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Talmud Torah: The illumination of Jewish learning

By: Natalie Soroka

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is a celebration of resilience, miracles, and the enduring power of faith. At its heart lies the menorah, whose flames commemorate the miraculous oil that burned for eight days in the rededicated Temple. Yet, the light of Hanukkah extends beyond the physical candles; it symbolizes the illumination of Jewish learning and wisdom that has guided the Jewish people through the ages.

Here at Edmonton Talmud Torah, our students learn the story of Hanukkah. Based on their age levels, they understand the importance of dedication—to our traditions, our communities, and our values. When the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple from oppression, they rekindled not only the physical menorah but also the spiritual flame of Judaism. This dedication is mirrored in the commitment to Jewish learning, which has been a cornerstone of Jewish life and identity at Jewish day schools throughout the world.

Using the Hebrew/Judaic curriculum developed by Talmud Torah Society's Education committee, and supported by a generous grant from the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation, children in our Early Learning Centre are immersed in the traditions and celebrations of Hanukkah. They enjoy songs, blessings, videos, and stories that bring the holiday to life.

Through hands-on activities and engaging experiences, students explore the story, symbols, rituals, and customs of Hanukkah. They become

familiar with Hebrew words such as Hanukkiah (Menorah), Ner/ot (candle/s), Shamash (helper candle), Sufganiyah (donut), Sevivon (spinning top/dreidel), and Leviva/vot (Latke/s). They also learn to recognize the Hebrew letters on the Sevivon and understand their meaning: Nes Gadol Hayah Sham (A great miracle happened there).

These introductory activities lay the foundation for increasingly advanced concepts, discussions, and activities that take place in Kindergarten to Grade 6. Depending on the grade, children are challenged to use their thinking skills in various ways. They may be encouraged to imagine what life was like for the Maccabees, explore the symbolism of light, engage in a STEM activity by making Hanukkiahs out of found materials, and investigate how Hanukkah is celebrated

around the world. They may also explore the concept of antisemitism, its relevance today, and ways to combat it.

Through reading books, engaging in writing activities, creating art or studying Hebrew texts, Edmonton Talmud Torah ensures that the spark of tradition continues to burn. Hanukkah reminds us

TT students pose with a bulletin board that reads: Each one of us is a small light. Together we are all one light.

that even in times of adversity, the light of Jewish learning can shine brightly. As we light the menorah during Hanukkah, let us also rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. In doing so, we honour the legacy of the Maccabees and ensure that the light of Jewish learning remains a guiding force for future generations.

The messages of Hanukkah

By Rabbi Guy Tal



Rabbi Guy Tal

In a dark and frozen nestledhamlet Eastern Europe, beneath a heavy blanket of snow, a beautiful Jewish child with radiant eyes lay upon a cold and crumbling floor, his sidelocks resting softly against his cheeks as he spins a dreidel. Despite the atmosphere of fear melancholy surrounding him, his

soul soars towards the illuminated hills of Judea, towards the heroic tales of the Maccabees he had just

heard, whispered moments ago by his father's trembling voice as he blessed the tiny oil candles placed with trepidation before the small window.

The ancient words still echo in his ears: "These candles that we kindle for the miracles, for the wonders, for the redemptions, and for the battles You performed for our ancestors," - and though these events occurred in distant times, they continue to illuminate our hearts in the present moment - "bayamim hahem bzman haze".

The Maccabees' heroism—blazing in the sundrenched fields of Beit Horon, in the slopes of Ayalon Valley facing Emmaus, and in the golden streets of Jerusalem—ignited a fire within his heart. The flames of the candles merged with flames of courage, of valor, of love for nation and land and faith in the righteousness of the path, in the power of the Jewish people and the redemption yet to come—all deeply rooted in his vivid burning soul during those dark and cold winter days.

Twenty years later, or perhaps ten generations hence, that boy grew and strengthened, driven by the same faith and values absorbed in the Hanukkah days of his childhood. He stepped into the fields of Degania, Rishon LeZion, and Tel Hai, raising the forgotten homeland from dust and reviving its soil, "One hand doing the work, and one hand holding the weapon" (Nehemiah 4:11). The faith that burned in the Hanukkah candles preserved the embers of nationalism and heroism in the heart of the oppressed people in exile and enabled their redemption.

"Who has accomplished and done this? He who calls the generations from the beginning—I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last, I am He" (Isaiah 41:4). The Jewish people lost their independence with the destruction of the First Temple and had not returned to full sovereignty since. Yet the One who "calls the generations from the beginning" planted, during the generations preceding the long and bitter exile—between Persian and Roman rule—a final ray of independence, heroism, and national spirit through the stories of the Maccabees.

The life-affirming heroism of the Maccabees, which was eternally inscribed in the Jewish calendar as a holiday to be remembered forever, is not the death-seeking heroism of Masada's warriors. It is what preserved the ember of nationalism in the Jewish people. And though the Hasmonean dynasty deteriorated and became corrupted over subsequent generations, to the point of bringing the Roman sword upon themselves, the Jewish people never forgot its youthful grace, its courageous valor, and its steadfast faith.

The life-affirming heroism of the Maccabees is revealed anew in our generation, especially in the past year, among our brethren in the Holy Land. Despite the terrible blow we have received, the Jewish people find within themselves the courage and spiritual strength to wage fierce war, to overcome all our surrounding enemies, and to permanently alter the situation in the Middle East. Just as the Maccabees' heroism illuminated the hearts of generations of Jews, so too will the Maccabees' heroism of our time eternally illuminate the chronicles of our people.

Rabbi Guy Tal is the Rabbi at Beth Israel Congregation in Edmonton.







FROM OUR
FAMILY
TO YOURS





Finding light in times of challenge

By Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein



Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein

As the winter nights grow longer and darkness settles early around us, we prepare to kindle the lights of Hanukkah. This year, these flames carry special meaning as Jewish communities worldwide face increased antisemitism and hatred.

The Hanukkah story reminds us of our ancestors' courage in the face of oppression.

When the Syrian-Greeks sought to eliminate Jewish practice, a small group of devoted Jews fought not just for religious freedom but for the right to exist as Jews openly and proudly.

The miracle of the oil lasting eight days teaches us something essential about perseverance. Even when resources seem scarce, and hope dims, we continue forward. Each night, as we add another candle, we demonstrate our commitment to increasing light rather than cursing the darkness.

Our sages teach that the Hanukkah lights serve as a public declaration (*pirsumei nisa*). We place our menorahs in windows not just to share the miracle's memory but to affirm our place in the world. Today, when some might counsel Jews to hide symbols of our faith, the act of lighting the menorah becomes an assertion of dignity and belonging.

Yet Hanukkah isn't only about defiance. The gentle glow of the candles reminds us that light need not blind or burn to dispel darkness. Through education within our communities, thoughtful dialogue among ourselves, and acts of kindness to one another, we can help strengthen our shared Jewish identity and values. The Maccabees fought not only with swords but

with conviction in their hearts and faith in their traditions.

Today, we too must cultivate our inner light through Torah study, through teaching our children, and through maintaining our customs with pride and joy. Each flame we kindle represents our commitment to preserving and celebrating our heritage, even in challenging times.

The Talmud teaches that we're not permitted to use the Hanukkah lights for practical purposes - only to look at them and appreciate their beauty. In these challenging times, let us pause each evening to absorb their message: even small lights can illuminate great darkness when we kindle them together.

May the lights of Hanukkah bring warmth to your homes and hearts. May they strengthen our resolve to stand tall as Jews, to support each other, and to work toward a world where all people can live without fear. Happy Festival of Lights.

Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein is the Rabbi at Beth Shalom Congregation in Edmonton.

Beth Shalom Scholar-in-Residence pays tribute to the Boss

By Howie Sniderman

The following is a brief overview of some impressions (well, mine, anyway) of things that my 'Hungry Heart' learned over the course of a Shabbat at Beth Shalom in Edmonton with Stephen Arnoff, our guest and Scholar-in-Residence, who joined us from his home in Jerusalem.

Stephen is the CEO of the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center but that's just his day job. By night (and on Motzei Shabbat) he is a talented musician and diviner of the spirituality in music. In particular, aside from his doctorate in Midrash from the Jewish Theological Seminary, he has also (literally) written the book on Bob Dylan – "About Man and God and Law: The Spiritual Wisdom of Bob Dylan." He is also a founding editor of BOSS: The Biannual Online Journal of Springsteen Studies.

The weekend of November 15-16, 2024, Stephen Arnoff took our community for a walk through a compelling picture of what the promise of a promised land has meant for us, as Jews, and for the world writ large. And what that promise could hold in store for us as we move, day by day, through increasingly complex and fraught times in Israel and abroad.

He did so through the lens of the spirituality in the lyrics of the music of Bruce Springsteen. Lyrics infused with world weariness, warning and wisdom. He did so from the opening prayers of our Kabbalat Shabbat service on Friday night, leading us in the singing of Psalm 29 (*Mizmor l'David*) to the melody of 'Born in the USA.' It was not lost on anyone that the results of the US elections a mere 10 days earlier had raised the spectre of uncertain times ahead.

He did so by leading us in the closing prayer that night, *Adon Olam*, to the melody of '*Dancing in the Dark*.' Can there be any better metaphor (or allegory?) for the uncertain times ahead for Israel, and the need

for us to steel and redouble our faith in our *Adon Olam?*

The Promised Land: Take Two – Shabbat Morning

During his Shabbat morning D'var, Stephen spoke about the call to action inherent in the lyrics of many of Springsteen's songs. The notion that it is up to us to make the Promised Land more than simply words. As well as the soothing notion that, in our 'Long Walk Home,' we aren't alone:

"Son, we're lucky in this town.

It's a beautiful place to be born.

It just wraps its arms around you,

Nobody crowds you and nobody goes it alone."

-Bruce Springsteen, 'Long Walk Home'

In the whirlwind of the bone-shaking tremors wracking Israel, which have sent concentric ripples of anti-Semitism around the world including right to our own home here in Edmonton, it is indeed soothing, as I say, to know that we are not

No Surrender: His Hometown – A Fireside Chat where no one was 'On Fire'

Stephen's day to day working world in

Continued on page 17



Stephen Arnoff on guitar while Rabbi Zilbershtein holds the havdalah candle.



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Purity, dangers and cemeteries

By Rabbah Gila Caine



Rabbah Gila Caine

We mostly retell the story of Chanukah as a celebration of purity and purification when our sacred space was defiled after which it was cleansed, and for eight days Darkness was pierced by the Light of virginal oil. This deep myth of purification offers us a measure of strength at times when

reality is suffocating. And though Chanukah is an awesome festival, we should be careful when building the core of our spiritual thinking or practice around it because striving for purity is, in itself, dangerous.

In a sense, Chanukah is important to North American Jewry exactly because it contains the tension between the idea of an eternal "untainted Judaism" and the timeless reality of fertile cultural encounters between Jews and our neighbours.

The hot topic now in Edmonton's Jewish community is the question of designating an interfaith / non-sectarian plot at the new Jewish cemetery, and of course this is cause for anguish on all sides and many heightened emotions. The question of Halacha keeps coming up, and I'm happy to set time and discuss Reform/Liberal *Responsa* (answers to questions of Halachah) on the subject with those who are

interested. The questions of who might Jews be buried next to, and who is the Jewish community responsible to bury, have been a fascinating discussion for the past two millennia and are not new.

Reading Responsa is very often a moving experience because through it you enter the lives of real people going through real life situations, in sometimes very distant times and places.

The beauty of Responsa is it's never a dry theoretical discussion, it's never "pure" but rather molded from the murkiness of life and from the reality of human pain, compassion, fear and confusion. Unlike the book of Maccabees where we read the story of Chanukah, Responsa isn't a myth with good guys and evil villains, rather real people trying their best to maintain a society at once responsive to people's needs, and responsible to tradition.

Jewish Edmonton is asking itself whether our Jewish dead will be contaminated if a non-Jew is buried in the same cemetery beside their beloved Jewish partner. Will our sacred ground be violated? And as a result of that, will Jews assimilate and disappear?

Jews have asked themselves these huge questions for many generations because whether on the macro or micro level, we've always been a minority group situated within larger, sometimes crushing, civilizations and we needed to maintain our identity and community boundaries.

And then I open the Talmud and read this:

"One sustains poor gentiles along with poor Jews, and one visits sick gentiles along with sick Jews, and one buries dead gentiles along with dead Jews. All this is done on account of the ways of peace." (*Talmud Bavli, Gittin 61a*)

This ancient text knows how to hold two sanctities together: On the one hand, we are Jews with our distinct culture and history, religion and community and not leaves floating around in the wind. On the other hand we don't live behind closed walls or up a tower. We live within society and are part of that society, and even in those ancient times - some Jews had non-Jewish spouses or relatives or friends.

In our case, in the case of a non-Jewish partner, who has tied their lives to a Jew they love, built a Jewish home together, often raised Jewish children and participated in the life of our community - it would be an unholy act, an *aveirah* (spiritual and religious transgression) to leave them outside the fence at their death.

I don't know if by the time this goes to print Edmonton's Chevra Kadisha will have decided on this question. It might be yes and it might be no, for sure some people will be hurt and perhaps even angry by their answer, and we'll all have to live with it for the coming years.

Chanukah promotes a mythos of purity but the historical reality was that of cultural syncretism. Rabbinic Judaism in its many shapes and forms carries within it strong undercurrents of all the social interaction Jews had with Hellenism, Roman culture and the many other people's we've been connected to throughout the generations. The way we think and build ritual, even some traditions around Chanukah, are testament to the complicated and fruitful impact of our engagement with wider society.

Society isn't an abstract thing, it's the sum of our relationships with the people around us, and true sanctity resides in the way we weave these relationships.

Happy Chanukah.

Rabbah Gila Caine is the spiritual leader and Rabbah at Temple Beth Ora, Edmonton's Reform Jewish Congregation.

Celebrate and share the light

By Judy Zelikovitz



Judy Zelikovitz

Chanukah is a holiday made joyous by its origins in the victory of the Jewish people over our oppressors and the liberation by the Maccabees of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Now, thousands of years later, over eight nights, we light candles to honour our brave ances-

tors and to recognize the fortitude, across the millennia, of the Jewish people.

Now, the meaning of Chanukah has acquired a new relevance: the bravery demonstrated by the people of Israel today – especially since October 7, 2023.

It has been more than 15 months since, in the most shameful and grievous fashion imaginable, Hamas deliberately started a war, placing the people of Israel – and of Gaza and the entire region – in jeopardy. Israel continues to defend its residents and citizens from terror on multiple fronts, facing both assaults from Hamas and unprecedented attacks by hundreds of rockets from Iran-backed Hezbollah. Israelis and the global Jewish community continue to call for the release of 101 hostages who remain captive in Gaza. Families across Israel and the world continue to adjust to life without the 1,200 Israelis – and victims from 30 other nations – systematically murdered on October 7.

Yet, amid the chaos and terror of daily rocket attacks, the spirit and fortitude of the people of Israel remains as strong as ever.

This year, as we light our candles over the eight nights of Chanukah, we contemplate the history and symbolism of our Jewish traditions, and we have an opportunity to consider their meanings in our current reality. Just as we light our Chanukiah with its eight, equally proportioned candles, we remember Jews have an admirable track record in fighting for social equality, and we consider where, today, there are inequalities to be addressed.

As we add candlelight to our homes, we remember our age-old obligation to bring light to our families, friends, and neighbours. We encourage well-rounded education, free from hate, for all children; we advocate for a safe and welcoming learning environment for our post-secondary students and faculty; and we support the most vulnerable among us.

There is much to do – what will your focus be over the coming year? To what cause will your efforts be directed?

Can we hope that Gaza will be freed from the terrorist influence of Hamas? Will Lebanon emerge from under the sway of Iran-backed Hezbollah? Will Israel's adversaries stop their war against the Jewish State?

Will our focus be on our own family, our close friends, our community, a charitable cause? Will we share the Jewish values we cherish, the triumph of light over darkness, freedom over oppression, and the importance of upholding one's identity and beliefs?

And can we help our fellow Canadians uphold the values we hold dearest? How much light can we share this Chanukah season? Let's find out.

Chag Sameach.

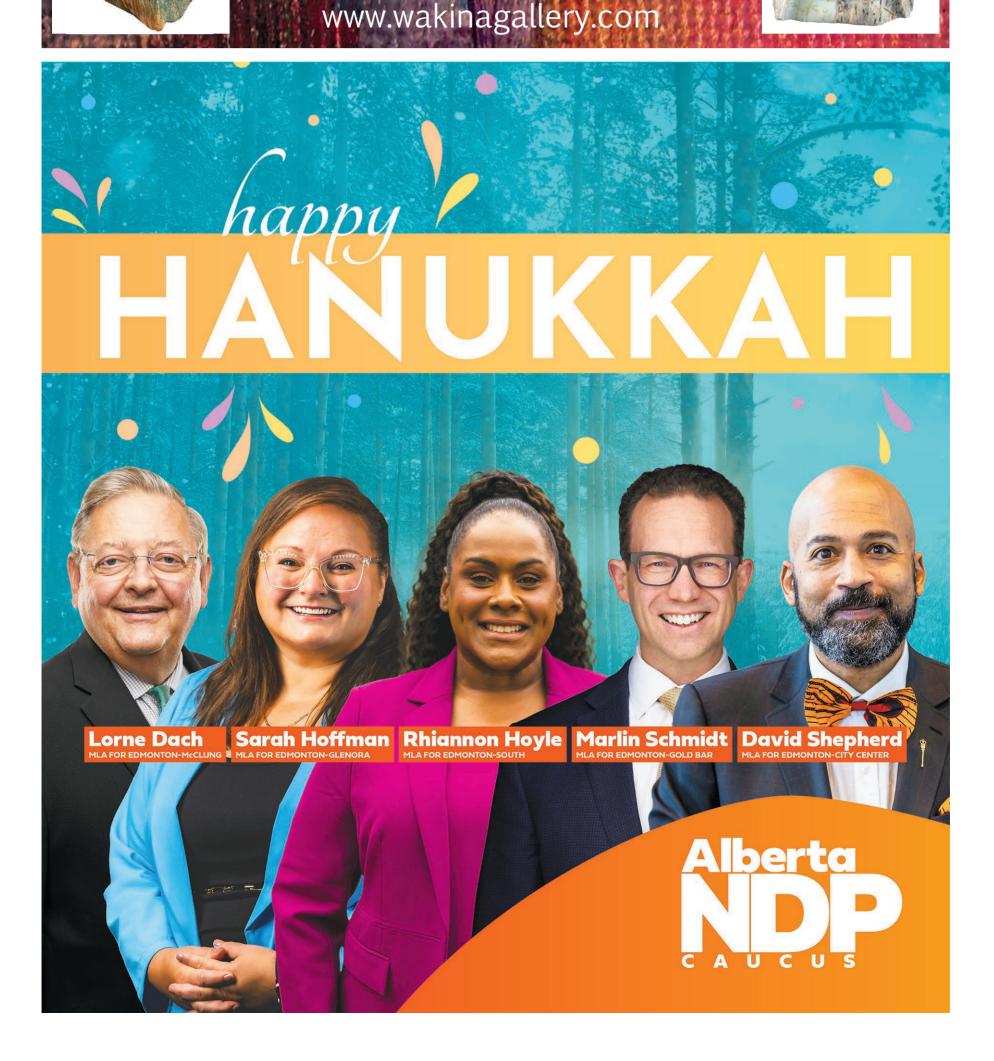
Judy Zelikovitz is Vice President, University and Local Partner Services, The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).





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Sufganiyot are bliss at Bliss Baked Goods

By Regan Lipes

Shakespeare claims that a rose by any other name will still smell as sweet, and I contend that a sufganiyah, no matter if you call it a ponchik, gefüllte krapfen, or just a good old jelly donut, will always induce instant smiles and salivation. Yes, it is that magical time of year once again: a marvelous time when Edmonton's Jewish families take solace in the fact that they will not have to fight for parking at their local mall, parents clumsily flip through radio stations in the car to avoid the earworm of seasonal carols, and everyone rushes to the phone to call Bliss Baked Goods to place their order for sufganiyot to enjoy with their loved ones during Chanukah.

The fully kosher, dairy-free, nut-free establishment has been a pillar of the Edmonton Jewish community for the past twenty-five years and continues to go strong! Sufganiyot-season brings out the customers in droves, and not only the Jewish patrons. Non-Jewish regulars at Bliss also eagerly await December to get their hands on one, or all three delectable flavors the family-owned business has for sale. There is, of course, the classic sufganiyah with strawberry jam, but their talented bakers and pastry decorators also have a custard filling and a chocolate mousse option to tantalize the tastebuds.

For any kid that ever confidently boasted they could eat more sufganiyot than their siblings, it might be interesting to know how many of these coveted goodies get lovingly fried up according to the Bliss family's time-honoured recipe each Chanukah-season. This year Bliss will be serving up and sending out the door many thousands of sufganiyot! If that sounds like a lot of baking: it is!

Preparations for Bliss' annual frenzy begin an entire month prior to the first sufganiyah making its way into a happy belly. Staff must source and order all the kosher ingredients to produce enough

sufganiyot to feed demand: and the demand grows every year. For anyone who has ever visited the cozy and fragrantly welcoming shoppe, it is astronomical think of thousands of sufganivot being baked there in one month on top of the extensive selection of other offerings at Bliss Baked Goods.

"Sufganiyot gained renown in Israel in the 1920s, when trade union Histadrut advocated for the production of the difficult-to-make sufganiyot over rudimentary latkes, to provide enough work for their laborers," according to Sasha Rogelberg of Jewish News. Well, the work at Bliss Baked Goods may be a labor of love, but it is a team effort that always means all hands, on deck. It is not just frying and filling, but the kneading and mixing, sifting and sorting, with at least two donut decorators putting the finishing touches on each tasty treat at any given time: all this, amidst the regular bakery business that keeps staff on their toes normally. But after so many years, this does not equate to too many cooks in the kitchen because with so much expert practice: the team is a well-oiled machine.

Of course, when it comes time for Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton's annual menorah lighting at the Provincial Legislature, things really heat up in the kitchen as enough sufganiyot are fried to feed the hundreds of revelers who attend. Certainly, anybody stopping by the shoppe on their way home to grab a quick sufganiyah nibble will leave smiling and satisfied, but for larger orders it is recommended that



Bliss Baked Goods is famous for their sufganiyot: Call today!

these be placed ahead of time to ensure quantity in addition to quality.

All holiday puns and cliches aside, Bliss Baked Goods' sufganiyot are an iconic punctuation to the Edmonton Jewish calendar year. No Jewish event would be complete without some good nosh, and you would be hard pressed to find an official community gathering without proud Bliss representation. Bliss Baked Goods supports its local Jewish community and its kosher needs; the final touches on local Chanukah dining tables would not be fully finished absent a bountiful box of Bliss' signature sufganiyot. I know that I will be placing our family order right away. So, as I burn the midnight oil frying up enough latkes to satiate voracious appetites, I will be confident that Bliss has us taken care of, and delectable deserts are set and ready to go!

And for those of you who are too busy to make latkes for your family and friends, don't worry - Bliss' delicious latkes can be pre-ordered for Chanukah at the same time.

Visit blissbakedgoods.ca or call 780-453-0101.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

As we gather to celebrate Chanukah, it reminds us of the central theme of rededication. The word "Chanukah" itself means "dedication," and this holiday invites us to reflect on renewing our commitment to Jewish values, faith, and community.

The victory of the Maccabees was not just a military triumph—it was a triumph of faith, courage, and the determination to preserve our identity and way of life. This year, as we light the Chanukah candles, we cannot help but think of the ongoing challenges faced by Israel and the Jewish people. The bravery of the Maccabees resonates deeply as we watch our brothers and sisters in Israel endure not only military threats but also efforts to undermine their right to exist as a Jewish state.

Like the Maccabees, Israel has shown incredible resilience in the face of adversity. The recent conflicts, especially the horror of the hostages, have reminded us of the importance of protecting our heritage, our people, and our right to live

in peace and security.

Let us focus this year's Chanukah on planting the seeds of renewal and hope investing in the future of Jewish life, culture, and leadership.

In case you missed the announcements after our recent annual general meeting, I am so deeply appreciative of our renewed leadership team, with Rebecca Asbell and Benaron Gleiberman assuming copresidency, Anika Zepp stepping up as treasurer, Lisa Miller maintaining her roles as vice-president and Jewish Community Centre (JCC) Development Committee co-chair, and Josh Raizman and Farrel Shadlyn staying in the role of United Jewish Appeal co-chairs for another year. I look forward to working with this diligent group to ensure that we continue to build the foundations of hope, unity, and

Our light as a community will keep glowing with the new JCC in development. Our new building will be a centre where we will forge our collective strength,

gathering together to shine as a light to those around us. The

JCC redevelopment work is progressing, with the firm Pemco Construction Ltd. contracted for the next phase of this project.

With many multipurpose spaces, a teen lounge and a rooftop patio, we can envision a multitude of programs that will continue to connect and inspire our community. Not only will we host speakers and events, but there is also space put aside for a future Holocaust Education and Jewish Heritage Centre where we will learn with and welcome Edmontonians to our community.

Chanukah is a time for celebrating miracles—the miracle of the oil that lasted eight days, the miracle of freedom, and the miracle of Jewish survival across centuries. But perhaps the greatest miracle of all is the resilience and unity of our people, and this is a miracle we can create together every day. Chag Chanukah Sameach.

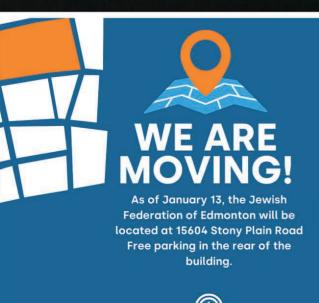
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New kids books for Hanukkah

By Penny Schwartz

(JTA) - Some notable new Hanukkah children's books include a compendium of stories and essays for older kids and picture books featuring a bear, a puppy and a dragon.

Here's a rundown of the new books on the Hanukkah market in 2024.

"The Festival of Lights: 16 Hanukkah Stories" Edited by Henry Herz

Albert Whitman & Company; ages 9-12

This Hanukkah collection — which includes stories, poetry and a comic — is geared toward older children and independent readers. In Herz's humorous entry, "Der Verzauberte Löffel," Caleb, a Jewish seventhgrader, impulsively bets that he'll win his school's holiday bake-off against Tyler, the classmate who bullies him. In an unexpected finish, Caleb — and Tyler — learn about forgiveness and second chances. Other works include "A Light in Darkness," Kimberly Brubaker Bradley's story set in London during World War II, and Erica Perl's "The Most Jewish Christmas Song Ever" that will strike a chord with theater lovers.

"Oy, Santa!: Or, There's a Latke to Learn about Hanukkah"

Joyce Schriebman; illustrated by Gila von Meissner Intergalactic Afikoman; ages 4-9

In Joyce Schriebman's humorous story, Oliver Overstreet hits send on an email to Santa to let the jolly North Pole gift-giver know that he is Jewish and that Santa and his reindeer can skip his chimney. As the pages unfold, Oliver sets Santa straight, to make sure he knows the difference between Hanukkah and Christmas and that Santa should never eat potato latkes with ketchup.

"Let It Glow"

Marissa Meyer and Joanne Levy Feiwel and Friends; ages 8-12

When two 12-year-old girls, each adopted at birth, meet by chance, they discover that they are identical twins. Aviva Davis, a vivacious Broadway hopeful, is growing up in an interfaith, interracial family and loves to hang out with her Jewish Bubbe. Holly Martin, who is Christian and lives with her mother and grandfather, is a more reserved book nerd. In this coming-of-age story, told in the twins' alternating





Talmud Torah students are getting ready for Chanukah!

voices, the sisters secretly switch places at home just in time for Hanukkah and Christmas. When their mischievous scheme goes too far, Aviva and Holly argue. A family health scare draws the two unsuspecting families together in this Chrismukkah "Parent Trap" mashup, and Aviva and Holly realize the resilience of family bonds and gain a deeper meaning of their faiths.

"My Dreidel"

Ann Diament Koffsky

Apples & Honey Press; ages birth to 1

Young ones will relate to the child-like pup in Ann Koffsky's cheerful board book when she tries to spin the Hanukkah dreidel with her paws. Her older brother helps out as they spin and dance till they plop like the dreidel.

"Don't Invite a Bear Inside for Hanukkah"

Karen Rostoker-Gruber; illustrated by Carles Arbat Apples & Honey Press; ages 3-6

There's mayhem in this laugh-out-loud story when a young boy invites a Jewish bear into his house for his family's Hanukkah celebration. But when the fun turns messy, the boy asks his new friend to leave, a decision he instantly regrets after he realizes the bear is sad. All ends well when the thoughtful boy invites the bear back to celebrate together — outside.

"Uri and the King of Darkness: A Hanukkah Story"

Nati Bait; illustrated by Carmel Ben Ami; translated by Ilan Kurshan Kalaniot Books; ages 4-9 As Hanukkah is about to begin, Uri and his sister Shir worry about their father when he is late coming home from work. Uri is frightened by a dark evening shadow cast from outside his window. He musters his courage, and with Shir, they fend off the imagined monster, waving his toy shield and Shir's child umbrella. When their father arrives home bearing a boxful of sufganiyot, the fried jelly donuts enjoyed at Hanukkah, the family lights the menorah, with a more confident Uri, knowing he can draw on Hanukkah's power of light to vanquish his fears.

"A Dragon For Hanukkah"

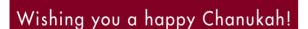
Sarah Mlynowski; illustrated by Ariel Landy Orchard Press; ages 3-8

Hannah gets a dragon on the first night of Hanukkah, kicking off a holiday full of imagination, surprise and whimsy. This lavishly illustrated picture book is meant for both experienced celebrators of Hanukkah and people who are just learning about the holiday.

"The Light From My Menorah: Celebrating Holidays around the World"

Robin Heald; illustrated by Andrea Blinick Pajama Press; ages 4-7

In this lavishly illustrated picture book, a young boy celebrates Hanukkah with his family. He follows the light of the flickering flames as it travels across the world, where he sees families celebrating Diwali, Kwanzaa and Christmas, winter holidays with their own candle-lighting rituals that shine with the universal hope of light against darkness.





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Space traveller pays homage to his Jewish roots

By Stacy Shaikin, LJI Reporter

Henry Wolfond was inspired by William Shatner's Blue Origin trip in 2021 to travel on Jeff Bezos commercial space travel company on November 22, 2024. "Captain Kirk was my idol," he told the *National Post*. Wolfond used this platform as an opportunity to shine a light on the plight of Jews in the world today.

Although many people have taken these space tours, he is the first to wear a yellow ribbon above the earth and bring photos to keep his Jewish family in his heart for this momentous occasion.

"I have a photograph of my grandparents, who fled antisemitic violence and persecution in Russia and Ukraine," he said. "And they came here. My grandfather literally had witnessed his cousin hanging from a lamppost after a pogrom in a small town in the Ukraine. They came here for a better life."

Another memento, and a stark reminder of the horrors of antisemitism, is a picture of Saul Reichert, his father-in-law, who was a survivor of Auschwitz. "He arrived on a cattle car train with his mother and his five sisters. After they were separated on the platform at Auschwitz, he never saw them again."

Wolfond is chairman and CEO of Bayshore Capital in Toronto, and chair of the Confronting Anti-semitism Committee of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. He also moonlights as a professional pilot on charter, medevac and organ retrieval flights around the world.

Wolfond has roots in Edmonton, his wife, Rochelle, grew up in Edmonton. He also went to Law School at the University of Alberta. "It made sense to stay in Edmonton we had friends and family there and a community.

"Rochelle's father Saul Reichert is a Holocaust survivor. Wolf and Seda Margolus adopted Saul in 1948 when he came to Canada as an orphan... Saul, who will be 94 this month has an incredible outlook on life. He always finds the silver lining in every situation," Wolfond says.

"When I signed up for this trip in 2022, antisemitism was building but I wasn't thinking about this."

But now... "synagogues are being burned in Montreal and Jewish day schools are being shot at in Toronto. I think antisemitism has reached a crisis point in the world. My mission in life is to turn antisemitism into a fringe part of society again," Wolfond says.

Wolfond has established himself as very committed to Jewish advocacy by participating in UJA, CIJA, CJPAC and other organizations with his volunteerism and philanthropy.

"I think we are in a crisis, it have never been this dire," he told CJN's Ellen Besner after this trip. "We are seeing an escalation in antisemitism starting with words and moving towards violence in our communities."

"It's a horrible situation," he said. "I think nothing could be more important than people with influence speaking out on this violence and the fear being provoked in our campuses."

He believes Jewish people with non-Jewish friends must have conversations about how Jews are feeling and what they are seeing.

He continued: "Hatred of Jews became normalized. Hateful words escalate to violence, to harassment, to intimidation, to blocking businesses, and ultimately to murder. I hope that's not the path that we're on, but I'm very frightened that we could be."

"So, my hope in connecting that to this mission is that I can reach out to people, responsible Canadians who see that the same way that I do, will be aligned with us, and will speak out against antisemitism and speak out against all hatred. I don't think any hate should be accepted in our society, and people need to recognize, if it's hatred against the Jews today, it can become hatred against them tomorrow."

He added: "I've never been bungee jumping. I've never been skydiving. Those things truly scare me, because I don't really see an end or purpose in mind. But as I've become more immersed and more afraid of



Space traveller Henry Wolfond wore a yellow ribbon pin for the Israeli hostages on his space suit. (Photo: Blue Origin)

what's happening in the world with hate, the purpose that I'm attaching in terms of taking that view in and being mindful of what this planet is all about, has become more important."

Wolfond goes on: "If it weren't for this crisis, I wouldn't have done all these interviews. I have got to amplify this message and speak out about what's happening in the world," he says with disappointment in his voice. "That perspective of seeing how small the planet is, we are one human species. We have become divided and it's hurting us. It's hopefully something we can turn around."

This article was prepared with files from The National Post and CJN.



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Celebrating Sigd at BI Congregation

By Regan Lipes

The evening of December 1was festive at Beth Israel Synagogue with much celebration, and as with most Jewish holidays – lots of good food. This, however, was a holiday new to many in the community, and an opportunity for learning. In partnership with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Beth Israel hosted its second community Sigd event. On the 29th of Cheshvan, Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) begin the day by fasting, followed by intense prayer, and a culminating feast as they remember their shared longing to return to Jerusalem after so long being displaced by the Diaspora. Sigd, meaning "prostration" in Ge'ez, was, according to Hillel Integrational, "originally expressed by the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah while exiled in Babylon. [...] Praying for the Great Temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt is the central religious theme of Sigd."

Those who have seen the Netflix original Red Sea Diving Resort (2019) will be familiar with Gideon Raff's dramatization of Israel's famous Operation Moses and Operation Solomon to repatriate Beta Israel Jews from Ethiopia. For many, even within the Jewish community, this may be the extent of the knowledge amassed about Ethiopian Jewry — until now! At Beth Israel Sigd is especially meaningful each year because of Rabbi Guy Tal and his wife, Rebbetzin Fentaye Tal. The Rebbetzin, of Ethiopian-Jewish



Celebrating Sigd at Beth Israel. Photo: Tammy Vineberg.

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decent, continues to share this rich tradition of Sigd with the Edmonton Jewish community year after year.

"In Israel, we used to attend the Sigd holiday in Jerusalem whenever we could. It is a joyful and colorful event. Many family members and friends come together to celebrate. It is a very special day to bring children and help them learn about their roots," explained Rabbi Tal to Alberta Jewish News. The Tal family also served Jewish communities in both Mexico and Venezuela previously, and Rabbi Tal further noted: "In Mexico and Venezuela, we did not celebrate, but I gave lessons to the community about the heritage of Ethiopian Jews. In Mexico, we also organized an evening at home with traditional food and invited some friends.'

"At the beginning of 1977, fewer than 100 Ethiopian Jews had been grudgingly allowed—by either Ethiopian or Israeli authorities—to settle in Israel. By the end of 1993 the number of immigrants had risen to nearly 45,000! This mass migration took place over a relatively short period, not as a single event but rather in a series of waves, each of which had its own special character," note Steven Kaplan and Chaim Rosen in "Ethiopian Jews in Israel" published in the *American Jewish Yearbook* (1994).

"Although promises of land reform and freedom of worship led many to hope that Ethiopia's Marxist rulers would ameliorate the situation of the Beta Israel, this did not prove to be the case. While seldom victims of organized persecution, they suffered all the tribulations inflicted on the general population as well as those reserved for a particularly weak and vulnerable minority group. As conditions in Ethiopia deteriorated the religious devotion to Jerusalem began to be transformed into an active desire to emigrate."

This was echoed by Rabbi Tal, who explained that: "The key point is that they did not come to Israel to seek more comfortable lives or improve their economic situation. In the Jewish community of Ethiopia, there was a strong yearning and deep longing for the Land of Israel. Ethiopian Jews dreamed of Israel and prayed for the day they could return. This is also part of the significance of the Sigd holiday. When the opportunity to come to Israel finally opened up, they did not hesitate and left en masse, some risking their lives (indeed, many died during the journey) to fulfill the old dream of returning to the Land of Israel."

Thanks to the Tal family, Sigd is becoming an integral part of the annual Edmonton Jewish calendar. The synagogue's social hall was filled with attendees of all ages and from across the community. There were tables with photographs and informational placards as well as a few traditional objects that would typically



What a delicious spread! Photo by Paula Kirman

adorn a Sigd table. After a warm welcome from Stacy Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Rabbi Tal provided some introductory remarks before jokingly declaring: "Food is always the most important: eat first, then talk."

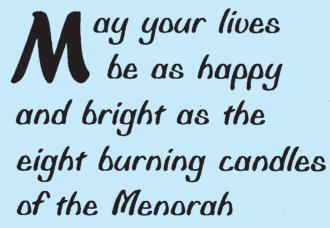
The scrumptious feast was lovingly prepared by Rebbetzin Tal and a team of volunteers. There was traditional bread that would be typically served, like challah, for Shabbat in a Beta Israel home, Ethiopian injera, a zesty fresh salad that did not spare the zing, and a number of mouthwatering vegetable stews and sauces. There was Ethiopian-style coffee and sfinj for dessert. Everything was outstanding, and each dish was more wonderfully explosive with flavor than the last. Nobody left hungry, and, in fact, many probably departed uncomfortably full.

Rabbi Tal's after-meal speech to attendees was particularly moving as he provided a detailed picture of how much Ethiopian Olim have achieved in Israel. He cited education as a societal sphere where women dominate, and this has also been substantiated within the scholarly community.

The contribution of Ethiopian Jews in Israel goes far beyond brains and beauty, but as Rabbi Tal elaborated during his presentation, they have also enriched the country with their devotion and practice of Jewish observance.

Rabbi Tal expounded meaningfully about the profound cultural influence of the Beta Israel people, the touching significance of welcoming them back to the Holy Land, and the important societal embracing of diversification. He left attendees with the resonating sentiment that the Jewish people, regardless of where they were born, share an age-old identity, a history, a spiritual connection, and must stay united as one people flourish further.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.





Happy Chanukah from

The Slawsky Family

Short stories by Chava Rosenfarb receives Jewish Literacy Award

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

There are more exciting accolades for the late Yiddish-Canadian writer Chava Rosenfarb, of blessed memory, and her academically accomplished daughter Professor Emerita from the University of Lethbridge. Dr. Goldie Morgentaler. In the Land of the Postscript, a collection of Rosenfarb's short stories has not only been published as a single compiled volume, but Morgentaler has also been honoured with a Canadian Jewish Literary Award for her translations from Yiddish to English of her mother's works. According to Edward Trapunski, Chair of the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards' Jury, this year, in Morgentaler's category, there were more submissions than ever. Trapunski, who spoke with Alberta Jewish News by telephone, elaborated that "in Goldie's section 'Yiddish literature' it can either be a work of Yiddish translation, or sometimes a book about Yiddish from a cultural vantage point. This year, Goldie's work stood out as truly exceptional."

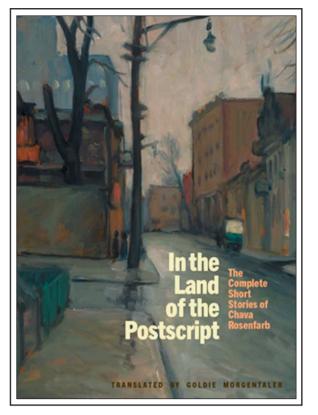
Trapunski, who like Morgentaler, grew up in Jewish-Montreal, even remembers Chava Rosenfarb from his own childhood. Rosenfarb taught Trapunski's mother Yiddish. In fact, it is precisely this community of post-immigration Holocaust survivors that are the subjects of Rosenfarb's short works. "This book was quite different from other submissions we receive; it is a bit of a later time frame. Those people who survived the Holocaust and lived in Montreal are depicted here as they rebuilt. That's unique," Trapunski explained. "What this translated collection accomplishes is incredibly important. If you don't have translation, you might not have Yiddish," emphasized the lifelong lover of Yiddish literature. "Yiddish is an important part of our culture, and it's vital that we maintain it for as long as we can."

These were similar to the sentiments expressed by Morgentaler during an interview with the *Alberta Jewish News*. She noted: "These are stories about under-represented Jewish lives. There are very few

works that explore what happened to people after they survived and what their lives were like as they rebuilt." Morgentaler proceeded to elaborate that survival was an ongoing process for those in her mother's social circle. "I grew up surrounded by Holocaust survivors. People often hurried into new marriages prematurely because they had lost their spouses and families during the Holocaust in the most horrible ways imaginable. They weren't marrying for the right reasons but to fill an emotional void. This was a painful reality that is portrayed in my mother's works."

Not all translations are created equal. The delicate craft of translating another person's words from one language to another is a minefield of prosaic obstacles and technical disconnects. While some translators strive for precision and linguistic accuracy, others champion the spirit and thematic tone of the original work. It is an artistic tightrope walk - balancing direct denotation and nuanced connotation simultaneously. Who better then to lovingly bring Rosenfarb's stories to life for English audiences than her own daughter – someone who remembers looking on as the works were first realized many decades ago. The characters that sprang from Rosenfarb's pages fully formed, were personalities Morgentaler could often recognize, perhaps not literally, but in fragments inspired by some of the people she had observed around her. Morgentaler's dedication to ensuring that her mother's oeuvre of valuable stories are accessible to a larger audience, has rightfully earned both women recognition from the Canadian Jewish literary community.

Understanding a glimpse of post-war Jewish-Montreal is a significant and profoundly impactful piece of the larger Canadian cultural narrative, and Chava Rosenfarb is certainly an author who has earned the title of 'Canadian writer.' Rich though her original prose remain, composed in her beloved Yiddish, now an English readership will be able to engage with her work in meaningful ways by exploring how survivors survived their survival. Goldie



Morgentaler's award-winning translations of her mother's short stories, with a new introduction, can be purchased online. In the Land of the Postscript promises to become a title of note within the genres of Canadian-Jewish literature, Yiddish literature, and Holocaust literature. Morgentaler and other award recipients were celebrated at a gala event in Toronto recognizing their achievements and tremendous contributions to literature. Trapunski and his colleagues at the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards were thrilled to be able to present Dr. Goldie Morgentaler, and Chava Rosenfarb by extension, with this prestigious distinction.

Other 2024 Canadian Jewish Literacy award recipients are - Harriet Alida Lye for Let It Destroy You; Michael Kater for After the Nazis: The Story of Culture in West Germany; Jill Culiner for Those Absent on the Great Hungarian Plain; Rhea Tregebov for Talking To Strangers; Sidura Ludwig for Rising; and Elana Wolff for Faithfully Seeking Franz..

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It's about bread and much more...

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

This year's community-wide Challah Bake at Beth Israel Synagogue was a roaring success! As part of the annual Shabbat Project, a grassroots movement that first began in South Africa in 2013, the greater Edmonton Jewish community was hosted by volunteer organizers at Beth Israel for some messy fun preparing challah dough in anticipation of Shabbat.

Veterans of the yearly gathering came prepared with festive aprons, while newbies found themselves quickly bedecked in the glitter of flour. Women, girls, and some tiny boys well below the age of bar mitzvah, got elbow deep in the task of mixing and kneading. The social hall was filled with familiar faces, and a few new friends to be made; there was certainly no shortage of enthusiasm. Challah may have been the task on the menu, but the evening also served up



Tamara and Karen at the Challah Bake.

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plenty of shmoozing.

This was the first year that my little ones and I attended, although we have long enjoyed the post Challah Bake pictures on social media. They were delighted to see their friends from school and get their hands nice and gooey with sticky dough ingredients. Soon, the activity became less about the baking preparation at hand, and more about just being together in a meaningful way. In fact, this 'togetherness' really is the entire purpose of sharing a Shabbat experience as a community.

Throughout the evening pictures from past years cycled on a projector screen, sparking much conversation and even more giggles as people dove into memories and stories recounted. As for the more official programming: welcoming remarks were given by Beth Israel's President, Shane Asbell, a special prayer for those defending Israel and the Jewish people, and another for those still in captivity, was officiated by Rabbi Guy Tal, and emcee and member of the organizing team, Karen Sadovnick kept attendees engaged and entertained. She even called up two special little helpers, my two younger children, to help draw names for door prizes: Jacob and Tamara could not have been more thrilled to lend their flour caked hands in assistance

As everyone's dough was left to rise in individual Ziploc bags, Sadovnick explained the significance of the Shabbat Project and bringing unity to the global Jewish community. The sentiments were especially meaningful and touching as attendees noted the day-count for Israel's kidnapped hostages. Chief Rabbi of South Africa, and Shabbat Project founder, Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein, would have been delighted to see so many women, from different branches of Judaism, and with a plethora of identities linked to Jewishness joined together to honour the sacredness of Shabbat.

Following a wonderful evening spent with friends old and new, and with two tiny, tired tots in tow, we arrived home with armfuls of dough that the children proudly prepared, and Shabbat candles in anticipation of Friday evening. The kids thought that the fun was now over with bedtime looming, but the magical part of it all was that the electric energy of the Challah Bake then continued into the next day and the next. After school, we rushed home to braid and bake our challah together; both Jacob and Tamara got very creative and imaginative with their artful challah sculpting. Their teenaged brother Benji was lured out of his room by the wafting aroma of the challahs in the



Challah Bake 2024 was about more than baking bread!

oven. The kids could not wait for dad to get home before digging in, let alone till Shabbat, and so the first challah was consumed in record time.

This was not just about devouring a delicious afterschool treat, but a time for the kids to be together and enjoy each other's company. We practiced hamotzi to teach the bracha to the little ones, and just like that, the Challah Bake that had united the community the night before, brought my kids to the table on an ordinary Wednesday afternoon. Of course we saved two of our challahs for Shabbat, and we eagerly added our pictures to the milieu already being showcased on social media.

All three of my kids got so excited about challah, but really, they were getting excited about Shabbat: whether they knew it or not. Jacob and Tamara came home from school on Friday primed and ready to light candles, and my husband, who had yet to taste our delectable challah, hovered over the covered loaves on the counter impatiently. Finally, it was time for us to all sit down together for Shabbat dinner, and for the first time ever, Benji said hamotzi over our challahs after my husband did kiddush. The spirit of the Shabbat Project accomplished all the unity and meaningful engagement it set out to achieve. The next morning at shul, the headcount was certainly much higher than usual despite inhospitable weather.

My whole family, even those who did not participate in the community event, felt the impact of the Challah Bake. This may have been our first year attending, but it certainly will not be our last. My kids are already excited to see if their bright smiling faces will grace the screen of the projector at next year's Shabbat Project Challah Bake!

The greater Edmonton Jewish community would like to thank the tireless team of dedicated organizers: Pessy, Nina, Riva, Anna, Robin, Karen, Lauren, Phil, Rebecca, Carolina, Victoria, Shayna, Li-el, Michal, Rebecki, Andrew, Sylvia, Manal, and of course Rabbi Guy Tal and Rebbetzin Fentaye Tal – thank you all!



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An interview with Raquel Benzacar Savatti, CEO, Israel Bonds Canada

What exactly is an Israel Bond?

Technically, an Israel Bond is a loan made to the State of Israel. In return for the loan, the State of Israel agrees to pay interest to the bondholder and repay the loan at the end of the term.

However, the *emotional* connection to Israel is really central to the investment. At the end of the day, people know that by buying an Israel Bond, they are loaning Israel money, and that it makes a positive impact for

We're close to Chanukah at the time of this interview - is there a link between Israel **Bonds and Jewish holidays?**

Absolutely! Israel Bonds are all about a powerful bond of tradition and connection to Israel. It's a meaningful way to celebrate a holiday or a Simcha!

Giving Israel Bonds as Chanukah Gelt is also affordable, with online options as low as CAD \$36.

And today, with the rise of lethal antisemitism, we must constantly renew that connection, with strength and pride. It's not just a material gift that will be forgotten. It's a reminder that in so many ways, Isael bonds us all together.

How do Israel Bonds contribute to Israel's economy, especially post October 7th?

Israel Bonds play a vital role in supporting Israel's economy by channeling funds into the economy. Israel needs the funds for rebuilding and recovery efforts amid the ongoing conflict, with increased demand for additional support.

Over the last 14 months, Israel Bonds has realized close to **FOUR BILLION** dollars in global sales – more than three and a half times the average annual sales volume. Many thousands of Canadian investors have spoken, loudly and proudly. Israel is our pillar, our shield, it is the eternal source of our pride and resilience.

What misconceptions do people have about Israel Bonds, and how do you address them?

One common misconception is that Israel Bonds are donations rather than investments. Israel Bonds, sold in Canada under the registered name of 'Canada-Israel Securities, Limited,' are strong investments that help strengthen Israel's economy overall, while providing tangible returns for investors.

Over time, more and more people across Canada began to think about Israel Bonds as a part of their investment strategy. So, we started having conversations with financial advisors who saw the value of adding Israel bonds to their Jewish and non-Jewish clients' portfolios. There is such a broad base of support.

> "One common misconception is that Israel Bonds are donations rather than investments."

What are the different types of Israel bonds available to investors?

There was a time when Israel Bonds were only available in U.S. dollars and had to be held for 12 or 15 years!

But Israel Bonds today are different. They're available in Canadian and US currencies. And you can choose terms of 1, 2, 3, and 5 years, or longer if you

Most Israel Bonds pay semi-annual interest for the entire term of the bond, ideal for building the strong fixed-income portion of your investment portfolio. Other Israel Bonds pay principal and interest at maturity. There's variety and flexibility for a range of investment objectives.

How can individuals purchase Israel bonds?

We have a few options and they're all fairly easy. It's important to know that in early 2021, Israel bonds in Canada became a regulated 'Broker-Dealer.' This means that 'Canada-Israel Securities, Limited' - which is our official registered trading name – is licensed by the Ontario Securities Commission, and securities



Raquel Benzacar Savatti

commissions across Canada.

So, if you are buying a bond for the first time since early 2021, the first thing you'll do is open an account. You'll provide some basic information about yourself, and a bit of financial information. This helps ensure that you're making investments suitable for your situation.

You can do the application online - it shouldn't take more than 15 minutes. Our review and approval process is completed within a day or two, and then you're ready to buy.

We see that Israel Bonds are RRSP and TFSA eligible. Is that a popular option?

Yes- thousands of people across Canada are adding Israel Bonds to their retirement planning RRSP accounts.

And over the past several years, more clients have been adding bonds to their TFSAs. The Federal Government has approved another \$7,000 allocation for TFSAs in 2025, which makes Tax-Free Savings Accounts more like Tax-Free *Investment* Accounts. When after-tax interest income grows tax-free, you're

Continued on page 14





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Starting at

Dr. Sarah Cramsey brings new insights to Jewish Studies Week

By Regan Lipes

This year's annual Toby and Saul Reichert Holocaust Lecture at the University of Alberta's Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies was given by a passionate and dynamic scholar. Dr. Sarah Cramsey is the Special Chair for Central European Studies at Leiden University, Assistant Professor of Judaism & Diaspora Studies and Director of the Austria Centre Leiden. The American academic earned her PhD in 2016 from the University of California at Berkeley and has enjoyed acclaim and success both as a lecturer and scholarly writer. She is the author of a 2023 book: Uprooting the Diaspora: Jewish Belonging and the "Ethnic Revolution" in Poland and Czechoslovakia, 1936-1946. A close personal friend of Dr. Alexander Carpenter, the Wirth Institute's current Director, the University of Alberta and larger Edmonton Jewish communities were eager to welcome such a noted researcher.

A symptom of the 'Hollywood-factor' is that younger generations of learners are not cognizant to the reality that the Holocaust's devastation manifested differently in a prolific number of locations throughout continental Europe. One valuable contribution that Cramsey's research vividly showcased was that the Holocaust was more than gas chambers and ovens, but that the decay of human decency and the systematic attempt to eradicate entire ethnic groups was being inflicted in a disturbing variety of ways and places. Vacillating interchangeably between the terms Shoah and Holocaust, Cramsey provided perspectives for three geographical territories.

"The Other Holocaust: Care, Children, and the Jewish Catastrophe" was the title of Cramsey's presentation and did not do justice to the level of insight and discussion she was able to provide on the topic. Despite Yad Vashem's estimate that 1.5 million children were murdered during the Holocaust, Cramsey, a historian by training disputes this, and estimates that these numbers are inaccurate and lower than the reality of losses. A mother herself, Cramsey's devotion to the topic is to give voice to those who provided care, support, and love to this vulnerable population that found themselves too young to defend themselves against the Nazi genocide machine. At first glance, one might think her research is dedicated to children, but what she aims to do is find the stories and documentation that narrate what caretaking during this devastating chapter looked like.

Her remarks were separated into three distinct

spheres of examination: the Warsaw Ghetto prior to liquidation, displacement within the Soviet Union, and Auschwitz-Birkenau and its satellite camps. Cramsey notes that making demographic estimates about how many children where being cared for by any one family is complicated by a lack of statistical data being collected at the time, births not being reported, and the need to hide.

The story of Dr. Janusz Korczak may be the most widely known when considering the protection of children during the Holocaust, but Cramsey illustrated with archival photos and the journals of Adam Czerniakow that in fact, playgrounds were being constructed within the oppressive and siffling walls of the Warsaw Ghetto, and that children's laughter could be heard. While plans were being made to obliterate European Jewish civilization, small efforts were also being made to see to the welfare of the community's smallest citizens.

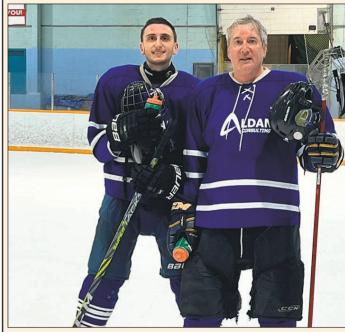
Those Jews displaced to remote and distant regions of the Soviet Union were

able to exercise some minimal freedoms. Cramsey noted the case of one Jewish family in the outskirts of greater Tashkent (modern day Uzbekistan), who took a picture of their son after his Brit Milah with the hope of showing it to their family to celebrate the fact that they could have their son circumcised without persecution. In reality, tragically, the photograph shown to attendees at the lecture was never seen by the child's extended family who were slaughtered in Nazi extermination camps.

Cramsey's third sphere of investigation was the notorious site of Auschwitz-Birkenau. She highlighted what could be learned about how caregivers comforted and protected small children from the horrifying realities of the truth until the very final moments through the preserved drawings of David Olere. As a member of the Sonderkommando, the Polish-born French-Jew, Olere, was cursed with a front seat to the inhumanity of the mass executions and their aftermath. These are indelible memories that haunted his artwork throughout his career.

Cramsey additionally noted that even in times of extreme turmoil fertility cannot always be turned off and went on to explain that meant pregnancies occurred when within the gates of what is now

EJHL season is going strong

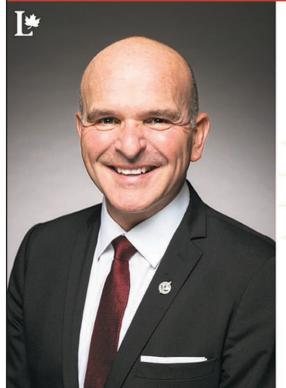


The Edmonton Jewish Hockey League is a place where generations of families and friends come together for recreational (but competitive) hockey. Robert and Daniel Brick (pictured above) have enjoyed playing together for Team Aldan.

Europe's largest and grimmest graveyard. Although Cramsey did not cite the work of Dr. Gisele Perl when making this point, the noted Jewish-Hungarian gynecologist's contribution to her people should be noted. Cramsey did highlight that the children of survivors born shortly after liberation were later recognized by Germany as eligible for reparations: an acknowledgement that generational trauma is inescapable and requires long-term support.

In addition to Dr. Sarah Cramsey's emotional speech, a gallery of photos and postered informational resources was set up in the atrium to the lecture hall. This gave attendees the opportunity to reach further on the topic and reflect on Cransey's remarks. Although there were recognizable faces from the Edmonton Jewish community, most of the audience was made up of academics and graduate students from the University of Alberta. Members from the greater Jewish community would no doubt have found this year's Toby and Saul Reichert Holocaust Lecture to be a valuable discussion, but it was gratifying to see so many non-Jewish Edmontonians coming out in the bitter cold to learn more about the Holocaust amidst so much international antisemitism and hateful mainstream media rhetoric.

May your holiday be filled with peace and light





Hon. Randy Boissonnault,

Member of Parliament / Député Edmonton Centre / Edmonton-Centre

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Israel Bonds Cont. from page 13

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Thank you, Raquel - any closing words for our readers?

I want to wish everyone a Chanukah filled with warm family celebrations, peace, and good health. May we see all of our sisters and brothers in Israel safe, and ALL at home, in the coming year.

To purchase Israel Bonds, contact Phyllis D'Aguiar, City Director for Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg at 825-806-9563 or 403-701-9272.

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Remembering Elexis Schloss, OBM

By Sam Margolis, Canadian Jewish News

Elexis (Conn) Schloss, a vibrant entrepreneur and philanthropist who supported a wide array of causes, both in and beyond Edmonton, died in Victoria on Oct. 31. She was 78.

Her enterprising and altruistic efforts were recognized in 2013 when she was made a member of the Order of Canada, "for contributions as a visionary and committed volunteer in support of health care, cultural, social service and educational causes locally and provincially." Schloss spearheaded initiatives for the arts, sports, immigrant women, the homeless, First Nations peoples and African children living with HIV, among other charitable endeavours. One of the achievements highlighted at her induction to the Order of Canada was her role in the creation of Compassion House, a housing and support program in northern Alberta for women undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

On a personal level, she was known for trying to make everyone she met feel better about themselves.

"She was not only my world, she was a world to everybody," her husband Eric said in an interview with The CJN. "She would talk to people on the street, people she did not know, and compliment them on their clothes or their hair."

Born in Medicine Hat, Alta., where her grandmother helped found the city's first synagogue—which occupied the site of a former Ford Model T dealership—Schloss's family moved to Calgary when she was 8. Her professional life began as a draughtsman and designer before studying architecture at McGill University. In 1967, she married Eric, a dermatologist and fellow Order of Canada member also recognized for his humanitarian and philanthropic endeavours.

The couple settled in Edmonton, where she became

the head of design at Maclab Enterprises for 18 years. Afterwards, Schloss launched many ventures of her own, including Truffles Darling, a chocolate company which became the official gift of the government of Canada. A story has it that the Queen Mother fell in love with her truffles and brought a large order back for her daughter Elizabeth.

Schloss also started a company that made designer angora sweaters which were sold at Saks, Neiman Marcus and Holt Renfrew, and were worn by Princess Diana and actress Victoria Principal on the television program *Dallas*.

Active in the art world, she had her watercolours exhibited at galleries in Edmonton and Calgary, become a qualified gilder (the art of applying gold to jewelry) after learning from the Queen's personal decorator in London, and studied shoe and jewelry making at the London Institute of Fashion and Design.

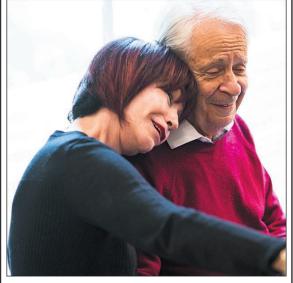
"Elexis also had beautiful handwriting," her husband said. "People would ask her to write wedding or bar mitzvah invitations, and she would always oblige."

Her commitment to community service was unquestionable—holding positions on over 25 boards and committees. She co-chaired the Caring and Providing Empowerment (CAPE) clinic for inner-city residents and held board positions with Pilgrim's Hospice, Canadians for a Civil Society and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights.

"She was on so many boards because she always wanted to help," Eric Schloss said.

As a citizenship court judge, Schloss granted Canadian citizenship to over 9,000 people. She would hug every new Canadian and say, "Welcome to Canada, your home."

On an international level, Schloss contributed to relief efforts in Haiti, and volunteered with her



Elexis Schloss, of blessed memory, in a recent photo with her husband Dr. Eric Schloss.

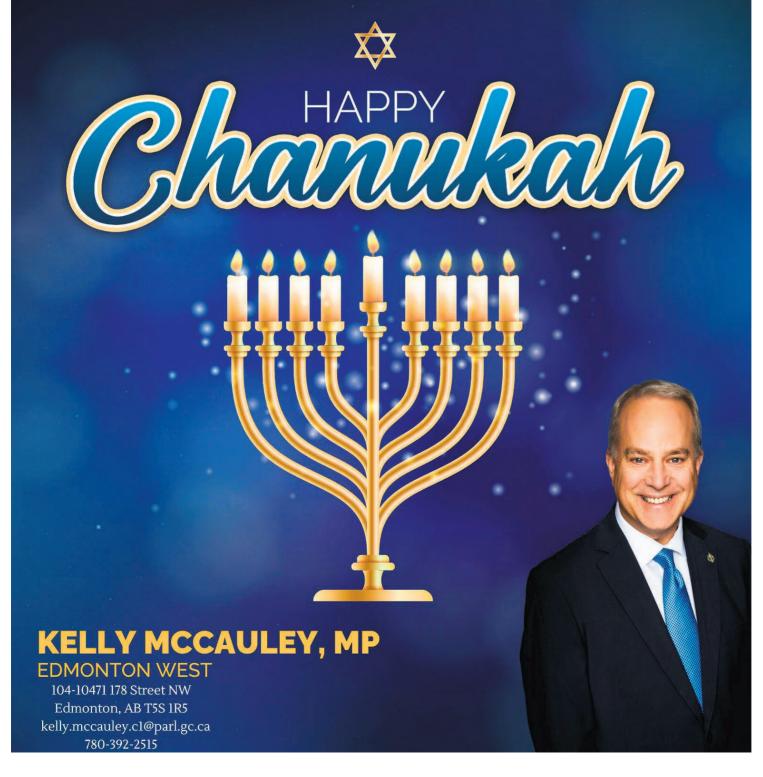
husband in Rwanda and Ethiopia where she taught creative art to children with leprosy, tuberculosis and HIV.

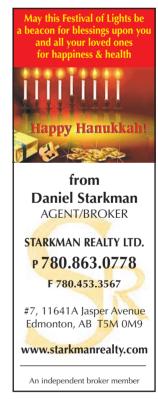
She was also known for her quiet acts of kindness, from volunteering in the kitchen ahead of a Passover seder to knitting hundreds of toques, mittens, and scarves for homeless shelters in Victoria, where she had a vacation home.

On Fridays, she bought gift cards from Tim Horton's and McDonald's to distribute among Edmonton's homeless. To make it easier for the recipients, Schloss would tell people it was her birthday. One Friday, someone witnessing the presentation of the cards from a distance yelled, "She's a liar! Her birthday was last week!"

Schloss's contributions within Edmonton's Jewish community were also numerous, serving as co-chair of

Continued on page 16







Next Print Date: Jan. 16, 2025

Next Deadline: Jan. 13, 2025

Here to Tell – a lesson in pain and resilience – on exhibit now at AGA

By AJNews staff

Now on exhibit at the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton, *Here to Tell: Faces of Holocaust Survivors* provides an opportunity to be present to the magnitude of the lived experiences of Holocaust survivors, specifically of those with a connection to Alberta. In fact, a number of the Holocaust survivors featured in Here to Tell chose Edmonton as their home in the years following the Holocaust.

Here to Tell: Faces of Holocaust Survivors is comprised of 65 portraits of living survivors and deceased survivors (held up in the hands of their descendants). Each photograph is accompanied by a brief personal account of the survivor's Holocaust experience and life after the war.

The dramatic black-and-white portraits of the living show close-up images focusing sharply upon the eyes of men and women who are here to tell what they personally saw and experienced during the Shoah. The photos are realistic, capturing the survivors as they appear now, more than 77 years after the end of World War II. Each image reflects wisdom, experience and the fullness of a life that has known both despair and hope.

Within the exhibit curators Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin also pay tribute to the living legacy of deceased survivors by placing their images in the loving hands of descendants and creating new photographs. Second-, third- and even fourthgeneration survivors held up their loved ones both literally and figuratively so they could be

seen and heard by a new generation.

These "hand photos" became all the more poignant as some descendants personalized them by wearing jewellery or other items that had belonged to—or had been gifted to them by—the survivors.

"As the number of living Holocaust survivors dwindles, second- and third-generation Holocaust survivors are stepping up to bear witness. We believe that all those who

make themselves fully present to the survivors depicted in Here to Tell will feel similarly compelled to share survivor testimonies and speak out wherever they encounter racial slurs, ethnic "jokes" and bullying. After all, genocide does not begin with a death camp - it begins with incremental erosions of civility and human rights."

Left unchecked, such hatefulness grows like a

This exhibit has been curated, produced and directed by Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin, Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education of the Calgary Jewish Federation. Among others, the AGA exhibit was supported by Dr. Frances Cyngiser and family in loving memory of Dr. Sidney & Bronia Cyngiser, Nora & Lawrence Lyman in loving memory of Isadore & Florence Burstyn, Elizabeth

Co-curators and creators of the exhibit: Dahlia Libin (left) and Marnie Bondar (right) with exhibit photographer, Marnie Jazwicki, at an AGA reception, marking the opening of the Here to Tell exhibit in Edmonton.

Regan & Robert Abells, Dr. Eric Schloss and Elexis Schloss of blessed memory, Barry Zalmanowitz & June Ross.

Plans for *Here to Tell* at the AGA include tours for school and community groups.

Bondar and Libin are hoping to have descendants of survivors on hand to engage the public and share their parents and grandparents' stories.

To find out more about *Here to Tell* at the Art Gallery of Alberta, including gallery hours, go to www.youraga.ca. For more information about *Here to Tell*, including the hardcover book, go to www.heretotell.com. Survivors or descendants who wish to become part of *Here to Tell* are encouraged to contact Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin at holocaustedu@jewishcalgary.org.

Elexis Schloss Cont. from page 15

the Friends of the Hebrew University, and designing and planning the interior and exterior of the new building for Beth Israel Synagogue, a modern Orthodox synagogue in the city, in the early 2000s. She and her husband were the 1995 honourees at the Edmonton Negev Dinner.

As a member of the board of Edmonton's Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA), she was pivotal in the institution's fundraising efforts for a new building.

Schloss was also a donor for the upcoming exhibition at the AGA, *Here to Tell: Faces of Holocaust Survivors*, which runs from Nov. 28 to Feb. 9, 2025. Started in Calgary, the exhibition is comprised of 65 portraits of survivors, held up in the hands of their descendants. Each photograph is accompanied by a brief personal account of the survivor's Holocaust experience and life after the war.

Animals, too, were not exempt from being on the receiving end of Schloss's goodwill. She was known for her love of birds and canines. Aside from her Yorkies,

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she kept a rescued German shepherd which she found in a muddy ditch surrounded by bulrushes near her vacation home in Pigeon Lake, Alta. She named the dog Moses.

Schloss is also being remembered for her sense of humour

"When she was made a member of the Order of Canada, everyone was seated in alphabetic order and Elexis was next to David Sobey," Eric Schloss recalled. "Elexis said to him, 'I shop at your stores.' To which he replied, 'Oh, you're the one."

Besides her induction to the Order of Canada, Schloss was the recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, the Global Woman of Vision Award, the Rotary Integrity Award and an honorary degree from MacEwan University.

In addition to her husband, Schloss is survived by her daughter, Robin; son, Jay J; grandchildren, and her brother, Sidney.

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Next Deadline: January 13, 2025



Scholar-in-Residence

Cont. from page 3

Jerusalem has required him to navigate the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center, where he serves as CEO, through storms that have not abated since October 7, 2023. In many ways, it's the spirituality in the music that has magnified the role the Center has played in the lives of Israelis from all walks of life and from all streams over these past nearly 14 months.

During a post-kiddush lunch fireside chat, he took the opportunity to expand on the impact that music has had, from the Zamru program run by the Center to the weekly Song Circle hosted by the Center. The Song Circle is a place where Haredi men and women join together with their secular neighbours and every flavour of Jewish practice in between, to create a healing space through sound, in prayer, and singing together.

He gave us a glimpse of how the Center has served as a creative and literal sanctuary for Jewish people in Israel, providing emergency housing, workshops, and activities for displaced families post October 7th, and through a global prayer service on Zoom each

And all while fulfilling its central 3 pillar mission – to provide a place for study (as home for the Conservative/Masorti movement's Yeshiva in Israel), for prayer (in the synagogue which is part of the campus), and for exploring (providing unique Israel experiences for congregational, organizational and student groups on missions), all in the beating heart of central Jerusalem, a mere 10-minute walk from the Old City.

The Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center is well able to 'Prove it all Night.'

The Promised Land: The Encore

Our journey through the lyrics of Springsteen led by Stephen ran right through to the closing program, following Havdalah, when he picked up his guitar and led us in singing a number of Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen songs. We said one giant collective "Amen" together following his encore rendition of none other than Springsteen's iconic song, 'The Promised

Teach your Children Well: The Talmud Torah **Experience**

Stephen and his guitar (well, the one on loan to him from Talmud Torah) spent an hour with the Grade 4, 5 and 6 students at Talmud Torah, discussing the concept of "Lech Lecha," and the faith it takes to get up and leave your home for a new home that you've never seen before; a 'Promised Land.'

The session ended with a rousing version of Simon & Garfunkel's 'Homeward Bound.' So rousing, that the entire school was able to hear the final 'Home' shouted out by the students. Stephen was impressed with the level of knowledge and nuanced questions posed by the students.

Denouement: Glory Days

On the following Tuesday night, my wife Debbie and I accompanied Stephen to see Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band in concert at Rogers Place. Stephen started his 'Long Walk Home' to Jerusalem on a red-eye flight east later that night. Instead of sleeping, he put together some thoughts about the concert, including this comment:

"The whole thing is a sermon — about staying resilient in the face of death, love lost, a rusted-out factory, and

a plastic face on the TV screen lying and hating and carrying on despite the good that was meant to be. There are stories of forever friendships and hard times come and hard times gone and stepping in and out of a state of grace. It's somehow shocking to witness that Bruce Springsteen still believes in all of this — and he commands us to believe as well. And to that, let us say again, "Amen."

Epilogue: The Load-Out (with thanks to Springsteen's buddy, Jackson Browne & many others)

There is no concert tour without the Roadies. And there is no Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat without the hard work of our Beth Shalom staff working hand-inhand with a group of dedicated volunteers who put together the creative details, backed up by a 'get her done' attitude.

Our congregation owes a huge debt of thanks to Erica Solomon, VP Programing and co-Chair of the Scholar-in-Residence program and the members of the program committee (Cheryl Shur, Angela Topping, Netta Phillet, and Chloe Soibelman) who worked together with Helena, Maria, Brojena, Vera and the catering staff to provide us with a seamless Shabbat experience.

The magical, musical and whimsical Springsteen themed table centrepieces were with us for all 3 delicious meals served over the course of 24 hours – the first time in a long time that our staff has been asked to turn around the kitchen and social hall so quickly!

The truly homey fireside setup for our Shabbat afternoon programs added a comfortable touch for our guest of honour, and the welcome basket prepared and delivered for Stephen and his partner, Rebecca Dinar, made them indeed feel welcome from the moment they arrived.



Beth Shalom Shabbat Scholar-in-Residence Stephen Arnoff visited Talmud Torah School and led the students in a discussion (with music) about Lech Lecha and a Promised Land.

A special thank you to Mark Huberman, who served as the welcome ambassador and chauffeur into the city upon arrival at the airport for Stephen & Rebecca – true (H)Uber service at its best – with sparkling conversation no doubt!

An extra special thank you to Rob & Brandy Graesser, who opened their lovely home to our guests for the duration of their visit with us in Edmonton.

Thank you to Moreh Ari Sniderman, for setting up the opportunity for Stephen to meet and teach our children at Talmud Torah .. and for arranging for him to have a guitar to use to lead our community in song.

Many thanks to the Rabbinical Assembly/Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael for providing Beth Shalom with an Israel Enrichment Grant, supporting our effort to nurture our strong relationship with Israel by allowing us to bring an aspect of Israel to our community, and to the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation, who provided a grant which assisted us to bring our Scholar-in-Residence program to the entire Jewish community of Edmonton.

Our gratitude also goes to Rabbi Zilbershtein, Beth Shalom President Steven Katz, and to the members of our Beth Shalom Board of Directors, who enthusiastically endorsed the idea of this Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat from the word go.

And finally, there is no concert tour without the fans. As such, many thanks go to the members of our Beth Shalom community and our Edmonton Jewish community who, like me, said to themselves and to Rosalita, 'Come out Tonight' and indeed came out to take advantage of an opportunity that doesn't come along our way near often enough. But, when it did, we were all 'Dancing in the Dark.'



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Jody Wasserman shares her creative gifts and talent

By Jenna Vetsch

"You are giving a gift to the world with your uniqueness." – Jody Wasserman

Jody Wasserman is a Graphic Designer, Digital Illustrator, Muralist and Painter whose art leaves a lasting impression wherever she goes.

When you experience Jody's work for the first time, you will enter a bold world of analogue and digital art that challenges you to expand the boundaries of your mind and break away from the mundanities of life. Her creations flow between Judaic mysticism, surrealism, intricate details, simplicity, and symmetry imbued with skillful intentionality.

Jody was born and raised in Edmonton in what she fondly describes as a proud Jewish household. Her dad, Ken Wasserman, of blessed memory, was the "Jewish protective warrior" in the family and set a great example of Jewish pride growing up. She was involved in BBYO and attended Talmud Torah School. From a young age, art served a vital role in Jody's life. Drawing, colouring, and creating was her way of finding comfort and making sense of the world. She describes her parents, Ken and Annella as independent, creative thinkers who always did things a little differently. "[My parents] presented this idea that you can use creativity as your superpower."

In high school it became clear to her that university was not the path she wanted to take just yet. Instead, she chose to work and got her first job in sales at a shoe store. Little did she know, this job would lay a foundation for the creative businesswoman she is today. Jody would work during the day and draw until the early hours of the morning. She began selling some of her art to co-workers who expressed interest in her creations. At 18 years old, Jody left this job to go on Birthright Israel, travel around Europe, and then work on a kibbutz for 6 months. Eight months later, she arrived back in Edmonton and worked for a few months. However, she felt called to be back in Israel.

Jody made Aliyah, lived on a kibbutz and attended an Ulpan. Between her Hebrew studies and day-to-day responsibilities, she would visit Tel Aviv. One place she would frequent is the Nachalat Binyamin Art Fair. It is a famous art market which features a wide array of high-level artists. People must apply and be accepted by the admissions committee to sell their work, and Jody envisioned herself as one of those artists. Once she finished with the kibbutz program, she took her shot to make this dream a reality. Jody's art at the time took particular focus on black and white, highly detailed, abstract creations.

She presented her work to the committee and got in. "I remember crying and calling my parents." It was a validating experience for her to be welcomed into such a respected community of artists. For a little over a year, Jody put a lot of energy and passion into creating original pieces. She eventually shifted into another art

market in Israel, creating and selling prints. In time, she began building a name for herself in Tel Aviv through custom work and murals. Jody was hired to paint murals in galleries, restaurants, private homes, and offices. "I was creating a brand by authentically doing what I loved to do."

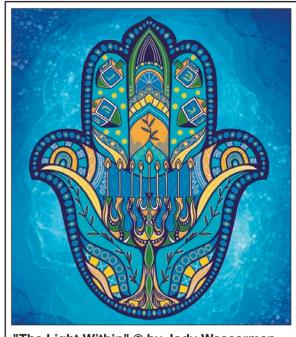
Over the span of four and a half years, Jody surrounded herself with creative work in Israel. She sold her art, worked as a community and events manager, acted in commercials, worked for an Israeli fashion designer, and modelled. Her desire to learn and do more with art and design began to grow though. On a whim, Jody applied to the Ontario College of Art & Design University (OCAD U) in the Bachelor of Design program, majoring in Illustration. She got in, moved to Toronto, and experienced a taste of post-secondary life for the first time since graduating high school. Although she loved aspects of the program, it did not feel like the right fit, so she listened to her intuition and left the program. She stayed in Toronto for another year, worked at a restaurant and created art before relocating to British Columbia with her boyfriend at the time. The move allowed her to be closer to her family.

In Vancouver, Jody enrolled in a 6-month condensed graphic design program at the BCIT School of Business + Media. She experimented with blending her unbounded artistic style with the rules of graphic design to create impactful projects. At the end of year show, put on for students to connect with various agencies, her designs spoke to one agency in attendance that Jody wanted to impress. Spoiler alert: they were very impressed. The agency created a 3-month paid internship position so she could bring her unique perspective into their studio.

Throughout each chapter of Jody's life, she has worked hard and given her full attention to being a creative. Jody has learned to trust her instincts and lean into her strengths as an artist, leading to an abundance of opportunities.

Jody highlights a couple of notable collaborations that shifted her perspective on the way she does art. In 2021, Canadian fashion and lifestyle retailer, Holt Renfrew, contacted Jody in the hopes she would be a contributing artist in their *Holt's for the Holidays* colouring book. She created two custom designs for the project and was one of five Canadian illustrators featured. Holt Renfrew even turned one of these illustrations into a giant mural in their Vancouver location. "This was the first time I saw my work in a graphic design perspective." This experience was a big shift for her mentally to know that bigger brands wanted to work with her.

In 2023, Jody was commissioned by the East Village Business Improvement Association (BIA) to design and paint a custom 463 square foot mural at the Kamloops and Hastings Plaza in Vancouver. She was then hired to design three custom vinyl wraps for various



"The Light Within" © by Jody Wasserman.

structures in the plaza as a part of the East Village BIA communal revitalization project.

By sharing her creative gifts, Jody has positively impacted individuals and communities around the world. Her journey has been filled with moments of adventure, laughter, and joy, along with loss, pain, and sadness. She has chosen to see the beauty in all of it.

After working remotely in South America last winter and subsequently returning to Vancouver, she felt a desire to move back to Alberta. "I was missing my roots, and I was curious about whether I could be connected to Edmonton again after being away for over 10 years." Jody has been in Edmonton since the summer and continues to work with clients, primarily doing graphic design projects. She hopes to create more space for painting and drawing as well.

Enjoy Jody's custom colouring page inside this Chanukah edition of the Alberta Jewish News. Sit down with those special people in your life and stay present as you create your own works of art over the holidays together.

Jody is currently accepting clients! Her services include custom artwork, graphic design, and social media amplification. She is looking for unique and creative opportunities to collaborate on and would be excited to work with somebody on a cool project.

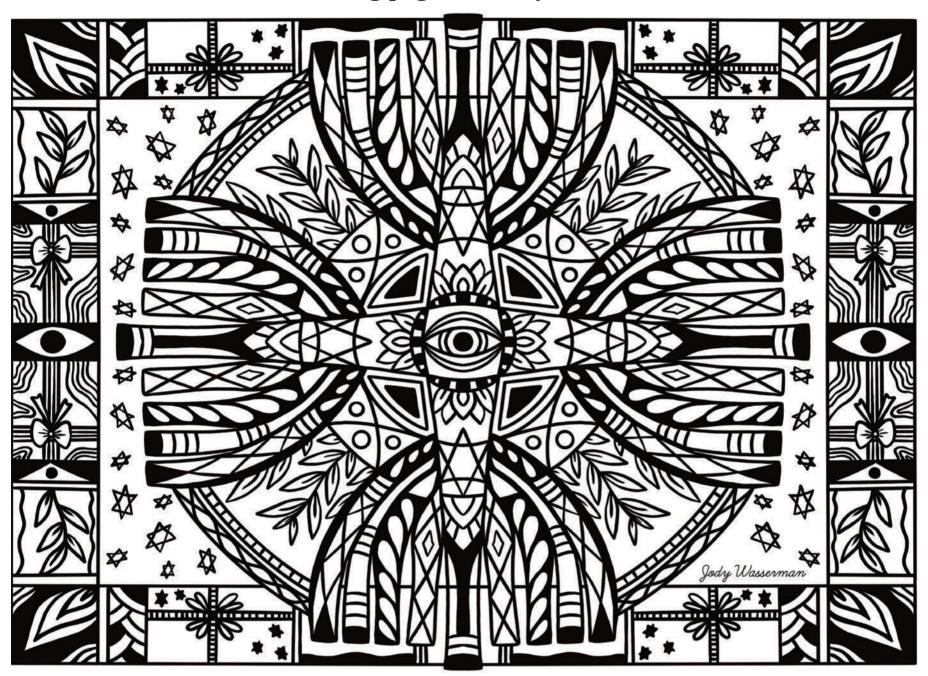
You can connect with Jody at jodywassermandesign@gmail.com. Check out her work at @designbyjody on Instagram and explore her portfolio on www.behance.net/jodywasserman1.

Jenna Vetsch is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter





Chanukah colouring page: Create your own work of art!



Graphic designer Jody Wasserman created this colouring page as a Chanukah present to our readers. Relax and enjoy!



Canada continues to glorify Nazi monuments

By Stacy Shaikin

An Edmonton vandalism case is shining a light on continued Canadian protection of Nazi war criminals.

"I am frustrated and angry that this is still an issue we have to fight," says Abe Silverman, Manager of Public Affairs for Alberta, B'nai B'rith Canada.

In Edmonton, there are statues and cenotaphs in different parts of the city. One such place is at the Ukrainian unity youth centre. The site where Duncan Kinney is being charged with allegedly vandalizing the statue.

Silverman says that the vandalism charge is a misdemeanor in his opinion. They added a charge in this statue, he explains - it is illegal to deface statues of war heroes. But the figure in this statue "is a war criminal not a war hero; those charges are ridiculous," adds Silverman.

It is well documented that many Nazis and Nazi

collaborators entered Canada during and after World War II.

"I think there still exists in leadership a support of antisemitism, driven to protect innocent members of those Nazis families. They came into Canada, got married had children, their families are not guilty of anything."

Silverman, a survivor of the Holocaust, went on to say, "we had an incident where a known Nazi war criminal came to meet Volodymyr Zelensky, the current Ukrainian President when he came to Canada. There was no movement to punish him, but he was honoured in parliament. As far as I know there was no attempt to bring him to justice."

Silverman was referencing the September 2023 meeting whereby Yaroslav Hunka, a Ukrainian Canadian who fought in the SS Division Galicia of the military wing of the Nazi Party, the Waffen-SS, was invited to the House of Commons of Canada to be

recognized by Speaker Anthony Rota, the Member of Parliament for Hunka's district. The Speaker later apologized for honouring Hunka and then took full responsibility for the debacle by resigning.

Jamie Kinzler-Roberts, Senior Director, Policy and Advocacy at Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, agrees with Silverman that there has been an ongoing problem in Canadian leadership when it comes to protecting Nazis.

"Our position has been for a very long time in Canada; We asked Canadians to put their lives on the the line, 45,000 soldiers. We should never have done that if we were going to allow people to celebrate our enemy in our country."

She continues, "This is un-Canadian, an insult to Jewish communities, our veterans and other communities who were the target of the horror of Nazi Regime. It's going to take some political leadership to get these monuments removed. A politician who will stand up for Canadian values."

Kinzler-Roberts says The Simon Wiesenthal Centre has been intervening on this issue politically for many years. They have been lobbying lawmakers, engaging on a regular basis with local police and RCMP. "This has been a file of ours for decades. We have never once changed our position that they must come down," she said.

"We saw one monument in Oakville, Ontario come down in April. Similar to the one in St. Michaels church in Edmonton of Roman Shukhevych a commanding officer in the Waffen SS Unit." She maintains "these small victories can give hope we can move the needle with the government agencies."

Steve Shafir, a board member of The Canadian Jewish advocacy group CIJA, says, "The memorial at St Michaels cemetery in Edmonton is glorifying the Waffen SS unit."

This Unit was a Ukrainian military unit working with the Nazis during World War Two. Responsible for the deaths of 40,000 poles, 10,000 Jews and countless Ukrainian partisans who were fighting with the Soviet army against the Nazi army, according to Kinzler-Roberts

Ultimately, Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and Silverman are frustrated that the Canadian government will not pursue bringing Nazis who escaped to Canada during and after World War Two to justice.

"I am very angry the government refuses to release unredacted documents that name the countless Nazis that entered Canada illegally after the war. Some entered during the war, we get half or more documents that are blacked out," Silverman said.

"There was no attempt to bring [them to] justice for the crimes they committed. Lots of injustices that officials turned blind eyes to. It just makes my blood boil," he continued.

Kinzler-Roberts admits they recently lost a huge fight with the federal govt. "When Hunka was given a standing ovation in Parliament, they said they were willing to open the Deschene Commission's Rodal Report, looking into approximately 900 war criminals that fled justice and lived a life of impunity here in Canada. [However] they decided to keep the documents private after all."

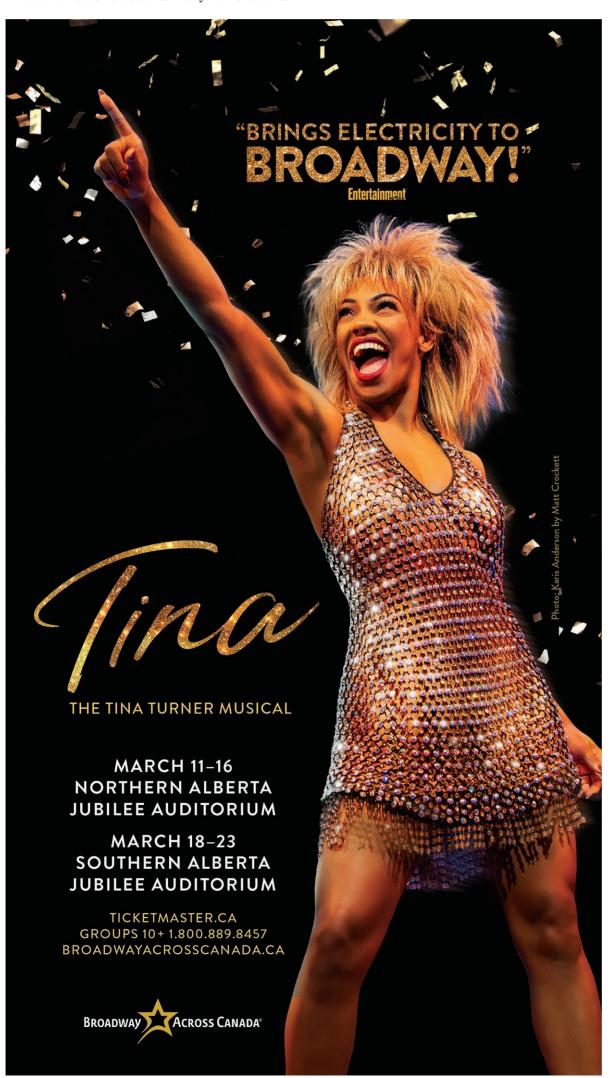
She continued, "They dangled the idea of looking into it and did nothing. They are enabling Nazis to live a life in Canada. Enough is enough, if you want to celebrate Nazis, do it elsewhere. I think Canadians feel over-whelmingly the same as we do."

Shafir believes education is a big part of our answer.

"I've spent 9 years lobbying the Alberta government for mandatory Holocaust education in the Alberta curriculum. Last year we were successful in that pursuit," he explained.

He went on to say that taking down all these statues and putting them in some kind of exhibit with storyboards showing Canada's history of supporting antisemitism in this country would go a long way in showing Jewish people in this country how serious our leaders could be to protect Jewish rights and freedoms and acknowledge that supporting Nazis in this country is unacceptable.

 $Stacy\ Shaikin\ is\ a\ Local\ Journalism \\ Initiative\ Reporter$



SOUICES by Eliezer Segal

Mending misdeeds, Maccabee style

The familiar Hanukkah story tells about a clearly defined conflict pitting Jewish monotheists against hellenizing pagans, between followers of the one God of Israel and the idolatrous cult of the Olympian deities.

However, the Jewish fighters might not have been completely unwavering in their rejection of idolatry. We find a suggestion to that effect in the Second Book of Maccabees ("2 Maccabees"), a record of the Hasmonean uprising composed in Greek in Egypt or Libya shortly after the events. It describes how Judah Maccabee organized a force to collect the bodies of fallen soldiers and prepare them for burial in ancestral graves. While carrying out this task, they discovered, hidden under the tunics of the corpses, objects devoted to the gods of Jamnia.

It is not clear whether the deceased soldiers actually worshipped those objects or had merely taken them as battlefield mementos. In any case, it was obvious to Judah and his followers, and to the pious authors of 2 Maccabees, that this lapse from Torah standards must have been the reason for their deaths. In recognition of this fact, "they all blessed the Lord who judges righteously and who makes the hidden things visible." They prayed that God should now obliterate this weighty sin. Judah admonished the Jews to draw the appropriate conclusions and not be lured into the same fatal temptation.

Not content with all this, he took up a general collection from the populace, amounting to the immense sum of 2,000 silver drachmas which he sent to Jerusalem to purchase sin-offerings. The narrator commends Judah not only for the act itself, but for its underlying theological message.

"For had he not expected that the fallen would be resurrected, it would have been pointless and silly to pray for the dead —and having in view the most beautiful reward that awaits those who lie down in piety, a holy and pious notion. Therefore he made atonement for the dead so that they would be absolved of the sin."

In fact, neither the rabbinic traditions nor any other ancient authors speak of sin-offerings or other sacrifices being offered on behalf of the dead.

It has been suggested plausibly that Judah Maccabee was more concerned for possible immediate repercussions of his soldiers' indiscretions, recalling the defeat that Joshua's army suffered when Achan pilfered from the spoils of Jericho.

At any rate, the doctrine of resurrection was a controversial issue in the Jewish world at the time, and was rejected by sects like the Sadducees. Along with the Pharisees and the rabbis who succeeded them, the authors of 2 Maccabees were strongly committed to this belief and never missed an opportunity to insert it into their narrative. Some scholars speculate that the belief originated among the Egyptians who were famously obsessed with the afterlife, and it subsequently spread to major Jewish centres like Alexandria where 2 Maccabees was likely composed.

There is another closely related question that is raised by this episode: Is it really possible for later generations to benefit the souls of the departed? As regards sin-offerings, the established rule in rabbinic law is that a sacrifice whose original owner died is disqualified from further use.

The ancient Jewish sages spoke frequently of "the merits of the ancestors," reassuring us (especially during the penitential season) that even if we are found wanting when we stand in judgement before the creator, we may draw from the stockpiles of merit accrued by our righteous forefathers. However it is hard to find examples in the Midrash and Talmud where the process operates in the reverse direction.

One passage that was discussed in this context was an early Midrash explaining the procedure for expiating communal guilt when a murderer was not identified. The priest prays, "Forgive, O Lord your people Israel, whom you have redeemed." The Midrash interprets that the desired forgiveness is meant to apply to the generation of the exodus, to the living and to the dead; and concludes: "This implies that the dead are in need of atonement." This text was known to some medieval Jewish authorities but was generally not considered authoritative.

Rav Sherira Ga'on, the tenth-century head of the Babylonian talmudic academy, wrote pointedly that a person's fate in the afterlife "is only according to his deeds. Even if all the saints in the world were to pray for mercy on his behalf, and all acts of charity were performed for his sake, they would not benefit him one bit."

The recitation of prayers for the souls of the dead does not appear in Jewish liturgies until well into the medieval era. The familiar Ashkenazic memorial prayers such as "Yizkor" or "E-l Male Rahamim," are first attested in communal Memorial-Books like that of Nuremberg dating from the late thirteenth century. These prayers were for martyrs, prominent scholars or others who had made notable contributions to the community.

Similar questions were raised in the ancient Christian church. In the early fifth century, Augustine was asked whether there was any scriptural foundation to the widespread practices of praying and performing other religious obligations on behalf of the deceased. He acknowledged, "In the books of the Maccabees we read of sacrifices offered for the dead." However, what was crucial for him was not the flimsy textual evidence so much as the established practice of the church for whom the "recommendation of the dead" held an honoured place among the customary prayers.

Although Augustine himself did not go so far as to include 2 Maccabees in the official Christian canon, he recognized that it was a convenient proof text for important Catholic beliefs like resurrection, duties to the dead, and even for the doctrine of Purgatory, the stage between death and final judgment. These questions would be revived during the Protestant Reformation.

Thus, the Jewish Second Book of Maccabees continues to live among Christians as part of their "Apocrypha," well after its abandonment by Jewish tradition.

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



Todah Rabah: BBYO thanks the Edmonton Jewish Community for participating in the Holiday Greeting pages of the Alberta Jewish News Chanukah edition.

Proceeds from these pages will help provide programming for Jewish teens in our city.

Chag Chanukah Sameach and Am Israel Chai.



From all of us at Alberta Jewish News: Deb Shatz, Dan Moser, Sandra Edwards, Sandy Fayerman, Maxine Fischbein and Regan Lipes.

Thank you to all our readers, advertisers,

Jewish organizations and everyone who participates
with our holiday greetings. We appreciate you!



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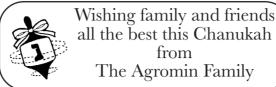


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Y THE BLESSINGS OF CHA

Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Crystal, Hannah and Aleks Aronov





Happy Chanukah from the Aizic family



Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Freda and Marvin Abugov, Cera and Andrew Dixon and family

Happy Chanukah From Robert, Krista, Aliya and Daniel



Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Darlene and Gord Bushewsky & Family



Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Judi Card



Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Lev, Shayna, & David Cairns

Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Talia and Charlotte Goldford

Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Kira, Reed, Hudson & Ford

Happy Chanukah from Mindy Jacobs & Eoin Kenny



Happy Chanukah to the entire community from The Hatches



Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from The Lerner Families

Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Samuel Koplowicz

Happy Chanukah

from Jake Kondor

& Julia Rivait

Happy Chanukah

from Léah, Dylan, Carter, Ayla,

Arielle & Oscar Muscat

Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel,

from the Linetsky Family





Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Brian, Terri and Adina



Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Brian, Anat, Noah, Eva and Maya

Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Greg, Nomi and Maya



Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Aubrey and Draytin Rogerville



from Megan, Gabe, Dani, Elie, and Nes Mandel

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love, light, peace and hope. from Michele and Josh Miller

Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Josh, Sarah, Jonah, and Samuel Raizman



Happy Chanukah to the entire community

from Shane, Rebecca, Daniella and Caleb Asbell



Happy Chanukah to the entire community from The Belostotsky Family



Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Gabe & Sonia Goldberg and family

Happy Chanukah to the entire community



from the Goldsand Family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled with love, light, peace and hope.

from Arlein Hoffman Chetner



Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Stephen Zepp, Karen Leibovici, Adam and Anika Zepp and family



Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Yuliya, Alexey, Zach, and Liza Massarsky

Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Colin, Jen, Asher and Nooni Muscat



Happy Chanukah to the entire community From Gary and Marina Marcus and family

Happy Chanukah to the entire community



from Paul Polushin



Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Carol and Ron Ritch

NNE ADIJH CH

from Mona & Dan Rosenberg

Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from

The Joel & Christina Reboh Clan

Happy Chanukah



from Judith & Jerry Spevakow and family

hne noun ch

from Faren, Ari, Noam, and Maya Sniderman



Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Erica, Jeff, Liam and Annie

Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Jonathan Tankel



from Shelley Weinstein and Bruce Bradley

Happy Chanukah The Whitham Family



Happy Chanukah to the entire community from The Huberman Family, Mark & Michelle, Kyle, Jessica & Oliver, Jordan, Kalin & Benjamin

Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from

The Sukalsky Family







Wishing family and friends all the best this Chanukah from Zev, Micah, Becky and Daniel Shafran

Let the light shine this Chanukah and everyday. Am Yisrael Chai.



from Esther & Howard Starkman & family

Let the light shine this Chanukah and everyday. Am Yisrael Chai.



from Riva and Howard Shein and family

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Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Connie & Danny Zalmanowitz

Let the light shine this Chanukah and everyday. Am Yisrael Chai.



from Dalia, Allan, Tammy and 'Mark Wolinsky

Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Regan & Dmitriy, Benji, Jacob and Tamara Lipes

Happy Chanukah to the entire community from The Buck Family



עם ישראל חי from Jane & Randy Soifer חג חנוכה שמח

Happy Chanukah to the entire community from Natalie and Ken Soroka and family





Happy Chanukah from Jane and Hersh Sobel and family

Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Howie & Debbie Sniderman



Happy Chanukah from
The Trenns

had asijh ch

from Jodi, Michael and Rebecca Zabludowski

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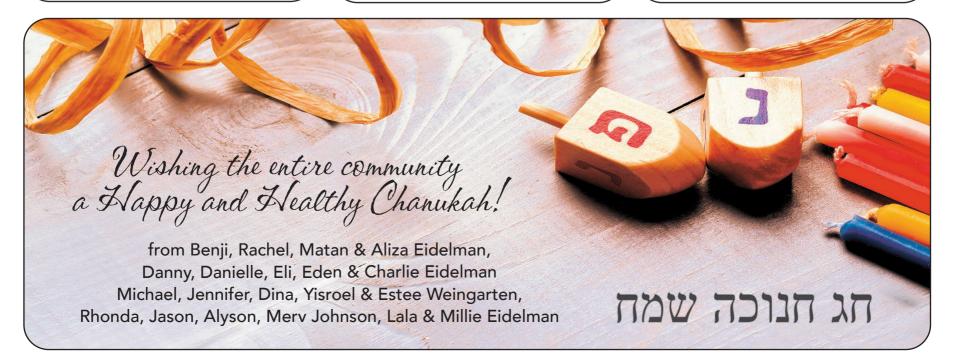
from Forrest, Anna, Adina, and Naomi

Wishing family and friends a peaceful and illuminating Chanukah



from handson Sue and Alvin Winestock

Chag Chanukah Sameach. We stand with Israel, from Shulamit Gil & Keith Dannacker





Chabad of Edmonton invites you to join us for our 33rd annual

Sunday, December 29 4:30-5:30pm At the Alberta Legislature Dignitaries in attendance!

Free park & ride Pick up at Beth Israel: 3:30pm Pick up at Beth Shalom: 4pm Return at 6:45pm

For more info: Rabbi Ari: 780 993 1818 Chabad@shaw.ca Chabadedmonton.org



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