businessman Fred Behr, Einstein wrote that what “has enabled the Jewish people to survive for thousands of years has been based to a large extent on traditions of mutual helpfulness.”

Jewish Calgary, as I know you all can relate, 2021 will go down in my books as a considerably challenging year. The ongoing rise in antisemitism, our seemingly perpetual battle with COVID, and the isolation we felt as individuals and as a community from both of those issues, has taken its toll on us all. I, for one, am optimistic that better things lay ahead this year.

And while we cannot simply wave a wand and put all of that behind us as we turn the calendar to 2022, I hope you will share my optimism that this coming year will be a bright one. For me, one of the best moments of last year came at its closing hours as Diana Kalef, Director of Development, sent me word that our 2021 UJA Campaign goal had been reached. I cannot overstate what a great achievement that was, in the midst of such challenging times. When our community needed you most, you

stepped up. Of note, this year we had over 70 new donors and over \$140,000 in donation increases.

This year’s campaign was marked by a unique approach that engaged our partner agencies as leaders in raising funds and awareness for the work that Federation does, and the connection between Federation and the critical work of each partner. Staff and lay leaders across our community joined together in the work and can now rejoice together in the success of this year’s campaign. It highlights the amazing partnership that our community’s agencies are engaged in.


I hope that in those canvassing calls, you all had the opportunity to understand the work that Federation and our partner agencies do. For those that I spoke with, I know that those conversations give the assurance that your hard earned time and dollars are serving to strengthen Calgary’s amazing Jewish community: now and for years to come.

In a most timely fashion, our programming calendar kicks off this month with an event that will enlighten and

inspire. In partnership with Jewish Federation of Edmonton, and the Calgary and Edmonton Public Libraries, we will be presenting a conversation with author, educator and advocate, Ben M. Freeman. Ben’s book, and message, are about the importance of ‘Jewish Pride’, in the face of many challenges. As easy as it is to constantly play defense to the hatred directed at our community, we must refocus on all of the things that truly define us.

We are a diverse community. We are a spiritual community. We are a resourceful community. We value inclusion. We welcome the stranger. We respect our elders and nurture our young. We seek justice. We seek truth. And as this year’s campaign has well demonstrated, we are stronger together. There is so much to be proud of. Happy 2022, Jewish Calgary.

B'Shalom,


Jared Shore
Co-President, Calgary Jewish Federation

Building an inclusive community is a priority. Contact us and we will make every effort to meet your needs.

WELCOME!



Calgary Jewish Federation is pleased to welcome **Hannah Giesinger** to our staff team as the Emerging Gen Coordinator, servicing JAC and Hillel Calgary.

Hannah is a born and raised Calgarian who is an active member in the community. She previously served on the Hillel board for three years, and has been an educator with Temple B'nai Tikvah since 2008. We are excited to see what Hannah has in store for our 18 to 40 year olds!

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Submit a cover letter and current resumé by February 4 to Danielle Braitman: dbraitman@jewishcalgary.org.

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TOGETHER WE ARE A COMMUNITY

UJA 2021

All activities on this page are made possible by your gifts to Federation's annual UJA Campaign.

Yasher Koach *Cont. from page 1*

studies leading to ordination. One option that Rabbi Cantor Jayne found within the Reconstructionist movement was geared only to Eastern Time making it impossible for him to juggle his responsibilities at Beth Tzedec with his studies.

“The Pluralistic Rabbinical Assembly has built a solid program that addresses the need; I believe that well-established Jewish institutions are sure to follow,” added Rabbi Cantor Jayne.

Online interdenominational rabbinical study programs have proliferated in recent years, posing a challenge for previously existing Jewish institutions. It is Rabbi Cantor Jayne’s hope that cornerstone institutions within the Conservative movement - like the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles - will consider providing online options for Jewish professionals who aspire to the Rabbinate.

“We’ve always been evolving,” said Rabbi Cantor Jayne, adding that the ability to adapt to changing times and circumstances is what keeps Judaism strong in general.

In addition to core curricula emphasizing sacred texts, PRS students choose some 18 to 20 classes from a plethora of electives and are also required to participate in six innovation units that emphasize entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial skills including how to develop business plans, build successful surveys, market synagogue programs and conduct fundraising campaigns.

“I got to hear a lot about different entrepreneurs, not just in the Jewish world, but in the religious world in general,” said Rabbi Jayne who added that he was inspired by the very innovative programming at the Sixth & I Synagogue in Washington DC and the work of Pastor Casper ter Kuile, the Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School, who encourages his flock to read non-religious texts using the same inquiry tools typically brought to the reading of sacred texts in order to “really tease something out of it.”

“I am now excited by the idea of helping others to glean inspiration not only from our holy texts, but also from every day reading,” said Rabbi Cantor Jayne, who adds that he is impressed at how the PRS program combines the study of ancient texts with cutting edge modern technology, training future clergy to incorporate the use of tools like social media to make the study and observance of Judaism more widely accessible beyond Synagogue doors.

The nexus of old and new has always fascinated Rabbi Cantor Jayne, who was delighted to engage in a class taught in Hebrew that explored Israeli popular music through the analysis of its religious symbolism.

“We learned to delve deeply to find the coded religious references that are there. It was a fascinating class because so much of the inspiration for Israeli popular music is rooted in our scriptural tradition.”

Rabbi Cantor Jayne looks forward to bringing the best of what he has learned to Beth Tzedec congregants and the community at large. A course he plans to offer this spring will give participants a fascinating overview of false messiahs throughout Jewish history. It is a fitting topic at a time when more and more people within and beyond the Jewish community are drawn to extremes and seek comfort in the too-easy answers willingly provided by demagogues.

In addition to enjoying the support of his teachers and classmates at PRS, Rabbi Cantor Jayne had the enthusiastic backing of the Beth Tzedec board of directors.

“Beth Tzedec has a long-standing record of supporting the continuing education of our clergy. We were really investing in our own future when we supported Cantor Jayne’s rabbinical studies,” said David Inhaber, the immediate past president and current interim CEO at Beth Tzedec.

At the time that Cantor Russ - as he was then known - was first hired, some were taken aback that Beth Tzedec had hired a convert as Cantor. Others were opposed to the hiring of an openly gay clergy member.

“Those of us who interviewed and hired Cantor Jayne, felt strongly that he would gain the respect of congregants when they saw how committed he is to Conservative Judaism and how inspiring his personal journey has been,” said Lorne Pearl, who is currently serving a second non-consecutive term as congregational president.

“Rabbi Russ has broken down so many barriers just by being who he is. He takes joy in Judaism and has an incredible work ethic,” added Pearl. “Congregants love the way he officiates lifecycle events and take comfort from his supportive presence during times of challenge and loss.”

Behind most successful men are encouraging and nurturing spouses, and that has certainly been the case for Rabbi Cantor Jayne who describes his husband - Russell Janiger - as “immensely supportive.”



Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne with Rabbi Sandy Zisser, co-founder of the Pluralistic Rabbinical Seminary.

“He knew that this meant a lot to me, that smicha was something I had wanted to pursue for years,” said Rabbi Cantor Jayne who quipped that Janiger will henceforth be known to the community as “the Rebbitzer,” a riff on *rebbetzin*, the traditional honorific for wives of Rabbis.

Janiger has himself served Beth Tzedec and the greater community as an avid volunteer. A much-loved ESL teacher, he has delighted in teaching immigrants in programs provided by Jewish Family Service Calgary and the Immigrant Education Society. Janiger also volunteers in JFSC’s Memory Care and Friendly Visitor programs.

With his husband and community behind him, Rabbi Cantor Jayne looks forward to many more happy and productive years at Beth Tzedec. While there are no immediate plans to hire additional full-time clergy, Rabbi Jayne has three part-time colleagues. Chazzan Sheini Elliott Steinberg leads some Shabbat and Holiday services; Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidés assists on the youth education front; and Jonah Potasznik continues to serve as the synagogue’s engagement director.

A former altar boy who embraced Judaism as an adult, Rabbi Cantor Jayne continues his fascinating spiritual journey, breaking barriers and making Conservative Judaism - to which he is passionately devoted - accessible and appealing to Jews by choice while helping those raised as Jews to look at their heritage with fresh eyes and renewed appreciation.

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

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UJA 2021

CALGARY

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The power of community.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and dedication of our volunteers we are thrilled to announce that our community raised over \$2.55 million for the 2021 United Jewish Appeal Campaign – exceeding our goal of \$2.5 million – all in support of vital programs and services!

Despite 2021 being our second campaign in the midst of the pandemic, our community members continued to step up for one another. So much is made possible because of you, including: services for our most vulnerable, education, outreach and engagement, support for children and families, everyday community amenities, connections to Israel, and so much more.

TODAH RABAH

You are a gift to our community, not just during Campaign season, but every day of the year!

New children’s book tells the story of Henrietta Szold

By Irena Karshenbaum

There has been renewed interest recently in the life of Henrietta Szold, whose name is not as well-known as it could be given that she saved 11,000 children from perishing in the Holocaust and improved the lives of millions of people.

The near simultaneous publication of two books based on her life — a biography by Dvora Hachoen, recently translated from Hebrew, *To Repair a Broken World: The Life of Henrietta Szold, Founder of Hadassah*, and an illustrated children’s book by Nancy Churnin, *A Queen to the Rescue: The Story of Henrietta Szold, Founder of Hadassah* — finally shines a light on this remarkable woman who persevered through personal heartbreak while living through difficult times to do work she saw as needing to be done.

Both book titles carry the name of the organization she founded, Hadassah, and how it is known in the United States. In Canada, it is called, Canadian Hadassah-WIZO. Remarkably, she founded two other organizations prior to founding what would become the largest Jewish women’s Zionist organization in the world. As a young woman living in her native Baltimore, when she saw new immigrants treated poorly on account of their poverty and lack of English skills, Henrietta founded a night school where they could study English and vocational skills to enable them to find better employment. When she saw that not enough Jewish books were being published, she became the founding editor of The Jewish Publication Society, today considered the preeminent publisher of Jewish books in English, overseeing the publication of books, writing articles, translating works, while carrying the title of “secretary,” at a time when women could not hold jobs.

These contributions would have been enough for most people, but Henrietta persisted. What launched this most productive phase was personal heartbreak. After learning that a young Talmudic scholar, named Rabbi Louis Ginzberg, whom she secretly carried a torch for was going to marry another, much younger, woman, an Adele

Katzenstein, Henrietta fell into a deep depression. She rose up from the ashes of her unrequited love like a phoenix and set sail for pre-state Israel where she went on to achieve her greatest work, through Hadassah.

So how do you tell such a difficult and complicated life story to children?

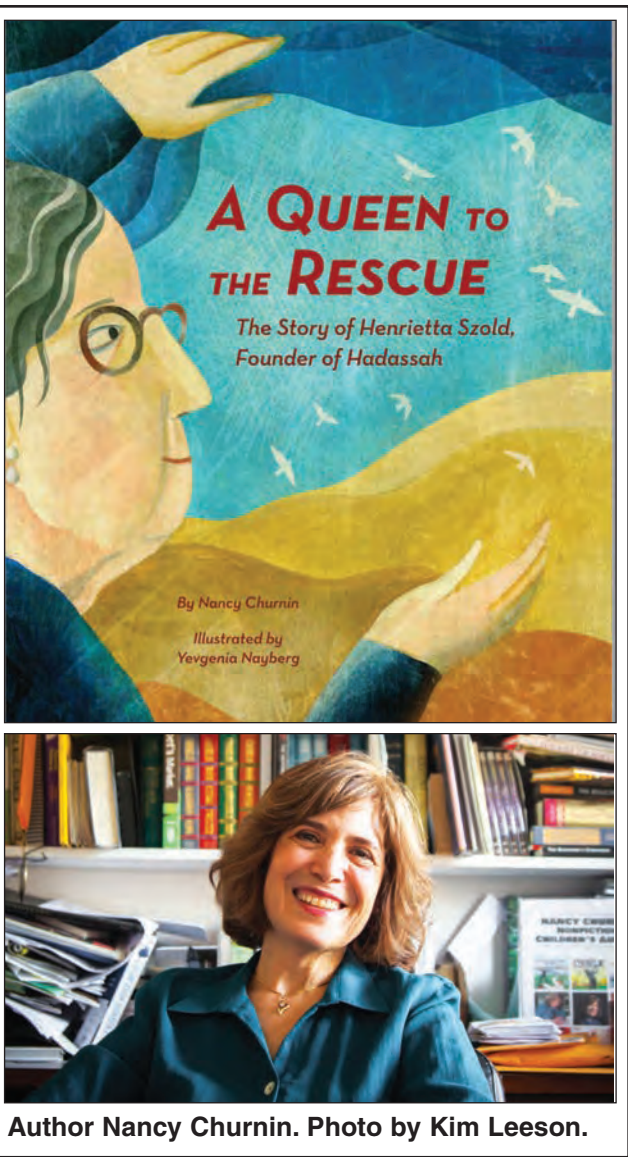
Educated at Harvard and Columbia University, Nancy Churnin worked for years as a journalist and finally, after receiving numerous rejections from publishers for an earlier children’s book manuscript, decided to hone her skills as a children’s book writer at a writing program sponsored by PJ Library. It was here, Churnin, being a lifetime member of Hadassah, discovered there had not been a picture book written about Henrietta Szold. She quickly realized why, “There was simply too much to say about her.” With further research, Churnin found “the kid friendly element” when she seized on Henrietta’s love of the Purim story. She explains, “Hadassah was the Hebrew name for Queen Esther, Hadassah was founded on Purim and kids love to celebrate Purim.”

What has resulted is a smart picture book for children that teaches history, hard work and not giving up to despair while living through dark times. It is a story for our time. The beauty of the book is that it is the antithesis of a fairy tale or a sugary sweet Disney tale that gives children cerebral cavities and distorts their thinking with illusions. *A Queen to the Rescue*, is honest, yet manages to broach difficult subjects in a sensitive, engaging manner helping to teach empathy and spark intelligent conversations.

Yevgenia Nayberg, who illustrated the book, deserves praise for her exquisite drawings that have turned this work into *objet d’art* for little hands.

At the writing of this story, the Jewish Book Council announced the 2021 National Jewish Book Awards, which included Hachoen’s *To Repair a Broken World* (Harvard University Press) receiving the Book of the Year and the Biography Awards and the prolific Churnin received the Children’s Picture Book Award, yet for another work, *Dear Mr. Dickens* (Albert Whitman & Co).

Churnin concludes, “Henrietta lived through the Civil War, World War I, she didn’t even live to see the end World War II, but she never gave up. This sends a message to kids. It’s actually comforting because it’s saying there are amazing people who lived through dark times, maybe even darker than ours. They kept the light burning. They managed to do good things. They managed to move the moral arch of the universe towards justice. You can do



Author Nancy Churnin. Photo by Kim Leeson.

that too. They didn’t do that with wealth. They didn’t do that with power. They showed that we can all do it.”

Nancy Churnin will be reading *A Queen to the Rescue* to children in time for Purim on Sunday, March 13, 2022 at 10:30 am MT over Zoom. Children are asked to wear a Purim costume. Tickets can be purchased at www.chw.ca.

Irena Karshenbaum writes in Calgary.
irenakarshenbaum.com

Diverse Minds *Cont. from page 6*

the community,” said Abe Silverman, Manager of Public Affairs, Alberta Region, B’nai Brith Canada. “A lot of groups talk about the need for diversity and inclusion. We’re not just talking... we’re also doing things that will make a difference.”

According to Silverman, there were 22 submissions from Edmonton students in last year’s competition.

Calgary B’nai Brith Lodge #816 has been actively promoting the 2022 competition, contacting Calgary and area teachers directly and also getting the word out to youth within the Jewish community through such organizations as BBYO and Camp BB Riback, said Calgary B’nai Brith Lodge President Darren Bondar.

“It is a great opportunity for us to be able to reach both Jewish and non-Jewish students and bring some awareness to what B’nai Brith does,” added Bondar. “What better way to do that than encouraging Calgary

teens to enter what has become a popular national competition?”

The 2022 competition will culminate in a national awards ceremony in September. COVID-19 permitting, B’nai Brith plans to fly each winner, together with a parent or legal guardian, to the city (as yet unannounced) where the national awards ceremony will take place.

For Ashrafi, former head of Judaic Studies at Winnipeg’s Gray Academy of Jewish Education, the enthusiasm of contest participants is a joy to behold.

“Last year I read all the submissions,” said Ashrafi. “I was completely blown away by how important these topics are for children and how original they are in the stories and illustrations they come up with.”

“It is important to help youth find their voice and to show them how much they can use that voice to influence their younger peers.”

While adults are not eligible to enter the Diverse Minds competition, they too can become part of this empowering experience. According to B’nai Brith Canada, sponsorship opportunities are available.

For more information about the Diverse Minds Creative Writing Competition, including rules and guidelines, media coverage, and excerpts from the delightful books by past winners, go to <https://www.bnaibrith.ca/diverseminds/>

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

A collage of four images: a child on a swing, a baby laughing, a child at a table, and a child with Hebrew blocks. Below these is the Gan Chaim logo featuring a bee and children.

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Tamara Rose Lipes-Treewater was born on November 18.

Mazal Tov to her parents Regan and Dmitriy and her big brothers Benji and Jacob.

A close-up photo of a newborn baby, Tamara Rose Lipes-Treewater, wearing a pink headband with a bow.

It's a Girl!

A small, cute illustration of a baby sheep with a yellow body and a red bow on its head.

Wilson M. Beck Insurance: We Care. We Help.



Sam J. Feldman

By Sam J. Feldman

Listen to any business podcast or read any business article and you will likely encounter the word ‘differentiator’. This word is often used to identify technological advancements. But while the trend is to view differentiators as a means to make more profit from customers, we don’t view it that way.

Let me tell you about our differentiator...

We base our differentiator around our slogan, ‘We Care. We Help.’ Business is not just about business for us; it’s not just about profit. We care about our clients’ families; we care about our clients’ employees and we care about how our clients are doing in business. We care because we are a partner, not just a supplier.

There are hundreds of insurance companies that come up in a quick Google search, many of them are paying big money to earn that top advertising slot on your computer. Instead of cycling our customers’ money into expensive advertising campaigns, we have chosen to take time to genuinely care about our clients and about their businesses.

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Niche Industry Expertise

Whether you are in the planning stages of a startup or running an established business, having a broker that understands your industry is really important. You may think that you have adequate coverage, only to realize when a claim occurs that your policy has fallen

significantly short. This could be due to inadequate coverage or to changes in your industry, such as changing legislation or legal precedents. Our team of experts is there to help you avoid that sinking feeling. We will ensure that you have the coverage you need to be protected so that you can focus on building your business.

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We all get annoyed when our bank is offering new customers a free iPad or cash incentive while offering their loyal customers nothing except increases in costs and decreases in service. We boldly stand against that practice and dedicate significant time to ensure that long term customers are not taken for granted like they are in so many sectors. Because of this, we are proud to boast long term relationships with many industry leading companies in Alberta, with many of these relationships spanning over 20 years.

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We believe that to offer the absolute best pricing and coverage, we cannot be owned by an insurance company. We are independently and 100% Canadian owned by a group of partners who are all involved in the business today. That means that we can advocate for our clients without any conflicting loyalties to other parties.

At Wilson M. Beck Insurance, we know what it’s like building a company from the ground up and your success matters to us. What drives us isn’t the cost of your policy, it’s making sure you have the coverage you need when the unthinkable happens. In the event of a claim, we fight to enforce your policy; we work with the insurance company to make sure that you get what’s owed to you – we make you a priority. We genuinely care about your business and helping you achieve success is the reason we come to work every morning.

If you feel like your broker isn’t meeting your expectations – maybe your part of a niche industry that they’re not familiar with – it might be time for you to make the switch to our team at Wilson M. Beck Insurance Services (Alberta).

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Sam Feldman is President, and Managing Director of Wilson M. Beck Insurance Services (Alberta) Inc.

Just a Few Testimonials...

“Tollestrup Group’s longtime partnership with Sam and his team at Wilson M. Beck Insurance Services are vital to our ongoing success. They provide the peace of mind and security of our business needs, with a customized approach”

- Mitch Arsenault, CFO, Tollestrup Construction Ltd

“Sam and his team are constantly working with us to ensure that we have the best fit for all of our company’s insurance and bonding needs. They have been our valuable partners for more than 15 years”

- Danielle Renton, Chief Executive Officer, Kidco Construction

“Sam and his team at WMB have been a part of our group’s success for the past 2 decades. We are beyond grateful for his dedication, partnership and best in class service for all these years.”

- Gildo Giusti, President, Giusti Group & Viper Concrete

“Sam and the WMB team have been a critical partner to our organization. They always have our best interest in mind and make sure we’re always covered for our insurance needs. The first 15+ years have been excellent and I look forward to working with them in the future. Great group of people!!”

- Trevor Tomlinson, President, Otis Excavating

“Having great financial relationships are critical in this business. Sam and his team have always delivered on our surety and insurance needs and are an important partner of ours.”

- Murray Cunningham, President & CEO, Scott Builders Inc.

“Prattco’s success has been due to its strong and fundamental partnerships. Sam and the WMB team have always worked extremely hard for us over past 12 years protecting our assets, our fleet and securing surety bonds for all our projects.”

- Jarrett Pratt, Operations Manager, Prattco Excavating



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Celebrating Tu Bi'Shevat in Alberta

By Jenna Soroka

Each year for Tu Bi'Shevat — *the New Year of the Trees* — JNF chooses a special area in Israel to plant trees or a meaningful environmental project to support celebration of Jewish Arbor Day. This year, they are campaigning to rehabilitate the forest of the Jerusalem Hills.

This past summer, a fire broke out in the Jerusalem Hills. It was the largest wildfire to occur in the Jerusalem area in recent years. Canadians have planted millions of trees in Israel over the decades, some of which were destroyed in this fire. JNF Canada is working with partners on the ground to start the first stages of rehabilitation needed to help the forests and environment start to heal.

JNF welcomes our readers to contribute to the JNF Tu Bi'Shevat School Campaign to ensure that the forests around Jerusalem will remain green and lush for generations to come. For a minimum of \$18, you will receive a special certificate and a downloadable Tu Bi'Shevat activity book for young children with colouring pages and puzzles.

Edmonton's Talmud Torah School is a long-time supporter of the JNF Tu Bi'Shevat campaign and has helped raise funds to plant trees in Israel for many years. This year, the student organizing committee, with support from teacher supervisor Moreh Ari Sniderman, is running the campaign until January 31st. If you would like to learn more about this campaign and how to contribute, please visit jnf.ca/annual-education-campaign.

Furthermore, in honour of Tu Bi'Shevat JNF is launching an important initiative as their environmental mission takes a new form to tackle the most pressing issue of our time: climate change.

The Climate Solutions Prize, a new initiative powered by JNF, will galvanize universities, scientists, engineers and research institutions to develop the best solutions to address climate change. Their aim is to develop a multimillion-dollar fund, and invest \$1 million per year in the most promising ideas from across Israel.

JNF believes in Israel's ability to profoundly impact the world and the Climate Solutions Prize represents a natural extension of their environmental work. For more information visit climatesolutionsprize.com.

Winter in Alberta is a time for snow, icy sidewalks, and bundling up in many layers before going outside. It is also a season when we celebrate Tu Bi'Shevat, the new year for

trees. Seems a bit odd, right? Rabbi Eitiel Goldwicht, founder of Aish Israel, explains that this holiday is the day “we celebrate the potential of the tree.”

This year, as always, a variety of events and activities were held in Edmonton and Calgary to help make Tu Bi'Shevat a more meaningful and memorable holiday. In addition to special events at Calgary Jewish Academy, Halpern Akiva Academy and Edmonton Talmud Torah numerous celebrations took place.

In Calgary a Tu Bi'Shevat Terrarium Workshop was held at the Paperny Family JCC for people to create their own mini-gardens to mark the holiday.

Beth Tzedec Congregation and PJ Library Calgary collaborated with BING Art Studio's Sarah Bing, to celebrate with a virtual nature-inspired, multi-media art project for elementary school-aged children.

Cantor Russell Jayne and Keshet held a virtual Tu Bi'Shevat Seder on Jan. 16 which included a wonderful lunch from Karen's Cafe and Catering.

Mira Feldman Campbell shared some Tu Bi'Shevat nighttime stories on January 16 as part of Jewish Federation of Edmonton's PJ Library. Kits includes some at-home activities, hot chocolate and a mug. February's program will be held on February 13.

On January 15, Victoria's Kolot Mayim Reform Temple and Edmonton's Temple Beth Ora congregations came together to celebrate the New Year of the Trees online for a virtual seder.


Edmonton's Beth Israel held a virtual seder on January 16 that include a free kids' festival package filled with colouring sheets, games, snacks, and a fruit platter seder plate.


Shira Or, with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and PJ Our Way, hosted a fun way for members to be creative

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and test their Tu Bi'Shevat knowledge. A virtual Tu Bi'Shevat themed Kahoot challenge and crafting activity was held on January 16.

In these colder months, we may start to wonder how it will ever become warm again. Tu Bi'Shevat reminds us that even in the harshest environments, a rebirth is happening below the surface, waiting to burst its colours into the world again.

However you chose to celebrate Tu Bi'Shevat this year, let it be with the understanding that hard times do not last forever and sweeter times are a result of our resiliency.

Jenna Soroka is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter with Alberta Jewish News.





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Winter programs sparkle at Edmonton's Beth Israel

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

On the fifth night of Chanukah, as light overpowered dark, Edmonton's Beth Israel Congregation celebrated with live music. With AHS safety protocols in observance, families gathered at the Family Shul on December 2 to enjoy a live performance by a Jerusalem musical staple, Anders Nerman.

"He sang, played guitar, and played the harmonica. He performed Chanukah songs, and some classic favourites," commented Shul Director Moshe Siderson. The event was very well attended with a terrific gathering of families enjoying Nerman's concert. "I think that everyone had a really good time!"

Just as Edmontonians began to think that it was safe to go outside again, the intensity of northern winter descended. With some record-breaking temperatures, followed by episodes of freezing rain, many people are actively avoiding the outdoors – and with good reason. However, with the lineup of engaging programming on the docket at BI, hunkering down never looked so appealing.

The recent 'In Conversation' series kicked off in November with an evening of authentic Indian cuisine and a Zoom session with Sylvia Benjamin – a pillar of the Edmonton Jewish community. "It materialized to be a fantastic event, serving about 140 people. Rabbi Claman facilitated an informal quiz game, and Sylvia provided really interesting explanations about the food and Jewish life in India," explained Siderson. The inaugural 'In Conversation' experience was met with rave reviews!

With such enthusiastic endorsements, the Jewish community should mark their calendars for February 17 for the series' second exciting international culinary destination, and get their orders in soon, because Siderson and the crew are already cooking up something exciting – Bukharian Night!

"We will be announcing our guest very soon, and the Rabbi will be hosting again," said Siderson. Bukharan Jewish history is fascinating and experiencing some of the cuisine will be a great way to learn more about it." Enough said – after hearing such glowing reviews, nobody will want to miss out!

The 'Outdoor Torah Adventures' for the winter season are already in full swing. On December 30, the first of the seasonal gatherings was outdoor themed, although hosted indoors at the West Edmonton Mall skating rink. "The first of our 'Outdoor Torah Adventures' may have technically been inside, (it was about -30c outside) but the activity had an outdoor spirit," explained Siderson jokingly. Along with some gliding loops around the ice, the experience was, of course, framed in Jewish learning through Torah reflection, and punctuated by some tasty treats, with fantastic Jewish music blaring throughout.

There is still time to sign up for the next 'Outdoor Torah Adventure' which will truly be outdoors! For those itching to suit up in their winter gear, Siderson and the team have joined with PJ Library and arranged snow tubing at Rabbit Hill on Sunday, February 6 from 9:30 to 11 am. Adventure goers should register online. The participation fee for snow tubing is \$10/person and includes exclusive

use of the tubing run and treats to help both fuel the physical activity and provide for noshing during Torah learning. BI and PJ Library invite the entire Edmonton Jewish community to register and attend.

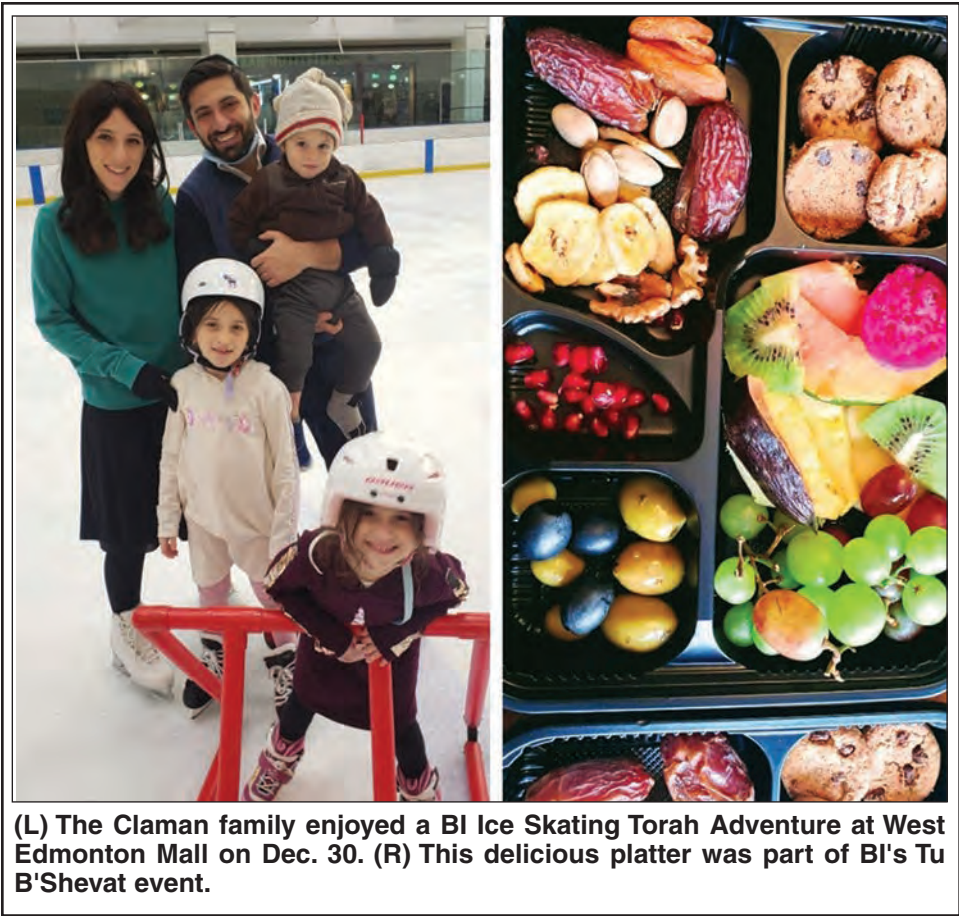
It might seem that with each passing day new restrictions are being announced, but things are still busy at BI thanks to some creative innovations.

"I was taking my jog in the -28C chill, and I started thinking about the back-and-forth of all the re-openings and closures we've experienced over the past two years," commented Siderson. "It occurred to me that this is not unlike a game of ping-pong. We are bouncing back-and-forth like ping-pong balls, so why not just enjoy an actual game of ping-pong!"

With hot coffee provided, BI congregants can sign up for one hour time slots to partake in this pastime and get their blood pumping. "We obviously disinfect the paddles and other equipment after each game, but ping-pong allows for social distancing by nature." BI members who would like to schedule a game during regular opening hours can bring their own partner or play a solo round by contacting Moshe at shuldirector@familyshul.org.

And for those needing a bit more pizzazz added to their week, the BI program planning team challenges community members to: "learn, laugh, cry, and engage" with a new weekly series called 'Sparkling Torah.' Those interested can sign up for free and will receive a link by WhatsApp or email, delivering directly to them carefully curated and meaningfully selected Jewish content selected to "illuminate, elucidate, and educate" as Siderson put it. "The content is diverse, and we really look for material that is eye-opening and thought provoking."

A recent video circulated, presented by Rabbi Yoel Gold, titled "A Babysitter's Message," chronicled the touching story of Jordan Schwartz and his 2003 tour in Iraq with the US. Armed Forces. While on patrol, Schwartz, who was raised in a secular Jewish home, was struck by an ominous sense of danger. He was saved from certain death when he remembered the Shema taught to him by his babysitter when he was a small child. He bent his head to say the prayer just



(L) The Claman family enjoyed a BI Ice Skating Torah Adventure at West Edmonton Mall on Dec. 30. (R) This delicious platter was part of BI's Tu B'Shevat event.

in time to avoid flying shrapnel from an explosion. Upon returning to the base, rattled but alive, Schwartz was given a kippa and siddur by an Army chaplain. He took this as a sign from G-d, and soon enrolled in Yeshivah. The clip, both uplifting and poignant, is short and can be easily integrated into busy schedules. Those interested should visit: familyshul.org/form/sparklingtorah.

The new program kicked off on January 5 with surprises in store for every upcoming week – why not add a little sparkle to your week?

In addition to these activities Rebbetzin Claman will soon begin hosting socially distanced women's classes in adherence to AHS protocols. Classes will include Mikvah and creative writing and she will also be teaching active movement classes for kids. Specifics about these learning opportunities with the Rebbetzin are at familyshul.org/

So as the temperatures dip and dive, the spirits of the Edmonton Jewish community need not follow suit. With all that's coming to life at BI, this winter promises to be an active one.

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

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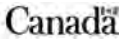
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from the **Sources** Visually Challenged

by Eliezer Segal

A novel that I read recently made several references to a maxim “in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” That saying shows up with considerable frequency in modern European writing. In the eighteenth century, J-J Rousseau invoked it to explain his success as a music teacher though lacking any notable talent: “Dans le royaume des aveugles les borgnes sont roi”- “I passed here for an excellent master, because all the rest were very bad ones.” H. G. Wells even published a story titled “The Country of the Blind” about a remote South American community whose members were all congenitally blind, and a sighted outsider wrongly deluded himself that he was their ruler.

The expression caught my attention because I was familiar with it from the midrashic compendium *Genesis Rabbah* where it appears in Aramaic, attached to a teaching by a second-century Galilean sage. The reading in the best manuscript goes “in the neighbourhood of the blind they call a one-eyed person ‘great one’.” Other texts have it as ‘...they call a one-eyed person ‘rich in light,’ and a small person ‘great one’.”

Indeed, the expression “rich in light” [*sagi nehor*] is used in the Talmud to designate blind persons, and in later usage it became the standard euphemism for, well, euphemisms.

The adage makes its appearance in the midrash in connection with an interpretation that is familiar to traditional Jewish readers from Rashi’s commentary to Genesis. Concerning the Torah’s statement that Noah was “perfect in his generations,” Rabbis Judah and Nehemiah disagree whether the phrase “in his generations” is intended to enhance the hero’s merits or to detract from them. (The same disagreement is brought in the Talmud in the names of Rabbis Simeon ben Lakish and Yohanan.)

Rabbi Nehemiah praised Noah for maintaining his virtue *even* in his wicked generation. On the other hand, Rabbi Judah argued that Noah appeared righteous *only* when compared to the wicked heathens of his time; however, if he had been a contemporary of the virtuous Israelites who flourished in the days of

Moses or Samuel, then his moral stature would not have been particularly impressive. It was to illustrate this opinion that the midrash cited the proverb about one-eyed persons being perceived as “rich in light” in comparison to the fully sightless.

I doubt that the popularity of this adage in European languages can be ascribed to widespread familiarity with ancient rabbinic literature. Indeed, my searches for its origins generally linked it to a more recent source—the eminent Dutch theologian and humanistic scholar Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466 – 1536). Erasmus compiled a vast collection of Latin proverbs known as the “*Adagia*”. One of the sayings that appeared there was “Inter caecos regnat strabus” [among the blind, a person who squints will rule].

Did Erasmus know Hebrew or acquire familiarity with classic Jewish literature? To be sure, he attached great value to the study of ancient languages and was one of his generation’s foremost authorities on Greek text—but he himself never mastered Hebrew.

He was in general a champion of religious tolerance and was opposed to forcibly converting or persecuting Jews. When European theological circles were torn by the fierce “battle of the books” in which the distinguished Christian Hebraist Johann Reuchlin came to the defence of the Talmud and Kabbalah against accusations by the apostate Johannes Pfefferkorn, Erasmus sided with Reuchlin. However, that probably did not reflect any real sympathies toward rabbinic Judaism, but had more to do with his respect for an esteemed friend and colleague and his antipathy to the boorish Pfefferkorn.

Erasmus’s personal attitude to Hebrew literature was expressed in his admonishment to a Judaophile Hebrew scholar: “I see that nation filled with the most frigid fables, casting forth nothing but various smokes: Talmud, Kabbalah, Tetragrammaton, ‘Gates of Light,’ inane names... I am afraid that by this opportunity the head of the plague that was formerly stifled may rise up. And would that the church of the Christians did not give so much preference to the Old Testament!”

Elsewhere too, Erasmus voiced his trepidations that the respect that Christian Hebraists were extending to Jewish writings (especially the Kabbalah) might lead to a rebirth of that rejected nation. He found little attraction in the ritualistic “Old Testament” in comparison to sublime Christian spirituality.

In fact, Erasmus’s Latin adage most likely reached him, as did much of the material in his anthology, in a Greek version that he heard from his friend Arsenius Apostolius, a scholar from Crete who migrated to Italy when Byzantium fell to the Ottoman Turks. The Greek proverb had previously been cited in an ancient commentary to Homer’s *Iliad*.

The proverb was even paraphrased in an English text that might have antedated Erasmus’s *Adagia*. The poet laureate John Skelton published a number of satirical broadsides denouncing his former ally Cardinal Wolsey, and in one of these works, titled “Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?” (1522), he ridiculed Wolsey for claiming to be the equal of King Henry VIII. In that connection Skelton wrote: “Yet proudly he dare pretende \ How no man can him amende \ But haue ye nat harde this \ How an one-eyed man is \ Well-syghted \ when He is amonge blynde men.” That is to say, the cardinal’s inflated pretensions are only imaginable if he is comparing himself with his intellectual and social inferiors.

As Rabbi Jacob Reischer suggested, the midrashic appraisals of Noah are not necessarily contradictory. His uprightness was quite exemplary in the context of his depraved society, even though his spiritual stature would have benefited further from a community of spiritual mentors.

Most authors cite the half-blindness metaphor in a cynical sense, to belittle heroes and leaders who only appear admirable when compared to ones who are utterly inferior. As far as I know, Jewish tradition is unique in envisioning a more hopeful prospect—that persons whose achievements are blurred by the mediocrity of their times might yet rise to visionary clarity when supported by a more ennobling milieu.



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Adult education offered at Beth Shalom in YEG

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

Rabbi Steven Schwarzman, of Beth Shalom Synagogue, Edmonton's Egalitarian Conservative Congregation, arrived in Edmonton in the summer of 2019, mere months before the word 'Zoom' became an essential term in everyone's daily vocabulary. He and his wife Bettina, had very little time to acclimate to their new positions, let alone meet all their congregants and the larger Edmonton Jewish community in person, before the first lockdown in

2020. This made outreach and adult education of even greater importance for Schwarzman. Supported by the tireless efforts of the shul's Adult Education Chair, Anna Linetsky, as well as the rest of the dedicated board members, the Rabbi has been able to not just spark, but ignite, some fantastic intellectual journeys.

Adult education at Beth Shalom takes two forms: scripture-based lectures and textual investigations guided by the Rabbi, and themed presentations by special guest speakers orchestrated by Linetsky. Most recently the Rabbi offered a twelve-week exploration of Kohelet via Zoom, and Linetsky organized a virtual lecture by celebrated University of Alberta history professor, Dr. Joseph Patrouch titled: "Monuments and Museums: How Austrians Are Dealing with the Past Today."

The next Beth Shalom Adult Education Program will be held on February 13, at 2 pm by zoom, presented by

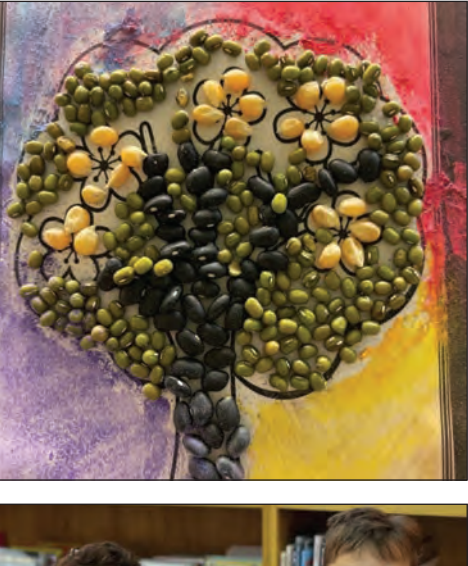
Dr. Laura Schechter. The topic is "Translating the Psalms." Schechter holds a PhD from the University of Alberta, and she teaches a wide range of courses in the Department of English and Film Studies.

For the time being, there is no need exhaustively scrape ice off windshields or to drive downtown and hunt for parking, since everything is online. With just the click of a mouse, or the tap of a touchscreen, a world of enriching Jewish programming awaits. The Edmonton Jewish community at large is warmly invited to sign up for Beth Shalom's newsletter to receive important updates and information about upcoming events. A quick visit to their website is the start of what promises to be a scintillating and thought-provoking endeavor.

For more information visit edmontonbethshalom.org.

Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School




It's been a very busy month at Talmud Torah School. In addition to a variety of classroom activities, Jay Cairns of JNF provided seeds and soil for students to plant as part of the Tu B'Shevat celebration. As of print date, 165 trees have been purchased by our TT families and friends. Looking for more tree orders; contact jnf.ca.

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