

Calgary Jewish Film Festival had something for everyone



A new generation of film lovers at the Beth Tzedec Congregation Calgary Jewish Film festival where 150 children, parents and grandparents gathered for a special screening of the delightful animated short film *Something from Nothing*, presented in partnership with PJ Library.

By Maxine Fischbein

After the Beth Tzedec Congregation Jewish Film Festival was forced online for three seasons due to the COVID-19 pandemic, film lovers welcomed the return of in-person screenings during the twenty-third annual event, held November 4-19.

While the mood was muted in the aftermath of brutal October 7 attacks by Hamas and the continuing war in Israel and Gaza, hundreds of Calgarians found solace in gathering as a community and focusing on feature films, documentaries and special guests.

“While it was not a record-breaking year, our audience remained loyal,” said festival founder and director Harvey Cyngiser, adding that there was “great energy” throughout three weekends of the much-loved cultural event.

As always, audiences gained extraordinary insights into a diversity of Jewish experience in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Celebrated film director Avi Neshet - Israel’s Steven Spielberg - introduced his dramedy *The Monkey House* on opening night while touching upon the current situation in Israel.

“You have no idea how moved I am to be here and to see this wonderful Jewish community coming together at this difficult time for Israel,” Neshet said.

“When I was an officer in the Yom Kippur war...the return rate of Israeli reservists was 110 percent,” he noted. “Even people we didn’t need came anyways,” quipped Neshet, who said that Israelis are once again running toward rather than away from danger during the country’s time of need.

Neshet related the discomfort he felt leaving Israel in the wake of the October 7 attacks to speak at film festivals abroad. Then, at a screening in Santa Barbara California just prior to his arrival in Calgary, he realized “...how important it is to have screenings like this at times like this.”

“There’s a famous saying by Winston Churchill who refused to turn off the lights in cinemas and theatres

in London during the blitz,” added Neshet. “He said if we do not continue to consume culture during the war, how could we know what we are fighting for?”

The Monkey House opened to great box office and critical acclaim one week before theatres went dark in Israel following the unprecedented Hamas

attacks. But a short time later, Neshet was providing a much-needed diversion to Israelis - some of them bereaved - who had been evacuated from their homes and were requesting to see the film and hear from Neshet himself.

Continued on page 2

Edmonton community lights up the Ledge



Chabad of Edmonton hosted a wonderful Chanukah celebration at the Alberta Legislature - with Rabbi Ari Drelich and EPS Chief Dale McFee lighting the Giant Menorah on Dec. 10 - the fourth night of Chanukah. Photo by Daniel Moser.

Film Festival *Cont. from page 1*

"I felt that I couldn't do it. What can you tell people whose house burned down, whose children were burned...how can you talk about cinema?"

Nesher spoke to people who survived at Kibbutz Be'eri and Kibbutz Holit, where he said a shocking 50 percent of kibbutzniks were slaughtered by Hamas terrorists.

"You have no idea what to say," said Nesher, who discovered that his film and presence created some light amid terrible loss and darkness.

"They said thank you for giving us two hours to forget real life, and if you don't mind, stick around afterwards to talk about cinema," Nesher said. "It's very, very important, you know, to see movies... and to celebrate life and to celebrate Israel."

Nesher expressed concern at rising antisemitism in the Diaspora.

"I think it's really extraordinary how the Jews in the Diaspora support Israel, and I'm doing my humble duty to come and offer you some hope because I'm telling you we are going to win this war, one way or another," said Nesher, to thunderous applause.

A highlight of the the second weekend of the film festival was a Q and A with Tal Inbar, director of the documentary *Closed Circuit*. The film, produced by Nancy Spielberg, put the audience inside the 2016 terrorist attack at the Saron Market in Tel Aviv thanks to footage from multiple security cameras that was, shockingly, provided to Inbar by the lawyer representing the terrorists.

Closed Circuit features interviews with both Jews and Arabs who speak to the trauma and loss they continue to endure years after the Saron attack.

This and many other films selected for this year's festival resonated with even more intensity given current events in the Middle East.

On a more uplifting note, Israeli humanitarianism was the focus of *Hope Without Boundaries*, a documentary by Israeli filmmaker Itay Vered about a field hospital established and operated by Israel in Ukraine in the midst of Russia's continuing war of aggression. The remarkable story made this film a shoe-in for the 2023 Dr. Ralph Gurevitch *Tikkun Olam* screening.

Fittingly, the screening of the Australian documentary *The Narrow Bridge* was dedicated to Israeli peace activist Vivian Silver - originally from Winnipeg - who was, at the time, believed to have been among the hostages taken into captivity in Gaza by Hamas.

The Narrow Bridge explores the efforts of four bereaved Jews and Palestinians whose loved ones were killed due to acts of terror.

"False equivalencies are often made when discussing events in the Middle East, but the Jewish and Arab individuals we encounter in this film can truly claim equivalence," said Cyngiser.

United in their urgency to prevent others from experiencing similar losses, they - together with others similarly bereaved - are turning their grief into activism in the hope of building communities that might one day live side-by-side in peace.

It is a tragic irony that just one day after the screening of *The Narrow Bridge*, Vivian Silver was confirmed as having been among those brutally murdered at Kibbutz Be'eri on what is now commonly referred to as Black Sabbath.

In media interviews, Silver's son reiterated the family's resolve to honour his mother's legacy as a peacemaker. Among Vivian Silver's mourners is her brother, Calgarian Neil Silver, who, together with his wife Jemmie, is a long-time supporter of the Calgary Jewish Film Festival.

Murdered and missing Israelis were never far from the thoughts and prayers of those at the film festival, where a front row section of seats draped with Israeli flags formed a visual reminder of solidarity with the approximately 240 captives (a large number of whom had not been released by Hamas prior to press time). Images and names of the hostages remain front and centre in the lobby of Beth Tzedec with updates provided as the captives are released or, tragically, confirmed dead.

In the midst of grief for the obliterated and concern for those still languishing in Gaza, stories of great courage continue to be told. Two screenings at Film Festival reinforced the importance of resistance, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

On November 9, a special community-wide Kristallnacht screening of *Four Winters: A Story of Jewish Partisan Resistance and Bravery in World War II* - co-sponsored by the Calgary Jewish Federation - saw aged Holocaust survivors recounting in their own words their remarkable resourcefulness, courage and sheer will in resisting the Nazi beast in the forests of Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Belarus.

During a Q and A with Calgary Jewish Federation Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education Co-Chairs Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin, American director Julia Mintz shed further light on the remarkable bravery and resilience of the women and men depicted in her beautifully filmed documentary.

Sadly, many stories about resistance have gone untold and even suppressed. Fortunately, in recent years, much has come to light about the roles played by women in resisting the Nazis and their collaborators.

Such is the case in *Sabotage*, a hybrid film in which animation is used to vivify the diary entries of Anna Wajcblum Heilman who, at great personal risk, documented the roles played by four women, including her sister Estusia, in smuggling gunpowder to the men of the *Sonderkommando* (Jewish prisoners forced to work in the crematoria). The men staged a 1944 rebellion in Crematorium 4 at Auschwitz, rendering it unusable until the time the death camp was liberated on January 27, 1945.

It is ironic that the rebellion took place on October 7, exactly 79 years before the savage Hamas attacks in Southern Israel, where stories of brave resistance by Israeli civilians continue to emerge.

Fortunately, there was some emotional respite at this year's film fest, including lighthearted feature films and a special family screening of *Something from Nothing*, adapted from a much loved children's classic

20,000 Rally in Ottawa



Lazar, Polina and Gita Ersh from Calgary were among the 20,000 people who rallied in Ottawa on Dec. 4 to support Israel and call for the return of the hostages who were brutally abducted from Israel on Oct. 7. Photo supplied.

by author Phoebe Gillman, itself based on a Jewish folk tale.

Some 150 kids, parents and grandparents attended the screening which was co-sponsored by Calgary Jewish Federation and PJ Library and included a craft activity where kids tried their own hands at creating something from nothing.

"We were excited that so many young families came out for this program," said Harvey Cyngiser. "The future of the Jewish Film Festival depends on our ability to attract new generations of film lovers."

Just as important is the continuing generosity of a growing list of film festival sponsors, including some who this year made significant gifts in memory of Cyngiser's father Sidney, OBM, who passed away in June. It was a fitting memorial given Sid Cyngiser's delight in the vast range of Jewish experience explored annually at the film festival. He and his widow Bronia created an endowment many years ago that will continue to support the festival in perpetuity.

The 2023 annual Jewish film festival ended on a high note with the screening of *Without Precedent: The Supreme Life of Rosalie Abella*, this year's Dr. Martha Cohen Memorial Screening. Insightful and entertaining, *Without Precedent* recounts Abella's birth in a Stuttgart, Germany Displaced Persons camp, her family life, her distinguished career as a lawyer, her glass-ceiling-shattering appointments to the bench - including the Supreme Court of Canada - and her whimsical and joyful personal style.

The breathtaking diversity of Jewish life is the cornerstone of the Beth Tzedec Congregation Jewish Film Festival. This year was no exception, even with the challenges facing Israel and Diaspora Jewry, as Harvey Cyngiser underscored in his opening night welcome: "... to curtail Jewish cultural or educational activities, to put our Jewish communal life on hold, would be to surrender and hand a victory to terrorism and evil," said Cyngiser.

"By coming together here tonight, and throughout the festival, we affirm our commitment to our people, and we affirm that our Jewish community, Jewish values, Jewish culture, Jewish life as a whole - that we as a people - are alive, and enduring, and resilient, and in the face of adversity, we - and our beloved State of Israel - will prevail."

The sentiment applies equally in times of joy and times of sorrow. Cyngiser and his committee have their sights set on record-breaking crowds in 2024. As long as Jewish Calgarians continue to cherish the film festival and support it through ticket purchases and sponsorships, the future will be bright for Jewish Calgary's best-loved cultural and entertainment event.

For more information about the Beth Tzedec Congregation Jewish Film Festival, go to CalgaryJewishFilmFestival.com. To find out more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Beth Tzedec at info@bethtzedec.ca or 403-255-8688.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



Register for a New Semester of Homework Club & Shiluv: Learning Club

Our winter semester begins January 8!

Don't miss your opportunity to sign yourself and your family up for our after-school Homework Club and popular Shiluv classes for all ages.

Shiluv Classes

- ✔ STEM (Grades 1-6)
- ✔ Dance (Grades 1-6)
- ✔ Music (Grades 3-12)
- ✔ Martial Arts (Grades 1-12)
- ✔ Visual Arts (Youth & Adults)
- ✔ Yoga (Youth & Adults)
- ✔ Bimah Challenge (Teens & Adults)
- ✔ Judaism 201 (Adults)

Register online at BETHTZEDEC.CA



ALBERTA
Jewish News

Next print date is January 11, 2024

Next Deadline: January 9, 2024



A Yiddish scandal at the Timms Theatre in Edmonton

By Deborah Shatz

MFA directing candidate Ben Smith was a guest speaker during this year's Jewish Studies Week at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. His thesis project was staging the play *Indecent* at the Timms Theatre featuring his fellow students along with Temple Beth Ora (TBO) member actor Elena Porter and former Edmontonian, actor Dov Mickelson, performing multiple roles. Three talented Klezmer musicians were also featured prominently in the production.

On December 2, with the University of Alberta Drama Department, TBO co-hosted an incredible gala evening of theatre, live klezmer music and community support at the Timms Theatre. The theatre was full, and the Jewish community of Edmonton came out in droves to support TBO. The real star of the evening was without question the remarkable performance by the U of A Drama Department of the Pulitzer award winning play *Indecent*.

Indecent, written in 2017 by playwright Paula Vogel, tells the true story behind the production of *God of Vengeance*, a Yiddish play that was banned in New York in 1923 for depicting a lesbian relationship. It also covers the obscenity trial against the actors that followed and their determination, at great risk to themselves, to continue performing the play.

The play was staged beautifully, the choreography was precise, the music was magical, the chemistry between the ingenues Megan Holt and Aidan Laudersmith was palpable and their harmonies were gorgeous. The Yiddish was delightful and familiar. The timing in the play was brilliant, with the last scene of the play repeating over and over again – with locations appearing in print to depict the passage of time and venues.

Mickelson, a community favourite, commanded the stage throughout the play, reprising the multiple roles he performed in the Toronto production, expanded to include his magnificent role of lead actor Rudolph Schildkraut. He demonstrated an incredible range on stage, nuanced and mild, dismissive and arrogant, loud and forthright and nimble and energetic – each as required in the moment. His connections were seamless and powerful.

The play, *Indecent*, is many things: a portrait of Yiddish playwright Sholem Asch; a love story; a timely look at homo-phobia, artistic freedom and censorship, the power of the theatre, and a tale of the Jewish diaspora and the Holocaust.

The piece resonates deeply today in the aftermath of the Hamas brutal invasion of Israel on October 7, the ensuing war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas and the rising world-wide climate of antisemitism. North American diaspora Jews are feeling isolated, alone and “other” – more than ever before. Yet this play is a proud celebration of Yiddish storytelling.

Director Ben Smith told CKUA that “it’s a real gift to be directing this show.” He said that before proposing it to the University of Alberta as his thesis project he wrote to playwright Paula Vogel about whether it was appropriate for him – as someone who isn’t Jewish – to be staging the play. With her blessing and with help from the Edmonton Jewish community through cultural advisor Temple Beth Ora Rabbah Gila Caine, the project came alive. He said, “Really the University of Alberta and the Edmonton community has embraced bringing it to fruition. It’s been really incredible. The BFA acting class has been incredible and we brought in some amazing musicians from Toronto to be in the production’s klezmer band.”

Smith said that he had ongoing correspondences about the project but six days before they began rehearsing the play, on Oct. 7, the world changed. “It’s haunting to think of the context that changed since I began planning the project,” he said. “Never could I have imagined how important this play would be in this moment of time.

“This play makes so many significant contributions to right now in the present moment. While using the frame of a Jewish theatre troupe playing around the world, the play is about the freedom to love who you want, the freedom of expression, censorship, the impact of culture and religion, and of course storytelling and theatre in itself.”

“The play really asks us: can the forces of love, win over the forces of hate,” he added.

One hundred years later and the play is still pushing boundaries, explains Smith. When he was looking for a play to stage, *Indecent* was making headlines in the US. A high school in Florida was actually prohibited from performing the play by Florida’s Don’t Say Gay Bill.

“So here we are, telling a play ‘*Indecent*’ about ‘*God of Vengeance*’ – a play that was censored in 1923. So, in 2023, a play about censorship is being censored...We have so much work to do.”

The family connections within the play are strong and within the community they are also strong. Several descendants of Sholem Asch have special connections to Edmonton and to the U of A that made performing the play here even more special.

Actor Dov Mickelson, is a Talmud Torah, Camp BB-Riback alum and also has special connections with the Edmonton Jewish community.

“I love this play so much,” said Mickelson. “This is


the third time I’ve done it but my first time playing the elder character.” Mickelson, who lives in Toronto, plays a total of five different roles in the show.

“I’d heard they were looking for professional actors who were Jewish to act/mentor with the BFA students so I submitted my name and talked with the director who’s doing his MFA thesis on this show and felt it was a perfect fit. The bonus is I get to spend seven weeks with my dad,” he said.

“It’s a real labour of love.”




"Indecent" was performed in Edmonton from Dec. 1-9. U of A MFA student director Ben Smith staged the remarkable play as his thesis project. Photo UofA Drama Dept.




בס"ד

**PIONEERS - DONORS
- INVESTORS
- REAL ESTATE AGENTS!**



**Say
'YES KOSHER FRIENDSHIP
ALBERTA'**

- ACCOMMODATION AND HOSTING FOR VISITING LOVED ONES IN HOSPITAL (WALKING DISTANCE TO MISERICORDIA)
- KOSHER FOOD HAMPER PANTRY • FRIENDSHIP LOUNGE
- KOSHER KITCHEN • ISRAELI DECOR



CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION CAN OFFER TAX DEDUCTIBLE RECEIPTS

**Be part of
Edmonton JEWISH GROWTH
and HISTORY in the making**

780-483-1028

Lodz celebrates the life and works of Chava Rosenfarb

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

When one thinks of prominent writers associated with twentieth century Yiddish literature, names like Isaac Bashevis-Singer, Abraham Sutzkever, and Sholem Asch might come to mind. Canada has its own Yiddish literary gem to add to this constellation of literary glitterati: Chava Rosenfarb. Since Dr. Goldie Morgentaler, Professor Emerita from the University of Lethbridge, first received the news that her mother, the late Chava Rosenfarb OBM, would be honoured by the city of Lodz in Poland, the Canadian-born academic knew that 2023 would be a year of great significance not just for her family, but for many.

Morgentaler's literarily accomplished mother was born in Lodz in 1923, and this year marks the centennial of her birth. In a unanimous decision, the City Council of Lodz voted to declare 2023 the 'Year of Chava Rosenfarb.' Now, because of the dedication of Polish academic and journalist Joanna Podolska, Rosenfarb's works are widely available in Polish, and are being accessed by a larger readership in the country of the writer's birth. Morgentaler was her mother's English translator, and because of this, Canadian audiences are also able to engage with Rosenfarb's extensive oeuvre.

Goldie Morgentaler, who does not speak Polish, did not require any translation when she watched a video recording of the City Council of Lodz' unanimous vote and announcement that 2023 would be the 'Year of Chava Rosenfarb.' This historic step is not only significant as it acknowledges the literary legacy of an accomplished writer who immortalized her birthplace with texture and nuance, but because it also pays tribute to the Jewish spirit of Lodz that was lost when the Lodz Ghetto was liquidated.

Rosenfarb's trilogy novel *The Tree of Life* is a significant contribution to documenting life in the Lodz Ghetto (Book One: *On the Banks of the Precipice*, Book Two: *From the Depths*, Book Three: *The Cattle Cars Are Waiting*). In a recent phone interview with

the *Alberta Jewish News*, Morgentaler noted that: "Nothing will immerse you in the character of Lodz better than *The Tree of Life*."

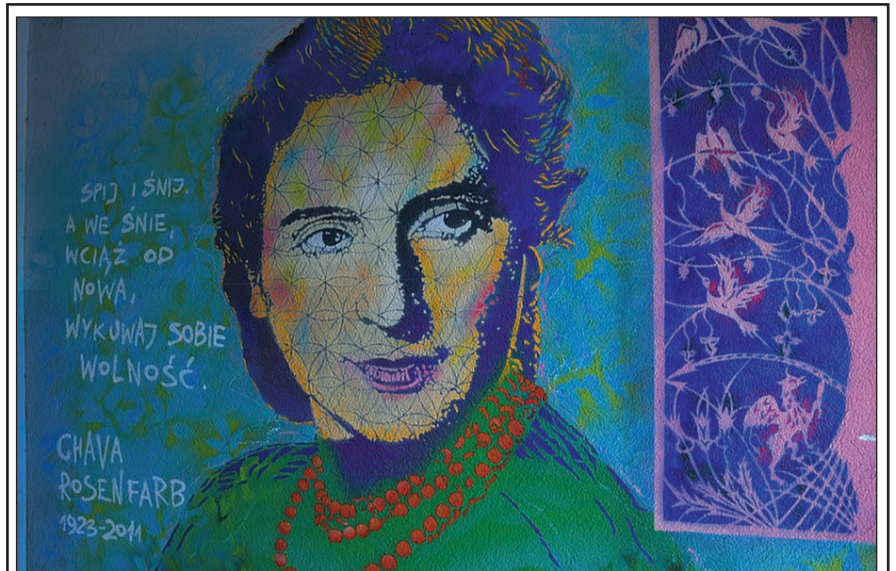
When Podolska first told Morgentaler that she wanted to have the three-volume novel translated to Polish, the career academic was skeptical of her new Polish acquaintance. Podolska has since had the three volumes translated with the help of grants she tirelessly pursued and has also become a lifelong friend of the family. "It was all Joanna," explained Morgentaler warmly. "The centennial, all of it. Joanna is relentless."

The 'Year of Chava Rosenfarb' was first reported by the *Alberta Jewish News* in February 2023, and as the year comes to a close, there are exciting things to take stock of. In October, Podolska and her colleagues from the University of Lodz and the Mark Edelman Dialogue Center organized an international conference to celebrate the works of Chava Rosenfarb and other Jewish women writers of the twentieth century. The event was exceptionally well attended with delegates from across Europe and the Americas. Sadly, a sizeable Israeli contingent of scholars were not able to attend because of the heinous modern day pogrom on October 7, where some 3000 Hamas terrorists massacred over 1200 people in Southern Israel and took over 230 as hostages. Despite the ensuing war in Gaza, a small number of Israelis were able to attend virtually.

Although Chava Rosenfarb called Canada home, her story began in Lodz – a world away from the Albertan prairies where she would spend her later years. The conference in her honour began with a walking tour of the Jewish community of Lodz. Very little remains to testify that this was once a thriving Jewish civilization aside from a sizeable Jewish cemetery that is being maintained, and a modern-day monument in recognition of those lost in the Shoah.

Podolska has made a professional crusade of preserving the Jewish history of Lodz, and Chava Rosenfarb has been a big part of this mission. She and her team had not anticipated the worldwide interest in the 'Year of Chava Rosenfarb' and conferences taking place in their not-so-glamorous industrial Polish city. When all the conference participants convened for the first evening of official programming, the Mark Edelman Dialogue Center auditorium was packed. Quite notably, there was a prominent cross Canada representation at the event including scholars from British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta.

The opening ceremonies were attended by dignitaries from the municipal government and distinguished faculty from the University of Lodz all with simultaneous Polish to English, and English to Polish



Stunning paintings of Chava Rosenfarb and her poetry adorned the walls at an International Conference that celebrated her life and her work, held in Lodz Poland. Photo supplied.

translation. The keynote was given by Dr. Goldie Morgentaler, with a touching tribute to her mother's legacy. In Morgentaler's speech she recalled heated discussions she would have with her mother over translation, and the sincerity and intimacy of her reminiscence made each attendee feel like they had been a fly on the wall. This was followed by Dr. Adele Reinhartz from the University of Ottawa speaking about her mother Henia Reinhartz OBM, Chava's younger sister who was also literarily gifted.

An address was then delivered by Mordecai Walfish, Reinhartz' son, who spoke about the work of his great-aunt Chava and grandmother Henia. These remarks culminated in a panel discussion with the family of Chava Rosenfarb, facilitated by Joanna Podolska. This was an exceptionally moving opportunity to see how first- and second-generation Shoah survivors process trauma and identity. Rosenfarb's son, Dr. Abraham Morgentaler admitted that traveling to Lodz was a voyage that he first undertook with much trepidation.

"I think that this conference would have been something my mother would have been very happy with," expressed Goldie Morgentaler during her post-conference interview. "I don't think the possibility of something like this would have ever entered her mind." The first evening ended with a concert featuring an original composition by Artur Zagajewski inspired by *The Tree of Life*. After returning to Canada, Morgentaler commented that: "My mother would have been touched to see that her work was reaching wider audiences."

There were two days of conference panels in both English and Polish. Even displaced from their homes, some Israeli scholars managed to deliver their conference papers virtually: a moving testament to the universal power of literature and the unbreakable Jewish spirit. On the final day of the conference, a very excited, but secretive, Joanna Podolska insisted that attendees gather following the last panels of the event. In a surprise presentation, on a miserably cold and drizzly Lodz afternoon, a street in the city was renamed in honour of Chava Rosenfarb.

After surviving the dehumanization of ghettoization in Lodz, it is a poignant and reflective moment to realize that the name Chava Rosenfarb will now indelibly live on in the city's day-to-day goings on.

"I think that this conference was possible because *The Tree of Life* was translated," commented Morgentaler when reflecting on the popularity of her mother's works. What began as a conversation about translation so many years ago, has now undoubtedly evolved. "When the Polish translations of her works began to materialize, my mother was already gone."

Chava Rosenfarb had always hoped to have her works be available to the English-speaking world, and wider Western audiences, and if October's conference is any indication, her dreams have come to fruition. The writings of this Canadian-Yiddish author are being taught and studied around the world. Shoah memory preservation is more important than ever as has been made abundantly clear in recent months. Rosenfarb loved Yiddish, and this was her language of inspiration and creation. Although not all Canadians are able to enjoy her works in their original splendor, her name is a part of the Canadian literary canon and is a valuable testimony of survivor memory.

Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

REGISTRATION AND HIRING IS NOW OPEN FOR SUMMER OF 2024

Work Weekend: June 22 - 26 • July Session: July 7 - 28

August Session: July 31 - Aug. 14

Wonder Week: July 31 - Aug. 8 • Wonder Weekend Aug. 7 - 11



Activities include: Sports, Waterskiing, High Ropes, Zip Line, Horseback Riding, Swimming Pool, Jewish Culture, Leadership Training, Inclusion, Filmmaking and so much more!

For full details visit www.campbb.com or email info@campbb.com

Check out our community calendar at jewishedmonton.org

The Hub

Your bridge to Jewish Edmonton



A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

This month, I learned a new Hebrew phrase, 'Hovah' meaning obligation. For some, an obligation is a mere duty, yet it was one that I felt in my heart and soul. Standing in the ruins of Kfar Azza this past month, I was struck by the sacred nature of obligation—of standing with Israel in her greatest need while simultaneously ensuring that we as a Jewish community remain strong and connected as we move forward.

The past two months have been a whirlwind of unplanned activity, all core to our mission. With a strong United Jewish Appeal campaign to ensure we meet the needs of our local community, we have additionally raised funds to address immediate and longer-term needs of Israelis impacted by the atrocities across the country. In Edmonton, we dealt with matters of security, meeting regularly with law enforcement partners, including Edmonton Police Service, RCMP, and Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Engaging in advocacy meetings across the political spectrum, at all levels of government, has kept us busy. We continue to support children and families facing antisemitism in schools and on campus and represent Jewish

Edmonton in conversations with the Edmonton Public School Board and University of Alberta. We have taken part in the Government of Alberta announcements mandating Holocaust Education, and expansion of the provincial security grant program. Consul General Idit Shamir visited Edmonton and met with community leaders for candid conversations. Connecting to and supporting Israel, we meet regularly with professional staff and volunteer counterparts from our partnership region. We have organized multiple events to support one another and worked with Jewish Family Services to expand their counselling and workshops to help the community in our time of grief and pain.

This historical moment is an opportunity to both rebuild and strengthen. While this may look very different in Edmonton versus Israel, we are finely interwoven, which has become that much more apparent to us and to our Israeli counterparts. While we worry about their physical and psychological safety, they are witnessing a mainstreaming of antisemitism abroad and they worry about us. It is a privilege for me to work with our local leaders to ensure

that we continue to have strong Jewish identities and presence, building upon the generations that came before us.

There was a sizeable showing at the Jewish Federation's annual general meeting with a landslide vote to move forward with the community centre project. This is an opportunity to establish a central home for our Jewish community, a place of connection with one another and to anchor us with a physical presence within greater Edmonton. No matter where you place yourself across the Jewish spectrum of affiliation, this new space is for you. Whether you are new to Edmonton or have been here for 20 years, you will have a place to connect with the Jewish community, and we will welcome you. We will continue to engage you and keep you informed of the steps being taken to develop this building.

As I write this message, there are still 120 people who remain hostage in Gaza. I pray for their immediate release, while praying for the safety of our Israel Defense Force soldiers. Wishing all of you love and light as we enter 2024.

Reach out to us on social media or by emailing info@edjfed.org.

DEADLINE JANUARY 15

Seeking young adults for Genesis Leadership Program

Invest in your future as a community leader.

Contact Jacqueline at jmedalye@edjfed.org for more information.

DROP-IN GYM TIME

Open play time for families with young children

Two Sundays each month
9:30-11:30 a.m.
Talmud Torah School Gymnasium
\$54 per family for the entire season
Register at jewishedmonton.org

January 7	PJ Library*
January 21	Shalom Baby
February 4	PJ Library*
February 18	Shalom Baby
March 10	PJ Library*
March 24	Shalom Baby
April 14	PJ Library*
April 28	Shalom Baby

*Additional PJ Library programming once a month as indicated

Interested in hosting a mezuzah making workshop?

We have a microgrant for that! Apply today at jewishedmonton.org

Up to \$1,800 available

Jewish experience microgrants to power your ideas!

Funded by the Government of Canada's Community Services Recovery Fund

I Believe...

Please join us in supporting the 2023/24 UJA campaign to sustain thriving and secure Jewish life in Edmonton, Israel, and around the world.



Josh Raizman
Co-Chair, United Jewish Appeal Campaign
Clinical Biochemist
UJA donor



Farrel Shadlyn, KC
Co-Chair, United Jewish Appeal Campaign +
Lawyer +
UJA donor



Focus on Insurance

Calgary Chevra Kadisha Q&A

By Harold Lipton and Susan Dvorkin

The following are some questions that have been directed to the Calgary Chevra Kadisha – and answers.

I recently buried a loved one, and on the invoice from Chevra Kadisha, was an item labelled “perpetual care.” What does that mean?

Our condolences on your loss. The Chevra Kadisha carries an ongoing responsibility to respect the deceased buried in its cemeteries and to provide ongoing comfort to mourning relatives and friends. This includes keeping the cemetery grounds in a proper and presentable condition, e.g. mowing and trimming lawns, pruning shrubbery, snow removal, maintenance of “common” space such as sidewalks, retaining walls, and fences. It does not include repairs or maintenance of grave monuments which is the responsibility of the family. Erlton Cemetery is now considered full in that no more plots are expected to be sold, but the cost of maintaining the grounds will continue indefinitely and must be covered in a different way. The Chevra Kadisha has set aside funds in an account which is invested securely. The proceeds of these investments will cover the maintenance of Erlton Cemetery in perpetuity. A portion of every funeral charge is deposited into this account. The Chevra Kadisha has been doing this for many years, only now, we clearly label on each invoice how much is set aside for perpetual care.

I am on the Chevra Kadisha funeral notice list, and I receive an email announcing each funeral. However, the notices don't mention surviving family members. Why is that? I want to know who the extended family is so I can pay my respects appropriately.

Our funeral notice announcements contain only details of a scheduled funeral. Surviving family members are usually named in an obituary which we do not publish for several reasons. Some bereaved families do not want this information published. A funeral is arranged very quickly after a passing in accordance with Jewish law and tradition. There is much to be arranged and we do not press the family to immediately write an obituary. There is also not enough time to obtain the permission of family members to publish their names. We also want to avoid inadvertently omitting a family member

which could be easy to do amid the stress of a passing, or when there is, unfortunately, a division within a family.

I have a relative whose health is declining. How do I make arrangements?

We are sorry this is a difficult time for you. If your loved one has pre-purchased a plot, there is nothing you need to do until your relative has passed. Once they have passed, please call (403) 244-4717. This line is open 24/7 and will be answered either by our office staff or the McInnis & Holloway answering service. Our funeral planner will then be notified, and arrangements will be made to bring your loved one to the Chevra to be kept in our care until burial. Our funeral planner will be in touch with you shortly after notification (if during the day), early the next morning or after the conclusion of Shabbat or Festival to arrange a meeting with the family members to make arrangements.

I know Jewish practice is to bury as soon as possible but I've noticed at times there is a delay of a few days. Why is that?

You are correct that Jewish practice is to bury as soon as possible and the Chevra does its utmost to fulfill that practice. However, there are occasions where there has to be a delay in burial, and we fully appreciate the distress this causes to the mourning family. As a small Jewish community, we rely on third party contractors for opening graves for burial. While we have an arrangement in place for a 24 hour turnaround, multiple deaths, sub-zero weather, or Shabbat/Festivals may cause additional delays in the funeral. Additionally, there are times where family members are travelling to Calgary for the funeral, and we try to accommodate a family's request to wait until they arrive if at all possible.

I have read that cremation is becoming more popular and may be a more environmentally friendly form of burial. Will that lead to a change in Chevra practice?

It is true that cremations have become more popular in North America. However, there are contradictory opinions on whether cremation is more environmentally friendly as the energy required to complete the cremation leaves a sizeable carbon footprint. The traditional Jewish practices of burial are

Jewish Book Festival



Local author Linda Gutman read from her delightful book "Just Nana and Me" as part of the Calgary Jewish Book Festival at the JCC on Dec. 1. (JCC Facebook photo).

actually considered among the most environmentally friendly types of burial. In any case, cremation is still clearly against traditional Jewish law and practice and there will be no change in the policies of the Chevra Kadisha.

I want to volunteer for Chevra but don't know how to help. The idea of death scares me.

We appreciate your interest in volunteering for the society. There are a number of volunteer activities that you could be involved in that would not expose you to any deceased member of our community that is in our care. We are always happy to have volunteers (women) to join our sewing group that prepares the tachrichim (shrouds) used to prepare the deceased. Both men and women (depending on the denomination) can be called upon to participate in making up a minyan at a funeral for someone who does not have enough family/friends to do so and in doing that, the mitzvah of a saying kaddish for the deceased can take place. Additionally, special knowledge of IT, legal, accounting or HR are always welcome on one of our committees or on the Board of Directors should there be a vacancy.

I attended a non-Jewish funeral with an open casket viewing which seemed to be a nice way to say goodbye. Can I request that too?

Jewish practice when it comes to death is to prepare the deceased for their journey to their final resting place. This involves the act of Tahara, where the deceased is ritually washed and dressed in white burial shrouds prior to being placed in the casket. The reason for this simple dress is to avoid distinguishing between rich or poor, and Jewish law does not involve embalming or dressing a deceased in good clothes for viewing and discourages an open casket. Jewish tradition encourages us to remember our loved ones as they were, not as they appear now. It is for this reason that we do not practice open casket viewing.

Several people I have spoken to say that you cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery if you have a tattoo. Is that correct?

That is an urban myth. While it is the case that Jewish tradition discourages tattoos, it does not disqualify anyone from a Jewish burial.

I have a non-Jewish partner. Can we be buried beside each other in the Jewish cemetery?

Continued on page 12



**WILSON M. BECK INSURANCE
ALBERTA**

You: Best in the Business
We : Best In Insurance & Surety
Let's Connect This Festive Season

We Care We Help

#construction #hospitality #realestate #oilandgas



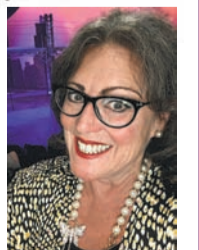
403.228.5888 wmbcalgary@wmbeck.com

Flo's Vocal Arts Studio



Florence Shustack BScOt
403.397.6737

- * Singing Lessons
- * Therapeutic Voicework
- * Vocal Performance Coaching



Facebook @ Flo's Vocal Arts Studio
florencesinger@shaw.ca • www.vocal-arts-studio.com

"Changing Lives... One Voice at a Time"

Eisenhower's granddaughter will speak to Albertans on January 25

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter.

The Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower - who later served as President of the United States - demonstrated a keen understanding of the human capacity to generate "alternate facts."

When Eisenhower heard of the atrocities at Ohrdruf - a sub-camp of Buchenwald and the first concentration camp to be liberated by American troops following World War II - he felt a powerful need to see things with his own eyes. Eight days after the April 4, 1945 liberation of the camp, he arrived there, meeting with General George S. Patton and General Omar Bradley. The next day he saw the horrific aftermath in Buchenwald.

Immediately grasping that the evil deeds of the Nazis would one day be minimized or outright denied, Eisenhower sent a letter to General George C. Marshall, then head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. In part it read:

"While I was touring the camp I encountered three men who had been inmates and by one ruse or another had made their escape. I interviewed them through an interpreter. The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so."

Eisenhower subsequently sent a cable to General Marshall, urging that arrangements be made to fly Members of Congress and journalists to Europe so that they could witness and document the carnage. The plan was approved by the Secretary of War and the President of the United States, ensuring documentation of deprivation, torture and genocide that continue - as Eisenhower said in his letter - to "beggar description."

On January 25, the Calgary Jewish Federation Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education department will once again team up with the Calgary Public Library, in partnership with Jewish Federation of Edmonton and Edmonton Public Library to explore Eisenhower's inspiring legacy during a virtual talk with his granddaughter Susan Eisenhower, author of *How Ike Led: The Principles Behind Eisenhower's Biggest Decisions*.

"She has written a compelling story," said Jared

Shore, former co-president of Calgary Jewish Federation and the moderator of the online event.

"Dwight Eisenhower had the foresight at an emotionally charged time to say we need to document this for the future. That compulsion was so important and has proven even more important as time marches on," Shore told *AJNews*.

Susan Eisenhower, a respected policy analyst, business consultant, educator, speaker and writer whose specialties include national security, leadership and related strategic issues, will speak about what her grandfather saw in the concentration camps and what antisemitism looks like today.

Also compelling are Susan Eisenhower's insights into the leadership style of her grandfather, the heart and soul of her book, published in 2020 to national and international acclaim.

"The book speaks to who he was as a leader," said Shore, from Ike's military leadership to his presidency of Columbia University, his command of NATO and, eventually, his service as president of the United States between 1953 and 1961.

"We cannot take leadership for granted," said Shore, who closely followed the recent US congressional hearings on antisemitism at Ivy League colleges.

It is easy to imagine Dwight D. Eisenhower turning in his grave at the lack of moral clarity demonstrated by leaders at Ivy League schools, notably Harvard President Claudine Gay, MIT President Sally Kornbluth and University of Pennsylvania President Elizabeth Magill, who subsequently resigned from her position.

"People we count on for moral leadership have utterly failed," said Shore.

In an October 18 article in the *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent*, historian Gil Troy had already called out the "tepid" responses of Ivy League leaders to skyrocketing expressions of antisemitism on their campuses as "the silence of the tenured lambs," said Shore, adding that the expression resonated with him.



General Eisenhower meets paratroopers in England, prior to their boarding for the invasion, June 5, 1944. (U.S. Army). From "How Ike Led" by Susan Eisenhower.

By contrast, said Shore, "Ike was such an inspiring leader, who often put his political life on the line because of what he believed in."

In the pages of her book, Susan Eisenhower paints the picture of a man to whom character mattered. Billed as "part leadership book, part history, and part memoir," it gives insight into a man who, while a Republican, was uniquely non-partisan, always aiming for middle ground.

Susan Eisenhower has described her grandfather as fearing the time when "...extremes on the left and the right would dominate the public space."

These eerily prescient insights are reason enough to register for the talk by Susan Eisenhower, whose exploration of her beloved grandfather's legacy is a much-needed tonic in a world that is more and more given to extremes and less and less discerning when it comes to leadership.

"The relevance today is so apparent," says Shore. "We as Canadians need to be aware of and concerned about matters of leadership. Expectations of our leaders is something this talk will shed some light on."

Never Again: International Holocaust Remembrance Day with Susan Eisenhower takes place virtually on January 25 from 7-8:30 pm MST. To register, visit [Eventbrite.ca](https://www.eventbrite.ca).

Somerville Memorials LTD.

Calgary's only Jewish monument supplier
Highest quality granite. Best price guaranteed.

Visit our showroom at:
7134R Fisher Street. S.E.
Calgary, Alberta

AM YISRAEL CHAI
עם ישראל חי



Lorne Tucker
Phone: (403) 265-0780
Email: lornetucker@shaw.ca

www.somervillememorials.com

JFSC presents:
"Betting on a Better World"
Fun Money Casino



For more information:






Thursday February 8, 2024 | Beth Tzedec
Synagogue | 6:30-10:00 pm


Sponsorship opportunities - contact Lynn at lynnt@jfsc.org

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY NEVER AGAIN VIRTUAL PROGRAM WITH SUSAN EISENHOWER



THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024 | 7:00 - 8:30 PM



In recognition of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, please join author and educator, Susan Eisenhower, as she discusses what her grandfather, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, saw first-hand in the concentration camps at liberation in 1945. She will explore what antisemitism looks like today and how never again is now.



HOLOCAUST AND HUMAN RIGHTS
Remembrance and Education

THIS PROGRAM IS SUPPORTED BY

The Isadore and Florence Burstyn Memorial Fund for Human Rights & Holocaust Education

KSW Calgary Holocaust Education & Commemoration Endowment Fund

Viewpoint Foundation

Human Rights and Holocaust Education Fund at the Calgary Public Library Foundation

Register at: bit.ly/neveragain_ihrd2024 or scan QR code




Photo credit:
Robert Iseni

community calendar

Want to know what's going on in Jewish Calgary? Check out the Community Calendar at jewishcalgary.org

Have an event? Click on "Suggest an Event" to add it to the calendar



jewishcalgary.org



A MESSAGE FROM ADAM SILVER

As we approach the end of 2023, many of us set our sights on 2024 even with a few weeks remaining in the year. On the one hand, we try to draw out the last few weeks of December, and on the other, we aim to turn our calendars to January 1, 2024, so that we reboot, course correct, and start anew.

For some of us, the fall is a time during which we not only celebrate our Jewish new year and reboot in the form of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, but we note that we have limited time in the secular year to fulfill last year's resolutions. During the last third of 2023 in particular, we experienced the horrific acts of Hamas on October 7, a point in history which became the focus of much of, if not all of, our energy, worry, and actions.

on us, or have even joined in the attacks on Jews and on Israel. We have, no doubt, felt the vitriol and hate of those whom we don't know, those who wait for the demise of the Jewish people, and those who actively seek to do us harm.

During these dark days, I have continued to see members of our community hide various parts of their Jewish identities. It is, in fact, understandable that out of fear people might remove their mezuzot, hide their Magen David necklaces, and kept their Chanukiot away from their window this Chanukah to protect themselves or not draw attention to their families.

Remaining sensitive to members of our community who are unsettled, fearful, and in need of support, I would like to suggest that our resolutions for 2024 should focus on doing MORE of what we are doing, and less on changing current or beginning new habits.

That is, in the face of fear and concern in a very dark world right now, I hope we will promise ourselves to continue to participate in Jewish Calgary even more this year, not less. I hope we will live proud Jewish lives, attend programs and events, and consistently gather in record numbers as a community. It would be easy for us to note all of our missteps and things we wish to change for the coming year. Instead, I hope we will find the courage and pride to stand in the face of growing antisemitism and sickening rhetoric, and leverage the response we have found over the last few months to stand tall, stand proud, and stand together. I hope you will join me in 2024 to focus less on what we shouldn't be doing, and more on continuing to do what has been in us all along.

Wishing everyone a safe and enjoyable end to 2023 and a meaningful and committed start to 2024.

B'Shalom,

Adam Silver

Adam Silver CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

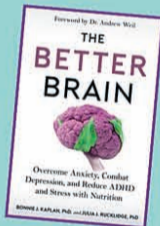
Building an inclusive community is a priority. Contact us and we will make every effort to meet your needs.

SAVE THE DATES FOR JDAIM AND JOIN CALGARY JEWISH FEDERATION AS WE RECOGNIZE THIS SPECIAL MONTH!



YOUR BRAIN ON FOOD: CULTIVATING WELLNESS AND A PEACEFUL HOME

Sunday, February 4 3-5PM | Paperny Family JCC



Join us in the exploration of a paradigm-shifting approach to preventing and improving moodiness, stress, behaviour, meltdowns, and more. Learn different ways to harness the transformative power of food and nutrients. Renowned scientist and author Bonnie Kaplan will share pioneering research, with an emphasis on practical tools to enrich your mental health and bring peace to your home, one bite at a time. Healthy snacks and childcare provided.



NORMAL SCHMORMAL!

Sunday, February 25 3-5PM | Paperny Family JCC



Join us for a stand-up comedy event, where Ashley Blaker will share the challenges and joys of parenting children with additional needs, and inspire us all and make us all feel "Normal Schmormal". Childcare provided, plus fun activities for the kids - Lego, art, and more! This is a family-friendly experience you won't want to miss!



REGISTER FOR FREE WITH KARINA KARINAS@JEWISHCALGARY.ORG 403-444-3158

JEWISH CALGARY Support Network advertisement featuring photos of people sitting in a circle and logos for bbyo, Hillel CALGARY, JCC CALGARY, and POWERED BY CALGARY JEWISH FEDERATION.

THURSDAYS • 6:30PM • JCC TEEN LOUNGE

OPEN TO ALL HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

SNACKS PROVIDED

REGISTER AT QR CODE OR EMAIL HANNAH GIESINGER: HGIESINGER@JEWISHCALGARY.ORG



ISRAEL EMERGENCY FUND

DONATE TODAY AT QR CODE OR JEWISHCALGARY.ORG



RAISED TO DATE: \$3.29 MILLION



It's Moments Like This

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



It's Moments Like This. Calgary Jewish Federation has been providing support in every type of Jewish moment – in times of crisis and in times of calm, we are building community and changing lives.

Your support is vital. Without it, we could not continue to be there, day in and day out, ensuring moments that are not only life-changing but life-saving. Your donation enables us to continue building, strengthening, and protecting our Jewish community.

HELP US REACH OUR CAMPAIGN GOAL OF: **\$2.55 MILLION**



It's Moments Like This

When everyone feels part of our community.

Ensuring engagement well into adulthood is critical to the strength and longevity of our community.



When they feel connected.

Jewish Calgary welcomes, accepts, and celebrates everyone. From helping individuals with disabilities to ensuring events, programs, and services are accessible for all.

Ways to Give



Online jewishcalgary.org
Phone 403.444.3157
Email lwolf@jewishcalgary.org
In-person 1607 90 Avenue SW

Together with our partners we're building and supporting a safe, equitable, inclusive, and healthy Jewish community.



LEARN HOW YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR OWN JEWISH LEGACY

Life & Legacy

ASSURE JEWISH TOMORROWS

BE REMEMBERED FOREVER IN OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY WITH A GIFT IN YOUR WILL, TRUST, OR LIFE INSURANCE POLICY



- CREATE YOUR JEWISH LEGACY -

Contact Diana Kalef
403-444-3154 • dkalef@jewishcalgary.org



Light, Love and Latkes at TT

By Natalie Soroka

Hanukkah is always an exciting and delicious time at TT! The week leading up to Hanukkah began with the smells of sufganyot and latkes wafting through the hallways, thanks to our children and educators in the Talmud Torah Early Learning Centre (ELC). They couldn't wait to dive into the glow of the holiday, using all their senses to embrace Hanukkah in all its glory!

Our brand new ELC *Ivrit b'Yachad* program - Hebrew Together, targeting our three and four-year-olds, saw the educators focusing on many different activities for Hanukkah. The children participated in an ELC-wide initiative to create a single, massive dreidel, they learned how to pronounce the letter chet, and they focused on words related to Hanukkah, such as *sufganiyah* - doughnut, *sevivon* - dreidel, and *cad schumann* - oil jug. The children delighted in prepared foods related to Hanukkah, including dreidel-shaped cookies, doughnuts, and *levivot* -latkes. They were very excited to understand that the Hebrew words they were learning related to their classroom activities.

All ELC rooms, from 12 months to 5 years, engaged in a variety of activities. The children learned the story of Hanukkah, the traditions and foods that make it special, and sang songs like *I Have a Little Dreidel*. They learned that the helper candle, the *shamash*, lights all the other candles, and they explored a variety of Hanukkiah, pretending to light each candle. There were discussions on the importance of oil in the story of Hanukkah, that latkes are cooked in oil, and how a small amount of oil miraculously lasted eight days and nights.

Students in the Out of School Care (OSC) program (K-6) loved practicing their Hanukkah songs and dances that they performed with everyone at the "Latkes and Laughter" ELC and OSC Hanukkah Party. They made their own hanukkiah using wood and bolts, and *Magen Davids* - Shields of David - using popsicle sticks, paint, glitter and glue. Our youngest students had the opportunity to explore a wooden Hanukkah playset, including *gelt* - toy money and a dreidel. The children were very curious about all the different pieces and enjoyed moving the items around and trying to fit them together.

Of course, our K-6 students were just as excited to participate in Hanukkah learning and activities. Grade 4 students crafted magnificent stained-glass menorahs, while grade one students created whimsical

dancing dreidels that lined the hallways. The ever-popular, giant blow-up Hanukkah bear in the front foyer was a big hit, and many children and their parents could be seen taking pictures with it. The school office and hallways were decked out with Hanukkah banners and Hanukkiahs, while the school's very large, electric *menorah* was prominently displayed in the library. Each morning, the whole school, ages 12 months to 12 years, along with staff, teachers and educators, gathered around the library, while different grades "lit" the menorah. Songs of Hanukkah filled the air, and our TT family glowed bright with Jewish pride.

Our TT student choir was once again invited to Chabad of Edmonton's Hanukkah lighting at the Alberta legislature, where TT's own Ben Ragosin led them in a performance of Hanukkah songs for everyone in attendance, including politicians, family and friends.

Back at school, Ari the lion, Talmud Torah Society's mascot, went class to class greeting students, and distributing chocolate *gelt*, dreidel cookies (courtesy of Bliss Baked Goods) and dreidels! Ari the mascot was very excited to see students' smiling faces and to receive hugs and high fives. Ari was designed and created by Edmonton-based International Mascot, and was generously donated by Mike Schayer (TT class of '91) and Ken Soroka (TT class of '69).

The "Latkes and Laughter" ELC & OSC Hanukkah Party was a big hit! The school kitchen worked overtime as latkes, pasta dishes and salads were prepared throughout the day. Accompanied by doughnuts from Bliss Baked Goods, the food was enjoyed by all! To keep the children busy, a baby play area with balls and an activity centre were available, along with a blocks/manipulative table, photo booth, face painting and tattoo stations, and an arts and craft area. The children and families got a real chuckle out of the video that included songs and dances performed by each ELC and OSC class. Ari the mascot made an appearance, to the delight of many, and enjoyed having pictures



TT students light the electric Hanukkah in the school library.

taken with kids and parents alike!

A school-wide (K-6) assembly rounded out the eight days of Hanukkah. Grade 4 students took the lead starting with a land acknowledgement, and invited all to rise for the singing of Canada's national anthem. Grade 4 students lit the Hanukkiah at the front of the gym, while the entire school recited the brachot - blessings. With all eight candles shining bright, it was a magical moment of love and light.

The next part of the assembly was very powerful. Five grade 4 students spoke about how Hanukkah this year has been "hard to celebrate," as there has been much darkness in Israel and around the world. But with all this darkness, they stated, we will rise and "bring the light." Students then sang a beautiful Hebrew song titled *Katan Aleinu*, with their teacher Moreh Ari on guitar. Kindergarteners sang, *Sevivon Sov Sov Sov*, as well as *La Bambanukah* with their grade 6 buddies.

The classic, *Imi Natna Leviva Li* and *Eight Days of Hanukkah-Eight Happy Nights*, were sung proudly by our grade 1 students, while grade 2 sang *Omer Toledano*. The grade 5/6 class delivered a stellar performance of *Ha Nerot Ha Lulu* on their ukuleles, and our grade 3 students sang *Yesh Bi Ahava*. To round out the assembly, our very own TT choir sang several Hanukkah songs and lead the entire school in the meaningful singing of *HaTikvah*, Israel's national anthem.



Talmud Torah Early Learning Centre



Child care & learning through play in a safe, nurturing, inclusive environment

Using the Alberta Early Learning Curriculum (FLIGHT), we introduce children to Hebrew language, Jewish values, customs & traditions

A place where children explore, learn and grow to their fullest potential

Full & part time options
7:00 AM - 5:45 PM
Ages 12 months - 5 yrs

Book a Tour Today!
Director: Sacha Brodie
sachabrodie@talmudtorahsociety.com
780-483-0170
6320 172 Street NW, Edmonton



WE WISH YOU A

Happy New Year!

2024




MRU 'Reflector' editors right a wrong

By Regan Treewater, LJI Reporter

On November 23, students at Mount Royal University (MRU), were confronted by a rather shocking school publication being distributed widely in the newsstands on campus. The front cover depicted a large protest sign, Palestinian flag, and bloodied handprint. This haltingly prejudiced image on the front of every issue of *The Reflector*, was followed by three pages of articles voicing one-sided support for Palestine, denigration of Israel, and numerous factual misrepresentations. "I was immediately disturbed and upset when I saw it," explained Kayla Rzepa in a recent interview with *Alberta Jewish News*. "Things have become uncomfortable on campus since October 7, but this was blatantly hostile to Jews."

Rzepa has never hidden her Jewish identity from her peers and professors at MRU. "I'm vocal about my support of Israel on all my social media platforms," she stated with conviction. "I have always been open about being Jewish; I've never hidden it, and since October 7, I can feel and see how people look at me differently."

Rzepa has not been directly targeted or confronted by her peers outright, but 'friends' that she once associated with at school have abruptly stopped speaking with her. "Overnight a bunch of people unfriended me, and it hurt because they didn't even want to have a discussion with me; they just immediately saw me as a Jew, and even though they aren't particularly informed about what's going on, they didn't want anything to do with me anymore." Rzepa is not losing sleep over the reactions of these individuals, but seeing a publication that represents the student body of MRU disseminating hate and aggression was more than she could handle. "I went home and showed it to my parents right away."

Rzepa's parents' priority was to try to ensure their daughter felt safe and supported above all else. "We wanted to make sure that Kayla was okay and that any action she would take would be something coming from her own convictions," expressed her stepfather, Don Schapira - a professional mediator and longtime Holocaust educator. He was certainly upset to see a school newspaper voicing such sentiments, but: "I knew that it wasn't like I could go in there as a concerned Jewish resident of Calgary. Whatever action would be taken needed to be Kayla's."

The twenty-year-old public relations, third-year student at MRU was quick to action, messaging her Jewish chat group. "It's a chat that includes about twenty or so Jewish MRU students. Some people participate more than others, but I thought that they needed to know what *The Reflector* had printed. I felt unsafe, and I was pretty sure they would feel unsafe too." She also took the bold step of seeking out the chief editor of *The Reflector* on Instagram. "I messaged her privately, and she wrote back almost right away," Rzepa recalled. "I made sure that I wasn't being confrontational. I just wanted *The Reflector* staff to know how hurtful this issue of the paper was for

Jewish students."

Through her Jewish student chat, Rzepa was able to connect with three other students who were interested in exploring options for dialog with *The Reflector's* editorial staff. "They are mostly journalism students, as are the three contributors who were spouting so much anti-Israel propaganda," explained Rzepa. "For a 'journalist' this sort of obvious bias didn't seem right to me."

Since her stepfather is a mediator by profession, Rzepa and her fellow students decided to enlist his help to get ready for a prearranged meeting with *The Reflector's* editors. "I was there only to support the girls," explained Schapira. "This was their discussion to have, and *The Reflector* needed to hear from them. We all agreed that this meeting needed to be about fostering dialog and having a conversation, not about confrontation." Schapira went on to elaborate that the four students were unanimous that their goal with the meeting was not to convince *The Reflector's* staff to become Zionists, but to turn them into allies. "Being an ally is different than being a Zionist. It's about acknowledging the Jewish people's right to feeling safe and respected," Schapira concluded.

In a truly admirable reaction to each of the students candidly talking about their experiences on campus since October 7, *The Reflector's* editorial staff was truly moved and deeply apologetic. "We knew that the editorial staff probably wasn't acting out of deep antisemitism, but out of a lack of information and overall understanding," said Schapira compassionately. "They were so receptive to listening and making a sincere effort to understand us," elaborated Rzepa.

The editors agreed that their coverage was one-sided and inflammatory. Instead of reporting objectively, the three articles published, as well as the image on the cover, served to divide and polarize rather than deliver accurate reporting. They issued and circulated a public statement: "*The Reflector* staff feels that our coverage of the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Nov. 23, 2023, issue lacked balance and accuracy. To that end, in this issue we are providing coverage focusing on the other perspective of the conflict. We would also like to stress that our newspaper does not condone acts of hatred towards any group - especially now towards either the Israeli/Jewish community and/or the Palestinian/Arab community. We would like to thank our readers and community members for continuing to provide us with depth and nuance regarding important cultural perspectives. It is our goal to continue learning and informing ourselves here at *The Reflector*. Our thoughts are with those who have been personally affected by the Israel-Hamas conflict."

Chanukah in YYC



Chanukah was celebrated joyfully across the community with an array of programs for different groups, ages, and stages. Photos by CJF.

The public acknowledgement went a long way towards helping Jewish students feel that their school newspaper truly reflected them as well. To this end, Rzepa and the other students were asked to write articles for the next issue of *The Reflector* to balance out the damage caused by the November 23 edition. "It was the end of the semester and so it was such a busy time for all of us. *The Reflector* gave us extra time to prepare our articles for publication. I was up all night polishing mine," said Rzepa clearly exhausted from a week of final examinations and work. "We all knew that this was an opportunity to be heard, and we felt adding our voices was so important to bringing clarity and facts to the story that had already been put out."

On December 7 Rzepa's article "Debunking False Narratives Against the State of Israel" was printed by *The Reflector*. The issue hit the stands the next day, and the last day of classes was on Dec. 11, but: "they also posted all four of our articles online, so this is going to reach a larger audience," said Rzepa. "There has been vandalism on campus and the attitude towards Jewish students is hostile. I think we are all hoping that giving people more accurate information is going to help," she concluded.

The Reflector's editorial staff is made up of MRU students. Their ownership of their professional error and quick action is an indication that they will be responsible and ethical journalists should they later choose to pursue this path.

ADAM SINGER, M.A., LL.B.
Divorce & Family Law

(403) 476-0153
asinger@wilcraft.com
www.wilcraft.com

650, 211 - 11 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB, T2R 0C6

WILSON LAYCRAFT

First Call Cemetery Monuments Ltd.
Chevra Kadisha Approved Supplier

Serving: 37th Street Cemetery - Beth Tzedec Memorial Park
- Erlton Cemetery - Queens Park Cemetery

We Guarantee The Lowest Granite Gravestone Prices

Brad Westwell Business Owner
Ann Westwell Business Manager

5010 1st Street SE, Calgary • firstcallcalgary@gmail.com
firstcallmonuments.com 403-723-0800

Best wishes for 2024!

Western Canada's Top Solar Installer

SkyFireEnergy
Solar Energy Solutions
SkyFireEnergy.com 1-877-SKYFIRE-1

Solar is cheaper than you think.

SkyFireEnergy
Calgary | Edmonton | Kelowna

403-251-0668
SkyFireEnergy.com

Calgary lights the Menorah at City Hall

By AJNews staff

Despite Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek deciding not to attend the 35th Anniversary Calgary Community Menorah Lighting, the December 7 Chanukah celebration at City Hall, hosted by Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, was bigger and better than ever.

Senior Rabbi and Executive Director of Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, Rabbi Menachem Matusof opened the evening to thank “each and every one of you for coming and expressing our joy and happiness in celebrating Chanukah.” He said that to introduce the evening he wanted to make it clear “that this is not a demonstration, this is not violent, this is not darkness. This is light, this is life. This is a peaceful celebration of Chanukah with a message of unity and Jewish pride. We’re proud to be Jewish, we’re proud to support our community – young and old. We’re proud to support Israel, our Holy Land. This is what Chanukah is about so please relax and enjoy our celebration of Chanukah.”

The program featured delightful performances from the Calgary Jewish Academy Choir and the Halpern

Akiva Academy Choir. They were followed with a public recognition of community leaders and dignitaries who have had a positive impact on the Jewish community of Calgary.

Rebbitzin Rochel Matusof then introduced the honourees for the menorah lighting – Nelson and Debbie Halpern – with Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade MLA Matt Jones lighting the shamash.

Following the menorah lighting, Calgary Jewish Federation President Lisa Libin and past co-president Jordan Balaban wished the crowd a happy Chanukah and shared some information about their recent trip to Israel. Remarks were also given by delegates from all sides of the political spectrum including federal MPs, provincial MLAs and a number of city councillors. The address by MP Michelle Rempel, who accompanied Libin and Balaban on their recent trip to Israel was particularly moving and supportive. She was followed by remarks by MP Shuvaloy Majumder whose words touched everyone in



Honoree Nelson Halpern lit the Chanukah at Calgary City Hall with Rabbi Matusof at the 35th Anniversary Calgary Community Menorah Lighting on Dec. 7. Photo Calgary Jewish Federation.

the crowd to their core as the voice of a loving and truly empathetic ally.

The evening program was followed by a wonderful family celebration with latkes, activities for children, live music and more.

“With over 1,200 in attendance, we wish to thank Chabad of Alberta and all of our community and external supporters for making the evening a success, we all truly showed that the light will always overcome the darkness,” said Calgary Jewish Federation.

Chevra *Cont. from page 6*

There is a section in the 37th Street Jewish Cemetery in Calgary where a Jewish person can be buried beside a non-Jewish partner. There are certain guidelines to this kind of burial that will be explained to you should you wish to purchase plots.

I have a friend who performs Tahara at the Jewish chapel (the process of preparing a

deceased for Jewish burial), but she says very little about her work there, even when we ask her about it. Why is that?

The act of performing Tahara is considered “chesed shel emet” - a deed of true loving kindness. This means that when we perform Tahara, we expect no compensation or reciprocation. At the most obvious level, this means that the deceased cannot pay us back for this act of kindness. But we have extended this

principle to also mean that in this volunteer role, we do not seek any kind of acknowledgement. We do not expect the bereaved family to be beholden to anyone specifically for this service and we do not seek to have any of our volunteers publicly glorified for their work. Tahara volunteers are discouraged from discussing their work publicly. Since we also practice according to the principle that everyone is treated the same by our volunteers, it should not matter who performed the tahara. Families can therefore safely assume that their loved one was treated with the utmost respect.

Why can't I pre-purchase an assigned plot?

The management of a Jewish cemetery is complicated. Jewish practice is to bury a man beside a woman only if they were married. It takes careful planning to avoid ending up with “leftover” spots that cannot be used at all. It is also very costly to open up a new row, and we will not do that until we know several new plots are needed. Therefore, we are now preselling “interment rights” meaning we will guarantee you a spot in our cemetery after a payment agreement has been established. The actual plot will be determined when the time of need has arrived. When one member of a married couple has been interred, we will reserve the spot beside them for the spouse once a payment agreement has been arranged. This arrangement can also extend to other family members wishing to have plots beside their relatives.

I have some old prayer books, prayer shawls and kippot that I want to discard. I have heard that it is disrespectful to throw them in the garbage and that cemeteries have a burial area for them. Is that true?

Yes it is true. The burial area is called a Geniza, which means “hiding place,” but it is really more a vault like structure. They can also be buried. This is an ancient custom going back hundreds of years. We are not supposed to simply trash sacred documents, i.e. documents that contain the name of G-d. Instead we bury them. There is a Geniza at both of the Chevra Kadisha's cemeteries, though the Erlton one is full. Kippot are not actually considered sacred and do not need special disposal. Hebrew secular literature and non-religious school texts also do not need special treatment. Tallaisim, prayer books, and bibles are considered sacred, even those little prayer booklets given out at weddings and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, and photocopies of prayers and Biblical text. Tallaisim can be used for Tahara (preparing deceased for burial) since they will be buried.

Individuals, synagogues, and schools are welcome to make use of our facilities when disposing of sacred objects. However, we are now waiting until Spring 2024 to accept any items and ask that you wait until you have a sizeable quantity and call our office ahead of time to schedule a delivery. Merely leaving them outside at the Chevra Kadisha risks having them exposed to the elements until they can be properly handled.

For information, email info@chevraofcalgary.org.

BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW!



Canadian
MAGEN DAVID ADOM
Canadien

CALGARIANS FOR ISRAEL

A fundraiser for ALL Calgarians in benefit of
Canadian Magen David Adom's Paramedics/Ambulance Fund

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2024 | 5 - 9 P.M.

REGENCY PALACE RESTAURANT

3rd Floor - Dragon City Mall - 328 Centre Street SE

- Chinese Traditional Instrumentalists •
- Violinist Steven Klevsky •
- Lion Dance •



TEN COURSE CHINESE BANQUET
KOSHER DINNER UPON REQUEST

LIVE AND SILENT "ELEVATE" AUCTION
SPECIAL GUESTS & HOSTS
Sharon Fraiman & Richard Gotfried (MC)



Platinum \$7,500 | Gold \$5,000 | Silver \$2,500
includes a VIP table and "Event Sponsor" recognition on marketing and communications
*Sponsors will receive a tax receipt for the highest eligible amount.

Table Sponsor: \$1,260
Comes with a tax receipt of \$700.

TICKETS: \$88 each
Comes with a tax receipt of \$38.

Tickets/Tables: bit.ly/calgariansforisrael

OR

Sharon Fraiman, Western Region Director | C: 587-435-5808 | E: sfraiman@cmdai.org

WWW.CMDAI.ORG

8 hot nights of Chanukah warms up a chilly afternoon

By Paula E. Kirman

On December 3, around 40 people came to Arcadia Brewing Co. at Manchester Square to experience what was likely Edmonton's first Jewish-themed drag show.

8 Hot Nights of Chanukah was organized by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton's Pride Committee, and featured four drag performers presenting over-the-top outfits and dance moves. The free event for those 16 and older saw audience members of diverse age demographics from youths to seniors express their enthusiastic appreciation with applause, cheers, laughter, and tipping the performers.

Ashley Kravetsky, who goes by the drag name Selena Cuchina, is one of three Jewish drag performers in Alberta. The other two were scheduled to appear at 8 Hot Nights of Chanukah, but had to cancel due to illness. Instead, several other talented drag performers took to the stage, including Cassie Collis (drag name: Colin Bae), Kravetsky's real-life partner. Together, they performed a humour-infused musical number about navigating the holidays as an interfaith couple.

Kravetsky has been doing drag for about five years

and hosts a drag event at Arcadia on a regular basis called "Beers & Queers." "Our queer community is small. Our queer Jewish community is even smaller and to get to bring that together and to celebrate with all of you just makes me feel so happy," she said in appreciation to the audience for supporting the event.

In addition, Kravetsky is involved with Federation's Pride Committee which also organizes the annual Pride Shabbat. "We need to have that intersection [between being queer and Jewish]. We need to have that voice and we need to have that support for those of us who maybe aren't really able to," she said, emphasizing the importance of visible representation through events such as 8 Hot Nights of Chanukah.



From left: Remy Resurrection (James Ritchie), Colin Bae (Cassie Collis), Selena Cuchina (Ashley Kravetsky), and Wanda Lust (Aaron Knox). Photo: Paula E. Kirman

"Especially in the climate right now people are afraid to be Jewish, people are afraid to be queer, and people are afraid to speak out. We need to have a following and a support system and people who love and care about us because right now we are not feeling that, especially in the queer community."

Jewish Studies Week looks at the Holocaust as world history

By Regan Treewater-Lipes, LJI Reporter

On November 23 the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, housed at the University of Alberta, hosted the annual Saul and Toby Reichert Holocaust Lecture. It was a timely, and much needed engagement with this not-so-distant tragic history, and in light of the overwhelming international uprising of antisemitism, the Edmonton Jewish community seemed comforted to know that larger audiences still feel compelled to understand more about the Holocaust. As a part of Jewish Studies Week, Dr. Doris L. Bergen from the Department of History at the University of Toronto delivered a lecture titled: "The Holocaust as World History." Dr. Bergen holds the distinguished position of Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust studies at the U of T and is currently J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar In-Residence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

A former U of A graduate, Dr. Bergen was received warmly by the Edmonton Jewish community, and the University's academic faculty alike. Emotions were understandably high amongst attendees who were concerned about security at the North Campus Telus Centre, but Dr. Bergen gracefully addressed these anxieties, and put the crowd at ease. She explained that with the events of October 7 still painfully fresh in everyone's minds, a long-lasting wound had clearly been inflicted on the collective consciousness of world Jewry. Her paper contextualized this global impact through the lens of Holocaust history, most notably, the examination of surviving diaries and uncovered testimonials from the Emanuel Ringelblum Archive.

What was an interesting and stirring choice for her lecture delivery was that her colleagues and friends seated in the audience read out the quoted material in her presentation. This gave the resonance of each

individual's words a character and texture that provided depth and impact. As she cited material, different voices would attempt to capture the tone and emotions from Holocaust-era diaries and testimonials. This was a profoundly captivating choice as it fused Dr. Bergen's academic content with the individual stories she invoked in her analysis.

The lecture branched out from just examining the Holocaust, and looked at what the world can, and should, learn from it. In her final synthesis, she discussed other acts of genocide inflicted upon the world since the World War II, and challenged the audience to see how engaging with Holocaust history could provide onlookers with a better understanding for how to advocate for human rights globally. Her concluding message seemed to be that everyone, as a citizen of the world, bears responsibility for safeguarding the right to dignity and humanity of those around them. The universality of her message inspired a lively question and answer session where people felt open to sharing their own stories of emigrating from war torn regions of the world.

Other programming for Jewish Studies Week included a Zoom discussion with Joanna Krol-Kolma the Head of Digital Collection at the Polin Museum in Warsaw, and a conversation with MFA candidate Ben Smith who was the director of the recently staged Paula Vogel play *Indecent*. Jewish Studies Week came at a

Beth Shalom Celebrates



Everyone had a great time at the Beth Shalom Chanukah party!

very important moment in modern Jewish history this year. World Jewry continues to feel mounting fear with blatant and unapologetic acts of antisemitism frighteningly being sanctioned and condoned within the public sphere. Educational efforts like those of the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies go a long way towards creating more compassion and understanding of the history of European Jewry.

It's Time to Consolidate Debt



We have practical solutions for reducing monthly payments

780-473-6333
MOSES ADVISORY GROUP INC.

Federally licensed to serve Albertans
All services can be provided virtually

info@magi-lit.com • proposalpeople.ca

Kathleen Jacob, LIT



OLIVER SQUARE REGISTRIES LTD

A fast, full service, friendly & convenient registry centre.

Oliver Square • 11648 104 Ave
PH 780.408.2000
www.osreg.ca

Licensing, Registrations & Renewals
All classes of written & road tests
Drivers' Abstracts
Name Searches & NUANS
Commissioners for Oath
Corporate Registrations & Searches
Vital Statistics Certificates & Registrations
Personal Property Lien Searches & Registrations

And many other services for Public & Professional

"Licensed to please."



STARKMAN Realty Ltd.

For All Your Real Estate Needs, contact



Daniel Starkman
BROKER/AGENT

P 780.863.0778
F 780.453.3567

#7, 11641A Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0M9

www.starkmanrealty.com
starkmanrealty@rogers.com

An independent broker member



This year's Latke Lunch featured a number of esteemed guests including, Alberta's Education Minister Demitrios Nicolaides and Calgary Police Service Chief Const. Mark Neufeld. Not pictured but present were Nagwan Al-Guneid MLA Calgary-Glenmore, and Samir Kayande MLA Calgary-Elbow, along with donors, community leaders, and CJA supporters.

CJA Hanukkah Celebrations

By Joseph Tappenden

Hanukkah at the CJA was a unique blend of celebration, tradition and excitement. Throughout the eight days students took part in various activities that not only honoured our Jewish holiday but also captured the genuine enthusiasm of our young learners.

The celebrations began in a not so subtle way, as students and staff dressed themselves in their favourite Hanukkah-themed sweaters and pyjamas. The hallways echoed with excitement as everyone proudly displayed their Hanukkah spirit.

To add to the excitement, this year we introduced a school-wide bingo activity that quickly became one of the highlights of the holiday. The students took the reins in designing their own bingo cards, incorporating Hebrew and Hanukkah-themed words that added a personal touch to the game. As Morah Joyce animatedly called out those words via Zoom, the students' spirited cheers and joyful shouts of "bingo"

reverberated through the school. The excitement reached its peak as winners, beaming with pride, received their cherished prizes – stickers, pencils, and Hanukkah treats.

On the first night of Hanukkah, our CJA choir joined with the greater Jewish community at the Calgary Community Menorah Lighting, hosted by Chabad Alberta. Students from grades 1-6 sang "Oh Hanukkah!" in English, Hebrew and Yiddish. The Community Menorah Lighting plays a significant role during Hanukkah, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. This very important event allows the Jewish community to share its traditions with the broader community and promotes the understanding of Jewish culture.

The heart of our celebrations was when our community gathered in anticipation at the Annual Latke Lunch. Our students were at the forefront, infusing the event with their energy. With the grade 2 class showcasing a number of Hanukkah songs and dances, and a surprise performance of "Maoz Tzur" by the CJA Maccabells (the CJA Handbell Club), students brought an authentic and lively touch to this year's celebrations. Their enthusiasm was contagious.

The youngest members of our school community stole the show in the Hanukkah Preschool Concert, in which their excitement was evident in every note and movement. The genuine joy displayed by these students created a heart-warming experience for families and fellow

students alike. The event showcased our cultural richness and emphasized the importance of passing on traditions to the next generation.

Reflecting on the Hanukkah celebrations at our school, it was the spirited excitement of our students that stood out as the defining element. Their genuine enthusiasm added a dynamic dimension to the days we celebrated together. The essence of Hanukkah, as seen through the eyes of our students, is not just a celebration of traditions but a lively reminder of our shared identity.



Playing Chanukah Bingo at CJA.

The Calgary Jewish Academy

OPEN HOUSE

January 25th, 2024

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Preschool through Grade 9
(Licensed Preschool for ages 2 & up)

To RSVP please email info@cja.ab.ca
If you require an alternate date, please contact our office



On Jack Adler's 100th Birthday, his children and grandchildren generously outfitted the CJA T'filah program with an Aron Kodesh, Torah and class sets of Siddurim. Pictured is Jack with the newly installed fixtures.

Publication Mail Agreement No. 40050628
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
#206, 8944 182 Street, Edmonton AB T5T 2E3
E-mail: albertajewishnews@gmail.com
Tel: (780) 421-7966

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

Funded by the Government of Canada / Financé par le gouvernement du Canada |

Volume 34, Number 12, December 20, 2023

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

For change of address, please send both old and new addresses. We welcome your stories, pictures, artwork and opinions. Please send submissions to our office at the address above.

Next Deadline: January 9, 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this newspaper may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Editor. Alberta Jewish News is published by 320754 Alberta Ltd.

from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

Don't mess with Judah

It's one of the tensest and most climactic moments of the biblical Joseph saga. Judah has been placed in a hopeless predicament. The viceroy of Egypt Zaphnath Paaneah (who has not yet revealed himself as Joseph) has been accusing Jacob's sons of espionage and incriminated Benjamin by planting a royal cup among his bags. Furthermore, Judah guaranteed their father Jacob that Benjamin would be returned safely to his home; and pledged that he would substitute himself for his brother if matters should reach that desperate point. In a régime that is absolute and tyrannical, there is not the faintest hope that Benjamin will be found innocent or pardoned.

It is at this point that Judah launches into a lengthy speech before the viceroy.

What was the purpose of that speech?

In their "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," Tim Rice and Sir Andrew Lloyd Weber accompany the speech with a chorus repeating the word "Grovel!" and that, it would appear, is an accurate understanding of Judah's intention. Powerless before the viceroy's authority and with no expectation of persuading him of their innocence, all he can do is throw himself at the mercy of the court and repeat his version of how the innocent brothers were cast into this tragic situation, emphasizing the cruel suffering it would cause to their aged father ("ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.")

Some interpreters discerned in Judah's words a more subtle strategy, in which he was attempting to argue as compelling a case as he could without openly contradicting his powerful accuser. This was evident in the way he enhanced the pathos of Jacob's suffering in order to elicit compassion.

Thus, according to one midrashic comment, Judah hinted that there was something suspicious about the way the ruler singled out for interrogation this particular Hebrew family from among the visitors from many lands who had come to purchase food in Egypt. Furthermore, Judah "reminded" Zaphnath Paaneah that he had expressed a wish to "set mine eyes upon" Benjamin—which seemed to imply a commitment to his personal safety.

Perhaps no scholar was so appreciative of Judah's argumentative skills as the fifteenth-century Italian

author Rabbi Judah Messer Leon. He was immersed in the ethos of Renaissance humanism which drew inspiration from the masterpieces of ancient Greek and Latin civilizations. In addition to his commitments to philosophy and science, Messer Leon was especially fascinated by the discipline of rhetoric, as professed by Cicero and Aristotle (according to the attributions and interpretations current in his day). Messer Leon's best-known book, entitled "*Nofet Sufim*" [Honeycomb] was devoted principally to expositions of those works, but from a distinctly Jewish perspective. Whereas the standard non-Jewish treatises culled their examples from Greek and Latin texts, Messer Leon strove to prove that the most perfect examples of rhetorical elegance are to be found in the Hebrew scriptures.

It was in this connection that the *Nofet Sufim* cited Judah's oration to Joseph as an object lesson in how to apply the techniques of rhetoric to the crafting of a persuasive oration. The speech begins by ingratiating the speaker to his audience, eliciting the listener's affection and compassion by means of self-deprecation and flattery (for instance, by praising the viceroy as equal to Pharaoh). Judah selected the details of his narrative very carefully so as to anticipate potential questions or arguments (but without disagreeing explicitly). Like all well-crafted lectures, this one concludes with a succinct recapitulation of its main argument.

By demonstrating the perfect conformity of the Hebrew Bible to classical literary aesthetics, Messer Leon wished to enhance the enjoyment that Jews may derive from reading their holy scriptures.

When you read Judah's speech through Rashi's traditional commentary, you get a very different picture of its meaning and of the relationship between the protagonists. Judah is neither grovelling nor restraining himself with tactical caution. Quite the contrary, Rashi understands every word that leaves Judah's lips as an expression of confident—even threatening—assertiveness.

Thus, when Judah began by saying "Let not thine anger burn against thy servant," it was not because he was afraid of offending his superior. Just the opposite—he was ordering him to calm down. And when he compared the viceroy to Pharaoh, he was

evoking the precedent of that earlier Pharaoh who suffered divine punishment for abducting Sarah. Judah was actually challenging his opponents to a showdown: "If you challenge me, then I'll kill both you and your boss!"

Rashi acknowledged that these interpretations were not supported by the literal sense of the biblical text, but were found in the Midrash. For the sages of the Midrash, the characters in scriptural narratives are not one-time historical or literary personages but embody recurring concepts and religious values. The figure of Judah, ancestor of the Davidic royal dynasty, symbolized the nation's pride in its dealings with the other nations of the world. During the era of the Midrash, this would have reflected Jewish pride vis à vis their Roman occupiers.

These differing attitudes might underlie a second-century rabbinic dispute about our text: "Rabbi Judah says: He approached ready for combat... Rabbi Nehemiah says: He approached him for conciliation... The Rabbis say: He approached in prayer..." Several sages enlarged on Rabbi Judah's premise, insisting (based on ingenious interpretations of the biblical wording) that Judah and his brothers were physically powerful enough to overpower the Egyptians if Benjamin were not released.

Rabbi Eleazar concluded that each one of the options might be a valid one, depending on the circumstances. As Rabbi Bahya ben Asher observed: "Judah had in mind all three possibilities... He took the attitude of one who approaches fully armed, prepared for battle, and then declares: 'Take your choice: Do you prefer to have recourse to legal adjudication, to conciliation, or to battle?'"

The Jewish nation continues to find itself in situations where we must choose between these same options.

Hopefully, we will find the wisdom to make the correct choices.

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

Condemned former Fox News host to bring act to Alberta in January

By Daniel Moser

In late January 2024 embattled former Fox News host Tucker Carlson will be performing in Alberta. On January 24 Carlson is hosting a sold-out lunch event with Premier Danielle Smith (an event which we have been told is not open to the media), at the Telus Convention Centre, followed by an evening show in Edmonton taking place at Roger's Place in downtown Edmonton. In Edmonton Carlson will be hosting former Order of Canada recipient Conrad Black (Black was removed from the Order and expelled from the Queen's Privy Council in 2014 following his criminal conviction), and opinionist Rex Murphy.

Carlson has been condemned countless times throughout his entertainment career by anti-hate

groups for his on-air messaging, tactics, and conduct. Most recently in an episode of his X talk show he endorsed the Antisemitic trope of a "great replacement theory" and a "white genocide," supposedly funded by Jewish elites.

In April 2023 Carlson was removed from the Fox News airwaves. At the time the condemned former host was facing a lawsuit from a Jewish producer on his show, who alleged the host and his staff created and maintained an office culture full of Antisemitism and sexism, including an incident where Israeli staff members were berated for taking the High Holidays off from work.

Carlson's firing is a move the Anti-Defamation League had been calling for actively since 2001. At the time of his ousting CEO Jonathan Greenblatt

remarked: "It's about time. For far too long, Tucker Carlson has used his primetime show to spew Antisemitic, racist, xenophobic, and anti-LGBTQ hate to millions."

Later in 2023 following his removal from Fox, he began hosting his program on X (formerly Twitter), where he quickly resumed evoking Antisemitism. In June when speaking about the Invasion of Ukraine Carlson described Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky (who is Jewish) as "rat-like," "shifty," "dead-eyed," "a persecutor of Christians," and "a friend of BlackRock (an investment company founded and operated by Jewish CEO Larry Fink). These comments prompted condemnation from B'nai Brith International who stated: Carlson "is recklessly trafficking here in Antisemitic tropes. These kinds of charged polemics only feed negative perceptions of Jews and add to a climate of bigotry."

Tickets are still available for Tucker Carlson's Edmonton show on January 24, priced at just under \$100.



local artists | exclusive collection | original pieces



carvings • paintings • illustrations • cards

780-237-1556

www.wakinagallery.com



Edmonton lights the giant menorah at the Ledge

By AJNews staff

The Edmonton Jewish Community and friends gathered at the Alberta Legislature on December 10 to celebrate Chanukah and light the Giant Menorah.

The 32nd annual event was once again hosted by Chabad of Edmonton Rabbi Ari Drelich with assistance from the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and National Council of Jewish Women. Edmonton Police Chief Dale McFee was given the honour of lighting the Shamash during the Chanukah Candle Lighting ceremony.

Rabbi Ari welcomed the crowd to the event and explained the significance of Chanukah, Festival of Light. The 8-day festival marks the miraculous victory of the Maccabees, Jewish freedom fighters, who recaptured Jerusalem's Holy Temple from the Seleucid Greek occupiers in the year 139 BCE.

It was a joyous celebration that kicked off with an indoor program that included remarks from Speaker of the Legislative Assembly MLA Nathan Cooper, Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi and MLA Lorne Dach. The program also featured performances by the Talmud Torah choir under the direction of teacher Ben Ragosin and a sing-along with entertainer Ben Soros.

Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright also welcomed the crowd and thanked everyone for attending. Her remarks included an update from her recent trip to Israel. She said, "Thank you all for joining us today as we come together to celebrate the lighting of the Chanukah menorah, the tallest in Alberta and a close second to the one placed in Sderot on the rubble of what was once the police station.

"Thank you Rabbi Ari for organizing this annual event and for the honour to share a few words on this special occasion. An occasion that feels less festive than years past, when we have 138 hostages who are not celebrating and soldiers who are not with their own families celebrating Chanukah this year, including our former community and staff member many of you know fondly, Tal Toubiana."

"The lighting of the chanukiah holds deep significance in our tradition," continued Leavitt-Wright. "Efforts to redefine Jewish identity is what Chanukah heroes, the Maccabees, fought against, overcoming persecution and darkness... Chanukah and Israel cannot be separated, much like the Jewish people and Israel cannot be separated."

Two weeks ago, the Edmonton CEO and former JFED President Steve Shafir, travelled to Israel with leaders from across Canada, "to a war-torn country in national grief but united in a way I have never seen before, and inspiring resilient."

She said, "The unity of the people and their determination to secure the future of the State of Israel while supporting one another is something we strive to emulate with our own community in Edmonton as we go through this difficult time."

She said, "What further jolted me in that moment, was how important it is that we as Jewish Edmontonians continue to live public and proud Jewish lives in the city our community has called home since Rebecca and Abraham Cristall arrived in 1893.

"Hope and light – It is not lost on me that this week our membership overwhelmingly voted in favour of pursuing a new Jewish Community Centre building, a forward-looking project to secure the future of our community. We are standing in the beautiful rotunda of our legislature, welcoming Chanukah with elected officials and our Chief of Police at our side. We are here with one another, from across the community, to do what centuries of Jews have done before us and will continue to do for centuries to come – light the menorah, spin the dreidel and declare Nes Gadol Haya Sham – a great miracle happened there – and do so with pride."

Rabbi Ari concluded the program with remarks about the long history of the Jewish people's connection to Eretz Israel. He then encouraged everyone to go outside for the Giant Menorah lighting




Rabbi Ari Drelich, with EPS Chief Dale McFee, Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright, Mayor Amarjeet Sohi and Speaker of the House Nathan Cooper. Photo by Dan Moser.

– a wonderful sight to behold against the backdrop of our Alberta Legislature Building. Yasher Koach to EPS Chief Dale McFee for lighting the Shamash and to Rabbi Ari for lighting the candles, and organizing such a wonderful event.

Then everyone proceeded to an indoor area beside the plaza for a fraylach party of live music, delicious latkes & sufganiot, kids activities and schmoozing with friends and family. Chag Sameach to everyone!



Chanukah at Talmud Torah.



ב"ה **Children's** ב"ס"ד
Programs 2024

B"H

J-KIDS FUN HEBREW CLUB

- 5-10 years
- 12-1:30pm
- 2 Sundays a month

J-TEEN





- Work Experience
- Lunch n Learn
- Jr. High and High School Students

GAN ISRAEL SUMMER CAMP

- 8 weeks
- Campers Boys and Girls 3-10 years
- CIT Girls 11-14 years
- GI Guys
- Mon-Fri 9-3:30pm

MY CHEDER CHABAD

- Aleph Bet Morning Child Care
- Toilet trained and up
- Mon-Thurs. 2 spots left.

BOYS / GIRLS BAT OR BAR MITZAH

Lessons 1 on 1
Group celebrations available

For more information and to register
123neshama@gmail.com • ChabadofEdmonton.org