

## Noa Argamani speaks out to save the hostages

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

The Jewish National Fund's Edmonton Negev Gala 2025 'One Nation: One Heart' welcomed two distinguished guests: Shai Davidai, an outspoken Assistant Professor who has been a dynamic advocate for Israel, vocally on the Columbia University campus in New York and beyond and the outstandingly brave, astonishingly courageous, and profoundly inspirational Nova Music Festival survivor and released Gaza hostage, Noa Argamani. To be in the same room with such perseverance and strength as Argamani, who endured 246 days of torturous captivity, was a draw for attendees, and proved to be a moving and powerful experience for all.

Proceeds from this year's JNF Edmonton Negev Gala went to support the Ashdod Rehabilitation and Therapy Centre as they provide essential services to those in the greatest of need, including children battling cancer. One of the local stars of the evening was Carmi Reboh, whose Bat Mitzvah project has focused on raising money to donate to this worthy cause. The Edmonton Jewish community could not be prouder of her spirit of giving.

The event was emceed by Mike Sobel who welcomed the audience, and described the horrors of October 7th, the devastation of the ensuing war and the resilience of the Israeli people while emphasizing the importance of a collective gathering. He kept the sold-out crowd fully engaged. Obviously, a few hockey jokes needed to be made as Edmontonians were still feeling the sting of a game 6 loss at the Stanley Cup Finals, but the community was truly joyful to be together to unite in



Former Hamas hostage Noa Argamani was interviewed by past-president of Hillel, Danielle Shaposhnikov at the JNF Edmonton Gala. She told the audience, "As someone who survived Hamas captivity in Gaza, I am telling you that we cannot heal until all of the hostages are returned home to Israel. My message to you is to talk and remember the hostages as if they were your own family." Photos by Reel Mensch Productions.

a shared love for Eretz Israel: truly in the spirit of 'One Nation: One Heart.'

The Edmonton Jewish community has been enhanced by the dedication, energy, and vision of Jay Cairns, the Executive Director for JNF Edmonton. Born and raised in the City of Champions, Cairns has been instrumental in building Jewish Edmonton into the strong, vibrant, and united community it is today. As he addressed the audience and spoke with compassion, love and respect for the people of Israel, the guest speakers and the exceptional goals of the Ashdod Rehabilitation and Therapy Centre, he emphasized that efforts at the local level have gone far. His words and message resonated impactfully.

As survivor of the October 7th massacre, Noa Argamani walked purposefully to the front of the sanctuary; despite the large audience, a tiny mouse's footsteps would have been audible. Then as she turned and faced the crowd, every able-bodied person in the room stood up tall, out of respect and admiration for the impressive young woman. The room erupted in applause that seemed to continue for quite some time. As attendees finally took their seats again, the previous deafening silence seized the crowd again so as not to miss a single word delivered by the soft-spoken and unassuming Argamani. She generously shared her harrowing story of determination and perseverance.

*Continued on page 20*

## Calgary celebrates a boot-stompin' Spuds & Suds Stampede



Calgary Jewish Federation's annual Stampede party, Spuds and Suds, was a successful shindig this year, setting a new record for attendance. Community leaders and volunteers had a boot-stompin' time engaging with critical stakeholders, allies, and friends. CJF extends "a tip of the hat to our amazing partners at @jewishedmonton, @cijainfo, and @cjpac. We can't wait to do it again next year. Thank you to this incredible group of staff and volunteers from CJF and the Paperny Family JCC who worked hard to ensure the event was a success."



# Author presents new book: “Denmark’s Forgotten Holocaust”

By Harry Sanders

“My mother survived the Holocaust. Her mother and sister did not. These facts have cast a shadow over my entire life whether I was aware of it or not.”

So writes Bodil Jelhof Jensen in her new book, *Denmark’s Forgotten Holocaust: My Family History in Letters*, which was published earlier this year.

The author, a retired lawyer who lives in Laval, Quebec, was born in Sweden in 1948 to Danish refugee parents. Her family emigrated to Canada in 1954 and settled in Edmonton, where Jensen studied history and then law at the University of Alberta. As a history student, Jensen was a contemporary of David Leonard, the future provincial archivist who died in Edmonton just weeks ago (on July 3).

Jensen’s first book, *Alberta’s County of Mountain View...A History*, was adapted from her 1972 M.A. thesis, and it was published in 1983. Mountain View County lies between Red Deer and Calgary; it surrounds the village of Cremona and the towns of Carstairs, Didsbury, Olds, and Sundre.

Around the time of the Centennial of Confederation in 1967, County Reeve William A. Bagnall approached the university about commissioning a history of Mountain View County. Jensen was an undergraduate honours student, and her advisor, Dr. Lewis G. Thomas, recommended her. Jensen wrote her honours essay on the history of the town of Olds, and she continued the project as a graduate student. She spent two or three summers living in the county and collecting oral history testimonies, which she analyzed through her own solid research in libraries and archives. Jensen also collected photographs for the project that have been preserved in the Glenbow collections, which are now housed at the University of Calgary Libraries.

When Jensen was in her second year of university, she learned that her mother’s family was Jewish and that her maternal grandparents, Max and Rose Hartwig, had been sent to Theresienstadt, a notorious transit-stop and death camp located in German-occupied Czechoslovakia, in 1943. Six of the Hartwigs’ seven children, along with their own families, fled to safety in neutral Sweden. (One married daughter had already been living in Sweden.) Family members sent

care packages, letters, and money to the Hartwigs. Max had many of these letters with him when he returned from the camp in April 1945. Rose had perished after three months in Theresienstadt.

Jensen learned the history of her grandparents and her mother’s extended family through the letters sent to and from Theresienstadt and through other surviving pre- and postwar documents, letters, and photographs. Jensen learned that, while most Danish Jews had fled to Sweden (some were killed in the attempt), 500 had been sent to Theresienstadt. Of those, 50 died in the camp.

“It was just overwhelming,” Jensen recalls. “And it’s taken me a long time to reconcile all of this.” She elaborates in *Denmark’s Forgotten Holocaust*: “In my search for my past, I asked two central questions: Who were these people and what happened to them in World War II? I especially wanted to know one thing: What happened that I grew up in a world apart from my family? What happened that contact with my family was reduced to letters?”

Jensen grew up without knowledge of her Jewish roots. She identified as a Dane, and her father was Lutheran. “I probably got more than I realized,” she reflects now. “My mother grew up in an Orthodox home, and you can’t just leave all that behind.”

Jensen went on to practice law in Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Quebec, where she has lived with her husband, Bernard Fontaine, since 1991. She translated (from Danish) two books written by her mother, Agnes Jelhof Jensen, including the novel *Dilemma* (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1995), which won a Canadian Jewish Book Prize for Fiction. In *Dilemma*, a non-Jewish waitress in occupied Denmark protects and ultimately saves a young Jewish girl.

Most recently, Jensen edited and published *Denmark’s Forgotten Holocaust*. It comprises a contextual introduction that frames the prewar, wartime, and postwar documents, letters, and photographs through which she learned about her own family and, by extension, the fate of Denmark’s Jews. “The beauty of this book is it’s told in their words,” she says. The letters range in date from 1920 to 1959.

“Contrary to popular myth, not all Jewish Danes were rescued from the Nazis and not everyone was well treated,” Jensen writes. “My grandparents fall into that group.” Undoing that myth motivated Jensen and informed the title of her book.



For Jensen, self-publication was a deliberate choice. “This is how I wanted to honour my grandparents,” she says. Self-publication gave her complete editorial control.

Earlier this year, Jensen received a call from Gerda Vester, the archivist at Mountain View Museum & Archives in Olds, to ask if her 1970 honours essay about Olds had ever been published (it had not been). Jensen told Vester about her new book, and the archivist encouraged her to come to the museum to speak about it. Jensen returns frequently to Edmonton, where her daughter lives, so the idea was realistic. “It just fell into place with other commitments that I had,” Jensen says. Her affection for the people she met and the friends she made while researching her thesis also motivated her. “I would walk the mile for the County of Mountain View,” she says.

The audience of some 50 people nearly filled the museum gallery at Jensen’s talk on June 19. Listeners were engaged, and many asked questions. One local man in attendance related the story of a German emigré whom his father had hired as a farmhand after the Second World War. The farmhand had been 14 years old when the war ended, and he rode his bicycle into a recently-liberated concentration camp. There, he saw the corpses that impressed on him the reality and the magnitude of the Holocaust. Telling this story did the same for the Alberta farmer who hired him and the farmer’s son who came to Jensen’s talk.

Jensen donated a copy of *Denmark’s Forgotten Holocaust* to the museum, where it is available to the public. It can be purchased by writing to Jensen at [bodil@sympatico.ca](mailto:bodil@sympatico.ca). She will speak about the book at Montreal’s Jewish Public Library on November 18, 7 to 9 p.m., and the presentation will be live-streamed.

*Harry Sanders is an historical consultant and freelance writer in Calgary.*

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Calgary Jewish Academy wrapped up the school year with an amazing event for students, parents, grandparents, alumni, friends, staff and board members - a very successful Mishpacha & Maple Syrup Breakfast. A great time was had by everyone who attended.

# Hundreds gather for the CJA Mishpacha & Maple Syrup Breakfast

Community event celebrates legacy, connection, and support for student wellbeing

The Calgary Jewish Academy playground was filled with laughter, music, and the smell of pancakes and hashbrowns on June 15, as more than 350 students, parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends of the CJA came together for the first *Mishpacha & Maple Syrup* pancake breakfast.

The new end-of-year event brought generations together to close the school year with food, games, and celebration; something organizers say they hope will become an annual tradition.

“This is exactly the kind of event our school community wants and needs,” said Principal & Head of School Joyce Kerr, retiring after 38 years as a teacher and educational leader. “It’s not just about the school, it’s about coming together as a community, celebrating each other, and building connections across generations. This is how we keep Jewish Calgary strong.”

One of the highlights of the morning was a White Hat ceremony honouring Morah Joyce and several retiring members of CJA’s Board of Directors. Joyce, who has taught hundreds of students over nearly four decades, described the moment as meaningful not just personally, but for the broader community.

“Teaching is about more than curriculum, it’s about relationships,” Morah Joyce said. “Seeing alumni, parents, and grandparents here alongside current

students is a reminder of the lasting impact we have when we build a community like this.”

In addition to the breakfast festivities, CJA’s online silent auction raised over \$17,000 toward much-needed facility upgrades. The same spirit of community support and togetherness seen at the breakfast is also helping to fuel the launch of the *Cheder Neshama* Fund, “A Room for the Soul,” inspired by and named in honour of Morah Joyce.

The *Cheder Neshama* will offer students a calm, supportive space to reset, whether they’re feeling overwhelmed or simply need a quiet moment during the day. The room will include tools and resources for mindfulness, movement, and emotional regulation, helping students build lifelong skills.

“The *Cheder Neshama* is about creating a safe, quiet space where students can breathe, reset, and feel supported,” said Dana Silver, Director of Community & Advancement at CJA. “It’s a reflection of Morah Joyce’s legacy and of the school’s commitment to nurturing the whole child - academically, socially, and emotionally.”

CJA has been a cornerstone of Jewish Calgary for generations, providing education that blends Judaic Studies with the Alberta curriculum. Events like *Mishpacha & Maple Syrup* reinforce the school’s role not just as a place of learning, but as a gathering place for the wider community.

“The turnout and the ruach in the air showed us that this is the kind of gathering people are craving,” Morah Joyce added. “It was a morning of joy, connection, and belonging. And it’s only the beginning.”

CJA plans to continue building on the event’s success and looks forward to welcoming the community again soon. For those who would like to learn more about supporting the *Cheder Neshama* Fund, please reach out to Dana Silver at silverd@cja.ab.ca.

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# It’s “Chai Time” to revive Calgary Jewish Theatre

By Holly Shifrah

On a beautiful afternoon on June 29 at Temple B’nai Tikvah in Calgary, a large crowd gathered for a “Chai Tea” Fundraiser to benefit the recently established Chai Life Productions (CLP). The event decor was appropriately colourful in consideration of the first show CLP is producing: Andrew Lloyd Webber’s hit musical, *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*. CLP Co-Chairs Ari Cohen and Laura Shuler and Artistic Director Tracy Smith went above and beyond in hosting the fundraiser. In addition to tea sandwiches and desserts, they ensured the crowd enjoyed entertainment in the form of musical parodies of songs from both *Joseph* and *Fiddler on the Roof*; sharing the history of the Beth Israel Players (of which CLP serves as a form of revival or spiritual descendent); an explanation of CLP’s mission and visions for what this new Jewish theatre company hopes to provide for the

community in the future; and a well-organized breakdown of the company’s budget and revenue sources. The presentation was filled with infectious optimism and humour. It demonstrated that the trio heading this venture has their heads and hearts in exactly the right place to create something really special with the support of their community. As Co-Chair Laura Shuler said at the event, it “takes the entire Jewish community to make a theatre rise again.”

Members of the community who were present certainly answered that call, nearly doubling the donations received prior to the event and almost fulfilling the total fundraising goal. Anyone who missed out on the Chai Tea event who would still like to donate in support of this blossoming Jewish theatre company can do so through Temple B’nai Tikvah, who has adopted CLP as an arm of their adult education programming. Instructions on how to direct donations

are available at <https://www.chailifeeyc.ca/copy-of-get-involved>.

The company’s inaugural show is scheduled for November 29 through December 7. *Joseph and The Technicolor Dreamcoat*, with its Torah content, was chosen not only to meet the company’s goal, as Smith put it “to share Jewish cultural experiences” but also because the cast and content is structured well to provide opportunities for a wide variety of ages to both participate in the show itself, and enjoy it as an audience. One of the iconic components of the show is the “Dream Choir” comprised of children. CLP is looking for kids ages 8-14 to fill the choir. Auditions for both the children’s choir and adult roles take place in early August at the Paperny Family JCC. Character and ensemble auditions will be August 5, 6, and 7 from 5:30-8:30 pm. Children’s auditions will be August 9, 2-5 pm. And any necessary callbacks will take place August 10 from 1-5 pm. Further audition details are available on the CLP website: [chailifeeyc.ca/auditions](https://www.chailifeeyc.ca/auditions).

People of all ethnicities, genders, and levels of experience are encouraged to audition for the show, which makes this a wonderful opportunity for anyone who would like to experience the many benefits of participating in community theatre. In a 2022 article on [parents.com](https://www.parents.com) titled “9 Benefits of Introducing Your Child to Theater” the writer and executive editor for *Playbill Inc.*, Ruthie Fierberg, lists a host of research-backed benefits to participating in theatre including better academic performance, improved self-esteem, mental health benefits, and more.

Laura Shuler and Tracy Smith had previous connections via work they’ve done with the Jewish Historical Society as well as both acting in a recent Calgary production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. It was while participating in *Fiddler* that Smith asked Shuler (who’d been a part of the Beth Israel Players) “what do you think if we start a Jewish theatre again?” With Shuler’s encouragement Smith proceeded to recruit as many people from *Fiddler* as possible as well as bringing the idea to long-time family friend and fellow performer, Ari Cohen. And it’s exactly that kind of connecting and inspiring that CLP will make possible for even more people. Community theatre has a way of forging memories, building new skills, and forming connections in everyone it touches whether they participate on stage, backstage, or in the audience.

Chai Life Productions may be new on the scene, but if their Chai Tea Fundraiser serves as accurate foreshadowing, it’s well on its way to becoming a deeply impactful fixture of the Calgary Jewish Community, starting with their first show. Cohen explained the importance of enthusiastically beginning: “It’s one of those things where you jump in, you act, that’s the most important thing.” Referencing the plot and character growth in *Joseph*, he added that it was by making a start, beginning to act, that *Joseph* “begins his emancipatory journey and rises and ascends through the political echelon, to the point where he’s prime minister. And so it is quite poignant and coincidental that this is our first, because this is our first act. And hopefully we ascend, like *Joseph* did.”

Holly Shifrah is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

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Ari Cohen, Tracy Smith and Laura Shuler.



# Edmonton Chevra Kadisha commits to L'dor V'dor

By Sharon Marcus and Jeremy Appel

From Talmudic times to the present, Jewish communities worldwide have taken on the obligation and rituals of burying the dead.

In 1907, Edmonton's Chevra Kadisha (ECK), which translates to "Holy Society," was established by members of Beth Israel Synagogue to provide the rituals and obligations of burying the deceased of our community. ECK is a sacred society – not a secret society – and is particularly proud to be one of only a few Jewish burial societies in North America where volunteers still provide these sacred duties.

Edmonton Chevra Kadisha provides a vital communal service whereby dedicated volunteers, both men and women, carry out Tahara, the ritual care and preparation of the deceased. Society members also organize the memorial service and oversee the burial process. ECK strives to provide a dignified and respectful final tribute, ensuring every soul is treated with the utmost reverence and respect.

In 1907, Abraham Cristall, the first Jewish Edmontonian, purchased land on the southside of the North Saskatchewan River to serve as the city's Jewish cemetery. In the early 1930's a permanent chapel was built on site. In 1963 the Chesed Shel Emes, with its larger Chapel, Tahara room, Kohane room and offices, was built at 12313-105 Ave.

By the end of the 20th century, when the southside cemetery was projected to exceed its space of available plots, ECK members Shim Laskin and Shelby Smordin purchased 30 acres of land in the city's northwest. The new cemetery, which has a capacity of 800 plots, was consecrated in May 2023. Interments in the new cemetery began in early 2025.

As is the history with most organizations over 100 years old, the ECK leadership has evolved over the decades to welcome members of the entire Edmonton Jewish community, regardless of affiliation and Rabbinic conversion. In light of the present high rate of interfaith families in Edmonton and Canada, the Chevra Kadisha passed a motion at last year's AGM to establish a committee to conduct research into interfaith sections in Jewish cemeteries in Canada and determine whether that could work in Edmonton.

The committee did extensive research including holding four information sessions last fall, three in person and one online, before making its final recommendation to the Board and, ultimately, to ECK members at a special February meeting. A "motion in support of building an interfaith section passed overwhelmingly," according to incoming president Jeff Rubin. "We've got to move with the times," he added. "We needed to respond to the needs of our community," said incoming vice president Barry Goldberg. "We heard from many people that Jewish community members wanted to be buried next to their [non-Jewish] spouses."

As articulated by members of the Board, the Interfaith section of the new cemetery is a sign of the times, regardless of one's own individual beliefs.

It will be separated from the Jewish-only portion of the cemetery, allowing families with one non-Jewish spouse/partner to be laid to rest together. "There will be no non-Jewish symbols permitted in the interfaith section," said Jeff. The committee continues their work to establish policies and procedures specific to the Interfaith section.

The Interfaith section is estimated to cost \$400,000 to develop in full. A special fundraising campaign has begun for this initiative, to conclude before the start of the UJA campaign. Due to bird nesting season, work on the site to clear trees cannot begin until late fall, with an anticipated opening in 2026.

A new chapel will ultimately be needed for the north cemetery so that all funeral services can be held on-site. The Chevra Kadisha is currently putting efforts towards developing a building plan for a new chapel, amenities to include all those which currently exist at the Chesed Shel Emes.

One major misconception about ECK is that it has significant funds available now, such that it is not necessary to come to the community with a special fundraising campaign. With the Board's commitment to full transparency, it felt prudent to share its financial position with the entire community. Aside from \$330,000 in designated funds previously raised in 2022 for the new chapel, ECK holds two other

restricted funds: \$1.6M for perpetual care – monies set aside to ensure both cemetery sites are maintained and repaired, as needed; and \$1.5M in pre-paid reserved plots.

ECK is committed to their vision to be a compassionate and trusted resource for Jewish families. It endeavours to provide a dignified and respectful burial service that preserves and upholds the rich traditions of Jewish values and traditions not just to people of all denominations of Judaism but to all unaffiliated as well. ECK envisions that Edmonton will continue to be a place where the sacred rites of a Jewish burial are accessible, meaningful, and a source



The newly elected board of Edmonton Chevra Kadisha with office manager Lauren Baram. (Missing Sharon Hundert).

of healing and comfort.

For any questions, please reach out to Jeff Rubin at [president@edmontonchevrakadisha.ca](mailto:president@edmontonchevrakadisha.ca).

*Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

This summer, the many ways our community continues to show up—for each other, for our shared values, and for the future we are building together has deeply inspired me.

As we plan for the upcoming Israel Pavilion at Heritage Festival, we appreciate all the volunteers who ensure a welcoming event. The Israel Pavilion will be a vibrant celebration of culture, resilience, and pride. Thousands of visitors experience the richness of Israeli innovation, music, and cuisine—and more importantly, they are encountering a community that is proud, gracious, and unafraid to share its story.

But even as we celebrate, we remain acutely aware of the pain and uncertainty still experienced by our extended family in Israel. The ongoing captivity of hostages is a wound that remains open in our hearts. We continue to pray for their safe return, advocate for their freedom, and support

their families with unwavering solidarity. Their plight reminds us why showing up—in voice, in action, and in spirit—matters more than ever.

This summer, the Federation has been convening local leaders and partners to align around strategic pillars that will guide our work in the year ahead. Together, we are planning a powerful fall series of programs focused on strengthening Jewish identity, deepening connections across generations, and countering antisemitism with unity and resolve.

We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the volunteers who recently supported the JCC casino. The AGLC casinos are a critical source of funding for many of our community organizations. If you haven't yet volunteered at one, I encourage you to consider doing so—it's a worthwhile way to give back and ensure our institutions remain

strong and vibrant.

The Jewish Federation exists to serve as a convener, a catalyst, and a connector. We strive to build a community where all, regardless of age or time spent in Edmonton, feel valued and have a purpose.

As we look ahead to the High Holidays and the new year, I invite you to show up—in whatever way is meaningful to you. Attend an event. Volunteer. Reach out to a neighbour. Join a conversation. Your presence matters.

Together, we are stronger. Together, we are building a Jewish future rooted in pride, resilience, and hope. Follow us on social media, sign up for The Bridge and watch our community calendar to make sure you know about all events and programs.

Reach out to us on social media or by emailing [info@edjfed.org](mailto:info@edjfed.org).



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Jonny Daniels  
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Tuesday, October 21 | 7 p.m.



Bonny Reichert  
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The hard working, dedicated, and caring staff at the Talmud Torah Early Learning Centre in Edmonton.

# Our Early Learners are in good hands

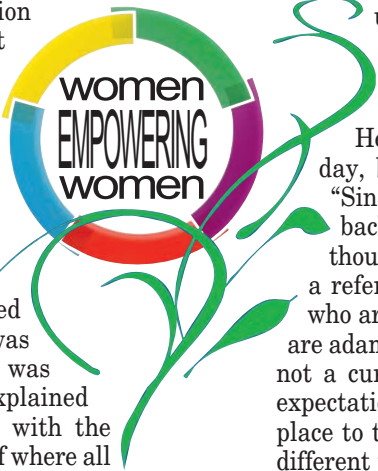
By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Talmud Torah’s Early Learning Centre (TTELC) is where so many little ones in the Edmonton Jewish community get their first start: playing together, socializing, discovering new things, and building bonds based on their shared heritage and identity. It is about community, and it is about the family that develops outside of the home too, according to Sacha Brodie the Director of the ELC. This feeling of ‘family’ is not just for the children who form lifelong friendships with their classmates, but for the staff who work side-by-side and watch them grow.

The last five years at TTELC have been a time of huge transformation and improvement. Program Coordinator Jennie Leonard joined the team 4.5 years ago and remembers starting out, as so many have, opening the front door and monitoring security. For the veteran childcare professional, this gave her time to observe and inventory what worked under the old system, and what would need to evolve. With 27 years of experience under her belt, many spent evaluating compliance with universal standards for health and safety, Leonard knew what needed to happen. “Definitely my vision coming into this was looking at improving and changing the Centre to meet today’s standards in childcare as well as the standards that I had in place and what I would have liked to see.”

When Brodie assumed the helm three years ago, she found that her vision aligned with the direction Leonard was already steering the ship. “I was impressed by the team,” explained Brodie in a recent interview with the *AJNews* held in the epicentre of where all the magic happens. “When I first came in for my interview and looked around, I immediately had a lot of respect for the women in the rooms. Don’t get me wrong, there will always be moments of chaos when working with little kids, but these ladies all had things under control. The children were on task and engaged, and activities were running smoothly.” This was exactly the kind of group of dedicated early childhood educators Brodie could work with. “I decided this place would be like my own baby,” she said with a smile.

She began by turning to the staff and listening to them: “They’re the ones in the rooms after all, so whenever I approach something like updating a space, I want to hear from the people who are using it every day.” This value that is placed on the observations and feedback provided by staff may be a huge factor in why TTELC is such a positive environment. “We go one room at a time. We clear out what has just accumulated over time and evaluate what is there, piece-by-piece. We look at: do we have enough toys, do we have enough materials, and does everybody have everything they need for their day-to-day purposes. Down to the furniture itself, everything is looked at through a seasoned educator’s gaze. “We have to make determinations like whether the chairs and tables are



the appropriate height for that age group of kids.”

Both Brodie and Leonard were focused on the smaller details but never lost sight of the big picture. “I was always told that this was a bilingual centre but I never saw any bilingualism happening. There would be the occasional bulletin board with Hebrew, or the occasional song that was listened to in Hebrew, but I felt like there was more that needed to happen. It was a challenge and a learning experience, that’s for sure,” explained Leonard with sincerity. Neither Brodie nor Leonard are Hebrew-speakers, or even Jewish for that matter. “We both knew that we needed to be doing a better job fostering a bilingual environment,” added Brodie. “I did some research and found another centre in town that is also bilingual, and we went on a field trip and observed over there,” Leonard elaborated. “I also found studies from European bilingual early learning programs to see what is working for them. These studies identified that bilingualism was much more productive when a dedicated person would primarily communicate with the children in the second language.” Brodie explained that they began by targeting Hebrew language acquisition by designating one hour a day with older ELC groups for activities and instruction. She added: “But it isn’t enough to do this just for the older kids. We agreed that it needed to be universal throughout the ELC.”

Brodie and Leonard, a productive team to be sure, set up a system where each classroom would have a dedicated Hebrew-speaker: not just for one hour a day, but for language exposure throughout. “Since neither of us come from Jewish backgrounds,” explained Leonard, “we thought it would be really helpful to compile a reference with resources for our educators who aren’t Jewish.” Both Leonard and Brodie are adamant that this compilation of material is not a curriculum, as this term would connote expectations that must be met. “It is more like a place to turn to for ideas and material related to different topics and holidays to better support our staff as they provide for the kids,” concluded Leonard. This resource began as an undertaking pioneered by Brodie and Leonard, but soon the Education Committee at the ELC recognized the value in the endeavor and provided added support. Now educators have a resource for explanations, best practices, and even successful activity ideas. For any questions about religious observance, kashrut, or just making sure that things are done properly, Brodie and Leonard know that they can always turn to Rabbi Guy Tal at Beth Israel Synagogue. “Yes, whenever we bring in new foods or ingredients for things we always check them with Rabbi Tal.”

Brodie credits her team with the success of the ELC. “I remember when I first started out in early childhood education, and I had a director who almost never came into the rooms. I was doing everything by-the-book and went above and beyond. Because of this she knew she didn’t need to check up on me,” recalled Brodie. “I told myself that when I would become a director, I would always take the time to make sure that my team felt appreciated.” Perhaps this is why they can retain staff. “We haven’t needed to hire anybody new in over a year,” Leonard continued.

If the staff want to be there, then they will have more love and energy to give to the children. “When I go home, I always say that I have a hundred and one kids,” joked Leonard. “When they’re here with us, these little ones are our kids.” In an industry predominantly supported by women, it is no wonder that the female spirit of nurturing is at the core of how the pedagogy is approached, and how the management is maintained. Whether it be ordering Hebrew-language classroom materials and engaging visual objects to enhance learning or getting ready for the next holiday well in advance of art projects, Sacha Brodie is on the job. She knows that programming is in capable hands with Jennie Leonard, and the dynamic duo have unwavering trust in their team. The early Jewish learners of Edmonton are in skilled and caring hands.





# BRAIN HEALTH

## and Tikkun Olam

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

“Good nutrition was always a part of our family-life growing up,” Dr. Bonnie Kaplan explained to *Alberta Jewish News* in a recent phone interview. Kaplan cites Jewish values as the foundation for her upbringing in Ohio. “We were not rich, but the priorities were health, family, and education. There would be nutritious meals on the table, dinners were family sit-down dinners, and there was always money for education,” she continued. Even if Kaplan had not been conscious as a youngster of these early lessons about health and happiness, she can now look back and appreciate the influence of formative lessons in childhood.

The focus on education propelled Kaplan to some of the most prestigious academic venues in the United States, and having graduated from the University of Chicago, and Brandeis University, this PhD continued to make her mark on the Ivy League by completing postdoctoral work at Yale University’s School of Medicine. It was during her time at Brandeis that Kaplan first began investigating the link between diet



Bonnie Kaplan

and brain health, publishing her first article in 1972, which focused on malnutrition and IQ. The interest in that article was so strong that she became determined to study nutrition and brain health in the future. After her postdoc in neuroscience, she remained on the research faculty at Yale for a couple of years, where she became aware of some colleagues in the Department of Neurology who were investigating the ketogenic diet for control of epilepsy, which further cemented her interest in the relationship between dietary intake and brain function. Despite her American upbringing, Kaplan has always been connected to Canada, as her mother was originally from Montreal. By the time this research psychologist relocated to Calgary in 1979, she had already set out on a path to be a trail-blazer in mental health studies.

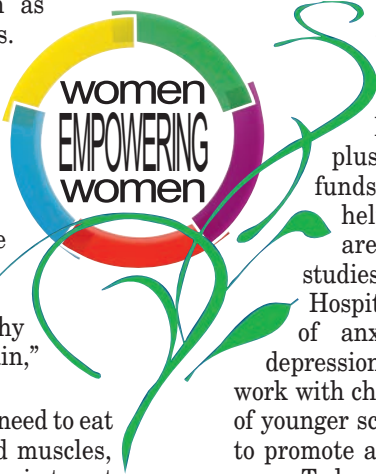
Kaplan is now technically retired from the University of Calgary, but she could not be busier. As Professor Emerita she still has her finger on the pulse of current research and spends her time advocating for better education about nutrition as early as the primary school years. She thinks that even young children would make better food choices if they understood what nutrients actually do when they reach their brains. “I spent my career in hospitals. Some of my students became physicians, some finished their PhDs and became academics or clinicians, but they all learned how important a healthy diet is for nurturing a healthy brain,” she emphasized.

“Parents tell their kids that they need to eat properly to grow strong bones and muscles, but what we should be telling them is to eat good food for the organ that requires the most nutrients – their brains.” Kaplan provided the following example: “Most people know that our brains depend on neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, so ask your friends what foods contain serotonin and dopamine. It’s a trick question, because the answer is that there aren’t any! We need to consume foods that contain lots of vitamins and minerals, which our clever little brains are able to utilize to synthesize the neurotransmitters.” Mental

health is a primary topic of discussion when trying to address many societal problems. In 2017, Kaplan was honoured as one of the 150 Difference Makers in Canadian Mental Health.

Parents may need to prod their little ones to finish their vegetables, but Kaplan encourages them to be informed that it is not just a matter of vitamin-rich foods, but also mineral intake that builds healthy brains. This is what she and her colleague Julia Rucklidge explore in their book *The Better Brain*, published by Harper Collins: how can our dietary intake improve the health of our brains? The research published by Kaplan and her colleagues shows that this is key to improving mental health. Her website notes that this research is a “paradigm-shifting approach to treating mental disorders like anxiety, depression, and ADHD with food and nutrients.” In 2021, amidst the chaos of COVID that saw a profound decline in the mental health of so many, Kaplan was recognized as one of the Top 7 Over 70 by the City of Calgary, and she has used the momentum of this honour to continue to promote awareness and education throughout her community and beyond.

For those who have never heard the term ‘micronutrient,’ Kaplan’s website (BonnieJKaplan.com) should be their next internet browsing destination. It provides videos and other resources, plus information about the two charitable funds she oversees. Donations there are helping up-and-coming researchers in the area of nutrition-based mental health studies. After 37 years at the Alberta Children’s Hospital in Calgary, Kaplan has seen her share of anxiety, mood-dysregulation, and even depression in kids. She is hopeful that through her work with charitable funds that support the research of younger scholars in the discipline, she will be able to promote a legacy that will benefit generations to come. To learn more about building a healthier future Kaplan’s website (BonnieJKaplan.com) is packed with information and explanatory videos. For Kaplan, the discoveries she has made about the link between proper nutrition and mental health, and her ongoing efforts to inspire and empower junior scholars has been, and remains, a passionate endeavor of *Tikkun Olam*. She would like to do her part to create an optimistic future for today’s kids to ensure a brighter tomorrow.



## Bonnie J. Kaplan, PhD: The Better Brain Wednesday July 30th, 2025

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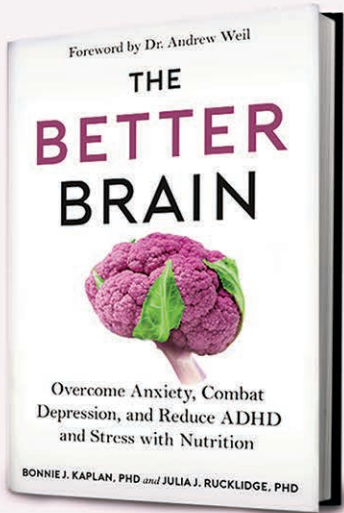
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suggests simple, practical  
steps that all of us  
can take to optimize  
brain health.”

FROM THE FOREWORD BY  
ANDREW WEIL, MD, NEW YORK TIMES  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR







# Dr. Régine Mydlarski:

*A life filled with Service*

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

“I consider it a true privilege to care for patients with complex skin diseases, advance research in skin cancer, and train the next generation of dermatologists,” expressed Dr. Régine Mydlarski, Associate Professor, Section Chief, and Academic Head of dermatology at the University of Calgary’s Cumming School of Medicine. Becoming a doctor is a dream for so many young girls and women – a dream that demands perseverance and dedication to become a reality. That is not where the challenges end though, and it is hardly as glamorous as TV shows and movies might suggest. The responsibilities and pressures of being a physician are immense and can be overwhelming. Total strangers put trust and faith in doctors with the most valuable things they have: their health, and the health of their loved ones. Then, to become a leader in this already competitive elite field is an even more monumental achievement. “Everything I’ve built – at work, at home, and in my heart – comes from knowing where I come from and who I come home to.”

“When people ask who I am, I say I’m the daughter of a courageous Holocaust survivor, the wife of a resilient political refugee, the mother of two incredible boys, and a physician determined to make a difference,” shared Dr. Mydlarski. As a second-generation survivor, the preservation of human life and dignity during care is something that resonates with the accomplished clinician and academic. To be raised by a Holocaust survivor almost endows a person’s nature with a unique kind of courage and resilience.

Dr. Mydlarski is Calgary-born, to, as she puts it: “extraordinary parents, Henri and Donna.” Her father, following immigration, built his own impressive career at the U of C as a professor of French literature. “My father – one of Calgary’s few remaining Holocaust

survivors – left France after the war in search of the ‘all-Canadian dream’. As a child, he witnessed the horrors of Nazi occupation and endured unimaginable trauma, yet he never let those years define him.” The value of education and trailblazing was also modeled for Dr. Mydlarski by her mother who is a Professor Emerita at the University of Calgary, an expert in computer-assisted language learning, and a pioneer in her field.

Dr. Mydlarski was a pioneer in her own right, graduating from medical school at the astoundingly young age of only 22. “It’s no surprise that my older brother, Laurent, and I followed in our parents’ footsteps. [...] I was beyond blessed to grow up in a home filled with love, tradition, and purpose. Though we weren’t religious in a formal sense, we were proudly Jewish in culture and values. The principles of family, education, hard work, and resilience were deeply ingrained in us. Lively family dinners shaped my childhood; my father always said, ‘A family that eats together stays together’ – and our walls were lined with books.” With a daughter improving the quality of life for so many patients, and a son who built a professorial career in engineering at McGill University, the Mydlarski family breathed light and life into a new Jewish generation.

“When people ask why I chose dermatology, I often credit my mentor, Dr. Marvin Fritzler, who underscored the need for medical dermatologists. My brother likes to joke that I chose it because it was the most competitive specialty.” Regardless of why Dr. Mydlarski first chose dermatology as her specialty, her selection has benefitted the Canadian medical community, her students, and decades of thankful patients. During her residency at the University of Toronto, she immersed herself in everything there is to know about the human body’s largest organ, and how best to treat its ailments. “After completing my residency, I undertook a four-year postdoctoral fellowship immunodermatology and medical genetics, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.” Ambitious and determined to innovate the field of dermatology, Dr. Mydlarski needed to ascertain how best to affect this change. “Though I was on a promising academic trajectory in Toronto, I soon found myself at a crossroads: stay and continue to advance in a thriving educational environment or return home to Calgary – a city with no established academic dermatology program [...] In the end, family brought me home.”

Dr. Mydlarski has never been one to shy away from challenge. Perhaps Calgary did not have an academic dermatology presence at the time – but why not? “During interviews, I met several supportive colleagues – but also a powerful group who told me, quite bluntly, that there was no room for me in Calgary. What they didn’t realize was that their doubt only strengthened my resolve.” She was adamant that U of C needed an academic dermatology stream to better train its medical students. “In 2004, I joined the University of Calgary as its first academic dermatologist. Within five years, I established the University’s Dermatology Residency Program – now one of the largest and most sought-after programs in Canada.”

The forward-gazing vision and determination Dr. Mydlarski embodied in establishing this competitive

program exemplifies the courage that her parents instilled in her. “In 2018, I was appointed Section Chief and Academic Head of Dermatology for Alberta Health Services (Calgary Zone) and the University of Calgary. Soon after, I became Chair of Dermatology for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, where I led the national implementation of Competence by Design (a medical education system) and conducted a comprehensive review of the specialty.”

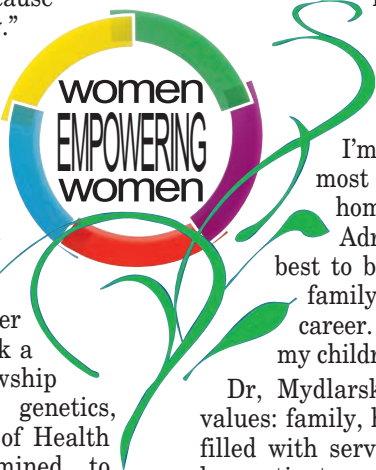
For this work, she was honoured to receive the Canadian Dermatology Association’s Award of Merit. Accolades aside, Dr. Mydlarski feels humbled by the ability to do so much good for those around her, whether it be her colleagues, students, or patients. “Mentors in our community, like Gordon Hoffman and Alvin Libin, have shown me the power of generosity and service. I’ve tried to lead by example, grounding my work in giving back – with compassion, respect, fairness, and integrity.”

Yes, she has built the kind of ‘Girl Boss’ career that should remind all women that the glass ceiling need not hold them back, but Dr. Mydlarski has achieved all this while building a happy Jewish home, full of *Sholom Bayit* and love. “My time in Toronto shaped more than just my academic path – it’s also where I met my husband, Stefan Mustata, a political refugee from Romania whose resilience and determination helped him become a respected nephrologist in Canada.”

Together, they have raised two wonderful sons and pass along their courage and values of social responsibility to another generation. “While I’m deeply committed to my work, my most meaningful role will always be at home. As the proud mother of Aaron and Adrian – my *raison d’être* – I’ve done my best to balance the joy and responsibility of family life with the demands of a fulfilling career. I made a conscious decision early on: my children would always come first.”

Dr. Mydlarski models the very best of Jewish values: family, health, and education. With a career filled with service to her colleagues, her students, her patients, and the larger community, she takes the greatest satisfaction from being able to nurture her family. “I hope my boys think of their mom as someone who leads with love, shows up with unwavering commitment, and is always there for them – whether for a doctor’s appointment, a tennis match, or a late-night conversation when they need me most. I hope they draw strength from our entire family – from their grandparents, and perhaps even from me and their father, too. More than anything, I hope we’ve passed on more than words: the strength to lead with kindness, the courage to do what’s right, the discipline to work hard, and the faith to keep going, even when the path is uncertain.”

Her family, the one that raised her, and the one she built, are the greatest inspiration that Dr. Mydlarski has as she continues to trailblaze innovations in research while helping to train an exceptional batch of up-and-coming Canadian dermatologists. Her accomplishments are considerable, but she attributes all the good she does, her efforts for Tikkun Olam, to a firm grounding in a heritage she holds dear and embraces with pride.



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# MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

The Jewish community of Edmonton was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Gillian Robinson Horwitz on Friday June 20. She was a vibrant leader and a shining star in our community for over 40 years.

Gillian ז"ל served as president of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton from 2009 to 2011. She chaired the Edmonton Holocaust Education Committee under the umbrella of Federation from 1990 to 2000 and continued as member through to 2025. She was a board member and president of Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta, from 2019 to 2022.

A dedicated volunteer, she spent her life serving both the Jewish and wider communities.

Gillian was born in Capetown, South Africa, and moved to Edmonton in 1979 with her husband Billy and two young children Brian and Terry, ז"ל.

Gillian was a kindergarten teacher at Talmud Torah School, before she and Cory Felber became hosts of a local Jewish television radio programs during the 1980s. Cory did the TV portion, *On Being Jewish*, while Gillian did the *Jewish Hour* radio portion on CKER. The show aired from 1981 to 1991.

Gillian was a powerful advocate for Holocaust education. She participated in a project called *Testimony to the Holocaust*, a result of a provincial government grant which documented the experience of Holocaust survivors.

She spearheaded the creation of the annual Grade 12 Holocaust Education Symposium and oversaw the committee responsible for erecting the Holocaust memorial at the Alberta Legislature in honour of survivors. In addition to her work as a producer on the documentary *Black Snow* about Edmonton's Holocaust survivors, Gillian helped establish the annual Toby and Saul Reichert Holocaust lecture at the University of Alberta and interviewed survivors for Stephen Spielberg's Shoah Foundation. The Federation's annual Yom HaShoah and Kristallnacht ceremonies were hosted by her for many years.

In the broader community, Gillian and Elexis

Schloss ז"ל were volunteer puppeteers, bringing their program, Kids on the Block, to over 100 Edmonton schools. This was a Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital program that used life-sized puppets to teach Grades 3 and 4 about people living with disabilities.

The City of Edmonton Citation Award was given to Gillian in 2014 for her contributions to the community. This award recognized individuals and groups for their significant contributions and inspiring leadership within the community. She volunteered extensively in many community roles, including as President, Edmonton Hadassah-WIZO from 1990-1992, and as National vice-president, Canadian Hadassah-WIZO, from 1992-1998.

In addition to the leadership roles at the helm of Jewish Federation of Edmonton, she served as a board member of Alberta Multilingual Society, Pilgrims Hospice Society, Jewish Seniors Citizens' Centre, Jewish National Fund, Beth Shalom Synagogue, and Jewish Family Services of Edmonton.

Gillian and Billy's son, Brian Horwitz and his ex-wife, Orith, live on Vancouver Island and have a son named Troy, who recently celebrated his bar mitzvah at Beth Shalom in Edmonton. Their daughter, Terry, of blessed memory, tragically succumbed to breast cancer at age 38 in 2008. To honour Terry, in 2008 and 2009, Gillian and Billy formed the 180-member Team Terry Horwitz for the Run for the Cure, raising \$20,000 for breast cancer research.

A Grant MacEwan graduate in early childhood education, Terry is remembered with an annual scholarship established by Gillian and Billy through Edmonton Hadassah-WIZO.

There is also a healing garden in her name at Assaf Harofeh Medical Centre in Israel.

Gillian battled cancer with strength, resilience, gratitude and positivity. She was supported and loved by her family and a wonderful group of close friends. She loved life, family and community. Her deepest wish was to impart her love of Judaism, Yiddishkeit and community to the next generation – particularly her son Brian and grandson Troy. Gillian passed away surrounded by loved ones on Friday June 20. She had



Gillian Horwitz, OBM

meticulously planned Troy's bar mitzvah in Edmonton; it was held on June 21. Brian said they had considered postponing the bar mitzvah when they realized how ill she was. However, Gillian's wish was for the bar mitzvah to go exactly as planned. It was a wonderful simcha – exactly as she wanted – as she planned. Friends and family had gathered including many who came from great distances to celebrate. Although she wasn't at the bar mitzvah she had the opportunity to kvell in advance at the accomplishments of her son and grandson who worked together to learn the haftorah and the service. And the lights did flicker three times during the service which some viewed as a blessing from the beyond. Gillian's funeral was the following day and a great number of people attended to pay their respects and say goodbye. Gillian was the star. She died as she lived, surrounded by community members and loved ones who gathered to pay tribute to an exceptional matriarch.

On behalf of the Jewish Community of Edmonton we extend heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Gillian Horwitz. May her memory be a blessing.



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A STAMPEDE TO REMEMBER: JULY HIGHLIGHTS FROM CALGARY JEWISH FEDERATION

July has been nothing short of exhilarating at Calgary Jewish Federation ! This year's **Spuds and Suds** Stampede celebration was a true western success, setting a new record for attendance and bringing together community members, allies, and leaders for a morning of connection, celebration, and delicious food. The boot-stompin' fun was made even more meaningful thanks to the vital partnership of CIJA, CJPAC, Jewish Federation of Edmonton and Allies for a Strong Canada.

We extend heartfelt thanks to the **hundreds of Canadians**, including elected officials from across party lines, dignitaries, and community members, who joined us to celebrate this unique and vibrant part of Alberta's culture. The event showcased the strength and unity of our community in the broader Canadian

landscape. With cowboy hats tipped and spirits high, we can't wait to saddle up and do it all again next year.

We were also proud to announce, thanks to the **generous support of Al Osten**, that **CIJA will be opening its first-ever Alberta office**. This new presence will work closely with Calgary Jewish Federation to enhance government relations and bolster our shared efforts in representing the Jewish community and combating antisemitism throughout the province.

Capping off a momentous month, we are beyond proud to share that our Board President, **Lisa Libin**, has been awarded the **King Charles III Coronation Medal**. Nominated by MP Michelle Rempel Garner, Lisa was honoured in a special ceremony this

month for her exceptional leadership during an era of profound challenge. Her integrity, strength, and unwavering commitment to our community have left a lasting impact. On behalf of the board and staff of Calgary Jewish Federation, we extend a heartfelt **Kol Hakavod and Yasher Koach** to Lisa for this prestigious and well-deserved recognition.

July was a celebration of resilience, unity, and pride in who we are. Here's to the power of community—stronger together, always.

*B'Shalom,*

Rob Nagus, Chief Executive Officer  
Calgary Jewish Federation

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

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This weekend will bring students together for meaningful connection, Jewish learning, and celebration.  
Open to Jewish students 25 and under.

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PRIDE SHABBAT

From Margins to Mitzvahs  
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Friday, August 22  
7:30PM Temple B'nai Tikvah

Celebrate Pride with a keynote address by **Hannah B** followed by a Shabbat service led by **Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne** with members of Calgary's 2SLGBTQ+ Jewish community, and a dessert reception to close the night.

INFO & REGISTER at QR code or go to [jewishcalgary.org](http://jewishcalgary.org)  
QUESTIONS? Contact **Jamie** at [jkeltz@jewishcalgary.org](mailto:jkeltz@jewishcalgary.org)

JEWISH ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

Families and friends were treated to an unforgettable visit with **Cobb's Exotic Rescue** this month ! We had the joy of meeting four bouncing baby wallabies and the tiniest, most adorable sugar gliders—small enough to fit in your pocket and big enough to steal your heart! It was a magical day full of wonder, cuddles, and endless smiles.

Jewish Calgary Together  
The strength of a people. The power of community.

Subscribe to our e-newsletter and stay current with all of the latest community updates, resources, events, and programs.

Scan the QR codes to see more photos for **Kesher** and **PJ Library**!

**Popsicles in the Park** was a huge success! Families came out to enjoy a morning packed with fun-filled activities. Our annual event featured bouncy castles, a petting zoo, pony rides, face painting, and of course, popsicles! Several community organizations were also on hand to share about their work through engaging and creative activities. Thank you to everyone who joined us for this wonderful kickoff to summer!



Calgary Jewish Federation is pleased to recognize our **2025 Shem Tov Award** recipients. Each year, community organizations are invited to recognize someone who has made a positive impact within their organization and for Jewish Calgary as a whole. Thank you to everyone who joined us at our AGM on June 18 to celebrate the outstanding individuals who go above and beyond in service to our community. *Yasher koach* to all of this year's honourees!



- BB Lodge 816 and Menorah Foundation – **Howard Silver**  
BBYO – **Mickey Khan**  
Beth Tzedec Congregation – **Bob Shiell** and **Cheryl Baron**  
Camp BB Riback – **Cory Krygier**  
Canadian Hadassah-WIZO – **Mel Ksienski**  
Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta – **Dr. Avygdor Moise**  
Halpern Akiva Academy – **Malka-Deena Lewis**  
Hillel – **Liz Pereplyotchik**  
Holocaust and Human Rights – **Lindsay Anderson**  
House of Jacob Mikveh Israel – **Braden Martin**  
Inclusion – **Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapides**  
JCC Maccabi – **Aviva Horwitz**

Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary – **Eytan Donsky** and **Richard Nagan**  
Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta – **Sheila Gurevitch**

Jewish National Fund – **Karen Belzberg**  
JFSC – **Will Katz**

Kehilat Shalom – **Eugene Shabash**  
Na'amat Canada Calgary – **Maxine Fischbein**  
Paperny Family JCC Arts & Culture – **Irene Ohly**  
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# Celebrating Barbara Walters

By Lior Zaltzman

(Kveller) - “Barbara sometimes asked questions that revealed a lot about herself,” Katie Couric says in “Barbara Walters: Tell Me Everything.”

The new documentary, now streaming on Hulu, features many of the late broadcaster’s iconic interviews, from Lucille Ball and Judy Garland to Gloria Steinem, that ultimately reveal so much about Walters herself, a trailblazing woman who started her career working on women’s interest stories and climbing up to become the first female co-host of the “Today” show and the first female co-anchor of ABC News. She made history with her interviews of world leaders and celebrities alike, paving the way for generations of women news anchors. Later in life, she still managed to revolutionize TV with “The View,” a show she created in 1997 that still makes headlines.

The documentary, directed by Jackie Jesko, is worth watching to take in just how much Walters, who died in 2022 at the age of 93, accomplished throughout her life and storied career. And while it doesn’t mention that Walters came from a Jewish family, Jewish viewers will likely sense the undercurrent of how that aspect of her identity often left her feeling othered despite her success.

This feels especially clear watching the news maven interview fellow Jewish woman Bette Midler, who effusively compliments Walters on her beauty.

“She was very beautiful, except that I would say that she didn’t feel beautiful. With her upbringing, she didn’t feel like she belonged,” Midler, who considered herself a friend of Walters’, says in the documentary. It’s clear, at least to this Jewish viewer, that Walters did not think of herself as attractive because of her classic Ashkenazi features, and how those differed from the beauty standards of the time. Couric, too, whose mother was Jewish, was once told by Walters that she saw in her a kindred spirit because they both were not beautiful. On the flip side, her biggest rival, the blonde, blue-eyed Diane Sawyer, held that ideal of beauty that eluded her.

It feels silly to belabor looks when talking about a

history-making woman such as Barbara Walters. Couric herself says that she took from that statement the fact that nobody tuned in to their shows for their looks.

The film paints a bittersweet picture of Walters’ personal life. She was a woman who sacrificed family and love for work — or maybe not exactly sacrificed, but was simply made for the latter and not the former. She would never prioritize her personal life over an interview “get.”

She is seen as shaped by her childhood with a disabled sister and a fiscally irresponsible father that forced her to be the family breadwinner. Her Jewish father, Lou Walters, looms large. The owner of nightclubs known for some unscrupulous business practices, Walters first rubbed elbows with the rich and famous — like Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Sophie Tucker and Milton Berle — at her father’s clubs, where she learned to never idolize them.

Ultimately, what made her such a success was her chutzpah. “I didn’t just nag, I nudged,” Walters said about getting the likes of Taylor Swift, Michael Jackson and Muammar Khaddafi to talk to her. The first interview that cemented her status as one of the nation’s most powerful newsmakers was a 1977 interview with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. It proved to everyone, even to the skeptical king of news, Walter Cronkite, that she had the chops — and yes, the chutzpah — that nobody had.

At no point does the documentary paint a more sympathetic picture of Walters than when it goes in depth about her historic interview with Monica Lewinsky in 1999, one that made both American and ratings history. Lewinsky talks about the lengths that Walters went through to prep her for their interview, building rapport with Lewinsky’s father, sharing

### Lisa Libin honoured



**Calgary Jewish Federation is thrilled to share that Board President, Lisa Libin, received the King Charles III Coronation Medal. This prestigious recognition celebrates her exceptional leadership of the Calgary Jewish community through unprecedented times, marked by dignity, strength, and efficiency.**

**Lisa was nominated by MP Michelle Rempel Garner, and a small ceremony took place on July 10.**

**In a facebook post CJF stated: "Please join us in offering Kol Hakavod and Yasher Koach to Lisa for this well-deserved honour. It is a meaningful recognition for Lisa and her family, Calgary Jewish Federation, and our community."**



acerbic jokes, encouraging her when she was feeling insecure. Lewinsky, all these decades later, tells the camera that no matter how tough the interview was, at the end of the day, she felt seen by Walters.

“Hers was one of the biggest lives that had been lived until that time,” Bette Midler says in the documentary. It is quite incredible to dive into that big, paradigm-changing life in this worthwhile film.

At the Calgary Police Service, we believe that strong, inclusive leadership is essential to building safe and thriving communities.

We are proud to stand with the Alberta Jewish News in recognizing the remarkable contributions of women in leadership who are shaping our province and inspiring the next generation.

To the women who lead with strength, integrity, and heart, thank you.





# Sunken Plum Cake recipe

By Sonya Sanford

(The Noshers via JTA) – For as long as I’ve been cooking I’ve made honey cake for Rosh Hashanah. I do this just as my mother did, and my grandmother did, and likely my great-grandmother before her. I love my family’s recipe, and I have even made tweaks to it over the years.

But the truth is, I like honey cake more for tradition’s sake than for its flavor. Last year it finally occurred to me that I don’t have to make honey cake for Rosh Hashanah.

What did I actually want to eat and serve on Rosh Hashanah?

I love sunken apple cake, but there are always so many apples eaten over the High Holidays that I wanted to make something featuring another fruit. I had just picked up a beautiful bag of plums from the market, and they called out to me. Why not make a sunken plum cake?

The flavor of plum goes so well with honey. Like an apple, the plum’s tartness cuts through and complements honey’s sweetness. Their bold colors always add beauty to any baked good, and I love that plums are highly seasonal. They’re only at their best for a short window of time each year, which typically coincides with the Jewish New Year. For me, using plums at their peak is always celebratory.

This is a simple cake to make with lots of flavor. I add ginger to the batter for its warmth and zing, and cardamom for its subtle and welcome citrusy spiciness. The ginger and cardamom’s perfuminess and oh-so-subtle heat also serve to exentuate the fruitiness in the plums. You can use any plum or pluot for this cake, but I like ones that are slightly firm and ripe, and not too

small. This recipe can be made pareve by using vegan butter, and the flour can be swapped for a gluten-free all purpose mix.

Like any good holiday recipe, sunken plum cake tastes even better made a day in advance. At dinner, I love to serve the cake topped with whipped cream or ice cream, but this also makes a delicious indulgent breakfast treat on the holiday.

**Ingredients:**

½ cup (1 stick) vegan butter or unsalted butter, at room temperature, ½ cup sugar, ¼ cup honey, 2 large eggs, at room temperature, 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract, ½ teaspoon freshly grated ginger, 1¼ cup all purpose flour or gluten free all purpose flour, 1½ teaspoons baking powder, ½ teaspoon ground cardamom, ¼ teaspoon salt if using unsalted butter, pinch of salt if using vegan butter, 4-5 plums, halved, pitted and sliced ¼-inch thick, Turbinado/raw sugar, for sprinkling on top ¼ cup honey for the glaze (optional)

**Directions:**

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

Grease and line a 9-inch springform pan with parchment paper, or you can also make this in a 9-by-9-inch baking dish.

Cream together vegan butter/butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3-4 minutes, using either a handheld mixer or stand mixer with the paddle attachment.

Add the honey to the sugar mixture and mix until well incorporated.

Add the eggs, vanilla and freshly grated ginger, and mix until they are also well incorporated.



Sift together the flour, baking powder, salt and cardamom. Slowly add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, and mix until just incorporated. Be careful not to over-mix.

Pour the batter into the lined and greased cake pan. Add the sliced plums on top of the cake; they will sink as they bake. Top the cake with a generous sprinkling of Turbinado/raw sugar, or regular sugar if you don’t have raw sugar.

Bake 35-40 minutes, or until a cake tester comes out clean when tested in the center of the cake.

If desired, you can brush honey on top of the cake once it has cooled: Heat ¼ cup of honey until just warm, and then brush it over the cake.

Serve topped with whipped cream or ice cream. Can be made a day in advance. Serves 8-10.

*Sonya Sanford is a chef, food stylist and writer based out of Los Angeles.*

*The Noshers food blog offers a dazzling array of new and classic Jewish recipes and food news, from Europe to Yemen, from challah to shakshuka and beyond. Check it out at [www.TheNoshers.com](http://www.TheNoshers.com).*

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## Open Letter to the Jewish Community: I’m proud to support Jeromy Farkas for Mayor

I first met Jeromy Farkas through our work with the Weaselhead Preservation Society ten years ago. From day one, he impressed me as someone who shows up, listens carefully, **and acts with integrity.**

For four years, Jeromy served as our City Councillor. He didn’t just sit behind a desk. He kept his promise to decline the golden pension, which speaks volumes about his **honesty and character.** Jeromy hosted regular town halls, answered every phone call, and made himself available in a way that’s become all too rare in politics.

When the Southwest BRT project was brought forward, Jeromy stood with our community to ask for **transparency and accountability.** He gave voice to residents who felt ignored, and he worked with us, not above us, to make sure we were heard.

He has consistently worked to protect Calgary’s natural spaces, opposing the sale of public parkland and advocating for **smart, balanced development policies** that reflect what residents actually want.

As a proud member of Calgary’s Jewish community, I’ve also seen Jeromy’s **commitment** firsthand. He spent eight years as the program administrator for the University of Calgary Israel Studies Program and has been a **constant ally in the fight against antisemitism.**

Jeromy’s attended countless community events over the years, but one moment stands out. During “that” menorah lighting downtown when tensions were high and many so-called friends stayed away, Jeromy was there. None of the other mayoral candidates showed up—but Jeromy did. **That means something.**

At a time when Calgarians are looking for **leadership that listens, respects, and delivers, Jeromy is the real deal.** He doesn’t just talk about building a better city. He puts in the work to do it.

City Hall needs an overhaul! That’s why I’m proud to support Jeromy Farkas for Calgary mayor.

Paul Finkleman  
Calgary, AB

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L to R: Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion, Carol Ryder, Joel Reitman - President of the Jerusalem Foundation Canada, Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek, Arik Grebelsky – President of Jerusalem Foundation, and Dina Wachtel – VP Community Affairs CFHU.

# Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion visits Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto

By Pat Johnson, for the Jewish Independent

Against the backdrop of regional and global challenges, Mayor Moshe Lion of Jerusalem brought a message of resilience, innovation and unity to Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto this month during a series of community events co-hosted by the Jerusalem Foundation and Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University. (The Vancouver event was held on June 9, preceded by an event in Toronto and followed by an event in Calgary on June 11.)

Now in his second term as mayor of Jerusalem, Lion spoke about his vision for one of the world’s most complex and sacred cities. His priorities, he said, include improving the quality of life for all residents, expanding affordable housing, creating economic opportunities, and reinforcing Jerusalem’s role as a city that belongs not just to its citizens but to all people of faith and conscience.

“Jerusalem is not just a city for Jerusalemites,” the mayor told an audience at Vancouver’s Beth Israel Congregation. “It is the capital of the Jewish people. It belongs to every Jew in the world – and it welcomes people of all backgrounds.”

With nearly one million residents – one-third secular and religious Jews, one-third ultra-Orthodox, and one-third Muslim – Jerusalem is not an easy place to govern, Lion acknowledged.

“Every day is different. Every day brings new challenges,” he said. “But I wake up every morning and say thank you to God for the privilege of being the mayor of Jerusalem.”

A certified public accountant and former chair of Israel Railways and the Jerusalem Development Authority, Lion acknowledges the differences among his population but said he strives to represent all.

“I am the mayor of everyone,” he emphasized. “I don’t agree with everyone, but I must care for them.”

said. “With the Jerusalem Foundation, we are creating a city where young couples, young families, dreamers and builders can thrive.”

The mayor’s visit to Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, founded by such visionaries as Albert Einstein, Martin Buber and Sigmund Freud. Today, its three campuses serve more than 24,000 students from diverse backgrounds – Jewish, Arab, Druze, Christian, religious, secular, immi-grant and local – studying side-by-side, noted Dina Wachtel, vice-president, community affairs, Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University, who emceed the evening’s event.

Lion highlighted the strong partnership between the university and the municipality, including the construction of new buildings, and the development of employment opportunities and research programs.

While some associate Jerusalem with prayer and problematic politics, the mayor wants people to think of it as a dynamic hub of science, culture and coexistence. Lion would like to see Jerusalem become one of Israel’s numerous high-tech hubs.

“It takes time because we have to develop it,” he said, “but we are doing it with Hebrew University.”

Projects like the Bloomfield Science Museum, the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, and the Hebrew University Youth Division for the Advancement of Science are touching lives in both East and West Jerusalem, he said.

One standout initiative, Sahi, targets youth at risk. Teen volunteers identify families in need and then participate in programs that assist them anonymously.

“These are the young people who will shape the next Jerusalem,” Lion said. “We are investing in education, in culture, in the power of everyday kindness.”

Lion outlined ambitious infrastructure goals, including high-rise housing to prevent suburban sprawl, expanded light rail networks, and preservation of Jerusalem’s cherished green spaces. Under his leadership, annual housing unit construction has jumped from 2,000 to more than 7,500.

“Jerusalem is undergoing an evolution,” he said. “We are building not just a city, but a future – one where Jews, Muslims and Christians all have a place to thrive.”

From the revitalization of Mahane Yehuda Market – once limited to produce stands by day but now with restaurants and social life at night – to cutting-edge healthcare and high-tech campuses, Lion sees Jerusalem as Israel’s next great engine of opportunity.


In Vancouver, Beth Israel’s Rabbi Jonathan Infeld interviewed the mayor and posed the historical question: “If you could sit with King David, Jerusalem’s first Jewish mayor, what would you say?”

“I would ask him – are you satisfied?” Lion replied. “After 3,000 years, is this what you hoped for?” He paused. “And I think he would say yes. Jerusalem is a complicated city, but it is united, it is strong, and it is ours.”

The mayor urged anyone considering making aliyah – or who knows anyone pondering the move – to choose Jerusalem as their destination.

The evening featured remarks from Joel Reitman, president and chair of the Jerusalem Foundation of Canada, and Arik Grebelsky, president of the Jerusalem Foundation. Both highlighted Canada’s deep and ongoing investment in Jerusalem’s development and social fabric, including projects that

Continued on page 21



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The Calgary Jewish Academy is an equal-opportunity employer and encourages applications from all qualified candidates. We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.



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Sharon Fraiman, Western Region Director of Canadian Magen David Adom was recently honoured to receive a King Charles III Coronation Medal. The medal was awarded in recognition of her significant contributions to the community and the community at large.

MP Shuvaloy Majumdar acknowledged her accomplishments, and achievements during the award ceremony. He said, “It is my honour to award Sharon Fraiman the King Charles III Coronation Medal in

need and her advocacy for the Jewish community reflect the high standards of public service and generosity.”

The King Charles III Coronation Medal is awarded to those whose contributions inspire others to serve their communities. “Your unwavering commitment to humanitarian causes makes you truly deserving of this honour,” added Majumdar. “It is a privilege to present you with this medal in recognition of your remarkable service.”

CMDA  
Western  
Director

Sharon Fraiman  
receives honour

recognition of her exceptional contributions to the Jewish community and tireless humanitarian efforts. As the Western Region Director & Major Gifts for CMDA, she has dedicated over 25 years to raising funds for medical equipment and leading programs that make a tangible difference in the lives of many.”

“Sharon’s work as an educator, Rotarian, and community leader exemplifies her mission to service and compassion,” continued Majumdar. “Her leadership in securing critical resources for those in



Sharon, receiving the medal.

Fraiman was honoured to receive the award. She said, “Thank you Shuv for recognizing CMDA and Rotary as a humanitarian organization that creates impact all over the world. I’m thrilled, honoured and grateful.”

Sharon and the CMDA recently held a A Magical Garden Gala in Calgary at the Carriage House. It was a spectacular evening with fantastic food, lively entertainment, captivating speakers and many opportunities to support CMDA.

Don Schapira, who was born in Israel and is now living in Calgary was emcee at the Gala. Schapira is an international speaker advocating for Israel throughout Canada and around the world. “Like so many of us, my family has been directly impacted by the attack on October 7,” said Schapira. “It’s so important that we give back, and supporting CMDA is one of the best things we can do for the people in Israel.”

Sharon Fraiman always brings some unique performers to every gala and this year was no exception. Israeli Mentalist Nevo Abutbul, touted as the youngest mentalist in the world, demonstrated his unique talents in a most entertaining way. The Gala also featured a very special performance by pianist Dr. Thomas Yu.

An important part of the Gala was updating guests on the situation on the ground in Israel and guests got the latest from Keynote speaker Uri Shacham, MDA’s Deputy Director and Chief of Staff, and MDA’s liaison to the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

Sharon works tirelessly to build relationships with community members and other caring advocates in

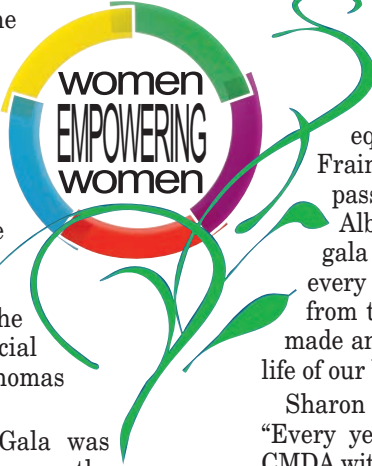


Sharon Fraiman at the award ceremony with MP Shuvaloy Majumdar.

Calgary in support of Canadian Magen David Adom. For her, it is a commitment to save lives.

“CMDA is an integral part of Israel’s survival and as fellow humans we carry a responsibility to ensure citizens of our beloved Israel have the best of ambulatory care, blood-bank options and life-saving equipment,” stated Valerie Sobel. “Sharon Fraiman champions this cause with genuine passion, grace, and determination to inspire the Alberta community to donate and sell-out the gala fundraiser each and every year. We thank every supporter of Canadian Magen David Adom from the bottom of our hearts. Every dollar has made and will continue to make a difference to the life of our brothers and sisters in Israel.”

Sharon thanked everyone involved with the gala. “Every year the community shows its support for CMDA with hundreds attending our gala, but the need in Israel has never been greater,” she said. “MDA volunteers and staff continue to put their lives on the line insuring emergency medical services are just minutes away for every Israeli. Our support helps by providing the ambulances, medi-scooters, and medical equipment so the pros can do their jobs.”



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Community spirit and leadership celebrated in Edmonton

This month saw the official opening of the City of Edmonton’s Karen Leibovici Park honouring her outstanding leadership and community spirit.

Karen was born in Montreal to Jewish immigrant parents who instilled in her the values of fairness, hard work, and tikkun olam (repairing the world). Raised in a working-class neighborhood of Outremont, she became active early in school life and social justice issues, with her first exposure to leadership through student politics.

While studying social work at McGill University, Leibovici became involved with the local Jewish Community Centre, organizing around poverty, equity, and labour rights. These formative experiences shaped a lifelong commitment to advocacy, both within the Jewish community and the broader public sphere.

After moving to Edmonton in 1980, she remained deeply engaged in civic and community life, including long-time involvement with Jewish organizations. She has been a visible and vocal advocate for human rights, inclusion, and public service, values rooted in her Jewish upbringing.

A four-term Edmonton City Councillor and former MLA for Edmonton Meadowlark, Leibovici was instrumental in leading a variety of City of Edmonton initiatives including the Transforming Edmonton

initiative, the Centre for Public Involvement, the Affordable Housing Strategy, the 10-year Plan to End Homelessness, among others. She was involved in the creation of the City Hall School and worked hard to promote the establishment of Big Island Provincial Park.

Leibovici was a strong advocate for the needs of her constituency in the former Wards 1 and 5. She fought to prevent the operation of a gravel pit along the North Saskatchewan River, and for the retention of natural areas in Edmonton. Leibovici was a President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and a Chair of the FCM Green Municipal Fund.

Through her years living in Edmonton, Leibovici has been involved in many nonprofit organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Concordia University and Events Edmonton. She also served as the vice-chair of the Civilian Review and Complaint Commission for the RCMP and as a board member at Canada Energy Regulator.

Among her many leadership roles, she was honoured by Beth Israel Synagogue for her public service and continues to champion Jewish community development. She currently serves as Chair of the Jewish Community Centre (JCC) Redevelopment Steering Committee, guiding the revitalization of this vital institution for future generations.

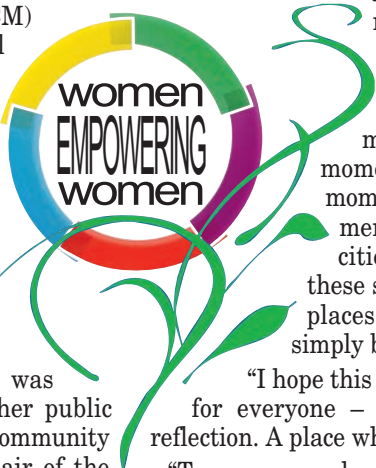
Karen’s life has been defined by service, guided by Jewish values, and grounded in a commitment to building a more just, inclusive, and vibrant community. On behalf of the Jewish community, we extend a hearty Mazal Tov and Yasher Koach to her for this well deserved honour.

“Yesterday was one of those unforgettable moments – the kind that turn into memories you hold onto forever,” said Karen.

“I’m incredibly honoured (and still overwhelmed) that a park has been named in my honour. We marked the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, surrounded by community, friends, and so much love. Life is made up of moments like these – and those moments shape us. Parks give those memories room to grow. As our cities get busier and more dense, these spaces become even more vital – places to breathe, connect, play, and simply be.

“I hope this park becomes that kind of space for everyone – filled with joy, laughter, and reflection. A place where new memories are made.

“To everyone who nominated me and to all those who came out to celebrate – thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your presence made the day even more meaningful. And special thanks to Paul Allard and Adam Zepp for their support and commitment to the community.”



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# Reflections: Innocents abroad in a war zone

By Howie Sniderman

The banana bread at the Sugar Beach Bakery on Maui is simply delicious. At 8:08 am on Saturday January 13, 2018 I was walking along the beach with my wife Debbie and our daughter Liz, en route to the bakery, when our phones started shrieking. It wasn't just our phones, it was everyone's. The message read: **Emergency Alert: Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaiian Islands. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill.**

Three things came to mind:  
I need to take a screenshot of the alert on my phone 'cause if this turns out to be fake, I for sure want to be able to show it to everyone later on.  
I knew I should have gone to shul that morning instead of to the bakery. This sort of thing doesn't happen if you go to shul.

We need to get to the bakery. You should never go into a nuclear scenario without baked goods.  
As it turns out, the alert was not real – a glitch in the Hawaiian Islands air raid missile warning system. Better safe than sorry, though, right? And, in the end, I got the banana bread from the bakery.

Last month, at 3:00 am the morning of Friday June 13, 2025, my wife Debbie & I were jolted awake from our sleep at the home of close friends in Tzoran, about 30 km. from Tel Aviv, when our phones started shrieking. Again, it wasn't just our phones, it was everyone's. The message from the Pikud Ha'oref (Israel's Homefront Command) app installed on our phones read:

**Due to the preparations for a significant threat, it is required to immediately comply with the Home Front Command guidelines that are currently being distributed throughout the media.**

My guess was that the guidelines did not include a trip to the bakery. Together with our friends Shlomi & Osnat (Os), their children Eyal & Shira, and their two big dogs Brandy & Chili, we made our way into Shlomi's home office which does double duty as the *Mamad* (the Protected Space) in their home.

Shlomi turned on the livestream broadcast news and we learned that earlier in the evening Israel had attacked Iran and a response was expected imminently. This was not a false alarm. This was war. Israel v. Iran.

A ballistic missile fired at Israel from Iran travels at Mach 5 (five times the speed of sound) and takes roughly 12 minutes to reach Israel after being launched.

A few minutes after entering the Mamad, the first barrage of ballistic missiles were launched by Iran. They were detected by Israel immediately upon launch. And, just as immediately, our phones shrieked and the text message read:

**In the next few minutes, alerts are expected in your area. You will need to find a better location that will provide the best protection in your area. If an alert is received, enter the protected space and stay there until further notice.**

As the missiles make their way toward Israel, their trajectory and anticipated impact site is calibrated and estimated. If it's determined they are headed your way, the next alert is sounded. And indeed, about 5 minutes later our phones shrieked and the text message read:

**Rocket & Missile Fire inbound to Tzoran. Time of arrival to the Protected Room – One and a half minutes. Enter the Protected Space now.**

Simultaneously, the air raid sirens in the community were sounded. Over the next 10 days we made 22 trips to the Mamad in Shlomi's home office. Each visit lasted about 30 minutes until we received a very different and much more muted alert on our phones. The text message – the one we longed for each and every time – simply read:

**End of stay next to a Protected Space. You no longer need to stay next to a Protected Space.**

During each visit to the Mamad, we watched livestream broadcasts of the dance of the missiles overhead. The incoming ballistic missiles from Iran. The Iron Dome interceptor missiles rising from the ground to meet, greet and (please God) obliterate the Iranian missiles.

We heard and felt the boom, boom, boom shudders of each salvo of interceptor missiles fired from the Iron Dome arrays in the area. And, in our small

community, we thankfully never heard the very different sound of an Iranian missile impact. Many other communities in Israel were not as fortunate. People were injured. People were killed.

The livestream broadcasts often split the screen into quadrants, panning back and forth across the skylines of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Be'er Sheva. During any given attack, the dance of the missiles was replayed over and over and over in the event of an Iranian missile evading the Iron Dome and impacting on the ground.

The plumes of smoke rising from the impact site were awful. And then came the wait – usually only minutes – before the first reports of the extent of the devastation wrought. In the ensuing hours, we would hear about the casualties, the injured, the dead, their names.

I've just given you a pretty fair accounting of what occurred each time a barrage of ballistic missiles from Iran was launched. What I really want to tell you about, however, and what is far more important to know about, is what happens in Israel in between each alert. Namely, life. Life albeit delayed, amended, pivoted, and overlaid with a sense of numbness, dread, fear and foreboding. But, most of all, life. Let me give you a few examples of life in Israel between alerts:

**Making new friends and cherishing old ones**

Every day we walked two blocks from home to the *Supersol* (supermarket), the bakery and the fruit & veggie stand. Life in a neighbourhood is wonderful. Everything is fresh. Did I mention the bakery?

Shlomi & Os know everyone in the neighbourhood. On day 1, following the 3 separate early morning missile alerts, the sun rose and with it the entire neighbourhood headed to the market to stock up for who knows how long. The market was packed. There was no pushing, shoving or typical Israeli Sabra 'tough on the outside'. Everyone wanted to know how everyone else was faring and, more to the point, was there anything they could do for one another.

By Day 7, Debbie & I were making the daily trip ourselves and greeting our new friends. For example, Nehiya, the Arab-Israeli woman who works at *Supersol*. Nehiya sets aside cottage cheese for Shlomi 'cause she knows it's his favourite. I won't go into a nuclear scenario without baked goods. He won't go into one without cottage cheese. To each his own.

Eddie is the owner of the fruit & veggie stand. My Hebrew is just good enough to get me into trouble. One morning, as we were leaving, I told him (in Hebrew), "I'll see you yesterday." I forgot the word for 'tomorrow.' He looked at me like I was the child that I am and said, "I speak English, you know."

And Moran, the owner of the bakery. She delicately took the delicious loaf of olive bread from my hands and sliced it for me in the bread slicing machine, because everyone knows I'm not allowed to play with sharp objects.

The opportunity to spend 'quality time during a war' with Shlomi, Os, Eyal & Shira was not expected but it will never be forgotten. The chance to truly 'live during a war' in a small Israeli neighbourhood was not expected but it, and the new friends we made there, will never be forgotten.

**Life goes on. Am Yisrael Chai.**

Rubble Rousers  
In the immediate wake of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the reserves were called up to duty. Tens of thousands of young women were suddenly left to fend for themselves and their young children. A grass roots lifeline was almost as immediately established across the country, matching women who could assist with those in need. A peer-to-peer



Howie and Debbie Sniderman were in Lev Tzoran, Israel during the 12 day Israel - Iran war.

network of women. Our dear friend Os headed up the program in Tzoran.

The day after the start of the war with Iran, once again there was a significant call up of reserves to duty. Os spent hours at the kitchen table, with her daughter Shira at her side, once again setting up the peer-to-peer matches to help the women in need.

Meanwhile, a Homefront Command platoon took up position in the local elementary school a couple of blocks away. Their job is to help with search & rescue in the event of a missile impact in the neighbourhood. Each afternoon, Debbie helped Os and her neighbour Chaya buy fruit, veggies & bread and take them to the soldiers. One day, lovely 20 yr. old Shira and her equally lovely friend helped out. Debbie said that the soldiers were 'extra appreciative' that day. I told her I'd come the next day to help level the playing field for her.

The willingness to assist. To volunteer. And not to wait for a government to step in (you'll wait forever) permeates the country.

**Life goes on. Am Yisrael Chai.**

This would never happen in Edmonton  
On Day 12 Os drove us to the Jordan River border crossing near Beit She'an. We walked across the border, took a taxi to Amman, and flew home. At 7:30 am, barely 15 minutes from reaching the border crossing, our phones shrieked. A missile alert for the 23rd and final time. Simultaneously, the Wave GPS navigation screen on Os' car populated with dots showing the closest shelters. The closest was in Kibbutz Yehezkel, about 2 minutes away.

We left the highway, entered the kibbutz, and stopped in the driveway of the first home. We knocked on the door and rang the doorbell until Uri, in his boxer shorts and groggy (we'd clearly woken him) opened the door. We told him there was an alert. He hadn't heard as he and his young family (wife and two little children) had been sleeping in their Mamad since the start of the war and left their cellphones outside so it wouldn't wake the little ones.

He immediately ushered us into the house and into the Mamad.... where his wife and little ones were sleeping. We sat on the edge of the bed with them until the 'all clear.' At which point he asked us if he could make us a cup of coffee before we continued on our way to the border.

**Life goes on. Am Yisrael Chai.**



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Noa Argamani *Cont. from page 1*

She began by recalling that she was drawn on that Sukkot of 2023 to the Nova Festival out of a deep connection to music, but above all, her love for her partner, long-term boyfriend Avinatan Or who is still imprisoned by terrorists and their collaborators in Gaza, was present with every word she uttered. The haunting image of Argamani kidnapped and forced onto the back of a motorcycle is one that has been emblazoned on international television screens. What cannot be taken for granted is that this was the last time she saw her boyfriend, and the final memory that she holds of him to this day remains one of sheer terror.

The poised and collected Argamani held back on her own trauma as she compassionately spoke of the other hostages she was imprisoned with at various times during her captivity. As she endured unimaginable psychological, emotional, and physical torture, Argamani's family pleaded with anyone who would listen to try to secure her release.

On June 8, 2024, in a truly courageous operation, IDF soldiers rescued four hostages: Argamani among them. Liora Argamani, suffering from terminal brain cancer was in hospital when the news broke. Incidentally the day of her liberation from Neseirat was also Yaakov Argamani's birthday and his daughter's release was the greatest gift he could have prayed for. Noa Argamani was able to spend three precious weeks by her mother's side before Liora Argamani tragically succumbed to her disease – but she was able to see her daughter before her passing.

Noa Argamani continues to be an impactful and eloquent advocate for the remaining hostages, as she prays to see Avinatan again. During a trip to New York to address the United Nations, father and daughter took a detour to visit the Ohel of Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, a pilgrimage Yaaakov Argamani made previously when Noa was still being held prisoner. She has been honoured with the distinction of being named one of *Time Magazine* top 100 most influential people, and she is steadfast in using this influence to bring home every last hostage. She expressed, poignantly, that until Avinatan, and all the others are home, a part of her still feels like she is in captivity.



Shai Davidai at the Negev Gala.



A sold out crowd listens intently to Noa Argamani's pleas for the hostages.

Following the unforgettable Argamani was the articulate and dynamic Ivy League educated Dr. Shai Davidai, who recently resigned from his position as Assistant Professor at Columbia University. Davidai, his wife, and two daughters live in New York, and worry constantly for their family back in Israel. Davidai explained horrifically to listeners that even before Israel launched into action following the modern-day pogrom of October 7th, there were already jubilant demonstrations on Columbia's campus as mourning Jewish students, faculty, and allies dressed all in white, silently held up pictures of the brutally kidnapped hostages. Davidai recalled, and shared with attendees that an older Jewish colleague grimly whispered to him that this, pointing to the disgraceful scene they faced, was exactly what their parents had warned them of.

Davidai, no doubt a talented and charismatic lecturer, explained further that he had an interesting moment when he began to consider what he would tell his grandchildren one day posthumously reflecting on his actions during and following the October 7th invasion of Israel. He can be proud that his vocal stand against antisemitism has been heard, and that in the face of criticism, he redoubles his efforts to ensure that Jewish students and faculty across academia, do not become targets and are not isolated by the misinformation that sadly influences the masses. Every Sunday, rain or shine, Davidai and his family go to Central Park in Manhattan to demonstrate in support of the hostages. He explains to his children that this is important because when a hostage's family member sees them there, this reminds them that their pain and struggle is not being ignored – that they are not alone.

Davidai's sentiments echoed the spirit of JNF Edmonton's 2025 Negev Gala: 'One Nation: One Heart.' The community was reminded that Israel has so much to heal from, and that through the diaspora's efforts to reinvigorate the vitality that terrorism sought to extinguish, the Jewish people will rise up stronger in unity.

Reflecting on the event, Cairns said, "One of the themes of this year's Negev Gala was to introduce and showcase the strength of young community leaders such as NCSY's Daniella Asbell, Stand with Us alumnus Gabriella Kaplan, and Shayna Cairns who began the programme with traditional blessings over



Jay presents Joan & Abe Goldstein with the Mandel Bloomfield Medal.

the people and State of Israel. Former President of Hillel, Stand with Us alumni Danielle Shaposhnikov did an unbelievable job interviewing both Noa and Shai with poise, class and thoughtful questions and follow ups. The crowd left feeling that the future of the Jewish people is in strong and capable hands."

Cairns extended his heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of this year's gala. He said, "Edmonton is a small but mighty community that continues to punch above its weight funding a number of transformative projects that improve and enhance the lives of all Israelis. One of the most beautiful parts of the gala for me was to see the group of students and young adults who stayed behind to spend time with Shai, sharing stories and asking great questions.

"Shai and Noa represent the resilience and strength of the Jewish people. We are all fighting our own battles, trying to navigate a world that seems to be rapidly squeezing and dividing us at every turn. All of our experiences with antisemitism have had an effect on our personal and communal consciousness. Regardless of the details of that experience I hope the gala gave attendees hope that the future of Klal Yisrael is strong. Leaders like Shai and Noa advocating for the hostages, Israel, and the diaspora makes me very proud to be Jewish and I hope you are too."

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Next Deadline: August 8, 2025

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# Memorial Tribute



## In Memory of Freya Wasel

January 21, 1948 – April 5, 2025

With great sadness and broken hearts the family of Freya Wasel announces that she passed away peacefully in her home in Edmonton on April 5, 2025. Freya was born in St. Boniface

Hospital on January, 21, 1948 and grew up on Inkster Blvd. in the north end of Winnipeg. She attended Inkster, Luxton, and St. John's schools and received awards for academic achievement. She also attended Peretz Yiddish night school.

Freya continued her studies at the University of Manitoba, earning a Bachelor of Science degree and majoring in physics. She married Lewis during her final year of university. After graduation she was employed by the Manitoba Telephone System for two years in the traffic and engineering departments. She then left the work force to bear and raise her children, Norman and Rebecca.

Ten years after her first university graduation, Freya returned to the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education. She earned a Bachelor of Education degree and then began a new career as a teacher. Freya taught at Vincent Massey Collegiate in Fort Garry for 21 years. Her primary subject was physics, but she is also remembered for an extra-curricular activity. She coordinated and chaperoned student tours to foreign countries during spring break periods. Those tours enabled her to travel to every continent except Antarctica. Freya retired prematurely and moved to Edmonton to take care of

her grandchildren.

Freya was predeceased by her parents, Alvin and Anne Gardner and her brother Norman Gardner. She is survived by Lewis, her husband of 57 years, her son Norman (Leanne) Wasel, daughter Rebecca (Shane) Asbell, grandchildren Aliza (Eitan), Daniella, Asher, Hila, Zev, Yaffa, Caleb, Koby and Yoni. Freya is also survived by her brother Arnold Gardner, sister Rhoda (Sid) Greenstone, sister-in-law and brother-in-law Ellen and Ron Dlin, uncle and aunt Hy and Donna Dubo, nieces, nephews, cousins and many friends.

Freya was known for her friendly nature and smile. She made everyone with whom she interacted feel important. She was very caring for her students who in return treated her with respect and affection. Freya was community minded and participated in many charitable organizations. She is dearly missed but leaves us with fond memories and her spirit will remain with us.

# Brook's NoFrills expands Kosher shopping in Edmonton

By Matthew Levine, LJI Reporter

Ever since the closure of Andy's IGA, one of Edmonton's favorite Kosher food suppliers, the community has been hungry for another good option. Brook and Kelsey Ritchie of Brook's NoFrills have arrived with a solution! When the IGA closed, they took matters into their own hands and graciously decided to start supplying a small selection of Kosher foods. With a great response from the community, they located suppliers in Ontario and Quebec, and now offer one of the best spreads of Kosher meats and other products.

They have a general selection of Kosher items available year-round. The catalog ranges from meat to bread, frozen meals, deli items, and a wide array of dry foods like matzah and Bamba. They also offer large order options upon request. Rosh Hashanah orders are available anytime until August 4th with a simple order form provided by emailing kelsrit@nofrills.ca. They are also open to bringing in any kosher item requested, let them know if you are looking for something specific.

Another great perk of getting your Kosher food from Brook's NoFrills is that it is surprisingly cost efficient. Price comparison with an Edmonton group that orders from a Vancouver warehouse, has NoFrills coming in at \$1-5 less per pound. It seems getting kosher meat may be easier and more affordable than ever!

"The best part about this is the opportunity to engage with the Jewish community, as well as build bridges outside of it," says Brook.

Brook and Kelsey both experience so much joy in representing the Jewish community here in Edmonton. Stop by and see the store for yourself on the southside, just off Whyte Avenue on 80th Avenue and 104 Street.



Brook and Kelsey display the Kosher foods that were available for Passover. Order Kosher meat for Rosh Hashana by Aug. 4.

## Jerusalem Mayor

Cont. from page 16


encourage academic excellence, youth empowerment and cross-cultural partnerships.

Reitman lauded Hebrew University's role not only investing in academic excellence but in helping shape the city's economic and civic trajectory, and spoke of the contributions made by the Jerusalem Foundation, which was founded in 1966 by the legendary, longtime mayor of the city, Teddy Kolek.


"Together, we are creating a Jerusalem that is smart, inclusive and prepared for the future," he said.

*This article was originally published by the Jewish Independent.*

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from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

Two-faced Titus

Titus, the general (later, Emperor) who commanded the Roman forces in the Great Jewish Rebellion, was invariably designated in rabbinic tradition as “the wicked” taking his place alongside eminent villains like Balaam, Nebuchadnezzar and Haman. The sages of the Talmud and Midrash depict him as no mere military leader – but as a heathen scoundrel determined to triumph over the God of Israel.

As related in the Midrash and Talmud, Titus was resolved to profane the Temple’s sanctity by plundering its sacred vessels to display them in Rome, and by performing obscene acts on a Torah scroll in the sanctuary. He boldly taunted the Hebrew God for his inability to defy him, and for his powerlessness to defend the Jerusalem Temple, his personal domain.

This portrayal of Titus differs diametrically from the one presented by Josephus Flavius, whose accounts of “the Jewish Wars” preserve the most extensive record of the events. Josephus writes that Titus was uncertain how to proceed after his legions had effectively penetrated the city’s walls. A decision had to be made whether or not to destroy the Temple structure, an operation that would take a toll in Roman lives and reflect poorly on the victors’ respect for the shrines of subject nations. Seeking advice on this question, he convened a council of his foremost officers.

The council was divided. One faction favoured demolishing the structure “according to the rules of war” (presumably something along the lines of “to the victor belong the spoils.”) More specifically, they argued that there was a clear military advantage to eliminating the Jewish Temple owing to its function as a place of assembly for Jewish pilgrims from their homeland and the diaspora, gatherings that often inspired mobs to rise up against their conquerors. Rebellions would never cease as long as the Temple continued to stand.

Another faction reasoned that a deal might yet be negotiated if only the Jews would consent to a ceasefire and disarm themselves, knowing that any violation of those terms would result in the devastation of their beloved spiritual centre.

According to Josephus, Titus advocated an

exceptionally conciliatory position: even if the Jews persisted in their insurrection, the Romans should refrain from destroying the Temple. After all, wars are fought against human enemies, not inanimate structures. And furthermore, after the suppression of the Jewish uprising the glorious Temple should survive as a tangible source of pride for the victorious empire.

General Titus’s position would have prevailed had not one of the soldiers, “propelled by a divine fury,” taken the initiative of tossing in a torch and igniting a conflagration that could not be restrained until the Temple lay in ruins, contrary to Titus’s wishes. Titus in fact hurried to have the fire extinguished, and even commanded to punish the soldiers who participated in the burning and looting. Ultimately, however, Josephus states that it was the Jews themselves, in their persistent opposition even against the soldiers trying to extinguish the fire, who were responsible for the Temple’s burning.

A very different version of Titus’s role in the event appears in a chronicle by a 3rd-4th century Christian scholar named Sulpicius Severus of Aquitania. In his account it was Titus who took the position – contrary to others who argued that the Temple should be left to stand as a monument to Rome’s magnanimity and not as a testimony to her ruthlessness – that it should be destroyed without delay, “in order that the religions of the Jews and Christians should be eradicated totally. For those religions, though opposed to one another, derive from the same founders; the Christians stemmed from the Jews and the extirpation of the root would easily cause the offspring to perish.”

Historians are still debating which of these contradictory portrayals is accurate. In the absence of direct evidence of the deliberations at the time, the question is often formulated as: who had reasons to falsify the historical record?

Thus, with regard to the Jewish sages, it should be noted that they were not historians in the academic sense of striving for objective accuracy. Their concerns were with deriving religious inspiration from those events, and that often involved depicting the villains and heroes of the Jewish past in stereotypical black

and white terms. A malicious Titus could serve as an effective prototype in their contemporary struggles against idolatry and Roman subjugation.

Scholars have questioned the credibility of Sulpicius’ premise that Titus regarded Christianity as a threat at as early as the first century, and concede that the detail was likely inserted by Sulpicius; however, the rest of his account seems plausible, and may be based on an otherwise lost passage from the respected historian Tacitus, whom Sulpicius often cites.

As for Josephus’s portrayal of a kinder, gentler Titus, we must not forget that the historian himself owed his personal survival after defecting from the Jewish army to Titus and the Flavian emperors. This was a sufficient motivation for him to compromise the truth so as to present his sponsors in a favourable light.

Dio Cassius reported that some Roman forces were reluctant to advance inside the Temple because of their "superstitious" reverence for the shrine, and only under compulsion from Titus did they proceed inwards.

Josephus himself mentioned several instances of Titus’s insensitivity to Jewish sacred shrines and his general hostility to Judaism as a religion. For example, he ordered the destruction of the Jewish sanctuary in Egypt in order to prevent it from becoming a rallying point for rebels.

Indeed, Josephus came to view the fall of Jerusalem as divinely ordained; and his historical chronicle is sprinkled with stories (analogous to those told by Roman historians like Suetonius) of supernatural portents that presaged the inevitable disaster. Seen from that perspective, the blame could hardly be assigned to any mortal leader.

Frankly, as a Jew if not as a historical scholar, I am quite comfortable recalling our ancient antagonists as unmitigated bad guys whom we are free to despise.

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

Edmonton Talmud Torah Wraps up the School Year



Edmonton Talmud Torah wrapped up the school year with its annual Maccabi Games Sports Day! Thanks to the support of the School Council, students had a blast taking part in a variety of fun, sports-themed activities.




# Announcing the Natan Notable Books' Summer 2025 Winner

**By JBC staff**



## Sarah Hurwitz

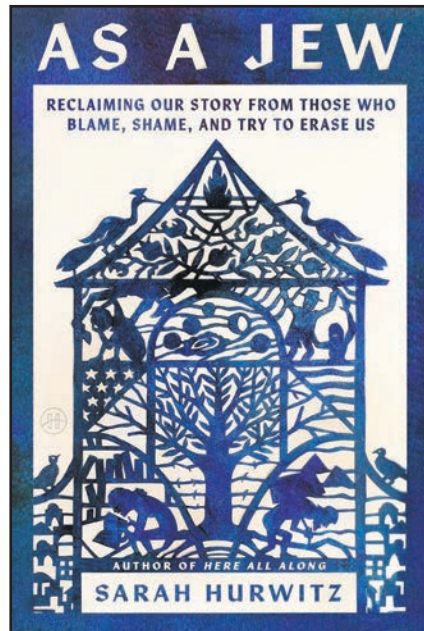
Natan and Jewish Book Council have announced the Summer 2025 Natan Notable Book: *As a Jew: Reclaiming Our Story From Those Who Blame, Shame, and Try to Erase Us* by Sarah Hurwitz (HarperOne, Sept. 9, 2025).

 Twice a year, Natan Notable Books recognizes recently published or about-to-be-published non-fiction books that promise to catalyze conversations aligned with the themes of Natan's grantmaking: reinventing Jewish life and community for the twenty-first century, shifting notions of individual and collective Jewish identity, the history and future of Israel, understanding and confronting contemporary forms of antisemitism, and the evolving relationship between Israel and world Jewry.

At a time when Jewish identity is worn with pride and discomfort, joy and fear, Hurwitz's book takes a discerning look back to the sources of it all, told with the empathetic voice of one who is familiar with the full range. Wanting to account for the disconnect or disinterest that many Jews express when thinking about their own religion, *As a Jew* begins to peel away the stories that shaped perceptions of Jews, the anti-semitic propaganda that subtlety or intentionally hid the core of Judaism and Jewish life from the outside world, but also from Jews themselves. And as Hurwitz herself dives deeper into Jewish history, tradition, scholarship, and observance, she brings her readers along to discover the depth of wisdom, the rootedness that is founded on ritual, and above all, the joy that Judaism has to offer. As Hurwitz writes in her introduction to *As a Jew*, "This book is an account of how I got to this point: how I sought to engage with Judaism on its own terms, not those of others who

misunderstand or disdain it; how I stripped away the layers of distortions and slanders that made me recoil from my own tradition; and how I have learned, and am still learning to live, as a Jew."

In choosing *As a Jew* for the Summer 2025 Nathan Notable Book award, the selection committee recognized the importance of this book at this moment in history. *As a Jew* is told by an author with a clear-sighted view not only of the challenges facing the American Jewish community, but also of the path through the tangled intersections of this current time and forward into the future. Committee member Daniel Bonner reflected: "We are in the midst of a renaissance in American Jewish life, and we could ask for no more powerful a messenger than Sarah Hurwitz." Bonner describes *As a Jew* "as a bold, eloquent, powerful call to Jews to own their Jewish identity, deepen their Jewish knowledge, and cultivate a sense of Jewish peoplehood. This award has long recognized authors — Matti Friedman, Ilana Kurshan, Bari Weiss, Ari Shavit, and others — whose books spur conversations about important issues in contemporary Jewish life. In this book, Sarah addresses them all and offers a masterclass on a thousand years of anti-Semitism, makes the case for integrating Jewish wisdom into our lives, and considers Israel's place among the nations. She is empathetic, drawing on her experience as a hospital chaplain. She is a great storyteller, owing to her years as a White House speechwriter. And she is unshakably,



unapologetically proud, in the knowledge that she now owns her people's story."

The author will receive a \$5,000 cash prize, as well as customized support for promoting the book and its ideas, drawing on Natan's and Jewish Book Council's extensive networks throughout the Jewish philanthropic and communal worlds.

Natan Notable Books submissions are rolling, and can be submitted at any time. The next deadline for consideration of a recent or soon-to-come non-fiction title is November 1, 2025. Titles must have a publication date between April 1, 2025 and April 1, 2026. Inquiries can be directed to [natannotable@jewishbooks.org](mailto:natannotable@jewishbooks.org). For more information on the award and eligibility or to submit a title, go to the Natan Notable Books page.

Natan Notable Books at Jewish Book Council has previously been awarded to Bari Weiss' *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (2019), Susie Linfield's *The Lion's Den* (2019), Ilan Stavans' *The Seventh Heaven* (2020), Nancy Sinkoff's *From Left to Right* (2020), Dara Horn's *People Love Dead Jews* (2021), Michael Frank's *One Hundred Saturdays: Stella Levi and the Search for a Lost World* (2022), and *Feeding Women of the Talmud, Feeding Ourselves: Uplifting the Voices of Talmudic Heroines and Honoring Them with Simple, Vegan Recipes* edited by Kenden Alford (2022), *The Land of Hope and Fear: Israel's Battle for its Inner Soul* by Isabel Kershner (2023), *Target Tehran: How Israel Is Using Sabotage, Cyberwarfare, Assassination—and Secret Diplomacy—to Stop a Nuclear Iran and Create a New Middle East* by Yonah Jeremy Bob and Ilan Evyatar (2023), *Henrietta Szold: Hadassah and the Zionist Dream* by Francine Klagsbrun (2024), *10/7: 100 Human Stories* by Lee Yaron (2024–25). Natan Notable Books is an evolution of the Natan Book Award, which was previously awarded to Matti Friedman's *Spies of No Country* (2018) and Ari Shavit's *My Promised Land* (2013).



 <p><b>WITS YESHIVA OF CANADA</b></p> <p>PHONE: (780) 483-1028</p> <p>NAME <input type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not for directors or families participation.</li> <li>\$54.00 single tickets also are available.</li> </ol>	 <p><i>Dedicated to bringing light and joy to a world that is grieving.</i></p> <p><b>YesKosher.ca</b></p> <p>Ticket No: <input type="text"/></p>	 <h2>The Israel Raffle*</h2> <p><b>3 Tickets to be won Promo Purchase 3 Tickets for \$95.00</b></p> <p><b>Extended Draw Date: Dec 01 2025</b></p>	 <p>B"H</p> <h2>License #686433</h2>	EDMONTONKOSHER@GMAIL.COM
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B”H

# Yes Kosher Friendship

## Rosh Chodesh Educational series

*Why does being Jewish—and feeling connected to the Land of Israel—provoke such strong reactions in the world?  
And even deeper:*

*Why did Hashem have to promise the Land to us so many times in the Torah? Why repeat it over and over again?*

*Let's look at just a few:*

וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם, וַיֹּאמֶר: לְזָרְעֶךָ אֶתְּן אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

“And Hashem appeared to Avram and said:

To your descendants I will give this land.” Bereishit (Genesis)

כִּי אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה רֹאֶה, לִךָ אֶתְנֶנָּה וּלְזָרְעֶךָ עַד-עוֹלָם

“For all the land that you see, I will give to you and your descendants forever.”

Bereishit (Genesis)

וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ וּלְזָרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ, אֶת אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֶיךָ... לְאֶחְזֶזֶת עוֹלָם

“And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojournings... as an everlasting possession.”

Bereishit (Genesis)

So we ask again: Why so many times? Why did God need to repeat it?

Because Hashem knew.

He knew we'd be exiled. Misunderstood. Told we don't belong. He knew there would be days when even we would question our place. So He told us again and again:

You belong. You are rooted. This is your spiritual home.

But He didn't just give us land. He gave us a relationship.

A refuge. A place where heaven and earth meet.

As the Torah says:

אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ... תָּמִיד עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ

“A land that Hashem your God seeks out; the eyes of Hashem are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end.”

Devarim (Deuteronomy)

It's not just geography. It's holiness. It's connection.

But What About Those of Us Who Don't Live in Israel?

Even outside the land, Hashem guides us:

וְדַרְשׁוּ אֶת-שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר... וּפָלְלוּ בַּעֲדָהּ

“Seek the peace of the city where I have exiled you... and pray for it.” Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah)

We are called to bring blessing and light wherever we are.

Jews have lived around the world for centuries, building, giving, serving. Loving Israel doesn't cancel out love for our home countries. We carry both loyalties, and both are holy.

And In the Time of Moshiach?

Our prophets envision a world where Eretz Yisrael becomes the spiritual center, but the holiness radiates outward:

כִּי מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַה אֶת ה' כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכֻסִּים

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.” Yeshayahu (Isaiah)

Chazal (our sages) explain that in the days of redemption, the entire world will reflect the kedushah (holiness) of Eretz Yisrael. There will be no spiritual “outside”—because God's presence will dwell everywhere.

"עתידה ארץ ישראל שתתפשט בכל הארצות

“In the future, Eretz Yisrael will spread to cover all lands.”

Midrash Tanchuma,

This means we're not waiting for escape—we're preparing the world. Each mitzvah we do, each prayer, each act of kindness brings that reality closer.

So What Can We Do Now?

We can:

Support and pray for Israel as both a homeland and a spiritual beacon.

Bring light to our local communities, living with dignity, faith, and kindness.

Return to Torah, especially the holy Hebrew letters that hold eternity.

If you want to strengthen your connection to the language and soul of our people, Morah Rifka invites you to chavruta study—a sacred journey into the texts that have carried us through every exile, and will carry us home.

Because even when the world shakes, one truth remains steady:

We are rooted.

We are remembered.

6And our destiny is peace.

שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרַחוּק וּלְקָרֹב

“Peace, peace to the far and to the near.” Yeshayahu (Isaiah)

May we all merit to live in a world filled with that Shalom.