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June 6, 2024

CPO performs with **Violins of Hope: A** night to remember!

By Maxine Fischbein

May 15 was a night to remember as the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra presented the highlyanticipated Violins of Hope concert in association with the Holocaust and Human Rights: Commemoration and Education Department of the Calgary Jewish Federation. The concert was part of a wide range of events and activities showcasing 64 stringed instruments — including violins, a viola and a cello owned and played by Jewish musicians during the Shoah. Some of these musicians survived thanks to their talent, literally playing for their lives, though many could never again bring themselves to perform.

"It was a meaningful night," said Diana Cohen, Concertmaster of the Calgary Phil, who performed three solos on the "Auschwitz Violin," one of 11 used by the Philharmonic during the concert, conducted by Juliane Gallant and featuring Meditation from Thais by Jules Massenet; Hebrew Melody Op. 33 by Joseph Yulyevich Achron, arr. Ohad Ben-Ari; Symphony No. 1 in C Minor Op. 68 by Johannes Brahms; Theme from Schindler's List by John Williams; and Violin Concerto in E Minor Op. 64 by Felix Mendelssohn.

Associate Concertmaster John Lowry was also a featured soloist, making it the second time he has played one of the Violins of Hope in Calgary. In 2009, Lowry and violinist Andrea Neumann played two of the violins accompanied by Cellist Beth Root Sandvoss and pianist Elizabeth Bergmann at a performance during the Beth Tzedec Congregation Jewish Film Festival.

There are challenges when playing an instrument

YEG celebrates Lag BaOmer with family BBQ



A fun, family Lag BaOmer BBQ was held in Edmonton at Westridge Park on May 26 featuring great company and delicious food, as well as a delightful petting zoo, a bouncy castle and rides around the park on the Mitzvah Train. The event was hosted by Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton, Beth Israel Congregation and YES Kosher Friendship Garden. Photo by Paula Kirman.

that is not one's own, Diana Cohen told AJNews following the Calgary Philharmonic's May 15 performance.

"It's not always easy physically, especially in a solo setting," Cohen said.

The Auschwitz violin has "... a very soulful sound but not a very big sound," said Cohen, adding that that is what a musician would ordinarily wish for during a solo.

To balance things, the orchestra had to bring their volume down.

"It felt like a much more intimate performance," recalled Cohen.

Still, it was certainly powerful from the perspective of audience members who leapt to their feet several times during the emotionally-charged evening.

"What is really special about these violins are their stories," said Cohen, who added that she felt moved as she imagined that the musician who played the Auschwitz Violin may have found that act to be his "only salvation" in the notorious death camp.

"Maybe that instrument kept somebody alive," mused Cohen. "That's a wonderful thought."

Cohen's intuition is correct. According to information gathered by National Music Centre

Continued on page 11

EJFF shines a bright light on community spirit

By AJNews staff

Yasher Koach to Edmonton Jewish Film Festival Coordinator Susan Schiffman, Festival Chair Sam Koplowicz, and their team of creative volunteers for hosting a wonderful festival this year that showcased Jewish culture and perspectives.

More than ever before, the festival combined special events and visits with the films to enhance the viewing experience and provide an authentic small community, artsy, fun, festival vibe to the event.

From encouraging community members to dress in period costume, with singer/actress Michele Miller joyfully leading the *Fiddler on the Roof* singalong, to hearing film producer and former EJFF Chair Josh Miller reminisce about his early experiences on a set with Gene Wilder, each film was thoroughly enjoyed.

Another highlight was meeting Less Than Kosher writer and star, Shaina Silver-Baird, and film director, Daniel Rosenberg, and hearing fascinating insights about their edgy and heartwarming film.

There was also a much-appreciated virtual festival for community members who prefer to view films from the comfort of their own homes. The venues this year were also stellar – the Metro was perfect for the singalong and opening night, and the lovely Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park gave the festival a charming ambiance with the size suiting the crowd attendance. Parking was a dream and the venue lent itself nicely to a presentation by the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Northern Alberta.

Susan and Sam both thanked the festival sponsors, and volunteers for the success of the event. EJFF is a major contributor towards Edmonton Partnership2Gether, a partnership with the communities of the Northern Galilee Panhandle. This year's project will bring a group of Israeli teens to Camp BB-Riback, connecting them to local teens and giving them respite from war and trauma at home.



Less Than Kosher star, Shaina Silver-Baird wowed us with her vocals in the film and also in person during the Q & A.

Ron Ghitter, Gordon Hoffman will be honoured in Calgary this month

By Maxine Fischbein

Two respected members of the Alberta Jewish community are among the distinguished individuals receiving honorary doctorates during spring convocation ceremonies at two Calgary universities.

It is a good-news story from which Calgarians and Edmontonians alike can shep naches.

As this *AJNews* issue goes to press, Calgary lawyer Gordon J. Hoffman will receive an Honorary Doctor of Laws (Hon. LLD) at the University of Calgary convocation for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, and the Werklund School of Education on June 5.

It is a full-circle story for Hoffman who is an alumnus of the U of C where he earned his M. Ed. Hoffman, who was born and spent his first six years in the capital city, earned his B. A. and LL. B. at the University of Alberta.

When *AJNews* contacted Hoffman about his honorary degree, his first thought was to share the happy news that a friend of his, the Honourable Ronald G. Ghitter — who was also born and raised in Edmonton — will receive an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree at Mount Royal University on June 14.

"He is one of the best things we have going for us in the Jewish community," said Hoffman of Ghitter. "He's a wonderful man, a star in so many ways."

"We've known each other forever," said Hoffman, who added that decades back, his mother worked for Ghitter's parents in their store, Betty Lou Ladies Apparel, in downtown Edmonton, across from the Hudson's Bay department store.

"It's a mutual admiration club," Ghitter said of his relationship with Hoffman. "We talk frequently, and I sit on one of his boards.... When Gordy calls, you can't say no, because he does such wonderful things in the community. He's an outstanding philanthropic individual and richly deserving of the honour the University of Calgary is bestowing upon him."

Hoffman and Ghitter will address graduates at the respective universities, sharing words of inspiration based on their many decades of community service and remarkable contributions to society.

Hoffman says he will be encouraging graduates to "be good people," a simple but profound message from a man who walks the talk. He plans to speak about architecture from a personal perspective based on projects in which he has been involved, touching on the intersection between architecture and education.

AJNews spoke to Ghitter as he was crafting his address to MRU humanities graduates.

"My bottom line message will be that they are the leaders of tomorrow....When you are leading, you must be respectful of the diversity within our community and you must be respectful of the freedoms that we enjoy in a democracy," Ghitter said.

Unfortunately, society is experiencing huge challenges these days, said Ghitter, adding that he will stress the importance of preserving democracy.

"You have the right, of course, to freedom of speech, but there is a line that you must always protect so you're not bullying or discriminating or prejudicing any identifiable group," Ghitter added.

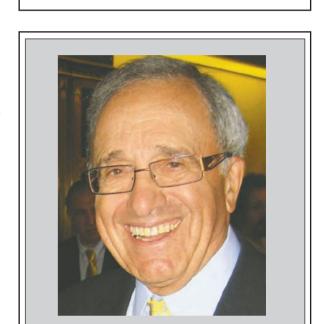
"There must be no place in our society for racism, for hatred, for Islamophobia, antisemitism, disrespect for members of our indigenous communities," said Ghitter, eschewing, as well, discrimination based on colour, sexual orientation and religion.

Hoffman, who, like Ghitter, devotes himself to the common good, is being honoured by the U of C for his incredible track record as a philanthropist. He has personally participated in the efforts of close to 100 charities, quite a few of which he personally established. He is the founder, president and director of the Project Warmth Society of Alberta (and its spinoff organizations Kids' Koats, Pupils' Parkas and Students' Scarfs); Project Warmth Society of Canada; and Operation Kickstart Society of Alberta, to name only a few.

Hoffman is also the founder, chair and president of the Alberta Champions Society in Recognition of Community Enrichment. He has dedicated himself to helping children with learning disabilities and ADHD as evidenced by his longtime support of Foothills Academy. His eponymous Charity Golf tournament has, for the past 13 or 14 years, raised \$1.5 million for

When asked about his golf game, Hoffman responds with a chuckle, admitting that he hasn't hit the links since he was 19.

Hoffman has had a long and successful career as a lawyer whose practice focuses upon personal injury, real estate and corporate law. He has served as solicitor and/or advisor, director, honorary director,



Project Warmth Director Gordon Hoffman.

Dignity Forum Chair Ron Ghitter.

board member or officer for countless Jewish organizations including the Shaarey Tzedec Synagogue, Calgary Jewish Community Council, B'nai Brith Calgary Lodge #816, the Calgary Jewish Senior Citizens Residence Society, Beth Tzedec Sisterhood; Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta and the Calgary Jewish Family Loan Association.

Within the community at large, he has similarly served a diverse range of community organizations including faith, inter-faith, cultural, arts and sports organizations.

Together with Eva, his bride of 56 years, Hoffman has chaired more high-profile and highly-successful fundraising galas than can be described in these pages. Those of which Hoffman is most proud include concerts featuring former Beth Tzedec Congregation Cantor Alex Stein, musician and composer Marvin Hamlisch, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, Neal Sedaka, and Joel Gray.

Continued on page 21



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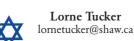


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Unveiling Notice

The unveiling for Sidney Cyngiser z"l will be held on Sunday July 14, 2024 at 11:00 am

at

Beth Tzedec Memorial Park 122 Shalom Way SE Calgary

Maccabi Canada is recruiting athletes for summer 2025 games in Israel

"We're scouting for high level, passionate, elite athletes to join our team for the 2025 Maccabiah Games!" says Jordan Balaban.

Maccabi Canada has begun recruiting Jewish athletes to participate in next year's World Maccabiah Games in Israel. The quadrennial games are scheduled to take place July 5-25 with competitions taking place in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Netanya.

More than just a sports competition; the Maccabiah Games offer a life changing experience for participants as they connect to their Jewish roots, the Land of Israel, and other Jewish athletes from around the world.

The Maccabiah Games create the opportunity for Jewish athletes to compete in a world-class international sporting event and to travel to Israel and explore their heritage.

The Maccabiah is the world's largest Jewish athletic competition and the second largest sporting event in the world – in terms of number of athletes competing

 after the Olympics. Taking place every four years in Israel, the Games are Maccabi World Union's largest initiative.

The primary mission of the Maccabiah is to facilitate a worldwide gathering of Jewish athletes in Israel, and to strengthen their connection to the State of Israel and the Jewish people. All athletes take part in Maccabi educational seminars and tours ranging from 2-7 days. A special celebration is also available at the Western Wall, for athletes who never had a chance to experience his or her bar or bat mitzvah.

Maccabi World Union is committed to bringing any athlete who qualifies to the Games, regardless of income, including 400 athletes from financially disadvantaged communities.

The Maccabiah Games is often referred to as the "Jewish Olympics." In July 2022 the Maccabiah hosted 10,000 athletes representing 80 countries. Maccabi Canada sent 600 proud athletes and staff to the last Maccabiah games and was the second largest international delegation. The Games featured 3000 tournaments across The Maccabiah sports. Games are committed to the values of fair play, mutual respect and the pursuit of excellence. Above all, they are a fun experience of sport and culture.

The Maccabiah includes four separate competitions: Juniors aged 15-16; Open - unlimited in age; Masters - divided into a number of different age categories; and Paralympics.

In 2025, Junior Delegation athletes must be available to travel and stay in Israel between July 2-22. Open and Masters athletes must be available to travel and stay in Israel from July 7-22. Training camps in Toronto will be scheduled for 2-3 days prior to departure. To compete in the Macca-

biah, athletes must be part of a delegation, formed by one of the countries that participate.

Alberta members who participated in the Canadian delegation in 2022 were: Zohar Broder, U16 junior men's tennis, Danyael Halprin, open women's track & field, Nicole Hult, open women's squash, Ian Power, coach, open

male and female squash, Brittney Sawyer, open women's hockey, Alana Takahashi, medical staff, Tim Takahashi, medical staff, Conaire Taub, U18 men's volleyball and Nick Taub, U18 men's volleyball.

Balaban has participated in 5 Maccabiah Games and highly recommends it as an amazing life changing experience. Competing in the Games is special, "but for me, the opening ceremonies are always a highlight," said Balaban. "Walking through the stadium with 10,000 other Jewish athletes from over



Calgary athletes at the 2017 Maccabiah Games: Zack Lister, Jordan Balaban, and Alex Molotsky.

The Maccabiah Games, an international sports

competition, are held every four years in

Israel. It is one of the top three gatherings of

athletes in the world! In 2022, over 10,000

athletes proudly represented 80 countries.

Our main goal is to assemble top level Jewish

athletic talent to compete in the Games.

80 different countries is a tremendous experience of Jewish unity and pride."

Balaban is spreading the word to bring more athletes from out west to the Maccabiah Games and it would be incredible if that athlete was you! For more information, he can be contacted at: Jordan@greengatepower.com. General information about Maccabi Canada or the Maccabiah Games can be found at www.maccabicanada.com

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** All sports and categories listed are tentative and may be subject to change/cancellation. Sports, not listed here, may be added Foradditional information visit our

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To be eligible to tryout all athletes must first submit an on-line athlete application. www.maccabicanada.com

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Calgary Negev has inspiring message

By Elliott Steinberg

This year's JNF Calgary Negev Event on May 9th at Temple B'nai Tikvah was a bit different, but everything is different this year isn't it?

In raising funds to rebuild Kibbutz Kissufim damaged on October 7th, JNF Calgary hosted a simplified event in order to ensure as many dollars as possible went to the project. We heard from Zohar Ben-Ari and Alexis Haas from the Kibbutz, and saw photos and videos they took on the day of the attack, with narration by Alexis that gave the videos shocking context. Our featured guest, Emmy Award-winning actor, media commentator and activist Yuval David. was energizing and inspiring. His clear message was to wake up, stand up, and be actively proud of being Jewish at this difficult time.

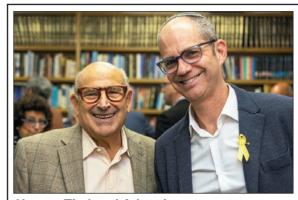
JNF Calgary thanks all the donors to this campaign, and appreciates the leadership of Terry and Kim Libin and the JNF Calgary Board of Directors. Together, we're helping re-build Israel!



Kim and Terry Libin with featured speaker Yuval David.



Stephen Chetner and Sam Bell.



Harvey Thal and Adam Levy.







Cathy Cole and Ortal Luzon.







Allan Wolinsky and Josh Orzech.



LtoR: Lorne and Beth Price, Alexis Haas and Zohar Ben-Ari from Kibbutz Kissufim, Dr. Jim Cohen. Photos courtesy JNF Calgary.

The unveiling of our beloved parents

Merryl Magidson z"l

and

Bernie (Bernard) Magidson z"l

will be held on Monday, July 1st at 12:00 pm at the Chevra Kadisha Cemetery, 17818-37 Street SW,

Calgary



With gratitude to Hashem Linda and Gary Wolf are excited to announce The safe arrival of their newest grandchildren **Identical twin boys**

Born to their son and daughter-in-law **Ezra and Esti Wolf**

in Israel

Two brothers for Refael!



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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

Zahava has lived in Kiryat Shmona all her life. Her parents were forced to leave Iraq and Kurdistan and came to Israel as refugees. Zahava, along with 23,000 other residents of Kiryat Shmona, was evacuated, scattering her community across Israel. She has remarked that despite having a sovereign state of Israel, she too is now living as a refugee, as her parents had before her, being displaced from her own home as they were from

The uncertainty of when it will be safe enough to move back to the northern periphery of Israel looms; moments before I was told Zahava's story, I received a WhatsApp about our coast-tocoast partnership friend and lay leader Shaul, whose home was hit by a missile. Fortunately, he was not inside.

The residents of the north have been aware for years that it was Hezbollah's intention to have what happened on October 7 to their communities. I am proud that Jewish Edmonton is partnering with the Calgary Jewish Federation and Camp BB Riback to bring the Jewish Agency Partners2Gether program to Alberta, where we will welcome a group of teens

from Metullah for respite and fun amidst these challenging times.

As our community's CEO, I am delighted and thankful for the philanthropic efforts displayed by our members. Your dedication to supporting the community through the United Jewish Appeal campaign, to programs such as the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival and the Israel Emergency Fund has allowed us to be part of the Canadian story of support and commitment to Israel. We, in Canada, have collectively raised \$140 million.

The first wave of funds went to urgent crisis and emergency needs. The second round of funding is being released. This includes requests that come to the allocation committees and Coast to Coast CEOs via our representatives in Israel. They have an ear to the ground by interacting with regional council heads and mayors. It took years to strengthen our partner region, only for it to be devastated. We are now in discussions about rebuilding this region. One light of hope is that Tel Hai College has now received university status and will become the University of the Galilee.

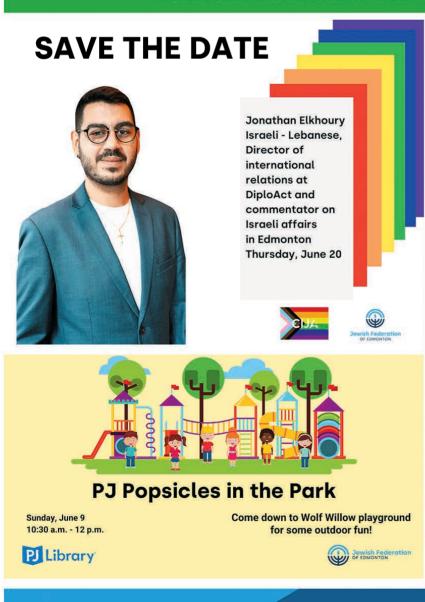
As our director general, Sarah Mali has put it so

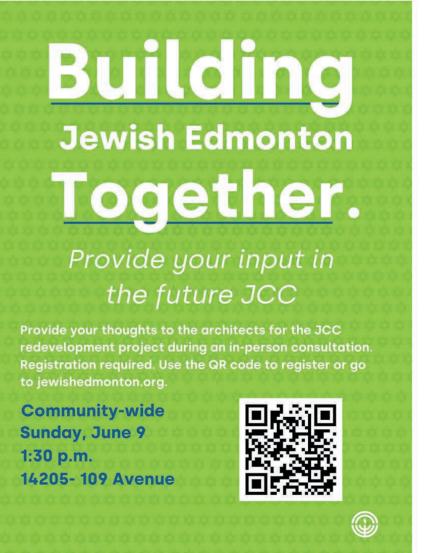
eloquently: Philanthropy is an expression of love; no matter how big or small, we donate to express our concern and love. It is a giver of hope, it says, "I'm with you". This commitment to Israel and her people is acknowledged, knowing that Israel is not alone, and that world Jewry stands with them.

As Shavuot approaches, a pilgrimage holiday marking the harvest of wheat, we are reminded of G-d's unconditional love. Moses received the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai, becoming a nation committed to serving G-d. We read the Book of Ruth, known as the book of chessed. The message that acts of loving kindness can heal heartbreak and solitude resonates this year. Chessed has a redemptive quality. It transforms tragedy into a kind of celebration and despair into a potent manifestation of hope.

On this joyous occasion of Shavuot, let us reaffirm our dedication to philanthropy as an expression of love. By working together, we can amplify the impact of our endeavors and create a brighter future.

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





Jewish Federation of Edmonton is hiring

HILLEL DIRECTOR

More information at jewishedmonton.org







A sold out crowd enjoyed the Boilermaker's Bash on May 4 at Temple B'nai Tikvah in Calgary, honouring Al Osten. Pictured above: TBT Executive Director Danny Opppenheim and event co-chair Roz Oppenheim. Photos supplied.

Boilermaker's Bash was a Blast!

By Judy Shapiro

A warm atmosphere. Lovely music. Great food. A lively and fun auction. It was a night to remember! Over 170 supporters of Temple B'nai Tikvah gathered on May 4 to celebrate the evening's honouree, Al Osten, and raise much needed funds for the maintenance of the synagogue building.

"The Boilermaker's Bash exceeded every expectation," said event co-chair Caron Glickman. "We doubled our fund-raising goal, everyone had a great time, and we paid tribute to a wonderful man. Al Osten has done so much for the Calgary community and this was our chance to say thank you."

The thank you came in the form of three speeches – from Temple B'nai Tikvah Rabbi Mark Glickman, niece Ellen Sue Mesbur, who traveled from Ottawa for the event, and longtime friend Myrna Ghitter. All praised Al's generosity, modesty, great smile, and warm friendship. The depth of that friendship was evidenced in the friends and family who traveled from across Canada and the U.S. for the event and the community members who turned out to honour Al.

The evening began with a silent auction, the signature Al-tini (a dirty martini, Al's favorite drink), and lovely music by Elliott Steinberg and pianist Jon Day. The guest of honour was ushered into the social hall to the strains of "Graduation Day," the Rover Boys hit single that was a highlight of Al's musical career. Then, with grace and humour, MC Josh Hesslein guided guests through the tribute to Al, delicious dinner catered by Gruman's, a message from Temple President Michael Clark, followed by a lively and entertaining live auction with guest auctioneer Jay Fiske.

"We are so grateful for the generosity of our community in supporting Temple B'nai Tikvah," said Caron. "We want to take this opportunity to thank all of our guests, sponsors, donors, volunteers, and the many vendors who helped make the Boilermaker's Bash a success."

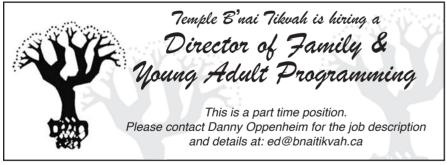
Funds raised through the Boilermaker's Bash will help support the many repairs needed to keep the aging Temple building operational (including the new boiler!). Those repairs will allow the congregation to host its warm and inclusive worship services and important social action initiatives, from serving meals at the Drop-In Centre, to providing lunches for Brown Bagging for Kids, to interfaith dialogue. And it allows the Temple building to be a welcoming hub for partner organizations.

"I can't tell you how thrilled I am at the success of the Bash," said co-chair Roz Oppenheim. "A sign of a good event is that guests don't want to go home – and that night people just wanted to stay and shmooze. Best of all – Al was very happy and that makes us all happy too!"





Al Osten with (top) event co-chairs Caron Glickman and Roz Oppenheim and (bottom) Debbie Baylin and Roz Mendelson.





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Jewish Heritage Month at Edmonton's Talmud **Torah School**

By Natalie Soroka

Students and staff participated in meaningful programs during the month of May this year, which was fitting since Yom HaShoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut all landed on the calendar during North America's Jewish Heritage Month. To have all three commemorations occur during this significant time was especially relevant this year.

We are so proud of our grade 5/6 students and the TT choir, who were led by Moreh Ben Ragosin through masterful ukulele performances of Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem, at Beth Israel Synagogue's Yom HaShoah community event, and in the singing of Al Kol Ele and Chai at Beth Israel's Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration.

The first of three assemblies during Jewish Heritage Month commemorated Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Remembrance Day. Our Grades 5 and 6 students not only led the entire assembly, but sang and beautifully performed O Canada, while also evoking chills when they concluded the assembly with their ukulele performance of Hatikvah. Next came the Yom HaZikaron assembly - Israeli Memorial Day.



Celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut

Wonderfully led by Grades 5 and 6 students, we remembered and honoured those who died theWar Independence and other wars in Israel.

In the lead up to Yom Ha'atzmaut,Talmud Torah's Early Learning Centre classrooms were busy with interactive

activities, art and baking. The Jewish Together program, consisting of three and four-year-olds, prepared and ate falafel and pita, while learning that falafel and pita begin with the Hebrew letter pey. Kinderarts students also enjoyed celebrating Israel's Independence Day by cooking and eating falafel, pita and Israeli salads. All classrooms celebrated Israel's 76th birthday by dancing and waving homemade flags and parading around the school hallways with pride. During circle time they talked about the meaning behind Israel's flag and its symbolism. Classes discussed how the colours represent the sky and purity, and that the Star of David represents the Jewish people. All classes made crafts that helped reinforce their understanding and appreciation of the

Our Yom Ha'atzmaut assembly on May 14th, celebrating Israel's 76th year of independence, was a highlight for students and staff alike. Walking through the hallways on their way to the gymnasium, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, were greeted by beautiful bulletin board displays of Israeli flags. More displays could be seen along the gymnasium walls and on the stage, decorated by Grades 5 and 6

Morah Shira Spring welcomed invitees Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of



The Talmud Torah choir performed at the community's Yom HaShoah program. Photo by Tammy Vineberg.

Jewish Federation of Edmonton, and Jay Cairns, Executive Director of Jewish National Fund (Edmonton), who were thrilled to attend. There was a sea of blue and white clothing and Israeli flag face stickers as the assembly began.

The TT Choir, consisting of K-6 students, performed the melodic songs, Al Kol Eleh (Over all these, please watch over me my Lord) and Chai (The people of Israel live). Kindergarten sang and danced to the popular song by Benny Friedman - Yama, Kinderarts sang and danced to the fun song Yeladim Totzeret Yisrael, Grade 1 performed to the song Chai, Chai, Chai, and Grade 2 danced to Lo Tenazhu Oti. This was followed by Grade 3 singing and dancing to Od Neda Yamim Tovim Yoter, while Grade 4 performed a mashup of Shiri LaShalom with Get Back Up Again.

Students, staff, families and guests who attended the school's Yom Ha'atzmaut assembly experienced a real treat when Meirav Or, an Israeli circle dance instructor with the Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association (AIFDA), invited everyone to participate in some fun Israeli dance choreography. It was a fun culmination to a very entertaining assembly!

Talmud Torah is known for its heartwarming and meaningful assemblies, and the ones during Jewish Heritage Month 2024 did not disappoint.



SECOND SESSION HAS SPACE FOR CAMPERS!

First Session is now full! Space Available in August Session: July 31 - Aug. 14 Wonder Week 3: July 31 - August 7 Wonder Weekend: August 7 - 11

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> To register visit www.campbb.com or email info@campbb.com



NOTICE

The Annual General Meeting of the Edmonton Talmud Torah Society shall be held in person at Talmud Torah School in the gymnasium on Tuesday, June 18, 2024, commencing at 7:00 pm.

The agenda for the meeting shall include the following:

- 1. President's Report
- 2. Principal's Report
- 3. ELC Director's Report
- 4. Financial Report
- 5. Election of Board Members

Per the Society bylaws, each Society member in good standing is entitled to one (1) vote. There are five (5) board positions open for election, each for a three-year term. A person is not eligible to be elected if they are engaged as an employee of the Edmonton Talmud Torah Society or if they have an outstanding debt or obligation to the Edmonton Talmud Torah Society, and have not put in place an approved payment proposal.

Any person who is eligible to run for the Board must complete the nomination form and submit it to the Secretary not later than one week prior to the Annual General Meeting. Nomination forms may be obtained from Natalie in the Society office. Please contact Natalie at 780-481-3377 or nataliesoroka@talmudtorahsociety.com to make arrangements to access and drop off the forms.

There will be no ability to nominate from the floor. You are encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting in order to become more fully informed about the affairs and activities of the Society. To register, please email nataliesoroka@talmudtorahsociety.com

In Northern Israel 80,000 residents are still displaced

By Regan Treewater

"It's the most beautiful area in Israel, not because it's my home, but because it is the most beautiful," commented guest speaker Michal Raikin at a recent presentation delivered at the Edmonton Jewish Seniors Citizen's Centre and organized by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. As the board chair of Tel-Hai College in Northern Israel, she delivered poignant words of love and hope for Eretz Israel.

"We succeeded in the last eight years to bring economic growth to our region. After October 7 this economy has moved to the South. Now we are all worried that there is a possibility that it won't come back. Eight months later we are still uncertain."

What the mainstream media is not reporting on is the upheaval and displacement being endured by those who, up till October 7, were living in the North of Israel. "We still don't know if we can return to schools on September 1," she noted. In fact, at present, over 80,000 people, who previously called the North their home, are living in hotel rooms scattered around the country. Their lives have been turned upside-down, and they have only uncertainty as they wonder if they will be able to return home for the High Holidays.

One thing that will revitalize the region is the May 22 announcement that ratified the University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee. With the support of Yoav Kisch, Minister of Education, and an astronomical amount of work by local community leaders, the college that once served the postsecondary needs of Northern Israel, gained the official recognition of their status as a university. "The university is the only light for our region in these days. I cannot explain how much hope it has brought." With these touching sentiments, Michal introduced her colleague Eli Cohen, Director General of Tel Hai College, now renamed University of the Galilee.

"I'm a bureaucrat," he began, with a jovial tone. "Even though I'm a bureaucrat I'm coming from the optimistic side of the picture. The situation now is very tough. We had challenges before the war, but we can see the light. We don't know when it will end, but we will get back stronger."

Eli is a resident of Metullah who is now displaced from his home and his community. He has worked very hard to get Tel Hai its new status as the University of the North. His optimism is supported by the potential for revitalization that the new university will bring. The institution's

website announcement states: "Tel-Hai College together with the MIGAL Galilee Research Institute are the foundations upon which the University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee is being established. The University, similar to other universities in peripheral locations around the world, will be a catalyst for the economic, social and demographic growth of Kiryat Shmona, the Galilee and the Golan - attracting quality human capital, establishing innovation and research centers, developing a variety of employment opportunities

and reducing gaps between the center and the north."

After the devastation inflected upon local residents, first by the heinous October 7 terror campaign, and then by their subsequent displacement, people need the hope for rebirth that a university brings with it. The institution hopes to attract students, international researchers, and industry, reinvigorating the devastated economy of the north.

"We decided many years ago that we want to be the engine behind growth for the economy and society in the Galilee. After almost a year of review it has been decided that we will have university status. Universities do research and bring modern employment, good people and knowledge," Eli continued optimistically. The institution's influence has already reached Edmonton, with two past graduates living in the local Jewish community. "There is no industry in the Galilee that the University doesn't support." With these words of hope, Cohen introduced his colleague Sarah Mali, director general of Jewish Federations of Canada - UIA.

Sarah shed light on the impact of Canadian donations and shared some very personal stories about how we in Jewish Alberta are making a difference in Israel.

"It takes a leap of the imagination, especially if you haven't been to Israel, to feel Israel even when you're here in Canada, and to appreciate the joy of Israel, and to be in pain with Israel when Israel is hurting.

You are present with us. It is a wonderful thing to know that you are with us," she began. "I want to talk about strength. I am going to start with a big number, and I want you to know that you are a part of this big number, and that this big number is growing: 114 million CAD. The Canadian Jewish community has given 114 million CAD to



Sarah Mali, director general of Jewish Federations of Canada - UIA, with Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright, Eli Cohen, director general of Tel-Hai College and Michal Raikin, board chair of Tel-Hai College, providing an update of the current situation in northern Israel.

Israel since October 7. I cannot overstate how significant this is," she paused meaningfully. "It is the largest allocation to Israel in the whole world. Your community is at the forefront of philanthropy, but I think this is an expression of love," she told the Edmontonians in attendance. "You have shown that you are by far the most loving community in the world."

Sarah emphasized this point by recounting the story of a small child from Vancouver Island who upon hearing about the devastation and violence of October 7 emptied her piggie bank. She carefully counted out 23 dollars and 17 cents. Taking this painstakingly accumulated sum to her parents, she announced that she wanted her life savings of \$23.17 to go to the children of Israel. A month after the attacks, Sarah received a letter from this little girl, along with the lovingly donated funds. "These defiant deeds that show hope, and connection and, love are what will fortify us for the future."

"80,000 people don't know when they're going to go back home. They don't even know how they're going to go back, or what will await them," Sarah explained painfully. She described watching her own son preparing for his final high school examinations at home in Jerusalem. The rooms that entire families are taking refuge in are unimaginably small, and yet they do all they can to support their children. "I can't imagine what it is like for students to try to study for their exams in such conditions. They don't know when they can return to their classrooms."

"From despair to hope, alone to being together: Tel-Hai gives some certainty for when residents go back. It stands to show that there is a vibrant community. There's going to be a university, along with all the good things that a university brings," she declared with conviction.

What better declaration of 'Am Israel Chai' than to create spaces for scholarship and knowledge in the face of destruction and hate.

Regan Treewater is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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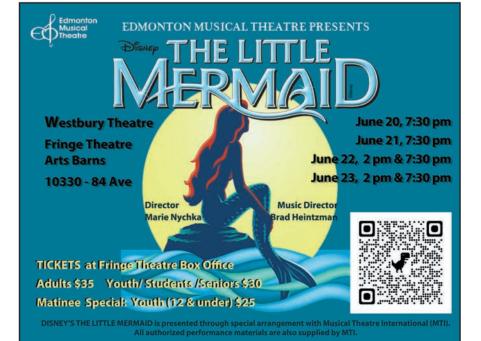
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CJA in the Big Apple: Grade 9 Students visit NYC

By Joseph Tappenden

The Grade 9 class of Calgary Jewish Academy recently embarked on an unforgettable eight-day trip to New York City. Anticipation was high as the students departed, eager to explore the historical and cultural richness of the Big Apple. After a long flight to John F. Kennedy Airport, they settled into their hotel, ready for the adventures that awaited.

One of the trip's most impactful experiences was visiting the Tenement Museum. Here, students delved into the history of immigration in North America, gaining insights into the lives of early 20th-century migrants. The museum's immersive exhibits, showcased the hardships faced by immigrants, including the lack of basic amenities like electricity and plumbing. This left a profound impression on the students, fostering a deeper appreciation for their own comforts and privileges.

A highlight of the trip was the interaction with students from Schechter Manhattan, a Jewish day school. The Calgary students met their Manhattan peers in Central Park, where initial nerves quickly gave way to camaraderie. The gathering culminated in a beautiful Kabbalat Shabbat at Schechter Manhattan, where both groups shared traditions and learned about each other's customs, forging

connections that transcended geographical boundaries.

The visit to Park Avenue Synagogue was another memorable event. The grandeur of the synagogue and the engaging service led by a charismatic cantor provided unique Shabbat experience. The students were captivated by the beauty of the service and the sense of community, making it a Shabbat they would cherish forever.

Throughout the trip, the students also enjoyed quintessential New York experiences such as navigating the subway, exploring iconic landmarks like the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, a walking tour of Jewish Brooklyn, and indulging in retail therapy. A thrilling evening at Yankee Stadium, complete with multiple home runs, added to the excitement. Despite the busy itinerary, there was always time for reflection, fun, and forging lasting memories.



Mazel Tov to the CJA Grade 9 graduating class of 2024.

This New York City adventure was more than just a sightseeing trip; it was an educational and emotional journey. From learning about the struggles of past immigrants to building new friendships and experiencing a vibrant Jewish community, the trip left an indelible mark on the students. Their experiences in New York City will undoubtedly continue to inspire them in their future endeavors.

Fire set at entrance to Vancouver synagogue

By AJNews Staff

On May 30 at 9:30 pm, a fire was intentionally ignited at the front doors of Schara Tzedeck synagogue in Vancouver. According to synagogue leaders and Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, no one was injured and damage to the building was minor, but very concerning. The incident has led to an increase in police presence in Jewish community institutions across Greater Vancouver.

In a statement to the community, federation and synagogue leaders said, "This deliberate act of hate was an attempt to intimidate our Jewish community. But we refuse to be intimidated or to hide. Our community is resilient, and we are proud to be an important part of the multicultural fabric of our city, our province and our country."

"I was horrified to receive a frantic call from a community member that there was a fire burning at the entrance to the building," said Aron Csaplaros, B'nai Brith Canada's British Columbia Regional Manager. "This is a serious and dangerous escalation of antisemitic activity in Vancouver, and it is outrageous and repugnant."

The Vancouver Jewish community expressed appreciation to the Vancouver Police Department for their response to the incident.

This latest incident of targeting Jewish institutions across Canada came just days after Jewish schools in both Montreal and Toronto were targeted with gunfire, and a month after Charlotte Kates, the Vancouverbased international coordinator of Samidoun, was arrested for hate-speech related charges after glorifying the Oct. 7 massacre in front of a large crowd in the city.

"To see three violent attacks against Canada's Jewish community in less than a week is unfathomable and extremely sobering for Jews across the country. Historically, we know that unchecked, hateful rhetoric often escalates into violence, and this is exactly what we are now experiencing in Canada,"

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stated Friends if Simon Weisenthal Centre CEO Michael Levitt.

"The question is not if but when these attacks will result in outright tragedy. It's imperative that all levels of government take immediate action to protect Jewish Canadians. This is a critical moment that demands comprehensive security measures and unwavering support to ensure the safety of our communities across the country. When is enough, enough?"

On May 27, police discovered that at least one bullet had hit the Belz Yeshiva Ketana at the Young Israel of Montreal synagogue in the city's Cote-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grace neighborhood. They believe the shooting at the Orthodox school occurred before Wednesday, The Montreal Gazette reported.

The shooting occurred less than a week after two masked suspects emerged from a vehicle early in the

Continued on page 17



Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt at the fire damaged synagogue in Vancouver.

Thank you

B'nai Brith Calgary Lodge #816 was proud to host its 71st annual dinner on April 9, 2024 that welcomed 700 guests, from all sectors of the Calgary community, to the Beth Tzedec Synagogue in the spirit of philanthropy and generosity to benefit numerous worthy projects and services in the Jewish and greater community.

The evening was a sold-out success honouring Hillel Neuer, Executive Director of UN Watch and Dan Balaban, CEO & Executive Chair, Greengate Power Corporation, and would not have been possible without our dinner patrons, donors, volunteers, sponsors, advertisers, prize and auction donors.

Thank you for your continued support that has allowed us, since 1917, to serve the community on your behalf!



Hillel Neuer Executive Director, UN Watch



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Morah Robin Marcus retires after 31 years at Talmud Torah

By Regan Treewater

Did you grow up in Edmonton and attend Talmud Torah School? Did you go on to send your little ones to Talmud Torah too? Well, if you answered 'yes' and you're a child of the 90s or younger, then chances are that your education has been enriched by the dedication of a woman who has made a real impact on the Edmonton Jewish community. For the last thirty-one-years she's been the rock supporting early Hebrew language and Judaic studies at Talmud Torah School; of course, I'm referring to Robin Marcus. Really, she needs no introduction; everyone who has walked through the doors of Talmud Torah knows Robin, but as she marks the end of an admirable teaching career, it is time for all those she impacted to wish her yasher koach and toda rabah!

Enjoying the recent shift to summer weather, I recently sat down with Robin to chat as she looks back at where she began, and the footprint she is leaving behind. Sitting in Wolf Willow for only an hour one evening, Robin was approached by no fewer than three community members, mostly students, and it was almost like being spotted with a Westend celeb. Watching so many people eager to come and say 'hello' emphasized how important Robin is to the community.

After moving to Edmonton as a child, Robin and her siblings all attended Talmud Torah. "I had very good teachers," Robin told me. "And even the ones that I didn't think were my favorite at the time, I've come to really appreciate." With some excellent educational role models, it was clear to Robin from a young age that she too, wanted to be a teacher.

Robin is what we in the industry call a teacher with a capital T. In fact, she has ensured the vitality of Hebrew language and Judaic education at Talmud Torah; she trained the generation that will follow in her footsteps. "Yes, some of the teachers we have at Talmud Torah now were my students," she beamed with a smile from ear to ear. "I remember teaching

them their Aleph Bet and now I watch with pleasure, as I see their own passion for teaching."

The hallmark of a great teacher is a person who never stops learning. After graduating from Talmud Torah, Robin remembers going to public school each day, and then enjoying the after school Hebrew program in the evenings. "It was a special after school program for Jewish kids," she explained. "We would go after regular school, and I have fond memories of these times!" When it came time for university, she already had her sights set on an education degree and worked to fulfil that dream. "In those days there was a recession, and unless you were willing to go to rural communities, there weren't jobs," she recalled. "We were a graduating class, and the job market was competitive."

Luckily, Robin had already been working as a day camp coordinator during the summer, for children of all ages at the old Edmonton Jewish Community Centre. She continued with this, and soon became the preschool director. This led to working as a classroom assistant as part of the Talmud Torah Society, and guest appearances around town as a substitute teacher. By the time her own little ones were at the school full-time, Robin too got the full-time position she was destined to fill.

I was curious, after such an accomplished career, what was it that Robin found most intimidating when she first started as Talmud Torah's kindergarten teacher. "I think one of the most important things I wanted to do was make sure I built strong partnerships with parents," she explained. "I think that I became much more confident with this over time... Every child is different, and they are learning at their own pace. I need to reassure parents that everyone is going to get to the finish line eventually. Some babies take longer to learn how to crawl, some might get the hang of walking right away, but they figure it out. It's like this with speaking, and with reading too. Some of them might take longer and might need extra assistance, but it will happen." She

paused and added with a smile: "It's like a light bulb being turned on — I love those light bulb moments!"

She's been a guest at numerous bar and bat mitzvahs and other lifecycle events. Living and working within the small and very close-knit Jewish community of Edmonton's West End has anonymity, especially for a high-profile person like Robin. I asked her if it is difficult to have her career community inherently intertwined. "Not at all," she was quick to respond. "I really love seeing my students at shul and running into people around the neighborhood.' It's true, I sit next to Robin



Talmud Torah Morah Robin Marcus.

in shul on Shabbos and there is a lovely parade of hugs from adorable little ones.

I once had a parent tell me that nobody could teach children how to read Hebrew quite like Robin. This parent insisted that after a year in Robin's class, any child would be on their way to reading and writing Hebrew. Many moons ago, I remember sitting in the office at Talmud Torah and listening to Robin confidently translate for newly arrived Israeli families registering their kids for school. I had always assumed she had lived in Israel for a time, done a year abroad, perhaps worked on a kibbutz during university.

"I come from a family that really values languages," she explained to me. "We always valued the richness of language in our home growing up and I always loved Hebrew. When I don't know how to say something, I ask. And when I speak Hebrew, I don't mind sounding silly while I figure things out."

Robin continued with her Hebrew education with classes at the University of Alberta even after becoming a full-time teacher, a testament to her dedication to providing her students with the best. More recently she completed a four-week intensive summer language immersion program in New York for Hebrew teachers, called Ivriyon.

Reflecting on her time at Talmud Torah, Robin said she is filled with a profound sense of gratitude. "Gratitude for the opportunity to impart knowledge, to instill values, and to witness the growth and development of each and every one of my students. It has been a journey filled with joy, challenges, and countless unforgettable moments that have shaped me as much as I hope to have shaped them."

"Teaching Jewish children has been a passion and a calling for me, not just a profession," she added. "It has been about more than just imparting facts and figures; it has been about teaching them the values and traditions that are the bedrock of our faith. It has been about instilling in them a love for learning, a curiosity about the world, a deep-rooted sense of belonging and of pride in our identity."

Robin said that she is grateful for the loving support of her family and friends. She also expressed gratitude

Continued on page 18

As a proud member of the Jewish community, we wish everyone Happy Shavuot! Am Yisrael Chai! We stand with Israel.



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The Linetsky/Lederman Families would like to acknowledge and thank all our caring family, friends, and community members for your overwhelming support extended to us in memory of our beloved brother, husband and father

YEFIM LEDERMAN z"l

The outpouring of so many expressions of condolence, kindness, the charitable donations, cards, meals, emails and numerous phone calls brought us all feelings of love and comfort.

With heartfelt and grateful appreciation, Lena & Victor Linetsky and family, Liliana & Lenna Lederman

CPO performs Cont. from page 1

Manager of Exhibitions Brandon Hearty, after World War II a poor Auschwitz survivor sold the instrument to Abraham Davidowitz, himself a Holocaust survivor, who was then working in Poland for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The man told Davidowitz that he had played the instrument in an orchestra at Auschwitz and that his life had thus been spared.

The impoverished survivor needed money and never wanted to play the violin again. Deeply affected by the story, Davidowitz bought the instrument for \$50, hoping that his son Freddy would take up the instrument.

Freddy Davidowitz eventually donated the violin to the late Amnon Weinstein and his son Avshalom (Avshi) Weinstein, second- and third-generation luthiers who, to date, have collected and restored 100 Violins of Hope permanently stored in Israel. The Auschwitz Violin has since been heard by audiences around the world.

The violins in the Weinstein collection are not state of the art instruments; the best and most valuable violins were looted by the Nazis, says Avshi Weinstein.

Yet the Violins of Hope are undeniably priceless.

Sharing the Violins of Hope with audiences "... is a wonderful way in to Holocaust education," said Cohen. "You're doing a lot of the work on your own when you're listening to these instruments. It is an indirect but maybe more personal way of thinking about the Holocaust."

"It's a beautiful project that Avshi Weinstein and his father have done," added Cohen. "Music usually has an impact on people, so it's an interesting way to talk about what happened."

Avshi Weinstein, who lives and works in Istanbul (where the Violins of Hope were first heard in concert), spoke to an appreciative audience in the lobby of the Jack Singer Concert Hall prior to the Calgary concert in a chat facilitated by Brandon Hearty.

Weinstein also narrated the Calgary Phil performance, briefly sharing stories about some of the violins, a few of the musicians who played them, and members of his own family, including his grandfather, violinist and luthier Moshe Weinstein, who gave world-renowned violinist Yitzhak Perlman his very first violin.

Avshi Weinstein also spoke of his maternal grandfather, Asael Bielski, one of the legendary Bielski brothers, partisans who courageously fought the Nazis, saving more than 1,200 Jewish lives in the forests of Poland. Their story is immortalized in *Defiance*, a 2008 film starring Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber and Jamie Bell (in the role of Asael), Weinstein said.

While he was in Calgary, Weinstein spoke to many of the 2,700 Calgary and area high school students attended the annual Holocaust Education Symposium which took place at Studio Bell, home of the NMC, from May 6-10 and May 13-16. The young adults and their teachers interacted with the violins at the extraordinary exhibit created by the NMC while also experiencing the usual components of the symposium including the testimony of Holocaust survivors and descendants.

The Violins of Hope were also front and centre at the May 5 community

Yom HaShoah program held at Beth Tzedec Synagogue. Following the traditional candle lighting ceremony by Holocaust survivors and descendants, attendees saw excerpts from the documentary film *Holocaust: A Music Memorial Film from Auschwitz* and heard performances by violinist Steven Klevsky, pianist Helena Barker and Calgary Opera soloist Arieh Sacke.

A highlight of the evening was a moving address by Brandon Hearty who reflected on his own journey as the NMC team created the Violins of Hope exhibition and pledged his sincere commitment as an ally to the Jewish community. Hearty's support was especially appreciated in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks by Hamas terrorists as acts of antisemitism have proliferated and allies have often seemed few and far between.

Hearty was joined by NMC Director of Programs Stephanie Hutchinson who spoke about programs at the NMC related to the Violins of Hope.

"The Violins of Hope have brought together some incredibly wonderful and talented people from Avshi Weinstein to our friends at the NMC and the Calgary Philharmonic," said Dahlia Libin, who co-chairs the Holocaust and Human Rights: Commemoration and Education Department together with Marnie Bondar.

"We are also grateful to our generous sponsors and the 100 volunteers who stepped up in various support roles," Bondar said.

It is Avshi Weinstein's hope that Calgarians will continue to walk through the doors of the NMC to see and hear the violins. He takes much pride in having



Calgary Philharmonic Concertmaster Diana Cohen captivates the audience as she plays the Auschwitz Violin during the Violins of Hope Concert, conducted by Juliane Gallant, May 15, 2024, Jack Singer Concert Hall. Photo by Milt Fischbein.

personally addressed some 300,000 students around the globe since 2014, sharing true stories about the ways Nazis used music to degrade and humiliate Jewish prisoners. On the flip side, Weinstein and the folks at NMC are also amplifying the uplifting stories of musicians who survived, courageously used their talents in acts of spiritual resistance, and provided comfort—however fleeting—to fellow prisoners.

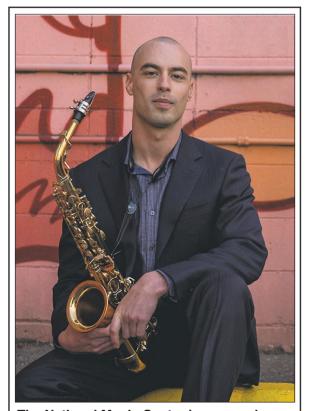
In his devastating memoir *Night*, the late and great Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel wrote of the violinist who played his final notes in the dead of night in their Auschwitz barrack:

"It was pitch dark. I could hear only the violin, and it was as though Juliek's soul were the bow. He was playing his life. The whole of his life was gliding on the strings—his last hopes, his charred past, his extinguished future. He played as he would never play again.... When I awoke, in the daylight, I could see Juliek, opposite me, slumped over, dead. Near him lay his violin, smashed, trampled...."

Fortunately, the Violins of Hope remain. The stories of those who played them and the music coaxed from them by new generations of musicians continue to warn, educate, and inspire a world that needs to hear their voices.

The Violins of Hope exhibit runs through June 16 at the National Music Centre. For more information, go to www.studiobell.ca

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



The National Music Centre has named The Daniel Pelton Collective for their Violins of Hope Artist Residency. Pelton is a Jewish composer and saxophonist from Calgary, who will use a portion of the historic violin collection to create new music with members of Calgary's Kensington Sinfonia.

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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





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A MESSAGE FROM **ADAM SILVER**

ince first arriving in Calgary on November 2, 2014, I think I have written close to 100 Pom messages, a privilege for which I am extremely grateful. I have valued the opportunity to communicate with Jewish Calgary about our community's successes, challenges, and opportunities. It is therefore, very bittersweet that this will be my last *Pom* message before my family and I embark on a new journey when we depart for Ottawa in the coming months. It is there where I will start a new professional role as President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation.

Our family was embraced by the Calgary community from the very beginning, and each of us individually, and all of us collectively, have built meaningful, lifelong relationships, while acquiring new skills and confidence along the way. We have benefitted from being part of a Jewish community that is second to none. Jewish Calgary's people are caring, kind, and committed. Its infrastructure is supportive and nurturing. The professionals who work tirelessly to provide educational, social, and recreational services are talented and dedicated, and Jewish Calgary's leadership volunteers are some of the very best in the world.

As I write to you, Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks) is quickly approaching. In researching content for my message, I came across some interesting perspectives from Renée Fishman who presents different thoughts about the concept of time. She refers to different types of time. Chronos, or linear, is counted in minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. Kyros, or human time, is measured in moments and milestones. The start date for Shavuot is not noted as a defined date in the Torah. It is not tied to the new moon or the full moon. It is relative to the start of Passover. We know when Shavuot falls only by counting from the start of Passover, and we believe that the seven weeks the Israelites wandered the desert were not just to wait for G-d to tell them they were ready to receive the *Torah*... but to actually ready themselves for that responsibility. Therefore, Shavuot presents the third type of time - relative time, a mix of moments and milestones within measured time, and B'Shalom, only determined by its connection to other events.

Our family joined Jewish Calgary just under ten years ago (linear time), but we have experienced and shared an Adam Silver exponential number of happy and sad times together with CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

our adopted family and extended friend group we have been so fortunate to cultivate here (human time). The community embraced us from the very beginning, and we will always be thankful for having the chance to thrive as individuals, as a family, and as dedicated members of Jewish Calgary (relative time).

We will forever count ourselves as Jewish Calgarians, even if we live elsewhere, and we will continue to cheer on this amazing, very special community. I would especially like to thank the incredible staff I've had the pleasure to lead and learn from, and the board members who have supported me along this journey, and continue to give selflessly for the betterment of Jewish Calgary. It is to them, to all of you, and to my family I owe a deep debt of gratitude and a huge todah rabah. As the saying goes, I'm not saying goodbye, but l'hitraot - until next time.

Dain Silve

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Are you or someone you know starting university in Calgary this fall? Discover Calgary Hillel, your Jewish home-awayfrom home! Stay connected and up-to-date with our exciting events by following us on Instagram @calgaryhillel. Join us and make unforgettable memories!

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exciting new addition and stay tuned for information on



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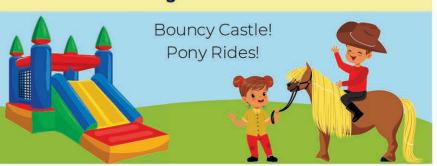
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Save the date for our 2024 UJA Campaign Launch featuring Amy Albertson, Debbie Lechtman (Roots Metal), and Matthew Nouriel.



Amy Albertson is a Jewish advocate and educator from California. Through online activism, public speaking, and workshops, Amy empowers young Jews to be unapologetically Jewish, both online and in their everyday lives. While living in Israel for six years, she created *The Asian Israeli*, where she catalogued her experiences as a Chinese-American Jewish woman. In 2015 she made *Aliyah*, where she dedicated her career to working for Jewish nonprofits.



Debbie Lechtman is a Jewish, Israeli, and Latina writer, educator, and content creator behind the Instagram account @rootsmetals. She is a board member at Indigenous Bridges, writes educational content and curriculums on Jewish history and identity for the Anti-Defamation League, Creative Community for Peace, Honest Reporting, and more. In the past, she worked as a guide, educator, and curator at Costa Rica's only Jewish museum and wrote for a number of Jewish publications.



Matthew Nouriel is the Community Engagement Director at JIMENA – Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa. Based in Los Angeles, California, Matthew is also a digital activist and content creator of Iranian Jewish heritage. He is a passionate advocate who uses their voice to champion various causes close to their heart, including LGBTQ+rights and equality within the Iranian and Jewish communities, the fight against antisemitism, and their active support of the Women Life Freedom movement for a free Iran.

chai fashionSUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

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For information contact Sydney Truax struax@jewishcalgary.org





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With our community partners **WE CAN** build and support a safe, equitable, inclusive, and healthy Jewish community.

















HAA students enjoyed a fun-filled Lag BaOmer sports day outing at North Glenmore Park. Students from all grades were collaborating in games and sports as teams in 'Kevutzot Ratzon' - a cross curricular program encouraging school spirit, teamwork, and leadership skills.

Why Celebrate Lag BaOmer?

By Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski

Lag BaOmer is a day of celebration and joy in the Jewish calendar, occurring on the 33rd day of the counting of the Omer, the period between Passover and Shavuot. Traditionally, this day interrupts a period marked by a solemn mood associated with the tragic deaths of Rabbi Akiva's twelve thousand pairs of students. Because of this, a custom was established to not get married during this period. However, on Lag BaOmer, the mourning customs are lifted because it is believed that the deaths of Rabbi Akiva's students ceased during this day.

Rabbi Chizkiyah da Silva, a seventeenth century Italian Halachaist, raises a critical question regarding the celebrations of Lag BaOmer: Is it appropriate to rejoice simply because the deaths of his students have ceased? After all, none of the original students survived. They all perished. Rabbi Chizkiyah suggests that the joy of Lag BaOmer stems from the five new students Rabbi Akiva developed, who did not suffer the same fate as their predecessors and who carried on the knowledge of the entire Torah to the next generation.

This act of resilience and determination is what we celebrate on Lag BaOmer, the revival of Torah study, the continuation of Rabbi Akiva's legacy through his new students.

But where did Rabbi Akiva have such inner strength to persevere and rebuild? The source seems to follow a precedent at an earlier point in his life. It is said that Rabbi Akiva embarked on his path to Torah wisdom at the age of forty, commencing from the rudimentary knowledge of the Alef Bet, before attaining his esteemed status as a sage. The catalyst that caused his commitment at this juncture to learn Torah was from observing how water was able to erode a stone,

concluding that if something soft as water could carve something hard as stone, then surely the words of Torah could penetrate his heart, despite his current limitations.

The life of Rabbi Akiva teaches us that his path to greatness was not linear. Instead, its origin and later years were both marred by trials and tribulations. Yet, his grasp on faith and hope in the transformative power of Torah study allowed Rabbi Akiva to draw on his inner strength and determination to continue being a builder.

On Lag BaOmer, we celebrate Rabbi Akiva's resilience, his unwavering commitment to Torah, and the enduring legacy he left through his new students. It reminds us that even in the face of adversity, there is always hope for renewal and growth.

Rabbi Kutnowski is currently the Head of Judaic Studies at Halpern Akiva Academy in Calgary. Next year, he will be relocating his family to Ontario, Canada, to take on the position of Head of School at Torah Day School of Ottawa.

A promise kept - mi'dor l'dor

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

During World War II, Helena Visser, promised Jewish neighbour and fellow-violist Fanny Hecht that if the Nazis came for the Hechts and their two sons, she would care for and play her violin until their return. The Nazis came, and Visser remained true to her word. She played the Hecht Violin for decades

before passing it on to her daughter, Helena Bosse, who played it for decades more.

Bosse brought the beloved instrument to Okotoks, Alberta where her family settled after immigrating to Canada from Amsterdam.

Helena Bosse's children traveled to Israel in 2016 to donate the Hecht Violin to the Violins of Hope collection. Just before that, at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, they learned that Fanny and Alex Hecht were murdered at Auschwitz in 1943. Their youngest son Ernst perished at Sobibor. His older brother Fritz died at Monowitz, a sub-camp of Auschwitz, just five months before liberation. Thanks to the two Helenas, the Hecht family will be forever remembered.



Helena Bosse (C) with her son Aart Bosse and daughter-in-law Janet Warkentin-Bosse at the Calgary Violins of Hope concert. Photo by Maxine Fischbein.

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For further information and/or to submit an expression of interest, please contact Danielle Broyde, Mikelle Search at danielle@mikellegroup.com.

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Is the tradition of the Shiva Visit disappearing?

By Susan Dvorkin and Harold Lipton

One of two cardinal principles that underlies Jewish end of life practice is *nichum aveilim* — comforting the mourner. There are various customs and traditions that comprise provision of comfort to mourners. All are designed to express to the bereaved that they are not alone. Perhaps the most widely known is the shiva call.

The "schedule of mourning" prescribed by Jewish tradition has been brilliantly designed to facilitate a gradual return to routine living for the bereaved. The first period is called *shiva* which literally means seven, and is the first week of mourning following a funeral. It is often during this time when grief is at its most intense level and the bereaved withdraw from most usual activity. Mourners closely following tradition do not even leave their home during shiva, unless it is to attend services to say Kaddish. Those wishing to comfort the mourners visit the house where shiva is being observed. Often the bereaved family will establish preferred times for visits in order to permit the family time to have meals or resting periods. These times should be respected. If a shiva visit is not possible, a phone call is appropriate to offer comfort to a mourner, though it should be understood that some mourners may not take calls during shiva.

Many of us have unfortunately had the experience of both sitting shiva and visiting a shiva house. Anecdotally, we know that sitting shiva can be exhausting, and making a shiva call can be a source of discomfort for those who are unsure of what to say or how to act. Witnessing another person in pain can be unsettling. Dealing with a passing can compel us to confront our own mortality. Other circumstances can also pre-empt the shiva call, such as the recent restrictions caused by COVID which only added to the isolation the bereaved were already feeling.

It should be clear that the focus of the shiva visit is on the mourner. Visitors are coming to provide sympathy and support to the bereaved, and to remember the deceased. The bereaved should not be expected to greet or entertain visitors. The shiva gathering is not intended to constitute a social gathering. The shiva experience can be draining for mourners, and responsibility to host visitors should not be added to this stress. Various customs are followed that emphasize this. The door to the shiva home is left unlocked during those times when callers are expected to come by. Callers simply enter and drift towards the mourner as soon as possible. Classic expressions of sympathy are given, but any other conversation is left to the bereaved to initiate. Reminiscing about the deceased is encouraged. Trite expressions that seek to minimize the death (e.g. it's a merciful ending, the suffering is over, etc.) are avoided. It is appropriate, even if anxiety producing, to sit in silence for periods of time. The presence of the visitor is, by itself, a sufficient expression of support, and there does not need to be constant chatter to fill the time. Loud conversation, joke telling, and raucous laughter should be avoided.

Any food brought to the shiva house should be for the consumption of the mourners as they traditionally to do not even cook for themselves during this period. A common practice is to order shiva meals from caterers for the bereaved family. While some refreshments may be made available for callers, visitors are not served as that should not be the purpose of the visit. Elaborate tables of food, pastries and drinks diminish the reason for the visit and can elicit an inappropriately upbeat and cordial environment. To that end, the meal of condolence, regardless of where it is provided is a more appropriate way to provide for the mourner and acknowledge their loss. Bringing liquor, candy or flowers is not generally done during the shiva period.

A recent trend in our community is for the mourners to attend synagogue for services twice a day and to invite people to offer condolences at the synagogue. While this may alleviate the pressure of having so many people in the home and helps to assure that



there will be a minyan, the same level of decorum applies as it is not a social gathering.

If services are being held in the shiva home, it is desirable to make a shiva call to coincide with the service so that the bereaved are assured of a minyan to say Kaddish. This may be more critical during the latter part of the shiva week when visitations may be ebbing.

If more shiva callers are expected, it is considerate to keep the shiva visit short so as not overwhelm the mourners. A half hour is often considered to be a recommended limit to the visit. If there are other callers arriving, avoid monopolizing the mourner's time so everyone has a chance to offer comfort. For many, the mitzvah of the shiva call is simply the attendance to give consolation. If there is an abundance of people in either the home or synagogue and there is little time to offer your sympathy to the mourners, the mere act of being present is comforting.

When it is time to leave, offer a comforting farewell to the mourner, e.g. good health, long life, no more sorrow, etc. It is always appropriate to offer the standard phrase "May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

Susan Dvorkin and Harold Lipton are board members at Calgary Chevra Kadisha.



June 16 Edmonton Bagel Loop is for everyone!

When a summer event includes light exercise, fresh air and a fun time with family and friends, you've got a winning combination. Now add to that a delicious international cuisine picnic in a picturesque setting and you've got the Edmonton Jewish Senior Citizen's Centre's annual Bagel Loop: Walk/Run/Roll. It's taking place on June 16 at Victoria Park, 12030 River Valley Road in NW Edmonton.

This year the folks at the Jewish Senior Citizen's Centre have made it easier than ever for people of all ages to participate and join the fun. You can register online at www.jdicseniors.ca/event/bagel-loop-walk-run-roll-2024 or register in person at the Centre.

A small registration free can be paid with an etransfer to jdic@shaw.ca or by cheque or cash. Each participant will need to bring a Waiver Form that is available on the website. Print your pledge form while your online and ask your family, friends and neighbours to support your participation in the event and help raise funds for the Centre.

Don't let transportation stop you from participating. A bus will be provided to drive you to the site from Beth Israel Synagogue (131 Wolf Willow Road) and also from the Jewish Senior Citizen's Centre (10052 – 117 Street). The bus will depart from BI at 9:45 am and it will depart from the Senior's Centre at 10:15 am to get you to Victoria Park on time to participate. Please contact the Senior's Centre to let them know that you are planning to use the bus service.

"We welcome all ages to join us for our famous 2024 Bagel Loop," said Executive Director Svetlana Pavlenko. "Our seniors will gear up their canes, walkers and wheelchairs and join their family, friends and neighbours to Walk, Run & Roll around Victoria Park at the Fourth Annual Bagel Loop, the

only event of its kind in Edmonton."

It is a unique friend-raiser – a fundraiser put on BY Seniors FOR Seniors and their Families in support of our Centre, explained Svetlana. "Please support us by participating in a fun pledge challenge. Gather pledges over three days for your participation: ask your family members for \$25 (day 1), ask your neighbours for \$25 (Day 2), ask your doctors, pharmacists, hairdressers, nail specialists, mechanics, favourite shop owners (Day 3). You will reach your goal of \$100!"

The registration and the pledge form are available at the Jewish Senior Citizens' Centre office and on jdicseniors.ca. Registration

fees are: Family (any 4 members) - \$50, Adult - \$20, Kids over 10-\$15 and Kids under 10 are free.

"It's going to be a wonderful and inclusive event," added Svetlana. "We are expecting around 200 participants. Our oldest participant in 2024 will be 100 and the youngest one will be determined at the race."

The preliminary event schedule is: 10 a.m. Registration and morning snacks; 11 a.m. Warm-up workshop facilitated by the Centre's Fitness Instructors; 11:30 a.m. The Walk/Run/Roll starts; and at 12 noon family-friendly international cuisine picnic begins. At 1:30 p.m. the bus will depart the park and



The Bagel Loop Walk/Run/Roll takes place at Victoria Park in Edmonton on June 16. Pictured above are some participants from last year's successful event.

take you back to the BI or the Centre.

Join the Bagel Loop for a fun morning of good company, exercise and fundraising – and while you're there it's a great time to join the Jewish Senior Citizens' Centre. It breaks stereotypes and unites different generations through educational, entertaining, and fun programs and events. Don't wait until you are 120 years old because you think you are too young now, – join the vibrant and warm Centre and you will add so much enjoyment into your life!

For more information visit jdicseniors.ca or call 780-488-4241 and find out how you can become more active in Senior's Centre community.



BAGEL LESP WALK / RUN / ROLL

Sunday, June 16 2024 — Victoria Park
Registration @ 10:00am

"On Your Feet or On Your Seat"

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A fund-raising walk/run/roll for ALL ages
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Registration: Family \$50 | Adults \$20 | Kids over 10 \$15 | Kids under 10 FREE (any 4 members)



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How to make great cheesecake 5 different ways

By Ronnie Fein

You know Shavuot is coming when you begin to see cheesecakes everywhere. Countless variations in the bakeries and supermarkets. Endless numbers of recipes in the media. Cheesecake is the iconic Shavuot dessert, as sacrosanct as a Hanukkah latke or Passover matzah ball.

Unfortunately, cheesecake is one of those deceptively simple recipes, the kind that requires some tips and techniques to get right. Also, not everyone agrees on what makes a cheesecake perfect. Some like it dense; others, fluffier. Purists say it should be simple, but lots of people prefer it fancy, with flavors and toppings.

Long ago I created a basic batter that works for almost any type of cheesecake you can imagine. In our family we prefer a dense, rich, creamy version, so I use all cream cheese. But sometimes I make a slight change to lighten it up (I use 1 cup of ricotta cheese to replace 8 ounces of the cream cheese in my recipe). We like it slightly tangy too, so I usually include sour cream or unflavored Greek yogurt. But if I don't have either of those in my fridge I substitute with an additional 1/2 cup of cream and add a tablespoon of flour to better bind the batter together.

This basic batter is amazingly versatile. You can use it to concoct all sorts of fabulous variations — strawberry-topped or chocolate or pumpkin and even elaborate versions such as "turtle" cheesecake. Here are some of my favorite adaptations:

Chocolate Cheesecake: add 10 ounces melted, cooled semisweet chocolate to the batter.

Half-and-Half Cheesecake: add 5 ounces melted chocolate to half the batter, spoon the chocolate batter into the pan, then carefully spoon the vanilla batter on top.

Pumpkin Cheesecake: replace white sugar with brown sugar; omit the sour cream and replace with 3/4 cup mashed pumpkin (canned is fine); stir in 1-1/2 tsp ground cinnamon, 1 tsp grated nutmeg, one tsp ground ginger and one tsp grated orange peel to the batter.

Berry-topped Cheesecake: place whole berries on top of cooled cake, brush with melted apricot preserves or currant jam.

"Turtle" Cheesecake: omit the graham cracker coating for the pan. Instead, make a bottom crust by combining 1 cup crushed graham crackers with 1/4 cup brown sugar, then work in 4 Tbsp butter until crumbly. Press into the pan and bake (no need for the second pan yet) for 10-12 minutes. Spoon in the basic batter and bake as in the basic recipe. Let the cake cool.

For the top: heat 1/4 cup cream until hot, add 3 ounces chopped chocolate and stir until melted. Let cool slightly and spread over cool cake. Scatter 2 Tbsp chopped nuts on top. Optional: pour caramel sauce on top of cut slices of cake.

Basic Cheesecake Recipe

Ingredients

1-1/2 tsp butter or margarine

1/3 cup graham cracker crumbs (approximately)

1-1/2 pounds cream cheese (3 8-ounce packages) 1 cup sugar

1-1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1/2 cup dairy sour cream or unflavored yogurt 1/3 cup cream (whipping cream or half and half) 4 large eggs

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread the butter on the bottom and sides of a 9-inch springform pan. Sprinkle the inside of the pan with the graham cracker crumbs. Shake the pan to coat the bottom and sides of the pan completely.

Beat the cream cheese in the bowl of an electric mixer set at medium speed for 1-2 minutes or until the cheese has softened and is smooth. Gradually add the sugar and beat for 2-3 minutes or until the mixture is



Delicious "Turtle" Cheesecake.

smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl occasionally with a rubber spatula. Add the vanilla extract, sour cream and whipping cream and beat for one minute or until the batter is smooth.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition to incorporate them. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.

Place the springform pan inside a larger pan. Fill the larger pan with enough hot water to come at least 1-inch up the sides of the baking dish.

Bake the cake for 65-75 minutes or until the top of the cake is tanning lightly. Remove the springform pan from the water and let the cake cool in the pan. When the cake has reached room temperature, refrigerate it at least 4 hours or until it is thoroughly chilled. Remove the sides of the pan to serve.

(Ronnie Fein is a freelance food and lifestyle writer. Over the years she has written for the food sections of various newspapers and is the author of four cookbooks: The Complete Idiot's Guide to Cooking Basics, The Complete Idiot's Guide to American Cooking, Hip Kosher, and The Modern Kosher Kitchen.)

The Nosher food blog offers a dazzling array of new and classic Jewish recipes and food news, from Europe to Yemen, from challah to shakshuka and beyond. Check it out at www.TheNosher.com.

Fire set Cont. from page 9

morning on May 25 and fired multiple shots at Bais Chaya Mushka, a Chabad girls' school in Toronto.

No one was injured in the shootings, just as no one was injured in the Vancouver fire, but Canadian Jewish leaders and political officials said the pattern was alarming.

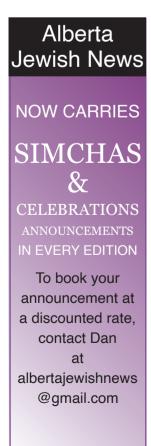
"We have had enough. Yet another Jewish school

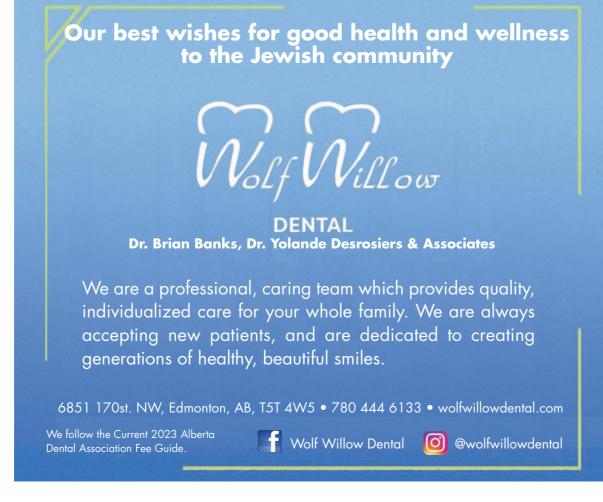
was shot at in the middle of the night – in Canada," said a statement jointly released by Montreal's Federation-CJA and Canada's Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs on May 28. "Thankfully no one was inside the building, but this violent hatred must no longer be tolerated."

On May 28, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined municipal and provincial figures in condemning the attacks on the schools.

"Disgusted that another Jewish school has been the target of a shooting," he said on X. "Relieved that no one was hurt, but I'm thinking of the parents and community members ... who must be incredibly shaken. This is antisemitism, plain and simple — and we will not let it win."

With files from JTA.







Staying up all night on Shavuot is about going all in

By Rabbi Shlomo Zukkier

(JTA) — The holiday of Shavuot, which begins at sundown this year on June 11, is understood by Jewish tradition to be the time when G-d gave the Israelites the Torah at Mount Sinai. It is traditionally celebrated with dairy foods and intensive Torah study, with some staying up all night to learn (a practice likely fueled by the advent of coffee in the 16th century). These allnight study sessions, known as Tikkun Leil Shavuot, are held by Jewish communities of different denominations and geographies and are the only widely observed Jewish ritual involving staying up all night.

Though the custom is widespread, there are few classical sources to support it. So why do we do it?

On its face, the connection is obvious. Shavuot celebrates receiving the Torah, so of course we would honor Shavuot with abundant Torah study. But upon reflection, this reason seems less than convincing. How high is the quality of Torah study in the middle of the night? As the hours tick by, is anyone even paying attention to the teacher? Many people load up on sugar and caffeine, perhaps ill-advisedly, just to get through it. This wouldn't seem like the best way to pay tribute to Torah.

A more common explanation is that Tikkun Leil Shavuot is precisely that — a tikkun (literally "rectification") for what went wrong on that original Shavuot at Sinai. The Israelites, according to this theory, slept in on the day they were meant to receive the Torah. In a sort of penance for that failing, we make sure not to miss Shavuot morning by pulling an all-nighter the night before.

But this seems potentially counterproductive. If you're worried about sleeping in and missing a morning meeting, staying up all night doesn't quite do the trick. It's overkill, and may actually undermine your goal. You might manage to be physically where you need to be, but at the cost of any sort of mental presence. What is the value of being present for the giving of the Torah if you're incapacitated from sleep deprivation?

I would like to suggest an alternate explanation, one focused less on learning and preparedness and more on the experience of receiving the Torah. The goal of Shavuot night is not Torah learning —

one can study Torah any day of the year. The goal is to experience something of the radical encounter with G-d at Sinai.

In the book of Exodus, we find this description of what transpired as G-d descended on the mountain:

And the entire people saw the thunder and lightning and the sound of the shofar and the mountain in smoke. The nation saw, they trembled with fear, and they stayed at a distance. They said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have G-d speak to us or we will die."

In the Torah's telling, the encounter with G-d was an immersive experience. As if attending a concert with overwhelming audiovisual components, the people are at first entranced and then overwhelmed by what they're experiencing, backtracking in fear. They are so overpowered they are unable to distinguish between the senses — hence they "saw" the "sound of the shofar." Overawed by all of this, they beg off, asking to have Moses serve as an intermediary rather than encounter G-d directly again.

This should not be surprising — it makes sense that an encounter with G-d should be overwhelming, an

JNF serves up western hospitality



JNF Calgary hosted staff and lay leaders from across Canada on the weekend of May 31, for JNF Canada's National Annual General Meeting. Local JNF board members showed off our great city and the Rocky Mountains with our best western hospitality. A special moment at the AGM was a tribute to Immediate Past National President Beth Price, as 15 or so of her best friends surprised her by joining us in celebrating her contributions to JNF Canada.

experience that scrambles the senses and shifts one's consciousness. And that's what we're looking for on Shavuot. Tikkun Leil Shavuot isn't primarily an opportunity to learn, nor a chance to fix some millennia-old mishap. It is meant precisely to simulate that total immersive experience.

We do that by occupying ourselves entirely with Torah — and nothing else (OK, maybe some cheesecake too). We learn until it hurts, going at it until we just can't anymore. Depriving ourselves of sleep brings our bodies into the experience and inevitably effects a shift in consciousness. Taken together, this practice creates an intense experience, an all-encompassing engagement with G-d and Torah — just as the Israelites experienced at Mount Sinai.

Yes, you might have a headache in the morning, but some hangovers are worth it.

This story originally appeared on My Jewish Learning. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.

Morah Robin Cont. from page 10

for her "incredible family of colleagues, as well as to the parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and most importantly, the beautiful children of our Jewish community."

"As I look back on my time in the classroom, I am reminded of the countless faces that have passed through my doors, each one unique, each one leaving an indelible mark on my heart...And through it all, there has been one constant: the support and

dedication of this community."

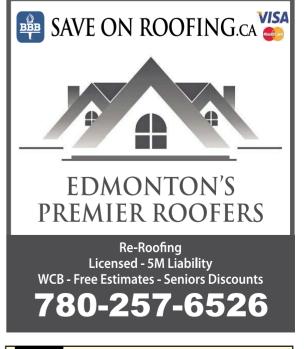
As Edmonton's Jewish community pays tribute to the end of an era, we can still look forward to cameo appearances! "I'm retiring, but I am still going to be on the sub-list," she said with unmistakable joy. As a substitute, Robin might not be with kindergartners or grade one students as we have all grown accustomed to. This made me wonder if she had ever considered teaching other grades. "Every year they ask us what we would prefer to teach, and they try to accommodate us as much as they can. I tell them that I can go where

they need me, but I do love teaching the little ones."

Robin is looking forward to representing Naamat at a program in Israel this November, and visiting with her grandchildren, but the rest of the time, she won't be far away. Talmud Torah students and parents can look forward to seeing Robin around and she looks forward to seeing her students, their families and her colleagues. When I asked how many students have come through her door during her career, Robin laughed and told me she hasn't been counting. Needless to say though, Robin Marcus is a hard act to follow, and her time at Talmud Torah leaves behind an admirable legacy.

Regan Treewater is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.







New outdoor space at Talmud Torah will honour Nathan Reboh z'l

By Christina Reboh

Honouring our loved ones is a mitzvah and keeps their spirit shining. We regularly reminisce, share stories, look at photos, and hold tight to our memories, passing their legacy from generation to generation. This tradition is part of what keeps the Jewish spark alive, knowing where we come from, learning from our ancestors' lives, and remaining steadfast in our solidarity and commitment to living a robust and beautiful Jewish life.

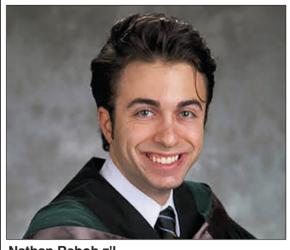
Nathan Reboh z'l lived life to the fullest. He always had a smile on his face, was a compassionate friend and family member, was dedicated to Torah and Jewish learning, and was always up for a new challenge or adventure. Education and learning and long-time friendships were among Nathan's greatest passions and these values started at the Edmonton Talmud Torah.

In his memory, his family is collaborating with Edmonton Public Schools, with support from the Talmud Torah Society, to build an outdoor leisure space at the Edmonton Talmud Torah. The vision for this project is to provide students with a shaded, outdoor space to learn, explore, and socialize; a reflection to how Nathan lived his life. There are unique lesson plans from Math to Science to English that challenge students to interact with the environment around them while learning core

curriculum. The leisure space will also provide a comfortable, shaded sitting area where parents currently socialize while watching their kids let loose at the end of the school day. We all know Nathan loved to mingle! He also enjoyed playing chess since he was a child, so the space will include a concrete chess table and Ping Pong table (another favorite activity of Nathan's). Additional elements, such as planters and more interactive pieces are on the list, but the inclusion of these depends on funding and construction timeline.

It took a few years to find the right legacy project, and now that it has become a true concept, the family is eager to make it come to life so that six (out of seven) of Nathan's nieces and nephews can use the space while they are students at TT. A generous \$25,000 matching donation has already been committed to get the project started. The end result will be a beautiful outdoor space for the Talmud Torah community to enjoy for decades to come.

The shape of the area is Nathan's hockey number, 33, flipped, but also symbolizes a butterfly. A fitting visual to the beautiful life Nathan endeavoured to have. Despite the onset of brain cancer when he was just twenty years old, he committed to living life to the fullest and never let the obstacles of the illness hold him back. He spent years learning new skills, including knife sharpening, wood working, and Thai cooking. Nathan loved exploring the world, he visited many countries like Cuba, Brazil, Morocco and Japan.



Nathan Reboh z'l.

He would never turn down a challenge to raise money for Cancer research or ice climb in Colorado. To Nathan, the only limitation was one's self and the willingness to try.

The Nathan Reboh z'l Outdoor Leisure Space will expand students' minds, engage their senses, encourage curiosity and socializing, and provide fresh air space for connecting with curriculum and each other

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Images of devastation rattles some of Israel's most ardent defenders

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – For months, Zoe Buckman, a Brooklyn artist with more than 72,000 followers on Instagram, has posted about the hypocrisy she sees in critics of Israel who downplayed atrocities committed by Hamas on Oct. 7.

On May 27, she again decried hypocrisy. But this time, she aimed her criticism in large part toward fellow supporters of Israel.

"Folks who do not condemn loss of civilian life in Palestine are akin to the many who refuse to condemn 10//7, h@mas and what is being done to the hostages," she posted in Instagram Stories. "Turning a blind eye the way others do to us, is not our way."

In the wake of last month's Israeli strike on a displaced persons camp in Rafah that killed dozens, Buckman was one of a number of pro-Israel advocates who said they could not look away. The viral images of devastation — including that of a decapitated child — triggered an outpouring of horror on social media, including from activists who have previously defended Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

Some sought to contextualize the violence, noting that it was Hamas that started the war and could end it by surrendering and freeing the captives. Others suggested that no end was worth the horror of at least 45 civilians killed in a single incident.

A range of world leaders have also condemned the attack, which Israel says it is investigating as likely caused by a secondary explosion after it targeted two Hamas leaders, who were killed. But the responses underscored the degree to which support for Israel's war effort has eroded beyond the halls of government in the nearly eight months since Oct. 7.

"The scenes from Rafah overnight are horrific," Piers Morgan, the popular British TV host who has made a sport of sparring with critics of Israel on his show, said Monday on X. "I've defended Israel's right to defend itself after Oct. 7 but slaughtering so many innocent people as they cower in a refugee camp is indefensible."

Avi Mayer, a longtime pro-Israel activist and former editor of the Jerusalem Post, called for Hamas's surrender, but his tone was one of exhaustion. "The images from Rafah are terrible," he said. "This war has gone on for too long. It's time for it to end."

Mayer was not the only Israeli who has accrued a massive following for public diplomacy efforts defending their country and its actions to lament the strike and its after-math.

Influencer Hen Mazzig posted that it is "undeniable" that Israel has taken measures to protect civilians in Rafah even as Hamas has shot rockets at Israel but wrote, "None of this can ever justify the heartbreaking tragedy of Palestinian civilians losing their lives in the fire caused by the strike."

He added, "We must always recognize the humanity in Palestinian civilians who are not part of this war. When we fail to see their humanity, we lose our own."

Israeli officials are defending the IDF campaign in Rafah, which they say is necessary to eliminate the remnants of Hamas' fighting force. In an address, Netanyahu called the strike a "tragic" mistake but said, "I will not yield or surrender. I will not end the war before achieving all our goals. Our fallen heroes will not have died in vain."

On May 28, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the IDF spokesperson, said in an English-language video that the original aim of the strike, to take out senior leaders of Hamas, was successful. He said

the civilian deaths were caused by a fire sparked by the strike that the military did not anticipate.

"Their deaths saved lives," he said about the Hamas leaders. "Sadly, following the strike, due to unforeseen circumstances, a fire ignited, tragically taking the lives of Gazan civilians nearby. Despite our efforts to minimize civilian casualties during the strike the fire that broke out was unexpected and unintended. This is a devastating incident which we did not expect. We

Continued on page 23



Alberta Na'amat retreat will be held June 23 in Red Deer

The Edmonton and Calgary chapters of Na'amat Canada will hold a retreat on Sunday, June 23, 2024 in Red Deer, Alberta. The event, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., is an exciting opportunity for Na'amat members to get to know one another, learn more about Na'amat's projects in Israel, brainstorm, share best practices, and participate in fun activities.

Speakers will include Na'amat Canada president Susan Inhaber, the second national president from Western Canada, Calgary Justice of the Peace Mac Vomberg, and Gail Baillie, an experienced and dynamic workshop facilitator. Inhaber's remarks will include an update on the programs and activities Na'amat Canada supports in Israel. Vomberg, who has extensive experience in criminal justice from all aspects of the Alberta court system, will speak about domestic violence protections in Alberta.

There will also be plenty of time for leisure activities, inside and out (weather dependent). Lunch and snacks are included in the \$36 fee for the one-day retreat, which is open to Na'amat Canada members only.

Maya Feldman, Tikvah Chapter President and Retreat Chair says, "I am so excited to have Na'amat members from our two cities come together for this retreat. I would love to have more women from Calgary and Edmonton join our amazing organization so they could also participate in this inspiring event! A perk of joining now is that not only would a new member be able to attend the retreat, but also be a member from now, through the 2024/2025 season."

Established in 1925, Na'amat Canada is a Jewish women's non-profit organization dedicated to empowering the lives of women and children of all faiths in Canada and Israel. Na'amat is the largest provider of social services for women and children in Israel. The organization's projects in Israel include an extensive daycare network, technological high schools, legal aid centres that have helped thousands of women, and a domestic violence shelter that also provides counselling for men and women.

In Canada, Na'amat is involved in a variety of charitable activities, including providing university and college scholarships for women who couldn't





Top: Calgary Na'amat members enjoying a recent Games Night and birthday celebration. Bottom: Edmonton's Na'amat Tikvah members met last month to hear guest speaker Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, talk about recent trips to Israel and current initiatives.

otherwise afford post-secondary education. As well, many Na'amat cities across Canada conduct the School Supplies for Kids program. Na'amat Canada Calgary was the first city to initiate this program in 1998.

Over the past 26 years, Na'amat Canada Calgary has provided more than 25,000 backpacks filled with school supplies for the children and youth who have taken refuge in Calgary and Southern Alberta domestic violence and homeless shelters. This year's campaign has already begun with a 50/50 cash raffle, which is taking place from May 29 to June 19. Alberta residents can purchase tickets by going to www.naamat.com/calgary and clicking on the raffle link.For more information or to become a member email: calgary.info@naamat.com, or go to www.naamat.com.

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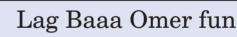
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A petting zoo for the kiddos was one of the highlights at the Edmonton Lag BaOmer BBQ on May 26. The event was hosted by Chabad of Edmonton, Beth Israel and YES Kosher Garden.



Yom HaShoah brought the testimony of Paul Kagan z'l to the community

By Regan Treewater-Lipes

Yom HaShoah marks a somber date of remembrance in the Jewish calendar year. Communities gather to remember the stories of past generations, and to unify in a single commitment: Never Again. This year an exceptionally diverse crowd convened at Beth Israel Synagogue to pay tribute to the six million lost. Not only did members of the Edmonton Jewish community from all denominations attend, but so did the Deputy Premiere of Alberta, Mike Ellis, trustees from the Edmonton Public School Board, and a sizeable contingent of allies representing the local Evangelical community.

Members of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton's Holocaust Education Committee facilitated the proceedings to a nearly packed room. Talmud Torah's choir led the audience in *O Canada* and later, more poignantly, in the singing of Ha Tikvah. Dr. Francie Cyngiser, Gillian Horwitz, and Anna Linetsky led generational survivors in lighting candles followed by a prayer offered by Rabbi Guy Tal.

The keynote presentation was given by Dr. Leon Kagan, a member of the Holocaust Education Committee, who helped to narrative his father Paul's Second Voices Project documentary. The Second Voices Project (SVP) continues to bring survivor testimony, and second-generation speakers to Alberta schools, grades 8 through 12. SVP films have also been screened to university classes as part of Holocaust awareness units. The SVP bridges a generational divide to help younger learners gain a more tangible and current comprehension of the devastation left by the Holocaust. Joined by members of his family, Dr. Kagan guided the audience through his father's story assisted by Paul Kagan's recorded testimony. Raised by survivors, Dr. Kagan provided insight

into his father's life before and after the Holocaust, while Paul Kagan's own voice rang out with stunning clarity as he narrated his own struggle to overcome the unimaginable.

Paul Kagan survived the Vilno Ghetto, forced labour, and the struggle to rebuild after losing his family. The individual stories woven together as the larger tapestry of his survival still resound vividly first through

the recording of his testimony and amplified by Dr. Kagan's discussion of his father. Moments like when young Paul Kagan recognized his own cousin as the Judenrat official stealing his food echo chillingly. His pain at leaving his mother and sisters behind to certain death after lying about being a mechanic to be selected for work detail, felt palpable as attendees looked around at their own loved ones sitting with them

Paul Kagan's story fused with the historical narrative of the Edmonton Jewish community when Dr. Kagan shared a touching wedding photo of his parents taken at the old Beth Israel location. Quite notably, both of his maternal grandparents survived and were present for the chupah.

Paul Kagan's childhood was stolen from him, and as he himself noted in his testimony, by the time he reached Edmonton, he had already lived more than his chronological years. Through Dr. Kagan's physical presence as he helped to introduce listeners to his father's story, the vision for the SVP was showcased marvelously. For those who never had the privilege of meeting Paul Kagan, his son's discussion of his father's survivor's journey in real-time with assistance from



Leon Kagan and members of his family at the Edmonton Yom HaShoah commemoration at Beth Israel Synagogue. Photo by Tammy Vineberg.

video archive footage made the testimony almost as strong as if the courageous man had been there to tell his story himself.

After the formal event proceedings concluded, attendees filed into the foyer to greet one another and reflect collectively about the presentation. This gave younger audience members the opportunity to ask questions of Dr. Kagan and thank him for his efforts on behalf of the community. What was astounding was that in this moment of remembering so much loss, there was actually so much life - Jewish life. Local teens from NCSY had only just returned from a shabbaton in BC and congregated in a corner of the lobby to chat, people stopped to show one another pictures from recent convocations and life-cycle celebrations, and others caught up exuberantly with friends. Perhaps to an outsider this spectacle might initially seem odd, but at an event to mark the near total loss of European Jewish civilization, the boisterous carryings-on trumpeted: Am Israel Chai!

Regan Treewater-Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

Ghitter, Hoffman Cont. from page 2

Some of these blockbuster events were held at Beth Tzedec, a point of pride for the Hoffmans, who are longtime congregants there. Funds they have raised over the years have benefited the Synagogue, Jewish organizations including JNF, and a plethora of organizations serving the greater community.

"We have had a lot of fun with these charities and we've done good work," Hoffman said.

One project that was especially meaningful to the Hoffmans was bringing Holocaust survivor, author and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel to Calgary in 2006 when he addressed a full house at the Jack Singer Concert Hall.

"It was one of the most important things we've ever done," said Gordy Hoffman, who takes pride in the fact that Eva—the daughter of two Holocaust survivors—co-chaired the community's Holocaust Remembrance Committee for many years.

The Hoffmans have two children and four grandchildren.

Hoffman's list of honours is lengthy. In addition to his Queen's Council designation in 2000 and appointment to the Order of Canada (Canada's second-highest civilian honour) in 2019, Hoffman has received awards and recognitions from a very long list of Jewish organizations. In 2008, he and Eva were co-honourees at the JNF Gala celebrating the modern state of Israel's 60th Anniversary. Gordy is the 2011 recipient of the Ben Docktor Award of Excellence (B'nai Brith). The same year he and Eva were Co-Honourees of Theatre Calgary's Night with the Stars. Other major recognitions have included the City of Calgary Citizen of the Year Award (2010), the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012), and the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Pin (2022).

Ron Ghitter earned his B. A. and LL. B. from the University of Alberta and practiced law for 25 years, later serving as Executive Vice President of Development for Trizec Corporation before establishing Ron Ghitter Property Consultant Inc. In 1993, Ghitter co-founded Certus Developments Inc, a business that is still active.

Ghitter served as a director of Bentall Corporation for 16 years, seven of them as chair.

Everything started with tennis, says Ghitter, which has been a lifelong passion.

"Tennis was significant to me because...it put me through law school," said Ghitter, who played, taught tennis for the City of Edmonton, and gave private lessons

Decades later, Ghitter paid forward his gratitude to the sport when he served as a director of Tennis Canada and founder of the state-of-the-art Osten and Victor Alberta Tennis Centre in Calgary. Fittingly, Ghitter was inducted into the Canadian Tennis Hall of Fame (builder's category) in 2022.

In these rough and tumble times, Ghitter is no doubt missed in an increasingly polarized political arena. Twice elected as an Alberta MLA — in 1971 and 1975 — he represented the inner-city constituency of Calgary Buffalo. Though he "resisted offers for a cabinet position," Ghitter chaired committees relating to liquor laws and condominium legislation.

Most notably, while serving in the Peter Lougheed government, Ghitter introduced Alberta's Individual Rights Protection Act, beginning a journey in the promotion of human rights that continues to this day. In 2022, Ghitter founded the Dignity Forum, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to counteracting "the growing cancer of prejudice and discrimination evident in the nation."

Ghitter chaired the Alberta government's Committee on Tolerance and Understanding in the aftermath of the Keegstra affair when it came to light that former mayor and high school social studies teacher James Keegstra had been promoting antisemitism and Holocaust denial, poisoning the minds of his high school students in the rural town of Eckville, Alberta.

Ghitter served as chair of the Arts and Culture

Initiative at the 1988 Winter Olympics held in Calgary.

Appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1993, the Honourable Ronald G. Ghitter chaired the Senate Energy and Environment Committee. He retired from Canada's upper house in 2000.

Ghitter has been the recipient of numerous honours through the years. He was appointed QC in 1978 and received the Human Relations Award, Canadian Council of Christians and Jews (1985); the Alberta Human Rights Award, Alberta Human Rights Commission (1990); Alberta Centennial Medal (2005); and the Gerald L. Gall Human Rights Award, John Humphrey Center of Peace and Human Rights (2012).

In 2018, Ghitter was appointed to the Order of Canada. Just last year, he was honoured with an Over 70 Award (recognizing the accomplishments of Calgarians over the age of 70).

Ghitter and his wife Myrna have been married for 30 years. He has one daughter from a previous marriage and two grandchildren. Myrna has two daughters and one granddaughter.

"Myrna has been by my side in all our philanthropic endeavours and has been a marvelous and wise participant," said Ghitter.

Both Ron Ghitter and Gordy Hoffman reacted to the news of their Honorary Doctors of Law degrees with humility and gratitude. Each considers it important for members of the Jewish community to engage in and support the society of which they are a part.

"It's fun that Gordy and I are being recognized and nice to see a couple of Jewish guys in that category," said Ghitter.

"With all the [chaos] that's happening in the world, especially after October 7, it's nice for people to know that we as Jews are involved in the community and doing good things for the community. That's what I'm proudest of," Hoffman told AJNews. "It's important for the world to see that."

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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SOUICES by Eliezer Segal

The Letters of the Law

For many of my contemporaries, the quintessential visual representation of the life of Moses is Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 cinematic epic *The Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston.

Despite its title, the film is not primarily about the revelation of the commandments at Mount Sinai. Only a brief segment of the screen time is devoted to the giving of the tablets (carved by spectacular divine fire), Moses's receiving them, smashing them, and delivering them to the Israelites.

When I first saw the movie in my youth, I was disappointed — as, I suppose were many Jewish viewers — by the fact that the text on the cinematic tablets was not written in the familiar squarish characters that we learned in Hebrew school and in which Jews have been writing and reading for more than two millennia. Instead, it was inscribed in an unfamiliar alphabet similar to the one found on coinage minted by the Hasmoneans and Bar-Kokhba, and still used by the Samaritans.

All this invites questions of why and how DeMille and his collaborators chose to make use of that particular portrayal of the biblical tablets, and how accurate they were in rendering them for the silver screen.

The background story to this decision inspires immense respect for the persons involved. Prominent among these was Henry S. Noerdlinger, a Swiss-born researcher to whom DeMille assigned the task of verifying the accuracy of this and other historical films.

We should note that Noerdlinger's definition of historical accuracy differed considerably from academic standards. Notably, he strove to incorporate narrative additions from later rabbinic, Christian and Muslim traditions; and the opening credits proclaimed proudly that the story was "in accordance with the Ancient texts of Philo, Josephus, Eusebius, the Midrash and The Holy Scriptures." DeMille also speculated that other ancient sources had been "long since destroyed, or perhaps lost like the Dead Sea Scrolls" that were coming to light at that time. Those texts were the sources of numerous plot complications, political and romantic intrigues in the Egyptian court,

and other non-scriptural elements that enhanced the movie's dramatic impact.

How was the team of filmmakers able to wrestle with arcane details of Hebrew paleography? So insistent was DeMille on giving his film a genuine look that his tablets of the Law were actually carved out of reddish granite rock extracted from the slopes of Mount Sinai (or at least from Jabal Musa, the site that has been identified with that biblical location). Multiple copies of the tablets had to be crafted from various materials for use in diverse lighting situations. In recent years, those props have been fetching prices of \$50,000 to \$80,000 at auctions.

As regards the choice of alphabet, this was also dictated by DeMille's desire for historical authenticity. For this purpose he consulted with Prof. Ralph Marcus, a respected expert on Second Temple Judaism. Of the various options from which they could have chosen (and which are in fact quite similar in appearance), Marcus argued for a late Bronze-Age Canaanite script that would likely have been in use in Moses' time.

DeMille was very appreciative of Marcus's contribution to the production and repeatedly consulted him on matters of scholarly accuracy. Marcus soon realized that for a blockbuster that was netting its producers \$130 million, he deserved more than the paltry fifty dollars that he was paid. He hesitantly suggested a raise to \$250, but received no response before he was felled by a heart attack.

The Talmud preserves divergent opinions regarding the alphabet in which the Torah and the Decalogue had originally been inscribed. While most sages recognized that our square script, known to the Mishnah as "Assyrian," was introduced in the days of the Babylonian captivity, others (like Rabbi Eleazar ha-Moda'i) denied that Jews had ever used anything other than our square alphabet. Rabbi Judah the Patriarch held that the original tablets had been inscribed in Assyrian letters, which had subsequently been abandoned until they were re-introduced by Ezra in Babylonia.

DeMille himself was a practicing Episcopalian Christian, and was presumably unaware that he might

have qualified halakhically as Jewish, insofar as his mother Beatrice Samuels was of Jewish birth, though she converted to Christianity before her marriage. (Through her he was second-cousin to Viscount Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner of Mandatory Palestine).

His sentimental attachment to the Jewish people was exemplified when filming an earlier, silent version of *Ten Commandments* in 1923, for which he employed a large number of recent Jewish immigrants to play the Hebrew slaves. At one point, those Jewish extras broke into a chant of the liturgical melodies "Av Ha-Rahamim" [merciful father] and "Sh'ma Yisra'el," eliciting tears from the director.

If (as I did) you transliterate Marcus's text into "normal" square Hebrew letters, you will observe that its content is not completely identical to that of our Jewish Bibles. Some of the differences might stem from the same challenges faced by designers of synagogue Torah arks when they set out to depict the motif of the Ten Commandments, but realize that there is not enough space to display them in their entirety in a readable size (especially the wordier ones at the beginning). A common solution is to include only the first two words of each commandment, or to substitute single letters of the Hebrew alphabet, used as numbers. The designers for the film seem to take an analogous pragmatic approach; though some also made reference to a scholarly theory that the original commandments given to Moses were formulated concisely, and were expanded in later times.

Curiously, the text on DeMille's tablets skips over the prohibition against taking G-d's name in vain. It was likely a simple copyist's omission (in a text that nobody could proofread) — but I wonder whether DeMille had concerns about his own reputed propensity for cussing and blaspheming on the set.

After all, such violations might not be so grave if the prohibition wasn't set in stone.

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





This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School



















It has been a busy month at Talmud Torah School. In addition to their regular studies, students participated in a school-wide Yom Ha'atzmaut Assembly and the choir performed at community events for Yom HaShoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut. ELC students enjoyed baking pita and falafel as part of their Judaic Program.

Images Cont. from page 19

are investigating what caused the fire that resulted in this tragic loss of life."

Some Israeli right-wing extremists celebrated the incident, referring to it in now-deleted social media posts as "Lag b'Omer in Rafah," a reference to the minor Jewish holiday that fell on Sunday and is celebrated with bonfires.

Tomer Persico, a scholar at the Shalom Hartman Institute who has decried antisemitism on the left since Oct. 7, posted a screenshot of one such tweet, since deleted, by a right-wing Israeli TV host. "This is joy at the deaths of children," he said.

Many other voices from Israel pushed back against celebrating the strike. Sarah Tuttle-Singer, an opinion columnist whose social media posts since Oct. 7 have described the anguish of Israelis, also called for an end to the fighting

"This war has stolen so much from us," she said on Facebook. "We will not let it ALSO steal our humanity and make us turn away from the suffering of others."

In one Instagram post that exemplified the degree to which the Rafah strike was creating new bedfellows of people who have not always agreed since Oct. 7, a viral drawing by the Egyptian dissident artist Yassin Mohammed shows a man lifting up a headless baby with a flower emerging from its neck.

Among those to share it was Israeli comedian Noam Schuster-Eliassi, a harsh critic of the war effort since early on. "Who will stop this death machine?" she wrote. "Stop this death machine now."

Alana Lindsay, a relative of five released hostages who still has relatives held in Gaza, shared Schuster-Eliassi's post from New York. And then Buckman, whose content more typically lambastes what she says is antisemitism among those protesting the war, shared it as well



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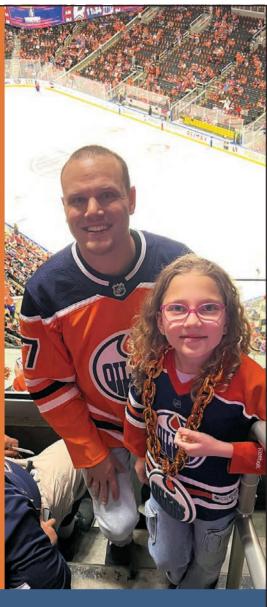


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