



# **Yizkor – past, present and future**

By Rabbi Guy Tal



Rabbi Guy Tal

Torah, of things we must remember: The Exodus from Egypt, The Shabbat, The Manna, The Evil Deed of Amalek, The Revelation at Mount Sinai, The Complaints of Our Ancestors Against G-d in the Desert, Especially the Sin of the Golden Calf, The Plots of Balak and Balaam

According to the sages,

there are ten Commandments of Memory in the

to Harm Our Ancestors, The Deeds of Miriam the Prophetess, The Commandment to Remember G-d, for He Gives You the Power to Succeed, The Remembrance of Jerusalem – May It Be Built and Established Speedily in Our Days, Amen.

The events of the Exodus from Egypt, the Manna, the Evil Deed of Amalek, the Revelation at Mount Sinai, the Complaints of Our Ancestors in the Desert, the Plots of Balak and Balaam, and the Deeds of Miriam the Prophetess are all memories of the past.

The Shabbat and the commandment to remember G-d are relevant to the present, while the remembrance of Jerusalem is linked to the future – the construction and establishment of Jerusalem in the time of redemption.

### Past.

Yizkor - the memory brings back things that are no longer present, that have passed away, what has been forgotten but returns to us through our minds. In the final words of Moses, the greatest leader of our nation, he urges us to remember:

"Recall the days of old, Reflect on the years of ages past; Ask your father, and he will inform you, Your elders, and they will tell you."

Moses instructs us to cherish history, the past, to seek wisdom from our parents and elders, as their knowledge is invaluable and cannot be acquired in any other way.

### Present.

Memory also serves as a vital tool for the present. We recollect things that demand action at this very moment and translate them into reality. Similarly, the Torah instructs us to remember its teachings in a way that activates and influences our current lives. One commandment, in particular, explicitly calls for remembrance and entails the obligation to "bind." For tzitzit, it is said: "and you shall see it and remember all the commandments of the Lord" and we are required to tie the fringes to the corners of our garments.

Binding and memory are intrinsically linked. Binding represents commitment and a bond that exists in the present moment. Through the observance of tzitzit, we manifest our commitment to the fulfillment of the commandments – "and you shall remember all the commandments of the Lord, and fulfill them."

### Future.

Memory also extends to the future, empowering us to shape a vibrant destiny. It is not a static recollection of a bygone era, but a living memory that urges us to take action and influence what lies ahead. The prophet speaks of G-d's yearning for His son Ephraim: "Ephraim is a dear son to Me, a child of delight; for as soon as I speak of him, I surely remember him still, My heart yearns for him; I will surely have compassion on him, declares the Lord." G-d's remembrance of Ephraim sparks a longing and a desire to change the situation, thereby promising a compassionate future – "I will surely have compassion on him again." Past memories inspire present action, shaping the promise of what is yet to come – "I will surely have compassion on him again."

During the holidays, especially during the High Holidays, we are infused with new energy and sanctity, preparing us for the days to come. An integral part of this energy is drawn from the past. During Passover, we recall the Exodus from Egypt; during Shavuot, the giving of the Torah; on Rosh Hashanah, the creation of the world; on Yom Kippur, the words of G-d: "I have forgiven according to your word" spoken after the sin of the Golden Calf; and during Sukkot, we remember: "For in Sukkot, I made the Israelites live when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." These memories instill in us faith and values, granting us the strength to construct our lives and shape our future.

This strength does not solely originate from collective memories but also from personal - recollections. Our origin, our childhood, and the people who influenced our lives are part of the fabric that revitalizes and constructs our future. We remember our loved ones, praying for the elevation of their souls and their eternal rest under the wings of the Almighty. Simultaneously, we ask for their strength, faith, and values to be bestowed upon us. May G-d remember us, may we remember, and may the memory live within us – Yizkor.

Yizkor will be said at Beth Israel Synagogue, 131 Wolf Willow Road, on the following days:

Yom Kippur, September 25 at 10 am and Shmini Atzeret, October 7 at 10:30 am.

Shana Tova and wishing good health to the whole community.

Rabbi Guy Tal is the spiritual leader at Beth Israel Synagogue, Edmonton's Modern Orthodox Jewish congregation.

# Feeling connected during the festival

### By Rabbi Nisan Andrews

A few weeks ago, we read from *Parshat Re'eh*. In that Parsha, we find the instruction to build a Temple and not establish multiple locations for sacrificial offerings. The Temple alone should be the place of this form of devotion, and we read:

"You, together with your households, shall feast there before the Lord your G-d, happy in all the undertakings (lit. all to which you put your hand) in which the Lord your G-d has blessed you."

This turn of phrase is questionable; why would we celebrate specifically – 'what you've done with your hands'?

Wishing a happy Rosh Hashana to all!

I recently found in a book, the *Kli Chemda*, a classic Torah commentary by Rabbi Meir Dan Plotzky (1866 -1928) of Poland, an attempt to answer this problem with a novel reading of this passuk.

The *Kli Chemda* quotes Maimonides from the *Mishneh Torah* in *Hilchot Yom Tov*, where the Rambam states that when we sit down to our Yom Tov meals, we should do so in the presence of family. However, we must not only invite close family but extended family as well. Additionally, we should welcome – 'all people who are dependent on us'. In essence, we should open our homes to the needy, enabling them to participate in our festive meal.

*Kli Chemda* then asks, what would happen if, for some technical or practical reason, the needy cannot gain access to our homes?

Well, explains the *Kli Chemda*, we can answer this query based on a new reading of the aforementioned verse: "and you should rejoice in everything that your hands have sent." This means to say that when one cannot invite guests, one should prepare food parcels

and send them to those who depend on them.

I believe the implication of this comment is that even if we can't meet up for a meal, we can still foster fellowship through other creative means. For instance, if we cannot send food packages, a New Year's card might suffice. If you don't feel like sending a letter, give an old friend you haven't seen in a while a call.

The verse emphasizes the importance of feeling connected to experience absolute joy during the festival. It's not just going through the motions, but truly feeling a sense of togetherness and community. The prolonged absence of community due to COVID-19 further highlights this need. Thankfully, this Rosh Hashanah provides an opportunity to eat, pray, and revel in each other's company.

I wish everyone a sweet new year filled with growth and good health.

Rabbi Nisan Andrews is the spiritual leader at House of Jacob Mikveh Israel, the Jewish Orthodox Congregation in Calgary.



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### Alberta Jewish News

# It's time to do Teshuvah

### By Rabbi Steven Schwarzman



We normally think of Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of the year. After all, isn't that what Rosh Hashanah means? Literally, it's the head or the start of the year. So it has to be at the beginning. Right?

Well, not exactly. Let's have a look at what the Torah says about this day in Leviticus: In the seventh month, on

**Rabbi Steven** Schwarzman

the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.

The seventh month? What's Rosh Hashanah doing starting the new year when the year is already six months old?

There is a historical reason for this. Nisan, when we observe Passover, is the first month of the Hebrew calendar because the Exodus from Egypt marks when we became a people with our own destiny. That's how we mark time as the Jewish people. As a result, the Torah itself says, in a conversation between G-d and Moses on the eve of the final plague, that the month that we now call Nisan is to be the first month of the year. This is when Jewish time begins.

And so Rosh Hashanah is in the seventh month, not the first month of the year. Half the months of the year have gone by. When the year is new, when our lives are new, we don't need to do teshuvah. There's been no opportunity to sin or to fail to do what we really should be doing, nothing to repent for.

It is in Nisan, in the first month, that we leave Egypt every year, because the Haggadah tells us that each of us must see ourselves as if we personally were among the Hebrews who left Egypt and headed off into the desert. Every year, we start back in Egypt. Every year, we are slaves again. And every year, we get redeemed from slavery and have the chance to start anew.

But by the time Rosh Hashanah comes, in Tishrei, the year is half-over. And we have had a half-year of mixed success, of new achievements...and new failures, or perhaps of sticking to old achievements and old failures. Now that the year is half-over, we are in danger of repeating the mistakes we made last year, of adding another layer of veneer on top of our

this is quite frightening. It is also very natural for us to have this experience. So much so, that as we reflect

on our hopes for the approaching year, we might also

long for our fears to just get out of the way, so that they

do not obstruct the path forward that we want to take.

It is a nice hope, but in reality, it may not even be

So, if our fears are going to, ultimately, remain with

Jewish tradition provides us with a wise answer.

I'm sure you've heard of it. "All the world is a narrow

bridge, and the main thing is not to be afraid." That is

how Rabbi Nachman of Breslov's quote is usually

translated. Yet, that is not, exactly, what the great

Rabbi said. A better translation of his quote would be,

true selves. And each new layer makes it harder to see the truth.

And so we sound the alarm. Every year, beginning in Elul and culminating in Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we sound the shofar, the alarm, to wake us up from what might be a pleasant or unpleasant dream, but which is always a dream, and return to reality.

Precisely in the middle of the year is when we need to do teshuvah. We can look back to the first half of the year, and to the first halves of all the years before this one, and see what we need to do differently and better this time. We need to return to ourselves. We need to do teshuvah.

And just as Rosh Hashanah happens in the middle of the year, our teshuvah can start in the middle of the year or even the middle of our lives; even in the middle of the day. Let us decide to truly start the new year and the new month, today. It's because we're halfway through that we have the perspective we need so that we can start over anew.

Leshanah tovah tikateivu veteihateimu - may you be inscribed and sealed for a good, sweet, healthy new

Rabbi Steven Schwarzman is the spiritual leader at Beth Shalom, Edmonton's Conservative Egalitarian Jewish congregation.

# **Open the door** to possibilities

### By Rabbi Russell Jayne



Rabbi Russell Jayne

breath and opened the door. At once, the demons rushed forward, but as they reached the righteous man, he bowed low in acknowledgement of their presence. An amazing thing then happened. The demons disappeared, and the man got his house back.

Now, why am I telling you this story?

As we move into the High Holidays, it is only natural that we will work out for ourselves and reflect on all that we wish to accomplish and change during this upcoming year. It is also quite possible that all of this hope and assessment will be accompanied by a great deal of fear. This is quite natural, because whenever we dream, or contemplate taking a step forward in our lives, our sense of what is possible expands, and this brings us closer to the unknown. As you might expect,

There is a Jewish parable about a righteous man who went on a journey and failed to lock the door of his house. While he was away, a crowd of demons entered and took over his dwelling. When the man returned and opened his door, the demons rushed at him, ready to devour him. He slammed the door shut, took a deep breath, and prayed. Then he took another deep

"When a person has to cross a narrow bridge in this life, the main thing is that he should not make himself afraid." In other words, if we have to approach or do something that causes us to fear, there is no point in trying to wish it away or pretend that it isn't there. What we have to do is not frighten ourselves or make the fear bigger than it needs to be so that it keeps us from moving

forward.

possible for most people.

us, what are we to do?

Yet, what should we do instead? Well, that's where the story of the righteous man whose house was full of demons comes into play. When the demons were discovered, the man closed the door, took a deep breath, offered a prayer, then took another deep breath.

He began by distancing himself from what frightened him, but that was only briefly in order that he might gather his strength. He then turned to face and even welcomed what frightened him. Once he did this, his fears disintegrated.

Choosing to turn towards our fears is one of the most difficult things that we can do, but if we can manage it, this can open for us a world of awe and opportunity. As we move into the possibilities and potential of 5784, let us recall the righteous man whose house was overrun by demons, and like him, gather our strength, take a deep breath, and open the door in welcome.

Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne is the spiritual leader and Kol Bo at Beth Tzedec congregation.



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| Shacharit                | 8:30 a.m. | Yom Kippur Shacharit           | 8:30 a.m. |
| Torah Reading            | 9:30 a.m. | Torah Reading                  | 9:45 a.m. |
|                          |           | Yizkor Following Torah Service |           |
| Sunday, September 17th   |           | Mincha                         | 5:45 p.m. |
| 2nd Day Rosh Hashanah    |           | Neila                          | 6:45 p.m. |
| Shacharit                | 8:30 a.m. | Maariv                         | 8:00 p.m. |
| Torah Reading            | 9:30 a.m. | Havdalah/Shofar/Fast Ends      | 8:17 p.m. |

Seats for High Holiday services will be allocated only to members who have paid their annual Membership Dues. If you have family or friends visiting from outside Edmonton who may require seats please contact the office so we can accommodate them.

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# Now is the time

### By Judy Zelikovitz

I love the High Holidays and the opportunity they present to get together with extended family, to



visit with friends, and to reach out to colleagues. In addition to the special foods of the season, it's also a time to remember what is important, and what we need to acknowledge and reject from the past year. It's also a chance to pause to consider how to find the path we really want to follow, to figure out what

Judy Zelikovitz

we need to enhance, to make our lives safer, calmer, more balanced. To make our lives – and our families' lives – better.

Whether we are part of large Jewish communities in Israel, the US, Canada, or Europe, or part of small pockets of Jews anywhere around the world, our connections one to another have never been more

# Can a toddler really apologize?

### By Rachel Seelig

This story originally appeared on Kveller.

"Don't you dare," I said, just milliseconds before a red matchbox car came catapulting toward my head. I scowled at my 2-year-old and gave him a stern fingerwaggle. Without hesitating, he trotted over, touched my arm gently and said, "Sorry."

I should have been pleased, right? But my toddler's saccharine "sorry" (pronounced "sowwy") was devoid of remorse. Were he capable of a genuine apology, he probably wouldn't have thrown the stupid car at me in the first place. I should add that a few minutes later, he launched a yellow matchbox car at my head.

With the approach of Yom Kippur, I find myself pondering that word, "sorry." As both a Jew and a Canadian, I admit it's one of the most heavily used words in my lexicon. But what purpose does it really serve? Is it a true expression of remorse? An attempt to get off the hook quickly? A way to avoid confrontation? (We Canadians are particularly adept at the latter kind of "sorry.")

Every year on the eve of Yom Kippur, my parents

important. Our support for our community's values, for their protection, is strengthened by our connections to one another, and it is together that we will be effective in the vital fight against Jew-hatred, a scourge that's grown significantly in Canada and around the world over the past few years.

In Israel, we've seen a shocking spike in 5783 in lone-wolf assaults against Israeli Jews along with vile rhetoric and attacks by terrorist groups against the Jewish people. In Canada, still among the safest places anywhere, we are nevertheless living through a growth in online hate, threats to Jews and their neighbourhoods, and an alarming statistical rise in hate crime of all kinds against Jewish Canadians.

This growth in Jew-hatred has been the focus of much of the advocacy CIJA has undertaken in recent years and, this year, we are taking our national campaign public. On October 16-17 in Ottawa, CIJA and the Federations across Canada will host *Anti-semitism: Face It, Fight It*, a two-day conference where we will confront the issue head-on.

We will *Face It*. We will learn from international and local experts about how they have addressed Jewhatred and how we can advocate for legislation and other changes that will make our community safer. The second day, we will *Fight It*, speaking directly to our elected officials, ensuring they know the impact of antisemitism on our community, the effects of hate on all minorities, and its toxic effect on all Canadians. We will unite – with one another and with our partners – to fight antisemitism, and we will leave the conference better educated and better prepared to get this done.

Speakers will include Jews and non-Jews whose careers have been dedicated to combating antisemitism. We will hear what has worked, what has not, how to advocate for effective legislation, and how to equip our students and young leaders to take on this fight on campuses across Canada.

We will leave the conference secure in the knowledge that we are embarking on our biggest effort ever to respond to antisemitism. We will ensure Ottawa and other governments hear our call. We will amplify our voices, speaking as a united community and as one supported by allies across Canada.

Now is the time for us to show up, to speak up, and to step up. Register now at fightit.ca.

I hope to see you in Ottawa, and in the meantime, over these High Holidays, I wish you a sweet, healthy, and happy 5784.

L'Shana Tova!

Judy Zelikovitz is Vice President, University and Local Partner Services, at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).

and siblings call one another to make amends for the past year's transgressions. I always considered this an enlightened tradition, until my husband asked me why we always rehearse the same script, something about "sorry for anything bad I've done." Talk about a catchall apology. "It's sort of formulaic," he pointed out. "Do you ever apologize for anything specific?" I must admit, he has a point. When we make this round of phone calls, are we truly atoning for wrongdoing, or just trying to check teshuva, the cycle of repentance and forgiveness, off the to-do list?

As you may have guessed, my husband has a hard time saying "sorry." The reason is in part cultural: born and raised in Germany, he bristles at Canadian niceties and understands guilt as an almost unbearable burden carried on the national level, not as that slightly awkward feeling you get when your great aunt asks why you don't want a second slice of her kugel. But saying sorry is also difficult for him because sincere apologies should be difficult. They emerge from an onerous process of self-reflection, acknowledgement of failure and heartfelt contrition.

Parenting guru Janet Lansbury sees "sorry" as one of the most difficult things children learn to say because it requires a high level of humility and vulnerability. It's also loaded with parental expectations. I don't know any parent who hasn't asked, cajoled or even forced their child to apologize to the kid whose Lego they swiped or shin they kicked, only to have their child clam up or, even worse, completely fall apart. According to Lansbury, such moments are fueled by our own embarrassment and need to save face among other parents, as opposed to a desire to guide our kids. Without the time required to process their actions, saying "sorry" strikes the child as false, says Lansbury, "and faking emotion does not come naturally to a child."

If we want our child to issue an honest apology, we need to give them time, and, most importantly, we need to model empathy and remorse. If we trust our children as we should, suggests Lansbury, they will learn to apologize in their own time. And when they do, they will mean it. "By trusting our children to develop authentic social responses, we give them the selfconfidence to be the sensitive and deeply caring human beings we hope they will become." If we show them this level of compassion, they will undoubtedly return the favor, for what children do more naturally than apologize is forgive.

Lansbury's take on apologies dovetails with that of the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who saw repentance and forgiveness, the essential ingredients of the Jewish day of atonement, as "the two great gifts of human freedom." Both are a matter of choice, Sacks insisted, which means they can't be forced.

Following anthropologist Ruth Benedict, Sacks distinguished between "shame culture" and "guilt

### Continued on page 8

### Best wishes for a Happy New Year, from





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# **Shlichim bring Israeli perspective** to Camp BB Riback

### By Tammy Vineberg

Avital Apartsev dreamed of going to a sleep-away camp when she was a child. The movies that she saw featured these camps, fueled her desire. Living in Israel, there was not an opportunity for this. Instead, Avital attended youth groups where they would camp outside for a week and had to build their sleeping arrangements.

"I begged my parents to send me to a camp abroad. When I found out at 17 that I can get into a program that sends me to a camp, I decided I wanted to go as a counsellor," says Avital.

The 20-year-old had experienced two summers as a counsellor at a day camp in the United States. But she was still vying to have her dream of a sleep-away camp fulfilled.

"It's a sense of belonging to a community. There's something magical about a place where you can only stay for a short time. I wanted something like this. This is how childhood looks like," explains Avital.

She discovered the shlichim (Israeli emissary) program when she was finishing her service with the Israel Defense Forces. Representatives from the Jewish Agency for Israel visit army bases to spread the



Fun at camp. Photo by Danica Cheyfetz.

word and promote the program through social media. When Avital signed up for the program, she could only choose if she preferred a day camp or an overnight camp, not which country. When she heard the news that they accepted her as shlichim by the Jewish Agency to spend the summer at Camp BB Riback this year, she was thrilled. She immediately searched online where Pine Lake was located and what Camp BB looked like.

Avital is one of three shilchilm hired by Camp BB, with funding from Calgary Jewish Federation and supported by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. The Jewish Agency sent 1,500 shlichim between the ages of 19-25 to 158 camps across North America, thanks to financial aid from 146 Federations. The shlichim hail from all around Israel and come from a variety of backgrounds, in a genuine display of the country's diversity.

"Each year, Jewish Federations partner with The Jewish Agency to bring hundreds of shlichim to our communities. These Israel & Overseas investments by Jewish Federations make possible countless moments of spirited singing around the campfire and meaningful discussions at the camp cafeteria table, which leave indelible marks on the hearts of young Jews in North America and Israel and help strengthen the relationship between North American Jewry and Israel for years to come," says Jeffrey Schoenfeld, chair of Jewish Federations of North America's Israel & Overseas Committee.

Camp BB Director Stacy Shaikin appreciates the partnership he has with the Edmonton and Calgary Federations. "We're all working towards encouraging Jewish life. We focus on leadership and community. We're community builders," he says.

Not only has Avital found a community at Camp BB, but she also has learned more about Canadian Jews and developed new skills. Her role was the program coordinator for Ruach-children between 10 and 12years-old. She built evening programs and supervised the counsellors.



Shaliach Avital Apartsev.

"We don't really know about Jewish communities outside of Israel. They have different struggles, but I learned no matter where you are that all Jewish people love community. In Canada, you really must work hard to practice your Judaism, to connect to it, and to feel comfortable about it. For us, it's very easy to practice Judaism," she says.

Her campers also learned more about Israel from her personal perspective. In one activity, she had them draw what a Canadian Jew and an Israeli Jew look like. Then they had a discussion based on the drawings. Avital also talked to them about her army experience, which she says differed from working at Camp BB.

"I'm so happy at Camp BB. I grew up in a month more than I did in the army. I'm taking care of 26 kids and that is a tremendous responsibility. It makes you grow up. I'm anxious about what they ate, whether they slept, if they took a shower, or if they fell. But I love it and I'm very grateful for this opportunity,' says Avital.

After Avital finished her work at the camp, she was planning to extend her stay in Canada to see more of the country. She hopes she can return to Camp BB next summer.

Tammy Vineberg is Associate Director, Marketing and Communications for Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

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### Volume 34, Number 08, August 29, 2023

PUBLISHER: Deborah Shatz **EDITOR:** Daniel Moser PAST PUBLISHERS: Barry Slawsky, David Moser, Judy Shapiro, Richard Bronstein

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Subscriptions in Canada: \$37.80 per year Subscriptions outside Canada: \$72 USD per year

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# Local family celebrates a triple simcha in Israel

### **By Regan Treewater-Lipes**

A trip to the Holy Land is a tremendous journey for any Jewish family, even one that has landed upon the sacred soil numerous times. This past summer, the Wasel and Asbell families - pillars of the Edmonton Jewish community - embarked on a voyage to Eretz Israel like no other! The landscape of Edmonton's Jewish life would not be what it is without the familiar faces of these families, and as they reflect on the joy and celebration of their recent travels, the larger community can join in toasting their philanthropic achievements and many simchas too.

Weekly Shabbos-goers at Beth Israel Synagogue may have noticed their congregation's president Shane Asbell absent from the bimah for several weeks. Aliza Asbell, eldest daughter of Shane and Rabecca Asbell, recently married Eitan Yehuda, her b'shert, in a ceremony surrounded by family and friends from around the world. Eitan was born in Israel, not far from where the couple wed, but grew up in Toronto. Aliza and Eitan met while studying at McMaster University in Hamilton, and now reside in Toronto where Aliza is pursuing her postgraduate studies.

This was not the only significant occasion marked during the trip though. Many in the community will remember the Edmonton JNF Negev Gala of 2019 when Freya and Lewis Wasel, Aliza's proud maternal grandparents, began their work to cultivate, restore, and revitalize a public green space in Kiryat Shmona. While in Israel for Aliza and Eitan's chupah, the families were able to attend a ceremony in Airplane Park and see firsthand the glittering oasis that their altruistic labors made possible. With the city's mayor, Avihai Shtern presiding, and



Freya and Lewis Wasel.

representatives from the local KKL offices, a plaque was dedicated in recognition of Freya and Lewis Wasel's tremendous contribution to the most northern Israeli municipality.

In addition to all these festivities, there was yet one more family milestone to pay tribute to – the bar mitzvah of Shane and Rebecca's only son, Caleb.

"At the Negev Gala I announced to Caleb that we would celebrate his bar mitzvah in Airplane Park," explained Freya



Freya and Lewis Wasel with family and friends at Airplane Park in Israel. Photo supplied.

Wasel in a recent interview with *Alberta Jewish News*. "His bar mitzvah was in May of 2022, but we were able to call him up to the podium with us during the ceremony at Airplane Park, with all his family around, and he could not have been prouder."

Freya and Lewis were presented with two awards that day: one from the JNF, and one from the city. Both now stand impressively in their home next to the framed certificate from when they were first honored at the Negev Gala in 2019.

"I visited Airplane Park shortly before the Negev Gala, and I can remember being so excited. I remember thinking how incredible it was even before all the improvements," Freya commented reflectively. When Jay Cairns from the JNF first presented the Wasels with potential projects, it took two visits before the couple could decide.

"Jay came and suggested some projects that might work for us, and they were all worthwhile projects, but nothing really resonated with us. So, he came back a second time, and BINGO! When we saw Airplane Park, this was it. Central Israel is vibrant but the North and the South need more development. Especially in this particular area, being surrounded by hostile neighbors, we knew this was it; it spoke to us. We liked the idea of families coming together in a peaceful setting."

During the dedication ceremony, both Freya and Lewis were moved to see so many people strolling through the park, some even stopped to thank the couple for their efforts to beautifully develop the area, realizing what the auspicious gathering marked.

"The park is also completely accessible," Freya elaborated. "I was so pleased to hear this and when I mentioned it to a representative from the KKL, his answer really stuck with me. He said: 'Freya, why are you surprised? Nature is for everybody.' I found that so meaningful."

Before the question could be posed, Lewis quite knowingly offered: "Perhaps you're wondering why it's called 'Airplane' Park." Yes, this was certainly a ponderance. "Well, the area adjacent to the park had been used as an air strip. Even after it was decommissioned, there was one airplane that was left behind. Nobody knew why, and it just remained there. It's been taken away now, but the name stuck."

Freya was able to tour the site before any work was done, so she was able to reflect on her before and after impressions. During the momentous ceremony she describes being captivated by the tranquility and natural elegance of the park with its finished product ready to be showcased. "There are some plans to enhance Airplane Park by building hotels and glamping areas next to it to promote tourism," she explained. "Airplane Park is an incredible place to start."

How much joy can one family cram into a two-week trip? This marked Freya's eleventh visit to Israel, and Lewis' eighth. Both Aliza and her sister Daniella celebrated their bat mitzvahs in Israel, and yet, this 2023 pilgrimage to the sacred sites of Eretz Israel will forever echo as the precious snapshots from the trip of a lifetime for the Wasel and Asbell families. A sincere yasher koach to Freya and Lewis for their contribution to tikkun olam, effusive mazel tovs to Rebecca and Shane and to Aliza and Eitan for a lifetime of happiness together, and many congratulations to Caleb who was able to fulfill his grandparents dream - to be recognized and celebrated at Airplane Park.

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







# **TBO congregants continue their reconciliation journey**

### By Jeremy Appel, LJI Reporter

Page 8

Members of Edmonton's Reform congregation, Temple Beth Ora (TBO), went on a guided medicine walk on July 30 at the kihcihkaw askî sacred Indigenous site as part of a broader grassroots effort to engage in reconciliation.

Rabbah Gila Caine gifted Dene Elder Molly Chisaakay with sacred tobacco before Chisaakay and Indigenous educator Lewis Cardinal, who is Woodland Cree, took congregants on an educational walk through Whitemud Creek Ravine, identifying various plants, berries and medicines.

Chisaakay opened the walk by offering the tobacco Caine gave her for a prayer. Cardinal then distributed tobacco to the guests and gave them the opportunity to offer it to a tree of their choice while making their own prayer.

The event is part of a larger series of reconciliationthemed events TBO is doing with Cardinal, which included a teepee talk earlier this summer.

Elder Chisaakay told *Alberta Jewish News* at the outset of the walk that after years of Canadian settlers attempting to eradicate Indigenous cultures by various means, including residential schools, Indigenous leaders have an obligation to ensure their practices and ways of knowing are passed onto Indigenous youth, always looking ahead to the next seven generations.

"It's up to us — my generation — to educate people without any preconceived notions or misconceptions," she said.

Various crises — from climate to drug poisoning, affordability and housing — underscore the urgency of honouring Indigenous cultures and their relationship to the land.

"There's no words for some things in our language. We live our language, we live through ceremony," Chisaakay said.

Asher Kirchner, a retired University of Alberta linguist who sits on the TBO board, said he first met Cardinal a few years ago at the "Survival to Thrival" educational series at the Jewish Senior Citizens Centre, which was an exchange of Jewish and Indigenous perspectives.

Kirchner said that event at the seniors' centre "got my appetite wetted for continuing and deepening that relationship."

Kirchner reached out to Cardinal about the

culture," and ascribed the latter to monotheistic

religions like Judaism. Both shame cultures and guilt

cultures instruct people how they ought to behave, but

they operate very differently. Shame cultures

emphasize what others think of you; the motivation for

repentance is purely external, fueled by the pressure

to avoid public shunning (or "cancel culture," in today's parlance). Guilt cultures, by contrast, are fueled by

individual conscience, the "inner conversation with the

better angels of our nature." According to Sacks, guilt

serves an indispensable purpose; we must feel guilty

to begin to make amends and repair the damage we

Toddler Cont. from page 4

### possibility of establishing a partnership between TBO and the Indigenous community in Edmonton, when Cardinal told him about kihcihkaw askî, which was then in development, and how they're looking for local community partners.

The Reform Jewish Community of Canada offered a grant for programming to encourage reconciliation between Jews and Indigenous Peoples, which the shul successfully applied for.

"If it's important for Judaism to be grounded in a moral, ethical stance, we have to come to terms with where we are living and our role as settlers in Canada. It is upon us to seek reconciliation, to learn about our Indigenous neighbors and to become allies to them in their struggle for justice," Kirchner told *Alberta Jewish News*.

Speaking after the walk, Rabbah Caine said she was still reflecting and gathering her thoughts on the afternoon's event, but she described the overall experience as enlightening.

"To learn the culture, to hear the stories from real people, not from books or movies, makes it feel more important," Caine told *Alberta Jewish News*.

She noted the similarities in the Indigenous and Jewish experiences of attempting to pass their culture onto future generations in defiance of efforts to eradicate them. While all cultures are distinct, there's a common humanity at their core.

"Deep down inside, there's a space of human connection. But to be able to do that, we really need to travel down into the roots and learn old traditions, learn people's histories and go deep down inside to see where their history has been ours," Caine said.

TBO congregant Norma McLean observed the common history of attempts to exterminate Jews and Indigenous Peoples.

"We survived it all. We're still here," she said. "It feels good to be associated with another group that has the same kind of issues."

Cardinal said events like these are important because they demonstrate the depth of meaningful,

sorry" isn't easy for me, either.

When I sit down with my 5-year-old this Yom Kippur, I will tell him that this is the day when we can talk about mistakes that we've made and how we might avoid making them again next year. I will apologize to him for the times that I lost my temper. Perhaps he will reciprocate, perhaps not. The main thing is that he'll think about it. And he will know that I am thinking about it, too.

As for my 2-year-old, the lesson might need to wait another year or two. This Yom Kippur, I think I'll just hide his matchbox cars in the closet.

have done. Yom Kippur provides the time needed to undertake this hefty task. It is not a day for rehearsed apologies but for honest soul-searching.

It turns out the rabbis and parenting experts have much in common. Both focus on opportunities to cultivate personal responsibility, kindness and empathy. The beauty of Yom Kippur is that nobody is exempt.

This is precisely the lesson I've decided to impart this year. Rather than coerce my kids to say "sorry" out of an abundance of shame or discomfort, I want to show them that even I must consciously devote time every year to this important — albeit uncomfortable undertaking. I want them to know that saying "I'm "Reconciliation cannot be seen as a governmentfunded program. Reconciliation only truly happens when the grassroots people sit and talk," he told *Alberta Jewish News*. Cardinal emphasized the strong symbolism of two communities walking together to embrace the

two communities walking together to embrace the natural world. "We're all walking together, right? How much more human can you get than being in nature with your

human can you get than being in nature with your fellow human beings? I think that's always very powerful, very strong. I think that communities should often take more walks together," he said.

After the walk, Caine conducted a baby naming ceremony for a congregant family, which Cardinal attended. He noted this as an example of the commonalities between Jewish and Indigenous practices.

"We have traditional naming ceremonies and it's so beautiful to see that happen in your ways. it reminded me that, hey, that's what we do too," Cardinal said.

The next TBO reconciliation event is the day before Yom Kippur, Sept. 23, with a shacharit Shabbat service using the KAIROS Blanket Exercise to reckon with the Jewish community's complicity in Canadian settler colonialism.







(right) listens as Dene Elder Molly Chisaakay teaches him

substantive reconciliation.

about the plants and medicines in Whitemud Creek Ravine.





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# It takes a village

### By Natalie Soroka, TT Society

Many of us are familiar with the saying: "It takes a village to raise a child." Well, in our case, *It Takes a Village to Raise a School*. Talmud Torah Society is grateful to the many organizations and volunteers who are consistently here for us and make up our village. There are so many supporters, volunteers, and donors who have and continue to be an essential part of our village. In this article, we are focusing on two important charitable organizations in Edmonton that contribute to our village.

The Society's board of directors continues to uphold the idea that no child will be turned away because a family cannot afford a Jewish education. The Jewish Federation of Edmonton (JFED) has and will continue to be an integral part of our village, and is a crucial organization in our small, but mighty, Edmonton Jewish Community. Through JFED's Integrated Bursary Program (IBP), families can apply for financial support through its confidential and respectful bursary program. Every Jewish community member who wishes for their child to have a Jewish education, but does not have the financial resources to pay full fees, can apply for a bursary. *It takes a village.* 

The Society cannot do it alone, and JFED has been a very important and generous community partner. Of course, thanking the Jewish Federation of Edmonton means also thanking the many generous donors who contribute to its yearly United Jewish Appeal (UJA) campaign. The funding the Society receives is based on the success of the annual UJA campaign. A portion of the funds raised by the UJA campaign directly fund the Integrated Bursary Program. In addition to bursary funding, we also are fortunate to receive extra grants when there are surplus UJA funds available.

When our new Don z"l & Myrna Silverberg lunchroom was being built in August 2022, the Society applied for and received a Federation grant towards brand new microwaves. More recently, Federation provided us with a generous grant to replace aging Siddurim used by students in their Hebrew classes. CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright, whose own

children graduated from TT, attends many of our holiday assemblies, graduation ceremonies and programs, and often writes about the positive impact TT has on the community in JFED's HAKOL newsletter. *It takes a village*.

Another valued contributor to our village is the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF). Talmud Torah Society has been the recipient of many financial grants from the EJCCF over the years. Through its Chair Stephanie Hendin, EJCCF provides grants for initiatives that are spread throughout Edmonton's Jewish community.

According to their website, "the Edmonton Jewish



The fun continued during the summer months for children enrolled in the Talmud Torah Early Learning Centre. Photos supplied.

Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF) helps people support Jewish causes that are important to them. We provide resources to make the community's vision a reality, working in partnership with our donors, and striving to ensure the long-term financial security of the Jewish Community." Their support has spanned so many areas of TT Society's needs, including classroom Siddurim, guitars for our music program, Judaic/Hebrew classroom materials and resources, mindfulness resources, last year's Jewish-themed drama production through Trickster Theatre, and most recently Hebrew readers for classrooms. The Society is thankful for EJCCF's continued and ongoing support of our programming and commitment to Talmud Torah student enrichment. It takes a village.

In 2012, Edmonton Talmud Torah celebrated 100 years. It's been 25 years since our newest school location opened its doors. Talmud Torah is resilient and strong. We are here because of the supportive and committed village of people and organizations who believe in us and our legacy. *It takes a village*.

When was the last time you were at TT? Interested in coming to visit or finding out ways to be involved and support us? We'd love to hear from you. We can even arrange to give you a tour.

Are you a former TT parent of a student? Are you a TT alumnus? Interested in receiving the Talmud Torah Times, our monthly newsletter? Make sure you are part of our database so that you don't lose out on the latest news from us. Please contact Natalie Soroka at the Society office (780-481-3377), or email nataliesoroka@talmudtorahsociety.com. You can also follow us on Instagram (@talmudtorahsociety) and Facebook (Edmonton Talmud Torah Society).

Wishing all our families a wonderful 2023-2024 school year!

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# **NWC BBYO welcomes new Regional Director Malvina Rapko**

### By Matthew Levine, LJI Reporter

On August 1, Malvina Rapko became the newest director for the Northwest Canada region of BBYO. It was a milestone event because although the region encompasses both Alberta and Saskatchewan, she is the first ever director to come from Saskatchewan.

BBYO is a place where Jewish teens develop leadership skills, establish lifelong friendships, advocate for causes they care about and find meaning in their Jewish heritage.

Malvina's family came to Saskatchewan as Soviet Jews when she was just an infant. She attended BBYO from grades eight to twelve serving in multiple positions on the city and regional board. After her time in BBYO she became an advisor for a few years and looks on the whole experience as an important and meaningful part of her adolescence.

Historically, Saskatoon had a presence in the Northwest Canada region but had since lost its way. Regina, on the other hand, has not had any BBYO teen programs in a very long time. Malvina came on as Saskatoon's city director in 2020 to help reinvigorate BBYO for Jewish teens in Saskatchewan. She is now enthusiastic about expanding her role to the entire region.

Malvina talked about Alberta as being a big part of her Jewish upbringing. She attended Camp BB-Riback for nine years and formulated many friendships and connections in Edmonton and Calgary. These connections have helped broaden her understanding of the whole region.

Malvina is enthusiastic about rebuilding chapter identity and teen participation across the region. She is planning to use the chapter building skills that she's developed in Saskatchewan to also strengthen BBYO in Edmonton and Calgary.

The new director wishes to highlight the importance of welcoming Jewish people from all different levels of religious affiliation to BBYO.

"BBYO is really for all types of Jewish teens, people who are more observant or others who don't feel connected to Judaism," she said, "Doing what I can to make these connections and be a part of all aspects of communities is a focus of mine.<sup>3</sup>

She also supports BBYO's inclusivity through the creation of an environment where teens feel empowered and have opportunities to gain various leadership skills based on their unique interests and personalities. For generations, many teens have felt like they do not fit in because of their differences they feel like they are on the outside. Malvina wishes to combat this by making BBYO a place for all types of people, and by working to enhance their individuality within the organization.

Another reason teens might feel unwelcome is because of previously formed friend groups that newcomers are not a part of. Edmonton and Calgary's Jewish youth that attend BBYO usually know each other well through Talmud Torah, CJA, HAA or Camp BB-Riback. Malvina explained that in Saskatoon the majority of BBYO teens go to different schools and do not know each other outside of BBYO. Through her work as the city supervisor, she was able to facilitate Saskatoon teens to attend regional conventions for the first time in years. This allowed the kids without friend groups to meet people from Alberta and make larger groups. She believes it is important that everybody has somebody and has seen firsthand that larger groups are there for everyone to find support systems.

Since 2021, Malvina's hard work has resulted in 4-8 teens from Saskatchewan attending each regional convention. This past year, regional conventions have had seventy to ninety total attendees, and two spots on the AZA regional board are held by people from Saskatoon's chapter. Malvina continues to work on improving the connection between Alberta and Saskatchewan but is also working on building the bond with other regions in Canada. She is planning to host



NWC Regional Director Malvina Rapko

a convention that brings Manitoba and Alberta teens to Saskatchewan next year. She is also hoping to plan something for the future with BBYO regions in British Colombia.

Malvina is excited to continue working on our region's future, but feels it is important to acknowledge and appreciate past teams and directors that have shaped BBYO into what it is today. "It's important to recognize that the team that was there before me built something that I am going to be adding to," she explained. "They have helped me reconnect with what's going on in Alberta and have provided me with preexisting knowledge that I can build on."





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# Israel Pavilion showcases culture and innovation

### By Matthew Levine

Despite a new location, Edmonton's 50th anniversary Heritage Festival was an overwhelming success, displaying the beautiful cultural mosaic that is flourishing in Edmonton. Although the Israeli dancers were missed this year, the Israeli pavilion provided some new offerings by highlighting Israeli innovation through a virtual reality experience and a hands-on archeological dig. These new features were very popular and the Israeli pavilion was rewarded by winning first place for best vignette.

Other winners included Nepal for best main dish, Netherlands for best drink, Palestine for best dessert, Uyghur for best festivities, Romania for best overall menu, and South Korea for best entertainment. Palestine also won people's food choice awards with menu items from Jerusalem Shawarma.

Sam Oshry, a Jewish Federation summer student, worked at the pavilion on both August 6 and 7. Sam explained that there were so many people at the Israeli pavilion because there was something there for everyone. "People of all ages were interested. There were lots of kids that found the VR fascinating and enjoyed digging in the sand, and adults that were just genuinely interested in learning about Israeli technology," he said.

Sam also expressed the importance of showcasing Israel's technological contributions to society. He explained that "Israel can get some bad press from people who are not necessarily motivated to learn. By displaying Israel's cultural and technological impact in a positive light, it allows for a more complete understanding and education of Israel." Sam was ecstatic about the number of parents that approached him with rave reviews about the pavilion's



The focus of the Israel Pavilion at Heritage Days this year was to demonstrate Israel's deep connection to the past and amazing contributions to the present and future. Yasher Koach to Federation and its team of volunteers for hosting a wonderful pavilion and winning first place for Best Vignette.

new features and the importance of providing entertainment and activities for kids of all ages.

Discovering and appreciating each other's unique cultures is what Heritage Days are all about. Sam was thankful for the opportunity to interact with so many unique people and cultures saying, "It was just really cool to see all these Canadians come together to learn about other cultures and express their own culture, and I think it's really important as Canadians because that's what Canada is all about and we should celebrate it."

The summer student wished to emphasize how hard the Federation staff and the pavilion volunteers

worked to put this all together. "To see everyonw's hard work at the pavilion pay off was amazing, and I think that was my favorite part of the whole weekend seeing all of these moving parts and plans finally come together."

Sam concluded by stating, "It was amazing. We had over ten thousand people this year and from what I saw, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and to learn something about Israel. To me that was the most rewarding experience."

Matthew Levine is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



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### Page 12

# Yellowknife evacuee says Edmonton has been welcoming

### **By Jeremy Appel**

Yellowknife wildfire evacuee Janine McKall, who's part of the northern city's small Jewish community, arrived in Edmonton, where she was born and raised, with her two kids on Aug. 17.

She said the city "has been really great" at creating a welcoming environment, giving evacuee families free admission to various amenities to keep the kids busy and their minds off the devastation back home.

"We don't have a lot of stuff like this in Yellowknife, so this is huge for them. They're getting memories and experiences they wouldn't get otherwise," McKall told *Alberta Jewish News*.

McKall, who works in social services, moved to Yellowknife a decade ago. "We're lucky enough that we've been staying with my parents," she said.

She described a sense of "panic" back in Yellowknife. "It's a very, very isolated community," McKall explained. "There's one road in and one road out of Yellowknife. We've hosted a bunch of evacuees already in Yellowknife, so it was hard to be on the other end of it."

The situation up north changed rapidly, she said. At 10:30 a.m. on the day she and her kids, ages five and eight, evacuated, they received a notification instructing them to stay put. By 3:30 p.m., the wind started blowing the fire closer to the city and some people began evacuating, but there wasn't an official evacuation order until 7 p.m. that evening.

"It was like watching something out of a movie. Every car on my street just pulled out and started driving at the same time," McKall recalled.

McKall and her children took all their valuables and flew down to Edmonton. Her husband, who's a Mountie, stayed back in Yellowknife.

Once they arrive in Edmonton, evacuated families need to register at the evacuation centre at the Edmonton EXPO Centre, where the Red Cross is on site. If they aren't fortunate enough to have family they can stay with, they have the option of a complimentary hotel stay or to stay at the EXPO Centre. The evacuation centre also offers day care for dogs, which McKall said is immensely helpful, with so many pet owners in Yellowknife. "It's been really hard to accommodate an evacuation with all of those animals," she said.

Regardless of where they stay, once they register as evacuees, they get a wristband that gives them free or discounted admission to TELUS World of Science, Fort Edmonton Park, the Aug. 27 Edmonton Elks game against the Ottawa Redblacks, the Muttart Conservatory, and any city recreation centre.

When she spoke to AJNews, McKall was on her way to taking her kids to the Edmonton Corn Maze, where they're meeting the families of some of her youngest child's kindergarten classmates.

Re/Max Field, where the Edmonton Riverhawks recently finished their baseball season, was opened one day for evacuees, with slip slides and bouncy castles on the field for kids, as well as a catered meal from Boston Pizza and a street performer from Edmonton Fringe.

It's unclear when precisely the Yellowknife evacuees will be able to return home.

"We got more precipitation than we expected last week, which is great. But apparently things have really picked back up today," McKall said on Aug. 25. "It's quite smoky and there's been quite a few flare ups because it's hot and windy."

There's a Facebook page for Yellowknife evacuees to support each other, with those who have family who stayed back sending them to check on worried evacuees' homes.

McKall said there are 10 Jewish families in Yellowknife, three of whom are staying in Edmonton.

Jewish communal life in Yellowknife is limited. There's no synagogue. On the High Holidays, McKall and her family usually get together with her parents.

Yellowknife's Jewish families, however, make an effort to host each other for dinner periodically.

"It's nice because now we all have kids who are similar age, so there is a little bit more of a community than there had been otherwise," she said.

McKall had a cultural Jewish upbringing. She



Janine, Brooklyn and Ethan at Fort Edmonton Park - hoping to go home soon.

attended Talmud Torah School, and Temple Beth Ora and was a member of BBYO. She said she wants to send her kids to Camp BB Riback when they're old enough to go to overnight camp.

"I spent probably 17 years there, so they'll probably go there eventually," said McKall.

McKall's children would be at day camp if they weren't evacuated. She said working remotely while taking on child care duties reminds her of the pandemic.

"I feel like my kids have never not been in a state of emergency," she said. "But you know what? They're very close to each other and they get lots of time together, and I get lots of time that I wouldn't have gotten with them otherwise. So that's the silver lining."

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.





Our very best wishes to the Jewish community for a happy, healthy New Year



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# Mazal Tov JNF Calgary for hosting a wonderful Pitch for Israel



JNF Calgary hosted their annual Pitch for Israel with several teams from Calgary and a team from Edmonton called Shvitz and Shout. It was a great day of slo-pitch softball, with Shvitz and Shout emerging victorious, against the Maccabees in the finals. The event raised funds for the Or Yehuda Family Care Centre in Israel, and everyone had a wonderful time.



May the sound of the shofar berald a year of happiness for you and your families

Shana Tova from the Slawsky Famili



# Honouring the memory of Fania Wedro z"l

### By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

Tears were, no doubt, shed in at least three Alberta cities when Fania (Fanny) Wedro passed away on August 21, 2023, just four days short of her 96th birthday.

Laying Fanny to her eternal rest at the Chevra Kadisha Cemetery in Calgary was a moment of mixed emotions for all who knew her. There was great sadness in a community that had, over the years, become Fanny's extended family. But there was also much comfort in giving her the time-honoured funeral rites that were denied her family and millions of other men, women and children slaughtered by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II.

For Fanny (née Elman), born in 1927, nothing in life was ever a guarantee.

Only 14 years old when the Nazis marched into her town of Korzec, Ukraine in 1941 and took her father away, Fanny was forced to dig ditches and clean the Synagogue where the Nazis made a point of stabling their horses. Her mother was shot into a mass grave by the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squad) assisted in their murderous task by Ukrainian auxiliary police.

Fanny was one of the remaining Jews forced to cover the horrifying kill site. She never forgot the rivers of blood and how the earth continued to heave.

One can scarcely imagine how crushed Fanny must have been when she then threw herself at the mercy of a Christian neighbour who had been like a second mother to her, only to be thrown out of her neighbour's home with the words "dirty Jew" ringing in her ears.

When Fanny heard rumours of another impending massacre, she made her daring escape into the forest. There, the partisans rejected her, saying she was too young.

That was a big mistake. Fanny Wedro would, no doubt, have proven an effective secret weapon.

Fanny was made of tough stuff. Even as a teenaged girl left to her own devices, she survived for 18 months in the forest. Fanny was liberated by the Red Army in 1944. Her brother had also survived the Shoah, only to be murdered by an antisemitic Ukrainian nationalist shortly after liberation, leaving Fanny the sole survivor in her family.

Smuggled across several borders, Fanny made her way to a Displaced Persons camp in Linz, Austria where she worked as a teacher and met and married Leo. In 1948, they immigrated to Canada, where Fanny had found a position as a domestic worker. She learned English by going to the movies.

Fanny and Leo lived in Edmonton where they eventually owned a grocery store and several convenience stores, including one in the CN Tower. They were blessed with two children, Ben and Eleanor (and, in the fullness of time, three granddaughters, Alexandra, Meredith and Celina).

Leo and Fanny moved in a new direction when they purchased and operated the Banff Cascade Inn during the 1970s. There, they generously supported the Whyte Museum and the Banff hospital.

After purchasing a home in Calgary in 1974, Fanny and Leo—who passed away in 2007 supported many community organizations and established charitable funds to support the causes they cared about, most notably Holocaust remembrance and education.

Fanny was instrumental in establishing Holocaust memorial sites and restoring the Jewish cemeteries of Korzec and Miedzyrzec.

Her charitable efforts ranged from the purchase of a Torah for House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel in 2009—in memory of Leo—to generous support for inclusion programming for Jewish community members with special needs. Israel was always close to Fanny's heart, and she supported the humanitarian work of Calgary Magen David Adom, donating ambulances for use in the Holy Land.

Over the years, Fanny was honoured by a number of organizations, including Magen David Adom and State of Israel Bonds.

In recent years, Fanny teamed up with the Krell and Switzer families—with whom she shared a particularly close bond— to form the KSW Calgary Holocaust Education and Commemoration Endowment Fund, which funds innovative Holocaust education and cultural projects, working in conjunction with partners within and beyond the Jewish community, including the Calgary Public Library.

Fanny is best known for her active involvement in the Annual Holocaust Education Symposium, where she shared her personal testimony with thousands of high school students and educators for decades.

A highlight of Fanny's life was meeting and getting to know Father Patrick Desbois, the French Catholic priest who has dedicated his life to locating mass graves of Jews and Roma murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators in Ukraine and throughout Eastern Europe during the Holocaust by Bullets.

It was painful to Fanny that the tragedy that befell her family, her friends and neighbours, and an estimated two million Jews across Eastern Europe was for so long overlooked or treated as a footnote to Holocaust history.

Fanny traveled to Detroit in 2012, where she was interviewed by Father Desbois, thus helping to inform his research and add her vital eyewitness testimony to the historical record.

She later said it was a relief to finally encounter someone who understood her and validated the extent of the Nazi's mass murder campaigns prior to the establishment of death camps.

In 2014, Fanny realized a dream, spearheading and generously supporting a visit to Calgary by Father Debois, who spoke to a large audience at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue, participated at a multi-faith

Holocaust remembrance service at St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, and was interviewed by media together with Fanny who, as always, provided her searing eyewitness account of the slaughter in Korzec.



Holocaust Survivor Fanny Wedro. Photograph by Marnie Burkhardt, courtesy *Here to Tell: Faces of Holocaust Survivors.* 

Fittingly, the University of Calgary recognized Fanny's remarkable contribution to Holocaust education when they bestowed upon her an honourary Doctor of Laws degree—its highest academic honour just months ago, during the 2023 Spring Convocation.

"As a survivor of the Holocaust, Fanny Wedro has dedicated her life to promoting Holocaust education," the University stated.

"A leading philanthropist and speaker, Wedro continues to give back to her community with a lifetime of volunteerism, speaking to schools, community and government officials about her horrific Holocaust experiences and the mass graves in Eastern Europe, known as the Hidden Holocaust."

True to that description, Fanny remained dedicated to the cause, even as her health declined.

At the age of 94, she stood for hours, speaking to numerous school groups touring the *Here to Tell: Faces* of *Holocaust Survivors* exhibit after it premiered at the Glenbow at the Edison in the spring of 2022.

In the midst of that, Fanny further ramped up her efforts when she learned of an antisemitic act that had occurred at a school just a few kilometres from her home. True to form, she insisted on visiting the school to address students and staff.

By then, Fanny was one of very few remaining Holocaust survivors still able to withstand the physical and emotional rigors of sharing their testimony in classrooms and at community gatherings.

"This last year, even while her health was failing, Fanny refused to miss out on any opportunity where she could connect with students," recalls Marnie Bondar, who co-chairs the Holocaust and Human Rights: Remembrance and Education department of Calgary Jewish Federation together with Dahlia Libin.

"Hauling an oxygen tank behind her, and taking rests on her way in and out of the Glenbow Museum, high schools and Mount Royal University, Fanny's presence impacted the youth around her," added Bondar. "Her loss is felt deeply by all, but especially by those on the front lines of Holocaust education, where she so richly gave of herself."

More and more, the responsibility of bearing witness has fallen to second, third and even some fourth generation survivors who—together with other allies in the community— now carry the indelible imprint of the stories and voices of remarkable and resilient survivors like Fanny.

Many, if not most, members of the Alberta Jewish





### Continued on page 15



# Federation presents the Clore Modern Quartet in concert: September 10

### By Tammy Vineberg

United Jewish Appeal Campaign (UJA) Co-Chairs Farrel Shadlyn and Josh Raizman are pleased to welcome the Edmonton Jewish community to this year's campaign launch, featuring a concert by the Clore Modern Quartet, an ensemble of talented young Israeli musicians from the Clore Centre for the Performing Arts, in Kfar Blum, located in the Jewish Federation's Partnership2Gether (P2G) partner region in northern Israel.

"We are delighted to host this event, which gives our community the chance to experience the strong connections we have built with our partner region in Etzbah Hagalil," says Stacey-Leavitt Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

The concert will showcase four young musicians, singer Shir Yaron, 17, Sagi Hodak, a 21-year-old guitar player, Gili Kovesh, 21, on drums, and a 17-year-old bass guitarist, Dor Ben Herzel. The young performers will be accompanied by Clore's musical director, Ran Levi and Clore CEO Telem Chorin. Telem says the students are looking forward to visiting Edmonton and meeting their supporters. It's their first time coming to Alberta. "They are very excited," he says.

The centre at Kfar Blum was established in 1996 as a music conservatory. The dance centre was opened in 2000, resulting in the Clore Centre for Music and Dance. The centre was again expanded in 2012. Students come from surrounding kibbutzim and moshavim, as well as Druze and Arab towns. The centre is the largest cultural institution of its kind in the north and strives to combine excellence and community.

Telem traces back his relationship with Canadian Federations to when he joined the

Clore Centre,10 years ago. "We have had delegations from Canada at the centre. We have done many activities together. We have lots of donations from Canada," he says.

The donations support student scholarships, music equipment, and creating spaces such as a recording studio. It's important for Telem that the students experience a very professional environment and have the best conditions to study. He estimates that donations from Canada, through the years, have totaled around \$2 million. These funds are impacting students' lives and their future careers.

Telem says it's important for Clore's musicians to perform at the UJA campaign launch because it helps bridge the understanding between Israel and Canada. Through this visit and concert, Edmonton will have a



The Clore Modern Quartet will be performing on Sept. 10th at the Citadel Theatre as part of the UJA Campaign launch.

glimpse of the talent and bright future of Israel.

The 45-minute performance will include popular songs in both English and Hebrew. "We are coming with very professional musicians. Some of them will be the next big thing in Israel," says Telem.

In addition to the concert, the September 10 launch event at the Citadel Theatre will include remarks by Steve Shulman, president and CEO of Jewish Federations of Canada – United Israel Appeal. While they are in Edmonton the Israeli musicians will be billeted by host families. On Monday, September 11, they will perform at Talmud Torah school, before heading to Calgary for another performance.

To purchase tickets for the campaign launch, visit jewishedmonton.org. The tickets include a kosher reception with wine and light fare, beginning at 6 pm.

### Fania Wedro Cont. from page 14

community knew Fanny Wedro or, at least, knew of her. She was loved by many, feared by some and respected by all for the tenacity with which she conducted herself through a long and accomplished life, both despite and because of the terror and loss she had endured.

Fanny was a no-nonsense woman. And God help those individuals who challenged her political views.

More than a few experienced her wrath at some point or other, but even they respected her tenacity and clarity of purpose.

"Fanny knew the value of friendship," said Bondar. "Even after many of her contemporaries passed away, Fanny made incredible friendships with younger generations of women who looked up to her for her wisdom and guidance."

"The community was Fanny's family," said Darlene

### Switzer-Foster.

That means we all have work to do. Together with other Alberta Holocaust survivors who have gone to *olam habah*, Fanny bared her soul to share painful testimony over and over again, even though it never got easier in the telling.

The best way we can honour their memory is by continuing their sacred mission.



Check out our community calendar at jewishedmonton.org





# A MESSAGE FROM STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, I extend heartfelt wishes on behalf of the entire Jewish Federation family for a year of blessings and meaningful connections. Rosh Hashanah marks not only the start of a new year but an opportunity for reflection and setting intentions for the coming year. At this special time, I encourage each of you to lean into your Jewish identity and embrace the strength of our caring and vibrant community.

As we bless the challah and dip the apples in honey, we remember the rich traditions that have bound us as a community for generations. Let us also recommit ourselves to fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

In the most recent issue of *Sapir*, a quarterly journal of ideas for a thriving

Jewish future, Editor-in-Chief Bret Stephens posits that "The real antidote to antisemitism is Jewish thriving.... It is the conviction among all Jews, whatever their level of observance, that their Jewishness is the most cherished element of their identity, a precious inheritance from their forebears and a priceless bequest to their posterity."

Embracing our Jewish identity also means strengthening our ties with one another. I urge you to actively participate in the events, discussions, and traditions that enrich our community. Attend synagogue services, host a Shabbat dinner, get together with friends new and old at a PJ Library, BBYO or Hillel program. By engaging with your Jewish heritage, you contribute to the vibrant tapestry that is our shared experience. The shofar's resounding call

reminds us of our obligation to uplift those less fortunate. As we embark on this year, let's ensure that no one among us feels alone in facing challenges, and let's extend our hand to those in need. Your support of the United Jewish Appeal campaign allows us to ensure that those most in need receive support, whether through the integrated bursary program or the outreach services at Jewish Family Services.

May the upcoming Rosh Hashanah inspire us to embrace our shared heritage, support one another, and create a bright future for generations to come.

Wishing you and your families a Shanah Tova U'Metukah. May you be inscribed in the book of life.



P Library presents Shake your lulav Sukkot shake down

The Facilities and Space Committee established by the Jewish Federation Board has been mandated to generate an actionable recommendation for future space. The committee has been meeting regularly in order to establish needs and priorities. The priorities are a social and welcoming, non-denominational facility that can over time become a physical hub and gathering space for the Jewish community.

Jewish Fede

H<sup>¶</sup>llel

Please watch this space for updates as they move forward.



### WELCOME TO OUR NEW DIRECTOR!

Hillel Edmonton is pleased to welcome Jacob Oshry as its new director. If you know of a student who wants to connect with fellow Jewish students, have them email hilleledmonton@edjfed.org.

A special thank you to the Shoctor family who has generously gifted space for this year's Hillel House.

Directors and the staff

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# **OU** initiative creates support network for rabbis

For rabbis of small to midsize Orthodox communities in cities like Edmonton, and San Antonio, Texas, professional life can feel lonely.

"As the sole Orthodox rabbis of their towns outside Chabad, these rabbis deal with issues impacting the entire spiritual life of their community," says Orthodox Union Department of Synagogue Initiatives National Director Rabbi Adir Posy. "They are dealing with the *eruv, kashrus,* the *mikvah, chevra kadisha* and conversion. That's a very unique and often very heavy responsibility for one individual."

Orthodox Union (OU) Executive Vice President Rabbi semichas Moshe Hauer empathizes with these rabbis' unique situations.

"Within larger Orthodox communities, rabbis have local peer partnership and support," he says. "In smaller communities the rabbi tends to be more isolated, making ongoing support and networking opportunities so much more valuable. We must strive to be there for those who need us most."

Recognizing their distinct challenges and opportunities, the Department of Synagogue Initiatives recently hosted a *chaburah* of a dozen rabbis from small to midsize communities for a day of *chizuk*, inspiration and education at the OU headquarters in Manhattan.

"These rabbis are doing incredible and important work and deserve significant investment from the *klal*," says Rabbi Posy. "That's one of the messages we wanted to impart in creating this *chaburah* and hosting this event."

The oldest department in the OU, the Department of Synagogue Initiatives provides vision, leadership, and programmatic support to Orthodox communities and congregations throughout North America. Its goal is to strengthen communities, congregations, and their constituencies, by providing religious, educational, and social programming on relevant and timely issues that impact the lives of individuals and families.

A large part of the department's focus is rabbinic support. For the last eight years, it has united cohorts of rabbis based on their commonalities in *chaburahs* who gather in person as much as possible to network and share personal or professional challenges in a safe space with others living the same experience. About 12 different *chaburahs* comprising different niches such as rabbis in the first few years of their pulpit, for example — meet on a rolling basis over the course of the year.

"The best support tool in the arsenal of a rabbi is other rabbis in similar situations," says Rabbi Posy. "We fundamentally believe that a more inspired, empowered, energized and supported rabbi is a better rabbi, and everyone benefits from that." This was the inaugural cohort of rabbis from small to midsize communities, and participants stemmed from Edmonton as well as San Antonio, Texas; New York's Poughkeepsie, Mount Kisco and Albany; Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Richmond and Norfolk in Virginia; Louisville, Kentucky; and Orlando, Florida.

"This gathering provided a unique platform for rabbis to share creative ideas related to communal development within the contexts of their particular communal reality," says OU Managing Director of Community Engagement Rabbi Yaakov Glasser. "The Rabbis also enjoyed learning from world-class experts in halachic areas that they consistently navigate in their work."

The *chaburah* centered on both professional development — offering resources and insights on topics like *kashrus, mikvah*, conversion, broader communal relationships and issues prevailing in their communities — and personal development, including work-life balance, rabbinic loneliness, and the idea of being everything to everyone. Sessions were facilitated by OU Executive Vice President Rabbi Moshe Hauer, OU Director of Halacha Initiatives Rabbi Ezra Sarna and OU Kosher COO Rabbi Moshe Elefant.

"These OU leaders have such incredible knowledge and are wonderful sources of guidance," says Rabbi Posy. "The chance to sit down with them excited many participants because of the unique insights and experience they bring to the table."

Beyond its supportive framework, the *chaburah* enabled participants to foster relationships and network with one another beyond the event.

"The connections the rabbis make as part of these *chaburahs* often extend to other circles, whether to shul presidents or other community members," says Rabbi Posy. "They in turn build their own networks and achieve really wonderful things."

The event also provided a platform to discuss the OU's growing support of emerging communities, an initiative supported by former OU President Steve Savitsky and his wife Genie through the Savitsky Family Communal Growth Initiative. Recently, the couple made a very generous investment that will expand the OU's strategic approach to North American



Rabbi Guy Tal from Beth Israel Congregation in Edmonton speaking with Rabbi Shlomo Krasner from Poughkeepsie, New York at an OU event to offer support to Rabbis in small and midsize communities.

Jewish communal development.

Savitsky joined participants for part of the day, and appreciated the opportunity to hear the rabbis' perspectives on how their communities can best be supported.

"Genie and I are delighted to see our gift being used to enable these and other rabbis to meet the challenges of their respective communities," he says.

As founder of the highly-successful Orthodox Union Virtual Jewish Community Home Relocation Fair, Savitsky's passion is working with this population, says Rabbi Posy.

"There was some really good information sharing between Steve and the rabbis," he reflects. "It was special to connect this donor to the frontline people who are the beneficiaries of his family's gift."

Rabbi Dovid Kaplan has served as the rav of Wilkes-Barre's Congregation Ohav Zedek and a satellite location in Kingston, Pennsylvania, for nine years. Of some 2,000 Jews in the region, his *kehilla* comprises about 110 families and singles.

Rabbi Kaplan loves his job and congregation, but is challenged with growing his community against the backdrop of a somewhat aging population. The chance to connect with OU leadership and colleagues living similar experiences at the chaburah was a tremendous source of *chizuk*.

"It was a very profound day," he says. "It was very meaningful and inspiring to know that we are in it together, and wonderful to share experiences and camaraderie. I look forward to reconnecting either virtually or in person with fellow *rabbanim* in the very near future."



Thank you to our members, donors and friends for another successful year!

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### Alberta Jewish News

# Surrender Dorothy! and the Days of Awe

### By Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides

"And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with G-d, whatever you conceive Him to be... keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world." -Desiderata by Max Ehrmann

Rosh Hashanah and

the Days of Awe are

almost upon us. And

the month of Elul, in

which we find ourselves,

creates an atmosphere of

introspection after the

sunny, more care-free

As I am writing this, I

am preparing to take my

youngest to college in

Toronto. I'm so happy for

him doing exactly what

days of summer.



Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides

he's supposed to be doing... and I'm so dreading facing the proverbial empty nest.

I know my kids still need me in their own way but it's not the same. And the temptation is so strong to be a helicopter parent – hovering around my children and supervising their every move. The new terminology is 'snowplow' parent – someone who clears the path so their children can be in the world without challenges or obstacles. But I know that both of those approaches are not what is best for them. One of my favorite stories is about a soldier who is heading home after a war. He is walking through a wooded area and spots a cocoon hanging from a tree and, with a start, he realizes that a butterfly is trying to emerge. The soldier watches as the butterfly struggles and beats its wings against the inside of the cocoon to escape.

He is moved by the butterfly's plight, and after having witnessed so much violence and trauma, the solider steps forward to assist the little creature. He gently opens the cocoon to allow the butterfly to fly out.

But that is not what happens – instead the butterfly falls straight to the ground and is barely able to open its wings, much less fly.

The solider doesn't understand at first but then realizes; the butterfly needs the struggle to strengthen its wings enough to fly. It is in the wrestling, the beating against the walls, and the fight, that prepares the butterfly to leave the safety of the cocoon. It is the struggle that creates resilience and allows us to fly.

Now, not all of us are parents of children, but we have all had the experience of needing to allow the universe to unfold naturally despite our desire to control it. We have all had to bite our tongue, to clasp back our hands, to watch a loved one, someone or something we care for, venture forward despite our misgivings. Even when we know best (because of course we do!) we have to let them make their own mistakes. I saw a sign that made me laugh with recognition: "Relax, nothing is under control."

In moments when I realize I need to relinquish control I think of the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, when the bad witch is flying and traces 'Surrender Dorothy' in the sky with her broom. While the context of the movie doesn't lend itself, the phrase does. When I am trying too hard to control my circumstances or the people I love, I take a deep breath and think "Surrender Dorothy." ie., take a deep breath, loosen my grip, and float along in the river wherever it will take me. As difficult as this is, I am almost always pleasantly surprised at the results. That said, it is difficult to have that kind of faith; to assume that, as the Desiderata quote says, "no doubt the Universe is unfolding as it should." We have plenty of doubt, particularly when we are struggling with loss, or grief, or trauma, holding on by the skin of our teeth, or any number of things that are part of the human condition. But it makes our lives sweeter and less lonely when we can express that kind of faith in Hashem and in humanity. When we can admit that we don't always know what is best, faith fills that void and creates bonds that make our lives better.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l says: "Humility (*and I would extrapolate, faith*) is not thinking you are small. It is thinking that other people have greatness within them."

Rosh Hashanah provides us with a framework of a clean slate on which to register faith. But before we can put last year behind us and start fresh, eating our apples and honey in anticipation of the sweetness of a New Year, we must acknowledge the times when we held on too tightly. The times when we didn't do what was best out of fear or shame and know that we have the opportunity to do better starting right away, if we can only have a little faith.

In this time of new beginnings, as we pray to Hashem for redemption, let us remember the comfort and kindness of our community; as we ask for forgiveness and, in turn, offer forgiveness to one another, let us find solace in our faith. And most of all, let us also seek to let go of the futile grip of relentless control and surrender, even just a little, to the beauty and wisdom of our tradition.

From my family to yours, A Gute une Gezint Yor, Shanah Tova u'Metukah!

Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides is the Assistant Rabbi at the Beth Tzedec Congregation. She is the Jewish Community Chaplain for Jewish Family Service Calgary. And she has her own independent Rabbinic practice at RockyMountainRabbi.com



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# The Daedalus Protocol: new title by Jeff Shekter

### By Matthew Levine

Writing a book can be seen as a daunting task but it was a challenge that was embraced by Jeff Sheckter, a well-known figure in the Edmonton Jewish community. He recently authored a puzzle driven thriller book titled *The Daedalus Protocol*. Jeff describes the book as "being in the same genre as *The Da Vinci Code*" and as being "rooted in science while not slipping into fantasy."

The story line features a plague that is threatening the world and a mysterious man known only as Daedalus, and a crew of notable soldiers and scientists who have advanced technology and seemingly unlimited resources for a heroic mission.

There are many Judaic Biblical references in the book, remarked Jeff. "There are references to the story of the mana and the exodus of Egypt and also a climactic finale in the tunnels of the Kotel."

Jeff's normal day-to-day before his transition into the creative space consisted of managing shopping centers and acting as an angel investor in the biotech industry. The writing process began during Covid when Jeff moved his family out to the Bahamas.

"I forever have been telling people that I could write a book," he explained, "and then I found myself sitting on the beach with no shopping centers to manage for the first time in 25 years with nowhere to be."

The philanthropist and now author described his transition into the creative space as a huge shift. He talked about the difference between the real estate industry and being an author as a shift to an entirely new world. For the first time in a while, he was being pushed outside his comfort zone.

Jeff wanted to fully understand the whole process of publishing a novel. "I try and learn from the inside out," he said, "and so, as opposed to delegating any of those tasks to somebody else, I just had to learn it. Now I have gone through the whole spectrum of developing the book and publishing it."

Because the completion of the first novel evoked such an enjoyable and rewarding feeling, Jeff wants to continue the series and even try to move into the film industry. He said, "It is at least three books that I have committed to no matter what. But yeah, I could see the series easily stretch to five. It might make for a really good film or Netflix adaptation so hopefully that's in the works."

As an orthodox Jewish

person, Jeff insists that Judaism plays a massive role in his life and that "everything is through the lens of G-d." His knowledge of the religion and of Israel had a huge impact on his novel through biblical references and holy sites. Jeff finds it fascinating that despite how long ago the ancient Judaic texts were written, they can still have relevance and practicality in today's world.

The Daedalus Protocol's author wanted to personally thank his family for the work that they did. His son, Jake, described the family's contributions as, "A lot of sleepless nights and a lot of family editing. We have gone through the book so many times just offering little pieces of advice here and there, and in the end



Author Jeff Sheckter with Reporter Matthew Levine at the book launch.

thank G-d it all worked out. But, man, it took a lot of hours for a lot of people."

From character inspirations to location selection, Jeff's family was there to support him through the entire process. The book launched earlier this month and they held an extremely successful book signing at the West Edmonton Mall Indigo. Jeff's books were sold out twice after a restocking - but don't worry, you can order your copy at your favorite book seller or wherever books are sold. For more information visit thedaedalusprotocol.com.

Matthew Levine is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

# Israeli-Palestinian cooperation continues but it's seldom reported

### By Michael M. Cohen

(JTA) — In January 2001, I was working at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, located on Kibbutz Ketura along the Israeli-Jordanian border. Since 1996, the institute has included Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, Moroccan, American and other



college-age students from around the world. It also has several transboundary research centers, including our recently established Center for Climate Change Policy and Research, and our Center for Applied Environmental Diplomacy.

From Jan. 21-27, 2001, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators at Taba, Egypt, came as close as they ever have to reaching an agreement. I thought the work of the Arava Institute would make a perfect story — with the Institute modeling what the negotiators were trying to achieve some 45 miles south of us, just across the Egyptian border. I gathered materials in Arabic, Hebrew and English about the institute and headed there. The Israelis were very but let me through, suspicious while the Egyptians took my materials and put me in a room with a soldier and his machine gun outside the door. Eventually, a military official made a call to Cairo, and I was given permission to proceed.

In Taba, I found a group of reporters sitting at a round table. I made my pitch, inviting them to see the institute as an actualization of what the negotiators were working to achieve. Their response? I was told there is hard news, always to be covered, and soft news, if time permits and if it hasn't been touched upon recently. My story was neither. Nablus, the board experienced a universe of Palestinian-Israeli collaboration, described by a young Israeli woman at TechSeeds for Peace as "statements of defiance, and friendships as radical action."

Another program we visited was at the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, which runs an Advanced Trauma Life Support curriculum for Israeli and Palestinian trauma surgeons. These activities optimize trauma care for local communities, creates shared experiences and builds deeper respect and lasting partnerships. Reflecting on such teamwork, Dr. Adam Goldstein told an interviewer, "In the coming days, years and decades, I hope the selflessness, the lack of ego, the teamwork and diversity and mutual respect — can be a model for our entire region."

The goal is to bring these societies to a tipping point so they can see one another in a different light. These projects produce effective, measurable results that shape strong, respectful relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. The unending violence between Israelis and Palestinians signals they are stuck — they need an off-ramp. Greater knowledge of these programs is one way to that off-ramp.

With such positive results, why don't more Palestinians and Israelis know about these programs and initiatives? Blame the Asymmetry of the Sensational.

In his poem "The Diameter of the Bomb," the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai explores how an individual act of violence expands from its "thirty centimeters" to "distant shores." The multiplier effect of violence and extremist language far outweighs the affirmative consequences of MEPPA programs, as well as the work of more than 170 Israeli and Palestinian institutions in the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP). On our MEPPA visit this past spring, it was so clear that, with all the positive results from these programs, fanatics need to do far less to have greater impact. Why is the Asymmetry of the Sensational so effective? A part of our brain responds to trauma with fear, fight and flight responses. Violence and extremist voices play into and feed off that fear, creating a deadly spiral. That fear is real and leads to negative perceptions between people: the weekly headlines steer us in that direction. It is easy to see why there is so much distrust between Palestinians and Israelis.

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### thedaedalusprotocol.com

This past spring, I would once again be made aware of that lesson — I call it the "Asymmetry of the Sensational."

In December 2020, Congress passed the Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act (MEPPA). Created through strong bipartisan effort, this is one of the most significant and innovative pieces of congressional legislation addressing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. MEPPA authorizes up to \$250 million over five years to promote economic cooperation and people-to-people programs; advance shared community building; and engender dialogue and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Within the legislation, Congress appointed a Partnership for Peace Fund Advisory Board. Senator Patrick Leahy named me to the board, based on my decades' involvement with the Arava Institute. In February, over three days in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and

The U.S. government over the years has invested millions of dollars, beyond MEPPA, in Palestinian-

### Continued on page 26

# Seven facts about Rosh Hashanah you may not know

### By Leah Kadosh

This story originally appeared on Kveller.

Shanah Tovah, Happy, Healthy New Year! The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, is nearly here. I can tell this coming year is going to be a good one — the bar is already so low, we can only go up from here!

Rosh Hashanah, or "Head of the Year" is observed this year from sundown on September 15 through September 17. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the beginning of the next year on the Hebrew lunar calendar and is a time of great reflection, repentance and, of course, guilt.

In honour of this very important Jewish holiday, we eat special foods, don white attire, hear the shofar, attend or stream services, give tzedakah, and, in my family, at least, make brisket and tzimmes (though I personally skip the tzimmes). Perhaps most importantly, we contemplate how we can improve our actions in the coming year. With all of the food, remorse, praying and thinking, Rosh Hashanah is the classic Jewish holiday.

So, take a break from your apple stamping project and enjoy these fun facts that are sure to make your Rosh Hashanah a blast:

### This New Year corresponds to 5784!

Wait, according to this date system, does that make me younger? The year 5784 counts the years since Gd created the world, as described in the very first portion of the Torah, Genesis Chapter 1. Just how did we arrive at this number? Many estimates were suggested by scholars, although Rabbi Yossi Ben Halafta's calculation (which he made around 165 CE in Israel) became the most widely accepted.

Through careful study of the Hebrew Bible, with special emphasis on the dating of biblical figures' lifetimes and kings' reigns, the established date of 70 CE (the destruction of the Second Temple) was used as the end point, and counting started backwards from there. Rabbi Yossi Ben Halafta established that G-d created the world on Monday, October 7, 3761 BCE. (using Gregorian calendar terms). And now it's math time: 3761+2023=5784!

# The name "Rosh Hashanah" is not mentioned in the Torah

It's true: This major Jewish holiday is not mentioned by name in the Torah! Instead, it is referred to as Yom Teruah (Day of Sounding the Shofar) and Yom HaZikaron (Day of Remembering). The holiday becomes identified as "Rosh Hashanah" during the 1st century CE in Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1.1.

# Rosh Hashanah celebrates the New Year, but falls on the first day of the seventh month!

Like so many Jewish holidays and traditions, there are several and conflicting theories as to how Rosh Hashanah evolved and how we came to celebrate the new year in the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar. Among the numerous interpretations, I wish to share my favorite: In the 13th century, Sephardic sage and rabbi Nachmonidies equated the counting from the months of Nissan (the first month of the Hebrew calendar) to Tishrei (the seventh) to be the same relationship as the first day of the week (Yom Rishon, which literally means "the first day") with Shabbat (the seventh day). The number seven in Judaism holds sacred significance. It is associated with G-d's six days of creation (special, but not super special) to the seventh day of rest, Shabbat (super special!). Counting seven months from the time of our Exodus from Egypt — which, you guessed it, happened in the month of Nissan - emphasizes the holiness of the seventh month of Tishrei, and is therefore the perfect excuse for a new year celebration.

# Rosh Hashanah is a two-day festival, everywhere!

As the song goes: Wherever you go... not only will you find someone Jewish, you will also celebrate Rosh Hashanah for two days. That's true whether you're in Israel or elsewhere! This is in contrast to other important biblical festivals, such as Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot, which are observed for an extra day in the diaspora (outside of Israel) — just to be sure the correct day is commemorated. (Why? Nearly 2,000 years ago, holiday start times were determined by moon-witness testimony, and then word was dispersed by foot. Extending the holiday by one day compensated for inevitable delays.)



Now, I know what you're thinking: Why is Rosh Hashanah celebrated for two days even in Israel? Maimonides, 12th-century scholar and philosopher, explains that it is the only Jewish holiday that begins on the first day of a new month, and therefore, witnesses were not permitted to travel to alert their communities on the sighting of a new moon. To enable complete worship, two days were established and came to be known as yoma arichta, "a long day" lasting 48 hours. Ask any Rosh Hashanah host at the end of the second day, and I believe you'll find that "yoma arichta" is the perfect description!

# Apples and honey aren't the only traditional foods.

Because Rosh Hashanah is a rather serious holiday filled with introspection, repentance and selfimprovement, our traditional foods symbolize those themes as well. In Ashkenazi tradition, apples are dipped in honey for the delight in literal sugary sweetness and the hope for a fulfilling year ahead. But that's hardly the only traditional Rosh Hashanah food: There's also round challah, as opposed to braided challah, which represents the yearly cycle and God's crown or majesty. Fish heads are traditional in Sephardi Rosh Hashanah feasts — "better the head than the tail" is what I was always taught! ("Rosh" is

### Continued on page 27

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# URBAN ERETREAT

# The Pinson family is headed to the Rockies

### By Regan Treewater-Lipes, LJI Reporter

Recently, the Edmonton Jewish community was devastated to receive the news that Rabbi Dovid Pinson and Rebbetzin Devorah Pinson, and the entire Pinson family, would be relocating. After twenty wonderful years at Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton, Team Pinson are moving on from their positions. "We are most definitely Edmontonians," commented Rabbi Pinson during a recent interview with the Alberta Jewish News. "All five of our children were born here and call Edmonton home," added the Rebbetzin.

In June, a community-wide women's event honoured the outstanding work of Rebbetzin Pinson and paid tribute to all that the entire family has done to help contribute to a thriving united Jewish Edmonton. The gathering took place at the Fantasyland Hotel, and was so well-attended, that by the time the official program began, there was standing room only. Daniella Asbell served as emcee, and the feature performance was captivatingly delivered by Mushka Pinson. An entire ballroom of women, all starstruck by Mushka's musical talent and skill on the piano, sang a compilation of classic Jewish favorites, and some lesser-known tunes as well.

Rebbetzin Chaya-Sarah Blachman and Rabbah Gila Caine offered inspirational words of gratitude to the Pinson family, and following their example, others took turns expressing their thanks and sharing fond memories from the past twenty fabulous years. "It was amazing! There were young women there that we've watched grow up, and others that were in camp years ago that also came," the Rebbetzin offered thoughtfully. "The outpour of warmth meant so much to all of us."

Many tears were shed all around, but everyone there was unified by their love for the Pinson family and their devotion to cultivating greater connections to Judaism. Mushka's heartfelt concert, the speeches, impromptu and not, and schmoozing over nibblies were brought together by community members from all denominations of observance and was a universal celebration of the work achieved by the Pinson family.

This ending, is, in fact, an exciting and momentous new beginning – not just for Team Pinson, but for the entire Alberta Jewish community! Every year millions of visitors flock to the Canadian Rocky Mountains for rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. These visitors come from all around the world to behold the breathtaking majesty of the scenery in Banff, Canmore, and the surrounding hamlets. In 1988, when Rabbi Menachem Matusof and Rebbetzin Rochel Matusof first settled in Calgary, the goal was always to grow in order to better serve the spiritual needs of Alberta's Jewish population. In 1993 Rabbi Matusof hired Rabbi Ari Drelich and Rebbetzin Rifka Drelich who have dedicated themselves to Edmonton's Jewry, and now the Chabad network of Alberta is blossoming even further. Through the creativity, innovation, imagination, and inspiration of the Matusofs and Team Pinson, there will now be a Chabad Lubavitch of the **Rockies!** 

"The Canadian Rockies are a top tourist destination, and we want to help see to the spiritual wellbeing of Jewish visitors from all over the world," explained Rabbi Pinson with great enthusiasm. "We will be able to make sure that people have easier access to kosher food and facilities while on vacation and help them to maintain their connection to Judaism even away from home."

The Rabbi went on to point out that Canmore is growing rapidly, and many Jewish families are settling in the area. "For Jews that call the Rockies home, we will provide a sense of community." The Rebbetzin added: "People can enjoy the physical beauty of Hashem's world, and we can support

their spiritual connection." Different locations around Canmore are still being scouted, but Chabad Lubavitch of the Rockies is already active, and hitting the ground running.

When asked about the crucial role that this new Chabad location will play, Rabbi Matusof, Senior Rabbi and Executive Director of Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, commented: "A living object must grow! With sixteen Chabad Shluchim (rabbis and rebbetzins) serving the Alberta Jewish community, the workload is only increasing, as the needs of individuals and communities are tremendous. We simply reached a point, that the needs and requests coming our way, are more than we can handle at the Alberta Headquarters. Let's face it. Canmore is booming. Obviously, there are Jewish people there. So, the Rebbe's call is to make Jewish Canmore boom! The Pinson's are the perfect couple to materialise this dream, with Hashem's help and the Rebbe's blessings!"

Chabad Lubavitch of the Rockies will be dedicated to the ongoing work inspired by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, but its approach and presentation might not be exactly what longtime Albertans are used to. "This cannot be only a space in a storefront and it won't be a large campus either. We will need to be out and moving to where we are needed. We will be working with a popula-tion that resides in the area, but a big part is going to be Jewish tourists," explained Rabbi Pinson thoughtfully.

They are still scouting locations for the new Chabad House, but once it is up and operational, there are plans to host Shabbos dinners for Jewish visitors to the area, and all holidays – everyone's Chabad away from home.

"We will have kosher cooking facilities, and barbecues for people to make use of," Rabbi Pinson elaborated. "If a family is on vacation and they want to barbecue, then they can come and use fully kosher equipment. We plan to build relationships with the local hotels and hope to facilitate kosher food services," said Rabbi Pinson.

> Chabad Lubavitch of the Rockies is about feeding the Jewish soul in addition to the Jewish belly. On Rosh Hashana a shofar will echo through

visitors far from their homes will be invited to share the holiday in the sukkah, and amidst the glittering snow of winter, Hanukkah candles will light up the night. On Passover, a Seder will be hosted, and those in the area will be able to get shmurah matzoh. Chabad of the Rockies will be a one stop shop for all things Jewish: for those who want to share in holiday traditions with a community, to those whose who daven daily.

The geographical location of the new Chabad House makes it ideal for building upon an existing program run by Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta. "The Roving Rabbi Program sends rabbis from Chabad Alberta to visit Jews in remote areas," explained Rabbi Pinson. "Right now, this is done mostly during the summer, but we are going to run the program year-round." Essentially, Chabad will hit the road and bring a strong Jewish connection directly to those who live in regions without established Jewish networks. "People have spiritual needs regardless of where they live."

News travels fast, but great news moves at the speed of light. This extension of the Roving Rabbi Program will target Lethbridge, Drumheller, Slave Lake, Lloydminster, and hamlets throughout the region. Whether it's affixing a mezuzah, helping men to put on tefillin, koshering a kitchen, bringing Shabbos candles, or assisting with any mitzvot, Chabad Lubavitch of the Rockies will be there – quite literally.

The Pinson family is heartbroken to be leaving loved ones and cherished friends behind in Edmonton, but they are grateful for the opportunity to growing the Rebbe's vision to include this unique locale. When asked about his hopes for future collaboration between the three Chabad centers of Alberta, Rabbi Matusof commented: "Growth and success can only happen, with cooperation, having the same vision, goals, and method. Part of the success of Chabad is the global unity and one vision. The world in general, while growing, is getting smaller and more tightly united and close to each other. Alberta is no different. Obviously, the vision, goal and practices continue to be focused on programming on a provincial level, while of course focusing on the individual. The needs of Canmore are by nature different from the needs of Calgary or Edmonton, who are larger communities. Chabad of Alberta with our message of caring and sharing, will continue and expand serving the





the mountains, on Sukkot communities as one Torah – one province for all, while

Continued on page 24



# Golf tournament honours the memory of Stevie Schwartzberg z"l

### By Matthew Levine

On August 20th, members of the Edmonton Jewish community and friends gathered in Spruce Grove to memorialize Stevie Schwartzberg OBM and to raise money for FD. The first Stevie Schwartzberg Memorial Golf Tournament was held four years ago and allowed over 50 FD patients to get the mental health support they needed to cope with the disease over Covid. Stevie tragically passed away at the age of thirty-five after living with a rare genetic disease called Familial Dysautonomia. FD is an inherited disorder that targets the nervous system causing physical, emotional, and social problems.

The turnout for this memorial fundraiser was amazing with all the golf spots being filled, and almost all the dining room seats being taken by friends, family and supporters of Stevie. After playing shotgun style golf, attendees made their way to the dining room where they socialized and examined the silent auction items. These items included signed hockey jerseys, gift cards to restaurants, and large appliances.

After everyone found their seat, Stevie's parents – Jack and Rowena Schwartzberg and his sister Daryl spoke about Stevie and the importance of this tournament in supporting FD. They thanked the golfers and the donors for all their love and support.

Stevie was an integral part of their family and their circle of friends for 35 years. He was loving and had a great sense of humour and an infectious enthusiasm and zest for life. He loved sports. The Schwartzbergs expressed

how thankful they are that they can celebrate Stevie's life this way, with friends, family and sport. And how meaningful it is to them to raise funds to help others with FD.

They then screened an informative video that described Familial Dysautonomia and how it affects different people. Friends and family took to the podium to give short impromtu speeches. Everyone who spoke talked with so much love and compassion in their voice, both for Stevie and for what it meant for everyone to be supporting the cause.

After a nice dinner of steak, salmon, and sides, the

attendees put their names in for a door raffle and prizes were given out for individual and team performances on the golf course. The door prizes were then given away followed by one last chance for participants in the silent auction.

The event was very successful and well done. Attendees had a wonderful time - sharing laughs, stories, and memories of Stevie. Through this event, our community was able to fundraise for a good cause as well as memorialize Stevie in all of our hearts.

Matthew Levine is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

Rowena, Daryl and Jack Schwartzberg at the tournament.



A wonderful golf tournament was held this month to honour the memory of Stevie Schwartzberg z"I and raise funds to assist people who are living with Familial Dysautonomia and their families. (Photos supplied).





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PREMIER ROOFERS

# **Telling the precious story of Herbert Zwergfeld**

### By Maxine Fischbein

It is hard to imagine the rollercoaster of emotions when, on March 15, 1939, Marie Zwergfeld put her 11year-old son on the train that took him to safety in England. Her only child, Herbert, was one of 10,000 Jewish children snatched from the claws of the Nazis in 1938 and 1939 thanks to a humanitarian mission called the Kindertransport. Herbert Fielding - as he later came to be known - is one of 212 Calgaryconnected Holocaust survivors whose stories are now part of the *Here to Tell: Faces of Holocaust Survivors* project.

Fielding, who eventually settled in Red Deer, Alberta, became one of that city's most notable citizens.

Made in Calgary, *Here to Tell* consists of photographic exhibits and a book. My sacred task as lead writer and editor is to capture brief but profound insights into the life of each survivor before, during and after the Holocaust.

How do you sum up a life in 300 words? Impossible! And yet, with the help of survivors, descendants and an army of volunteers, we do so. Herbert Fielding's story - which I now have the luxury of expanding upon - is one of 51 that will be rolled out in an all-new *Here to Tell* digital exhibit on September 11.

While every survivor story is unique and compelling, Herbert's has earned a special place in my heart. How is it that I never knew about this larger-than-life Holocaust survivor? And why was he very nearly lost to the Jewish people?

Herbert's son and daughter-in-law, Paul Fielding and Jenn Thomas, summed it up in an interview this past July, saying that among the great tragedies of Herbert's life was his separation from his community.

"He both lost it and couldn't try to find it," Herbert's daughter, Helen Fielding, told *AJNews*.

Fortunately, Herbert's descendants have seized the opportunity to repatriate their patriarch.

Herbert Zwergfeld was born on September 20, 1927 in Vienna, Austria where he later sang in a boys' choir. Tragedy struck when his father Alfred - a World War I veteran - died of tuberculosis. At the time, Herbert was only seven years old. Things would soon go from bad to worse for the clever and inquisitive boy.

A few years later, Herbert was confronted by Hitler Youth members who denounced him as a Jew. Herbert denied it and pulled down his pants to "prove" it.

To their utter shock, Herbert was uncircumcised. Frightened, the young thugs ran away.

Herbert had fallen ill shortly after birth, forcing his parents to delay their son's *bris*, which never came to pass.

That twist of fate may well have saved Herbert's life, Helen Fielding told *AJNews*. Her father did not share the story until he had another brush with death after contracting septicemia at the age of 80. The angel of death was again thwarted when Herbert pulled through that medical emergency.

Her father-in-law "...had more lives than a cat," said Jenn Thomas.

Poignant letters between mother and son reveal Marie Zwergfeld's fervent hope that she would one day reunite with Herbert in England. Fortunately, Herbert preserved his mother's letters as well as carbon copies of some of his replies to her, allowing rare glimpses into the emotions of a mother and son separated by the madness that gripped Nazi-occupied Europe.

In a letter dated April 21, 1939 and translated by Helen Fielding, Marie urges Herbert to say *Kaddish* for his father:

"...on April 29th candles must be lit, which of course you cannot do, but perhaps you can say Kaddish, though if it's not possible I won't be angry with you but at least you can think of him. Be really good and work hard. I am quite healthy. Many kisses, your Mama."

On September 9, 1940, Herbert wrote to his mother:

"Dear Mama, Much luck on your birthday. Am healthy, am good in school. I swim. Many greetings and kisses, Herbert"

Though loving, Herbert's letters had to be brief because of a 25 word limit for letters delivered by the Red Cross, notes Helen Fielding.

Eventually, Marie's letters stopped coming. Archives gathered by her grandchildren reveal her grim fate. One of 1,000 Jews deported to Riga in 1942, Marie Zwergfeld was among 150 women who were then sent to the ghetto there. Remarkably, she endured ghetto life for two years, likely by clinging to the hope that she would still somehow reunite with Herbert in England. That hope died, together with Marie, four months after she was sent to the Stutthof concentration camp.

Herbert was mainly educated at Stoatley Rough - a boarding school for Jewish refugee children funded by British Quakers and run by progressive German feminist educators.

When Herbert completed his school certificate, the wealthy British-Jewish benefactor who had sponsored him concluded his support. Herbert was now financially responsible for himself.

Archives obtained by his family show that Herbert lived for a couple of months at the Willesden Lane hostel in London toward the end of 1944. Several months later, when he reached the age of 17-and-ahalf, he was allowed to enlist in the British army, as he had hoped to do.

Herbert made many successful jumps while training as a parachutist but was disqualified when he broke his arm on his final training run. That misfortune may once again have spared him from an infinitely worse fate.

Eventually, Herbert did serve. His fluency in

Lubavitcher Rebbe's vision even further. As grateful as Edmontonian's are to the Pinson family, they too are grateful to the Edmonton Jewish community.

"We grew and learned so much here," expressed Rabbi Pinson with tangible sincerity. Both Rabbi and Rebbetzin Pinson cherish the opportunity that Rabbi Drelich gave them twenty years ago, and they say their hearts are full with gratitude as Rabbi and Rebbetzin Matusof have now entrusted them with the spiritual wellbeing of such a diverse and varied demographic. "People sometimes say that we are 'kid people' because



Herbert with his mother, Marie Zwergfeld. (Photo courtesy of Helen Fielding).

German made him quite useful in the aftermath of World War II when he controlled a checkpoint in British-occupied Germany on the border of the Soviet zone and also served as a translator.

After returning to England, Herbert - described in a 1939 letter from his Aunt Charlote and Uncle Arthur as a *Frageteufel* (question devil) - worked and studied, earning his law degree at the University of London and taking postgraduate studies at the London School of Economics.

Aware that his German surname limited his employment opportunities in England (he kept every rejection letter he received), Herbert opted to create his own luck by swapping Zwergfeld for Fielding.

In addition to practicing law, Herbert pursued his love for music, joining a choir where he wooed and won his wife Bridget, a Catholic who had been born and raised in England. Well-educated and independent, Bridget was, according to her children, a woman ahead of her time.

It is hard to imagine Bridget's reaction when Herbert decided to pursue an opportunity in rural Central Alberta. She put her foot down when they arrived in the small town Herbert had in mind. The couple instead settled in Red Deer, where they welcomed and raised their children Christine, Helen and Paul.

Herbert built a thriving and varied law practice, arguing cases all the way to the Supreme Court. One thing he avoided at all costs was family law.

"He refused to do divorces, and we think that is because his own family was torn apart," said Jenn Thomas.

### Continued on page 25

# Pinson Cont. from page 22

attending to the individual's needs and desires."

The future is bright, but this is also a moment to reflect for the Pinson family: to take grateful inventory of all they were able to contribute to Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton. When Rabbi Ari Drelich first welcomed them onto his team they could not have hoped for a better community to call home, but now they will be able to grow Alberta's connection to Judaism in the of what we do with youth programming," said Rabbi Pinson. "But I really think we are 'people people.' We build relationships with the families: the children and the adults." As Jewish families flock to this tourist destination now, they can rest assured that there is a strong, and caring Jewish presence to connect with.

As the Jewish year comes to a close, and a bright new one begins, there is much to eagerly anticipate. "To help this new centre for Jewish life thrive and flourish, the greater community at large is asked to please give what they can to support this noble endeavor. Jewish Albertans can now include Chabad Lubavitch of the Rockies as a stop on their family vacations as everyone wishes the Pinsons the greatest success! To stay in touch, learn more, to sign up for the mailing list, or to make an appreciated contribution, please visit chabadrockies.org.

Peo





As kids, Helen Fielding says that she and her sister Christine - who passed away in 2014 - were aware of their Jewish roots but warned not to divulge the family secret.

"We were told when we were children not to tell anyone that he was Jewish and not to talk about his story," Helen told *AJNews*.

"By the time I came along, he was not projecting that same fear," says Paul, though his father remained reticent to speak of the past.

Herbert served as a Red Deer alderman from 1970 to 1977 and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1978. A proud individualist, he ran as a Liberal candidate in a provincial election, knowing full well that a leftleaning candidate from Central Alberta would not be taking a seat in the Legislature.

"One of the things about my father is that he really believed that you don't do what you think other people want you to do. You do what you think is the right thing to do," said Helen, adding that, as a result, her father made some enemies.

Herbert was, according to his children, an "enigma."

Helen recalls meeting a lawyer many years after he had sparred with her father in a Red Deer courtroom. Observing this disheveled guy who was posing "really odd questions" in court, Herbert's colleague assumed that his own victory was as hand. In the end, as he so often did, Herbert "pulled it all together," leaving his opponent utterly gobsmacked.

Helen likens her father's rumpled demeanor and interrogation style to actor Peter Falk's portrayal of *Columbo* - the title character of the popular 70s TV series.

In 1987, Herbert went to Austria to visit Helen who, at the time, was living in Salzburg. Herbert had never intended to return, but his daughter says she pushed him to do so and travelled together with her father to Vienna.

Herbert remembered a great deal about the city, easily navigating the streets and even remembering addresses, Helen said.

"He wouldn't go out to where he used to live. He didn't want to go there, but he was good with being in the city itself," Helen told *AJNews*.

Herbert returned to Austria a number of times with his wife Bridget.

"Wiener Schnitzel was his favourite meal. Nobody could make it like his mother," recalled Helen, adding that her mother eventually mastered the dish.

In his later years, Herbert doted on his grandchildren, Harley and Zander. His children say

he was a great dad when they were small, but Herbert became distant as they reached their teens.

"He didn't know how to parent because he hadn't been parented at that age," observed Jenn Thomas.

Curmudgeonly, but always with a twinkle, Herbert loved his feather and fur menagerie and reading and listening to Beethoven and Viennese Operettas. He whistled or sang wherever he went.

Herbert never really retired; he loved the law too much for that. After a fall that resulted in a catastrophic brain injury, he died in a Calgary

hospital on July 1, 2013 at the age of 85.

Honouring Herbert's wishes, his children arranged for Herbert's cremation and for a rabbi then serving a Calgary synagogue to say *Kaddish* for him.

Gerda Mayer, who had attended Stoatley Rough with Herbert, saw his online obituary and reached out to the Fielding family with condolences. Now deceased, Mayer - originally from Czechoslovakia - was also rescued on the Kindertransport. She went on to become a British poet.

"Herbert's nickname at Stoatley Rough was Beethoven, because of his hair," says Helen, who inherited her father's Jewfro. Her brother Paul, who plays the violin, received his father's love for music. Paul and Jenn's son Zander has his grandfather's intense and probing eyes.

"He passed away two weeks after he retired," said Jenn Thomas of her father-in-law, poignantly adding, "My plan for his retirement was to try and get him to start talking a little bit more." Thomas had hoped to encourage Herbert to write his memoirs.

Fortunately, Herbert's family has delved into his

history, a labour of love initiated by his late daughter Christine, the family genealogist. And in 2019, on the fifth anniversary of Christine's passing, Herbert's surviving children and grandchildren traveled to Vienna to unveil memorial stumbling stones outside the last known residences of their grandmother Marie and her brother and sisterin-law, Leo and Stefanie Roubíček, who also perished at the hands of the Nazis.

I began writing about Herbert on the very weekend that Jews around the world read and contemplated *Shoftim* (Judges), the Torah portion in which we are told *Tzedek*, *tzedek tirdof* - Justice, justice thou shall pursue. And I celebrated Herbert Fielding who devoted his life to that core Jewish value, the flame of his *Yiddishe neshama* - his Jewish soul - unextinguished.

Fittingly, among other efforts to connect with their family's Jewish roots, Herbert's children and grandchildren light *menorahs* every Chanukah.

May Herbert Fielding's family always take comfort in the glow of those candles, the memory of their beloved father and grandfather, and the gift of bringing Herbert Zwergfeld back to his people.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

<image>

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Holocaust Survivor Herbert Fielding. Hands belong to son Paul

Faces of Holocaust Survivors.

Fielding. Photograph by Marnie Burkhardt, courtesy Here to Tell:





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# Learn more about Sixties Scoop with *Little Bird* on Crave and APTN

### By Regan Treewater-Lipes

Questions about identity, belonging, and the eternal search for self-definition are universal ones that transcend the boundaries of time and space, but also those of cultural or national affiliation. At the core of the great human experience, everyone just wants to feel safe. Such security is often related to community and family. For some Canadians this knowledge of one's roots may be a treasure trove of stories and cherished photographs, but for those who either survived the Holocaust, or carry forward the memories of past generations, legacy can be a haunting reality.

September 30 has been designated National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – to work towards reconciliation by honouring Indigenous residential school survivors. Canadians can commit to increasing their awareness of the horrors that were committed against Indigenous children by learning more about the Sixties Scoop and the IRS system. Reading books and watching films on the subject is a good place to start.

Writers Jennifer Podemski and Hannah Moscovitch, both Ontario-born to families of Jewish heritage, beautifully and poignantly narrate the story of Bezhig Little Bird, played by Canadian actress and rising star Darla Contois, in the recently released Crave APTN series *Little Bird* (2023). The journey of main character Bezhig Little Bird is also the story of Esther Rosenblum in what reveals to be an exploration of hybrid multilayered cultural negotiation.

Like far too many Indigenous children victimized in the Sixties Scoop, Bezhig and her younger brother and sister are forcibly taken from their mother by government social workers. Bezhig is adopted by a loving and well-intentioned Jewish couple who survived the Holcaust and is raised within an affluent home in Montreal's Jewish community as Esther Rosenblum. The name "Esther" is given to her by her adoptive Jewish mother Golda, in honour of a sister lost in Poland at the hands of the Nazi's and their collaborators.

"The second I heard 'Jewish' and 'Indigenous' I was like 'yes'! That's definitely something I want to do," commented writer Jennifer Podemski remembering her reaction when first approached to work on the project. Born in Toronto to a Jewish father and Indigenous mother, Podemski's own upbringing in a Jewish area was itself a crossroads of cultures and identities.

"I am a person who is deeply immersed in

multilayered identity being Jewish, having a dad who was born in Israel, [and Indigenous]. My grandmother and grandfather on my mother's side are residential school survivors. At the center of this I am a storyteller immersed in the cultures that make up my identity... I grew up in a Jewish community, but I did not fit in... Where I physically lived was in a Jewish area. I celebrated Shabbat, and all the Jewish holidays when I was little.

"My mother, like many from Indigenous families was really impacted by being the daughter of two residential school survivors and was very detached from her community. Up until I was a teenager I don't think I really felt that I belonged anywhere," Podemski elaborated further during a recent phone interview with the *Alberta Jewish News* enroute to her next stop along a tour of promotional events across Canada.

Podemski's paternal grandfather was himself a survivor of the Holocaust. He was originally from Lodz, Poland, and forcibly displaced when the ghetto was liquidated. Podemski traveled back to Poland and retraced her grandfather's steps along with him in a documented journey through his trauma. He survived the war, and met Podemski's grandmother, his future wife, in a displaced persons camp where the British nurse was stationed.

Little Bird is more than just a narrative exploration of identity though, it is a loving examination of mothers and daughters – the families of birth, and the families of circumstance. As Esther is driven to rediscover the truth about Bezhig, her younger self, it is a painful road for the woman who raised her as well. Golda, dazzlingly portrayed by Jewish-American actress Lisa Edelstein, a primetime staple, and instantly recognizable Hollywood face, has poured all her love, hopes, and dreams into her adopted daughter Esther.

"Being raised very aware of what happened to our family during the Holocaust, I was really proud to be able to play this part and represent that story," said Edelstein in a recent phone interview. "What I was really trying to grab onto in the performance was that particular generation of Jewish women that I knew, who didn't smile in the way we smile now...They laughed when it was funny but there wasn't a necessity of having emotional approval from the world," she explained further. "I think the most important thing is having a heart that is open enough to accept the difficult reality that you may have been complicit in, and I think that's really Golda's journey.

"In no way did she understand what was happening



Actors Darla Contois and Lisa Eidelstein portray Sixties Scoop survivor Bezhig and her adoptive Jewish mother in 'Little Bird' available on Crave and APTN.

in the Sixties Scoop when she adopted her daughter.... But when her daughter confronts her about what that system really was, she's resistant, like most people, because no one wants to be a part of something so ugly," she concluded meaningfully.

Edelstein's performance is nuanced, moving, and captivating as Golda experiences so many dimensions of loss and love. Edelstein, who grew up in what she described as a Conservative Jewish home, explained that she feels no lack of connection to her identity. "My grandparents were Orthodox," she noted elaborating that in her home they also kept kosher. The nuance and emotional texture that she brings to Golda's performance is at times heartbreaking and deeply moving.

"She adopted a child that in her mind lost her family, just like Golda had lost her family in the Holocaust. I think in some ways she wanted to take somebody into her life that would understand that grief but also be able to love each other fully and make a new family." After her world has been destroyed, Golda still practices the principle of *tikkun olam*, and strives to repair the world around her, this brought to life stunningly through Edelstein's portrayal.

The central character must find a way to merge the identities of Bezhig and Esther to find peace for herself before marrying and starting her own family. Her journey is profoundly excruciating. As her Montreal

### Continued on page 28

### Israeli-Palestinian

### Cont. from page 20

Israeli civil society. As large as \$250 million is, it's not enough. The International Fund for Ireland spent \$40 per person in Northern Ireland on MEPPA-type projects. This relatively large expenditure was critical in paving the way for the Good Friday Agreement, which ended three decades of violence between Protestants and Catholics. At present, only \$2 per person is spent on Palestinian-Israeli enterprises.

The international community needs to come together and coordinate vast increases in the support of these programs. That investment needs to be augmented by appointing someone whose sole task is to wake up every morning and focus on advancing peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians. Appointing a Liaison to Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem would signal a greater integration of MEPPA, related U.S. funding and current policy.

In addition, Israelis and Palestinians need to grasp that peace is not the final destination. It is a means and not an end. Peace does not erase all disagreements. The Good Friday Agreement did not end tensions between the two communities in Northern Ireland, but it did take violence, death and extremism out of the equation so that a healthier reality could emerge.

MEPPA and ALLMEP create an essential step in that direction, with Palestinians and Israelis building mutual trust through their engagements with one another. Tareq Abu Hamed, the executive director of the Arava Institute, makes that point. "Water is not the scarcest resource in the Middle East, trust is," he says. "We build trust between students and between researchers."

Differences may remain, but trust creates the will to work together to overcome those gaps. Trust is fundamental to generating the conditions for Israelis and Palestinians to have the better future they deserve.

In the Asymmetry of the Sensational, one violent act or extremist statement quickly travels far and wide. We need to reverse that asymmetry and amplify quieter, transformative, positive actions between Palestinians and Israelis.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.

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The solemn liturgical poem "Untanneh Tokef," chanted as part of the High Holy Days service, epitomizes the mood of momentous dread as the Sovereign of the universe sits in judgement over his creatures:

"Like a herder leading his flock, who passes his sheep beneath his staff. So shall you cause to pass, count, measure and reckon the lives of all living beings."

The source for this simile is in the Mishnah which describes the mood on the annual day of judgment when "all the denizens of the world pass before him like *b'nei meron.*"

I have left this last expression untranslated because its correct translation is indeed a matter of considerable doubt and controversy. Philologists, sages, lexicographers and poets have interpreted the words in very diverse ways.

The physical shapes of Hebrew letters tolerate a certain degree of ambiguity. Specifically, the letters that represent the vowels "i" and "u" are easily confused; and it is not clear whether the text should be read as one or two words. As regards to the correct reading in the Mishnah, there are two main options: "*ki-ve-numeron*" and "*ki-vnei meron*."

According to the first possibility, humankind parades before their Creator like a "noumeron" - a military cohort being inspected by their commander. The Greek "noumeron" and its Latin cognate "numerus" both denote military divisions; so that the Mishnah's simile is of a contingent of soldiers undergoing an inspection before their commanding officer. The Babylonian sage Samuel specified that the comparison was not just to some generic army - but to the Hebrew soldiers under King David's command.

The other variant of the Mishnah's text was subject to its own diverse readings and interpretations. The Talmud states that in Babylonia it was customary to explain "*meron*" with reference to a similar-sounding Aramaic word connoting sheep. Rashi explained this image with reference to the procedures for tithing livestock, when the animals are paraded single-file through a narrow gateway and every tenth lamb is designated for sacred use. This analogy was employed by the author of the *Untanneh Tokef*. Other talmudic teachers envisaged different situations that would necessitate squeezing through narrow spaces. Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish adduced the "Ascent of Beit Horon," a strategic site that was the scene of military actions during the Maccabean and Roman eras. Rabbi Aha described it as a small, narrow mountain range that could only be traversed in single-file.

Saadyah Ga'on, author of the first known Hebrew dictionary, included an entry for "*maron*," which he equated with an Arabic root that means "march past" or "pass in review," especially in a military context.

The liturgical poet Yannai, who lived in Galilee during the Byzantine era, incorporated both interpretations in his poem for Rosh Hashanah. In one place he writes, "As we are passed under the staff like sheep by the one counting them, you will appoint for us an advocate." A few lines further down it says, "The king will cause all the denizens of the world to pass before him like a *noumeron*."

Several medieval manuscripts of prayer books and liturgical poetry contain the vowel "u," indicating "noumeron" - even though the word is split into two parts (as "*kivnu-meron*"). Though there is considerable debate and hesitation about the question, this has become the generally preferred reading in scholarly circles.

Moving beyond the lexicographic and academic questions raised by these texts, several authors strove to elicit spiritual insights from the different interpretations.

Rabbi Samuel Edels (Maharsha) equated the three interpretations with the three classes of people who stand in judgment before the divine tribunal: The sheep, destined for slaughter, stand for the confirmed evildoers. The heroic soldiers symbolize the perfectly righteous. And those struggling to keep their balance along the perilous trail represent the average flawed individuals who strive to maintain their moral balance.

Rabbi Hayyim Joseph David Azulai and Rabbi Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad (the "Ben Ish Hai") found in the three categories allusions to the Supreme Judge's desire to tip the scales to the advantage of the Rosh Hashanah defendants. Thus, comparing us to

# Flocks, fighters and forgiveness

sheep, who are utterly lacking in intelligence, allows us to plead that fundamentally we are no better dumb animals, and hence not of sound enough mind to deserve punishment. The Ben Ish Hai explained, "Even when sheep cause damage to the foliage, the owners do not hold them liable. And so it is with respect to Israel - even though they sin, the Holy One treats them like sheep."

As regards that image of an ascent through a precarious mountain trail flanked by deep gorges on either side - this also works to the benefit of mortals, as a factor that would mitigate a severe verdict. It evokes the picture of an Everyman who is plodding cautiously, clinging to a narrow path enclosed on either side by barriers. Rabbi Azulai explained this imagery in the sense that, from one side, the physical constitution of our bodies impels us to pursue the vanities of the material world, while on the other side we are continually bombarded by temptations from the evil inclination ("The devil made me do it!").

The Ben Ish Hai noted that Jews are particularly vulnerable to negative influences when living amidst impure foreign cultures. Samuel's analogy to the warriors of King David's army also works to our advantage by urging G-d to give us some credit for our ceaseless daily battles to eke out honest livelihoods for our families. Furthermore, the merit of righteous ancestors like David can be invoked even if our personal virtues are not adequate for the purpose.

The preachers and poets who crafted these scenarios had to steer a cautious course. On the one hand, their audiences must be alerted to the grave consequences of their transgressions. And yet the prospect of severe judgment must not cause them to despair of repentance.

Hopefully, we will all emerge from the experience with gleaming fleeces or spotlessly groomed uniforms, as the case may be - worthy of enjoying a blessed new year.

'From the Sources' by Eliezer Segal is sponsored by the Zeisler Families of Calgary, Edmonton, New York and Los Angeles

### Seven facts cont. from page 21

also the Hebrew word for "head," and therefore, there is a literal connection to beginnings.) Pomegranates are in season during this time in Israel, and are another traditional Rosh Hashanah treat. They were once thought to contain 613 seeds, the same number of mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah — just don't tell my daughter, she just started counting!

### But, strangely, it's tradition to avoid nuts!

It is a custom to abstain from eating nuts during Rosh Hashanah for a couple of reasons. According to the Shulchan Aruch, one of the most consulted Jewish

law books written by Joseph Caro in the 16th century, nuts not only increase the production of saliva and phlegm in our mouths (a lovely thought) but could perhaps hurt our pronunciation of words recited during services. As any young Jewish child knows, services are already extremely long on Rosh Hashanah, therefore, anything that hinders our ability to pray should be avoided! communication (figure our modern TV or cell phone alert) and had a multitude of purposes: to declare battle, welcome Shabbat and a New Moon, announce the reign of a new king and so on. Nowadays, one can hear the shofar blown after morning services every day (excluding Shabbat) in the month of Elul, the month preceding Rosh Hashanah — except for the last day, the day before Rosh Hashanah.

The unique sound of the shofar reminds us of an alarm, a reflective wake up call. Maimonides reasoned that the sound awakens our souls and calls to our attention our actions of our past and what we want to change in the future. We are tasked to analyze our relationship with God, ourselves and others and to change for the better.

As for the reason for abstaining from blowing the shofar on Shabbat, that's due to the fear of carrying the instrument itself! The Talmud explains that it was not the actual sounding of the shofar that was forbidden, but the worry of an inadequate shofar blower carrying their shofar to an experienced shofar blower for help and training on Shabbat that was prohibited. If that is not the most Jewish reason for anything, I don't know what is!

Wishing you and your family the most healthy, happy, fulfilling new year ahead with blessings abound, Shanah Tovah!

The shofar is an integral part of our High Holiday season, although it's never blown on Shabbat!

You heard me! As mentioned previously, one of Rosh Hashanah's Biblical names was "Day of Sounding the Shofar," and only two details are included in its observance as written in the Torah: to hear the shofar and to abstain from work. Shofars are horns taken from kosher animals and can vary greatly in size, color and shape. It also takes a skilled musician to make a decent sound — trust me, I'm not one of them!

The shofar is an ancient instrument of



# Enrich family celebrations with PJ Library

PJ Library, the non-profit program that sends free monthly children's books to families who want to bring more Jewish stories to reading time, is helping answer some questions for the High Holidays this September and October. Why do we blow a shofar? What's the importance of apples and honey? What is a lulav and etrog? The answers to these and more can be found in "A Time to Grow: A PJ Library Family Guide for Starting the Jewish New Year." This beautifully illustrated guide offers families myriad creative ways to celebrate Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Sukkot (Festival of Small Huts), and Simchat Torah (Rejoicing with the Torah) is available for all to download for free.

The three-week Jewish holiday season is an annual celebration of growth that Jewish tradition invites us to take year after year. Make the High Holidays in 2023 that much more meaningful, memorable, and fun with the colorful, enriching guide offering a visual introduction to the holidays, step-by-step rituals for family meals, kid-friendly activities, and recipes such

as "Make Your Own Shofar" or "Round Challahbraiding," and prompts for family conversations about reflection and growth. In addition, you can visit the online companion filled with helpful how-to videos, music, and audio versions of blessings and prayers, adding to the interactivity of the guide.

Families can download "A Time to Grow" in English, Russian, Portuguese, or Spanish. There is also an English only version on the PJ Library Amazon store for those looking to purchase a keepsake printed edition. Also available for purchase is PJ Library's Perpetual Calendar which invites families to experience the uniqueness of the Jewish calendar. The colorful dry-erase calendar features sheets of reusable stickers uniquely shaped to illustrate how Jewish holidays start and end at sundown, with additional stickers marking family events, Gregorian months, and more.

PJ Library sends more than 670,000 free Jewish children's books to families in over 35 countries every month. The non-profit Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF) created this program so that a family's reading time can inspire them to explore what they love about Jewish life. In addition to the beloved stories, PJ Library also shares family activities, ways to connect with other Jewish families online and in person, and a variety of resources like holiday guides, story podcasts, and Jewish parenting advice. The HGF partners with local Jewish organizations to fund PJ



Library and make it available in their community at no cost to subscribing families. To learn more or sign up kids ages 0-12 in Edmonton and the surrounding area, contact jewishedmonton.org.



PJ Edmonton hosted a hard-working group of Jewish Youth Volunteer Connect members (JYVC) at Beth Shalom, to make delicious Shabbat cookies for the Jewish seniors at Our Parents Home. Photo Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

# Little Bird cont. from page 26

Jewish community gathers to celebrate the simcha of Esther's engagement to longtime love David, the atmosphere seems traditionally Jewish, and accepting of the accomplished protagonist. Esther gives a toast and calls David her "bashert" as she optimistically looks to their future together building a Jewish family.

These moments are cinematically interrupted by nightmarish visions of her abduction from her birthmother's arms, and flashes from a dormitory filled with children stolen by a corrupt system. This collision of emotions from the entire spectrum of humanity is condensed into Esther's story - each episode more poignant than the last. The questions raised are not just about the story of one young woman, but the many stories of a lost generation of children robbed of their sense of self identity by institutionalized colonial values.

Beneath a thin veil of performed acceptance, there is judgement and discrimination among the revelers at Esther and David's engagement. After overhearing derogatory and hateful remarks made by her fiancé's mother, Esther begins to see that the community she thought she belonged in does not consider her one of their own. Such traumatizing moments ignite within the viewer introspective reflection surrounding how we, as a society, treat one another, and whether we, as individuals, are truly as accepting as we present ourselves to be. history and it's something that we need to understand and be a part of in order to move forward together."

Opposite a legendary TV veteran like Edelstein who has delivered unforgettable performances on *Seinfeld*, *Ally McBeal*, *House*, *Girlfriends' Guide to Divorce*, and most recently *The Kominsky Method*, up-and-comer Contois was entrusted with the role of a lifetime, in a performance that showcases her thoughtful talent and compassion for her character. She remembers the latenight phone call from Podemski where she was first offered the part, and how she burst into uncontrollable tears of joy.

"I think in Esther it's complicated for her to navigate her own personal history with being raised by a mother who lost her family in the Holocaust and then also understanding that her birth family has suffered through the genocide of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and also mass murder... Esther just has so much love for her mother and so much love for her birth family and where she comes from that it just ends up being a really beautiful, incredible story," the directors and putting that trust in everyone who has had a hand in getting this show to audiences makes me feel a lot better."

When asked what she admires most about the character she spent so much time inhabiting, Contois commented thoughtfully: "I think the thing that I admire about her the most is her tenacity to really understand and to take care of the people around her. Because while she's going through this incredibly tumultuous journey, she's also conscious and trying so hard to not be disrespectful to her Jewish mother and to not be disrespectful to her Indigenous family and I think she just has so much love for the people around her and that's something I really admired, and I really enjoyed playing."

Edelstein, who is no stranger to social activism and giving voice to marginalized communities, commented meaningfully at the end of her interview with AJNews: "One of the very compelling things about this experience was the culture sharing that was happening on set. For a large part of my journey on Little Bird I was the only non-Native person and because there were so many references to Jewish tradition, what I was doing often was having conversations sharing and comparing our rituals. It was incredibly beautiful to have that experience." The story is gripping, and the characters engaging to watch. What comes through most is the humanity of the project. Audiences care about Esther and Golda, and along with this mother and daughter, viewers will celebrate their victories, and cry sincerely with all they must endure. Little Bird is now available to stream on Crave and APTN.

"Everybody is going to take away something different," explained Darla Contois during an on-theroad phone interview with the *AJNews*. "It depends where your ready to hear from, where you're ready to listen from, and what you're ready to take in. As Canadians this story is a part of our collective leading lady commented.

Contois is of Cree-Saulteaux heritage and a 2014 graduate of the Professional Training Program at the Centre for Indigenous Theatre. *Little Bird* is her breakthrough role, and the journey has been intense. She worked with a dialect specialist to perfect the Montreal-Jewish accent of Esther, studied Judaism and Jewish culture through intensive instruction in preparation for the role. She even became a connoisseur of Jewish food – matzoh ball soup being her favorite. Now, the series is available for binge watching, and the young ingenue can only sit back as audiences fall in love with Esther and her story.

"I think inherently it's a nerve-wracking experience overall. But I think that putting that trust in the Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.







The Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association thanks the Edmonton Jewish community and the Alberta Jewish News for participating in these holiday greetings.

Todah Rabah and Shana Tova! We're sure by now that you've noticed that as a Canadian news outlet, we can no longer use Facebook to distribute our community news and photos.

Please visit our website at albertajewishnews.com frequently to keep up to date on community happenings and news from an Alberta Jewish perspective. Or sign up to include us in your RSS feeds.

We also encourage everyone who liked us on Facebook to sign up for the Alberta Jewish Schmooze - our weekly newsletter - that is sent directly to your inbox. Sign up right on our website: albertajewishnews.com.

We are also posting more articles on twitter - so visit us there too.

Thanks again for welcoming us into your homes each month and online on a regular basis.

Shana Tova to the whole community. Dan Moser, Editor Alberta Jewish News





Special thoughts to our family and friends, may the year ahead be a sweet one

from Matalie and Ken Soroka

& Family





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