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Tu B'Shevat at Talmud Torah

By Natalie Soroka

Tu B'Shevat is always an exciting time at TT. This year, learning about and celebrating *Tu B'Shevat* began with a visit from Yifat Bear Millar, Jewish National Fund of Canada's Education Emissary (National Shlichah). Yifat's primary objective is to "strengthen Canada's connection to Israel and to the Israeli people."

Yifat does this "by bringing a taste of Israel to schools and synagogues, from Vancouver to Halifax, and everywhere in between." Jewish National Fund (JNF) provides special opportunities to enhance the way schools and other organizations celebrate *Tu B'Shevat* and connect to the land and people of Israel. For as long as I can remember, Jay Cairns, Executive Director of JNF Edmonton, and Yifat have visited TT near the holiday of *Tu B'Shevat* to educate our students about Israel.

The day started out by kindergarten students taking a fun Trip in Israel, where they used a remote-controlled car to drive on a large floor map of Israel to find different locations. Along the way, Yifat asked questions and gave hints as to where the car was to travel to next. The students learned a lot and enjoyed the interactive component of the lesson, as did the Grade 2 class later on that same day.

Grade 3 students participated in a unique educational program called "Israchute." A parachute displayed pictures of important locations and places in Jerusalem, such as Mt. Hermon, Mt. Herzl, the Red Sea, and *Knesset Menorah*. The class stood on the perimeter of the parachute, while Yifat discussed the importance of each one and tested their knowledge. For some fun, they had the added benefit of spending time underneath it as well!

Yifat presented the Grade 4, 5 and 6 students with the fun and interactive program, "Water in Jerusalem". Grouped in teams they alternated getting as many



Each year, Talmud Torah participates in JNF's annual *Tu B'Shevat* School Campaign and Grade 6 students lead the campaign. This year's campaign is about renewal and hope; each tree that is donated will be planted in the Be'eri Memorial Forest near Kibbutz Be'eri, in memory of the lives lost on Oct. 7. To date, 345 trees have been generously donated.

cup as possible of water into a bigger tub of water on the other side of the room. The competition was intense, but one group did manage to transfer more water to the bigger tub! The challenge increased when they were required to climb up on chairs and back down again, simulating mountains and water travelling from high to low ground. They learned how Israeli water technology solves issues of getting water to where it's needed most to grow trees, plants and crops.

Grade 1 students learned all about birds and migration, seeing a child-friendly short film, "The Man Who Taught Me to Fly" by Yossi Leshem, the founder and Director of the International Center for the Study of Bird Migration at Latrun, Israel. This film has been

used by many schools to help integrate *Tu B'Shevat* with Israel. Students learned that during migration, over 500 million birds fly over Israel two times each year, and that Israel serves as a fueling station during their long journey across Asia, Europe and Africa. The students were captivated by the short film and very engaged in the discussion with Yifat.

Of course, *Tu B'Shevat* at Edmonton Talmud Torah is never complete without our Grade 6 students participating in JNF's annual *Tu B'Shevat* School Campaign. This is one of the leadership opportunities our Grade 6 students look forward to each year. As they prepared for *Tu B'Shevat*, student tree leaders were

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Calgarians aid in the triumphant rescue of Israeli hostages

Late on February 11th the Jewish world, finally, had something to celebrate. After four months in captivity, Israeli hostages Fernando Marman, aged 61, and Louis Har, aged 70, were miraculously rescued in Rafah from a building under heavy fire from Hamas terrorist guards. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the rescue mission "one of the most successful in Israeli history."

This, most complex operation, was the triumphant success of IDF Special Forces: Yamam (National Counter-Terrorism Unit) and Israel's Navy Seals, Unit Shayetet 13. Indeed...but also the collaborative work of a group of Calgarians and their friends.

The Calgary connection to the rescuers, specifically Israel's Navy Seals, Unit Shayetet 13, began when a visiting-to-Calgary member of that unit became a close friend to Valerie Sobel, then the Chair of Beit Halochem Canada for Alberta. Their friendship

endured and became more meaningful with each passing year and the challenges Israel faced.

Enter Black Sabbath, October 7th, 2023. Sobel immediately reached out to Avi (not his real name) who was about to go into Gaza along with his entire unit. "What do you need? What can we do for your unit right now; don't worry about the magnitude of the funding it will take," she asked. To her surprise, the hesitant reply was about needing bullet-proof vests for half of the unit. As it turns out, this elite force of IDF was working with outdated Vietnam-war-era safety vests. This, amongst many other shocks to the system, was the lasting legacy of Ehud Barak's outsourcing of Israel's military manufacturing and general diminishing of military funding. It caught up catastrophically on October 7th as the Jewish world became painfully aware of Israel's urgent military needs, in the past always unquestioned and



Rescued hostages Norberto Louis Har and Fernando Simon Marman. Photo Hostages Families Forum.

presumed to be in tiptop shape.

Sobel sprung into action to raise tens of thousands of dollars for state-of-the-art bulletproof vests through a private network of family, friends and social media contacts. Considering that most Israel-supporting individuals had already contributed to

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Caroline D'Amore spreads her positivity in Edmonton

By Deborah Shatz and Regan Treewater-Lipes

The Edmonton Jewish community experienced a wonderful evening of positivity and camaraderie from an unexpected source on January 29 – Malibu influencer and ‘pizza girl’ Caroline D’Amore.

The internet sensation was the featured guest at a special event titled “Pro-semitism.” In a fireside chat with Michael Sachs, Director of JNF Pacific Region, D’Amore, who is not Jewish, spoke about her journey from knowing relatively nothing about Judaism or Jewish culture to becoming an avowed advocate in the fight against antisemitism. She was stricken by the brutality of the Oct. 7 attacks in Southern Israel by Hamas and then horrified at the way world opinion turned against Israel and the Jewish community almost immediately after.

“Caroline is a true advocate for peace, who recognizes the importance of speaking out, unapologetic in her words to shed light on the truth,” said Tami Cairns, who attended the event.

“She is shouting from the rooftops, standing up for what is right, not afraid of the backlash she may encounter.”

The accomplished businesswoman and CEO of Pizza Girl Inc. flew to Israel on December 13 to bear witness to the atrocities of Oct. 7. She journeyed to the site of the Nova Music Festival and met with a family member of a victim of the attacks.

“Oct. 7th was not a fight for freedom,” she wrote in a post from the Nova festival site. “It was a group of terrorists trying to kill as many innocent Jewish people as possible and then call home so their parents could be proud of them. This is the truth. This is the terrifying truth of what happened on Oct. 7th.”

“Attacking innocent party goers is not a fight for freedom,” she added. “It’s cowardice and cruel and pure evil. Anyone who celebrates this is gone and needs serious help.”

Caroline returned home from Israel and has been speaking in support of Israel and against antisemitism ever since. She is also raising awareness about the sexual and gender-based abuses that happened on October 7th.

Over 125 community members and friends attended the January 29 event at the Fantasyland Hotel and found the fireside chat to be warm and inspirational. D’Amore’s down to earth demeanor and refreshing presentation provided comfort to many of the people who attended the event – with her sincere message resonating during this difficult time – that we are not alone.

“I think a lot of us felt confused and very alone after Oct. 7,” noted Jay Cairns, Executive Director of JNF Edmonton. “Between how the news has been positioning the war, and the hateful disgustingly antisemitic online rhetoric that I was experiencing at the time and since, Caroline was this innocent voice that spoke to me and I would imagine to a lot of people who felt like they had no allies, no non-Jewish friends that were willing to speak up or even reach out to say how are you. She offered hugs to Jewish people and



Influencer Caroline D'Amore was in Edmonton last month with a message of love for Israel and the Jewish community. Pictured above with Michael Sachs, Director of JNF Pacific Region.

communities at a time when Jewish communities were being alienated.”

Stacie Pearlmutter also found the event to be refreshing and comforting. “Hearing Caroline speak and then talking with her after, was like meeting a new best friend,” said Stacie. “She is so down to earth and exudes kindness and positivity. Caroline speaks her mind and shares her heart, and the Jewish community is so blessed to have her as a fierce advocate and ally.”

D’Amore candidly shared her personal experiences following Oct. 7, and continues to serve as an inspiration to those to speak up for what’s right.

“At a time when the non-Jewish world is silent, Caroline has stood up, unafraid,” explained Tami. “Her public support for the Jewish community is so critical, so needed. She highlights the need to fight for justice, opposition of hate and teaching future generations to speak up.”

Her focus on future generations was central at the BBYO bowling event held for teens at Ed’s Rec Room at WEM on January 28. Around thirty local Jewish youth, grades nine to twelve, gathered for a Sunday evening of bowling and pizza joined by the pop-cultural celebrity.

D’Amore, sat down with the teens for a candid discussion about how they have experienced antisemitism since the largest coordinated act of mob-violence against Jews in eighty-years was barbarously inflicted on October 7 in Israel.

D’Amore admitted that before that fateful day, she had been blissfully unaware of how widespread the tentacles of antisemitism reached. She warmly and graciously listened to the stories of a few brave high schoolers who chose to share their experiences and she was visibly moved by their candor.

Jay Cairns said that Caroline has long been an advocate for women’s rights, who marches on behalf of marginalized communities and admits to being a leftist.

“She jokes that her dad calls her ‘woke’ but I think she’s very much awake, aware and able to speak to anyone willing to have a reasonable conversation about the human elements of the conflict and war,” added Jay. “She gave me hope. Some of us get lost in the doom scrolling of negativity towards the Jewish people; again, she joked to me who would have thought it would be the Pizza Girl from Malibu. But it was, she spoke her truth and encouraged us to say ours, and I thank her for having the strength to speak out.”

This event was sponsored by JNF Canada, Stand With Us, Na’amat Edmonton and National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), with support from Jewish Federation of Edmonton – all coming together to raise awareness and facilitate a comfortable discussion.

Regan Treewater Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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A plea for connection

By Rabbi Mark Glickman



Rabbi Mark Glickman

“Rabbi, in my circles, *Zionism* is a bad word. What does the term *Zionism* mean to you?”

The question came from a member of the Muslim community I’ll call Tariq. I had met him in the context of my interfaith work, and he had agreed to meet with me in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks. Coming to meet with a rabbi at a synagogue was

no small matter for Tariq – to be safe, he asked that our meeting be kept confidential. Tariq and I had a difficult discussion, but a good one. We disagreed about a lot, but we both came to a deeper understanding of one another than we’d had before. I was grateful for his willingness to speak with me.

Sadly, these days there’s not a whole lot of talking going on between people who disagree. Instead, at this time of violence and trauma, many of us have retreated to our own corners, refusing to speak with anyone except those who agree with us.

There are so many examples:

- Last Chanukah, Calgary’s Mayor Jyoti Gondek refused to participate in the Chabad menorah lighting

at City Hall. In response, many organizations in the Jewish community have disinvited her from all their events. Leaders refuse to be seen with her, and organizations have canceled their participation in any program she attends.

- Jewish leaders, everywhere, often find themselves forbidden to meet with any non-Jewish leaders – particularly *Muslim* leaders – who have ever said anything objectionable about Israel.

- Although most diaspora Jews support Israel in its war against Hamas, a sizeable minority does not. Thousands of Jews, many of whom are in their twenties and thirties, find themselves unable to reconcile Israel’s war efforts with the universal Jewish values they have long embraced. In response, many Jews and Jewish organizations dismiss these objectors with a wave of the hand rather than invite them into constructive dialogue.

I could cite many other examples, but you get the point. We feel angry these days, not to mention scared and wounded, and in response we storm off in a huff, canceling people in disgust rather than engaging them in constructive discourse.

And what’s worse, the language we use to make these rejections can be downright nasty. After the recent explosion regarding Calgary’s mayor, I casually mentioned to a congregant of mine that it might be nice to invite her to our Temple for some constructive dialogue. “Oh no, rabbi,” my congregant responded, “she *can’t* come to Temple. She’s *treyf* (unkosher).”

Treyf? He and others see their adversaries as *treyf*, untouchable. These are *Jews* who do this. For a people called to repair our broken world, this cancel culture is quite unbecoming.

And so, I make this plea: Don’t dismiss the people with whom you disagree – speak with them. Don’t storm off when others say

objectionable things – stay connected. Don’t add to the divisions separating us – address them. And most of all, don’t build walls – build bridges.

What this means is that we all need to be actively working to connect with our friends and neighbors. It’s easy to connect with others when we agree, of course, but we need to make a special effort to engage with those with whom we *disagree*. Just as important, as Jews we should all be calling upon our institutional leaders – agency executives, rabbis, and others – to do just the same.

Muslims around the world are mired in hatred toward Jews. Avoiding them will solve nothing – it is only through engagement that we have any hope to end our conflict. Jews disagree profoundly about what’s going on in Israel – dismissing everyone who disagrees with us can only perpetuate our disagreements. People can be difficult, and misguided, and downright wrong in so many ways. We can shun them when they’re wrong, or we can talk – I vote for the latter.

The ancient rabbis described what our tradition calls a “*machloket l’shem shamayim*” – a disagreement for the sake of heaven: respectful disagreement; positive disagreement; disagreement for the sake of learning and growth rather than for victory and conquest. Now more than ever, these are precisely the kinds of disagreements we need.

By the end of my conversation with Tariq, he and I hadn’t reached anything even resembling a consensus on Israel. But we did gain increased understanding of our respective positions, and we pledged to keep on talking. I thank God for his willingness to do so, and in this broken and conflict-ridden world of ours, I pray for continued strength to do the same.

Rabbi Mark Glickman is the spiritual leader and Rabbi at Temple B’nai Tikvah, Calgary’s Reform Jewish Congregation.

Jewish employees taking PSAC to Human Rights Tribunal

(CIJA) – Jewish members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) have filed 14 individual complaints at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal against their union for advancing an anti-Israel agenda and causing a culture of discrimination and harassment against Jewish PSAC members that developed as a result of the union’s ongoing one-sided advocacy concerning the Israel-Hamas war.

Immediately following the October 7 terror attack in Israel by Hamas, a Canadian listed terrorist entity,

PSAC began promoting unbalanced and biased views against Israel that led to a hostile environment for Jewish workers.

The complainants are all federally regulated employees and will be represented pro-bono by Daniel Lublin and Marc Kitay from Whitten & Lublin Employment Lawyers, one of Canada’s leading workplace dispute firms.

“The essence of the complainants’ case is that PSAC

is clearly advancing an agenda that discriminates against Jewish union members, including donating union funds to UNRWA despite credible reports of agency workers holding innocent Israelis hostage and other behaviours that adversely impact them,” said Daniel Lublin, Founding Partner of Whitten & Lublin Employment Lawyers.

“These actions and others have left PSAC’s Jewish members pointing out that their union, which is supposed to represent their interests, is in fact causing an environment of fear, hostility, alienation, and bias against them. PSAC’s alleged behaviour is a clear violation of the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibits the union from engaging in differential

Continued on page 19



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Simchas and Celebrations

Parents play an important role in the BBYO society

By Heather Lister



Heather Lister Board Member

Every year, over the February long weekend, more than 5,000 top teen leaders, educators, professionals and philanthropists from around the world gather for one of the largest Jewish communal events of the year – BBYO’s International Convention (IC).

Delegates hear from and meet inspiring speakers, deepen leadership skills, serve the local community, celebrate Shabbat and

learn together. They have access to exclusive music performances and do their part to strengthen the Jewish Future.

This year, the largest local delegation ever – over 50 teens from Northwest Canada Region of BBYO, which includes Alberta and Saskatchewan – will be attending IC in Orlando Florida. Chaperones include Malvina Rapko, Danielle Braitman and Jay Cairns. The large number of delegates is a testament to the dedicated efforts of these individuals, as well as the teens and their parents, to keep the youth of NWC Region engaged in matters related to being Jewish. The theme of this year’s IC is “100 years – Forever Young.” The convention is the largest gathering of Jewish teen leaders worldwide and it is sure to be an epic celebration of teen culture and leadership.

In addition to showcasing spirit and community pride, International Convention (IC) delegates join in the democratic process of furthering BBYO’s agenda and elect AZA and BBG’s next International Board. Opportunities to be a part of IC’s host region, engage



BBYO teens leading Friday evening services during the fall 2023 convention in Calgary.

with the old friends and build lifelong global friendships are constants of every IC and are always major highlights of the experience.

For over 100 years BBYO has been providing and engaging Jewish teens with the tools to learn about their identities, develop their leadership skills and most importantly embrace lifelong friendships with their peers. Across 60 countries there are over 700 teen-led chapters with kids entering the programs in eighth grade and participating through their high school years. The focus is on community service, leadership, Jewish heritage and having fun.

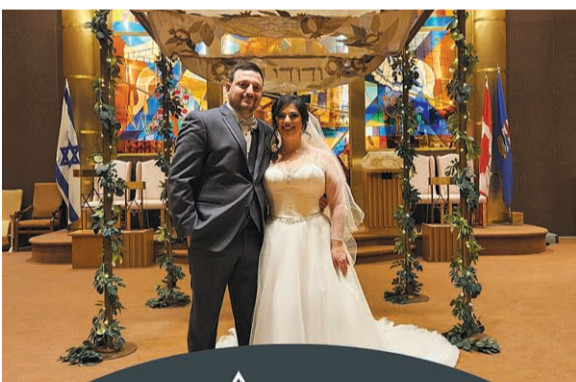
The role of the Northwest Canada BBYO Parent Society is to support and enrich the teen led BBYO movement. This is accomplished through the three pillars of community engagement, fundraising, and managing the compliance with provincial regulations governing non-profit organizations.

Community building and engagement focuses on establishing partnerships with Federations, JCCs, synagogues, B’nai Brith lodges and serving as

advocates to maintain these key relationships in the local cities. These stakeholder alliances are key to the future growth and stability for BBYO.

Community outreach and promoting Alumni participation is crucial to connecting the legacy members to new families. Fundraising focuses on educating parents and community members on the philanthropic needs of BBYO to ensure staffing, programming and endowment fund requirements are met. Lastly the BBYO Parent Society is tasked with managing regulatory requirements for Casino funds and other regulated processes.

Currently the NWC BBYO Parent Society has fourteen members and growing in Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton. Meeting online once a quarter, the focus in 2024 will be fundraising events to celebrate the BBYO 100 year anniversary. If you are interested in learning more about BBYO and the BBYO Parent Society, please visit nwcbbyo.ca or mail the Parent Society at nwcbbyosociety@gmail.com.



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Simchas and Celebrations

A joyful Shabbat celebration at CJA's 'PJ Goes to Preschool'

By Joseph Tappenden

On February 9, the Calgary Jewish Academy (CJA) opened its doors to families across Calgary for the heartwarming celebration of our annual PJ Goes to Preschool event. In collaboration with PJ Library, this special day brought the essence of Shabbat to life, offering a glimpse into preschool life at CJA and strengthening ties with young families in the Calgary Jewish community.

The morning kicked off with a delightful Shabbat service led by our preschool students and teachers. Excitement filled the air as young voices sang songs, shared Shabbat stories, and recited traditional blessings. The event beautifully showcased the richness of Jewish traditions embodied by our preschoolers, creating lasting memories for both students and families.

After the Shabbat celebration, guests were invited into the CJA Learning Commons for crafts and a reading of *Goodnight Bubbala*, a joyful Yiddish parody of the classic bedtime story *Goodnight Moon*.



In collaboration with PJ Library Calgary, CJA opened its doors to families across Calgary for the celebration of their annual PJ Goes to Preschool. Morah Joyce delighted the children with a reading of "Goodnight Bubbala."

At CJA, we are more than just educators; we are dedicated to fostering a strong sense of community and Jewish identity. Through meaningful experiences like PJ Goes to Preschool, we aim to encourage the development of unique personal connections to Judaism. This event perfectly captures the spirit of

CJA's commitment to education, where identity, culture, and community seamlessly intertwine to leave an indelible mark on the hearts of our students and their families.



CJA Jr. High students learned culinary skills.

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Simchas and Celebrations

Tu B'Shevat *Cont. from page 1*

chosen, and they used their recess time to work with *Moreh* Ari Sniderman to create a tree campaign they would present to the school. Tree leaders created an educational and motivational video that was shared with families. They also visited each classroom to talk about how important trees are to our environment and to Israel specifically. Students learned that this year, JNF's Annual *Tu B'Shevat* School Campaign is about renewal and hope, and that each tree that is donated will be planted in the Be'eri Memorial Forest near Kibbutz Be'eri, in memory of the lives lost on October 7th. The leaders collected donation envelopes from classrooms, and students were seen adding leaves to JNF's large tree poster, indicating the tally of how many trees had been donated. Each year, our TT community steps up and donates to this important initiative. The school campaign officially ends February 19, but we always receive a bunch more later in February. To date, 345 trees have been generously donated. *Kol Hakavod!*

In addition to these exciting whole-school initiatives, in Grade 1, *Morah* Robin held a *Tu B'Shevat* Seder with her students. A few students had the special opportunity of helping *Morah* Robin read about the reasons for the different cups of grape juice -- white grape juice for the winter; white plus a bit of red for the spring; red plus a bit of white to represent the flowers and fruits of Spring and early Summer. The final cup is all red, representing the full bloom of summer and early fall. Students recited the blessings and readings while being thankful for the fruits of the trees and the seven species – wheat, barley, grapes, olives, pomegranates, figs, and dates. Special guest, principal Darin Johnson attended the Seder and the students were eager to help him learn the Hebrew words and customs associated with *Tu B'Shevat*.

Kindergarten students had a great time participating in a *Tu B'Shevat* taste test with *Morah* Shira. Their faces spoke volumes as they made their way through the traditional foods and recorded if foods tasted sweet, salty, sour or bitter. In *Moreh*

Ben's class, Grade 3 and Grade 6 learned about the traditions and customs of *Tu B'Shevat* and its origins, including *Shivat HaMinim* (7 species) and their significance to the land of Israel and the holiday. On the day of *Tu B'Shevat*, they conducted a Seder that included reading, blessing, stories, and fruity foods. In Hebrew language arts students gained a further understanding of *Tu B'Shevat* through vocabulary, while in music students sang, learned, and listened to *Tu B'Shevat* songs.

Walking down the school hallways, one couldn't help but stop and stare at the amazing *Tu B'Shevat* artwork. Grade 2 students created pastel trees adapting Kandinsky's circles as tree canopies, while also learning about traditions and the seven species. Grade 4 students drew trees and used paint to bring their artwork to life, while continuing to enrich their knowledge of *Tu B'Shevat* by viewing *The Lorax* movie and discussing with *Moreh* Ari the importance of trees in preserving the environment. During a mock Seder, Grade 5 & 6 students reviewed the traditions of *Tu B'Shevat*, while also watching *The Lorax* movie and considering the importance of trees for our planet and the power we all have to make a difference in preserving it for future generations.

Needless to say, our Early Learning Centre was bustling with energy and enthusiasm as our littlest ones were immersed in the wonder and splendor of this fun holiday. Some children planted seeds in small cups with cotton balls, some soil and seed, and watered them and watched them grow daily. At circle time they read



Tu B'Shevat, New Year for the trees, was celebrated throughout Talmud Torah with a variety of creative activities. There is still time to buy Tu B'Shevat trees - contact JNF.ca.

stories about trees, sang songs and danced together. They were offered different kinds of fruits to taste, smell and touch and it was explained how the fruits come from trees. Some classes used scissors to cut leaves, fruits and branches from colorful construction paper and to make their own trees.

In the 4-year-old classroom the children were a little confused about how they were going to plant in snow! They read the book "We Planted A Tree" by Diane Muldrow and learned about the various foods that grow on trees. The children then used that knowledge to decorate their own tree and plant bell pepper seedlings which were then sent home on *Tu B'Shevat*.

Our Out of School Care had a great time making edible *Tu B'Shevat* trees out of white chocolate, pretzels, and food coloring. To celebrate *Tu B'Shevat* they participated in a classroom Seder where they had the fun opportunity of eating their edible trees!

As you can see, *Tu B'Shevat* at TT never disappoints!



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The Hub

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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

This is my first message in the Hub for 2024, a fitting name and time to update you on the physical hub we will create for the community with the new Jewish Community Centre (JCC). With the acquisition of the building completed, we are now in possession of a unique property that will be the future home and face of Jewish Edmonton.

We have established a JCC Redevelopment Steering Committee, chaired by Karen Leibovici with Vice-Chair Lisa Miller. Ensuring continuity of community with a strengthened future, we look forward to engaging with you as we animate this property from now on.

The committee has commissioned Marshall Hundert as project manager, and will spend the coming months planning and tendering contracts to architects and general contractors. At this stage, we are circling back and discussing needs

with community agencies while preparing an application for a development permit. I can feel the excitement build as considerations for synergistic programming unfold and we plan to conceive of a Holocaust Museum with an even broader scope.

As I write this message, I am preparing for a return to Israel, to support and delve into a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in our complex partnership in the etzbah hagalil. Being on the ground and speaking directly with those living through such a challenging moment gives me greater clarity and insight on stewarding the philanthropy of our community, whether through the ongoing Israel Emergency Relief Fund, the support we provide to the Jewish agency for Israel, or special projects in our partner region.

I hope to re-establish a *mifgash* for our teens, where they have a 'Gesher Chai'—a

living bridge with Israeli teens to better understand and connect with one another. We look forward to welcoming some teens to Alberta this summer to do just that, hoping in future years we can have a full exchange in place.

Around the world we have seen troubling times of polarity alarming the increase of antisemitism. While we are a community with a diversity of views, let us be inspired by the unity we see in Israel, and continue to foster a connected community committed to a strong and vibrant Jewish Edmonton.

My greatest hope is that by the time I am writing the next message that we are celebrating the eradication of Hamas, and the release of all hostages who can be returned to their loving families and klal Israel.

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Stanley A. Milner theatre
Free
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 Edmonton Jewish Film Festival

Focus on Real Estate

YEG Real Estate Market: Off to a good start

By Daniel Starkman

Are you are thinking of buying or selling? This spring maybe an opportune time for you. Edmonton's Real Estate market is off to a very good start in 2024.

Single family detached homes are averaging 60 days on the market and semi-detached townhouses are down to 53 days, an improvement in the real estate market. The benchmark selling price for a single-family home is now up to \$440,000 dollars. Average sales for townhouses and condominiums are at \$233,000 respectively. If you are thinking of downsizing from a home to a condo, this would be an ideal time. Our market is one of the most affordable in Canada.

An article published in the *Edmonton Journal* dated Feb 9, 2024 by Cindy Tran reflected that Edmonton saw record population growth in 2023 from both immigration and interprovincial migration which is predicted to continue in 2024. The article further reflects the city's affordability, continuing employment growth and easing interest rates all pointing to a stronger market in 2024.

Retaining the services of a licensed Realtor with knowledge and skill whether buying or selling is an effective way to facilitate your objective and avoid the many latent pitfalls associated with property

purchases or sales.

Taking advantage of the affordability factor and the stabilization of interest rates makes this an opportune time for both buying and selling.

Daniel Starkman can be reached at Starkman Realty at 780-863-0778 or 780-760-0778. Starkman Realty is located at #7 11641A Jasper Avenue in Edmonton.



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Calgary welcomes Palestinian Human Rights activist Bassem Eid

By Maxine Fischbein

On February 7, Calgary Jews Stand United - a grassroots organization mainly driven by members of the Israeli Diaspora living in Calgary - welcomed an audience of approximately 600 to an evening with Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid.

Entering the sanctuary of Beth Tzedec Synagogue, eyes could not help but gravitate to a large section in the upper bowl where each empty seat honoured one of the 240 innocent people taken into captivity by Hamas terrorists during the savage attacks on Israel's southern communities on Black Sabbath, October 7, 2023.

The images of all those children and babies and women and men, including some who were elderly and ill, were even more devastating given IDF confirmation earlier on February 7 of 31 hostages dead in Gaza.

Our community came out in droves to hear Bassem Eid, drawn by a need to be together, to remember those murdered on October 7 and subsequently, and to reaffirm the importance of advocating for those we fervently hope will yet return to the loving arms of their families.

And how often do we hear an Arab born in Jerusalem and reared in an UNRWA refugee camp sharing a message that is openly critical of Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Middle Eastern regimes that fuel their engines of destruction?

Eid, who attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem, later working as an advocate, peace activist and journalist, now spends much time on the road, frequently addressing Jewish audiences where he is predictably well received.

The event, spearheaded by CJSU organizers Ortal Luzon and Roni Sandruski, was held in conjunction with Beth Tzedec Congregation, Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, Calgary Jewish Federation, JNF Canada, Stand with Us Canada, Students Supporting Israel and the Israeli Canadian Council.

Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne, the Senior Rabbi at Beth Tzedec, led the Canadian and Israeli anthems while Rabbi Menachem Matusof (who was born and raised in Casablanca, Morocco) recited Psalm 122 for



Human Rights Activist Bassem Eid.

the soldiers of Israel and the land of Israel, a prayer for the kidnapped and, In Arabic, the translation of a

Continued on page 14

LOOKING TO BUY OR SELL?
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On July 1, 2020 William I. Brustein stepped down as Vice President for Global Strategies and International Affairs at West Virginia University to assume the position of Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of History (currently emeritus). Professor Brustein has published widely in the areas of political extremism and ethnic/religious/racial prejudice. Among Brustein's award-winning books are *The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925-1933* (Yale University Press) and *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press).

SPEAKER

William Brustein


Why Do You Think They Call It The Oldest Hatred?:
ANTI-SEMITISM - PAST & PRESENT

TUESDAY
MARCH 12, 2024
12:00 PM

Student Lounge,
Arts & Convocation Hall


Free and open to the public
Refreshments served

Scan for more Jewish Studies Week News!



Drawing on more than 40 years of empirical research on anti-Semitism in Europe and the U.S., Professor William I. Brustein offers key insights into the ubiquity of anti-Semitism. Among the questions to be addressed in his presentation are:
Why were so many people indifferent to the fate of the Jews on the eve of the Holocaust? Why did anti-Semitism reach such heights before the Holocaust? How do we explain societal and temporal variation in anti-Semitism? How does anti-Semitism differ from other forms of ethnic, racial and religious prejudice? Is leftist anti-Semitism new? And how does present-day anti-Semitism differ from past anti-Semitism?

JEWISH STUDIES WEEK
WINTER 2024



Focus on Real Estate

Navigating real estate challenges

By Tanya Eklund

Calgary, a city with a storied history of boom and bust cycles, has weathered economic uncertainties since the early 1900s, largely tied to the fluctuating fortunes of the oil industry. The resilience of its people was tested in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash and again during the oil boom from 2012 to 2014. However, October 2014 marked a turning point when the city faced adversity, leading to five years of shared stories of loss, bankruptcies, and a surge in mental health challenges.

In 2022, Calgary began to emerge from the shadows, witnessing a resurgence of vibrancy. Beyond economic factors, the city's appeal expanded beyond job opportunities, with a newfound reputation as a destination for families seeking a high quality of life. The oil industry diversification efforts and the influx of new tech industries played a role, but the city's allure went beyond that. Calgary became a global destination, attracting people looking to raise families, find affordable homes, and enjoy the proximity to the breathtaking mountains.

By 2024, Calgary's population soared to 1,665,000, marking a 1.52% increase from the previous year. This growth trend continued, with a 1.8% increase from 2022 and a 1.9% rise from 2021. Alberta's highest median after-tax income in Canada added to the city's appeal, especially when compared to the soaring costs in places like Toronto and Vancouver. The ability to work remotely further fueled the influx of residents, turning Calgary into a sought-after destination.

Having moved to Calgary 23 years ago, I've witnessed the city's evolution and am deeply passionate about its people and potential. However, rapid growth presents challenges, including escalating housing prices, a shortage of affordable rentals, and strains on healthcare and infrastructure. These concerns resonate daily, as clients express frustrations in securing homes amid intense demand, reminiscent of the multiple-offer scenarios and over-list-price bids of yesteryears.

Builders are racing against time, but the demand is outpacing supply, leading to reminiscent scenes of past

Edible art for Tu B'Shevat

Beautiful (and delicious) edible art was created at the Flavours of Tu B'Shevat program held at the Paperny Family Calgary JCC, followed by a fabulous Seder in celebration of the holiday. Facebook photos Calgary JCC.

boom times. Land has become a precious commodity, echoing the challenges of the 1970s boom and the subsequent 1980s bust. Despite these challenges, Calgary stands strong, and the prospect of continued growth is promising if migration persists.

While we navigate the complexities of a growing metropolis, reminiscent of building a company, challenges are inevitable. The current real estate landscape mirrors the gold rush days, with a sense of urgency and opportunity, but also the risk of rapid

change. Gratitude fills each day as we revel in the safety, education, bustling grocery stores, and friendly citizens that Calgary offers. As my mother wisely says, "This too shall pass," but for now, I choose to remain grateful for the present moment in our city and country.

For more information contact tanya@tanyaeklundgroup.ca.

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Focus on Real Estate

HonestDoor shakes up real estate industry with \$500 MLS listings

In these tough economic times in Alberta and across the country, people are looking for ways to save money, without losing valuable service. HonestDoor, an online real estate platform, is transforming the real estate landscape, offering homeowners a new way to take control of their property listings and save money, all while providing transparency and flexibility.

If you are a homeowner thinking about selling your home, HonestDoor may be a perfect fit for you. They list your home on Multiple Listing Service (MLS) and realtor.ca for a set fee of \$500. Your listing is distributed to thousands of real estate agents who represent buyers looking for homes, and hundreds of other syndicated websites; there is no need for you to put the listing on Kijiji or Facebook. You control the listing, manage the showings and negotiate with potential buyers - with no sellers' commissions. That way you can keep thousands of dollars in your pocket.

HonestDoor also empowers Canadian real estate buyers, sellers, investors and lenders with property valuations and innovative brokerage services. The company's mission is to provide consumers with transparent, up-to-date and cost-effective solutions for all their real estate needs.

HonestDoor recently announced the nationwide launch of its groundbreaking brokerage service, providing Canadian homeowners with an affordable and transparent way to list their properties on the MLS for just \$500. With this expanded service, HonestDoor continues to redefine the real estate industry by offering a unique opportunity for homeowners to take control of their property listings.

"Our brokerage service offers a compelling alternative to traditional real estate listings,"

said Daniel Belostotsky, co-founder and CEO of HonestDoor. "We manage the listing and placement on Realtor.ca, allowing homeowners to set the commission they wish to pay a buyer's agent. If an unrepresented buyer contacts the seller, the savings can add up to tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the value of the property."

At that point, both parties can speak directly and agree on a price. They can then reach out to many of HonestDoor's recommended real estate lawyers or use their own lawyer to ensure everything is legitimate. So far, according to Belostotsky, 20 per cent of HonestDoor's listings sold without representation from either side, resulting in significant savings.

For example, he explained, an owner with a property valued at around \$500,000 could save approximately \$20,000 in after-tax dollars. HonestDoor's automated valuation models, which boast a 91 per cent accuracy rate, can assist in identifying the price of a home, making the HonestDoor platform a one-stop service for buying and selling Canadian properties.

HonestDoor's brokerage service has already completed dozens of successful transactions, noted Belostotsky. Homeowners can now list their properties on the MLS network across Canada, with listings that also appear on Realtor.ca, one of the nation's leading real estate platforms, within as little as 24 hours. In addition, these listings are featured on HonestDoor.com, a website that receives over

500,000 monthly visits and is steadily growing in popularity.

The platform is not competing against excellent real estate agents, said Belostotsky, but is offering an alternative for owners who want to steer the selling process.

HonestDoor's brokerage service has been used for a wide range of properties, including residential (condos, houses) as well as rural, recreational, and commercial properties. Listings remain active for a full year, and homeowners have the flexibility to edit, remove and relist their properties as often as they like throughout the year.

The platform's commitment to transparency and customer empowerment extends to its offer to refund the \$500 listing fee if, at any point, a homeowner decides to work with one of their partnered real estate agents, added Belostotsky.

HonestDoor's future plans include expanding to the consumer's buy-side, enhancing services, and providing valuable data for business clients. With its significant data resources and growing website traffic, HonestDoor is poised to become a prominent player in the online real estate portal industry. The company aims to complete thousands of listings in 2024 - a fraction of the approximately one million listings completed nationally each year - and grow from there.

For more information, visit HonestDoor.com.

Knitzvah Hats for IDF Soldiers



The first package of Knitzvah Project hats from the Calgary knitters has arrived at the Lone Soldier Foundation Office in Tel Aviv. Staff and the soldiers send heartfelt gratitude for the caring sent through the lovely hats and meaningful cards. With appreciation to Stan Meyer for bringing the hats to Israel. If you are planning to travel to Israel, and can take even a few hats, we can arrange for someone to pick them up from you in Israel. Contact Michele Doctoroff switzer@telus.net to help make a difference and share Calgary's love for Israel.



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Focus on Real Estate

Is buying a home on your mind? 4 things to think about

(NC) Becoming a homeowner can be exciting, but is it the best decision for your circumstances? Here are four steps to help you decide if homeownership is right for you:

Consider what you can afford

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, your monthly housing costs should not be more than 39 per cent or so of your gross monthly income. These costs include your mortgage payments, property taxes and utility costs such as heating and cooling. Review your budget to assess whether you can realistically take on these extra costs.

Get preapproved for a mortgage

Getting preapproved for a mortgage with your bank will tell you what amount you qualify for. It provides a benchmark you can compare with your budget. Keep in mind that the amount you are approved for doesn't

necessarily fit in your budget.

Once you've done that, you can start looking for homes that are right for you and your finances. You can also use the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada's free mortgage qualifier tool to see if you can qualify for a mortgage to buy a home based on your income and expenses.

Remember all the other costs

When you buy a home, you must pay for upfront costs in addition to your mortgage. Referred to as closing costs, these are one-time fees you pay to complete the sale. Examples include home inspection fees, legal fees, property tax adjustments and title insurance. Be prepared to spend between one and a half and four per cent of the home's purchase price on these costs at the time you close on the home. And don't forget ongoing expenses such as maintenance costs and insurance.

Explore government programs and incentives

The Canadian government has home buying programs and incentives. If you're eligible, these can help you purchase your home:

Home Buyers' Plan: You may withdraw up to \$35,000 from your registered retirement savings plan tax-free to buy your first home.

First-Time Home Buyer Incentive: You may receive five or 10 per cent of your home's purchase price for a down payment.

Home buyers' amount: You may be eligible to receive a non-refundable tax credit of up to \$1,500.

GST/HST new housing rebates: You may be eligible for a rebate for some of the tax you pay when buying your home.

Find more information to help you decide if buying a home is right for you at canada.ca/money.

Nova Music Festival survivor will speak in Calgary: March 11

By Danyael Halprin

Israel's Or Elmakias, 27, is a survivor of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack at the Nova Music Festival. While trying to escape she was shot in the leg and is now on a journey of physical and emotional healing.

Elmakias was working at the festival, scanning tickets at the entrance. She had worked through the night and the dawn had newly broken. It was 6:29 a.m., Israeli psytrance DJ Artifex was playing and everyone was dancing. "All of a sudden we started seeing a lot of missiles in the sky and we realized it was not a regular attack. It did not look like anything we'd seen before," says Elmakias in a phone interview from Israel.

The DJ stopped playing and everyone started running to their cars in the parking lot. There was chaos, confusion, fear... The gunshots were getting louder, closer. People were looking for places to hide, they were being shot at and falling to the ground, screaming, crying hysterically... Elmakias was shot in her right leg near the knee while trying to get to her car. Nine of her friends were murdered at the festival.

"We just wanted to dance. Most of the people who were at the festival were young men and women and they were murdered just because they were Jewish," says Elmakias. "It wasn't just murder. The terrorists boasted, raped, butchered."

As she was running through the field with her leg bleeding a guy took off his green shirt and tied it around the gushing artery, ultimately saving her leg. Because so many cars were trying to exit the festival at the same time it caused a bottleneck to get onto the road, but one group of people helped her inside their vehicle and were able to drive away. To all these angels, she wrote on her Instagram post on October 20, 2023: "The gratitude is not understood! The choice to save someone you don't know while understanding that you are exposing yourself and wasting time instead of running and saving yourself."

The IDF was caught off-guard by the terror attack, but Elmakias says she doesn't know why it took the army so long to respond. "There's a lot we don't know." Their car managed to get in touch with the ambulance service Magen David Adom who told them which roads to take to safety. And with G-d's help, of that she is sure, they reached Kibbutz Tsalim, far from the party. After four to five hours, she was able to get medical attention at the clinic but because of the severity of the gunshot wound she was transferred to Soroka Medical Centre, 45 kilometres away in Be'er Sheva.

Elmakias's right leg is seriously injured with entry and exit holes from the bullet. Before the attack she was living in Tel Aviv but she is now in Netanya with her parents who are helping her rehabilitation. She has been speaking to a psychologist, who, she says, has been very helpful in processing the trauma, and she works with a physiotherapist a couple of hours a day.

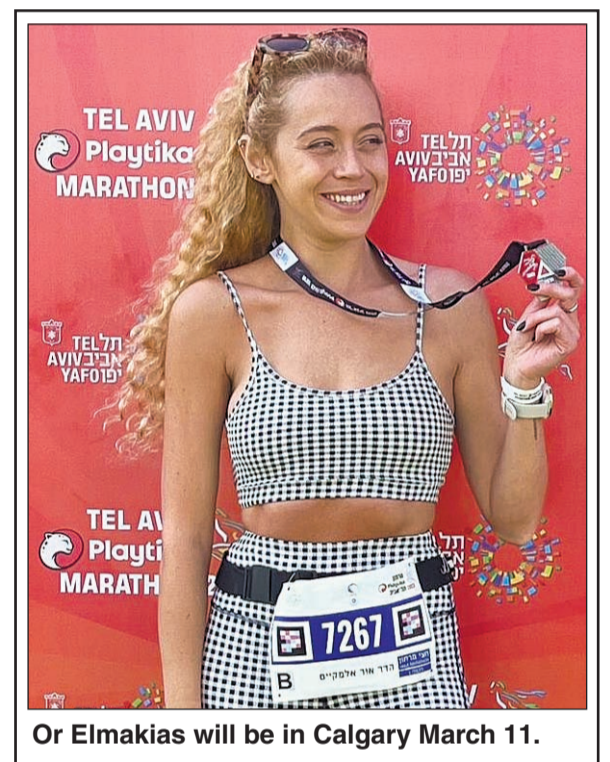
Elmakias graduated with an honours in psychology. Right now she's unable to work or play sports but she intends to continue her master's degree in education

at Levinsky College in Herzliya and teach Grade One students.

In December 2023, Elmakias travelled to New York where she spoke to Jewish students from 40 campuses across North America, sharing her story and insights into the complex reality of what is happening in Israel. Elmakias says she's not interested in politics but says her government must bring the hostages home now. "We don't have a lot of time and a lot of them have died."

A long-distance runner, Elmakias specializes in the half-marathon. She ran a few half-marathons in the past two years in Tel Aviv. Elmakias is currently on crutches. She says she will be able to walk free of them in a couple of months, but it may be another two years until she can run again. On her Instagram post on November 23, 2023, she wrote: "They asked me, What would make you a little happier? To run. What will help you alleviate the trauma? To run... The light will return and a day will come and we will dance (and run) together."

In her Instagram photos, the sunlight illuminates her happy, free spirit as she dances at various music festivals over the years. Elmakias is resilient and positive and she has the mental fortitude of a runner.



Or Elmakias will be in Calgary March 11.

Or Elmakias will be speaking at Calgary's Beth Tzedec Congregation on March 11, 2024, an evening hosted by Students Supporting Israel. Tickets are free on Eventbrite, go to Students Supporting Israel Calgary on Instagram @ssicalgary.

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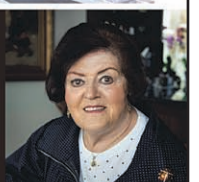


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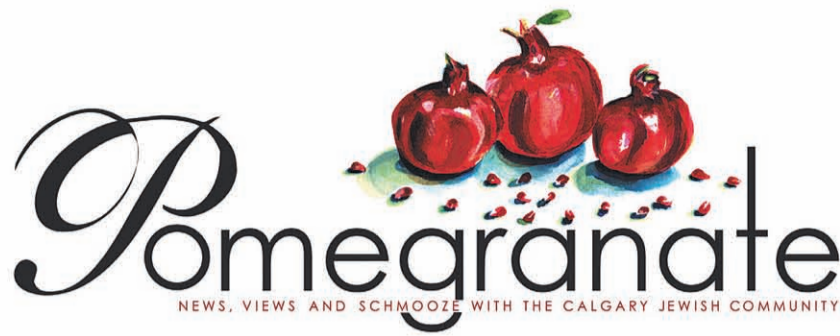
This is not intended to solicit properties already listed for sale with another brokerage.



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 LISA LIBIN

Although it's nearly two months since the end of winter break, I find myself still missing the quieter two weeks in December where I loved having some time to sit, read, and even finish a few good books.

I love reading. It's something I have always held a special passion for since childhood and made a priority to demonstrate the same enjoyment of reading to my own children from the time they were babies.

It was perfect timing that when I moved back to Calgary in 2011 with a six-month-old in tow, PJ Library® was waiting for us with open arms. As my oldest daughter grew to appreciate books, it was always an exciting time in our house when a new PJ book arrived in the mail addressed to her. At the time, I don't think that I truly appreciated the abundance of benefits the program brought to my family.

Not only did the books allow us to explore holidays and Jewish themes, but the program in itself expanded our own personal community. It was always so special to attend PJ programs with our own friends, but more importantly, to meet new ones – ones that continue to be important people in our life so many years later.

I have also been so fortunate for PJ Library to grow with my family. My daughter was thrilled to graduate to the PJ Our Way® (PJOW) chapter books, and my son has been excited to participate in the newly established PJOW programs that have included swimming, trips

to the trampoline park, pizza parties, and more.

When I tell friends outside our community that there is a program that gives Jewish kids free books every month and participate in monthly activities for minimal cost (if any), I can personally tell you they express how unique and special this is. There are so many parents in Calgary seeking connections with other families, along with activities for their children – and Calgary Jewish Federation offers this solution to any and all Jewish parents. How amazing is that?

I think about how, right now, community is so very important in my world. Jewish Calgary is my reprieve in a world full of hate, and if my kids were younger I know that PJ Library would be an even more crucial program in not only helping to reinforce my own Jewish pride with my PJ community, but also helping to develop this in my own children.

Your generous UJA donations help fund PJ Library by supporting connections with reading, Jewish learning, and community building. We are so fortunate to also have in place the PJ Library Legacy Endowment Fund that is currently over \$300,000 – all to support the long-term viability of our local PJ Library programming and subscriptions. There is currently a matching grant incentive for donations received before March 31, 2024, in which the Harold Greenspoon Foundation will match 25% of cash legacy gifts with no minimum to participate!

Particularly in a time when Jewish connection and pride is more important than ever, it is wonderful to know that PJ Library exists – and will continue to exist – to support our families and children. PJ book can also help families with difficult conversations in this complex and polarizing environment by giving parents the tools to engage in developmentally appropriate discussions on topics including combatting antisemitism and encountering hate. It can also serve as a tool for those who did not grow up with a strong Jewish foundation but want to ensure their own children or grandchildren love and celebrate all things Jewish.

Regardless of your Jewish background, knowledge, family make-up, or observance level, it is necessary to prepare our children for a future in which they will face hard moments but also feel pride in celebrating the good ones. As a proud PJ Library parent, I can confidently say this invaluable program accomplishes this and I encourage all of you to give generously to ensure this one-of-a-kind program continues to thrive while remaining free and accessible to our Jewish families.

B'Shalom,

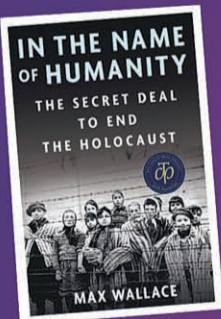
Lisa Libin, President, Calgary Jewish Federation

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

MAX WALLACE

Join us as Max Wallace reveals an incredible story involving the secret negotiations of an unlikely trio – a former fascist President of Switzerland, a courageous Orthodox Jewish woman, and a Finnish osteopath – to end the Holocaust. He documents their efforts to deceive Heinrich Himmler, successfully preventing the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews during the last months of the Second World War.

**THURSDAY
MARCH 7
7:00 - 8:30PM
CENTRAL LIBRARY
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FREE REGISTRATION AT QR CODE OR JEWISHCALGARY.ORG



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

VISIT JEWISHCALGARY.ORG/IBP FOR MORE INFO



IBP opens doors

Calgary Jewish Federation's Integrated Bursary Program

can help you, if you find it's a financial struggle to participate fully in Jewish life in our community.

With a single application followed by a discreet, personalized session with a Federation volunteer, you can access subsidies for day schools, summer camp, and recreational activities – depending on your need.

More information and application form available online at: jewishcalgary.org/ibp or by email to: ibp@jewishcalgary.org



Calgary Jewish Federation is a participating charity in Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink.

All donations made through Birdies for Kids will be matched up to 50% making your donation go even further!

**JAC GALA
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\$3.456 MILLION**





The first PJ Library® books arrived in Calgary in July 2009. Sixty-nine books were sent out to the inaugural group of PJ Library Calgary children, and since then we have sent out 75,559 books! Books that are loved and cherished, and passed down to family and friends; books that teach us about Jewish holidays, and how to be a mensch; books that make us feel happy, or silly, or ones that make us think – 75,559 books that have helped shape our community.

Since 2009, PJ Library families have gathered together to learn about holidays, create art, play with joy, and get to know each other. As a PJ parent myself, I can genuinely say that I met some of my best friends through PJ Library and so have my children. The babies that laid together on the floor at Shalom Baby have now been friends for close to nine years and will carry a bond that was created because of PJ Library – forever.



My name is **Sydney Truax** and I am the **PJ Library and Family Engagement Coordinator** with Calgary Jewish Federation. I have a passion for bringing people together and creating a sense of community. I am honoured to have this role and play even a small part in giving families their connection to Jewish Calgary.

If you would like to **learn more about PJ Library** or if you have an event or get-together you would like to see in our community, contact me at: **struax@jewishcalgary.org** or **403-537-8592**. I look forward to hearing from you!



PJ FAST FACTS

- This year, PJ Library is celebrating our **18th Anniversary!**
- PJ Library subscriptions cost **\$100USD** per child. Thanks to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, our community only pays 50% of that cost, and your generous UJA donations help to pay for the rest.
- We currently have over **500** PJ Library and **118** PJ Our Way® subscriptions.
- Since 2009 we've sent out **75,559** books!
- Some Calgarian children started receiving books at six months and received a book every month until they turned 13! That's **150** FREE books!
- PJ Library provides books and programming to readers ages **0 to 8½**. This year we have celebrated holidays, swam at the JCC, created art, sang songs, read books, and so much more!
- PJOW provides books with Jewish themes to readers ages **8½ to 12**, plus an array of fun and age-appropriate programs and events for students in grades 4, 5, and 6.
- So far, **PJ Our Way** has celebrated Chanukah, splashed in the pool, Created terrariums for Tu B'Shevat and more! Sign up for PJ Our Way to be a part of the fun!



Thank you to our PJ Library Legacy donors who are ensuring our families will have the gift of books for generations to come. Our community has raised over \$370,000 – and has received a 25% match to support PJ Library Calgary in perpetuity. The Harold Grinspoon Foundation Legacy matching program for Calgary ends on **March 31, 2024** so please consider making a donation today – there is no minimum amount to participate. For more information contact Diana Kalef at **dkalef@jewishcalgary.org** or 403-444-3154.

2023 PJ LIBRARY ENDOWMENT HONOUR ROLL

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LOOK FOR OUR NOOK!

Thanks to a generous grant from The Calgary Foundation, PJ Library is thrilled to announce the start of construction on **The PJ Family Library and Play Space**. Families will be able to enjoy this beautiful space filled with books, toys, and engaging activities fostering a love for reading and playtime. Stay tuned for our grand opening and join us in creating lasting memories and fostering a sense of community for children and parents alike. We can't wait to welcome you to the PJ Family Library and Play Space very soon!



PJ celebrates Shabbat every other Friday at the JCC with an interactive half hour of songs, stories, and brachot (blessings).

Upcoming dates: **March 6 & 20**



Do you have a baby, two or under? Join us every other Wednesday at the JCC for coffee and nosh while sharing the joys and oys of parenting.

Upcoming dates: **March 1 & 22***

*Dress up for our special Purim Tot Shabbat celebration!



PJ PARENT CONNECTORS

We are bringing PJ Library to YOU! Watch your email for an invitation to join PJ Library in your community.

If you would like to host an event in your community, email Andrea (South Calgary) or Alexis (North Calgary) at **parentconnector@jewishcalgary.org**

PJ PARENT CONNECTOR

We want to hear from parents with kids 2 and under! Contact Aliya: **parentconnector@jewishcalgary.org** to connect with other new parents and be a part of our **Shalom Baby** program!



GET PAID TO GET TOGETHER!

PJ Library will pay you to hang out with your friends! **PJ Library Get Together Grants** are now open! Whether you're hosting a Shabbat dinner, holiday event, volunteer project, or hike, PJ Library will reimburse your family for up to \$100USD of expenses to feed, entertain, and delight your gathered guests. Families may apply for a total of three separate events. Eligible PJ Library subscribers will have already received a Get Together email containing a personal host code and link to complete an application. Contact Sydney for more information or if you need help finding your unique code.

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Bassem Eid *Cont. from page 8*

psalm promising the arrival of Moshiach (the Messiah).

According to Luzon, the CJSU journey began when Diaspora Israelis, previously unknown to each other, “were connected by our sheer despair after the October 7 attack.”

“We were heartbroken and lost, seeking a way to connect our community and shed light on the situation back home.”

“Your presence here speaks volumes,” Luzon told the audience. “It is a powerful reminder of our community’s incredible strength and unity.”

“The story of Israel, our story, is one of unparalleled perseverance and resilience,” said Luzon. “Against all odds we have risen time and time again, overcoming adversity with unwavering determination. However, the challenges we face are not limited to our borders.”

“The threat of radical Islamic extremism looms large, not only in our region, but across the globe,” added Luzon, who says CJSU has made it its mission to “...educate those who are misled” by Israel’s enemies and their enablers.

Eid was born in 1958 in Jordanian-controlled Jerusalem, where his family lived in the Jewish Quarter. Today he lives in Jerusalem, Israel.

During the first Intifada he was a field worker for B’Tselem, an Israeli non-profit devoted to calling out human rights violations in the occupied territories. In 1995, Eid turned his efforts toward human rights violations perpetrated by the Palestinian Authority against Palestinians. The following year he founded the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group.

In her introduction, Sandrusi recognized Eid as a prolific writer and award-winning activist.

Eid began by acknowledging the fear and dread of Israelis and Palestinians during a time when things are “upside down”.

“People don’t know to where this war is really leading us,” Eid said.

“I think that the Hamas almost proved to the international community on October 7 that they are a genocidal movement, that they are a brutal, barbaric terrorist organization.”

While he previously sounded that alarm, Eid said it was “much more comfortable” for some leaders in the region to turn a deaf ear because it suited their purposes.

“Now things are more clear, not only for Israel, not only for the international community, but I believe also very clear to the Palestinians themselves,” said Eid, who added that Israel alone can put an end to Hamas.

Not a single Arab country is calling for an end to the war, Eid said.

“All of the Arab countries are calling to increase the humanitarian aid to Gaza,” noted Eid. “Even the International Court of Justice never, ever mentioned to stop the war.”

Underscoring the existential risk to Israel, Eid characterized the war as Israel’s second war of independence.

Hamas has brought the people of Gaza “misery, barbarity, and destruction,” Eid said, as well as hundreds of kilometres of tunnels.

“But, in the meantime,” adds Eid, “the Hamas did not ever try to build one shelter.”

When Hamas is challenged on that point, says Eid, they ascribe responsibility to the United Nations and

the Israeli occupation.

Eid shakes his head at the victory proclamations of Hamas’s leader, safely and luxuriously hunkered down in Doha, as Gazans experience devastation.

“If this is victory, imagine what our defeat will be,” mused Eid.

“We are living in the lap of a leadership that is not a leadership. Hamas is not a leadership. Abbas is not a leadership,” Eid said.

“Nobody cares about the civilians in Gaza,” added Eid, who explained that the international community is calling for more humanitarian aid when it is fully aware that it is siphoned by wealthy Hamas leaders and “sold on the black market the next day.”

Israel has confiscated hundreds of millions in Shekels from the tunnels, Eid said.

Eid says he talked about the participation of Palestinian UNRWA workers in the October 7 slaughter in Israel, long before UNRWA admitted that a mere 12 employees had blood on their hands.

The numbers are far greater, Eid said, adding that the tragedy is magnified because many UNRWA employees who took part in the attacks were teachers who influenced the children of Gaza.

“As a Palestinian I really hope that Israel will free Gaza from Hamas,” Eid said, characterizing Hamas leaders as “Iranian agents and Qatari traitors.”

Other proxy actors, including the Houthis in Yemen are “adding oil to the fire,” Eid said.

What will happen in Gaza the day after the war ends? Eid does not believe Gaza should come under the control of the Palestinian Authority or a coalition of international organizations.

He favours self-rule by and for Palestinians and noted that the Gaza Strip consists of five districts and a population of which 67 per cent was, originally, Bedouin. It is Eid’s belief that each of five tribes “can keep its people under control.” He said this formula could work as long as the tribes do not unite.

Eid was dismissive when asked during the Q and A if the region wouldn’t just descend into tribal warfare. (Editor’s note: One does not need a history or political science degree to surmise that such an arrangement would lead to further chaos and fertile soil for another generation of proxy warlords).

Eid thinks room should be made for said tribes to run the affairs of the Gaza strip for at least a period of five years, “and to see how things are going.”

If that model were to work, he’d like to see it implemented in the West Bank.

“No Hamas and no Abbas,” Eid proclaimed.

“The tribes need, also, to be supported and protected,” said Eid, adding “I think that the only one that can support and protect those tribes is Egypt.”

He did not address the unlikelihood of Egypt applying for the position.

In Eid’s vision, Israel would facilitate economic prosperity for Gazans that would, in his view, help to protect Israel.



Each empty seat in the upper bowl of Beth Tzedec honoured one of the 240 people taken into captivity on Oct. 7.

crossed daily into Israel, earning hundreds of millions of shekels every month.

According to Eid, this Palestinian labour force is waiting for an end to the war or a decision from the Israeli government to let them once again work in Israel, something he says is a non-starter for the right wing of the Netanyahu coalition who favour importing workers from the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia. Eid speculated that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu would himself favour the return of Palestinian workers to Israel.

If West Bank workers are not allowed to ply their trades within Israel within the next month or two, Israel can expect a “huge storm of violence from the Palestinians towards the Israelis,” Eid said.

He had strong words for what he called “the so-called pro-Palestinians” whom he referred to as “thugs and gangsters” causing “huge damage to the reputation of the Palestinians” and providing no benefit to the people they claim to support.

Eid called for the US Congress to limit the activities of these actors, whom he believes will eventually perpetrate acts of terror in the United States and Canada, and called out the leaders of universities, saying that Jewish students should not be living in fear on their own campuses.

These pro-Palestinians couldn’t operate at all in the Arab world, noted Eid. “They would be in jail until their death,” Eid said. “But here, the United States call it freedom of speech.”

Students should be protesting this and demanding protection from legislators, said Eid. Their failure to provide it would be the prelude to much suffering in America, Eid warned.

The success of CJSU in bringing the Jewish community together for the evening with Bassem Eid is remarkable. Would that our synagogues and community organizations could readily attract those numbers in time of celebration!

Some took comfort in Eid’s support for Israel and the Diaspora Jewish community and his affirmation of truths they consider self-evident. Others would have preferred a deeper and more nuanced dive into the complicated history, issues, motivations and relationships that were the prelude to October 7.

Inviting Bassem Eid to speak to the Jewish community is akin to preaching to the choir. Perhaps Moshiach will draw a little closer when Eid is given standing ovations by large and enthusiastic Arab audiences.

Halevai!

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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Eid told his Calgary audience that in the West Bank more than 200,000 workers previously

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Simchas and Celebrations



PJ Library Drop-In at the Talmud Torah gym

By Mira Campbell

Edmonton PJ Library had another successful Drop-in play time at the Talmud Torah Gym on Sunday, Feb. 4th that included many hands-on activities, a challah craft, snacks, and an opportunity for families to visit, bond and connect with other Jewish families in our

community.

The morning also included a special visitor, Brayden Bernstein, brother of our PJ parent Kylie Benson and uncle to Brooks, who recently wrote a beautiful children's story called, "The Great Mensch." The author read his story to a very captive PJ Family audience.

That same day, PJ Library held its first yoga and creative movement class with Glow Yoga Kids. All the children had a great time, stretching, bending, balancing and singing. The next two classes will be held on March 10 and April 14. Sign up today at jewishedmonton.org. A single class is \$18.

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Simchas and Celebrations

Ethos Bridal makes your wedding day a wonderful experience

“Making your wedding day a wonderful experience is our main objective,” said Haya Stein, matriarch of Calgary’s Ethos Bridal Boutique.

Fashion trends have come and gone, but the classic elegance of Ethos Bridal Boutique has withstood the test of time and flourished. They are proudly celebrating over fifty years of dressing Alberta’s brides and bridal parties.

Every special occasion begins with the dress and that is the specialty of Ethos Bridal Boutique. From flower girl to prom, bridesmaid to bride, evening gown to mother-of-the-bride, it’s no wonder that visiting Ethos has become such a sentimental family tradition.

Stan and Haya Stein, along with Haya’s brothers, Sam and Hayim Hamburger, founded Ethos in 1970 in Alberta and they have worked together for over 50 years to bring the finest quality gowns to Canadian brides and their wedding parties.

Hayim manages the day to day operations with precision and dedication to the bridal fashion industry. Haya has a passion for all things bridal and a natural talent for designing extraordinary wedding gowns and evening wear. You will find her designs at Ethos under the Anna Rose Label, lovingly named after her mother.

“In our bridal salon you will find a wide range of

dressess including exquisite couture designer wedding gowns, bridesmaid dresses, mother of the bride dresses, mother of the groom dresses, flower girl dresses and a large selection of elegant evening gowns, special occasion dresses, graduation/prom dresses and unique bridal accessories,” explains Haya.

With 50 years’ experience in the wedding industry, Haya has cultivated close relationships with the world’s most celebrated fashion houses and fills her store with their finest collections. She inspires her professional bridal consultants to graciously serve every bride and help her find the perfect dress... at the very best price!

“We have an assortment of dresses and bridal collections that flatter every figure and offer styles for any taste or special occasion,” remarked Haya.

Originally based out of both Edmonton and Calgary, the Edmonton store, located in West Edmonton Mall was a favorite destination shopping experience for brides for many years. Now Edmonton shoppers make the special trip to Calgary to sample the unique Ethos bridal selection.

“Our beautiful dresses bring the customers into the shop,” noted Haya, “but it is our amazing customer service that brings customers back year after year and



Ethos Bridal Boutique offers an assortment of fabulous dresses that flatter every figure.

across generations of friends and family members.”

Visit Ethos Bridal at Calgary’s historic Devenish Building on 17 Avenue for the latest bridal, bridesmaid, mother-of-the-bride, flower girl, prom and evening wear collections. Book an appointment online at ethosbridal.com or call 403-245-4188.

Your wedding videographer should be a Reel Mensch

By Jared Paull

Never let a wedding videographer’s confidence fool you. The service itself is relatively very young, and we are constantly inventing the medium as we go. Furthermore, folks don’t always know what they are seeking from this type of service. One thing is certain,

the expectations are high. Couples want the events properly documented, and with the accessibility of in expensive HD equipment, there is no reason why it can’t have the look of a Hollywood movie. I can tell you one thing, there is no tougher Executive Producer than a Bride, and no tougher shoot than a wedding.

The exciting thing from an artistic perspective is that before the videographers even arrive, there has been tens of thousands of budget dollars put towards set design, props, makeup and wardrobe to create a sensational world to capture. Also, there is no need for contrived emotion, because all of our key players are experiencing something genuine and exciting.

When our company began creating wedding videos, we needed a way to separate ourselves stylistically, so that potential shoppers would see our work, and need to have it. Our company is very versatile. In a normal week, it is very possible that we will be working on a television commercial at the same

time as a safety and orientation video, or a music video, or webcasting events around the world. Style has always been a derivative of the function of our work. So when creating a style for our product `wedding video`, we created the term `romantic, cinematic, documentary.` This term has driven the style of our wedding videos for the past 10 years. The `romance` is derived from the subject matter, so that our narrative is always about love. Our `look` is cinematic, meaning the shots are always carefully composed, with broadcast quality cameras, and movement tools such as stabilizers and dollies - the very same equipment used in our TV commercials. The `documentary` aspect is our capture style. Our shooters act as flies on the wall, not interfering with the event, but documenting it. We don’t create beautiful moments, we skillfully capture them, and present them romantically and cinematically.

The biggest trick to succeeding in this industry is right there in our company name - You’ve got to be a Mensch. I often remind couples when choosing photographers and videographers that the most important thing is to pick somebody you wouldn’t mind having around you on the most important day of your life.

We are almost 15 years into this business, which has taken on a life of its own by now, but it wouldn’t have without a lot of support from our community, many of whom gave us a shot before we had much professional experience. I had my first videography gig at the age of 9 and I haven’t put the camera down since. To keep tabs of the work we are doing, go to reelmensch.com or like Reel Mensch Productions on facebook.

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Simchas and Celebrations



Author of *The Great Mensch*, Brayden Bernstein was a special visitor at the Halpern Akiva Academy Daycare.

Fostering kindness through literacy

By Morah Nechama Rassin

Halpern Akiva Academy recently welcomed Mr. Brayden Bernstein, author of "The Great Mensch," for a special visit to our daycare. The experience was not just about enjoying a book; it sparked a chain reaction of kindness, as well as the importance of early literacy for our students.

Mr. Bernstein's book delves into the concept of being a "mensch," a Yiddish term signifying a person of integrity and honour, someone who acts with kindness and decency. Inspired by the book, our students, teachers, and staff engaged in discussions about what it means to be a mensch and how kindness can shape our interactions and relationships.

As we shared our thoughts and experiences, students created a physical kindness chain which grew longer and longer. Each act of kindness, whether big or small, contributed to the strengthening of our community bonds. This emphasis on kindness aligns with our school's values and mission to nurture not only academic excellence, but also character development.

At Halpern Akiva Academy, we understand the importance of instilling these values from an early age, especially when it can be paired with literacy. Our newly implemented early literacy intervention and prevention programs utilizing the Heggerty and LetterLand curriculum, are designed to foster a love

for reading and language acquisition from the earliest stages of development.

Early literacy lays the foundation for lifelong learning and success. By engaging children in literacy-rich environments and providing them with the tools and support they need to develop strong reading skills, we empower them to become confident, capable learners. Moreover, early literacy interventions can help identify and address potential challenges before they become barriers to academic achievement.

Indeed, this experience of combining literacy and character development echoes our regular exploration of the Torah at Halpern Akiva Academy. Through literary analysis of Torah texts, we delve into the ethical teachings of the Jewish nation, extracting timeless lessons that guide our students in their personal and communal lives. Torah intertwines literacy and character development, and creates a cohesive educational approach that not only fosters academic growth but also nurtures the moral compass of our students, instilling within them the values of kindness, integrity, and compassion inherent in the Jewish tradition.

The visit from Mr. Bernstein and the subsequent kindness chain serve as a powerful reminder of the impact that literature and acts of kindness can have on our school community. As we continue to prioritize early literacy and character development, we are laying the groundwork for a future generation of mensches – individuals who not only excel academically but also embody the values of kindness, integrity, and compassion.

At Halpern Akiva Academy, we are committed to fostering a culture of kindness and excellence, where every child has the opportunity to thrive academically,

socially, and emotionally. Through our dedication to early literacy and character education, we are shaping not only the minds but also the hearts of our students, preparing them to make a positive difference in the world.



Author Brayden Bernstein at the Halpern Akiva Academy Daycare.

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Book review: *Untethered* by Ruth Rakoff

Reviewed by Jenna Vetsch, LJI Reporter

Ruth Rakoff has created a terribly beautiful concoction of pain and hope in her novel, *Untethered*. She does not shy away from heavy themes as she pulls you into the inextricably connected, yet utterly different, lives of Petal and Rose Wolffe. Rakoff brings to light conversations around mental illness, intergenerational trauma, and Jewish identity that creates opportunities for a variety of viewpoints to surface. Her book provides language to complicated topics that can be a challenge to articulate.

The story begins in New York City celebrating a milestone in Petal's professional career, when she is suddenly confronted with a crisis involving her twin sister. What was once a diverging path transforms into a journey towards healing. The wounds run deep and the road to healing is never linear. For Petal, it is littered with grief, bitterness, and judgements formed from loss, secrecy, and mental illness.

Pragmatic, introverted, and reliable Petal grew up bearing the responsibility of wild, enchanting, and unpredictable Rose. The burden becomes too much though after their high school graduation during a trip to Israel. Away from Der, Petal's usual support person, suicidal thoughts and self-destructive behaviours create a cascade of events.

Der becomes one of my favourite characters, adding an element of safety even in the darkest of moments. He is a trusted father-figure, and a close friend to the sisters' grandparents, who Petal leans on for her emotional wellbeing. A flawed character himself, Der reveals snippets of wisdom collected from his own life experiences. He always gives the girls the space to

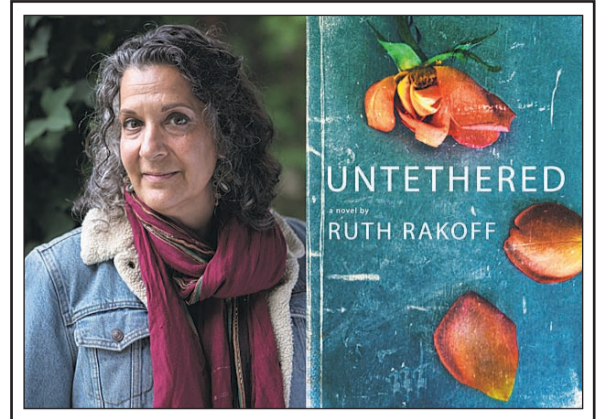
make their own decisions, regardless of whether they align with his own. I found myself using his words of wisdom to help me navigate my own personal struggles as well.

Rakoff jumps between present day and the past, taking us through the beginnings of the Zionist movement, the aftermath of the Holocaust, the establishment of kibbutzim, and the declaration of the State of Israel. These historic events act as a backdrop to better understand the decisions each character makes throughout the story.

The sisters experience a secular upbringing sprinkled with Jewish traditions and rituals which creates, in part, a semblance of order to the chaos and uncertainties in their lives. This Jewish expression is juxtaposed with the ultra-orthodox world Rose eventually immerses herself in. "Jewishness" is a spectrum of religion, spirituality, and culture that forms a broad array of Jewish identities globally. *Untethered* takes us inside two of these distinct Jewish communities—the secular and ultra-orthodox. These worlds collide as the sisters, at forty years-old, reunite in less-than-ideal circumstances in Rose and her husband's bungalow.

In the podcast *Culturally Jewish*, co-hosts David Sklar and Ilana Zackon have a conversation with Ruth Rakoff where she reveals glimpses of her writing process for *Untethered*. "I am somebody who has always needed to have a creative outlet." Touched by loss and grief in her own life, she channels personal experiences into this book which evokes authenticity. Rakoff also takes her time spent in literacy education within an ultra-orthodox community, as well as insights gathered from individuals she has interviewed, to build an honest story.

Readers get to follow characters over multiple generations and witness the impact trauma and mental illness can have on future ones. Petal and Rose experience a disconnect on numerous levels as their family's shadowed past catches up with them. Rose's current situation doesn't allow her to fight for what she needs, so Petal fights for both, offering a path for the sisters to reconnect. Festering problems grow when



negative circumstances are left untended. Rakoff tackles this head on through uncomfortable and meaningful conversations.

Rakoff's writing draws you in with her colourful imagery and expertly crafted metaphors. My mind devoured each word, captivating my attention, and leaving me hungry for answers with every chapter.

I found myself days later reflecting on the story, wondering what lay ahead for each character beyond the final page. Although this is a fictional novel, it feels grounded in truth. *Untethered* is an excellent novel to dissect and discuss within families and school settings, providing vocabulary to talk about difficult subjects. Snippets of dark, twisted humour ironically helps lighten the weighty topics.

Grab a copy of *Untethered* at your local bookstore and prepare to be transported into the enthralling, tragic, and messy world of Petal and Rose.

Author bio: Ruth Rakoff is a writer, and the director of a non-profit organization. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Toronto. She is grateful for the privilege of writing and making art. Born in Montreal, Rakoff published her first book, a memoir titled *When My World Was Very Small*, in 2010. Rakoff weaves personal experience into fictional characters and narratives in *Untethered*, her first novel. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.

PSAC *Cont. from page 3*

treatment on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, and religion or religious beliefs."

PSAC officials were made aware of the filing at the Human Rights Commission, including the relief sought by their Jewish members.

"Jewish members of PSAC should not be forced to endure their union's dissemination of anti-Israel views and anti-Jewish propaganda, which creates an unsafe environment where Jews are villainized in the eyes of their peers," said Marc Kitay, Partner at Whitten & Lublin Employment Lawyers.

"Despite complaints to PSAC's executive about the problematic conditions, no investigative or remedial action has been taken. In some instances, the union

even used these complaints as a platform to further disseminate antisemitic and anti-Israel views. A union's job is to represent the interest of all its members. No one should be made to feel like a second-class citizen or targeted because of their background and beliefs. There must be impartiality."

Among the relief sought by the complainants are a public apology, financial damages, orders to cease funding of UNWRA and BDS initiatives, and a means for them to re-direct their union dues to a Jewish charity of their choosing.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs' (CIJA) Legal Task Force, comprising volunteer lawyers from across Canada to coordinate litigation in defense of

Jewish people, connected the complainants with the pro-bono offer from Whitten & Lublin Employment Lawyers.

"We are incredibly thankful for the pro-bono services that Whitten & Lublin Employment Lawyers are providing and the work they're taking on for these Jewish PSAC members dealing with such an anti-Jewish and hostile environment from their own union," said Richard Marceau, Vice-President, External Affairs & General Counsel for CIJA.



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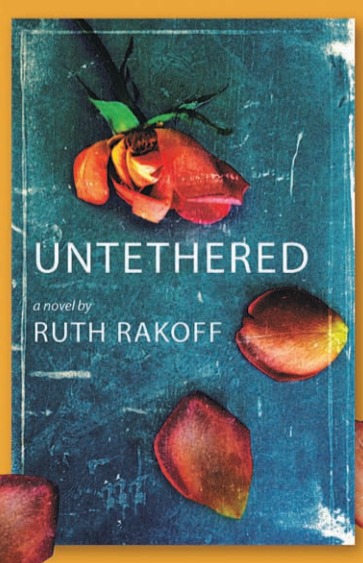
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UNTETHERED
a novel by Ruth Rakoff



UNTETHERED
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RUTH RAKOFF

A story about finding
empathy and forgiveness for
ourselves and those we love.



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Smashed cucumber dill salad

By Micah Grobman Siva

Pickles play an important part in Jewish cuisine, especially for those living in Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Russia. Before refrigeration was possible, pickling was a way to preserve fruits and vegetables to ensure there was enough to eat throughout the cold winter months. There are two main types of pickling: with a brine and with vinegar. Salt-brined pickles are what we now associate with Jewish delis because vinegar was too expensive for poor Jews to afford. Jewish home cooks used salt to preserve the summer's bounty along with garlic and dill and were then left to ferment for weeks, if not months.

My Zaida Arnold was a natural host. Every time we went to his house, he would come in with a tray of candies, Mrs. Fields cookies, Coke, and ice cream floats (with unique flavor combinations, like cream soda or orange soda in place of cola, no less). He made freshly squeezed orange juice for my bubbe (grandmother) every morning, and if you were lucky, he would make you a batch of "Zaida's Pickles," made with pickling cucumbers, salt, sugar, and vinegar.

It was a perfectly tangy treat that we looked forward to and craved every summer. Since then, I often make my own pickle variations and think of how he took

such pride in caring for others. The flavors of Arnie's pickles inspired me to create this cucumber salad, a modern twist of a side dish that is a hybrid between a salad and a plate of his pickles. It's a great dinner party option.

This recipe is from *Nosh: Plant-Forward Recipes Celebrating Modern Jewish Cuisine* by Micah Siva. It serves 4 to 6 people and the prep time is 40 minutes but it gets better, the longer it sits. For optimal results, make it up to 1 day in advance and toss with fresh dill just before serving.

Ingredients

2 large English cucumbers or 6 Persian cucumbers
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
 1 teaspoon sugar
 1 garlic clove, minced
 ½ cup chopped fresh dill
 Black pepper

Directions

Cut the ends off the cucumbers and cut them in half lengthwise. Place the cucumber halves, cut side down, on a cutting board and, using the handle of a wooden



spoon or spatula, press down firmly using the heel of your hand until the cucumber splits, repeating the motion along the length of the cucumber. Once it is evenly smashed, cut the cucumbers into diagonal 1-inch slices. Transfer the cucumbers to a large bowl, add the salt, toss until combined, and let sit for 20 minutes.

Using a colander, drain the excess liquid from the cucumbers, and then return them to the bowl. Add the vinegar, sugar, and garlic, toss, and let sit for 10 minutes.

Add the dill and mix until combined. Taste, season with salt and pepper, and serve.

Substitution: Instead of white wine vinegar, try white balsamic vinegar or any white vinegar.

Nosh vegan cookbook has a local connection

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

When Micah Grobman Siva, a proud Calgarian born and raised, made the conscious personal decision to become a vegetarian at age thirteen, it began a unique and creative culinary adventure that has shaped her life and career. "I got into cooking largely because of my mom and grandmother," Siva described in a recent phone interview with *Alberta Jewish News*. "Cooking together was such a big part of our family, and Jewish holidays were always celebrated at our house with lots of food." For Siva, food is symbolic and a means of expression. "So many of my most cherished memories surround food, preparing it, and meals shared with loved ones."

Micah Siva grew up in Calgary before her talents in the kitchen took her to New York for cooking school; her skills then launched her onto the London food scene for work, and she now writes a popular food blog *Nosh with Micah*, from her Bay Area home in California. In addition to providing her professional consultation regarding nutrition, Siva has recently published a must-have cookbook fusing the best of healthy fruits and veggies with the traditions of classic Jewish Bubby's kitchen. *Nosh: Plant-Forward Recipes Celebrating Modern Jewish Cuisine*, with a forward by Adeena Sussman, has been a labour of love for Siva, who has spent decades perfecting her repertoire of vegetarian Jewish recipes and Jewish inspired

culinary innovations.

"Every night we came together and ate dinner as a family. Food has always been a huge part of identity for me," she explained. "My grandmother didn't always understand vegetarianism, but meals are a shared experience, and I started to make versions of Jewish classics, just without meat. In high school I would even host dinner parties with multiple courses." Siva is quick to emphasize that people should break free of their preconceptions of vegetarianism. "I think people don't realize how delicious vegetables are and all the flavors that can be achieved with them," she pronounced with conviction.

After her grandmother, with whom she spent countless hours cooking, passed away, Siva worked through her sorrow and loss through food. "It happened right before Rosh Hashanah, and I was in London unable to make it home in time for the funeral," she explained. "I was overcome, and I was so far away from family." Needing to find an outlet for the flood of grief, Siva spent the entire day making kreplach, just as she had done so many times with her grandmother. "She would make her kreplach with bits of brisket inside; I filled mine with sauteed onions," Siva elaborated.

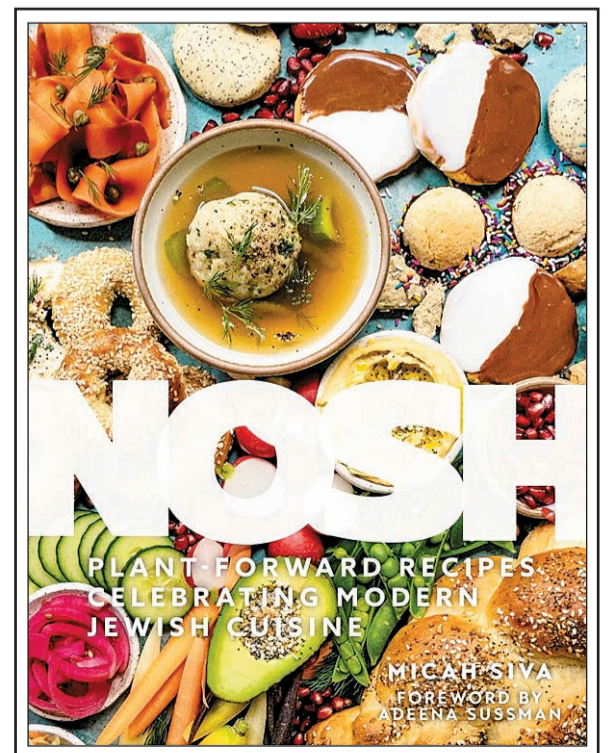
A great number of Siva's recipes in the new cookbook are vegan, but some do include cheese. "I'm not here to convince anybody to become a vegetarian," she declared with conviction. "That's a personal choice, and

I'm not going to tell people what to eat or not to eat. But I do want people to see that being a vegetarian and still feeling connected to Judaism is possible – and quite delicious." Siva, who now has her own family to prepare Jewish holiday feasts for, feels deeply that sharing traditional and holiday foods together will always culminate in a meal attached to cultural significance. With the help of her new cookbook, integrating vegetarian and vegan family members into the joy of celebratory feasting has become more inclusive than ever. "The book provides options that are really yummy and you get the feeling of brisket or gefilte fish, so you're able to share in the experience of everyone else at the table."

"These aren't just foods that vegetarians enjoy – they're for everyone. One of the wonderful things about the book is that it provides excellent parve options that people maintaining a strictly kosher home can easily and confidently incorporate at their table. If the menu is lacking side dishes, no worries! I have some awesome salads and sides that will complement any main," explained Siva.

With Pesach just around the corner, Siva's book makes an excellent addition to any Jewish household and is sure to provide some inspiration to jazz-up the Seder table. "Being connected to Judaism and identity is so crucial within my own life," Siva noted. "Food is a central part of that, and just because I am a vegetarian doesn't mean I lose out on any of the richness or togetherness of holidays."

Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



from the **Sources**
by Eliezer Segal

Footprints in the ashes

Literary historians and just-plain fans of mystery fiction occasionally raise the question “What was the first detective story?” The correct answer depends somewhat on how you define the genre (for example, whether it has to involve a crime or a detective). The proposed candidates are almost invariably nineteenth-century European or American authors, such as E. A. Poe or Wilkie Collins. Those with wider horizons might include a tale from the *Thousand and One Nights*. Others expand the category to allow just about any story that involves solving a puzzle.

A popular candidate is the biblical Daniel who exposed the fraudulent cult of Bel.

What’s this? You don’t recall that episode from your reading of the Jewish scriptures? Well, the truth is that the story is not found in the editions of the Bible that were accepted by Jewish tradition. It was however included in some other ancient versions. The original Hebrew or Aramaic text has not survived, but it found its way into Greek translations that were preserved by Christian communities. There are two known versions of the Greek text; one of which is part of the complete Greek Bible from Alexandria (the “Septuagint”), and a slightly different one preserved by the second-century Jewish translator Theodotion.

In Christian churches, the Greek books and sections that were excluded from the Hebrew canon are often placed under a separate classification as “Apocrypha.” This story, which appears in the Greek Bibles as a concluding chapter of the book of Daniel, gets separate billing as “Bel and the Dragon.”

The story takes place during the reign of King Cyrus of Persia. The pagan priests maintained a temple into which were daily heaped enormous quantities of grain, meat and wine for the god Bel to consume, thereby proving to everyone that Bel was a powerful deity — everyone, that is, except Cyrus’s trusted Jewish counselor Daniel. Daniel laughingly dismissed the notion, arguing that Bel was nothing more than an inanimate statue of clay and bronze.

The pagan priests challenged Daniel to a test. The temple’s only entrance would be sealed after the food was deposited. If in the morning the food was gone,

then that would prove conclusively that Bel was real, and the unbeliever Daniel would be put to death. Otherwise the priests would be executed.

That night Daniel, observed only by the king, scattered ashes on the temple’s floor. When the temple was opened in the morning, the food was all gone, and everyone rushed to judge Daniel. He, however, called their attention to footprints in the ashes, which proved that the supposedly sealed chamber had been entered by a large contingent of humans, identified as the cult’s seventy priests and their families. These people had been sustaining themselves sumptuously from ostensibly religious contributions of grain, meat and wine. The enraged king had the priests and their families executed, and authorized Daniel to destroy the idol and its temple.

The motif of a Hebrew monotheist unmasking the hoax behind the worship of graven images is familiar to many of us from the midrashic account of young Abram’s undermining his father’s idol business. After destroying all the statues in the shop, he accused the largest of them of causing the destruction in an argument over the distribution of offerings. This elicited an admission by his father that the idols were nothing more than inanimate objects.

There is an earlier episode in the Greek Daniel that also has a detective-like ring to it, the story that appears in Apocrypha collections as “Susanna and the Elders.” It tells of the virtuous lady of that name who resisted the advances of some dirty old men who subsequently accused her falsely of adultery in an attempt to blackmail her for sexual favours. Just as she was about to be condemned to death on the fabricated charge, their nefarious plot was exposed by young Daniel when, under his cross-examination, the elders gave differing identifications of the tree where the supposed dalliance had occurred.

The Mishnah, to illustrate the need for intensive interrogation of witnesses in capital trials, contains the cryptic statement: “there was a case in which Ben Zakkai interrogated the witnesses regarding the stems of figs.” The Talmud identified this mysterious “Ben Zakkai” as the renowned Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai,

and explained that the case arose while he was still a student before receiving his rabbinic ordination. Rabban Yohanan lived during the generation of the temple’s destruction, centuries later than the biblical Daniel; and scholars disagree whether there is any real connection between the two stories.

The trick of detecting intruders by sprinkling ashes on the floor makes an appearance in the Talmud—not for purposes of exposing human charlatans, but rather in order to reveal the presence of nocturnal demons. “One who wishes to know them should surround his bed with powdery ashes, and in the morning he will see something resembling rooster footprints.” This was probably similar to the function of the many Jewish Aramaic incantation bowls that have been discovered in Babylonia, which were placed upside-down in order to capture hostile demons.

The Apocryphal story about Daniel and the pagan priests did eventually find its way back to “normative” Jewish literature, apparently with assistance from Babylonian or Syrian Christian teachers who helped adapt it from their Syriac Bible for the benefit of Jewish scholars. A version of that text appears in the collection *Bereshit Rabbati* by the eleventh-century Rabbi Moses ha-Darshan of Narbonne, and it found its way into several medieval Jewish compendia. In that guise it was cited as an ancient midrash by the erudite Dominican Raymond Martini in his *Pugio Fidei* (“dagger of the faith”), an anti-Jewish polemical treatise that attests to the compiler’s extraordinary mastery of Jewish religious literature, including valuable quotations from books that have otherwise been lost.

The precise details of the story’s wanderings from ancient Greek Bibles through the dust of later ages are not entirely clear, and will undoubtedly benefit from additional scholarly sleuthing.

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

Year of the Dragon: Calgarians for Israel raise funds for CMDA



On Jan. 21, Calgarians for Israel held an amazing fundraiser to benefit Canadian Magen David Adom's Paramedic and Ambulance Fund held at the Regency Palace Restaurant. Top: CMDA Western Region Director Sharon Fraiman with Shael Gelfand and National Exec. Director of CMDA Sidney Benizri; Fraiman with MP Shuvaloy Majumdar. Bottom: Traditional Instrumentalists; Fraiman with Chinese Dragon Performers and Paramedic Don Sharpe with his wife Donna.

Letter to the editor

Hamas uses Star Wars to invert the truth

By Adam Girvitz

(Calgary) – There is a great disturbance in the force. I have felt it.

We recently bore witness to Hamas propaganda films featuring the three Israeli hostages Noa Argamani, Yossi Sharabi and Itay Svirsky. What many have not noticed was the subtle background music intended to convey an unconscious and dangerous message. Listen carefully, the background music and the alarms are stolen right from the original scores from Star Wars.

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, a young Luke Skywalker takes a moment to look towards the sunset over the vast sand dune sea on the binary star system planet of Tatooine, located in the outer rim of the known galaxy. As he looks out with hope turning to uncertainty, a theme plays in the background, “Luke’s Theme.” A poignant moment in cinematic history.

The scores from the original Star Wars films are legendary. From Darth Vader, to Yoda, to Luke, many of the main characters have their own scores that will play in the background when the respective character is on-screen. We subconsciously equate the “Imperial March” theme, usually played when Darth Vader is on-screen, with the dark side of the force just as we subconsciously equate “Luke’s Theme” that plays when Luke is on-screen with the light side of the force. Usually, we do not even know we do this.

In the latest Hamas propaganda film featuring the three Israeli hostages, Hamas cynically tries to equate themselves with the “light side of the force” and equate

Israel with the “Evil Galactic Empire” and subsequently, the “dark side of the force.” As the video begins, you can hear “Luke’s Theme” in the background and about 1 minute into the video, you can begin to hear the alarms heard on Princess Leia’s Correllian Corvette, the Tantive IV, as the evil Sith Lord, Darth Vader, and his henchmen board her transport in search of the stolen plans for the newly constructed Death Star! (Shout out to the late, great Carrie Fisher!)

This is the desired effect the propaganda film makers want. When Hamas carefully times the moments while these themes play in the background of their latest hostage video, they are hoping that you subconsciously equate themselves as representing the “light side” while portraying the IDF and Israel as representing the “dark side.”

Hamas’s portrayal of themselves as fighting for the “light side” is a complete inversion of the truth. I do not recall Luke Skywalker, or any other Jedi for that matter, engaging in such atrocities like Hamas did by burning innocent civilians alive. But this is exactly what the Empire does to Luke’s Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru in Star Wars IV, A New Hope. ISIS also employed this method when they burned the captured Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kesasbeh alive.

It is common knowledge (among Star Wars aficionado’s) that the Jedi order is based on various aspects of many distinct cultures. These include Japanese, Taoist, Buddhist, and yes, Hebrew influences, among many others. The Jedi Order itself is depicted as a religious, meritocratic, and peace keeping cadre of warrior-like monks that can tap into an ancient mystical power known as “The Force,” and that are bound by a moral obligation to defend democracy, harmony, and justice. The Jedi abhor negativity. The emotion of fear plays heavily in the dogma of the Jedi because they understand fear will subsequently lead to anger, anger leading to hate, and hate leading to suffering.

In opposition to the Jedi are the Sith, also practitioners in the ways of “The Force.” But while the

Jedi forbid the use of the dark side of the force, the Sith embrace it by focusing on destructive emotions such as greed, hatred, rage, aggression, and jealousy to fuel their lust for power. The Sith seek violence and absolute rule over the galaxy.

Hamas’ embrace of its complete hatred and quest for annihilation of the Jewish people has led Gazans on the path to ruin. Hamas and its followers have clearly embraced the dark side and as part of its propaganda machine, want to portray themselves as bearing of the light. A complete inversion of the truth to their situation. In contrast, the achievement of the Abraham Accords has given hope to the region by leaders who have embraced tolerance and peace, which represent the light side.

Hamas represents everything evil that the Sith represent. They, like the Sith, deal in absolutes: No recognition. No negotiations. No Peace. Hamas wants all the land from the river to the sea and they will not compromise. Israel on the other hand, has offered, more than once, peace in form of the West Bank, the Gaza strip and east Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. A compromise. The Israeli’s just refuse to compromise their own safety.

If Hamas, and frankly many within the general Palestinian population, continue to embrace hatred, rage, aggression, and jealousy to fuel their conduct, they will continue to suffer. Until the Palestinians finally begin to embrace tolerance and peace, such as shown in the recent and historic peace agreements of the Abraham Accords, there will never be a Palestinian state. And until the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian people learn to employ commonly accepted forms of diplomacy, instead of terrorism to achieve their political goals, then perhaps they do not deserve one.

Star Wars deals with many themes. Themes such as morality, courage, genocide, politics, corruption, and redemption to name a few. But if Star Wars has taught me anything, it is that we must never stop striving for peace because even a small chance is a galaxy of hope.

In Memory of Zelda Glick (Vinsky)



Zelda Glick (Vinsky) passed away peacefully at home on January 29, 2024 surrounded by her loving family. She was predeceased by her husband Harry (Harold) Glick, her parents, her sister and two brothers. Zelda is survived by her children Murray (Marilyn), Jefferey (Denise), Leah and Marilyn, grandchildren Jeremy (Karen), Seth, Jacki (Akshay) and David (Danya), in addition to many nieces and nephews. In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to the Okanagan Jewish Community Center or Jewish charity of your choice.

Commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day



The Jewish community commemorated January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the date on which the Auschwitz camp was liberated in 1945, and a day of commemoration for the victims of the Holocaust, or Shoah, in countless places around the world.



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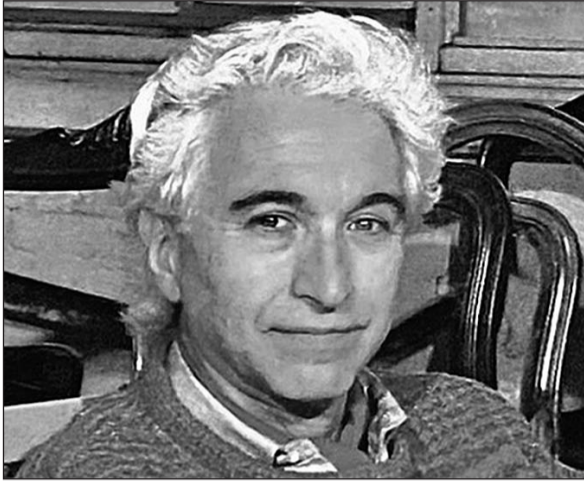
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Memorial Tribute

In Memory of William Switzer z'l



March 3, 1926 - January 8, 2024

William Switzer z'l, born on March 3, 1926, in Calgary, Alberta, passed away at age 97 on January 8, 2024, in Vancouver, British Columbia. William, known by his family and friends as 'Bill' or 'Billy', had a rich and fulfilling life.

In his early years, William worked for his father at Capital Furniture before venturing out on his own. In 1952, he opened House of Modern in Calgary, where he made a name for himself in the furniture industry. Bill had a gift for seeing the talent in others. He would

say that the success of his business, first in Calgary and then later in Vancouver at William Switzer & Associates, was in part, thanks to the hard work and unique talent each of the interior designers contributed. The Vancouver design community was richer because of the designers who started out at William Switzer and then opened their own thriving firms. In the late 1980s William Switzer & Associates branched out to become the finest reproduction manufacturing firm in North America, sought after by international designers who would gain success by having their collections licensed to be made and sold worldwide by William Switzer & Associates. Throughout his career, Bill established himself as a pioneer in the field of Interior Design and Furniture Manufacturing.

Beyond his professional achievements, Bill was a man of great integrity and kindness. He possessed a warm and welcoming spirit that made everyone feel at ease in his presence. He was known for his generosity and willingness to lend a helping hand to those in need, and to create jobs for them in his business.

Outside of work, William had two passions: family and golf. He enjoyed playing the game for many years until physical limitations prevented him from doing so. In the 1960s, William and his three golf buddies started an annual golf holiday tradition, exploring different courses each year. These trips were filled with laughter, camaraderie and cherished memories.

Above all, Bill was deeply proud of his Jewish heritage and large extended family, which today numbers more than 1700 on the Switzer family tree. The Switzer family reunion, held every five years since

1990, gathers family from all over the world to celebrate in Calgary.

Bill was the son of Meyer z'l and Etta Switzer z'l, modest and humble Polish Jewish immigrants, who taught him many life lessons. He kept the vivid stories of their life in Poland and then in Canada alive by sharing them with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and his sisters Lily Switzer z'l, Betty Yan z'l, Annie Brodsky z'l, Diane Spindel z'l and Miriam Winston z'l.

William was a dedicated husband to his wife of 75 years, Frances Switzer. He is also survived by his son, Allan Switzer, (Sandy), and his daughter, Renee Switzer. 'Zaida Bill' was a proud grandfather to Gabriella Switzer, Julia Switzer, Joshua Switzer, Rabbi Matthew Bellas, (Oksana), Adam Bellas, (Britt), Jennifer Wilds; he was also blessed with five great-grandchildren Yaakov, Maya, Aliza, Jack and Daisy. Bill has many nieces and nephews who also mourn his loss, and he will be deeply missed by his family, friends and all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

A funeral service was held at Beth Israel Cemetery in Vancouver on January 9, 2024. May his memory be for a blessing.

For those who wish to do so, contributions in Bill's memory may be made to the following funds: Israel Emergency Fund through Jewish Federation, the Renee Switzer Family Fund for Human Rights & Social Justice through the Jewish Foundation, or the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund at Schara Tzedek or Beth Israel Synagogue in Vancouver.

Calgarians aid

Cont. from page 1

various causes for Israel in previous weeks...she often heard "...but I already contributed here and there."

Nevertheless, a group of 45 Canadian and American Jews and Gentiles quickly formed to fulfil the Navy Seals' request. Most of the individuals had been contributing to a plethora of Israel fundraising efforts prior to this project. About 70% of the group is Calgarians.

At the same time as fundraising, Valerie learned that only one factory, located in Virginia, manufactured this type of high-end military gear. Unfortunately, the factory was unavailable for 12 months as they were already committed to the production of earlier-placed orders. As luck would have it, most of those orders were placed by American Navy Seals who, upon hearing about Shayetet 13 urgent needs, instructed the manufacturer to halt their production until all of Israel's orders were fulfilled. American Navy Seals' kindness and grace now had Israel in front of the line! In the weeks to come, Valerie maintained regular contact with the factory to make sure the rush order was, indeed, rushed.

Fundraising continued and Sobel ended up with more money than was required for half of the unit's vests. The goal moved. The group expanded and now began fundraising for the entire unit. In the end, the entire Shayetet 13 unit received the state-of-the-art bulletproof vests they desperately needed for their work in Gaza. The Virginia factory shipped off the vests in record time; it took only one week for the first order to arrive in Israel, and another three for the second order. Something that normally takes 12 weeks of production alone, before shipping. The manufacturer-contact Valerie worked with expressed personal empathy and support for Israel in each phone conversation.

The generosity of the 30 Calgarians, along with 15 counterparts from the US and other parts of Canada

was extraordinary in the fundraising for tens of thousands of USD. And then another miracle happened. Once again, more money was raised than necessary for the two orders of the bullet-proof vests. Now, with the additional generosity of Calgary's Jerry Schwartz, Alex Rotzang and one other anonymous donor couple, the group was able to fund the third request by the Navy Seals. This time, for specialized tactical carrier-bags, equipment necessary for special operations. The Calgary-based group, once again, funded the supplies for the entire unit. The equipment arrived in Israel a week prior to the events of February 11th, just in time for the hostage-rescue operation.

Very late on that Saturday night, February 11th, Valerie Sobel received a private message from Avi who just returned from Gaza. It read, "Please tell your group that we competed the rescue operation with all of the equipment you sent us. We're all safe."

Last week Special Forces of IDF gave us an unexpected gift of joy and celebration, something we desperately needed for months. Yet what has become crystal clear is that everyone can play an integral role no matter how far away from the battlefield. It takes a village.

Special gratitude goes out to the 45 individuals/families who so generously supported Israel's special forces and the rescue operation of the two hostages without ever requiring a donation receipt or any

recognition. Some members of the group have also volunteered in Israel in the area of agriculture and military and plan to do so again. A special Todah Rabah! goes out to members of Calgary families who aided the rescue efforts of the two hostages with their generosity and humility: Schwartz, Rodin, Rotzang, Schvimer, Cheuk, Bogoch, Mollerup, Gelmon, Sharpe, Robinson, Gelt, Kaye, Brener, Doctor, Korduner, Wiebe, Ezekiel, Tweet, Mousaev, Grisaru, Elhanati, Klevsky, Guterman, Gaber, Chulsky M/S, Della Vedova, Sobel, Picard, Kahane, Anonymous, Anonymous and Anonymous.

On behalf of the family of the late **Evelyn Sheftel Shapiro z'l,**

of blessed memory,

I want to thank everyone who has participated in honouring and remembering her, both within our community and the larger community: The Chevra Kadisha, the Clergy, family, friends, neighbours, fellow shul members, and other associations.

If I have missed anyone, my sincere apologies!

Your expressions of support, condolence and reminiscences, are much appreciated.

Everyone will remember Evelyn for her kindness, generosity, great smiles, interest and participation, love of learning and Judaism, and 'joi de vivre'!

She will be missed!

Your thoughtful generosity by donations to various organizations will further the ideals that have been important to her and they are much appreciated!

As I mentioned in my eulogy, "Everyone likes to feel appreciated - tell the people you care about while they are in your lives - that they matter - that they make a difference in your world. Tell them about your life and enrich theirs."

With love, Fran Sheftel Kolinsky

*The family of Rudy Berger,
of blessed memory,
would like to express
our gratitude for all the
kind expressions of condolence
that we have received
in his memory.*

*We thank all those who phoned,
visited, sent cards,
memorial donations
and contributed to the shiva.
The outpouring of love
and kindness
means alot to us.*

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