

JNF Floor Hockey: Dustpans clean up for the win!



The Edmonton JNF Floor Hockey Tournament was held on Sunday Feb. 23 at the TT Gymnasium. It was a round robin battle that saw the Dustpans, a.k.a Team Muscat walk away with the championship and bragging rights...until next time! Pictured above: Jr. volunteer Josh Mailhot presents Dustpans Cpt. Colin Muscat with the trophy. Net proceeds from the tournament will help to build Protected Classrooms (bomb proof) in Northern Israel. "Thank you to all the team captains and participants for an incredible day of Floor Hockey Fun," said JNF Edmonton Executive Director Jay Cairns. "Thank you to our generous sponsors: Acme Scrap Metal (Michael Schayer), Alberta Jewish News (Dan Moser), Cushman Wakefield Edmonton (the Asbell Family), Natalie and Ken Soroka and Good Luck Sock. A special thanks to Talmud Torah Society, Natalie Soroka, Diane Sonnenberg, Dan Moser, Ari Sniderman and new JNF Edmonton President Colin Muscat."

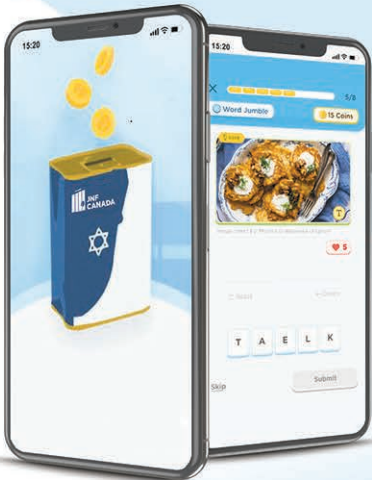
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A book about the failure of Holocaust education gives more insight

By Irena Karshenbaum

Over a Zoom call in late January of 2025, from her home in Hamburg, Germany, independent historian, author and speaker, Dr. Melanie Carina Schmoll, explained that antisemitism is “rooted in hate” and “an emotional thing, which is why it makes it so hard to fight.”

Not deterred, Schmoll has dedicated her life to fighting the “hatred of Jews,” as she said it should be called, and not antisemitism, by researching and writing about Holocaust education, work that she described as “a matter of my heart.”

Schmoll’s work is even more impressive considering she is not Jewish. Born in Hamburg, Schmoll’s maternal line, “The important one” as she jokingly stated, is Latvian and she found church records dating back to 1871 showing that all of her ancestors were baptized. Her paternal line, being German, has no Nazi ancestors or anyone who worked in the camps. She said that she always had a fascination with Judaism and recalled a story when, as a teenager, she learned about what is a Sukkah she wanted to have one because she thought it would be nice to eat outside.

Schmoll, of course, is not the first non-Jewish person in history to be fascinated by Judaism, after learning more about it, but dedicating her life’s work to Holocaust education speaks to her innate ability to think about the world at a deeper level. Her parents “who were very much into politics and history” nurtured this inclination. She recalled one incident when they gave her books to read and talked to her about Israel after she told them about a teacher who brought out a map in class and questioned the existence of one country, Israel, then stated, “It’s an artificial state.”

In May of 2024, being true to her nature, Schmoll was observing the rise of antisemitism since October 7, 2023, and decided to write a book in response to media articles that were stating fifty years of investment into Holocaust education was a failure given the rise of antisemitism.

Schmoll felt the wrong questions were being asked and producing a population free of the hatred of Jews was not only the responsibility of Holocaust educators, but society as a whole, “I tried to find answers for my own questions.” The result being, *Hatred of Jews, A Failure of Holocaust Education?* which will be published in February of 2025.

Schmoll explained that Holocaust education originated in North America, is mandatory in

Germany, but admitted, “We can prepare the best curriculum and the best books, but we don’t know what is going on in the classroom and if teachers really do teach the topic.” She explained that the critical historical period from 1933 to 1945 – which includes the Nuremberg Laws, the Second World War and the Holocaust – is taught in just nine hours in Germany.

She explained, “Even in Germany, teachers are not required to cover this topic to become a teacher. You can be a history teacher in Germany and never do anything on an academic level about the Holocaust, but in the end you will have to teach it.” The situation is similar in Israel and Canada, where Schmoll did a study, and where teachers revealed they did not feel prepared to teach the subject. Schmoll added, “Teachers need more support.”

Schmoll proposes that if the school system is unable to provide more support to the teachers because of lack of time or money, then it needs “experts.”

She added that if teachers are unable to teach the Holocaust, “It’s not a sign of weakness to say this is too complicated for me because people spend years studying the subject and it’s not getting easier. The more you deal with this topic, the more it’s getting complicated.”

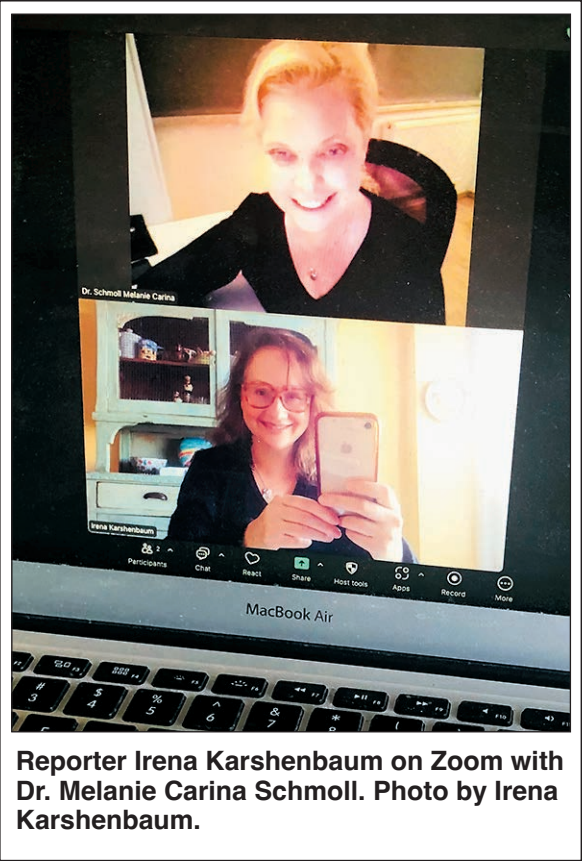
Schmoll explained, “There is so much literature, so many studies, we know so much, and it’s overwhelming.” She said the average teacher might not be interested in the topic and might have a different area of interest, “We cannot force these people to go into this topic area and know all this stuff and know how to deal with students who are not so open minded, so it needs experts to teach the subject.”

Schmoll’s proposal is that the experts would be found, for example, in Canada by the Jewish communities, “The people who would teach this subject would be an educator, a historian or a person with a social studies background. They would become an expert on the subject.”

Schmoll envisions having a pool of Holocaust education experts that would then be brought into the schools. She admits this is an easier proposition in Germany, which is geographically smaller, than in geographically dispersed Canada.

There is an added benefit to having experts teach the subject, she explained, in that studies show that older students in Germany, those in grades 11 to 13, take school books more seriously if they know there is an expert talking.

Schmoll who has spoken widely on the topic, including in Calgary at the first city-wide Holocaust



Reporter Irena Karshenbaum on Zoom with Dr. Melanie Carina Schmoll. Photo by Irena Karshenbaum.

Remembrance Day in 2020 and at the MRU Holocaust Education Symposium, explained that *Hatred of Jews, A Failure of Holocaust Education?* is written for teachers, academics who are not familiar with the topic, authors of texts books, people who create resource materials and historians. “The book is based on studies, but also my own experience as a teacher in the classroom in the academic world and in public schools.”

She concluded, “We need more to combat the hatred of Jews than just Holocaust education. It is not like a pill you get and you talk to kids for two hours and they come out as better persons, less hating, that is certainly wrong. The entire story of the hatred of Jews is such a long story and the Holocaust is the more horrific thing, but it’s just one thing in this entire story. This idea that it’s all on our shoulders, the shoulders of the educators to make it better, and that’s a little bit too much. The story of the hatred of Jews is so complex and Holocaust education can be just one part of it.”

Irena Karshenbaum is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter. She writes in Calgary.
irenakarshenbaum.com

Thank You

B’nai Brith Calgary Lodge #816 December Casino was a tremendous success! It would not have been possible without all of our invaluable volunteers! Todah Rabah!

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Simchas and Celebrations



Talmud Torah celebrated Tu B'Shevat in Edmonton in a variety of fun and creative ways with Israeli educators Yuval Sapir and Hagar Diller and JNF Edmonton Director Jay Cairns. Students also enjoyed a Tu B'shvat Seder and the Grade 6 tree leaders organized a tree planting campaign to support the Be'eri Forest Rehabilitation, as a powerful tribute to the lives tragically lost on October 7.

Israeli educators celebrate Tu B'Shevat at TT

By Natalie Soroka

Recently, Jay Cairns of Jewish National Fund - Edmonton (JNF) organized a special visit from Israeli educators Yuval Sapir and Hagar Diller, who made a stop in Edmonton on their way to Toronto, continuing on to the United States. Their visit brought a dynamic and interactive learning experience to our students, highlighting the significance of Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish New Year for Trees - Feb. 12 to 13.

Arriving well-prepared and full of energy, Yuval and Hagar engaged students with immersive activities that combined education with fun. Through a series of competitive and hands-on experiences, students deepened their understanding of Israel's geography,

environmental sustainability, water conservation, and biodiversity. The sessions emphasized Israel's innovative contributions to agriculture and ecology, while also teaching students about the country's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

Among the many engaging activities, students participated in:

Trivia Challenges – Competing for points by answering questions about Israeli geography, water conservation, tree planting, and sustainability efforts.

Orange Juice Squeezing Competition – A hands-on activity that not only tested students' speed and teamwork but also connected to Israel's rich agricultural traditions.

Puzzles and Taste Tests – Encouraging sensory exploration while learning about the diverse fruits of Israel and their connection to Tu B'Shevat.

Bird Migration and Nature Discussions – Exploring the vital role Israel plays as a key stop along migratory bird routes.

The event successfully combined education with experiential learning, leaving students with a greater appreciation for Tu B'Shevat, environmental responsibility, and Israel's ongoing commitment to ecological innovation. Thanks to JNF Edmonton and the visiting educators, the students experienced a unique and meaningful way to connect with these important themes.

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

Next Deadline: March 25, 2025

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Simchas and Celebrations

Tu B'Shvat was a vibrant celebration at Beth Israel

By Regan Lipes

In the Lipes home, our Talmud Torah attending youngsters were ready for Tu B'shvat well before the 15th of Shevat with tree-themed artistic creations, circle-time stories, and songs. Even with thick mounds of snow as far as the eye could see, New Year of the Trees, was in full vibrant bloom. Long before their Tu B'Shvat art projects went up on the walls, mass preparations at Beth Israel Synagogue were well underway. Organizers had a big vision, and what came to fruition certainly did not disappoint!

The Beth Israel Tu B'Shvat celebration, graciously sponsored by Howard and Leah Goldford, was extremely well attended, and organizers even set up extra tables to accommodate last-minute registrants. Teenagers gathered at their own table eager to catch up with one another, while parents and younger siblings settled themselves for a beautiful dinner service and Tu B'Shvat seder. A long table that stretched almost the entire length of the social hall was set up with marvelously eye-catching delicacies. Volunteers helped serve these scrumptious masterpieces that all carefully incorporated fruits and grains in inventive and tasty ways. Pasta salad was deliciously dressed up with the addition of grapes, olives were plentiful, and soul-fueling piping hot soup boasted extra helpings of barley. Although kid-pleasing favorites like hot dogs and fries also adorned

plates, the traditional Tu B'Shvat tasty treats took centre stage.

This was truly the 'Family Shul' as there was something for everyone: kids of all ages, parents, grandparents, and singles. After bellies had been joyfully filled, Rabbi Guy Tal led the Tu B'Shvat seder explaining the significance of the seven foods mentioned in the Torah: wheat, barley, figs, dates, olives, pomegranates, and grapes. Meanwhile, supervised by NCSY teens, smaller children ran exuberantly through both women's sections of the sanctuary harvesting hidden letters in a scavenger hunt to spell out the words "Happy Tu B'Shvat." Our little ones, younger than the rest, took the task exceedingly seriously, and our five-year-old Jacob, all but exploded with excitement when he found an 'H' tucked behind a siddur. This made our three-year-old Tamara so envious that she had to enlist her oldest brother Benji to help her in her search.

Returning to the social hall, out of breath and smiling, kiddos congregated on the floor with their families in front of a projector. Rabbi Tal led participants in a Kahoot with must-know Tu B'Shvat facts and trivia. For those who do not know what Kahoot is, not to worry, many adults relied on their teenagers to walk them through this interactive quiz game. Rabbi Tal read out questions with multiple choice answers, and players would input their answers on their phones. Almost instantly the analytic data was published on the screen sending out shouts of victory among the crowd. Things got competitive: but in a fun-for-the-whole-family, kind of way. Team-Lipes was divided into Benji and Jacob against their dad who

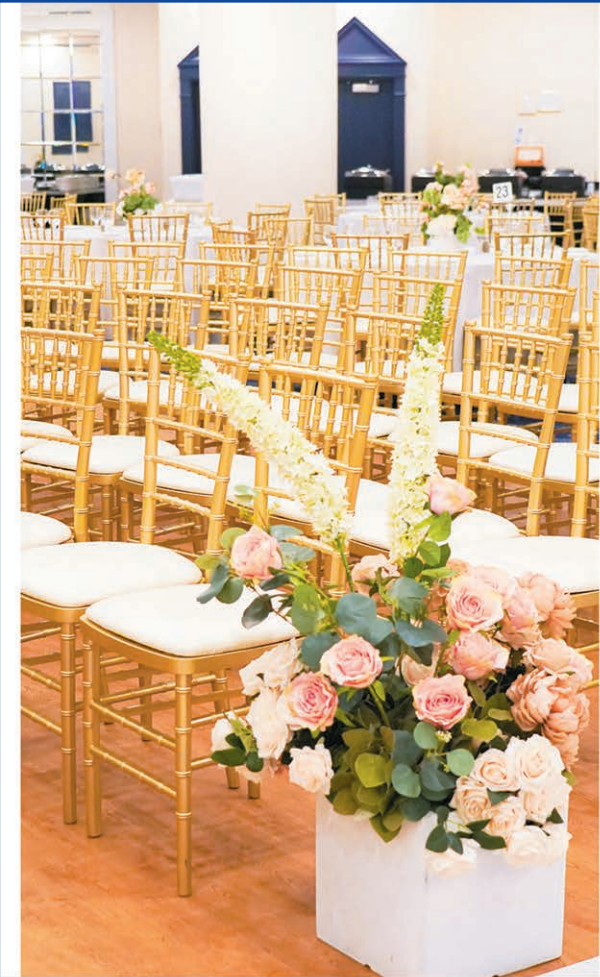
grew up in Israel. To the amazement of my husband, his ferociously competitive sons left him in the dust! Families were so engaged by the game that upon completion, Rabbi Tal brought up the quiz from last year and the fun continued.

The community thanks Howard and Leah Goldford for their generous hosting of Beth Israel's Tu B'Shvat celebration this year. Every member of the Lipes family had a truly memorable time, and I can safely say that we were not the only ones. 'The New Year of the Trees' is a time of promise and optimism for the Jewish people, to recognize and be thankful for the fruits of the Holyland of Eretz Israel, and to pray to Hashem while meaningfully connecting with the gifts of the Earth He created. It was an excellent turnout for a blisteringly cold Wednesday night, but the success of the event left everyone smiling and Rabbi Tal's explanations and elaborations provided lasting substance for reflection and spiritual contemplation.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



A delicious Tu B'Shevat at Beth Israel in Edmonton.



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Focus on Real Estate

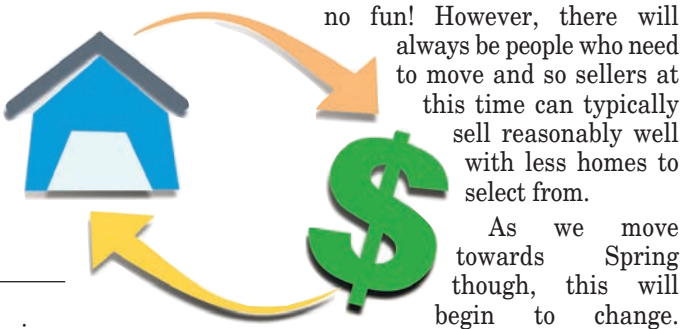
Are you looking to buy or sell your home?

Submitted by Paul Ackerman

Are you looking to buy or sell your home? Curious about the Real Estate market and what the new year has in store?

You are not alone! As we step into 2025, there are many factors that will determine what the market will look like. Politics, immigration, economy, population, development and of course mortgage rates are all factors. Through all of this, Alberta has seen significant growth over the last decade and this trend isn't stopping anytime soon. New developments in all quadrants, rezoning for multifamily applications and our city spreading its perimeters every year are proof of this.

Over the last few winter months, we have seen a slow but balanced market. This is typical in our city as we all know that moving in the frigid temperatures is



no fun! However, there will always be people who need to move and so sellers at this time can typically sell reasonably well with less homes to select from.

As we move towards Spring though, this will begin to change. Traditionally this season is the busiest in Real Estate, with milder weather and the holidays past us. With this comes competition, having more inventory available but more buyers looking for the same types of properties. In these times, we will often see multiple offers and sale prices going above and beyond asking prices.

So how do you know when is the best time to buy or sell your home? A variety of factors can help make these decisions, such as the time frame you require, the type of property you have, is it attractive to developers, the reason for the move and the desirability of your community.

The best way to start is to find a great Realtor who can help you navigate the market and answer all your questions. You will also want to meet with your bank

or mortgage broker, so you know exactly where you are financially. If you are a buyer, most realtors will want you to be pre-approved for a mortgage prior to viewing homes.

Buyers benefit from a realtor's knowledge of what is available and realistic in their budget, working with their buyers' specific requirements and desires. As a seller, a realtor can help you price your home correctly and competitively, prepare your home to list, market your home to the proper audience and negotiate with buyers to ensure a smooth sale.

Negotiating between buyers and sellers is best done through the expertise of a realtor, who have your best interest in mind and can get the most value for everyone. This year Real Estate in Calgary is anticipated to thrive and continue the trend of growth and development.

With mortgage rates continuing to go down and increasing inventory supply, 2025 promises to be a great year. Our city stands as one of the best in the world for livability, attracting more and more people every year, cementing our Real Estate market strong for the foreseeable future. If you want to learn more don't hesitate to give me a call, I would love to chat! Paul Ackerman, Re/Max Realty Professionals 403-926-4435.

Providing lunch and other essentials to the Edmonton Bissel Centre

By Regan Lipes

We've had some bitter cold weather this month in the City of Champions and thankfully we are getting a reprieve now. Earlier this month the wind was blowing with icy bone-chilling intensity. Edmontonians have been thanking their lucky stars that they opted for insulating their vehicles; the numbers of bus patrons opting for Ubers literally left the streets empty. When it gets that cold, water-cooler-chatter is dominated by discussions over thermal garments and proper insulation while darting from work to car at the end of the day, but what about those who huddle in doorways or shield themselves from blowing snow with cardboard boxes – what of them? The marginalized within society are even more vulnerable during wintry weather, and many struggle simply to survive.

The annual Jewish community Bissell Centre lunch, organized by Beth Israel Synagogue and its partners in the greater Jewish community does its part to

provide for some immediate needs for those Edmontonians experiencing homelessness. This is not the only time of year when the Jewish community engages with the Bissell Centre. Every year, during the winter holidays, Beth Shalom Synagogue also organizes a highly regarded and well attended lunch service.

On Sunday, March 2, a team of volunteers will be distributing pre-packed lunches and hot coffee to those most in need of compassion and good-will. Along with non-perishable food, these bundles will include some necessary personal items that many might easily take for granted but mean so much to those accustomed to going without new insulating warm socks, mitts, hats, and scarves.

One staff member, Maria, commented recently that: "Our community continues to be challenged by the police and clean-up crews taking away peoples' belongings almost daily so that they have to start rebuilding their lives again and again." The challenges endured by those experiencing homelessness are such that even the most basic of personal items

become luxuries. Maria continued: "Homelessness is increasing, and these NGOs were the last line of defense for many of our community members, who are also seeing increases in amputations and overdoses. No one should have to live like this. Affordable and supporting housing cures homelessness."

As with any large community chesed effort, volunteers and donations are much needed. Some volunteers will meet in advance to sort and prepare these lunches for distribution, some will transport these much-needed goods, and a smaller number will serve guests to the Bissell Centre during the lunch on March 2. Even those who cannot be accommodated inside because of occupancy restrictions will still have their needs addressed. Volunteers from the Jewish community will also be distributing lunches to people outside the doors so that no one will be missed.

No donation is too small, and those who are able are invited to visit the Beth Israel Synagogue website to see what non-perishable food items are being collected. These donations can be dropped off at Beth Israel or Talmud Torah School. Cash donations are also graciously received so that organizers can purchase the goods needed. Please visit <https://volunteersignup.org/WRQXB> to sign up to donate food, cash donations (select 'Bissell Centre Lunch' on the drop-down menu) can be made online by visiting <https://www.familyshul.org/payment.php>, or contact Sylvia in the Beth Israel office with any questions: sylvia@familyshul.org. Please sign up to donate today, or to volunteer for this worthwhile cause.

Please be part of uplifting someone's spirits in these difficult times. Join with Beth Israel Synagogue, the Talmud Torah Society, Jewish Family Services, Alberta Jewish News, Beth Shalom Synagogue, the Jewish National Fund of Canada, the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Brook's NoFrills, the Jewish Drop-in Centre, Na'amat, Temple Beth Ora, and the Jewish Federation of Edmonton in joining the greater Edmonton Jewish Community to help make a difference in the lives of our vulnerable fellow residents.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

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A photograph of Paul Ackerman, a man with glasses and a black leather jacket, standing in front of a tall wooden bookshelf filled with books.

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Focus on Real Estate

3 questions to ask before renewing your mortgage

(NC) Over a million mortgages in Canada are expiring this year. If your mortgage is one of them, here are some smart questions to ask before signing on to a new contract.

What are my current priorities?

This is a good time to review your mortgage needs and make sure you have the right product. For example, consider if your budget allows you to increase your payments to pay off your mortgage sooner and save on interest. Also, think about whether you're satisfied with the services offered by your current lender.

Are there better options out there?

You don't have to renew your mortgage with the same lender. You may want to shop around and compare various lenders and mortgage brokers to see if they offer better alternatives.

You may decide to switch your current lender for a loan of the same amount. If this is the case, the new lender will need to approve your mortgage application. Just keep in mind they may use different criteria to decide if you qualify. It's also important to know that changing lenders will include fees, such as setup fees, appraisal fees and other administration fees.

Have I gotten the best deal from my lender?

Negotiate with your current lender to get a lower interest rate. You can even tell them about offers you received from other banks. You could also ask to change your variable rate to a fixed rate, as this could lower your interest charges. If you don't act, your current mortgage could renew auto-matically, meaning you may not get the best interest rate and conditions.

Learn more about mortgage renewals at canada.ca/money.



Book your Passover Greeting with Alberta Jewish News

Passover is right around the corner and Alberta Jewish News is once again celebrating with two special editions – one for Calgary and one for Edmonton. We're proud to be the newspaper of the Alberta Jewish Community by publishing interesting and relevant original community news on a print platform, as well as our online weekly "Alberta Jewish Schmooze" which goes right into our readers' in-boxes and daily posts on our website and X (formerly known as twitter).

It is more important than ever that we have a community newspaper to connect us and you can show your appreciation by purchasing holiday greetings in the newspaper three times a year – Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah and Passover. If you've already booked your holiday greetings – Todah Rabah!

If you haven't, there are three different sizes available – small for \$36, medium for \$72 and large for \$180 – something to suit any budget. Your partici-

pation helps us pay for printing and mailing so it is very much appreciated. It also allows us to give generous discounted pricing to our beloved Jewish community organizations to help them advertise their events.

In the coming weeks, you will be approached to purchase a holiday greeting in the Alberta Jewish News – by Sandy Fayerman in Calgary or from the Edmonton chapter of Na'amat in Edmonton. Please say yes and book the greeting through them, or by calling the office at 780-421-7966 or sending an email to albertajewishnews@gmail.com. The easiest way to book is by using our online form on our website at albertajewishnews.com/greetings.



Book your Passover Greeting Today!

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Focus on Real Estate

JFED secures \$1 mil. for redevelopment of Edmonton JCC

On February 15, Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright made an exciting announcement regarding provincial funding that will secure the future of the Edmonton JCC.

She announced that the Community Facilities Enhancement Program Grant committee approved Federation’s application for the new Jewish Community Centre (JCC), awarding us the full \$1 million that was requested. She extended thanks to Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women Tanya Fir and the Government of Alberta “for their support and confidence and for bringing this undertaking to fruition and to invest in the future of our community.”

Leavitt-Wright explained that the grant results from a significant application, backed by the Alberta Counsel and Federation’s project manager, Marshall Hundert. She further noted that ongoing discussions and advocacy events with Federation staff, volunteers, and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) “have resulted in greater understanding about our community, our challenges, and our work towards creating a stronger Alberta.”

Leavitt-Wright stated, “The JCC project will ensure that today’s generation and generations to come will have a gathering space open to all.” And she listed a myriad of activities and programs that could potentially be held in the facility.

“I often quip I am in the growth business,” quipped Leavitt-Wright, “whether you look at the increase of anti-semitism or the expansion of community. While we cannot ignore the darker moment that we face as a Jewish people, Jewish Edmonton is showing our strength, resiliency, and determined future through this project. This announcement is providing us with the momentum to move forward, and a powerful signal that we are not only welcome in Alberta, but strongly encouraged to imagine and build our tomorrow here.”

She elaborated that the project architect Mode and contractor Pemco Construction Ltd. are working diligently with the redevelopment committee to establish building plans according to budget. She stated, “With your generous support, we will fulfill the vision of completing all the additional items that we hope for in this 19,200 square foot facility and secure an endowment that will provide operating funds in perpetuity. I anticipate with pleasure discussing



The Edmonton Jewish community gathered on Feb.23 for a prayer vigil to honour the Bibas family and to stand with the hostages, their families and Israel. Photo by Jim Moses.

naming opportunities with you, as we work together to create a thriving, connected Jewish Edmonton.”

Leavitt-Wright concluded by saying, “L’Dor V’Dor – from generation to generation. As we continue to build on this resurgence, let’s take a moment this Shabbat to light an extra candle for those who remain in captivity, and dedicate a sip of wine as we say a l’chaim to our community.”

Israel scholar

Cont. from page 10

Women’s World Games in London in 1934. There were not many female athletes in the Yishuv, and the women were recruited from the PE class in Tel Aviv, Idels said.

“They know that they’re not going to win anything, they’re only going to lose. They don’t care at all.... The important stuff for them is that the national flag is going to be raised and we’re going to be there with the other nations,” said Idels.

Six months earlier, a male team had competed in the Asian Games in India, Idels said.

“The men are actually a little bit better, and they’re winning a few medals, but they don’t care about the winning...They care about the flag. It’s about how sports contributed to this new Zionist experience and this new Hebrew experience, this new Hebrew selfhood,” said Idels.

“There are Zionist sources that say the athlete isn’t supposed to be selfish, he isn’t supposed to win all the time, the athlete is supposed to be nice and kind,” Idels said, adding with a chuckle that it is therefore not hard to understand why Israel fell short in competition.

Idels plans to concentrate on two projects during his time in Calgary, beginning with Hebrew opera, which had its day in the Yishuv during the interwar years.

“We want [opera] because it’s important to us, kind of culturally prestigious, but the way we understand it and what’s important to us is different,” Idels said, adding that today opera scarcely registers in mainstream Israeli culture.

Nevertheless, Idels plans to “linger in the moment” with members of the Yishuv, mining source material

including the words of critics and the diaries of opera-goers to explore what it meant to them to hear opera in Tel Aviv.

Notably the librettos of classical operas were translated into Hebrew, said Idels, adding that it was very much part of the culture to prove that anything could be accomplished in the language.

“For them, the project is very much about the Hebrew. They don’t care about the music almost enough, but they have long, long conversations about the Hebrew, about how it was pronounced, about the quality of the translation,” Idels said.

Another project Idels plans to tackle is the impact of the 1990s on Israeli culture in general, with a particular focus on “the end of history and its implications in relation to the language, the body and the space.”

[Note: The end of history paradigm has deeper historical roots but was popularized by American Political Scientist Francis Fukuyama with the publication of his book *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992.]

“One way to see the 1990s and what exactly happened there through this end of history paradigm is that...there is no need for ideologies anymore. Every ideology is something that belongs only to the past. In a global sense...the communist is the most obvious one,” explained Idels, who adds that in Israel, the focus is “Zionism and everything it represented.”

“Of course people in Israel are still Zionist.... Perhaps just a small group see themselves as post-Zionist, but both the left and right of Israel, I mean the mainstream, are...rejecting the legacy of Labour Zionism and Mapai, Ben Gurion,” said Idels.

“Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister, who was the figure of the Sabra, the Palmach warrior, was assassinated,” said Idels, adding that the Nov. 4, 1995 murder was symbolic of this change.

“The past, the Palmach, is leaving us and we are getting something else,” Idels said, describing current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as “a much more globalized character than Rabin,” who is more “individual in the experience” with an “affection for luxuries, wellbeing and materialism.”

Idels says it is interesting how the Israeli left reacted to the Rabin assassination. The labour

Zionists of yore would have reacted by taking action, explains Idels, “by changing the reality.”

“But the reaction was very much also copied, very much in the spirit of mourning they see in other places...sitting with all the candles, like when a famous celebrity dies,” said Idels, likening the response of Israel’s left to the public outpourings following the deaths of John Lennon and Princess Diana.

Idels points to the excitement when foreign politicians and other world figures traveled to Israel for Rabin’s funeral. The sentiment was more akin to what Netanyahu represents than the Labour Zionists of yesteryear, Idels observes.

“The 90s is significant. Something happened there,” said Idels who is seeking to understand the shift and its continuing implications in collaboration with fellow academic Roni Cohen. They previously co-published the article “Nonsense: Israeli Humor, Globalization, and Vegetables during the Early Nineties.”

“I think it’s a good time for this project because in many ways there is a good reason to think that this period of end of history is coming to an end, not only in Israel, but in the world,” Idels said.

“What was new in the 1990s is now history, Idels adds. “We are not in the 90s anymore and, in many ways, socially, culturally, politically, this has become very much evident. We are still finding it difficult to adjust to the new culture.

This is a global phenomenon, says Idels, adding that “...for obvious reasons Israel is at the forefront of many of those conversations.”

In addition to his research and writing, Idels will be teaching during his sojourn in Calgary.

Though the details have not yet been confirmed, he expects to teach a Modern History of Israel class in the fall. He is also working on ideas for community engagement and hopes to collaborate with local Jewish organizations in creating programs of interest to the community.

This is not only good news for Calgary. Idels says he would be happy to also speak in Edmonton as opportunities arise.

“I’m here to make the most of this experience,” says Idels, who adds that his wife, Sandra, is looking forward to sharing her expertise in the community too. A social worker and psychotherapist, she has, among other professional highlights, worked with IDF soldiers in Israel.

Idels’ long term goal is to earn a tenured position in Canada, the US or back home in Israel. For now, academics and community members have a wonderful opportunity to benefit from the expertise of a scholar who is bringing something unique and fascinating to the field of Israel studies.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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Focus on Real Estate

Mastering Real Estate Insurance: Past lessons, present strategies, future safety

By Sam J. Feldman, President & Managing Director, Wilson M. Beck Insurance Alberta

In the dynamic world of real estate, insurance plays a pivotal role in safeguarding investments from the myriad risks associated with property ownership and management. As the president of a leading commercial insurance brokerage focused on real estate, I've witnessed the evolution of this sector through various economic cycles and market trends. Here, I aim to unravel these trends, past and present, and offer strategic advice to navigate this complex landscape.

Historical Trends in Real Estate Insurance

Historically, real estate insurance has been primarily about property and liability coverage. However, the scope has broadened significantly:

Post-World War II Boom: This era saw a surge in property development, leading to a demand for basic property insurance. Policies were straightforward, focusing mostly on fire and theft.

1980s to 1990s: The introduction of more complex risks like environmental hazards (think asbestos, mold) necessitated the evolution of policies to include pollution and environmental liability.

2000s: The tech boom and subsequent real estate bubble highlighted the need for business interruption insurance, protecting against income loss due to unforeseen events.

Post-2008 Financial Crisis: There was a shift towards more risk-averse strategies, with insurers tightening policy terms and increasing premiums to mitigate future risks.

Current Trends Shaping Real Estate Insurance

Today's real estate insurance market is influenced by several key trends:

Climate Change: Increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters push for enhanced coverage against floods, hail, and wildfires. This has led to the development of parametric insurance, which pays out based on the occurrence of specific events rather than

actual loss incurred.

Cybersecurity: With properties becoming smart, cyber risks have infiltrated real estate. Insurance now often includes cyber liability to cover data breaches from connected systems like HVAC or security systems.

Regulatory Changes: New regulations, especially those concerning tenant safety, environmental standards, and sustainability, have implications for insurance policies, requiring coverage for compliance with these laws.

Market Consolidation: The insurance industry has seen consolidation, leading to fewer but larger insurers, which can mean less competition but also more comprehensive service offerings.

Strategic Advice for Real Estate Investors and Managers

Considering these trends, here are some strategic insights:

Risk Assessment: Regularly update your risk profile. Understand that the real estate sector is not static; new risks emerge with technological advancements and environmental changes. Employ risk consultants if necessary to tailor insurance needs.

Diversify Your Coverage: Don't rely on one type of insurance. Integrate policies like: Builder's Risk for construction projects, Commercial Property Insurance for physical assets, Liability Insurance to cover legal claims against your business, and Cyber Insurance to safeguard digital assets.

Consider Parametric Insurance: Especially for areas prone to natural disasters like hail, parametric insurance can provide quick payouts without the need for loss assessment, aiding in swift recovery.

Sustainability and Insurance: Invest in green buildings not only for environmental benefits but also because insurers are beginning to offer discounts on premiums for properties that meet cer-



Sam J. Feldman

tain sustainability criteria.

Stay Informed on Legal Changes: Regulatory shifts can alter what types of insurance you need. Keep abreast of local, provincial, and federal changes in laws that might affect your real estate holdings.

Negotiate with Insurers: With fewer insurers, the dynamic might seem less in your favor, but understanding your risk profile can give you leverage in negotiations. Sometimes, bundling different types of insurance can lead to cost savings.

Annual Policy Review: Insurance needs change with the market and your property's status. Don't just renew; review. This includes checking the insurer's financial health and their response to claims.

In conclusion, the real estate insurance market is as much about strategic foresight as it is about immediate coverage. By understanding historical patterns and current shifts, real estate professionals can better prepare for what lies ahead. Insurance is not just a mandatory expense but a strategic investment in the longevity and resilience of your real estate ventures.

Real Estate market update – strong sales and more inventory!

Submitted by Jasen Reboh, Remax Excellence

January sales in Edmonton surged 11.2% year over year! While overall home prices remained steady, detached homes saw a 4.2% increase, now averaging \$561K—still well below the national average. This signals strong demand from families looking for more space.

A key shift: inventory has increased! In December, we had a critical shortage, with sales outpacing new listings at 104%. Now, at 65%, buyers have more options while it remains a seller's market.

Results you can trust, success you can see!

Westridge / Oleskiw - Wolf Willow: Listings are up, but homes here are still selling fast—many in multiple offers above list price! I have buyers from all over the country ready to purchase.

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A BOUTIQUE INSURANCE BROKERAGE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Discussing Israel’s Black Panthers with author Asaf Elia-Shalev

By Jeremy Appel, LJI Reporter

While Israel was founded by Ashkenazi Jews seeking a solution to the pervasive problem of antisemitism in Europe, the largest ethnic group in Israel today is the Mizrahim.

During the first few decades of Israel’s existence, these Jews from the Middle East and North Africa were crowded into slums, with substandard housing, educational and employment opportunities.

In 1971, a group of young Moroccan Jews in Jerusalem’s Musrara neighbourhood established the Israeli Black Panthers to draw attention to anti-Mizrahi discrimination. While they weren’t quite the Marxist revolutionaries of their American namesake, the Israeli government treated them similarly—surveilling and infiltrating them, arresting their leaders and attacking their demonstrations.

While initially focused squarely on domestic politics, in 1980, Panthers co-founder Charlie Biton, who was then an MK with the left-wing Hadash party, became the first Israeli to meet Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Los Angeles-based Jewish Telegraphic Agency reporter Asaf Elia-Shalev wrote the book *Israel’s Black Panthers: The Radicals Who Punctured a Nation’s Founding Myth*, which was published last year by University of California Press.

This interview has been edited for clarity and condensed for space.

How did you first become interested in the Israeli Black Panthers?

It goes back to 15 more years ago when I was a college student at UC Berkeley. Then as now the campus was at the center of all kinds of radical activism and I was very interested in that at the time. The American Black Panthers were founded in the next town over in Oakland and had a lot of history on the UC Berkeley campus.

I decided to write about them on a couple of occasions for my history papers and things like that, and I came across a reference to the Israeli Black Panthers. I could find almost nothing about them except for a Wikipedia page that said, that they fought for equality and against racism faced by Middle Eastern Jews, or Mizrahi Jews.

My family is from Iraq and Bulgaria, so this raised a lot of questions for me.

Growing up in the United States, I felt a difference from American Jews because they almost all were Ashkenazi. There was some pronunciation stuff, there were certain assumptions about what Jewish food is, but I never felt oppressed by that difference.

I was raised in Israel for a number of years, but primarily I grew up thousands of miles away in California as a white person. And here I’m trying to connect with what it meant that my brown-skinned family moved to Israel and inevitably faced racism. What was that like? And how can I come to understand myself as part of a whole?

This line that separated Arabs and Jews all of a sudden seemed so blurry. I learned how my grandfather used to listen to all the great Arab singers and how my dad was so ashamed and embarrassed about that, and would never bring friends over because he didn’t want them to know that my grandfather was continuing to live as an Arab, essentially, with his big Arab mustache.

After Berkeley, I moved to Israel to work at Haaretz as a news editor and I met Reuven Abergel, who’s one of the founders of the Israeli Black Panthers. We strike up a conversation and we come up with this idea that I’ll interview him.

His voice just seems so urgent and so different from everything else you hear in the public discourse. We do maybe 50 hours of recorded interviews.

Meanwhile, I’m also developing as a journalist and falling in love with the genre known as narrative non-fiction, by which I mean factual stories but written with dialogue, plot, scenes and character development. And I decided that I’m going to write the story of the Israeli Black Panthers. This is how I’m going to make my mark and make an intervention into the discourse around Israel and Palestine.

Why do you think this chapter of Israeli history is so little known?

We tend to think about Israel in binaries. There’s the Arab and Jew, Israel and Palestine, and the two shall not meet. The Mizrahi story drives a wedge into that binary and breaks it apart.

A lot of people have a hard time with nuance and complication and it doesn’t fit into any of the pre-existing narratives. That’s one reason.

The other reason is that Israel, for many decades, tried to present itself as a very white country in terms of who they sent to be represented abroad. Today, that’s totally different. Israel now emphasizes its diversity. But for most of its history, that wasn’t the case.

Part of it is also the failure of intellectuals in Israel and in the United States to give the story its due. Israeli universities didn’t make room for many brilliant Mizrahim, who found themselves without space to engage in critical thinking about Israeli history at the universities near where they lived so they ended up moving abroad in large numbers.

It’s worth noting that Mizrahim aren’t just Arab Jews. They’re also Persian Jews, Turkish Jews and Kurdish Jews, among others, all with their own distinct histories and cultural practices. How was the Israeli state able to construct a unified Mizrahi identity?

The founders of Israel and the people running the show were swimming in the same intellectual waters as the wider European society.

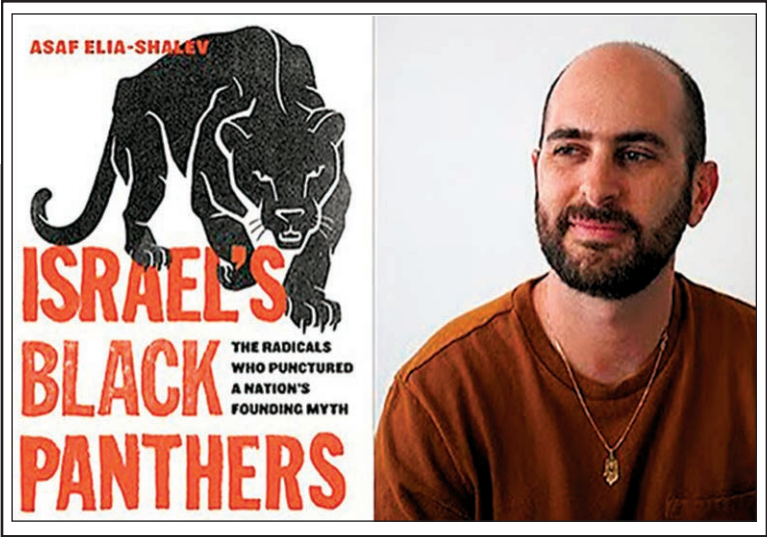
Racial attitudes were imported from Europe and according to this racial attitude, there are the worthy races of the world that happen to be concentrated in Europe and there’s everyone else. When groups are coming from these different countries, there are already racist assumptions about their needs and capacities.

They all were all grouped together because it was seen that their differences didn’t really matter. There was this idea that being among Muslims, regardless of which country or the specifics of your culture, had degraded the cognitive and spiritual level of the Jews, and hopefully with exposure to the superior European Jews, they would be able to be rehabilitated within some amount of years.

The experience of being racialized in Israel, of being treated as another because you come from the East, forged this new Israeli Mizrahi identity. People still had held onto their Turkish heritage, but now they had a way to build solidarity and say, ‘We’re all experiencing this thing. We all live in this little ghetto. We all are stuck in Dimona. Now we are alike and we’re Mizrahi.’

What was the catalyst for this group of Mizrahi street youth in Jerusalem setting up an organization that was named after the Black Panthers?

This group of kids who would become the Black



Panthers were either born in Israel or arrived as babies or young children. Their parents refused to go along with the program of being settled on the frontiers of Israel. They say, ‘We’ve been praying to Jerusalem since time immemorial, we’re going to go to Jerusalem, whether you like it or not.’ No one’s offering housing, so the only place that they can find where to live is in this border zone separating East Jerusalem from West Jerusalem. These are bombed-out houses where Palestinians had previously lived, but they fled in 1948, and it’s right in the Old City.

But it’s a no-man’s land. There’s barbed wire running through the neighborhood, and there’s snipers from the Jordanian side and Israeli side from them exchanging fire from above, sometimes shooting at residents below. It’s extremely crowded, unsanitary. Sewage is running through an open canal through the neighborhood.

There’s almost no government services, hardly even a school and later just a religious school. Most of their interaction with the Israeli state is through the police that comes in and arrests kids who maybe stole a piece of fruit from the market or scavenged from the no-man’s land and try to sell metal or different fixing that they could find in the bombed-out housing.

You have a whole generation of young men in particular who get in trouble with the law, end up in and out of juvenile institutions. They’re without jobs. They don’t serve in the military because the military won’t take anyone with any kind of running in with the law at this point.

The Six-Day War in 1967 catalyzes tremendous amounts of change in Israel. For one thing, Musrara overnight almost goes from being the backwaters of Jerusalem, which itself is the backwaters of Israel at the time, to the very center of a super exciting city.

All these phenomena that were going on in the world and hadn’t really arrived in any major way to Israel came rushing in. Rock and roll music, psychedelic drugs, radical politics, the hippie movement—all that stuff’s coming in.

Well-off Ashkenazi Jews who are traveling to Europe and visiting the student revolts in Paris and the United States to see what’s going on there with the civil rights movement bring that back to Israel.

Many of the people in this group that become the Panthers didn’t even know how to read and now they’re suddenly working with these really innovative social workers who are starting to empower them through education. They’re learning about the world in these ways.

One of the things they’re noticing is that there’s a lot of articles in the newspapers about the American Black Panthers, calling them antisemitic because they were making pro-Palestinian statements and talking about overthrowing American imperialism, which was allied with the Israeli state.

The main takeaway for these youths reading about the Panthers was that the Israeli establishment was very scared of this group and they decided they’re gonna emulate them.

beacon of light.

His B’nai Brith family will miss him dearly and his indomitable spirit will remain in our hearts eternally. We will carry the torch with pride and honour in his name!

Michael Mostyn’s memory will forever be a blessing, and his impact will continue to be felt in so many different ways, in the years to come. May we all honour his legacy by emulating his steadfast courage, unconditional kindness, and commitment to tzedakah and chesed.

Yehi zichro baruch—May his memory be a blessing.

Remembering Michael

Cont. from page 15

communities. Yet, despite his public accomplishments, those who knew Michael personally will remember his kindness and compassion: the quiet moments when he extended a helping hand, shared words of encouragement, or simply listened with his whole heart.

He was awarded many accolades during his lifetime, including the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee

Medal and the King Charles III Coronation Medal, but his distinguished legacy remains in the countless lives he touched and the world he helped make more just and compassionate.

Michael is survived by his loving family, Ella, Benjy, and Bella, who were his greatest source of pride and joy. He was a beloved and adored son and brother to Sheila and Alan and to Matthew and Sari. To them and their families, he was their giant pillar of strength, courage and love. To his friends and colleagues, he was an infinite source of inspiration. And to the Jewish community, he was a protector, a defender and a

A test of character

By Lesley Machon, JFSC Community Chaplain



Lesley Machon

I have always been struck by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s insistence that the truest test of a people consists in how it treats the elderly. “It is easy to love children,” he remarks, “Even tyrants and dictators make a point of being fond of children. But the affection and care for the old, the incurable, the helpless are the true gold mines of a culture.”

This quotation particularly comes to my mind as I spend time visiting the sick and dying in hospitals and hospices. At a time at which so many older Canadians are suffering loneliness and abandonment, several experiences and initiatives I have seen within the Jewish community reveal the concrete possibilities for the kind of affection and care that Heschel describes.

The first initiative is Shawl-Om. This program involves providing hand-made blankets to comfort Jewish community members as they face the challenges of new symptoms, diagnoses, and illnesses. Of course, it is not only these blankets that provide comfort, but also the warmth of human concern that goes into making every Shawl-Om gift a patient receives.

Another positive effort in our community involves a partnership with the Kinder Arts program at the Calgary Jewish Academy. Students are tasked with creating attractive posters to adorn the sterile medical rooms of hospitals for Jewish patients. When teachers

explain that the artwork will be seen by those who are facing difficult times, the students eagerly enhance the colourfulness and thoughtfulness of their pieces.

On Fridays, I am touched by how the nurses wrap the fire alarm so I can light Shabbat candles with the patients. Sometimes they, or other patients in the room, join in -- sharing a piece of delicious challah baked by Jewish seniors. Meanwhile, Calgary Jewish Academy alumni are engaging in a program through JFSC, where they visit seniors, play games, and offer companionship.

These are just a few examples of responding to the ways in which our character is tested. In choosing to remember that we belong to one another in these ways, we can discover those “true gold mines of [our] culture” of which Heschel spoke.

If you are a senior, student, or simply wish to get involved—or if you are in need of a visit, grief support, or companionship in a hospital, hospice, or care home—please feel free to email me at lesleym@jfsc.org.

Be part of the MADA TEAM

By Don Sharpe

We all want to be on the Winning Team. In sport, in business and in our community. Magen David Adom is The Winning Team for Emergency Medical Care in Israel.

You can join this Winning Team of Professionals and Volunteers from right here in Calgary. Next time you go to Israel you could even see one of the Winning Team's Ambulances with your name on it!

Everyone who supports MADA with their efforts and donations becomes part of an organization that provides front line medical care across Israel every day. Full time Paramedics are supported by thousands of exceptional, skilled volunteers who work right alongside them.

You could visit a MADA Base Station and see how your donations are put to work, nothing is wasted! If you're very brave, you could join a MADA Paramedic team for a ride-a-long. You can also donate blood while you're there as Magen David Adom also collects and manages Israel's Blood Supply.

One of the very BEST ways to can be on our winning

MADA Team is by joining all of your friends at the Winner's Garden Magen David Adom Gala on May 4, 2025 at the Carriage House Inn. Your donation is your ticket to the Magic and Music which have been specially selected for you!

As someone who's been blessed to be able to work as a Volunteer Paramedic in Israel, I can say with confidence that Magen David Adom is the undisputed Champion of pre-Hospital Care. The very latest vehicle, equipment and training gives those citizens and visitors the very BEST chance of survival in a medical or trauma emergency. Ask me at the Gala how it is possible that MAGEN DAVID ADOM manages to provide this Highest Level of Care!

It doesn't happen without you. When you attend you not only support the work but also bless the memory of all our MADA Team members who were slain in the line of duty on Oct. 7. This cursed War will end, until then MADA Paramedics need your support more than ever.



So join the winning team, get your tickets now before they sell out. Bring your friends and anyone you'd like to see on Israel's Winning Team, Magen David Adom!

In order to purchase tickets to our upcoming event please contact: Sharon Fraiman Sandrusi, Western Regional Director and Major Gifts. Canadian Magen David Adom Canadian, 587-435-5808 sfraiman@cmdai.org.

Bibas family *Cont. from page 1*


the past 16 months. Shiri smiling, wearing matching Batman pajamas with Yarden, Ariel and Kfir — Batman was little Ariel’s obsession. Shiri with her baby in a carrier, filled with that serene joy. Shiri on her wedding, beaming and radiant. Shiri showing Ariel his little brother for the first time, her heart melting with joy when she sees him lean in to hug his brother in that baby carrier. Shiri laughing along with her sweet baby, lovingly tickling him. I think of the pictures of Shiri and her late parents, Margit and Yossi, them holding her. A beautiful family that deserved a better world.

The Nir Oz community is still waiting for so many of their loved ones to return home, including David Cunio, who along with his wife, Sharon Aloni Cunio — who returned from captivity with their daughters Yuli and Emma back in November of 2023 — was the one who set Yarden and Shiri up. In an old video, you can see Shiri talk about how long she’s known David and his twin brother Eitan, who are almost impossible to discern from one another, saying she can tell them apart by voice. David’s brother Ariel is also being held hostage in Gaza. His partner, Arbel, was recently released as part of this most recent hostage deal. One of the recently released hostages brought with him a sign of life from David, who Shiri would certainly

have wanted to see reunite with his wife and daughters.

May Shiri Bibas’ memory be for a revolution, for a better world, and most immediately, may it spur on the return of every last hostage to Israel. It is a small comfort that she will be brought to rest along with her two precious little boys. We are thinking of and grieving with the Bibas family who fought so hard for their loved ones return. And our thoughts and broken hearts are with Yarden Bibas, who deserved to hold his wife and children again.

This article was originally published on Kveller.



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The family of **Ben Berman** בן-מנחם would like to acknowledge and thank all those who reached out with their love, support, donations and condolences in memory of Ben.

Thank you all, Claire



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Bloom Boom: Chic Floral Trends to Elevate Every Occasion

By Safeway Glenmore Landing

From bold hues to eco-chic centrepieces, our on-trend wedding flowers and bouquets are blooming with inspiration.

Flowers are the heartbeat of your celebration, weaving together emotion, artistry and ambiance. Their scent sparks nostalgia, their colours set the mood and their textures add depth, turning ordinary spaces into something extraordinary.

As weddings and milestone events evolve, so does floral design—2025 is all about bold expression, unexpected pairings, and a deeper commitment to sustainability. Today’s blooms are more than décor; they make a statement, marking the significance of a moment and immersing your guests in an experience that feels curated and unforgettable. From striking installations to intimate wedding bouquets, this year’s wedding flower trends promise to leave a lasting impression.

Wedding Flowers: Four Budding Floral Trends

1. Locally Grown and Sustainable Blooms

Eco-conscious couples can say “I do” to sustainability, choosing locally sourced flowers that reduce carbon footprints while supporting local growers. Organic, in-season wedding flowers—think peonies, ranunculus and dahlias—arranged in natural, unstructured styles are the budding choice.

2. Beyond Pastels: Bold, Vibrant Hues

Soft blush tones are making way for moody, high-contrast palettes. Deep reds, sunset oranges, rich purples, and even black accents lend wedding flowers a modern, luxurious edge.

3. Wild and Whimsical Garden Vibes

Forget stiff, over-structured arrangements and centrepieces. This year, the trend leans into a more natural, just-picked-from-the-garden aesthetic. Loose, organic styles with cascading greenery, wildflowers, and unexpected textures create a romantic, effortless feel.

4. Showstopping Floral Installations

Centrepieces are getting bigger—literally. Couples going all in on jaw-dropping floral installations have

high-impact options, from oversized chuppah designs and hanging floral chandeliers to flower walls and lush aisle runners. This wedding flowers’ goal: total floral immersion.

Wedding Bouquets: Put These Floral Trends in Your Hands

1. Hand-tied Bouquets with Movement

Brides are opting for looser, more free-flowing bouquets rather than traditional, tightly packed arrangements. Asymmetry is key with these blooms, complete with greenery spilling over naturally for an effortless, ethereal look.

2. Mixing Fresh and Dried Elements

Blending fresh flowers with dried textures—like pampas grass, lunaria, and preserved ferns—is a floral trend that’s here to stay. It adds visual interest, contrast, and a longer-lasting bouquet.

3. Personal Touches and Symbolic Blooms

Florals with meaning are having a major moment. Their fragrance can transport you to fond memories, while their symbolism—roses for love, lilies for devotion, peonies for prosperity—add meaning to any celebration. Whether it’s including a grandparent’s favourite bloom or incorporating flowers that hold cultural or sentimental value, these bouquets make deep and personal statements.

Three Floral Trends to Elevate Every Simcha

1. Seasonal and Theme-based Arrangements

From bar and bat mitzvahs to anniversaries and milestone birthdays, trends are moving beyond tradition to embrace personal style, seasonality and storytelling. Be it with cherry blossoms in spring to create a natural connection to the time of year or a garden-inspired bat mitzvah with cascading wildflowers, each choice sets the mood and enhances the experience.



2. Dried and Preserved Florals

Not exclusive to wedding bouquets, these eternal blooms are making their way into event centrepieces, chuppahs and décor elements. Their long-lasting beauty can be repurposed as keepsakes long after the party ends.

3. Minimalist vs. Over-the-top Centrepieces

Floral trends in décor are going in two directions: sleek and modern or full-on opulence. And both are fantastic. Refined, single-bloom arrangements look sleek in contemporary vases. Lavish, overflowing tablescape offer a maximalist feel.

Where to Find the Perfect Blooms

No matter your style—vivid and daring, soft and romantic or effortlessly natural—flowers set the tone for life’s most meaningful celebrations. At Safeway Glenmore Landing’s floral department, you’ll find expertly crafted wedding flowers, bouquets, fresh-cut blooms and custom arrangements designed to reflect your vision.

Whether you’re planning a wedding, a milestone event or an intimate gathering, 2025 is the year to embrace floral artistry that speaks to you—because the right flowers don’t just decorate a space; they bring it to life.

Adult learning at Beth Shalom: The Habsburg Dynasty

By Regan Lipes

There are dozens of organizations who are dedicated to the mapping of Jewish genealogy: Jewish-Gen being perhaps the most widely known. Understanding the paths of one’s ancestors can be a meaningful process of getting to better understand one’s own identity even if that history treads though unfamiliar places. Within the collective Jewish consciousness ‘displacement’ and ‘exile’ are familiar realities dating back to the expulsion from the Holyland. In more modern times, the Spanish Inquisition left Jewish people homeless, the deeply rooted antisemitism of Eastern Europe facilitated the massacre of the shtetls and Tsarist efforts at forced assimilation, and within the memories of the last hundred years Nazi aspirations for complete extermination. But what about all the historical spaces in between? Equally a part of the necessary knowledge of the Jewish narrative is how the Hapsburg Dynasty treated its Jewish population.

The Netflix binge-worthy miniseries *The Empress (Die Kaiserin)* a German-language historical drama created by Katharina Eysen and directed by Katrin Gebbe has brought the Habsburgs of the latter nineteenth century to the big screen, but in reality, this dynasty powerhouse was one that spanned from the tenth to twentieth century. In fact, this legacy is still tangible within the contemporary consciousness with Princess Yolande de Ligne having been interred in the family’s Imperial Crypt in October of 2023. This was a family of power and influence, and one that shaped not only the geopolitical landscape of Europe, but the globe. But what did this mean for the Jews?

Dr. Joseph Patrouch, Professor of History in the Department of History, Classics, and Religion at the University of Alberta has been a popular lecturer both for the wider Edmonton Jewish community, and a repeat guest at Beth Shalom Synagogue for their adult education programming. Recently, Dr. Patrouch gave an online talk titled: “Jews and the Habsburg Dynasty.” Initially this might seem like an academic engagement opportunity, but in addition to cerebral enrichment this proved to be enlightening for helping some within the Jewish community understand the trajectory of their own family history. Over forty people attended the presentation, emphasizing that there is a desire within the community to better understand the many chapters of Jewish history.

Attitudes towards Jews during the fifteenth century under the Habsburgs, as Dr. Patrouch explained, vacillated from intolerance, expulsion, and execution to short reprieves in these policies. What is important to consider though, is that as the Habsburgs amassed greater territorial control their power over Jewish populations also increased. Anyone who has heard the story of the Golem of Prague will contextualize the longing for a supernatural being to protect persecuted Jewish population’s antisemitic campaigns but also acknowledge that at various stages of the Habsburg dynastic rule, pockets of Jewish civilization were able to flourish in spiritual and cultural life. And yet, with the acquisition of Portuguese territories, the Habsburgs continued the Inquisitions that had already devastated Jewish communities in these areas. For an armchair historian trying to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of the early modern Jewish landscape,

understanding the sheer expanse of Habsburg power brings about the realization that this dynasty exerted its own lasting impact on the evolution of world Jewry.

Antisemitism remained a constant but during the reign of Empress Maria Teresa some more influential Jewish families rose in their social standing. The Habsburg occupation of Bosnia in the latter part of the nineteenth century and annexation in 1908, integrated Sephardic Ladino-speakers into the Empire further diversifying an already complex mosaic of nationalities under Habsburg control. Acknowledging the profound impact of this family through time and across geographical space illustrates that endeavors to increase community knowledge about this history is a big part of the modern Jewish cultural equation. After all, it was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo that spurred the First World War – to the enlist the great cliché: the rest is history!

Dr. Patrouch, who has conducted prolific research on the Habsburg Dynasty is a leading scholar on the topic of their legacy and the ideal speaker to learn from regarding how Jews were impacted. As a frequent contributor to the adult education programming at Beth Shalom this gives community members valuable opportunities to gain better, more nuanced, perspective regarding the Jewish historical narrative prior to more infamous chapters in modern memory.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



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from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

A prophet in persia

Esther has many claims to greatness in the Jewish memory. She was a brave and loyal member of her community, the heroine of the book that bears her name, a renowned beauty, and monarch of the Persian empire.

Rabbinic tradition adds yet another important aspect to Esther's greatness: she was a prophet.

The Hebrew word for prophet—*"n'vi'ah"*—is not actually used in connection with Esther, but various rabbis proposed different textual sources for the claim.

Rabbi Hanina derived it by employing a common hermeneutical method, the *"gezerah shavah,"* that allows the exegete to expound similarities between occurrences of identical words in the Bible. In this case, he focused on the passage where the queen is preparing for her fateful approach to the king to invite him and Haman to a banquet. The Bible here employs the expression "It came to pass on the third day, that Esther was clothed in royalty." The Talmud notes that royalty—as distinct from "royal apparel"—is not something that can be worn physically. Therefore the reference must be to a spiritual entity. "This teaches that the holy spirit clothed her." This interpretation finds support in an episode in the book of Chronicles about the warriors who pledged their allegiance to David when he was fleeing from King Saul. Of all the men who were present, only Amasai took the initiative of addressing David: "Then the spirit clothed Amasai, who was chief of the captains... and he said: We are yours, David."

To be sure, being "clothed" by the spirit might just mean that Amasai was animated with the courage to speak out on this occasion. At any rate, Rabbi Hanina understood it as relating to supernatural inspiration. In rabbinic parlance, the holy spirit is the conduit through which the Almighty communicates prophetically with his creatures. From this Rabbi Hanina inferred that the similar expression used in connection with Esther was also referring to prophetic inspiration.

An earlier rabbinic collection took a different approach to demonstrating Esther's prophetic status. *Seder 'Olam*, a chronological treatise ascribed to the second-century sage Rabbi Yosé ben Halafta cites the

verse about how "the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book."

Rabbi Yosé understood that Esther was not merely instituting a new holiday, but authorizing that the story of its origin be accepted into sacred scripture. This implied that the book of Esther, like all the other books of the Hebrew Bible, had been revealed prophetically, and that Esther was therefore to be ranked as a prophet.

Whether or not the book of Esther qualifies as inspired scripture was discussed from several perspectives. Some rabbis pointed to passages in the book that describe people's thoughts or actions that human observers could not have known of. But others countered that it was possible for people's thoughts to be discerned by means of their observable behaviour. (Of course modern readers take for granted that narrators of fiction can penetrate the thoughts of the characters.)

The Talmud imagines how, when Esther approached her contemporary sages insisting that her story be included among the sacred scriptures, they objected, whether out of fear of offending their gentile neighbours or because the Torah set strict limits to the acceptance of new scriptural books. In the end, they were able to creatively expound phrases in the Torah so as to justify Esther's request, though some rabbis remained hesitant about recognizing the Megillah as holy writ in all respects.

Among all the reasons that the Talmud proposed for classifying Esther as a prophet, there is one whose absence might surprise some of us: she is not credited with accurate predictions of future events.

In some ways this is a reassuring fact. Jews often find themselves insisting that the Hebrew *navi* is not primarily a "prophet" in the sense of a foreteller; and that the conventional English translation, which goes back to the ancient Greek version of the Torah, reflects the centrality of oracles and divination in Greek religious life. The *navi*, on the other hand, transmits God's message in many ways, particularly to chastise the people for their moral shortcomings or to console them in difficult times.

Be that as it may, the Babylonian Talmud attached much importance to predictions as part of the *navi's* job description.

In both *Seder 'Olam* and the Talmud, Esther is mentioned as one of seven female prophets (Sarah, Miriam, Hannah, Deborah, Abigail, Hulda and Esther). Both works cite prooftexts in support of the claims. As tends to happen in such cases, the authority of the Babylonian Talmud influenced medieval scribes to impose its readings on other texts, so that the standard editions of *Seder 'Olam* do not differ significantly from the Talmud. However, in the most reliable manuscripts of *Seder 'Olam* the choice of proof-texts is at times quite notable.

As regards most of those women, *Seder 'Olam* is satisfied with quoting texts that use the word *"nevi'ah"* in connection with them; however, the Babylonian Talmud prefers to ascribe to them specific predictions of future events. This difference might reflect a fundamental divergence between the rabbis of Babylonia and of the land of Israel concerning the *navi's* job description. Is it defined primarily by predictions, or by the broader mission to serve as a messenger of the holy spirit?

An intriguing possibility was suggested by Rabbi Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides). He focused on the Talmud's prooftext about Esther clothing herself in royalty on the third day, explaining it literally, as an example of the meticulous planning that she invested in her strategy to persuade the king and disarm Haman. This included choosing her most impressive regal wardrobe, carefully timing her entry before the king's presence, insightful psychological readings of Ahasuerus and Haman, and more.

The Talmud observes that "a wise person is preferable to a prophet." Perhaps it was Esther's astute strategic wisdom, more than any supernatural prophetic communication, that succeeded in saving the Jews.

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

Learning about Media Bias in a Post-October 7th World



On Sunday February 23, Calgary Jewish Federation, in collaboration with the Calgary Council of Christians and Jews (CCCJ), hosted an engaging evening with Mike Fegelman from Honest Reporting Canada, moderated by Kevin Libin of PostMedia. The theme of his event was "Media Bias in a Post-October 7 World." The evening began with Rabbi Jayne leading a somber Moment of Remembrance in memory of the Bibas Family and Oded Lifshitz. The event sponsors thanked CCCJ, Beth Tzedec Congregation, B'nai Brith Calgary Lodge #816, and Honest Reporting "for this meaningful and important discussion. We must continue to stand with the truth." Photos from Calgary Jewish Federation Facebook.



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