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Al Osten donates a ‘game changer’ to Camp BB-Riback

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

Calgary philanthropist Al Osten has few regrets in life, but one of them is that he never had the opportunity to attend Jewish summer camp.

“We were too poor to afford it,” recalled Osten (né Ostrovsky), who at 95 years young beams with pride at the \$1 million gift he pledged to Camp BB-Riback just weeks ago.

Osten’s donation is believed to be the largest single gift ever received by the camp, said outgoing Camp Director Stacy Shaikin, adding that the camp plans to deposit the lion’s share of the gift in an endowment fund so as to protect the principal, ensuring a steady stream of support in perpetuity.

Part of the gift may be devoted to a capital project which has not yet been announced.

“When I talk to people today, they always remember their camp days. That was one of the best parts of their lives, and they still have the friends they made there,” Osten told *AJNews*.

While his family did not have two nickels to rub together, there was always a *pishke* (charity box) in the Ostrovsky home, and the door was always open to family and friends.

Osten, who continues to live the lessons he learned at his parent’s knees, has ramped up his already significant charitable giving to civic and Jewish causes by tens of millions over the past few years alone. News of recent gifts supporting arts initiatives in both Calgary and Edmonton has been the stuff of newspaper headlines and radio interviews.

But it is hard to imagine that Osten can smile more broadly than he does at the thought of helping Jewish kids to enjoy the summer of their lives on the shores of Pine Lake.

“Al’s gift is a game changer,” says Jessica Miller Switzer, a former camper who has chaired the Camp BB Riback board of directors for the past three years.

“It ensures a strong and sustainable future for camp BB Riback and provides us with the opportunity to

dream bigger than ever before,” Miller Switzer wrote to the camp board as she shared the happy news.

“This moment is massive for our camp family,” Miller Switzer stated. “It is not only a gift, it is a vote of confidence in our future. We must build on this momentum, celebrate it wisely and leverage it to inspire further support from our community.”

According to Shaikin and Miller Switzer, the camp is actively pursuing matching dollars from corporate donors, individuals, and families and has already netted \$40 thousand (USD) from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Miller Switzer’s dream is for the camp to use the interest from the endowment to help defray the cost of sending kids to camp. She notes that the cost of sending three children to the camp tops \$15 thousand, which is financially challenging for most families, especially if they are also sending their kids to Jewish day schools and supporting other community institutions.

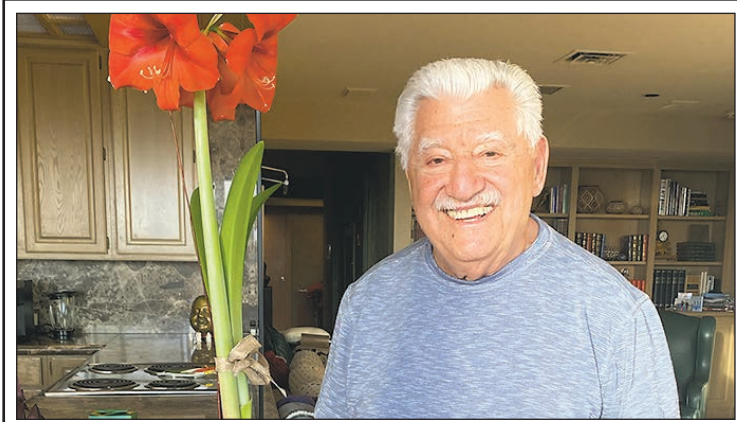
Lowering the cost of camp tuitions across the board – and providing additional financial support to families who need additional assistance – would go a long way to giving kids a formative Jewish experience, says Miller Switzer.

“Camp should be accessible for everyone, and I think it can be,” Switzer told *AJNews*, adding that the ability to open the camp gates wider is a gift to the future of Jewish life in Alberta.

Studies by sociologists have shown that when kids attend Jewish day schools and overnight Jewish camps, it increases the likelihood that they will engage in Jewish life as adults.

Osten told *AJNews* that he was poised to make a gift elsewhere when several members of the community made the case for his support of Camp BB Riback.

It caused him to fondly recall the late Donna Riback,



Philanthropist Al Osten has made a transformational donation to Camp BB-Riback.

who chaired the JNF Gala honouring Osten in 2017. Her father, Ted Riback, was a founder and generous supporter of the camp which eventually came to bear his name.

Calgary lawyer and philanthropist Gordy Hoffman was instrumental in facilitating Osten’s gift to the camp. Hoffman also reached out to Calgary architect Harvey Bernbaum – a former camper – who will be sharing his expertise and professional knowledge with camp leaders regarding potential future development at the camp.

Hoffman’s son JJ – a former Camp BB camper and counselor and its first-ever mountain bike specialist – has been an avid volunteer at the camp for years. The owner of Cutline Developments Inc., a landscaping and construction company, JJ recently advised the camp on potential repairs and upgrades to its sports courts – which he and a colleague in the concrete business had offered to complete on a sub-profit basis.

When the project was delayed due to the need for fundraising, JJ talked to his own friends, some of whom stepped up with donations. He also spoke with

Continued on page 10

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Hanukkah: The Dedication to a New Beginning



Rabbi Guy Tal

By Rabbi Guy Tal

Hanukkah is the last of the festivals ordained by the Sages before the long exile, until we were privileged in our generation to witness the renewal of our nation's revival in its land and the establishment of additional holy days: Yom Ha'atzmaut (Independence Day) and Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day).

Though it is the last, its very name bears the profound meaning of a fresh start: Hanukkah (חנוכה) stems from the root of "Chinuch" (חינוך), meaning "education" or "inauguration."

The first occurrence of the root associated with the

word Chinuch in the Bible is during Abraham's war against the four kings: "He armed his retainers (חניכין)" (Genesis 14:14). Rashi explains this: "This is Eliezer, whom he trained ((חנוך in the commandments, and it is the term for the beginning of a person or an instrument's entry into the craft he is destined to master." Rashi provides further examples: "Chanoch la-na'ar" (educate the child) and "Chanukat HaMizbeach" (The dedication of the Altar.)

In essence, when we commence utilizing a specific thing for the purpose for which it was intended – its very essence and purpose in existence – we are "Chonchim" or "dedicating" it. Thus, for instance, when we celebrate "Chanukat HaBayit" (the dedication of the home), we begin using the house for its intended purpose: to live in it. When we engage in the Chinuch (education) of our children, we strive to guide the one being educated to walk the path for which he is destined. Contrary to a common misconception, we are not constructing something entirely new within the child; rather, we are assisting him in discovering his purpose and inner strengths – "to enter the craft he is destined to master," in Rashi's words.

Technically, the word Hanukkah reflects the Chanukat HaMikdash, the rededication of the Temple after the Greeks defiled it. On a deeper level, however, the Hanukkah festival may be understood as our "Chinuch" (our education) – the initiation of our

enduring challenge to ignite the light in a place of darkness. In the year's deepest gloom, there is a necessity to begin fulfilling our destiny of illumination. Approximately 200 years before the commencement of the long exile, which has endured for some 2,000 years, we dedicate our capacity to confront the darkness.

The Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah interprets the verse at the start of the Book of Genesis, "and darkness was upon the face of the deep," by stating: "Darkness – this is the Kingdom of Greece, which darkened the eyes of Israel with its decrees, for they said to them, 'Write that you have no share in the G-d of Israel.'"

The struggle against the external influence that seeks to make us forget our essence, our connection to our great past and our luminous future – the redemption of Israel and the building of the Temple on the Temple Mount, the denial of the Divine, and the severing of our bond with the Torah and tradition – this is the perennial struggle of the exile that began with the deeds of the Syrian-Greeks and continues today with various permutations of those same forces antagonistic to the spirit of Israel.

When we light the Hanukkah candles this year, we will begin, yet again, "to enter the craft we are destined to master."

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

Andrew Zimmern's Perfect Potato Latkes

By Andrew Zimmern

(JTA) - These potato latkes are so good that posting the recipe alone is a mitzvah of the highest order. The Festival of Lights refers to a lamp in the temple that was supposed to have only enough oil to last the Maccabees one night, but instead lasted for eight. The holiday celebrates the miracle of the oil, so fried foods are often featured at Hanukkah feasts. Problem is, most potato pancakes, or latkes, are awful. Luckily for you, these are amazing.

Ingredients

1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks
sea salt
2 pounds baking potatoes
1 large onion, finely diced
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup matzah meal
1/2 tsp freshly ground white pepper
vegetable oil, for frying
applesauce, crème fraîche, smoked salmon, salmon roe, and dill sprigs, to serve

Directions

In a medium saucepan, cover the Yukon Gold potatoes with cool water, season generously with salt, and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain well and immediately pass the potatoes through a ricer into a large bowl.

Working quickly, peel and grate the baking potatoes on the large holes of a box grater into a medium bowl. Press with a clean kitchen towel to remove excess moisture. Add half of the grated potatoes to the riced potatoes.

Transfer the remaining grated potatoes to the bowl of a food processor. Add the onion and pulse until the potatoes and onions are very finely chopped. Transfer to a fine-mesh sieve and press with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Add the potato-onion mixture to the large bowl. Stir in the eggs, matzah meal, white pepper, and 2 tsp of salt.

In a large, heavy skillet, heat 1/4 inch of oil until shimmering. Working in 3 batches, spoon 1/4 cup of the potato mixture into the oil for each latke; press slightly to flatten. Fry over moderate heat, turning once, until the latkes are golden and crisp on both sides, about 7 minutes. Drain the latkes on a paper towel-lined baking sheet and sprinkle lightly with salt. Serve with applesauce, crème fraîche, smoked salmon, salmon roe,



and dill.

Note: The fried latkes can be kept at room temperature for up to 4 hours. Reheat them on a baking sheet in a 375 degrees F oven for about 5 minutes, or until warmed through and crisp.

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What Hanukkah really means

By Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein



Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein

specifically, the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabees reclaimed it from those

Every year, as we polish our menorahs and stock up on candles, we prepare to commemorate an ancient miracle. The story is familiar: a small jar of oil, enough for just one day, burned for eight. Yet the name of our holiday points to a different wonder altogether. Hanukkah means "dedication"—

who had desecrated its sacred spaces. The military victory was dramatic, but what followed was even more remarkable. The Maccabees were a priestly family, and they walked into a Temple that had been desecrated beyond recognition. They could not simply declare victory and move on—their sacred duty demanded that they restore what had been broken and make it holy again. This act of restoration became the heart of the holiday itself. The Talmud in Shabbat 21b famously asks: "Mai Hanukkah?"—What is Hanukkah? The question seems almost absurd. Surely everyone knew what Hanukkah was! But the rabbis teach us that the obvious answer isn't always the complete one. They were inviting us to look deeper, to ask not just what happened but what it means, generation after generation. This year, as we kindle our lights, we might ask ourselves: what in our own lives is ready for rededication? Our connections to the community are often the first to fray. We live busy lives, and the fabric of communal life can easily feel loose. We show up for High Holy

Days, perhaps for the occasional Shabbat, but the regular rhythms of participation—the weekly kiddush conversations, the committee meetings that somehow become meaningful, the simple act of being present with the same people week after week—these require conscious recommitment. The Temple wasn't rebuilt in a day, and neither is community. It asks us to keep showing up. Our spiritual practices, too, may be waiting for renewed attention. The phones we check throughout Shabbat dinner. The Hebrew we meant to learn but never started. The Jewish books on our shelf we haven't opened in years. None of these lapses make us bad Jews—they make us human. But Hanukkah whispers an invitation: what might happen if we approached one familiar practice as if for the first time? The Maccabees didn't build a new Temple; they restored the one that had always been there. And then there are our Jewish values—the commitments that shape how we move through the world. Tzedakah, giving to those in need. Gemilut chasadim, acts of loving-kindness. Bikur cholim, visiting the sick. We know these values; we teach them to our children. But knowing and living are different things. The prophet declared: "He has told you, O human, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8) The requirements themselves are ancient, but the doing is always new, always demanding fresh dedication. When the Maccabees finally entered the Temple, they searched until they found a single jar of oil hidden away and still bearing the seal of the High Priest, a small vessel that had somehow survived the destruction around it. This is the real miracle: that even after devastation, something pure remained. The oil was there all along, waiting to be found. The same might be true for us. Beneath the busyness and distraction, beneath the obligations that pile up and the connections that fray, something essential remains sealed and whole—the wonder and longing and love for this tradition that has carried our people through millennia. Like that jar of oil, it remains hidden within us, waiting to be set alight. As we place our menorahs in the window this Hanukkah, we fulfill the mitzvah of pirsumei nisa—publicizing the miracle. We announce to the world that light persists even in darkness, that dedication has the power to make holy again what was once profaned. But the deepest miracle isn't the one we show to others. It's the one we discover within ourselves, when we pause long enough to ask: what am I ready to rededicate? The candles will burn down. The last latke will be eaten. The dreidels will return to their drawers. But the invitation of Hanukkah lingers well beyond the eight nights. A Temple was rededicated once, long ago. And we, its inheritors, carry that capacity for rededication within us—not as a single act but as a practice, renewed each time we remember who we are called to be. חג אורים שמח - Happy Festival of Lights, Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein is Rabbi at Beth Shalom, Edmonton.

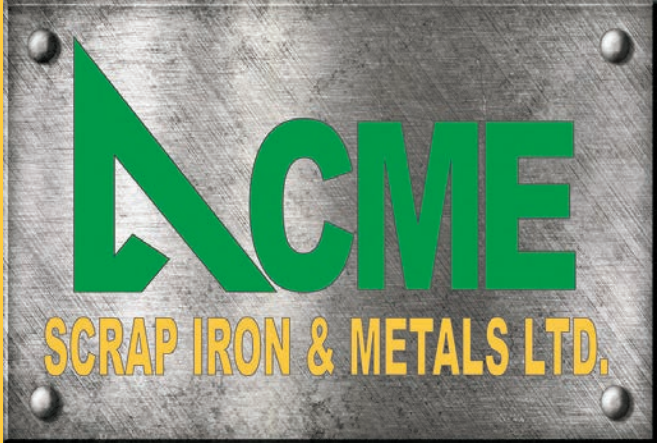


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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT



The festival of Chanukah invites us to reflect on miracles and to search for sources of light—especially in moments that feel heavy or uncertain. It reminds all of us that even in the darkest times, we can find, nurture, and share sparks of hope.

We recently hosted world-renowned advocate and educator Johnny Daniels, a man of extraordinary warmth and presence. He addressed the youth at Talmud Torah School, who had gathered with survivors and community members. As he spoke to the children, he paused, looked at them with great intent, and said:

"You need to know how lucky you are. What a wonderful time this is to be Jewish. What a moment this is for the Jewish people!"

His words struck me. They cut through the anxiety and existential worry so many express about these times and the future of our people. Johnny reminded us that Jewish pride is not only about survival—it is about embracing the blessing of who we are, right now, in this moment in history. This is an inflection point in the long chronicle of the Jewish people, a time when renewal, unity and strength are the path to forge ahead.

And here in Edmonton, we are indeed living in a remarkable moment. Almost daily, I hear from individuals who have long lived here but are only just stepping back into the community—people who once felt alienated, unsure where they fit, or simply didn't know where to begin. They see the work of the Jewish Federation, and the anticipation of a Jewish community centre, and they sense that now is a time to reconnect, to rediscover, to come home.

JCC becoming a reality

Two years ago, as we began purchasing our new community home, I took a picture of a menorah glowing in the window of what would become our future social hall. The sun was setting, and I nicknamed that image Hatikvah—the hope. Today, that hope is becoming reality. After a full year of planning and hard work by our JCC redevelopment committee, PEMCO Construction has started in the building, and next year at this time, we expect to be moving in.

Jewish Edmonton has a long and storied past, and we are now entering a new chapter. Let us stand proudly, as generations before us have done. We have an incredible opportunity to build on this energy. To welcome newcomers. To help young families discover connection—grabbing a coffee and a nosh, bringing toddlers to PJ Library programs, dropping teens for a program in the youth lounge or joining friends on the rooftop patio for a Havdalah under the stars. These are the small, beautiful acts of togetherness that weave a strong and vibrant Jewish fabric.

This Chanukah, as we place our menorahs in our windows and let our light shine outward, I ask you to help strengthen that light. If you are able, please consider donating to support our community's work with a gift to the United Jewish Appeal campaign. **Donations received prior to December 31 will receive a tax receipt.**

Your gift at this moment will help ensure that our light burns brighter for generations to come.

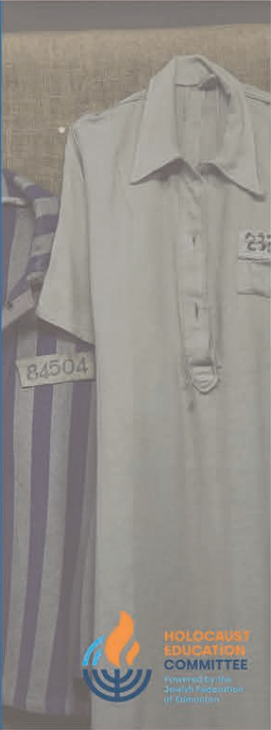
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What Chanukah can teach Canada about celebrating ourselves

By Rabbah Gila Caine

The days are growing shorter. In Edmonton and Calgary, and in cities from coast to coast to coast, temperatures are dropping. And soon, something quite beautiful is about to unfold.



Rabbah Gila Caine

Jewish families across Canada will light the Chanukiah and place it in their windows. This is a moving annual ritual: a defiant assertion of light against the gathering darkness, echoing in its own way the ancient Menorah that once burned in our Temple in Jerusalem, centuries ago.

This light is meant to be seen. It is meant to be public.

Yet Chanukah raises a question that feels particularly urgent for Canada right now. What exactly is this light meant to illuminate? And perhaps more importantly, for whom is it shining?

The answer reveals something profound about Judaism – and about what our country very much needs to hear.

Among the “Abrahamic” faiths, Judaism stands apart in at least one crucial respect: it does not view itself as a missionary religion. We do not seek conversion. We do not attempt to remake others in our image. This is not cultural insularity, nor is it indifference to the wider world. Rather, it reflects something foundational to how Judaism understands its place within human society.

While some faiths, for their own theological reasons, have pursued spreading their message through expansion and conversion, Judaism has embraced a different attitude entirely: the defence of particularism – the right of peoples and cultures to remain distinctly themselves.

That is a real light we offer: An assertion that a people, a culture, a way of life has the inherent right to persist as itself, without apology and without expectation that others will join.

The psychologist Bill Plotkin explores this idea through the concept of *individual ecological niches*. Just as different species occupy irreplaceable positions within nature's ecosystem, societies inhabit distinct niches, and so do individuals within a society. I would add that our soul – our *neshamah* – possesses a singular place in the cosmic order. A life well-lived means discovering and occupying that specific niche with integrity and skill. Nations have such niches. And among the nations, so do Jews.

This frames Chanukah as a moment of public declaration: an affirmation that Jewish life – with its particular rituals, texts and ways of being in the world – represents something vital and irreplaceable. Not superior to others. Not the only legitimate path. But distinctly ours, and worthy of illumination.

For Canada, this carries particular resonance. In an era of increasing cultural anxiety, we face a fundamental choice about what kind of nation we wish to become. Chanukah offers a lesson worth heeding: we can celebrate and deepen our own cultural identity without diminishing others. The mistake we often make is treating cultural flourishing as a zero-sum game. It need not be. When I light my candles, I do not extinguish yours.

Canadians can stop apologising and stop worrying. Taking care of Canada, taking pride in Canada, investing our talents and resources in our own home does not mean we negate other places. It only means we are taking ourselves seriously.

This is the gift that Canadian Jews can offer the broader nation, and in dark times such light matters more than we might think.

This Chanukah, as flickering candle- lights appear in windows across Edmonton and beyond, they will carry that message. And in a country that increasingly needs to remember what binds us together, that is a light worth seeing.

Chag Sameach.

Rabbah Gila Caine is the spiritual leader at Temple Beth Ora in Edmonton.

The Meanings of Hanukkah

By Rabbi Leonard Cohen

Best wishes to the community for a happy and meaningful Hanukkah celebration. The following is adapted from Rabbi Nossan Scherman of Torah.org.

Why is the upcoming holiday called Hanukkah? The word itself has a variety of meanings, each of which adds to our under-standing of the holiday. The word Hanukkah signi-fies all of the following:



Rabbi Leonard Cohen

Peace – the word Hanukkah, according to sages Abduraham, Tur, Ran and others, derives from two words: “Chanu”, which means [they] rested, and “Kaf-Heh” which

means 25. In other words, the Jewish fighters, i.e. the Maccabees, rested from their battles on the 25th day of Kislev. This suggests that the Jewish ethic is not to commemorate the battle victory as much as the peace that resulted from it.

Divine Grace – Noam Elimelech connects Hanukkah with the Hebrew word “Chen” which means grace. Hanukkah is the time when the Jewish warriors, as well as the nation as a whole, encountered Divine grace.

Rededication – The word Hanukkah is used in the Book of Maccabees to refer to the dedication (“chanukah”), or in fact rededication, of the desecrated altar in the Beit Hamikdash. From this perspective, the holiday celebrates our turning away from the unholy and dedicating ourselves once again to that which is sacred.

Commemoration – The consecration of the 2nd Temple occurred on the 24th of Kislev (see Chaggai 2:18). As well, according to Midrash, the dedication of the Mishkan – the holy tabernacle built by the Israelites in the desert – occurred on or around this date. The latter event is commemorated in the Torah readings each day of Hanukkah, which recount the sacrificial offerings presented by the leaders of each tribe at the dedication of the Mishkan.

Revelation – According to Kabbalah, Chanukah is a preparation, or “chinuch”, for our eventual redemption. The light of the Hanukkah candles forms part of the Ohr Haganuz – G-d’s perfect light which was shattered and then hidden since Creation. Our mystical challenge as Jews is to unify the holy sparks in our world in order to recreate this great light.

Increasing Holiness – Ateret Zekenim and Pri Megadim depict the word Hanukkah as an abbreviation of the phrase “chet nerot v’halacha k’veit Hillel” – “Eight lights, and the Halacha follows the School of Hillel.” This refers to the Talmudic debate between Shammai and Hillel. Shammai said we should light eight candles on the first night of Hanukkah, then decrease the number of candles by one each subsequent night. Hillel, on the other hand, said that we should light one candle the first night then add one additional candle for each night – and this is in fact our practice to this day. Hillel’s reasoning? Ma’alin b’kodesh v’ein moridin – We increase holiness, we don’t reduce it.

May we use the opportunity of this holiday of Hanukkah to achieve all the meanings of Hanukkah – and to continue discovering ways to always reach higher and higher in fulfilling G-d’s purpose for us.

Rabbi Leonard Cohen is the Spiritual leader at congregation Kehilat Shalom in Calgary.

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North Cemetery update and Interfaith Burial Campaign

The Board of Directors of the Chevra Kadisha has been busy ensuring that work continues at the new North cemetery site. Improvements have been added at the site, from landscaping to the installation of the 2022 donor wall along with excavation work on the Interfaith burial site.

Edmonton Granite Memorials, honouring a commitment made by the previous owner, donated the stone for the donor wall, including inscriptions and installation, ensuring the accuracy and quality of the final product. The donor wall monument was installed on November 3. A central gazebo is now complete, made possible through the generosity of the Shoctor family in the 2022 campaign. Additionally, a bench donated by Todd Margolis & Anne Zavalkoff has been added to the site. Design is moving forward in the Interfaith section for a pergola, donated by Marcia Bercov, to honour the volunteers of the Chevra Kadisha.

The work on the Interfaith burial site, stewarded by project manager Marshall Hundert, began in September with tree removal and site excavation to ensure all organics were removed. New soil has been backfilled onto the site allowing for continuing development after the spring thaw. During the winter, permits will be obtained so that grade beams can be installed in the spring, the necessary next step for burials to begin. The Chevra is hopeful that burials can begin late spring/early summer 2026.

The Interfaith cemetery campaign began in the summer with a small committee of fundraisers speaking to potential major donors for support. Donations and pledges of \$185,680 were secured over the summer. The campaign was paused in late August so as not to compete with the UJA campaign. Our public campaign is now launching to meet our \$250,000 goal.

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Pictured above from the Edmonton Interfaith burial site: The Interfaith burial site, The Gazebo, and the Memorial Wall.

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Project Regeneration sets big things in motion in Northern Israel

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

On October 7, 2023, the international Jewish community looked on in horror and fear as peaceful communities in Eretz Israel were descended upon by terrorists orchestrating modern day pogroms of mass slaughter and the bloodshed of innocents. On October 8, with the numbers of dead still rising, and a still unknown number of hostages, the international Jewish community sprang into action. While pro-Hamas rallies and demonstrations began to brew, Jews around the world came together, emotionally, spiritually, and monetarily to support Israel and the future of the Jewish State.

Albertans may recall a visit from Sarah Mali, the Director General of the Jewish Federations of Canada in September 2024. In Edmonton, she attended an event to kick off the United Jewish Appeal campaign. She explained passionately that the people she visited in Northern Israel were being supported in meaningful and life-changing ways by the generosity of Canadian Jewish communities. Even then Mali was clear with audience members, that the process of collective healing would take years of effort and dedication. The destruction of October 7 aftermath will ricochet for many years to come but the inspiring efforts to rebuild and rejuvenate Canada’s partner communities in Northern Israel are already underway and thriving.

Recently, Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, traveled to Israel with Calgary Jewish Federation CEO Rob Nagus and their counterparts from other Jewish Federations and Coast-to-Coast representatives. As Jewish Albertans are well aware, Leavitt-Wright and Nagus have both worked tirelessly with their teams to keep the communities safe and informed as hate crimes and rising antisemitism have sparked uncertainty and anxiety.

Leavitt-Wright was happy to be able to share good news with the *Alberta Jewish News* in an interview following her return, bringing with her a message of hope and healing from Eretz Israel. “Our communities in Canada were abundantly generous with donations to support Israel following October 7,” she explained. “These funds were vital and we were able to help support some essential services at a critical time, but we always knew that there would be a long process of healing.”

While in Israel, the Canadian delegates met with community leaders, local decision-makers in municipal government, and educators.

“Together, we’ve allocated emergency funding over the past two years throughout Israel, and today, we stand united in our commitment to the North, a testament to the collective of Canadian Jewry where we are contributing equally toward a shared vision.” Leavitt-Wright expanded on the importance of a new and uplifting undertaking. She said, “Project Regeneration unites the Federations of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Coast-to-Coast Emergency Forum, who are each committing an equal share toward a joint goal for the North. The Coast-to-Coast group includes Jewish Winnipeg; Ottawa; Calgary; Edmonton, and Atlantic Jewish Council. We are joined in this endeavour today with Victoria and Vancouver Island; Windsor; Hamilton; London, Ontario and small communities in Ontario and Saskatchewan. I am so proud of our work together and the impact we create when we galvanize the Canadian collective, an opportunity that has ensured that the smaller



federations and communities could also join in something larger than what any of us could have accomplished on our own. This is the true spirit of what it means to be a Jewish Federation and part of the Canadian collective.”

The power of collective giving cannot be underestimated. “In February 2024 we came to Eitzvah Hagalil for a Coast-to-Coast solidarity mission, to listen and to see firsthand how our remarkable partners on the ground were dealing with an unprecedented situation. Ensuring that communities were supported and kept intact, despite being spread across the country, took herculean efforts by very dedicated professionals and lay leaders.”

According to a June 2025 article in the *Canadian Jewish News*, over \$140 million dollars in emergency funds were raised to support Israel. In Northern Israel, with so many families displaced long term this support was crucial. As Leavitt-Wright reiterated though, there is now the need to rejuvenate and rebuild, and this may be an even longer process than anticipated.

“It isn’t just about repairing infrastructure, but revitalizing community, and bringing families back to

Continued on page 24

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this season*



Al Osten *Cont. from page 2*

his father, who, in turn, spoke with Osten.

“It’s all about relationships,” says Stacy Shaikin, who is thrilled that the camp received Osten’s transformational gift on his watch, following his eighth and final season as camp director.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better way to go out,” Shaikin said. “Maybe some of the dreams that I had when I came into the job have now come to fruition.”

To be sure, Shaikin worked hard at realizing those dreams, having retired the camp’s debt while fundraising for and completing vital capital projects. Now, Osten’s gift will give the camp much-needed forward momentum.

“We are asking the community to share in this with Al,” said Shaikin, who describes Camp BB-Riback as the “hub of the Alberta Jewish community,” the only local organization he can think of that serves both Calgary and Edmonton.

“The camp is important to Jewish youth, especially nowadays,” says JJ Hoffman, who grew up with Shaikin and shares his passion for BB Riback.

“With antisemitism and all the chaos in the world, it is more important than ever to give to the camp and the schools, where we can foster Jewish identity,” added Hoffman. “Kids need to grow up loving their Judaism, loving their community, loving the places that basically shape their future.”

With the news of Osten’s gift, the entire camp community is smiling, but none as broadly as their benefactor.

“The last few years have been the happiest in my life,” Osten told *AJNews*. “I’m so proud of the things we’ve been doing.”

The “we” refers to the late Buddy Victor, Osten’s showbiz, business, and life partner, who passed away in 2023 but whose name lives on in all the couple’s charitable works, bringing Osten much comfort and many happy memories.

Osten and Victor met when they were singers in the Rover Boys, a 1950s quartet whose hit song *Graduation Day* is still fondly remembered. They even helped to discover legendary singer Paul Anka who later acknowledged their early support in his

autobiography.

After living for a time in New York City, Osten and Victor settled in Edmonton, where Osten – born in Saskatoon – had been raised. They achieved business success following their ground-floor entry into the weight-loss industry with their purchase of the Alberta and Saskatchewan Weight Watchers franchise.

That meeting changed the course of Victor and Osten’s life.

For one thing they lost a lot of weight. As their waistlines shrunk, their business grew, necessitating Osten’s move to Calgary while Victor continued to helm the Edmonton office.

Thanks to a relationship they had with a Weight Watchers friend, Mildred Oppenheimer, Osten and Victor began investing in Broadway shows, some of which became major hits, including *Hairspray* (2002), *Little Shop of Horrors* (2003), *Sweeney Todd* (2005), and *Young Frankenstein* (2009).

Prudent investment through the years allowed Osten and Victor – who did not have children of their own – to build and then generously share their legacy, taking care of kin and the causes nearest their big hearts.

Osten told *AJNews* that the couple’s charitable efforts in both Edmonton and Calgary have been built around four pillars: Hospice and healthcare (or, as Osten puts it, “living and dying with dignity”); children and youth; the arts; and religious organizations, with emphasis on Jewish and Catholic charities, consistent with Osten and Victor’s respective faiths.

Through their Osten-Victor fund at the Calgary Foundation and Victor-Osten Fund at the Edmonton Community Foundation, they have supported countless worthwhile organizations and institutions, like the Roozen Family Hospice Centre in Edmonton and Ronald McDonald Houses in both Edmonton and Calgary, to name but a few.



Camp BB-Riback summer of 2024. Photo supplied.

ing love for sports.

Osten’s \$500 thousand gift to CIJA (the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs) – announced this past July – supports that organization’s first-ever office in Calgary, helping to boost local advocacy for Israel and the Jewish community.

In recent years, Osten has also pledged an after-lifetime gift to a broad range of Jewish communal organizations via the Life & Legacy program, an initiative of the Massachusetts-based Harold Grinspoon Foundation that is coordinated locally by the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary and the Calgary Jewish Federation.

It is impossible to list all the civic organizations in both Calgary and Edmonton that have benefited from Al Osten and Buddy Victor’s philanthropy. Their donation some years back to the Art Gallery of Alberta’s New Vision building capital campaign was described by the AGA as “pivotal,” and they later donated many works of art to the AGA. In Calgary, the Osten and Victor Alberta Tennis Centre is making a difference in the lives of young tennis players.

A former member of the board of directors at Theatre Calgary, Osten is proud that the legacy fund they endowed there has, among other things, subsidized ticket prices, making theatre accessible to more Calgarians.

Chag Hanukkah Sameach!

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Within the Jewish community, beneficiaries have included Temple B’nai Tikvah – where Al is a much-cherished congregant, Calgary Jewish Federation/ UJA, Jewish Family Service Calgary, CHW, the Beth Tzedec Congregation Jewish Film Festival, Chabad Lubavitch, and JNF.

Funds donated by Osten and other supporters at the 2017 JNF Negev Gala gave a boost to the Israel Tennis Centre, with funds earmarked for programs facilitating the integration of Ethiopian immigrants, youth with disabilities, and other at-risk groups while modeling the peaceful co-existence of Arabs and Jews through a unify-

Recent major gifts – dizzying in their scope – reflect Al and Buddy’s shared love for the performing arts. They include a \$5 million gift to the Glenbow Museum – which will feature a 150-seat Osten-Victor theatre – and a \$12 million gift to the Werklund Centre which will house the state-of-the-art Osten-Victor Playhouse at the Werklund Centre, previously known as Arts Commons.

Another eponymous performance space Osten is excited to have gifted to Calgarians is the Osten-Victor Inspiration Studio, a state-of-the-art, accessible theatre/dance workshop venue that will be part of the Multidisciplinary Disability Community Arts Hub (MDCAH) Project of The National accessArts Centre in Calgary.

Other philanthropic projects are currently in the works, says Osten whose friends sometimes warn him he is giving it all away.

“That’s the plan,” he replies, counterintuitively adding, “The more you give, the more you get.”

“It shoots me to the moon,” says Osten.

Jessica Miller Switzer has a more modest travel proposal for Osten.

“We want to bring Al out to BB-Riback this spring,” said Miller Switzer.

How heartwarming is that? Al Osten will finally go to camp!

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Hanukkah: One flame at a time

By Rabbi Russell Jayne

As we prepare to enter Hanukkah, I find myself returning to a detail in the familiar story of the Maccabees that we often rush past. We speak of the miracle of the oil that burned far longer than it should have, of a rededi-cated Temple glowing once again with sacred light. But before any of that happened, before the miracle unfolded, some-thing much more quiet took place. Something without which there could have been no miracle at all.



Rabbi Russell Jayne

A single flame was lit. In a sanctuary still scarred by war, surrounded by debris and uncertainty, with no assurance that there would be enough oil for the days ahead, our ancestors chose to act anyway. They didn't wait for conditions to be perfect. They didn't wait to feel ready. They didn't wait for the world to give them a sign. They simply lit one small flame,

trusting that this first step mattered. That is what Hanukkah is, at its heart, a festival of small courage. A celebration not of grand victories, but of modest acts of faith that become the foundation for something far greater. Most of us aren't fighting ancient armies or purifying desecrated Temples. But we know what it means to walk through uncertainty. We know what it feels like when the world seems dimmer than we wish it did, when our reserves feel low, when the days seem shorter in more ways than one. And yet, like our ancestors, we keep lighting that next candle. Every time we choose kindness when it would be easier to retreat, every time we extend a hand despite feeling weary, every time we create connection in a world that too often drifts toward isolation we are performing our own Hanukkah miracles. They may not feel dramatic, but they shine just as brightly. In every Jewish community across our province,

these quiet acts take place every single day: A volunteer who steps forward even when no one sees, simply because it is the right thing to do. A member who calls someone who has been absent, asking sincerely, "Are you okay? We've missed you." A family who chooses hope over fear by showing up, participating, and bringing life into Jewish spaces. A person who offers kindness even when their own heart feels heavy. These are our "one-day-of-oil moments." They are small, but they matter more than we know. They remind us that while the world often celebrates spectacle, Judaism has always honoured the sacred power of the *Kol D'mamah Dakah* (the still, small voice). This year, Hanukkah arrives at a time when many people are carrying quiet burdens, visible and invisible. Some are worried about global crises. Some feel the weight of rising antisemitism. Some are navigating illnesses, family stresses, or private griefs. Others are simply tired, tired in the way that only modern life, with its relentless speed and expectation, can make us. Hanukkah doesn't ask us to solve these challenges all at once. It asks only that we take a small step toward light. Our tradition teaches that when the Maccabees searched the Temple, they found just one cruse of pure oil, barely enough for a single day. But what is equally important is that they didn't dismiss that tiny reserve as insufficient. They didn't say, "It's not enough, so why bother?" Instead, they honoured what they had. That, too, is a profound spiritual message. The world does not need us to be perfect. It needs us to be willing. One flame at a time. One act of compassion at a time. One conversation, one prayer, one gesture of generosity. The story of Hanukkah reminds us that hope doesn't begin with certainty. It begins with the courage to try. Courage rarely feels like bravery in the moment. Most often, it feels small, like the decision to strike a match, not knowing what might come next. But Jewish history is built on these moments. On people who stepped forward when they weren't



sure, who brought light into imperfect circumstances, who trusted that doing something, however small, mattered deeply. This is how we rebuild our communities. This is how we strengthen the bonds between us. This is how we honour the generations before us and sustain the generations to come. As our menorahs glow across Alberta, in private homes, in synagogues, in schools, in care facilities, in public celebrations, I hope we will remember that each light is a testament to someone's courage, past or present, ancient or modern, grand or humble. May we have the courage to bring our light into the world, one candle at a time. *Chag Urim Sameach!* May your Festival of Lights be filled with warmth, resilience, community, and gentle miracles. Rabbi Russell Jayne is Senior Rabbi and Cantor at Beth Tzedec Congregation.

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Lighting up Edmonton Talmud Torah with music, art and celebrations for Chanukah

By Natalie Soroka

As we prepare to welcome Chanukah, our halls are already buzzing with creativity, music, and meaningful learning.

Our Talmud Torah student choir has been practicing weekly in preparation for the community Menorah lighting at the Alberta Legislature on December 14th. Each year, TT students eagerly sign up to be part of this meaningful event, and they can't wait to share their joy and talent with the wider community! Moreh Ben will lead the choir in a medley of classics.

On December 18, early learning and out of school care families will gather for a Hanukkah program to enjoy delicious food and warm conversation. There will be fun activity centers for the children, as well as delicious latkes, *sufganyiot*, and pizza to fill everyone's bellies. Ari the TT lion mascot will be in attendance to give high-fives and hugs. As part of their graduation year, Grade 6 students will be volunteering throughout the event. Be sure to pop by and enjoy a treat!

Led by our enthusiastic Grade 5 class, the TT community will also come together on December 19th for our very own Chanukah assembly, where Grade 1s will sing *Bo'u Negaresh Et Ha'Choshech (Banish the Darkness)*, matching the tone of the Grade 4 song *Bayamim HaHem BaZman Haze (In Our Time as in Days of Old)*. Grade 2 will follow with *Yesh Po Am Maleh B'Or (A Nation of Light)*.

Grade 5 students will be rapping in Hebrew and English about the Chanukah story to the tune of the *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. The song will accompany an impressive hip hop routine choreo-graphed by Ms. Kovacs. The Kindergarten and Grade 3 classes will be singing in Hebrew, and Grade 6 students will be using their new guitar skills (and instruments) to play *Chanukah oh Chanukah*. Grade 5s will conclude the assembly with *Hatikvah*. Our Early Learning Center (ELC) students and educators are excited to join this event.

A peek into our Kindergarten classroom shows our little learners excitedly engaging in Hanukkah enrichment activities: connecting numbers on a dreidel worksheet, searching for holiday words, forming Hebrew letters with playdough, amongst other Chanukah-themed activities.

The Podersky Judaic Art Fund will be used for the very first time to support a special Grade 2 in-class field trip with *ArtVentures*! Students will dive into the



Each year, family and friends are invited to enjoy a school wide Chanukah assembly where the TT students perform. This year's assembly, led by the Grade 5 students is sure to be a delight.

world of block printmaking, creating their own Chanukah-themed prints. This hands-on experience beautifully blends artistic expression with Jewish cultural education.

Classrooms and hallways in both the ELC and K-6 are busy with creative and colourful Chanukah art, using water colour paints, oil and chalk pastels, and a variety of other mediums. Students have been exploring the story of Chanukah throughout the grades, learning how the Maccabee army fought

against King Antiochus and the Greeks who attempted to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem and the Jewish people. We are reminded of those brave warriors every time we light our Hannukah candles and the parallels in today's climate with the ongoing sacrifices of the Israeli Defense Forces in their active fight to keep the Jewish nation safe.

Wishing all our families a joyful and light-filled Chanukah!

Wishing you a happy Chanukah!



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days be filled with light, joy,
and blessings.

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This year’s Hanukkah kids’ books light up the imagination

By Penny Schwartz

(JTA) — From Who-ville to Schmoozeville, and from island getaways to cozy homes, this year’s crop of Hanukkah books for kids of all ages take families on journeys to imaginative settings, some familiar from the pantheon of children’s literature and Jewish ideas. Families from across the diverse Jewish spectrum will enjoy the new titles that celebrate the popular eight-day holiday, also known as the Festival of Lights.

Three titles garnered the recommendation of the Association of Jewish Libraries — “Construction Site, Hanukkah Lights,” “Banana Menorah” and “Lost and Found Hanukkah.”

Hanukkah begins at sundown on Sunday, Dec. 14.

“Construction Site Hanukkah Lights”

Sherri Duskey Rinker and Shawna J.C. Tenney
Chronicle Books; ages 2-4

The youngest children — particularly those who are vehicle-obsessed — will enjoy lifting the flaps of this rhyming story, in which a dump truck, a crane and a cement mixer transform a construction site into a Hanukkah wonderland with a dazzling giant menorah and a huge pile of shiny gold Hanukkah gelt.

“Happy HanukKat”

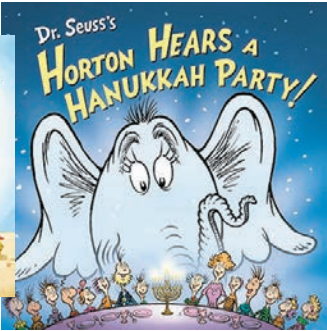
Jessica Hickman; illustrated by Elissambura
Kar-Ben Publishing; ages 1-4

Jessica Hickman’s sweet, rhyming board book about a lively Jewish family of kittens will tickle the youngest kids, who will have fun celebrating each night of the holiday with the Hanukkah party-loving cat family. Elissambura’s playful illustrations feature kitties in Hanukkah party hats and sweaters.

“Golem Loves Latkes: A Tasty Hanukkah Tale”

Doreen Klein Robinson;
illustrated by Anna Krajewska
Intergalactic Afikomen; ages 3-10

In Doreen Klein Robinson’s fun-filled story, an endearing little girl loves to visit her bubbie for Hanukkah in the happy village of Schmoozeville, where everyone likes to schmooze – chat, in Yiddish. But this year, the usually friendly townsfolk are bickering about the best topping for fried potato latkes



— applesauce or sour cream. The young girl makes a clay dreidel that spins to life as a golem, the centuries-old Jewish mystical clay figure who protects Jews. When the latke-loving golem gobbles up all of Schmoozeville’s crispy latkes, the clever girl takes the

golem’s message to the warring camps: Enjoy your latkes however you like and celebrate the true meaning of the holiday. Anna Krajewska’s lively, colorful illustrations add to the mayhem and score points for featuring a youthful, active bubbie.

“Dr. Seuss’s Horton Hears a Hanukkah Party!”

Leslie Kimmelman; illustrated by Tom Brannon,
based on “Horton Hears a Who!” by Dr. Seuss
Random House; ages 3-7

Horton the Elephant looms large in Leslie Kimmelman’s rhyming riff on the classic “Horton Hears a Who!” by Dr. Seuss. The original features an elephant who champions the small against the mighty — a perfect character for the Hanukkah story. In this version, only Horton hears the faint sound of celebration that goes on night after night, so his jungle friends tease him. On the eighth night Horton sees the sparkling menorah belonging to a rabbi, who invites Horton and his pals to his family’s celebration. Tom Brannon’s illustrations translate the essence of Seuss’s floppy-eared Horton to a Jewish setting.

“Banana Menorah”

Lee Wind; illustrated by Karl West
Apples & Honey Press; ages 3-5

In Lee Wind’s light-hearted story, Skylar, a spirited young girl, and her two fathers are vacationing on an island far from home on the first night of Hanukkah. But both dads forgot to pack a menorah. The clever girl improvises with what’s on hand — the first night, it’s a banana menorah, the next, a granola bar. When they get home in time for the fourth candle and light their three menorahs, Skylar misses the new ones. For the rest of the holiday, her family celebrates with friends and all kinds of menorahs. Karl West’s animated illustrations add to the fun for a playful, creative holiday. Instructions for a banana menorah at the end — though there are also mass market versions available to buy.

“Lost and Found Hanukkah”

Joy Preble; illustrated by Lisa Anchin
Chronicle Books; ages 5-8

LGBT families and homemade menorahs are part of Joy Preble’s heartwarming story about Nate, who loves celebrating Hanukkah and lighting his family’s three menorahs, including one he made. When he and his two fathers move to a new apartment, Nate’s menorah gets lost. At Amy’s Judaica shop, Nate befriends the latke-loving, furry store kitty named Kugel, who runs out of the shop. When Nate’s dads fry up a batch of latkes for the holiday, the clever boy hatches a plan to find Kugel. By story’s end, everyone is reunited in time to celebrate Hanukkah and Nate carves a perfect new menorah. Lisa Anchin’s large cartoon-style illustrations reflect the story’s warmth and love.

“The Book of Candles: Eight Poems for Hanukkah”

Laurel Snyder; illustrated by Leanne Hatch
Clarion Books; ages 4-8

Children will enjoy following a young girl, her siblings, their parents and — again — a kitten as they light Hanukkah candles every night. Each night’s poem flows lyrically to the next. The award-winning Laurel Snyder adds a note for each candle that illuminates the themes of the holiday and turns the story into a teachable moment. Leanne Hatch’s cartoon-style illustrations capture the cozy, wintry setting and glow of the flickering flames

“A Dragon Called Spark: A Hanukkah Story”

Lily Murray; illustrated by Kirsti Beautyman
Kalanit Books; ages 4-7

In Lily Murray’s imaginative tale, a young girl named Eva feels lonely when she and her family move somewhere new and she is far from friends at the start of Hanukkah. For comfort, Eva turns to Spark, her imaginary friend, a diminutive flying dragon. But Eva is worried that Spark is lonely and hopes for a Hanukkah miracle — a friend for herself and for Spark. When she meets Charlie, her neighbor, they become friends and she tells him about Spark, whom he can’t see. The power of friendship shines in this poignant story. Kirsti Beautyman’s illustrations capture the magic of the tale, which gets high marks for featuring a multiracial friendship.

“Eight Fairy Nights”

Imagined and illustrated by Bub
BookBaby; ages 4-8

Bub’s unique Hanukkah story introduces young kids to a fairytale version of the Hanukkah story and the Maccabees — who are lauded for their courage. Readers then meet eight fairies with eight virtues, one for each night. The book captures Bub’s enthusiasm for celebrating Hanukkah, and his weakness for riddles. Without referencing God’s hand in the Hanukkah miracle, “Eight Fairy Nights,” may be especially appealing to secular and humanist Jews.

May your lives
be as happy
and bright as the
eight burning candles
of the Menorah

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This Indian donut is the perfect Hanukkah treat

By Joanna Nissim

(The Noshers via JTA) - Hanukkah has always been my favorite Jewish holiday. I love all of it: Friends and family gathering together, watching children open their presents, cheery songs to sing when lighting the candles, the celebration of triumph over evil and the opportunity to eat fried food and happily justify it. Of course, no Jewish holiday is complete without each family's edible traditions.

Our family are Bagdadi Jews from Bombay and Calcutta, and have wonderful culinary traditions from Iraq and India for every Jewish holiday. For example, cheese sambusak are *always* served to break the Yom Kippur fast, and leek fritters are always served at our Rosh Hashanah seder. On Hanukkah, we enjoy all sorts of delicious fried food, from latkes and donuts to zalabia; however, I am *always* on the lookout for something new to add to our repertoire.

My Auntie Ruby who grew up in Calcutta, India recalls being taken as a child by her parents to KC Dass, a sweet shop close to where they lived, after Passover to have gulab jamun: a small, milky donut which has been deep-fried and soaked in cardamom and saffron syrup. She said they would dream about the little creamy treats all Passover, and would count down the minutes until they could eat them.

This got me thinking that they would make an amazing addition to our Hanukkah table: They're fried, to symbolize the oil lasting eight days; they contain dairy, to celebrate the heroism of Judith, slayer of the general Holofernes; and they're soaked in syrup — well there doesn't need to be a reason to eat anything soaked in syrup!

Gulab jamun is one of India's most famous deserts, though it was introduced by the Persians around 500 BC. The word "gulab" is derived from the Persian words "gol" (flower) and "ab" (water), which refer to the sweet's rose water-scented syrup. Interestingly, gulab jamun is commonly served at Diwali, the Indian festival of lights, which, much like our own festival of lights, Hanukkah, celebrates bringing light into the world and good triumphing over evil.

Gulab Jamun

Prep time: 15 minutes + 2 hours soaking time

Cook time: 30 minutes

Yield: 15 balls

Ingredients

For the syrup:

4 green cardamom pods, bashed in a pestle and mortar, 500 g caster sugar, 2 tsp rosewater, ¼ tsp saffron strands

For the gulab jamun:

1 tsp ground cardamom, 1 tsp caster sugar, 100 g milk powder, 40 g plain flour, ½ tsp baking powder, 50 g softened unsalted butter, cut into cubes, 1 Tbsp natural yogurt, squeeze of lemon juice, 3 Tbsp whole milk, sunflower oil (or any other neutral oil), for frying

To serve:

2 tsp crushed pistachios, slivered almonds and/or silver leaf

Instructions

Make the syrup by gently heating the sugar and cardamom in 500 ml water in a saucepan. Once it comes to a boil, lower the temperature and simmer for 10 mins. Remove from heat, add the rosewater and a pinch of saffron, and leave to infuse. Set aside.

To make the gulab jamun, sieve ground cardamom, sugar, milk powder, flour and baking powder into a mixing bowl.

Rub in the 50 g butter using your fingertips until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.



Add the yogurt, lemon juice and 3 Tbsp milk. Mix to form a soft dough, taking care not to overwork the mixture.

Oil your hands with a little sunflower oil and shape small portions of the dough into walnut-sized balls, about 3 cm in diameter and 20 g each. Make sure the dumplings are smooth and have no cracks or folds.

Reheat the syrup until it comes to the boil, then turn off the heat and cover with a lid.

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan. Once the top is shimmering, the oil is hot enough for frying. Test the oil with a piece of bread to ensure that it sizzles. Fry the balls in batches over medium heat for 5-7 mins. (As soon as you drop one in, move it around immediately with a spoon to ensure it doesn't catch on the bottom of the pan.)

Once the balls are even and dark golden brown, remove them from the oil and let them drain on paper towel.

Once cooled, add to the balls warm syrup and leave to soak at room temperature for at least 2-3 hours, if not overnight.

Eat warm or at room temperature, and garnish with slivered almonds, crushed pistachios and/or silver leaf for a special decoration.

This story originally appeared on The Noshers.



World Zionist Congress: In the room where it happened

By Howie Sniderman

It costs 8 shekels to ride the Jerusalem Light Rail Train. I took the LRT daily to Binyanei Ha'Uma (the Jerusalem International Conference Center) to attend the 39th World Zionist Congress on October 28-29. The 39th iteration of Theodor Herzl's original convening of the leaders of the Jewish world in Basel, Switzerland in 1897.

I mention the Jerusalem LRT for two reasons. First, they are digging up much of downtown West Jerusalem as they construct new lines so I felt like I was right at home back in Edmonton, seeing traffic tied up in knots trying to find ways around the construction related congestion.

But, more germane, I mention the Jerusalem LRT because, in preparation for the whirlwind of Israeli politics that predictably descended on the Congress, a few days prior I had an early crash course in 'differing opinions' when, over a delicious Shabbat dinner at the home of close friends from Beth Shalom's sister synagogue in Jerusalem, Kehillat Ya'ar Ramot, I (not so) innocently asked the dozen or so at the table for their advice on the best way to access and pay for travel on the Jerusalem LRT.

As you will imagine, there were a dozen or so different opinions gleefully shouted my way and at one another over the next 30 minutes until everyone was satisfied that they'd had their say. In the end, one of my friends abruptly got up from the table, walked out the door and 3 minutes later walked back in and handed me a Rav Kav (transit) card. You tap it as you enter the train – one of the various ways in which you can pay for an LRT ride.

So, what did I learn from this? No surprise here – it's not what you know, it's what you do that will carry the day. You may have the loudest, shrillest and/or most insistent voice in the room. But rest assured, there will be others who are in the background 'doing' while you are talking and, in the end, they will carry the day. Or not. Which is the wonderful thing (maybe?) about Israeli politics.

Let me give you an example. One of the well-publicized resolutions voted on at the WZO Congress urged the Israeli Knesset to enact legislation that makes it mandatory for all age-eligible Israeli's to complete national service or service in the IDF. In other words, no more exemptions for Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox). Indeed, in the weeks leading up to the Congress the Knesset itself has been rife with speculation on what the long-promised legislation on the issue would actually say. The latest iteration, which may well be superseded by something else by the time you read this, would exempt 50% of age-eligible Haredi who are not enrolled in a Yeshiva. (Hmmm - I wonder how quickly the Haredi Yeshiva enroll-ment ledgers will inflate if that ends up being the legislated 'compromise'?).

More to the point, with the issue squarely on the table at the WZO Congress and in the Knesset, the Haredi called for a 'Million Man' protest (no women allowed, of course) to take place at the Central Jerusalem Train station - directly in front of the conference centre and exactly where my LRT station stop was located. They set the protest for the final morning of the Congress, when the resolution on the exemp-tions was scheduled for vote, making it impossible to access the conference centre.

In response, the WZO Congress met until nearly midnight the night before to complete the vote on all resolutions (but one), passing the 'equal national service for all' resolution by a margin of almost 4 to 1.

Votes for: 427
Votes against: 09
Abstentions: 12

Resolution passed.

This was one of the resolutions proposed by Mercaz Olami – the political arm of the Conservative/Masorti movement. The approval of the resolution – which is now the official 'policy' that will be promoted and followed by the World Zionist Organization – is indicative of and repre-sentative of the overall 'mood' of the Jews of the World and indicative of the ultimate outcome of most of the other 30 or so policy resolutions that were reviewed, debated and voted upon by the 755 delegates to the Congress from over 43 countries, including delegates from Uganda, one of 6 nations making their debut at a WZO Congress.

The final resolution to be voted upon at each Congress relates to the ratification of a Coalition Agreement. Specifically, an agreement on how the leadership of the WZO and its constituent arms, known collectively as the National Institutions, will be governed for the coming 5 years until the next Congress.

The National Institutions of the World Zionist Congress include:

The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) – JAFI works in 65 countries. Amongst other things, JAFI promotes Aliyah, sends Shlichim to engage with local Jewish communities who bring Israel to the world, and provides funding for the security of threatened Jewish communities.

Keren Kayemeth L'Yisrael/Jewish National Fund (KKL/JNF) – Since its establishment in 1901 KKL/JNF has helped build Israel though forestry projects, combating desertification, community development, and water management amongst other things. KKL/JNF owns and controls over 12% of the land of Israel.

Keren Hayesod/United Israel Appeal: Established in 1920 with a mission to raise funds and provide social services for the State of Israel, this national institution has partnerships in 45 countries and helps, amongst other things, with the absorption of immigrants to Israel, provides funding for programming and services that strengthen weak populations and disadvantaged youth in Israel and for programs which connect Diaspora Jews to Israel by cultivating and facilitating the dissemination of information and informed discussions about Zionism and modern Israel.

World Zionist Organization: The various departments of the WZO include those that combat anti-Semitism, promote Holocaust Commemoration, provide spiritual services in the Diaspora, organize &



Opening Ceremonies of the 39th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem held on October 28, 2025.

liaison with Israelis in the Diaspora, and strengthen Jewish Identity and connection to Israel in the spirit of Israel's Declaration of Independence.

Controlling an overall budget in excess of \$5 Billion USD annually, it's patently clear why efforts to populate the key leadership positions are a struggle at each WZO Congress and the 39th iteration was no different. In the end, the Coalition Agreement ratified by the Congress – albeit more than 2 weeks later by a remote vote by Congress delegates – proved to be a final success for the centre/ centre left faction, repelling efforts (for example) to provide what would amount to a pure nepotism position in the National Institutions to Benjamin Netanyahu's son, Yair, and specifically prohibiting any role in the governance of the WZO and National Institutions by the likes of Itamar Ben Gvir and his racist Otzma Yehudit thugs.

The ability to achieve these successes – and they are indeed tangible and real successes for sanity and a path forward to more sanity – is in major part thanks to the participation of hundreds of thousands of Jews worldwide in the election and selection of their national delegates. My personal thanks to our Jewish community in Alberta, who (singularly amongst Canadian provinces) voted primarily to select delegates to the Congress who promoted the principles of our Conservative/Masorti movement, and whose votes propelled me to be able to attend the Congress to voice (until I pretty much had none left) those principles. To literally be 'in the room where it happened'.

In the end, while the 'parliament of the Jewish people' has now spoken, through the resolutions passed at the 39th World Zionist Congress, it is clear that our Jewish world (in Israel and in the Diaspora) has much work to do to match the plea of Israel's President Isaac Herzog at the Opening Ceremonies, where he welcomed us all as 'Am Echad' – one people – but implored us to be more than that; to be a 'united people'.

And so, back to work. On the LRT (in Edmonton and in Jerusalem) and on the path to unity of our 'Am Echad.'

Am Yisrael Chai.



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Canadian Jewish Literary Awards announced

The nine winners of the 2025 Canadian Jewish Literary Awards have been announced. The accomplishments of these writers stand as a beacon of hope and resilience in these challenging times when the community often feels under siege. The awards were presented on October 26, 2025, at a gala ceremony at the Miles Nadal JCC in Toronto.

As it embarks on its second decade, the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards recognizes and rewards the finest Canadian writing on Jewish themes and subjects. Winners have been selected in the categories of fiction, biography, memoir, poetry, Yiddish, Jewish culture, history, scholarship, and books for children and youth.

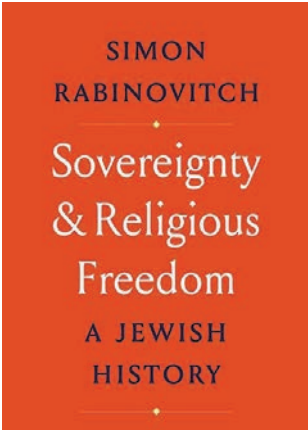
“Despite the challenges, the Canadian Literary Awards had more submissions this year than ever before,” Canadian Jewish Literary Awards founder and Jury Chair Edward Trapunski said. “The quality of the submissions was exemplary, and the Jury had to make tough decisions to honour these exceptional books.”

Especially significant is the Irving Abella Award in History given annually in honour of Irving Abella z”l, of blessed memory. Celebrating the best Canadian writing on Jewish history, the Irving Abella Award is supported by the friends of this giant of scholarship who left an indelible imprint on Canadian Jewish studies.

The Irving Abella Award in History

Sovereignty and Religious Freedom: A Jewish History (Yale University Press) by Simon Rabinovitch recounts the story of the varying rights Jews have enjoyed in different countries. Deeply researched and brilliantly conceived, it is both a survey and a legal history of Jewish sovereignty and religious freedom. It explores ideas about citizenship and belonging,

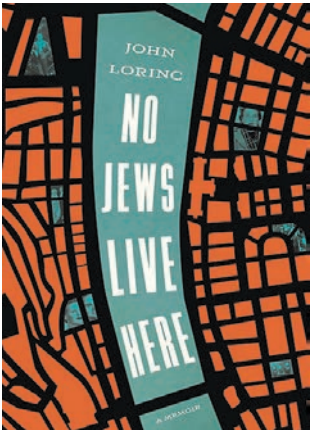
including who is a Jew, what constitutes a Jewish family, and how to define Jewish space. It compares the conflicts between the individual and collective rights of Jews over the last two centuries. With Rabinovitch as a guide, we explore religious freedom and group rights for Jews in America, Europe, and Israel, the one state



where they are a majority. The book’s analysis of Jewish rights and sovereignty is directly applicable to Quebec’s history, particularly the Jewish community’s response to Quebec’s own sovereignty movements and the ongoing discussions within Quebec about the rights of religious minorities. Sovereignty and Religious Freedom is original, comprehensive, nuanced, and surprisingly accessible.

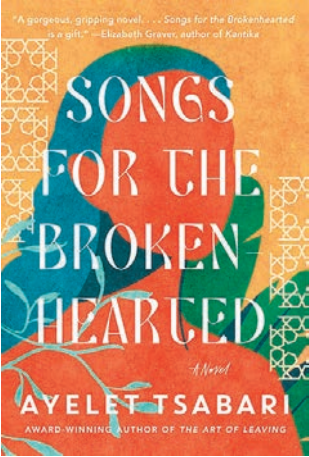
Biography

Menachem Mendel Schneerson: Becoming the Messiah (Yale University Press: Jewish Series) by Ezra Gliner is a highly readable, non-partisan biography that allows the reader to understand the gifts, the accomplishments and perhaps the limitations of a man admired by Jews and non-Jews alike. It places Schneerson within the intellectual context of Hasidism and the historical context of Eastern European Jewry. It follows him through his educational journey, surprisingly, in secular institutions in Berlin and Paris that continued alongside his religious studies. It delves into the politics of leadership and succession within the Lubavitch Hasidic movement and Schneerson’s role in establishing Chabad/Lubavitch in America. Its distinctive ideology is at the centre of a worldwide Jewish outreach program with the Rebbe as its sage and sometimes messianic figure. The photograph on the cover has become a meme signifying both the Hasidic movement that Schneerson led as Rebbe and the messianic beliefs and aspirations of his followers, including arguably of himself.



Memoir

No Jews Live Here (Coach House Press) by John Lorinc explores his family story and how life is shaped by historical forces over which we have no control. From pre-war Budapest to post-war Toronto, John Lorinc unspools four generations of his family’s journey through the Holocaust, the 1956 Revolution, and finally an exodus from a country that can’t rid itself of its antisemitic demons. His parents and maternal grandmother, Ilona, Holocaust survivors, arrived in Canada in 1956, the second wave of Hungarian refugees, mostly Jewish. The irony is that Lorinc’s parents kept his Jewish identity a secret from him to protect him from the atrocities they might have faced even in seemingly benevolent Canada. As a child, the author and his sister were baptized at a United Church, a classic “just in case” move for his still traumatized survivor parents. In uncovering his Jewish and Hungarian identity, he tells a profoundly human saga that weaves his fascinating family history with the history of Hungary and its uneasy relationship with its Jewish community.



Fiction

Songs for the Broken-Hearted (HarperCollins) by Ayelet Tsabari is a rich and moving novel in which a young woman rediscovers and reclaims her homeland, heritage, and family. The year is 1995, and Zohara, a Yemenite Israeli, interrupts her studies in the U.S. to return home for her mother’s funeral. It’s an unsettling journey, as she uncovers secrets about her mother’s past, immerses herself in the haunting traditional songs of the Yemenite women, and expands her political awareness. Shifting between 1950 and 1995, the novel also features a compelling love story that crosses generations. Drawing on her own cultural background, Tsabari confronts the discriminatory treatment of her community in the early days of the state, including the controversial Yemenite Children Affair. *Songs for the Broken-Hearted* offers a window into a segment of Israeli society that has often been ignored in literature.

Poetry

To All the Mirrored Doors of Beginning, a Journey Ending (Wipf and Stock) by Ruth Rivka, is a collection of poems driven by passion and urgency. Under her full name, Ruth Rifka Abrams, she is a well-known visual artist and expressionist painter. With advanced age has come the need for words, as well. In the poem titled “In My 96th Year,” she begins: “I am obsessed/ to search out the truth of all things, to see the picture clear/ before I go as go I must.” With startling honesty and directness, Ruth wrestles with questions of mortality, morality and belief, responding to painful current events and the rise of antisemitism. Exploring Jewish experience and concepts, she looks inward and, at the same time, bravely outward to engage with the world around her. In the Jewish tradition, her poems are an interrogation, a lament and, at the same time, a testament to the creative spirit.

Children and Youth

The winner in the Children and Youth category is *The Light Keeper*, written by Sheila Baslaw and Karen Levine, and illustrated by Alice Priestley (Second Story Press).

The Light Keeper is a story of light—both physical and metaphorical. Shmuel is eager to help support his poor family, but no one in his shtetl will hire a 10-year-old boy. One day, two men arrive and install electric lamps, bringing the miracle of light to the village square. When a lamp breaks during a storm, Shmuel, who had carefully watched the men as they worked, is the only one who can fix it. To do it, he must overcome his fear of heights. This story is based on tales Sheila Baslaw’s father told her about life in Porilla, a shtetl near Kyiv. Told from a child’s perspective, their themes overcoming fears, family responsibility, and the importance of community—are universal.

Continued on page 21

ALBERTA’S NEW DEMOCRAT CAUCUS

HAPPY Hanukkah

Lorne Dach
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Sarah Hoffman
MLA FOR EDMONTON-GLENORA

Naheed Nenshi
LEADER OF ALBERTA'S NEW DEMOCRATS

Marlin Schmidt
MLA FOR EDMONTON-GOLD BAR

David Shepherd
MLA FOR EDMONTON-CITY CENTRE

Carrying grief through a season of light

By Sarah Karesa, M.Ed., R.Psych

For many, the holiday season is a time filled with joy, connection, and celebration; a period where we are all encouraged to engage in practices that reflect a sense of warmth, tradition, and togetherness. But for those who are grieving, this same season can feel very different. The light that warms our hearts and our homes during Hanukkah can become a painful reminder of those things that we have lost (e.g., our loved ones, our traditions, and even our past selves who enjoyed these special days). We feel the pressure to pretend that everything is okay when, in reality, we are struggling with the heaviness and unavoidability of our grief. To those who are grieving, everything is not okay.

Even though we cannot change the holiday season itself – the expectations, the gatherings, and the painful reminders – we can *gently* shift how we start to approach it. Coping begins by giving ourselves permission to show up honestly, without forcing enjoyment or hiding what hurts. It may mean setting new boundaries, simplifying traditions, or creating space for quiet moments of reflection. It might look like honouring your loved one in a small, intentional way, or seeking support from people who understand. By orienting ourselves with compassion rather than pressure, we can move through Hanukkah, or any other holiday, in a way that feels more grounded, more honest, and ultimately more supportive to our grieving hearts.

How do we start to orient ourselves differently and gently shift how we approach this time of year? First, consider your expectations for the holiday season – what is the image you have in your head when you think about Hanukkah? For some, it might be a lively gathering filled with delicious food, cherished rituals, and the warm bustle of hosting a large crowd. For others, it might look like a quieter evening with a

simple meal shared between friends and family. Whatever your image may be, it is shaped by memories, hopes, and the ways you have celebrated in the past. Know that this does not need to be the case every year; part of grieving is loosening the grip of old expectations and allowing yourself to approach the season in a way that feels more manageable and comfortable. Ask yourself: What is truly necessary and important for me to include this year? What might be nice to have, but is not essential? What do you simply not have capacity for right now but might return to in future years? By taking stock of what we can and cannot do, we create space to be intentional, genuine, and honest in our holiday practices, making room to navigate our grief with greater compassion.

Second, know that carrying grief during Hanukkah is not about avoiding or minimizing what you are feeling. Rather, it's about deepening your relationship with grief and allowing it to be present in ways that make it meaningful and manageable. What this means could look different for everyone. For some, this might mean planning for moments of quiet reflection to acknowledge how this time of year shapes your grief. For others, it might involve bringing the loved one into the celebrations themselves – saving a place for them at the table, sharing stories that keep their memory alive, or embracing their favourite activities, foods, or traditions. Don't be afraid to make new memories or traditions that honour the grief you, and others, may be experiencing. By giving yourself intentional opportunities to stay connected to both your loved one and your grief, you create space for comfort, authenticity, and even tenderness amid the holiday season.

As important as it is to honour your grief over the holidays, it is equally as important to allow yourself breaks – the third way we can gently shift our approach to the holiday season. Breaks are moments that help you preserve the emotional energy you need to cope with demands of the season. They offer space for you to breathe and process – a chance to pause, let your grief out, and gather yourself. These breaks can be short or long, planned or unplanned, and involve any sort of activity (self-care or even sitting quietly on your bed). They can also involve other people – often a supportive other who can cover for you, create space when you need it, and help ensure you take the time



Sarah Karesa is Counselling Program Manager at JFSE Edmonton Healing Centre.

necessary to care for yourself in grief. Breaks are an essential part of coping with grief over the holidays; by honouring your needs and giving yourself these moments of rest, you create the capacity to engage more fully in meaningful experiences, connect with loved ones, and navigate the season with greater resilience and compassion.

As Hanukkah moves closer, and the reality of your losses become more present amidst the painful reminders that may surround you – remember to take care of yourself. Give yourself permission to be honest with yourself about what you need and allow yourself the space and latitude to provide it. Adjust your expectations, acknowledge your grief, and make room for moments of pause, reflection, and gentle connection. By approaching the season with intentionality, flexibility, and kindness toward yourself, you will create a way to navigate the holidays that honours both your loss and your resilience and, in doing so, you will allow the light of the season to shine in and offer warmth amidst the heartache.

Sarah Karesa is Counselling Program Manager, Edmonton Healing Centre at Jewish Family Services Edmonton.

Netanyahu says he is formally seeking a pardon

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is formally seeking a preemptive pardon of the criminal charges he has long faced, saying in a video address ending his prosecution was needed to bring unity to a divided nation.

“I am certain, as are many others in the nation, that

an immediate end to the trial would greatly help lower the flames and promote broad reconciliation — something our country desperately needs,” Netanyahu said in the speech on Sunday as his attorneys filed a petition with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who is responsible for granting pardons.

Netanyahu’s speech comes weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump wrote to Herzog advocating a pardon, which Herzog said he could not consider because Israeli law requires the accused or his family to make the request.

Netanyahu has three legal cases open against him, on charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust. They relate to allegations that he accepted lavish gifts in exchange for political favors and that he used his position to secure positive media coverage. The trial in the cases began in 2020 and has proceeded in fits and starts, with hearings routinely canceled as Netanyahu attends to Israel’s affairs, including the multi-front war and a protest movement that Netanyahu and his allies allege has been stoked through foreign

interference.

In his speech, Netanyahu did not acknowledge guilt and said, as he long has contended, that the charges against him were political in nature. He alleged that crimes had been committed in the case against him. He also cited Trump’s advocacy on his behalf.

“President Trump called for an immediate end to the trial so that, together with him, I could advance even more vigorously the vital interests shared by Israel and the United States, within a time window that may never return,” Netanyahu said.

Herzog’s office said it would consider the pardon request in accordance with Israeli law. Netanyahu’s critics lambasted the request, saying it amounted to another assault on country’s legal norms by the prime minister, whose right-wing government has led an effort to overhaul the judiciary.

“I call on President Herzog: You cannot grant Netanyahu a pardon without an admission of guilt, an expression of remorse, and an immediate withdrawal from political life,” tweeted opposition leader Yair Lapid while making a video address of his own.

Netanyahu’s request comes as the country nears elections that must take place within the next year. Netanyahu was reelected most recently in 2022, after the charges against him were in place.

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Raising awareness and *chesed* about kidney donation

By Regan Lipes

In Vayikra it is said: “You shall keep My statutes and My laws, which a person shall do and shall live by them. [...] You shall not stand idly by while your neighbor's blood is shed.”

The value of human life is a fundamental belief in Jewish teaching. *Pikuah nefesh*, the preservation of life, is so critical within Jewish Law that it allows for the breaking of Shabbos. Some observant medical professionals might even be called upon to perform lifesaving measures during Shabbos with full support of religious authorities. In order to save another's life, those observing *shomer negiah* are able to touch the opposite sex, and despite some beliefs to the contrary, within *halacha*, organ donation is permitted. The saving of lives is so critical within Judaism that many Hasidic communities operate their own emergency response service, *Hatzalah* (rescue).

In 2018 *Alberta Jewish News* was delighted to share a local success story, that of Rabbi Mendy Blachman of Chabad Lubavitch of Edmonton and Herschel Moster. Since live-donor, Rabbi Blachman and Moster first began sharing their shared story, Edmonton's local Jewish community has had a bit more familiarity with the real faces attached to *halachic* organ donation. The two men have an unbreakable bond for life.

This past September, just before the Jewish world welcomed a sweet new year, Edmontonians again paused to consider the tremendous impact of *pikuah nefesh*. “I honestly had only thought about this in more abstract terms before,” confided local lawyer and forester Craig Rose. “Now I think about it constantly and it’s real and personal.”

Rose, originally from Toronto, has lived and worked in Alberta for over four decades. He built a stunning career here and raised a family. For the last seven years, he has also been battling kidney disease. In January of 2025 he stopped working and now goes three times a week for kidney dialysis. "I was going twice a week for four-hour sessions, but it left me so exhausted and weak I couldn't do anything, so now I'm going three times for shorter treatments."

For anyone not familiar with how kidney dialysis works, it might be surprising to know how invasive and intense the procedure is. The patient is hooked up to a machine that extracts and filters their blood before returning it back to their body. This cycle is completed several times during the course of a treatment, and despite the fact that it leaves the body's blood free of waste and extra fluids that contaminate the kidneys, it also debilitates the patient. This has left Rose, a man who is not only good at his job, but passionate about his work, unable to do what he loves.

“How many mothers out there can say that their son is a forester,” he mused jovially when asked about the position. He explained that growing up in Toronto exposed him to very different kinds of forests, but “coming out here was the best thing that could have happened to me.” In 1995, Rose was admitted to the Bar, and has since synthesized his love of forestry and law.

Jodi Zabłudowski, President of the Edmonton section of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada commented; "Craig has always been the one

to lift others up – offering his time, his wisdom, and his heart. And now, as he faces the challenge of needing a kidney transplant, he continues to inspire us with courage, resilience, and unwavering positivity.”

Despite being a long-time congregant and community leader at Beth Shalom Synagogue, representation from all the Edmonton shuls were present on September 14 at the Fantasyland Hotel to learn more about Craig Rose and kidney donation.

“When our son was preparing to be bar mitzvahed, I was livid when they told me we had to be present for three out of every four Shabbat services. Then, by the time he had his bar mitzvah, I was livid if we ever had to miss a Shabbat service,” he chuckled.

Rose is very much an integral part of shul-life at Beth Shalom, and the greater Jewish community of Edmonton as well. The awareness event in his honour was graciously sponsored by NCJWC Edmonton, and attended by special guests from Renewal Canada. "National Council of Jewish Women has always stood for compassion, justice, and the power of individual action to make a difference," commented Zabludowski. "One of the most meaningful ways we can live these values is through organ and tissue donation – the ultimate act of *chesed*, loving-kindness."

Renewal Canada is a life-giving Jewish organization that works to help connect patients with potential live-donors. "What inspires me most is that Renewal Canada does this with such compassion. Their services are free. Their motivation is kindness. Their work is literally saving lives. A living kidney donation can mean years of health, freedom from dialysis, and a future that once seemed out of reach," said Zabludowski.

Penny Kravetsky from Renewal Canada joined the event and traveled from Toronto accompanied by a past donor. This gave those in attendance a chance to ask questions about what it was like to undergo the process of kidney donation from first being tested, undergoing the screening process, being matched, donating, and then recovering.

“Judaism teaches *pikuah nefesh* – that saving a life is the highest of all commandments. By choosing to be an organ donor, we have the chance to give others hope, healing, and a future. NCJW supports this sacred responsibility through education, awareness, and advocacy, encouraging our community to have open conversations about donation and to take the simple step of registering as donors. Each of us carries the ability to change lives,” Zabludowski concluded meaningfully.

According to the Renewal Canada website:



Craig, Corbin and Eve Rose.

“Receiving a diagnosis of irreversible kidney failure can be devastating. That’s where Renewal comes in. We help patients and their families navigate the complex process of kidney transplant, from finding a donor to arranging the transplant and beyond. At the same time, we support donors to make sure their incredible self-sacrifice is as easy as can be and comes at no financial cost to them. Our services are always free of charge to anyone in need.”

The support and care offered to Jewish patients and their families by Renewal Canada is a blessing, and they work cooperatively with local donor registries and hospitals. While Renewal Canada works to find a donor match for Rose, so does Alberta Health, G-d willing, making it more likely to find a compatible match – and soon!

A live-donor transplant is preferable to an organ harvested from a cadaver. According to Renewal Canada: "On average a deceased donor kidney lasts 10 years, whereas a living kidney lasts an average of 15-20 years. As these are just averages, each situation is different. A variety of factors such as overall health and lifestyle of the recipient contribute to the lifespan of the kidney. In some cases, transplanted living donor kidneys have been known to last for many decades. With regard to a deceased donor kidney, there is a significant chance that the kidney won't work initially, thereby complicating the post-operative care and increasing the chance of complications. Conversely, a living donor kidney works right away in about 95% of cases."

Nobody is a more passionate supporter of Renewal Canada than Eve Rose, Craig's determined and loving wife. "What this organization does is incredible, and there really are no words," she explained with the note of a quiver in her voice. "The generosity and humanity that some people are willing to give is, well, it takes your breath away. To think that someone could be so selfless, so giving, it's inspiring and humbling."

The Edmonton community joins together in praying for a match for Craig Rose, but a potential donor could

Continued on page 20

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May your Hanukkah be filled with peace and light!



Happy Hanukkah

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Archival work underway for future YEG Holocaust Education Centre

By Tammy Vineberg

Zion Barany spends his days poring over historical documents and items, trying to link the stories of Edmonton Holocaust survivors in preparation for a permanent exhibit at the future Holocaust Education Centre which will be housed at the new Edmonton Jewish Community Centre, expected to open later next year.

Zion started his role as curator in June, thanks to a grant from the Edmonton Community Foundation. He's been diving into files, videos, and photos held by the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (JAHSENA) with fresh eyes, as he has never lived in Canada and is not Jewish.

He grew up in Iran, where he attended an Armenian school and mainly socialized with the country's minority populations—Jewish, Kurds, and others. Zion says that's where his passion for history and philosophy stems from.

"Growing up as a minority in a majority country, you kind of wonder why we are here. You begin thinking about why certain groups are in countries where they are not the majority," he says.

When his family fled Iran, they settled in Germany, where Zion had to learn a new language before studying history and philosophy at Ruhr-Universität Bochum. He decided to focus on modern history, including Jewish history and the Middle East, for his master's degree. Following graduation, he worked as an intern at museums and developed an exhibit for the Westfalen Jewish Museum in Dorsten, Germany. He also worked at the Holocaust Museum LA in California, where he analyzed handwritten German documents from 1933 to 1945. His role was to research their origins and translate and transcribe the materials.

After returning from Germany following his stay in Los Angeles, he contemplated where he wanted to live and work. He discovered Edmonton after coming across a position as an archivist for JAHSENA. The timing for that role didn't work out, but his résumé was forwarded to the Jewish Federation of Edmonton as work needed to be completed for the future Holocaust Education Centre.

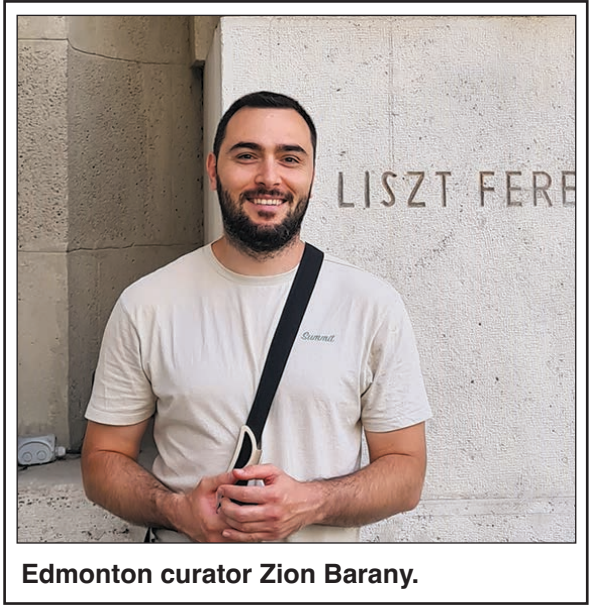
"I guess it was meant to be. Everything fell into place at the right time. I'm happy about it," says Zion.

As he had never been to Edmonton before, he had to get his bearings while learning an overall understanding of how the Edmonton Jewish community is related to the Holocaust. For example, how many survivors immigrated to the city and Alberta. He has been pulling files on each survivor one by one. As a Jewish Federation of Edmonton employee, he is collaborating with JAHSENA to access these files.

"There are a lot of documents in one file. You don't know what you will find. You are looking at interviews, trying to find the whole story because you only get bits and pieces in archival material. You must cross-reference the material with the overall history of Canada and how it is related to the Holocaust. It's like a puzzle," explains Zion.

His role is different from archivists because archivists are responsible for handling and preserving historical materials. What Zion does is examine the archives and trace the history of each paper, one by one. "I try to understand where that piece of paper came from, who wrote the letter, to whom it was written, and why. I ask questions about why this piece of paper existed and how it relates to overall history. You try to contextualize archival material in the broad history."

His gloved hands have touched many interesting pieces that are stored, including barbed wire from



Edmonton curator Zion Barany.

Auschwitz. The next step is to interview the family who donated this piece of history.

With so many Holocaust museums around the world, Zion still believes it's important that Edmonton has its own centre. "It's even more important because we have so many survivors here, and I think it's doing a disservice to them if we don't highlight their stories. These people came and found a home here. It's part of this country's history. Holocaust education is not only about the past. It's not only about what happened and how these people survived. It's a way of dealing with the future. It's equipping citizens and visitors who come to the centre to make them able to see growing hate and to see what threats in a democracy can lead to," he says.

If you or a family member has items from the Holocaust and would like to donate them to this Edmonton-based project, please contact Zion at zbarany@edjfed.org.

Tammy Vineberg is Director, Marketing and Communications at Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

Raising awareness

Cont. from page 19

be anywhere in the country. "People are tested but this doesn't mean that the search is only in that community," Craig explained. "And so being tested at the event in September, and many people did volunteer to be tested, means that those people could, in theory be paired with someone hundreds of miles away."

Being tested to be a donor carries no obligation, but the potential to give life to another person cannot be underestimated; it is a monumental gift, and one that

Eve Rose expressed she has no words to adequately describe. Rabbi Ari Drelich, who attended the event to blow the shofar in anticipation of Rosh Hashanah, commented that: "It's inspiring that there are people out there who are ready to give such a gift to a person they may not even know."

Rabbi Drelich's sentiments are well taken; when a total stranger can literally give a piece of themselves to give another person a chance at life without the burden of debilitating dialysis visits multiple times a week, this is truly something exceptional. Knowing that such generous individuals exist, should give everyone hope regardless of their own health status. Altruism that can never be repaid is an immeasurable mitzvah, and it is not only the donations themselves, but those who are willing to be tested to consider this act of heroism that trumpet the spirit of tikkun olam.

Renewal Canada was in Edmonton in September for

a Kidney Donor and Awareness Swab Drive to focus on Craig and they were also in Richmond BC to raise awareness for Kenny Sanders, and also in Toronto to raise awareness for Colin Silver. Even now, in Winnipeg, Renewal Canada is working to find a live-donor kidney for Mark Kagan, at a Kidney Donor and Awareness Swab Drive on December 9. There were countless more events that took place earlier in the year, and there will no doubt be more in 2026.

With the help of Renewal Canada, members of Jewish communities across Canada, including Alberta's Craig Rose, or Mark Kagan of Winnipeg, Kenny Sanders of Vancouver and Colin Silver in Toronto, could have their lives given back to them through the *chesed* of another person with the desire to make a significant contribution to *tikkun olam*.

Even if someone is uncomfortable with the idea of themselves being a live-donor, they can still do their part to spread the word and promote awareness within their community. Anyone wanting more information about Renewal Canada should visit their website to read testimonies from donors and recipients: <https://www.renewalcanada.org/>.

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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Orizon Energy is lighting the way

Orizon Energy has quickly become one of Alberta’s leading solar providers since opening its doors in 2021. In just 4 years, the company has completed over 2000 residential solar installations, adding over 19 MegaWatts of clean energy to Canadian Homes.

As the Hanukkah season approaches, a celebration of light, renewal, and possibility, Orizon continues its work helping Canadians harness light in a way that lowers bills, increases energy independence, and contributes to a cleaner future. For Orizon’s founders (Oren and Nic), the symbolism is meaningful. Raised with a deep sense of Jewish heritage, they grew up with values centred on responsibility, pride, and the belief that every generation should strive to build something better for the next. That mindset has shaped much of Orizon’s purpose.

Orizon was founded on a simple mission: to make high-quality, affordable renewable energy accessible to homeowners across Canada. From the first consultation to long after installation, Orizon manages

the entire process. This streamlined approach ensures homeowners receive a tailored solar solution designed for their roof and their long-term energy goals. Oren and Nic have committed to integrity and doing business like a mensch. Both pride themselves on doing ethical work, which they credit to their upbringing.

As interest in greener, cost-saving home upgrades continues to grow, Orizon is expanding too. The company has recently relocated to a 20,000 sq ft facility located in Edmonton at 6605 82 Ave, where you are welcome to visit and see the equipment, as well as Canada's first SolarEdge demo wall. This new office allows for faster service, localized support, and deeper involvement in the community that helped shape its beginnings. Community involvement has always been central to the company’s identity, from supporting children’s sports and local health initiatives to exploring opportunities to help make sustainable energy more accessible for organizations like the future Edmonton Jewish Community Centre.

Orizon’s values guide every project and every customer interaction. These principles, rooted in



An Orizon solar project.

accountability, service, and the desire to create a better future, have helped the company earn a strong reputation in a rapidly developing industry.

With strong growth, a dedicated team, and a commitment to doing what’s right, Orizon Energy is lighting the way toward a more sustainable future. And for its founders, there is a special meaning in helping others realize the power of light during a season that celebrates it. If you or someone you know is considering solar, you can visit orizonenergy.ca to request a free quote today!

Literary Awards

Cont. from page 17

With co-author Karen Levine, who wrote *Hana’s Suitcase*, Baslaw, who is 92, is passing the stories on to the next generation. The atmospheric illustrations rendered in sepia and earth tones by Toronto artist Alice Priestley enrich a tale that touches the heart as it illuminates a chapter of our collective past.

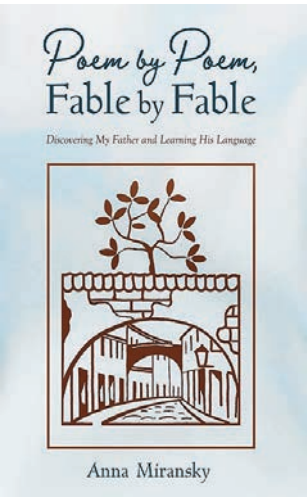
Jewish Culture

Mashel Teitelbaum: Terror and Beauty (Goose Lane Editions with workbook) by Andrew Kear (Editor) is a beautiful book featuring more than 200 reproductions of artwork from the full scope of Mashel Teitelbaum’s career. Teitelbaum (1921-1985) said about his work: “What I’m saying I’m painting, in effect ... is the terror and beauty of life.” Andrew Kear has compiled essays and reflections on the life and work of one of Canada’s most talented artistic outsiders. The terror and the beauty are both clearly shaped by Teitelbaum’s Jewish background. One essay, “The Mills of the Gods: The Impact of Judaism and War on Mashel Teitelbaum’s Art,” highlights a painting depicting a bearded and burdened Jewish figure in a biblical landscape with a temple and palm

trees (the meaning of Teitelbaum) at the end of the path, layering Jewish scenes over a Canadian landscape.

Yiddish

Poem by Poem, Fable by Fable: Discovering My Father and Learning His Language (Wipf and Stock) by Anna Miransky does more than celebrate the life of her father, Peretz Miransky, one of Canada’s foremost Yiddish writers. At the age of seventy-two, she begins to read her father’s poetry and fables in her first and forgotten language. She not only discovers her father, but she also gains insights into the experiences of being a Holocaust survivor, being a member of Yung Vilne, the celebrated Yiddish literary group, and the thriving Yiddish cultural community in Montreal. In an astute literary analysis, she probes why he had to write in fables to protect himself from harm and why, as a Yiddish writer, he chose the literary themes he did. *Poem by Poem, Fable by Fable* brings forward an understanding of the creative imagination and introduces the reader to remarkable poems and fables both in Yiddish and in English translation.



Scholarship

A Time to Sow: Refusenik Life in Leningrad 1979-1989 (University of Toronto Press) by Michael Beizer and Ann Komaromi, provides an account of the *refusenik* movement in Leningrad in the period between the end of *détente* with the West and the beginning of the policy of *perestroika*. This time marked the end of any realistic possibility for Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union to the point where such emigration once again became possible. The book dispels any notion that the Soviet Jewish community was passively waiting for external guidance or deliverance. It shows how they themselves worked to establish a Russian Jewish identity during that period. A story emerges of how these *refuseniks* created their own Russian Jewish identity where previously there was none. A movement that originally sought emigration because of economic realities came to understand, as one *refusenik* put it, “a free person needs to belong to some sort of group with shared traditions, with shared values and a shared world view.” The book’s great achievement is to focus our attention not only on what the *refuseniks* resisted, but also on the identity they constructed.



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From the Promised Land to the Prairies

An Israeli family’s search for safety and reunion

By Jana Zalmanowitz, LJI Reporter

It’s been over two years since the horrors of October 7, 2023 shattered the lives of many Israelis. Since that time, some have made the choice to leave Israel, while rebuilding and finding an identity here in Alberta. This series examines the reasons they left and what being in Alberta has meant to their Jewish identity.

When Valeria Murov and her husband Stas, heard about the Canadian program granting 3-year work visas to Israelis during the war, they saw an opportunity. They loved their life in Israel but were finding it increasingly difficult to navigate with young children. “It’s so scary what’s happened there. I wanted my children to be calm, not to wake up in the night from alarms, always searching for a safe place.”

Valeria did her research. She had never been to Canada but learned that Calgary had the most sunny days per year, boasted views of the mountains and that Alberta had lower taxes than other Canadian provinces. They settled on Calgary and she decided to take the leap and leave behind what she knew: their house, family, friends and an established career. What she did not anticipate leaving behind was her husband.

While Stas, a business owner, stayed in Israel longer to work, Valeria came to Calgary in September 2024 with her children, ages 3 and 6 to set up their life. She knew nobody, but within 10 days of arriving had registered her kids in daycare, found an apartment and opened a bank account. There were endless bureaucracies to figure out. “You know you come to Costco and they say ‘No, you can’t come to Costco because you need a membership,’” Valeria says, describing one of the unexpected rules of Canadian life. “It’s a store. Can’t you just shop there?”

She quickly figured out Calgary is not easily walkable and she would need a car to get around more easily, so she got her Canadian driver’s license, bought a car and learned to drive in snow. She’s wasted no time in embracing this new life.

When it came time for Stas to join his family in December of 2024, he was denied entry to Canada at the border. “He’s on a blacklist or something. They told us he needs an Authorization to Return,” Valeria explains. Stas lived with his parents in Montreal for part of his childhood, leaving for Israel when he was still a minor. “He arrived in LA and immigration said he can’t get on the plane. So we all flew to Florida. It was my son’s birthday.” While the family managed to make a different kind of memory on vacation in Disneyworld, it didn’t solve the long-term problem.

Valeria and her family have been working with an immigration consultant but are still unsure why her husband cannot enter Canada and how he can gain entry to join his family. “It was last December and that’s the last time we saw him. It’s very hard.”

Valeria is building a life in Alberta for her children. When asked for photos, she pulls up images of her and her children on hikes in the mountains and dressed up for Stampede. Quintessential Calgarian experiences. Her son started at public school this year and both kids are making friends in their neighbourhood. She has watched their knowledge of English go from nonexistent to fluent.

Valeria met other new Israeli Calgarians through a WhatsApp group but hasn’t ventured too much into the rest of the Jewish community. She attributes this partly to language. “I was at the JCC on Pesach but didn’t meet a ton of people. Maybe because my English is not so good. I don’t feel so free to speak with the Jewish people there who aren’t Israeli.”

When asked about whether she acknowledges she is Jewish or Israeli to those who she meets in the broader community, there isn’t a simple answer. Valeria was born in Belarus and moved to Israel when she was one. She speaks Russian with her children and says when people hear them talking, they often assume they have come from Ukraine. Her children aren’t old enough to truly understand antisemitism and Valeria is okay with that right now.

“I left Israel because I was afraid and I don’t want my children to be afraid. I want to understand how it works here and when I feel safety, it will work. I do want my children to know they are Jewish. That’s how I grew up. But I can’t explain to them there are bad people who may want to hurt you. I just can’t have this conversation with them again right now.”

Building a new life for her children is hard. Especially without her husband in the country.



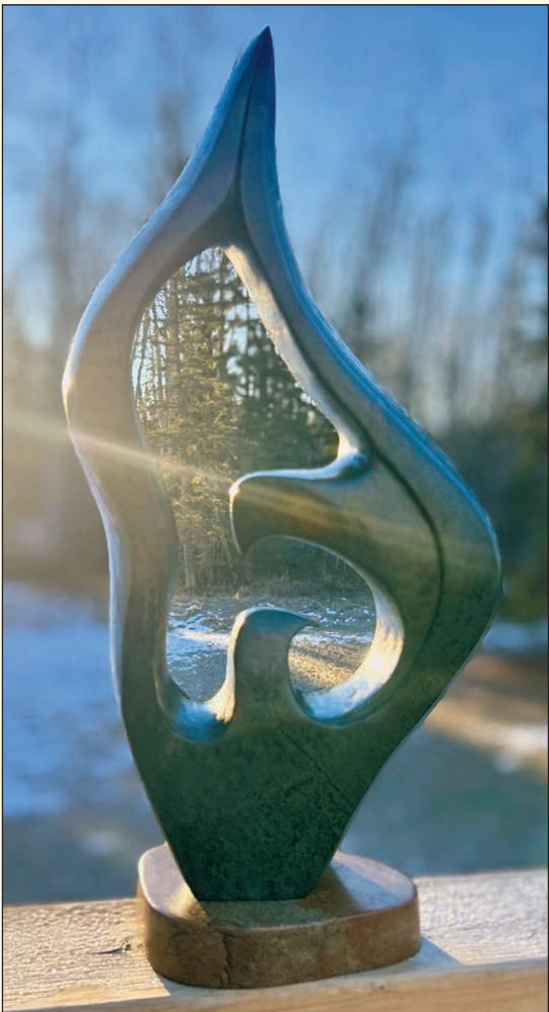
A family photo, the last time they were together, one year ago.

She misses her family and friends. She misses her work. Valeria was trained in communications and human resources. She managed a team in the Electrical Engineering department at a university. “I felt like the queen at work. Someone always needed something from me.” She understands it will take time to learn the language and gain not just employment, but work that uses her skills to their potential.

It’s not just the personal things she misses. Valeria talks about Israel with obvious love, in a way that makes you want to go there. You can feel the heavy trade-offs newcomers to our province make. They are not just coming somewhere new, but leaving somewhere they love behind. “I miss the sea. I miss the beach. I miss the *balagan* of Israel. We say it’s like a scene. There’s always something happening and something doing. Here there’s no *balagan* but it’s good for my children.”

Valeria is doing what so many parents have done before her, and that’s trade her comfort for her children’s future opportunities. Her biggest wish is that she does not have to do it alone and her husband can share in the joys and challenges of raising Jewish children in Canada. While they continue to problem solve and seek guidance, Valeria hopes the Jewish community can become a new home for her here in Alberta, offering support. “I hope someone reads this and says, ‘I can help her!’”

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A Hanukkah gift budget doesn't ruin the magic

By Gail Hoffer-Loibl

This essay was first published on *Kveller*.

The holiday season has arrived in full force, and already promotions for toys, games and other products are enticing our children to ask for more and more. My family has already seen countless commercials for Black Friday deals, and we even got a full holiday catalog from Amazon in our mailbox before the end of October.

In our home, that Amazon catalog is a useful tool to help my children, ages 10 and 7, get a sense of what they might want for Hanukkah. We tend to limit gifts for our kids throughout the year in favor of making the holiday a special one for them.

My more judicious elder child carefully analyzes each page and marks off a handful of items, while my younger one might as well draw a giant circle on the cover to indicate he wants every product listed within the thick booklet.

Regardless of how many things each of my children desire, I want them to understand our family has a budget, and that, like anything else we choose to invest in, we need to be mindful about our spending and think about what is best for all of us. Like many families, we have a number of required expenses that need to come before spending in other areas, including Hanukkah gifts.

Early on, my husband and I tried to instill in our children mindfulness around material possessions. This has meant enduring many tantrums over our refusal to buy them some random toy we knew they would just toss out the next day. During Hanukkah time, we take our kids' interests into account and give them gifts within our budget. This means we don't get them everything they want. For the most part, our kids don't complain about the amount of gifts they get, as we also try to instill in them a sense of gratitude.

Of course, our kids weren't born knowing about things like budgets and spending, and as they grow up, helping them understand these concepts is very important in our family. At around age 5 or 6, I believe kids can understand gifts don't just materialize out of nowhere. They cost money and that money comes from their parents or anyone else who purchases something for them. People work hard to earn the money used to buy them gifts, and this is something to be appreciated and not taken for granted.

The elementary years are also when children start learning about currency, and monetary literacy becomes an important part of their math education. At home, many kids this age receive an allowance and can begin thinking about how to use their own money. My kids will ask me to buy them something, to which I will often reply by telling them to use their own money. It is amazing how disinterested in something they become when their own cash is on the line.

Though we do our best to help our kids understand the value of spending wisely and being grateful for the gifts they receive, we are up against enormous societal pressure to get our children as many gifts as possible. Many of us have kids whose classmates and friends celebrate Christmas and are showered with gifts, putting even more pressure on Jewish parents to help our kids "fit in." Being left out of the Christmas "magic" is eased a bit when you can share how many toys you got for Hanukkah.

There is no denying the massive influence of Christmas culture on Jewish kids and their families. However, I learned long ago to avoid competing with Christmas and instead make the focus of Hanukkah family togetherness, Jewish pride and passing on the traditions of lighting the menorah, eating latkes and playing dreidel.

But we still do gifts. My honesty about our family gift budget is never intended to make my kids worry or feel bad about our family finances. In discussing our Hanukkah plans, I focus on the wonderful things we get to do for the holiday and making the time truly special. My husband and I don't get into specifics about how much money we have budgeted for gifts, and we guide our kids toward focusing on the few items they really want instead of just asking for everything.

This year, for example, in lieu of more physical gifts, we are hoping to give our kids a special day out.

We discussed this idea with them and explained this would mean getting fewer or less elaborate gifts for the remainder of the holiday. They also agreed that they are becoming less interested in playing with toys and would prefer doing fun things as a family. In the future, I could see us forgoing physical gifts all together, or just giving our kids a small amount of cash each night.

While some may feel honesty about who buys the gifts may take away from the joy of the holiday, I do not envy my Christmas celebrating friends whose kids believe Santa is responsible for their presents. Instead of stressing over how to give our kids everything they want, and having to explain why a mythical being couldn't get them their dream gift, I can just be upfront with my kids about what we can and can't afford. I also talk to them about the importance of giving back to others, and part of our family budget goes toward monetary and physical donations to local and national causes we support.

By encouraging mindfulness in their gift choices, and consideration of others who may not be as fortunate, I hope my kids learn that Hanukkah is more

than a holiday for getting presents. It is a time for being with family, honoring tradition and celebrating Jewish pride.



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Teachers love lively participation in ELLA classes

By Kathy Kerr

Learners on both ends of the age spectrum have a lot in common, including enthusiastic curiosity, says writer and instructor Marty Chan.

The award-winning children's book author will repeat his course on writing for children for Edmonton Lifelong Learners Association's online winter session starting in January.

He says students at ELLA, which offers classes for those over 50, are ready with as many questions as the elementary school kids he usually teaches.

Seniors are as engaged as the kids, "but with more self-control," Chan says.

"They're more willing to participate. ...It gives me a chance to interact with the audience as opposed to just being a one-way broadcast."

ELLA is offering 17 thought-provoking online courses this winter. In spring, the organization conducts in person classes on the University of Alberta campus.

Chan's class for this session will cover basics, such as character and plot development, and topics such as crafting a voice which will grab the younger reader.

"You have to sort of blow up your expectations of how somebody takes in the story and figure out exactly how to appeal to that younger audience."

Chan says the motivation to take the course varies from wanting to tell stories to grandkids to wanting to publish a book.

Edmonton Journal municipal affairs columnist Keith Gerein is returning to teach his Civic Politics in the Age of Incoherence course.

Coming off the recent elections, the course will have plenty of relevance even for students who have taken it before, says Gerein.

Last year the class raised questions about where the city was heading, with factors such as party politics and whether change was in the air, he says.

"We'll delve into that, and we'll try to look at what happened and why."

Gerein says it's great to get the feedback ELLA students provide.

"They probably have a little more time to think about these issues. They've seen the city go through its ups and downs."

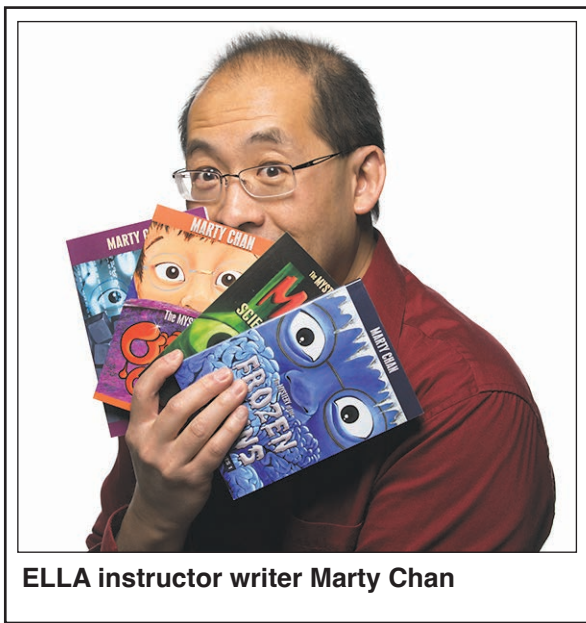
Veteran technology instructor Shawn Gramiak is teaching two ELLA classes - Getting More out of Google and AI for Everyone.

Gramiak says he wants students to come away with something that will make their lives simpler. But there will be fun and challenges along the way.

The Google course will cover Google mail, docs, sheets, maps and YouTube.

"I show people how to use the tools and I leave it up to them to figure out where they want to go with it," says Gramiak, a longtime instructor at MacEwan University.

The AI course will focus on practical uses of AI, but Gramiak adds that he appreciates senior audiences



ELLA instructor writer Marty Chan

dive a bit deeper into subject matter.

"In a class of seniors, you'll have very frank discussions about the ethics and morality of it all. And sometimes I don't think that necessarily takes place, especially with the people who are big fans of artificial intelligence."

Registration for ELLA's Online Winter Session begins Dec. 2, with classes starting Jan. 12. For course information and more details, visit my-ella.com.

Project Regeneration

Cont. from page 8

their homes," she said. Displaced families have been living in other, sometimes more established, communities for the past two years, and some are reluctant to return to the North. "When we asked residents what mattered most to them, beyond security, they spoke of education and academia – two sides of the same coin, and the foundation for a thriving future. Project Regeneration is about more than replacing what was lost – it is about building back better. And building on the knowledge and

expertise from these decades of collaboration and the team of professionals we have here on the ground," Leavitt-Wright commented candidly.

Education is positioned at the heart of core Jewish values, and it is understandable that parents want to give their children only the best. The remaining funds raised in Canada to send to Israel are now being allocated to reinvigorating the North, with Kiryat Shmona at the centre and education at the core. "All the communities we spoke with agreed that a vibrant Kiryat Shmona would benefit the entire region," emphasized Leavitt-Wright.

After Sarah Mali's visit to Alberta in 2024, the *Alberta Jewish News* reported that there were already efforts underway to transition a local college, Tel-Hai, to university status. This vision became tangible for the Canadian delegates as they laid a foundational cornerstone for a new senate building. Leavitt-Wright expressed: "This is why the establishment of Kiryat Shmona and Galilee University is so crucial. From my vantage point, this is not just a building – it's a beacon. With 10,000 students, hundreds of faculty and researchers, and thousands of volunteer

hours dedicated to the region, Tel-Hai is transforming into an educational engine for the Galilee Panhandle."

As the old saying goes, if you build it, they will come, recognizing the existing Tel-Hai institution as a university promises to draw people to Kiryat Shmona: students, educators, researchers, and the families they will bring with them. "This journey hasn't been easy," she said. "It's taken vision, perseverance, and a deep belief in the power of regeneration."

This project is not, however, solely focussed on what a university in the region will bring, but also what it will accompany. Efforts will go into revitalizing community centres, local schools, and rehabilitation. Leavitt-Wright pointed out that after so many years of being displaced from their homes and schools, many children will have a lot of catching up to do.

"There are huge strains on a family when they are housed long term in a single hotel room," she emphasized. "A few days is manageable, but we're talking about years."

As children return to school in their home communities Project Regeneration will connect them with free tutoring to support them as they undertake the monumental task of catching up with the national curriculum. There is security in numbers, and with a strong focus on education, numbers are sure to grow.

Stacey Leavitt-Wright, Rob Nagus and their CEO counterparts continue to work steadfastly with the support of Sarah Mali, in cooperation with sister communities in Northern Israel to bring the inspired vision of Project Regeneration to fruition. The generosity of Canada's Jewish communities during a time of significant need, will help to rebuild the North, perhaps even stronger than it was before.

Wishing everyone
a happy & healthy Chanukah!



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Jewish Family Service's Walk & Roll Group had a wonderful end of season event on November 30 at Muttart Conservatory.

The JFSE season's Walk & Roll Story

By Danielle Shaposhnikov

What if wellness didn't come in a bottle, but in the warmth of good company, the rustling of leaves overhead, and the simple joy of being outdoors together? This summer, Jewish Family Services Edmonton (JFSE) explored this question through the Walk & Roll project, an initiative rooted in understanding the social determinants of health: the everyday experiences, relationships, and environments that help people thrive. Many JFSE team members are passionate walkers, gardeners, yogis, and nature enthusiasts who understand the transformative power of stepping outside. They asked themselves how they could bring that same sense of freedom and connection to the remarkable Holocaust survivors they serve. For many survivors, a simple stroll through a park can feel daunting when mobility challenges or isolation set in, yet the desire for sunlight, movement, and togetherness never fades. With a shared love of nature and a tremendous heart, Walk & Roll was born.

JFSE's first ever Walk & Roll summer walking initiative had a remarkable impact, reaching more than 20 survivors aged 80 to 100, who participated in outings across multiple Edmonton green spaces. Made possible through Claims Conference funding and dedicated young volunteers, the program provided accessible equipment, including walkers, wheelchairs, hiking poles, and comfortable seating, along with thoughtfully planned routes ensuring safety and comfort. Snacks and refreshments were offered at every outing. Still, the actual transformation occurred in the conversations that stretched longer than the walks themselves, in the shared stories passed between generations, in the steady arms offered along each path.

Survivors shared powerful reflections that revealed the program's value. Many spoke about how walking in nature reminded them of their earlier years, while

others found renewed confidence in completing walks that used to seem too challenging to venture out on. Some joked that the most difficult part wasn't walking at all but rather stopping to go home. Participants expressed feeling reconnected with the world beyond their homes and are already looking forward to next year's outings.

The significance of this project wasn't only felt by the survivors who went walking. As one of our dedicated volunteers mentioned, "This program was so meaningful to me, as I got to assist seniors with their monthly outdoor activity. I could see how happy they were to get some sun and some social hours in, and to be a part of it was extremely special. They would always greet me with kindness, and I could feel their warmth. Giving them snacks and pastries at the end of the walk helped us bond as a group. All in all, it was a huge success, and I'm so happy I was a part of it! "

When we asked another youth volunteer what this opportunity has meant to them, they emphasized, "getting to connect with the survivors and learn more about their lives. It was also nice to hear that the event positively made a difference for them."

But still, the project came to a close and as the snow fell, we continued to receive inquiries from the participants about the walks. So, we decided to conclude the season through a special celebration that took place on Sunday, November 30th, 2025, at the Muttart Conservatory. As winter winds pressed against the glass pyramids, survivors wandered among tropical leaves and desert blooms, accompanied by NCSY youth and members of the Beth Israel congregation.

Under the leadership of Lauren Tankel and Daniella Asbell, the Beth Israel group brought tremendous energy and kindness, deepening the intergenerational connections that make this program special. The scene was heartwarming: elders moving through vibrant

leafy spaces, young people guiding and laughing beside them, volunteers facilitating connections across generations, all connecting through the thoughtful care and planning of the JFSE team. It served as a living reminder that wellness doesn't always arrive in grand gestures but often appears in small, shared steps, in extended conversations, and in the simple act of knowing you're not alone.

There's a saying that it takes a village to raise a child, but the truth is, the village needs care too, especially their elders. JFSE serves as one of the village caretakers, and Walk & Roll demonstrates the profound value of bridging languages, ages, and perspectives, of communities coming together to nurture all members, and of recognizing that when people step outside, breathe deeper, and share the journey across generations, wellness becomes a shared adventure. These acts of community care bring healing that extends the efficacy of medical care in isolation, without social support, simply does not provide.

As we enter the holiday season, let the spirit of Walk & Roll inspire you to explore our city's evergreen spaces, reach out to someone who may need company, and embrace the simple joy of fresh air and connection. At JFSE, our doors and hearts remain open to all who seek connection, support and growth in their days.

Those interested in participating or volunteering for next year's Walk & Roll program are encouraged to contact Jewish Family Services Edmonton to learn how they can be part of this transformative community initiative. May the season ahead bring warmth, joy, and plenty of opportunities to be in nature and breathe deeply.

Danielle Shaposhnikov is a Case Management Assistant at Jewish Family Services Edmonton.

Happy Chanukah



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Hope is the real miracle of Chanukah

By Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidès



Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidès

The recent release of *Wicked: for Good*, the second part of the film adaptation of the popular Broadway musical, has reverberated in the Jewish world in unexpected ways.

There are some folks who believe that *Wicked*, particularly when referencing the original book written by Gregory Maguire, is a parable of the Holocaust. An anti-fascist novel of how antisemitism can arise from the wickedness of propaganda, particularly if good people stand by and let it happen.

In journalist Olivia Haynie’s article in the Dec. 2024 *Forward*, she states: “*Wicked* is a parable about how propaganda can be leveraged by authority figures, whether against Elphaba or the Jews, and the different forms it can take...In *Wicked*, Maguire wanted to examine how language is used to prompt violence against minorities and dissenting voices in a society.”

The argument is related to the plot of *Wicked* in which the Wizard of Oz has decided that the (talking and fully functional) animals that live among humanoid residents in the Land of Oz are the cause of all evil in their society. The Wizard, using relentless propaganda and manipulation, convinces everyone to turn against the animals: removing them from their jobs, taking away their voices, and shackling them away from society. There is even a literal scape-goat, the main characters’ friend and mentor, who gets fired from his professorial job and taken away by the powers that be.

There is another perspective, however, that *Wicked* can be looked at as anti-Zionist because of how a character, like the Wicked Witch of the West (Elphaba in the movie) has her ‘wickedness’ excused and explained-away by her back-story. Allison Josephs, creator of the popular *Jew in the City* blog, wrote an article titled: “Wicked Could Not Have Come at a Worse Time for America.”

She asserts that anyone who watched the original *The Wizard of Oz* film from 1939 can’t help but be traumatized by how scary and evil the Wicked Witch of the West is. And no amount of back-story or explanation for how that character came to be could or should excuse the behavior.

She writes: “When society has been primed to feel sympathy for villains with difficult pasts, young Americans will begin posting videos on TikTok expressing support for real-life monsters like Osama bin Laden, as many did this past November. Atrocities like the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel – a massacre beyond our worst nightmares – will be put into ‘context.’ When I saw the Namor storyline in *Wakanda Forever* back in 2022, I immediately feared that this framing would further justify violence against Israel, ‘the colonizer.’”

Now, you may be asking, what does this have to do with Chanukah? Where does hope fit in? Well, perhaps, like how Chanukah can be so misunderstood, we need to go back to the true source material to get the real story.

In the original and beloved *The Wizard of Oz* film, the song ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’, is the central focus of the movie. It is the vehicle that drives the theme of hope throughout the story. The song frames the movie and reflects the wistful longing and desire for a world that is peaceful and sweeter than the one in which Dorothy currently resides.

The curious thing about the song, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, is that, like many Christmas songs, it was written by Jews.

In considering the connection between hope and this song, Matt Haig in his non-fiction work, *The Comfort Book* writes: “I think that it’s no coincidence that ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’, one of the most bittersweet yet hopeful songs in the world, a song that has topped polls as the greatest song of the twentieth century, was written by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg for *The Wizard of Oz* in one of the bleakest years in

human history: 1939.

“Harold wrote the music, while Yip penned the words. Harold and Yip themselves were no strangers to suffering. Yip had seen the horrors of the First World War and was left bankrupt following the crash of 1929. As for Harold, who would become known for his hopeful octave-leaping, he was born with a twin brother who sadly died in infancy. Aged sixteen, Harold fled his Jewish Orthodox parents and went to pursue a modern musical path. And let’s not forget these were two Jewish musicians writing arguably the most hopeful song ever written, all while Adolf Hitler was triggering war and antisemitism was on the rise.”

In the Chanukah story, there is a moment when the rag-tag army of Jews have finally beaten the Greco-Syrian war machine. It is then that the Jews participate in a particularly poignant hopeful act: They light the menorah.

They light the menorah knowing that there is not enough oil to keep burning, knowing that it will go out before kosher oil can be delivered, knowing that the practice is to not light unless you know it will burn eternally, they lit it anyway. That small, sweet act of faith now brings light to the darkness for millions of their descendants thousands of years later. That’s an amazing act of hope.

So, is the *Wicked* movie ‘Good for the Jews’, or no? Maybe that’s the wrong question. Maybe the question is, how can we keep the glow of those tiny candles in our hearts regardless of what the world around us thinks? The answer is that we must continue in our traditions and continue to reflect the beauty and holiness of the world God has given us. In our small way, every time we light a Chanukah candle, we are bringing light to the night; connecting our souls to *Am Israel* and honouring all those who came before us. We may ask, how can we nurture and nourish our hope when things can seem so dark? And the answer to that is: One candle at a time.

From my family to yours, wishing you a *Lichtig* and *Freileich Chanukah*. Chag Chanukah Sameach!

Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidès has an independent Rabbinic practice at RockyMountainRabbi.com and is the Assistant Rabbi at the Beth Tzedec Congregation.

Shining lights for everyone at Talmud Torah



The lights of Shabbat and Hanukkah fill Talmud Torah with a beautiful spirit of community, reminding us of the strength, pride, and connection we celebrate each day at Talmud Torah.

Remembering Remembrance Day with HMCS Edmonton

By Esther Starkman

On November 11, 2025, I stood in Victoria, BC, joyfully awaiting our granddaughter’s convocation at the University of Victoria. Being in Victoria and neighbouring Esquimalt—home to the Canadian Navy’s Pacific Fleet—sparked memories of an unexpected and cherished chapter of my life: my long relationship with HMCS *Edmonton*.

Becoming a Ship Sponsor: An Honour Few Experience

In 1996, I received a privilege I will treasure forever: I was chosen as the sponsor of HMCS *Edmonton*, a Maritime Coastal Defence Vessel of the Kingston Class. The moment I cracked a bottle of champagne over her newly built hull in Halifax Harbour—a tradition both celebratory and nerve-wracking (“What if the bottle doesn’t break?!”)—I became tied to this ship in a way that is difficult to describe but impossible to forget.

The launch weekend itself was a whirlwind of ceremony and pride. We toured the Halifax shipyard, met the builders and crew, attended formal dinners, and, of course, witnessed the launch alongside Mr. and Mrs. J.K. Irving, Mayor Bill Smith of Edmonton, Senator Nick Taylor, MLA Laurence Decore, and distinguished members of the Canadian Navy.

As a Jewish woman and the daughter of immigrant parents, being asked to sponsor a Royal Canadian Navy vessel was deeply meaningful. At that time, I was the only Jewish woman to have ever been given this honour—and to my knowledge, that remains true today.

A Living Connection With the Crew

My relationship with HMCS *Edmonton* didn’t end at the launch. Over the years, I have been welcomed aboard with full naval ceremony—tweeted up the gangway to the sound of the boatswain’s whistle—and have hosted members of the crew here in Edmonton. In connection with Read-In Week, a literacy initiative close to my heart, the ship’s crew gifted books to local schools during their visits. These moments bridged our landlocked city with the vast oceans our namesake vessel patrols.

One of my most vivid memories came in May 2010, during the Royal Canadian Navy’s 100th anniversary celebrations. Victoria hosted an international fleet review, and I had the great honour of participating. Surrounded by vessels from around the world—gleaming hulls, crisp uniforms, the sheer spectacle of naval precision—I felt profoundly proud to be connected to Canada’s Navy and its remarkable people. That Shabbat, I spoke at the historic Temple Emanu-El in Victoria about the magnitude of the experience and my deep affection for the ship.

HMCS Edmonton: Mighty, Modern, and Surprisingly Fearless

Over the decades, I have watched in awe as HMCS *Edmonton* has become one of the Navy’s most versatile coastal defence and patrol vessels. Its missions have taken it from the warm waters of the eastern Pacific to the icy reaches of the Arctic Ocean.

Pacific Patrols and Drug Interceptions

2013: Joined Operation Caribbe on the West Coast, seizing over one ton of cocaine in two October interceptions.

2016: Working alongside HMCS *Saskatoon* and U.S. partners, intercepted smugglers off Central America—recovering 650 kg of cocaine.

Later in 2016: Disrupted three further shipments, totalling nearly 1.5 tons of narcotics.

2018: Partnered with HMCS *Whitehorse* to seize more than 2,800 kg of illegal drugs. Later that year, joined HMCS *Nanaimo* for another major bust of 750 kg.

Arctic Operations

2017: Deployed north with HMCS *Yellowknife* under Operation Limpid, sailing into the Arctic Ocean to monitor Canada’s remote, strategically vital waters.

Global Naval Cooperation

2022: Represented Canada at RIMPAC, the world’s largest multinational maritime exercise.

2023: Again deployed to the eastern Pacific with

the U.S. Coast Guard—seizing 755 kg of cocaine off Mexico.

NATO Support and European Operations

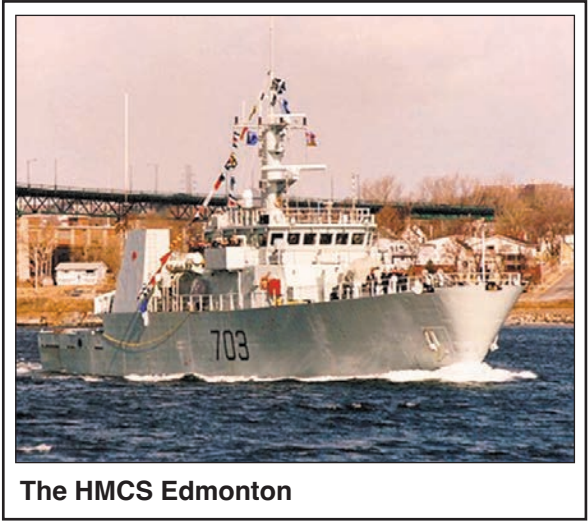
Summer 2025: Crossed the Atlantic to support NATO mine-countermeasure operations in the Baltic, including locating and disposing of explosive ordnance—Canada’s contribution to collective security and deterrence against Russian aggression.

All this from a “small” coastal defence vessel—one that many Edmontonians may not even realize carries the city’s name across the globe.

A Navy Presence for a Landlocked City

HMCS *Edmonton* doesn’t sit idle in times of peace. It patrols, protects, trains, cooperates, and responds. It is fitted with state-of-the-art technology and crewed by highly trained professionals—many with advanced degrees in engineering, psychology, and fields essential to modern defence.

Edmonton may be far from the ocean, but our namesake ship lives its motto with pride and purpose. For me, *Industria Ditat* (Industry Enriches) resonates deeply with several longstanding Jewish values and teachings. In our culture, work is not only a livelihood but a *mitzvah*: a way to benefit others and sustain the community. HMCS *Edmonton* is a vivid example of *Tikkun Olam*, work that enriches the world. HMCS *Edmonton*’s missions—protecting waters, preventing narcotics trafficking, supporting NATO security, participating in humanitarian efforts—are all forms of



The HMCS Edmonton

contributing to global safety and stability.

Honouring Service on Remembrance Day

As Remembrance Day reminds us, the freedom, safety, and stability we often take for granted are safeguarded by people who serve—at sea, on land, and in the air. HMCS *Edmonton* is part of that commitment.

I suspect many Edmontonians, including in our Jewish community, may not know the full scope of what “our” ship has accomplished—or what it continues to do to protect Canadians and support our allies.

For me, being part of the HMCS *Edmonton* story has been one of the great honours of my life. On Remembrance Day, and every day, I am grateful for the service, courage, and professionalism of the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Edmonton commemorates Kristallnacht



The community commemorated Kristallnacht with special guest author Bonnie Reichert, who discussed her recent memoir "How to Share an Egg" with facilitator Senator Paula Simons. Reichert is pictured above with her husband Michael, father Saul, sister Jerrol and Federation CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright. (Photos by Tammy Vineberg)

ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF CHANUKAH

חג חנוכה שמח
Grant, Lemoore, Nathaniel
and Ellie Vogel

*Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from Lauren Baram
and Lawrence Rodnunsky*

Happy Chanukah
from
Marcia Bercov

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah from
Ben and Ruth Coppens & family

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Judi Card

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from
Miriam Devins and family

חג חנוכה שמח
from
Leeor, Ohad, Noa, Shai and Daniella

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Gabe & Sonia Goldberg & Family

חג חנוכה שמח
from Ari, Faren, Noam,
and Maya Sniderman

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Nikki, Naomi, Stephanie,
Jared & Michla and Malka

*Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Joan Juskeiw and family*

Happy Chanukah
from
Mindy Jacobs &
Eoin Kenny

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

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from
Tamara Aronov and family

Happy Chanukah to the entire
community from Freda
and Marvin Abugov & family

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from
The Belostotsky Family

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from
Zaide & Grandma Lezack

חג חנוכה שמח
from Ariel Kiel,
Gila Caine
and our family

Happy Chanukah
from Adam, Jessica, Hailey
and Brandon Coppens

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Anita Sky & Howard Davidow

*Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from Clyde and Karen*

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community from
Brandy and Rob Graesser

Happy Chanukah
from Shaun, Beth,
Roan and Zoe Gluckman

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from Lesley Jacobson
and Family

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from Samuel Koplowicz

*Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, light, peace and hope.*
from
Shane & Rebecca
Asbell & Family

Happy Chanukah
from Jesse Turuk,
Eva Aronov, Lola & Ella

Happy Chanukah
from Robert and
Krista Brick and family

חג חנוכה שמח
from Leor, Melissa, Zoe
and Jamie Benjamin

*Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from The Buck Family*

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
The Cairns Family

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from
Colin, Jen, Asher, and Nooni Muscat

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

*Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from
Stan and Faith
Greenspan*

Chag Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
The Goldsand Family

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

Happy Chanukah to the entire
community. We stand with Israel!
from
Lena & Victor
Linetsky and family

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

from
Malkie, Gavi, Dani,
Elie, & Nes

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
Valda Levin

Wishing everyone a
Chanukah filled with love,
light, peace and hope.
from Ed Lazar,
Kim Murch
and family

Wishing everyone
a Happy Chanukah
from Marcia and
Walter McKall

Happy Chanukah
from Carter, Ayla, Arielle,
Oscar, Léah
and Dylan Muscat

Happy Chanukah
from
Sharon Marcus

*Happy Chanukah
from
Luke Muscat*

חג חנוכה שמח
from Kyle, Claire, Jacky,
Rosy, & Franky

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from
Barbara Mandel

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from
Michele and Josh Miller
and Family

*Happy Chanukah
from
Jacqueline Muscat
and Hilson Moss*

**Let the light shine this Chanukah
and everyday. Am Yisrael Chai.**
from
Joel and Christina
Reboh & Family

חג חנוכה שמח
from Robin and Dave Marcus
& family

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Dan, Jen, Jackson & Josh

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
Francie & Jon Nobleman

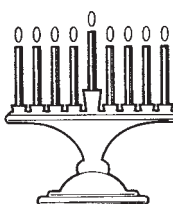
*Let the light shine this
Chanukah and everyday.
Am Yisrael Chai.*
Jeff and Shira
Sheckter & the
boys.

Happy Chanukah
from
Kim and Bert Malo

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

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
Sherry and Fred Muscat and family

Happy Chanukah
from
the Phillet family

*Happy Chanukah
to the entire community*
from
Linda and Ray
Rutman

Happy Chanukah to the
entire community from
Yuliya, Alexey, Zach
and Liza Massarsky

**Happy Chanukah
to the entire community**
from
Paul Polushin

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from
Aubrey & Draytin Rogerville

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from Dan and Mona Rosenberg
& family

Happy Chanukah
from
Greg, Nomi, and Maya

*Wishing family and friends
a peaceful and
illuminating Chanukah*
from
*Susan and
Bruce Mintz*

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, light,
peace and hope,
from Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein
and
Viktor Burkatskyi



ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF CHANUKAH

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Sukalsky Family

חג חנוכה
from Andrew, Aliya,
Orly and Simon

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

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
Shira Spring, Rena and Noah Uretsky

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
Jeff Rubin, Gaylene Soifer and family

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from Sarah, Josh, Jonah,
and Samuel Raizman

Happy Chanukah
from
Jane and Hersh Sobel

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from
Erle and Jeannette Snobel

עם ישראל חי
from the Soifer family
חג חנוכה שמח

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, light, peace and hope.
from Riva
and Howard
Shein & family

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
Erica Solomon, Jeff Winterstein,
Liam and Annie

Happy Chanukah
from
The Saegerts

Have a happy Chanukah filled
with good food, family & light
from Natalie
& Ken Soroka
and family

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, light,
peace and hope.
from
Howard & Esther
Starkman & family

Chag Chanukah Sameach.
We stand with Israel.
from
Connie and Danny
Zalmanowitz

Wishing everyone a Chanukah
filled with love, light,
peace and hope,
from Abe Silverman,
Janice Wilson & families,
and B'nai Brith Canada

Happy Chanukah
from Beverly and
Stephen Shafran

חג חנוכה שמח
from Jonathan Tankel

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Chanukah
from Esther Sklofsky

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

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from
Deborah Shatz

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

Let the light shine this
Chanukah and everyday.
Am Yisrael Chai.
from
Sue Winestock
and Family

חנוכה שמח
from
Forrest, Anna, Adina,
and Naomi

Wishing family and
friends all the best
this Chanukah
from Eva and Sam Weisz

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from Joel G. Weisz

Wishing family & friends
all the best this Chanukah
from
Naomi Wolfman

Wishing everyone a Chanukah filled
with love, light, peace and hope.
from Dalia, Allan,
Tammy and
Mark Wolinsky

Happy Chanukah
Rick and Nikki Vogel
along with Zach & Amanda
and Jordan & Kayla

Happy Chanukah
to the entire community
from Jodi and Michael Zabłudowski

from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

A problematic priest

In his concluding message to Israel, as told in the penultimate chapter of the Torah, Moses addressed each of the tribes with a blessing concerning its future. Speaking to his own tribe of Levi, he prayed: “Lord, bless his might and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.”

Rashi offered two different readings of this verse. The first of them focused on its violent tone, as an assurance that the priestly tribe of Levi would be granted the physical or military strength necessary to defend themselves against their foes. Moses’s blessing promised that the opponents will be eradicated totally without any chance to rise up again.

Who are those foes? Rashi says: “Those who challenge the authority of the priesthood.” It is not entirely clear if he was referring to a specific episode in biblical or post-biblical history.

Which brings us to Rashi’s second explanation.

“He foresaw that Hashmonai and his sons would one day wage war against the Greeks, so he prayed on their behalf because they were few in number— a mere twelve Hasmonian sons [it is unclear where this number came from] and Eleazar, arrayed against several myriads. It was for this reason that he said, ‘Lord, bless his might.’”

In other words, Rashi was stating that Moses’s blessing to the tribe of Levi might have been a prediction of the Hanukkah story in which the Jewish triumph was spearheaded by a family of Levite priests [kohens], known as the Hasmoneans.

Rashi was alluding here to a passage in a midrash according to which one of the twelve tribes of Israel was preordained to bring about the downfall of each of the four great empires that will subjugate Israel through history: Babylonia, Media (Persia), Greece, and Rome (Edom). In that framework Jacob’s third son, Levi, will be the one to overthrow the third empire, Greece.

“These [the Greeks] are numerous in their population while these [the Jews] are but few in number. And yet the many fell into the hands of the few. To what may this be credited? To Moses’s blessing, when he said: ‘smite through the loins of them that rise against him.’ Into whose hand does Greece fall? Into the hand of the sons of Hashmonai who stem from Levi.”

An ancient Aramaic interpretive translation of the Torah —a “Targum” mistakenly ascribed to the ancient sage Jonathan ben Uzziel and usually dated to the seventh century C.E.— inserted a mystifying clause with reference to Moses’s words about “them that rise against him.” Here the Targum remarked: “let those who hate Yohanan the High Priest be unable to stand on their legs.” This reading is not attested in any other work of ancient Jewish exegesis or midrash. Which high priest did it have in mind, and what does it tell us about the Targum’s origin and purpose?

The patriarch of the family is designated “Mattathias son of Yohanan,” and the Targum might well be alluding to that Yohanan, though he is nowhere mentioned as an active protagonist in the Hanukkah story.

However, several prominent scholars argued that the reference is to Yohanan (John) Hyrcanus, grandson of Mattathias and nephew of Judah Macabee, who served as political and cultic leader of Judea during the second century B.C.E. Hyrcanus was a controversial figure who pursued warlike policies toward Judea’s neighbours. He underwent a radical about-face on internal religious questions, switching his support from the Pharisaic sages to the priestly Sadducee party. Evidently, an addendum of this kind could only have come into existence at a time when he enjoyed the favour of the Jewish religious leadership, before his defection to the Sadducees. It has even been suggested that the Targum text might have functioned as a kind of liturgical blessing for the government when it was recited during Hyrcanus’s reign as part of the synagogue Torah reading, to plead for the sovereign’s protection from his numerous internal and foreign opponents.

Indeed, recent scholarship has argued that classical Hebrew liturgical poetry and Targums were produced in distinctive priestly circles that did not always share the perspectives of the rabbis.

This explanation would situate this Targum passage centuries earlier than the bulk of rabbinic texts that were not composed until the second century C.E. and later —and much, much earlier than the date normally proposed for the “Jonathan Targum.”

Other scholars have been less extreme in their claims, reluctant to go beyond the acknowledgment that this particular passage preserves a unique remnant from an older tradition (one that somehow eluded censorship by the Pharisees or rabbis), though the entire Targum is not necessarily so ancient. It is therefore quite understandable that some scholars simply dismissed the problematic reading “Yohanan” as a scribal error for what should have been “Aaron,” Moses’s brother and the founder of the Hebrew priesthood.

On the other hand, the Targum does make reference to other militant priests in its explication of Moses’s blessing to Levi. Consistent with a rabbinic tradition that the prophet Elijah was of priestly stock, identified with the zealot Pinhas, the Targum has Moses praying prophetically that the Almighty will accept “the offering of the hand of Elijah the priest, which he will offer on Mount Carmel” against the priests of Baal, and that he should “smash the loins of Ahab his enemy, and the neck of the false prophets who rise up against him.”

There are those who would argue that it is inappropriate for priests, whose main concerns should be confined to the spiritual realm, to take up arms in battle. This, however, is one of the lasting lessons of the Hanukkah story: that sometimes—all too often—it becomes necessary to contend with powerful enemies in order to create the conditions for pursuing the life of the spirit.

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



Todah Rabah:

Talmud Torah Society thanks the Edmonton Jewish Community for participating in the Holiday Greeting pages of the Alberta Jewish News Chanukah edition.

Proceeds from these pages will help provide extras for the

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Chag Chanukah Sameach and Am Israel Chai.

Happy Chanukah to the entire community

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

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Hey (ה), Joseph, and the Flow of Giving

The fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Hey (ה), represents openness, light, and potential. Its three solid sides and one open side show us that God creates space for us, to act, to choose, and to bring goodness into the world. Divine energy flows through this opening, but it needs our participation to become real. Hey reminds us that spirituality is not only given to us; it requires our conscious choice to step in and make it manifest.

We see this in the Torah with Joseph feeding the Egyptians. Joseph doesn't just see the famine; he acts decisively. He organizes, plans, and distributes food, turning potential goodness into practical, life sustaining charity. This is the essence of Hey in action: the open side is God's invitation, and Joseph's deeds show how we step in to channel that divine light into the world.

Charity, or giving (אֲרִיּוּת), is more than handing out resources. It is the combination of divine potential and human action. Hey symbolizes the opening, the chance for light to enter, while Joseph exemplifies stepping into that opening to bring tangible benefit to others.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches that this is not limited to extraordinary events. Every day offers small openings, helping a neighbor, offering a kind word, or supporting someone in need. Each act, like Joseph's, channels divine light.

Hey calls us to live openly and generously, transforming ordinary moments into holiness, and showing that charity is not only giving, it is participating in God's flow of goodness into the world. By stepping into the space God leaves for us, we turn everyday actions into opportunities for light and meaning.

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