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Chemin des Juifs screened at CPL

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

An International Holocaust Remembrance Day IHRD program on Tuesday, January 27 brought a diverse audience of approximately 300 people to the Central Library with others joining virtually as Calgary Public Library (CPL) and the Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education Department of Calgary Jewish Federation presented a screening of the documentary film *Le Chemin Des Juifs: A Survivor's Story*, directed by Daniel Bhattacharya.

The film, featuring the testimony of Holocaust survivor David Shentow and his wife Rose, was preceded by a chamber concert featuring the *Le Chemin Des Juifs Suite*, original music that was conceived by Bhattacharya – an accomplished violinist originally from the UK – and composed by Patrick Savage and Holog Spies. The film was produced by Bhattacharya and Canadian Koa Padolsky.

Following greetings by Heather Robertson, CPL Executive Director, Service Design and Innovation, and Calgary Jewish Federation CEO Rob Nagus, Calgary Mayor Jeromy Farkas – who had proclaimed



David Shentow. Screenshot from 'Le Chemin Des Juifs.' Reprinted with permission.

Charlotte Korchak gives a masterclass in positive Jewish conversations

Yasher Koach to Friends of JNF Canada for bringing educator Charlotte Korchak to Alberta. She was the right speaker at the right time for our community.

With her casual but teacherly demeanour she was able to uplift the audience by providing some valuable tools to reinforce our Jewish pride. For those of us who are experiencing emotional fatigue over the war, the devastation, the propaganda, the politics and the hasbara, she demonstrated that we can have a proud Jewish identity while maintaining our Jewish values and respect for human rights. We can be proud Zionists and still hold onto our Jewish ethics and beliefs. Her message was to arm yourself with knowledge, both historical and current. Keep calm and be patient. Be proudly Jewish but don't defend the indefensible, don't defend lawlessness. Be empathetic but be proudly Jewish and lean into our

TT students at the Indoor Games in YEG



The Talmud Torah Track Team competed at the Running Room Indoor Games this month in Edmonton and won two medals - in the Team Relay Race and Individual long jump. Yasher Koach to all the students who trained and participated. It was wonderful to see so many families at the Butter Dome cheering them on.

IHRD at City Hall earlier in the day once again shared an unequivocal message of support for the Jewish community and zero tolerance for antisemitism and racism in Calgary.

The IHRD program – organized by Holocaust and Human Rights Remembrance and Education Coordinator Amy Glassman Boiko – was generously funded by the Balaban family, the Krell family, Viewpoint Foundation, and donors to the Calgary Public Library Foundation's Human Rights and Holocaust Education Fund.

Le Chemin Des Juifs tells the surprisingly little-known story about Jewish slave labourers deported by the Nazis from Belgium to work camps in Northern France between 1942 and 1944 to do the heavy lifting on the Atlantic Wall, a system of fortifications mandated by Hitler to prevent the allies from launching an attack from Britain on Nazi-occupied Europe.

Bhattacharya told *AJNews* that the story is largely unknown because of the understandable emphasis on the notorious death camps in Eastern Europe where millions of Jews were murdered.

David Shentow and his father were among 2,200 Jews deported from Belgium between 1942 and 1944 to the work camps, including 1,500 from Antwerp alone, many if not most of them were Jews from Eastern Europe who had fled worsening pogroms there. Shentow did heavy labour at the Lager Tibor camp in Dannes-Camiers, near Calais, for three months.

At the heart of Bhattacharya's evocative documentary, shot on location in England, Belgium, France and Canada, is the searing testimony of Shentow (né Dydja Krzetowski), a teenager at the time, who, like his fellow prisoners, was forced to

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we are on a spectrum. We live in a world today where disagreements often result in rejection. Judaism, however, does not reject differences in perspective; it embraces the spectrum and encourages debate and conversation.

Thank you to Friends of JNF of Canada for bringing Korchak to Alberta with the knowledge and the tools to encourage this conversation in a positive and meaningful way. We can all benefit from her nuance.

Jay Cairns, the executive director of the Alberta chapter of Friends of JNF Canada, said those who attended Korchak's presentations were uplifted and empowered by the knowledge, experience, balance and positivity she brings to the discussion. He expressed appreciation to Korchak and everyone who attended as well as to the event sponsors. He said, "Friends of JNF Canada thanks our partners at the Calgary Jewish Federation and the Calgary Jewish Foundation (private donation) and thank you to National Council of Jewish Women (Edmonton chapter), Na'amat (Edmonton), and Jewish Federation of Edmonton for cosponsoring."

CPL screening *Cont. from page 1*

perform the dangerous work on starvation rations. They suffered countless other humiliations and privations, including beatings, miserable living conditions and little to no medical attention. Some died while others were murdered.

As Rose Shentow aptly observes in the documentary, the footprints still preserved in the pavement of the Jews' Road yield wordless testimony of a chilling story. Frozen in time are the imprints of the bare feet of slave labourers, the boots of the German soldiers, and the paws of their Shepherds.

With the Nazi occupation of Antwerp, Jews were subject to racial laws that, among other things, restricted their movements. David Shentow's family – who had once hoped to reunite with relatives who had settled in New York – could not leave as the Nazi noose tightened.

In August 1942, Shentow and his father were ordered to report to the Antwerp railway station. It was the last time Shentow saw his mother and two sisters. In the film, he recalls, with regret, that he turned around one last time to catch a glimpse of his mom, who was crying...something he had never seen before. That was his last memory of his beloved mother, who – together with Shentow's two sisters – was later deported and murdered by the Nazis.

This was merely the beginning for Shentow whose road to liberation later wound through Auschwitz and then Warsaw, where he and other Jewish prisoners were forced to clear debris following the Nazi destruction of the Jewish ghetto in the wake of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Shentow later survived a death march, and the Dachau concentration camp, where he was liberated on April 29, 1945, his 20th birthday.

The sole survivor of his immediate family, and one of very few from his large extended family, Shentow was brought to Ottawa in 1949 by an uncle who had preceded him.

In the film Shentow describes his immigration to Canada as the best thing that ever happened to him. Shentow met and married Rose, his wife of 61 years, who infuses *Le Chemin Des Juifs* with profound insights into her husband and his journey. Together

they welcomed two children and, in the fullness of time, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Shentow got on with his life, built his four-decade career at Friemans Department Store, and provided for his growing family. He did not speak much about his experiences until Holocaust deniers like Ernst Zundel began to spread their pernicious lies.

Then Shentow felt compelled to share his testimony with high school and university students as well as other groups, among them members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

A Q and A session with Director Daniel Bhattacharya was moderated by Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidés, following the screening of 'Le Chemin Des Juifs.' Photo by: christina (plus) nathan photography. Courtesy of Daniel Bhattacharya.

Shentow's connection with Alberta is not among the topics explored in *Le Chemin Des Juifs*, though it was touched upon in a Q and A session with Bhattacharya moderated by Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidés, following the screening. She spoke movingly of the deep bond between her late great-uncle Leon Krygier and Shentow when they met on the ship that brought them to their new lives in Canada following the Shoah.

"They were inseparable," Rabbi Krygier Lapidés said.

Leon had scrounged up enough money to make the journey from France to Calgary to reunite with his fiancée, Annette Groner, but during the voyage, Leon's wallet was either lost or stolen.

"He was beside himself and had no idea how he would make it from the east coast to Cow Town," Rabbi Krygier Lapidés said.

"David Shentow had \$20 to his name, and the ticket to Calgary was \$12. He gave it to Leon," said Krygier Lapidés, adding that her uncle paid Shentow back as soon as he could. They remained close friends until Leon Krygier's passing.

The road Shentow later traveled as a much-sought-



The film "Le Chemin Des Juifs" was accompanied by an exquisite chamber concert. Photos by christina (plus) nathan photography. Courtesy Daniel Bhattacharya.

after speaker brought him in contact with many more Albertans, most notably Jewish high school students who participated in March of the Living programs in 2006, 2008 and 2010 when Shentow, accompanied by his wife Rose, traveled with the Canadian Coast to Coast contingent of teens to Poland – where he shared his testimony with them at Auschwitz – and then Israel.

In 2009, Calgary Jewish Federation brought Shentow to Calgary as the keynote speaker at the community's Yom HaShoah program.

Like those audiences, Calgarians who attended the 2026 IHRD program will not soon forget David Shentow's story as told in his own words with surprising composure, though raw emotion bubbles to the surface, especially when this soft-spoken and gentle man recalls the violence and murders inflicted on others in front of his eyes and the guilt he carried for surviving when so many others did not.

It is impossible to replicate Shentow's impact second-hand, so those who missed the IHRD program should watch for other opportunities to see *Le Chemin Des Juifs* and learn of Shentow's experiences in his own words.

The film will, no doubt, reach additional Alberta audiences now that Daniel Bhattacharya – who moved

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Stampede with purpose: CMDA Calgary annual event

By Shael Gelfand

Dust off your cowboy hat, polish up your boots, and save the date – May 31. That’s when *Stampede with a Purpose*, Canadian Magen David Adom’s annual Calgary Gala, rides into town for a night you won’t want to miss.

Shaking things up this year, Sharon Fraiman, CMDA’s dynamic Western Regional Director, Major Gifts, has chosen a Stampede theme. “Cocktail Western,” says Fraiman. Think fancy jeans and elegant western dresses, western shirts and blazers, bandanas and bolo ties – and, of course, cowboy hats

and cowboy boots.

Like all CMDA galas, this one is sure to impress. Fraiman and her dedicated volunteers are planning a fabulous evening featuring delicious western-inspired cuisine, all prepared under strict kosher supervision, and top-flight country music by Tyler Two Guns, a renowned Tsuut’ina Nation entertainer. Tyler also happens to be the Chief of the Tsuut’ina Nation Fire Department.

“This is Stampede with a purpose,” says Fraiman, “and that purpose is to come together to save lives.”

Joining the evening as a guest speaker will be Uri Shacham, MDA’s Deputy Director and Chief of Staff,

who will travel from Tel Aviv to provide an update on Magen David Adom’s life-saving work.

The keynote speaker, Loay Alshareef, is sure to captivate guests and leave a lasting impression. An Arab influencer and activist with over 200,000 followers on X and more than 150,000 followers on Instagram, Alshareef advocates for normalized relationships between Israel and the Arab world and has been described as an “Arab-Zionist.”

“It’s because of the efforts of long-time CMDA supporter Valerie Sobel that we have Loay here for our Stampede gala,” says Fraiman. “I’m so appreciative

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Tyler Two Guns

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Loay Alshareef

Peace-with-Israel Arab advocate, historian and social media influencer

Sharon Fraiman

Western Region Director, Major Gifts

C: 587-435-5808

E: sfraiman@cmdai.org

GUEST SPEAKER

Uri Shacham

Deputy Director and Chief of Staff MDA

Holding Survivors close and carrying their legacy forward

By Danielle Dolgoy

Last week, I stood in a room filled with living history. More than fifty Holocaust survivors gathered in Edmonton for Café Europa, a program of Jewish Family Services. There was music, conversation, and laughter. There were also memories that cannot be separated from the people who carry them.

As Executive Director of Jewish Family Services, I have the privilege of working closely with the team that supports Holocaust survivors in our community. I also feel a responsibility to name what this moment requires of us.

Our survivors are still here. They are aging. Many are now in their late 80s and 90s. They rebuilt their lives after devastating loss and helped shape Jewish life in Edmonton. Today, they face the vulnerabilities that come with advanced age layered on top of experiences of persecution, displacement and profound trauma.

As people grow older, early memories often resurface with new intensity. For Holocaust survivors, that can mean the return of fear and grief that were set aside for decades in order to survive and rebuild. Aging can narrow social circles and increase isolation. Health challenges can threaten independence. Trauma does not simply fade with time.

Jewish Family Services exists to ensure that our survivors age with dignity, safety, and connection. With support from Claims Conference and the Azrieli Foundation, we provide in-home supports, counselling, system navigation, financial assistance, and social programs such as Café Europa, where survivors gather with peers who share language and lived experience. These services are practical. They are also an expression of communal responsibility.

At this year's gathering, what struck me most was not only the testimony of survival, but the strength in the room. Survivors danced. They laughed. They sang songs from their youth. Joy and memory existed side by side. That resilience is part of their legacy.

But the story does not end with those who lived through the Holocaust.

At events like Café Europa, we often observe that standing alongside many survivors are their children and grandchildren. Beyond them are families who fled Europe before the Holocaust, escaping pogroms, state violence and systemic discrimination. The dates differ. The wounds are connected.

I am a third-generation survivor of the Russian pogroms that terrorized my baba when she was a small child. She rarely spoke about what she experienced. She did not need to. The vigilance and fear lived quietly in her body and shaped how she moved through the world. Like many descendants of survivors, I have come to understand that trauma can be transmitted across generations.

This is not simply metaphor. For decades, psychiatrist and researcher Dr. Rachel Yehuda and her colleagues have studied Holocaust survivors and their children. Their work has documented higher rates of anxiety and altered stress responses among some descendants. In research published in journals such as *Biological Psychiatry*, Dr. Yehuda identified epigenetic changes in a stress-related gene known as FKBP5 in Holocaust survivors and in their children.

Epigenetics refers to changes in how genes are expressed rather than changes to the DNA sequence itself. These findings suggest that extreme trauma can leave biological imprints that influence how the next generation responds to stress.

Additional studies examining cortisol regulation, the body's primary stress hormone, have found measurable differences in some adult children of Holocaust survivors. While research continues to evolve, there is growing scientific support for what many families have long sensed: trauma can shape both psychological and physiological patterns across generations.

There is also encouraging evidence that resilience can be transmitted. Strong attachment, community belonging, and access to mental health support are protective factors. Intergenerational trauma is not destiny. It is influence. And influence can be redirected.

For those of us who are second and third generation, that understanding carries responsibility. We inherit both wound and strength. Breaking cycles of silence, hypervigilance, and unresolved grief requires intention. It requires investing in mental health, building secure communities, and choosing connection over isolation. It requires teaching our children not only what happened, but how we heal.

This is why survivor support remains urgent decades after the war. As survivors age, their needs become more complex. They require coordinated care, culturally competent services, and consistent social connection. They also require a community that understands their wellbeing affects the generations that follow.

Jewish Family Services serves Holocaust survivors, newcomers fleeing contemporary conflict, seniors living alone, families in crisis, and individuals seeking counselling. Our work is rooted in Jewish values of *kavod, chesed, and tzedek*. When we support survivors, we are not only addressing history. We are strengthening the future of our community.

Soon, there will be no living witnesses who can say, "I was there." When that day comes, the responsibility will rest even more heavily on those of us who follow. The question is whether we will have done enough to care for them while we could.

I invite our community to lean in. Learn about the services available to survivors. Support the work that sustains them. Speak with your children about inherited resilience as well as inherited pain. Ensure that those who endured the worst of humanity experience the best of ours in their final decades.

The measure of a community is how it cares for its elders and how it transforms inherited trauma into collective strength. Our survivors carried history on their shoulders. It is now our responsibility to carry them.

Danielle Dolgoy is the Executive Director of Jewish Family Services Edmonton, which provides social services, counselling and community supports to individuals and families across the Edmonton area.



A joyful Café Europa program was held in Edmonton sponsored by JFSE. Photos by Bar Lavy.



Enjoying the music and the connections at Café Europa.

What Is Happening Here?!

A conversation with Jesse Brown, publisher of *Canadaland News* and creator of the podcast series *What Is Happening Here*, which documents the surge of Jew hatred in Canada since October 7th, 2023.

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Festival Hatzafon is coming to Edmonton

By Jenna Vetsch, LJI Reporter

As the winter months pass and spring draws closer, our community can look forward to a season filled with exciting events, including the Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association's (AIFDA) annual Festival Hatzafon – Alberta's only Israeli dance festival.

Festival Hatzafon celebrates Edmonton's youth and adult dancers through a vibrant program of choreographies that blend traditional and contemporary Israeli dance styles. Proudly presented by Title Sponsors Cristine and Barry Slawsky, this year's festival will take place on March 15, 2026, at the Westbury Theatre. Guests are invited to stay for a light reception following the performance, generously sponsored by Pauline Uretsky.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Sari Uretsky and Assistant Artistic Director Abby Wright, Festival Hatzafon 2026 is inspired by the theme "One," exploring the importance of togetherness, unity, and shared cultural expression. Tickets can be found on AIFDA's website, www.aifda.ca.

Rikud and Aviv dancers spend months learning, rehearsing, and creating alongside their peers and instructors to present a meaningful performance for family, friends, and the broader community. The festival also welcomes the return of out-of-town performers from Vancouver's Israeli dance group, Orr Chadash, continuing a longstanding relationship built on many years of artistic collaboration. A Friday night dinner, sponsored by KBS Developments, will take place prior to the show, providing an opportunity to foster connection and celebrate with visiting guests.

In addition to this year's Title, Reception, and Friday Night Dinner Sponsors, Festival Hatzafon is made possible through the generous support of community organizations that help bring its vision to life each year. AIFDA wishes to thank the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF) for assisting with theatre rental costs. They also thank the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, powered by the United Jewish Appeal, for



The Aviv Israeli Folk Dancers will be featured at Festival Hatzafon in Edmonton on Mar. 15.

funding key logistical components to ensure a smooth and professional event. AIFDA is grateful to the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC), Edmonton Section, for supporting their commitment that no dancer is turned away due to financial hardship. The festival also values its ongoing partnership with the Talmud Torah Society, which provides subsidized rehearsal space for youth dancers. Not to be forgotten, the dedicated volunteers and dancers' parents are foundational to the festival's success, generously contributing their time, energy, and support to ensure a smooth and memorable experience for all participants and attendees.

AIFDA's Executive Board, teachers, and dancers, are excited to present Festival Hatzafon 2026 and look forward to welcoming audiences to experience the energy, creativity, and joy of Israeli dance.

Grab tickets for you and the family at www.aifda.ca.



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CPL *Cont. from page 2*

with his family to Canada in 2021 – lives in the Calgary area. Bhattacharya already has some irons in the fire for screenings that will once again pair his film with live performances of the *Le Chemin Des Juifs Suite*.

The live performance on IHRD by Bhattacharya (violin), his wife Holly Bhattacharya (violin), Bruce White (viola), Jeremy Young (keyboard), Olena Kilchyk (cello), and Rob Hutchinson (double bass) was a highlight of the evening. Like Daniel Bhattacharya, Bruce White was among the musicians that recorded the suite for the film.

“Each movement [features] a theme from [*Le Chemin Des Juifs*] When we perform the music first, there is an instant connection when people see the film,” said Bhattacharya. “The main thing about music is it’s a communication tool, and it goes beyond words.”

Bhattacharya, who did a post-graduate fellowship in Toronto at the Glen Gould School in 1993-94, has done principal work with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. He currently teaches violin at the Mount Royal University Conservatory and is executive director of ChamberFest West in Calgary. The live performance on IHRD by Director Daniel Bhattacharya (violin) and an ensemble was a highlight of the evening. Photo by: christina (plus) nathan photography.

There is a high probability that everyone who reads these words has heard Bhattacharya’s violin. He is a prolific recording artist who, according to his bio, “has contributed to more than 400 soundtracks, including *The Lord of the Rings*, *Black Panther*, *Dunkirk*, and



Daniel Bhattacharya playing his violin at CPL. Photo: christina (plus) nathan photography.

Wicked,” not to mention *Phantom of the Opera*, *Black Panther*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Les Misérables* and a host of Marvel and James Bond films.

An app widely used in the music industry calculates that the music Bhattacharya has recorded for film has been heard by an astonishing 27 billion people...and counting.

Along the way, Bhattacharya felt inspired to contribute to filmmaking from another angle. Some 13 years ago, at the age of 40, Bhattacharya enrolled in film studies at the Brighton Film school while continuing his work as a violinist. He subsequently made a couple of short films which screened in the UK and at a few film festivals abroad. When he met someone who was researching the slave labour camps in Northern France, Bhattacharya decided to make an educational film about The Jews’ Road.

The labour of love ended up being a four-year journey, during which he learned that David Shentow was one of four living survivors from but one train that transported 700 Jewish prisoners to Northern France.

Bhattacharya tried, at first unsuccessfully, to locate Shentow. Then he showed some of his footage to his UK neighbour, Koa Padolsky, a Canadian expat working as a film producer.

“As luck would have had it, she said, ‘Oh yes, my dad knows him,’” chuckled Bhattacharya, adding that Padolsky’s father attended the same Ottawa synagogue as the Shentows.

A week later, Bhattacharya and Padolsky traveled to Ottawa where they interviewed David and Rose.

The film morphed as Shentow’s Holocaust experiences became the focus, beginning with his deportation from Antwerp where his Polish family had moved when Shentow was an infant to escape worsening violence against Jews in Poland.

Fortunately, Bhattacharya completed his rough cut of *Le Chemin Des Juifs* and was able to share it with the Shentows prior to David’s passing in 2017 at the age of 92.

“He was happy with it,” Bhattacharya says.

Funded by private donors, *Le Chemin Des Juifs* premiered in 2018 at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa at an event supported by the Azrieli Foundation. Since then, it has been screened elsewhere in Canada and Europe, Bhattacharya said.

The subject matter is, on multiple levels, personal for Bhattacharya who speaks with pride about his Jewish roots.

“My mom was Jewish and I had a Bar Mitzvah,” said Bhattacharya, whose paternal roots are Indian and Hindu.

Bhattacharya’s maternal grandfather immigrated from Russia to England just after the turn of the 20th Century, enlisted in the RAF during World War II, and was among the liberators of Dachau, where he could only conclude that “...there was no God.”

As a result, Bhattacharya’s mother grew up in a



Rabbi Ilana Krygier Lapidés in conversation with Daniel Bhattacharya following the screening of "Le Chemin Des Juifs" on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

secular household.

Daniel’s Jewish grandmother, who had immigrated from Poland to England around the same time as her husband, came from an Orthodox background and insisted that her grandson have a Bar Mitzvah.

“I wanted it,” recalls Bhattacharya, “because of the family history on that side of the family...it was a blood thing for me.”

His calling as a violinist seems to also be a part of his DNA. His mother was a pianist, and his grandfather was both a violinist and saxophonist who played for the silent movies in London and was among the first musicians to record music for films in the late 1940s. Bhattacharya grew up in a flat above his family’s music shop.

“A lot of [violinists] are Jewish,” he says.

Violin music is front and centre in the playlist of Jewish experience. It is especially fitting that it compliments Shentow’s story. A bio likely used to introduce Shentow at the 2009 Calgary Yom HaShoah program reveals that he took violin lessons as a child, when Antwerp – as Shentow poignantly states in *Le Chemin Des Juif* – was a “paradise” for his family.

Bhattacharya says he is impressed with local efforts to promote Holocaust education in the schools. “That’s something I really want to push for,” Bhattacharya told *AJNews*.

“If you go to the interior of BC, there are people who don’t know anything about it,” adds Bhattacharya, who lived in Nelson and worked as executive director and artistic director for Arts Revelstoke prior to relocating to Alberta.

Along the way, he shared *Le Chemin Des Juifs* with BC audiences.

“We’re trying to get the film seen... and for me, I really want to do it with the [live] music, because it then becomes an experience.”

Bhattacharya says he is keenly interested in learning more about the Jewish experience in Canada and right here in Calgary. He is fascinated by how very interconnected the Jewish community is.

One example is the moment that a mutual friend of his and Rabbi Krygier Lapidés – Julie Friedman-Smith – introduced them to one another knowing that they shared an interest in Holocaust remembrance and education.

“It was a total coincidence that each of us had a connection with David Shentow,” Krygier Lapidés said.

“It’s all about connections,” says Daniel Bhattacharya. “This is the way the world works. When we packed our bags and moved over here, we knew maybe one person.... In a very short time, we’ve made so many connections.”

Some of those connections led to an unforgettable evening on International Holocaust Remembrance Day when members of the Calgary Jewish community and the community at large had the opportunity to hear the testimony of survivor David Shentow.

May his memory always be for a blessing.

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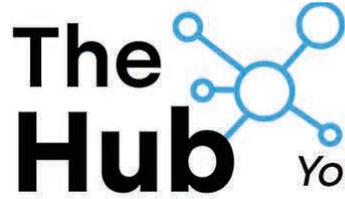
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A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

As Purim approaches, we can once again draw strength from one of our tradition's most powerful stories. The story of Esther reminds us that even in moments of uncertainty, the Jewish people have always found courage, unity, and an unwavering sense of responsibility for one another. This message feels especially meaningful today as we navigate the challenges facing Jews in Edmonton, across Canada, and around the world.

Purim teaches we face adversity not by turning inward, but by showing up for each other. The mitzvot of the holiday—hearing the Megillah, sharing mishloach manot, and supporting those in need—reflect the values that guide the Federation's work every day. We have seen these values in action throughout recent months: through our expanded community security efforts,

our advocacy against rising antisemitism, and the tremendous support you have shown for our partner region of Etzba HaGalil. Your commitment has underscored the strength and resilience of our community.

Our shared strategic priorities also shaped this year's Purim celebrations. We remain focused on strengthening Jewish identity and engagement, ensuring safety and resilience, deepening our connection with Israel, expanding access to meaningful programs and services, and advancing plans for our new Jewish Community Centre. These goals guide our decisions so that we are meeting today's needs while building a vibrant, sustainable Jewish future for generations to come.

Esther's leadership—defined by courage,

clarity, and a profound sense of responsibility—continues to inspire us. This year, Purim falls close to International Women's Day, offering a fitting reminder of the impact of women's leadership throughout Jewish history and in our own community. Esther's example calls on all of us to use our voices, strengthen our community, and ensure every Jew in Edmonton feels supported, connected, and proud.

As we celebrate Purim, may its lessons encourage us to act with bravery, give generously, and embrace the joy that sustains us.

Chag Sameach!

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Opening doors, building community: TT's Kindergarten Open House

By Natalie Soroka and Cara Greenspan

Talmud Torah School opened its doors in January for a Kindergarten Open House, inviting prospective families to experience the school's warmth, energy, and close-knit community. Guests had the opportunity to tour bright and engaging classrooms, meet passionate teachers and staff, and gain a true sense of the supportive environment in which young learners thrive academically, socially, and personally. The event offered families a chance to see how the school fosters both learning and connection from the very first day of Kindergarten.

Families were welcomed by Principal Darin Johnson, Kindergarten teacher Shira Spring, and Talmud Torah Society Vice President Ohad Eliyahu. They shared information about the alternative Hebrew Bilingual and Judaic Studies program, which serves students from Kindergarten through Grade 6. They also explained the unique partnership with the Talmud Torah Society, which not only supports the program but also enriches the school experience beyond the standard curriculum, ensuring students have access to a wide range of learning opportunities. Families learned about popular after-school offerings, including Sportball, Israeli dance, and theatre improv, giving students a chance to explore new skills and hobbies in a fun, social environment.

Additional Society programs at the school were highlighted, including the optional afternoon Out-of-School Care program. ELC Program Director Jennie Leonard described how this program offers a nurturing extension of the school day, providing a structured yet relaxed setting where children can continue to learn, play, and engage creatively. Through music and art-based activities, students are encouraged to explore self-expression, build social connections, and enjoy meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that complement their academic curriculum.

School Council Chair Cara Greenspan also spoke about the council's active role in supporting everyday school life and fostering a strong sense of community. She described several ongoing initiatives funded by the council, which enhance student experience and school resources. One standout example was a week-long artist-in-residence LEGO S.T.E.A.M. program held in celebration of Tu B'Shevat, which combined hands-on learning, creativity, and cultural connections, giving students a unique opportunity to engage with Jewish heritage in an interactive and innovative way.

Throughout the open house, families observed how Hebrew language and Judaic studies are integrated into daily classroom routines. Kindergarten teacher Shira Spring guided parents through a typical day, highlighting how structured learning, free play, and cultural education support academic growth, personal development, and bilingual proficiency. Parents gained a clear understanding of how the school's programs foster curiosity, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning.

The Kindergarten Open House reflected Talmud Torah School's dedication to nurturing young learners in a vibrant, engaging environment. Families saw firsthand how the school's supportive community, commitment to academic excellence, and immersive Hebrew and Judaic studies combine to provide a foundation for meaningful learning, cultural connection, and personal growth from the very start of a child's educational journey.



Talmud Torah students busy at work.



Talmud Torah's Kindergarten Open House, showcased the school's warmth, energy, and close-knit community.

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From the Promised Land to the Prairies

Finding Jewish Community in Calgary: Sivan's story

By Jana Zalmanowitz, LJI Reporter

In May of 2023, Sivan and her husband Ziv were celebrating an anticipated change in their lives, the birth of their second child. A few short months later, they were moving forward with an unanticipated change: leaving Israel to move to Calgary, Alberta.

Sivan paints a picture of Israel post-October 7th, that many mothers cannot even fathom. "We were shocked. For three or four weeks we didn't want to leave the house," she describes. "I remember, on that Saturday, I opened the door and from my balcony I could smell the fires burning. There were moments that we didn't know what to think, and the truth was too hard to bear."

Sivan was on maternity leave, home with a 4-month-old and a two-year old. "We've had rockets before, but this time it was different. Israel is so small that something happens 30 minutes away from you and it feels like something is going to happen to you." The future didn't feel bright.

Sivan and Ziv had previously thought about the idea of coming to Canada to study. After October 7, 2023, Canada opened its gate to Israelis, providing a temporary visa, and by January, the move they had been entertaining became a final decision. "We realized that this is a great opportunity to take, and try to live in Canada," Sivan says when talking about this big decision.

Like many in their position, they turned to Google to figure out where in Canada would best fit their family. Their criteria included job prospects, Jewish community and proximity to nature. Despite its one disadvantage of having no direct flights to Israel, Calgary won.

Sivan describes their move as a roller coaster. The family sold and gave away most of their possessions. They packed four suitcases and with their two young children in tow, arrived in Calgary in May 2023. They went on a trip to Jasper and fell in love with the Rocky Mountains. Everything felt new and exciting. Sivan and Ziv had to wait for a while before they could get their work permits. They found a nice house and enjoyed not working for a little while, but they knew they needed to settle down and create a life. "That took some time and, in some moments," Sivan says, "It felt too long."

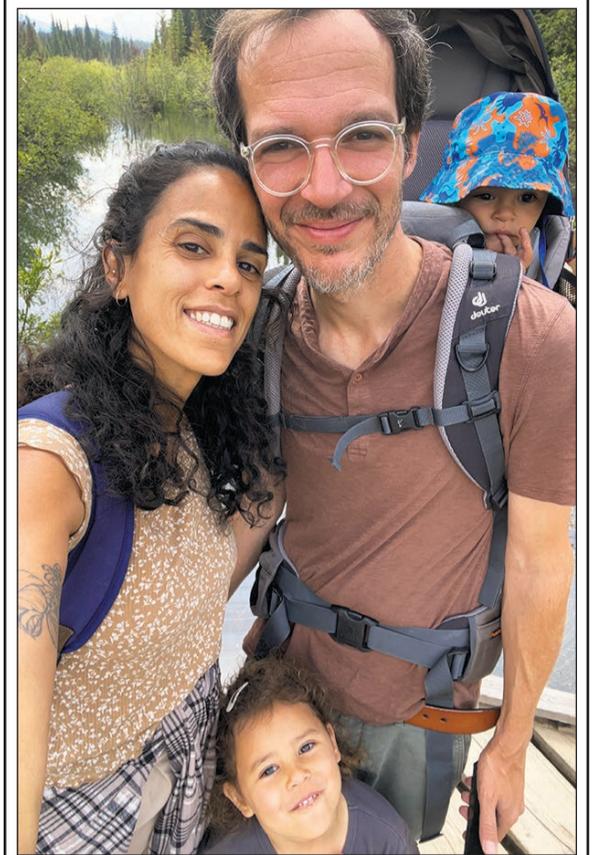
Step by step things started to fall into place. Their daughter started preschool at the Calgary Jewish Academy and they found a day home for their son. Both kids settled quickly into their new places. "They love it here," says Sivan. By sending their daughter to Jewish school, Sivan and Ziv are finding a way to ensure their Jewish identity remains strong. They notice you have to work harder to be Jewish in Calgary. "We love celebrating the Jewish holidays," says Sivan, so sending their children to Jewish school was the natural choice for them.

Other aspects of life were slower to fall into place. Sivan and Ziv are both educated professionals who had good jobs in Israel. Sivan has a PhD in biology and Ziv is a fiberoptic engineer. "We didn't think that it would be hard to find a job in our profession, but we were prepared to be open minded and make some changes," Sivan says. She has been in academics for most of her life but knew this may not be possible after the move. "It took a while, but we are both working now in a place that became like a family for us."

Work hasn't been the only place Sivan's family has found community. They came not knowing anyone and have found Calgary's Jewish community to be welcoming. The kids love to go swimming at JCC and participate in many of the

holiday activities with PJ Library. "When we get to JCC, it always makes me laugh, to see how they both go crazy running to press the green button to get inside," she says, enjoying how comfortable her children have become in this space. "If it's at work, or at the Book Nook [in the JCC], they feel surrounded by a community. Even when things are very hard, you have people around you to encourage you to keep on going and not quit."

Sivan says that while coming to a new country can be difficult, she is remaining positive. She feels the move was the right choice. "Living in Calgary has turned out to be a good place for us. Lots of gems to find and places to have fun with the kids. In the long run we are aiming to have the opportunity to stay here and grow." As with many Israelis who have moved to Alberta, Sivan brings an open mind to finding a new path in Canada, but it's a different path and there are many things to miss. "Israel has a place in our hearts! We are going to visit back home, after almost 2 years in Canada and we can't be more excited. We miss our family, friends, the beach and the food," Sivan says. "I love Israel. I love our people. Am Israel chai."



Sivan, Ziv and their children embracing their new life in Calgary.

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Montana Tucker brings powerful virtual conversation to Calgary

By Mark Cooper, LJI Reporter

Montana Tucker never would have believed so many she thought she knew and trusted in the entertainment industry would shut her down for speaking up for humanity.

Yet with every career setback she experienced because of her unapologetic advocacy against antisemitism, the American model, singer, dancer, actor and fierce Jewish activist just grew stronger, carving out a new celebrity identity more meaningful to her than any one of her multitudes of significant previous achievements in the industry.

“When I first started talking about this, I lost hundreds of thousands of followers, I lost brand deals. I lost collaborators I collaborated with for years who said they will no longer collaborate because of my support for Israel,” said Tucker, the 33-year-old granddaughter of Holocaust survivors who have shaped her life’s mission.

“That was really sad and hard for me but it has only fueled me even more. It has made me want to be more outspoken, especially in the entertainment industry when there are so few speaking up and doing something, it’s made me really want to go even harder and make sure no one can miss my message.”

Nobody could have missed her when she gained worldwide attention, showing up to the 2024 Grammy Awards wearing a dress fashioned with a huge yellow ribbon for the Israeli hostages then still held by Hamas.

Today, her provocative message is shared regularly on her vast social media platform, mostly through a series of viral videos she produces of her having tough conversations with those with vastly different backgrounds than her – such as a former neo-Nazi skinhead and a Gazan-born and raised man who lost several family members in the recent conflict.

And as she gets ready to speak to a Calgary audience during an online session later this month hosted virtually by the Calgary Jewish Federation and Calgary Public Library, she says Diaspora Jews should not hesitate having difficult conversations of their own, including with their Muslim neighbours to build bridges and an understanding of each other’s perspectives.

“People are so nervous and scared to have conversations with people that might think differently than them and I think that’s the most important thing you can do.

“It’s really important for my platform to work with

people and do videos with people who are different than me from different walks of life.

“And I think that’s the only way forward in general. If we all keep hating on each other we’re never going to come to a good place. We have to work hard and unite.”

She says those with “skin in the game” such as Jewish and Muslim communities need to find a way to have these conversations, while ignoring those with little connection to the conflict who seem to want to perpetuate the hatred.

She experienced that first hand when she collaborated on a video with Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib, a Palestinian American Humanitarian Activist, in early 2025 on social media to promote dialogue, peace, and understanding.

“We were getting so much hate (for doing the video) from people who were not Jewish, who were not Muslim, were not Israeli, not Palestinian.

“People with no skin in the game were hating on him for doing the video with me and it shows you what the reality of the situation is.

“The people who actually have skin in the game actually want peace.”

Before October 7, Tucker’s connection to her grandparents’ history and their resilience as survivors led to years of hard work documenting their stories and using her platform to educate younger generations about the Holocaust.

While she grew up hearing the stories of what they went through, her desire was truly ignited after her grandfather died six years ago at the age of 97 and she decided to re-watch, as an adult, the testimonies he and her grandmother gave to the Steven Spielberg-founded Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

“I felt something completely different, that I needed to do something with these stories.”

She decided to go to Poland with her mother and create the docuseries *How To: Never Forget*, a ten-part series of short episodes which documents her time in Poland, her grandparents’ story – all in an effort to bring Holocaust awareness to a Gen Z audience.

Released at about the same time singer Kanye West came out with a series of antisemitic remarks that included Holocaust denial, Tucker’s series took on a life of its own. Her social media platform ignited, and by the time the events of October 7 occurred she had some 14 million followers across her platforms. “When October 7 happened, it was like a generational trauma and something completely took over me and said



On Feb. 22, join activist Montana Tucker for a powerful virtual conversation.

“I have to share the truth. I have to use my platform and my voice ...”

She has been to Israel eight times since then to interview survivors, families and hostages. “I’ve shared real raw personal stories and I feel everything I have been doing has not been political. It’s really just been standing for humanity and I always will stand by that.”

Her documentary *The Children of October 7* was released in 2025 and can be viewed now on Paramount Plus.

With the hostages released, Tucker can now see glimmers of some career normalcy creeping back in. A new movie release is on the horizon and a new song will be coming out in time for her to perform it at July’s 2026 Maccabiah Games in Israel.

“I’m so, so excited about that and while I’m working on a whole bunch of things, always at the forefront of my mind and of my life will be combatting antisemitism, standing up for Israel and trying to make difference in this world.”

Calgary Jewish Federation CEO Rob Nagus says Tucker has been a bold and brave champion of Holocaust education and the fight against antisemitism.

“I hope that people in Calgary, both Jewish and non-Jewish alike, will be inspired by her powerful and timely message,” said Nagus.

Her virtual Calgary presentation, *Never Forget: Montana Tucker on the Holocaust, Antisemitism, and Hope*, runs February 22 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. MST and is hosted in partnership with the Calgary Jewish Federation’s Holocaust and Human Rights: Remembrance and Education department. The department is supported by the Balaban family, Krell family, Viewpoint Foundation, and donors to the Calgary Public Library Foundation.

Participants can register for the session here.

Stampede *Cont. from page 3*

and want to say thank you, Valerie, for your friendship and for all that you do.”

Fraiman often reminds people that saving lives takes strong community support. “Here in Calgary, we’ve played a huge role. Our community has donated ambulances, emergency scooters, and vital supplies that save lives every single day. I can’t say thank you enough.”

CMDA will also launch an exciting new initiative: MICU Second Life, a campaign that transforms retired Mobile Intensive Care Units (MICUs) into Mobile Mass Casualty Stations (MMCS) capable of treating up to 50 patients at a time.

Sponsorships, table sales, and tickets for *Stampede with a Purpose* are now available.

To learn more, please contact Sharon Fraiman, Western Regional Director & Major Gifts, at 587-435-5808 or sfraiman@cmdai.org.



Peace advocate Loay Alshareef will be in Calgary at the CMDA Gala.



Haskel Eisner z”l

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A Breath of Broadway celebrates Jewish culture

For vocalist Omer Shaish, music is a way to touch the heart and soul – and that is the goal of his one-person performance *A Breath of Broadway*, coming to Temple B'nai Tikvah on April 12.

In *A Breath of Broadway*, Omer celebrates Jewish culture by showcasing Broadway music with a Jewish connection, some Israeli music, some funny and some moving songs, and some surprises specifically for the Calgary audience.

“My agenda is to lift spirits and bring us together to laugh and cry and clap and dance, said Omer. “Everything is allowed and encouraged.”

Born in Rishon LeZion, Omer started his performing career as a dancer at age 9. He then attended a performing arts high school in Tel Aviv, majoring in theatre, followed by a stint with the Israeli Air Force Band, where he performed on military bases and in Jewish communities in Europe and Canada. The day after he completed his military service, Omer started rehearsals for Chicago and for several years enjoyed success on the Israeli stage. In 2007, he moved to the U.S. to study musical theater and graduated from the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. After 12 years working actively in the musical theatre world, Omer realized he most enjoyed being a vocalist, performing as himself.

“It felt right. I enjoy it, I can communicate with the audience and be who I am. I don’t have to stick to a script; I can create for myself. And in that way no show is similar to another. It’s fresh each time. Things happen on stage and you react to it and the audience reacts to you.”

Interestingly, his musical idol and inspiration as a performer comes from Canadian icon Celine Dion. Omer remembers watching the 1988 Eurovision contest, when he was just 5 years old, and hearing Dion sing for the first time.

“I remember my shock hearing that voice,” Omer recalls. “Seeing the magic of that woman, I remember thinking – that is what I want to do. She’s been my idol since then.

“She wears her heart on her sleeve, she is authentic and true to herself and she is dedicated to her audience

– she’ll do everything for her fans. She is my biggest inspiration.”

That authenticity and energy is what audiences can expect from *A Breath of Broadway*, which partially explores the long history of Jewish people in the musical theatre world.

“Jews were responsible for the early industry and are still very involved today,” said Omer. “What I try to do in this show is tell the story of the amazing relationship between the Jewish community and Broadway. In a way, many of those Broadway shows tell the story of the Jewish people without necessarily saying it out loud.”

As an example, Omer points to the classic “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” Written in 1939, the song sent a hidden message of hope to the Jews of Europe. Omer sees the place “over the rainbow where the sky is blue and blue birds fly” as a metaphor, in a way describing what happened a decade later with the establishment of the State of Israel in the aftermath the Holocaust.

One can also find a Jewish connection to the story of “Wicked,” where the green witch is hated only because of her colour. She tries to do good but is often misunderstood, says Omer, which is also the experience of the Jewish people, who are often misread. “We try to do something right, and others say it is wrong.”

A truly wandering Jew, Omer spends very little time in his home in Baltimore. He is constantly travelling, either with his one-person shows, or with an Israeli touring group called Kol Esperanza. Caught on his way out the door to perform and visit family in Israel, having just finished performing on a cruise, Omer is looking forward to gigs in Dubai, Florida, Houston, L.A. – and Calgary!

Omer is very much looking forward to his Calgary performance, and the community is looking forward to getting to know him, both on and off the stage.

“I’m very excited about this event, brought to you by deeply devoted volunteers,” said Rabbi Mark Glickman, who appreciates all those who contribute to the synagogue.



Vocalist Omer Shaish will be in Calgary on April 12 for a "Breath of Broadway."

“Supporting the synagogue, in whatever way, lets us continue our sacred work as a congregation.”

A Breath of Broadway is brought to you by a dynamic team chaired by Roz Oppenheim and Debbie Baylin. Funds raised from the event will be used to upgrade Temple’s air exchange and ventilation system (hence *A Breath of Broadway*!).

“This is an older building and always needs something,” Roz said. “And, speaking for the team, we’re thrilled to bring such a fabulous performer to Calgary. Omer’s show will have something for everyone!”

After the concert, guests are invited to enjoy refreshments in the social hall – and if you’ve ever attended an event organized by this team, you can count on beautiful décor, good wine, and delectable desserts.

Tickets are a reasonable \$50 and can be purchased online at templebnaitikvah.org/abreathofbroadway or by calling the Temple office at 403-252-1654.

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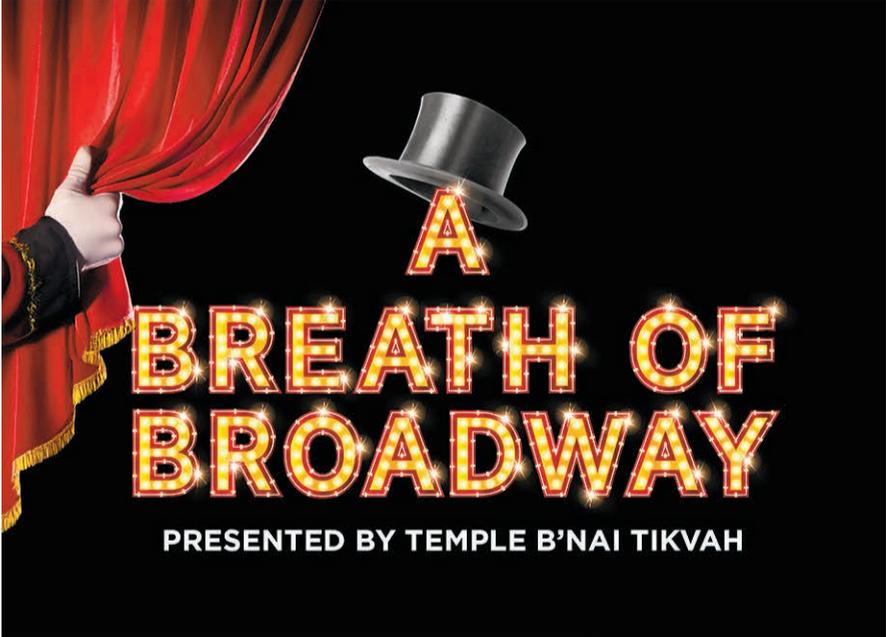


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Ottawa scraps envoy positions for new advisory council on rights, equity and inclusion

Canadian Jewish advocacy groups are advising the federal government not to compromise its efforts in the fight against antisemitism.

The warning comes as media reports indicate that Ottawa will eliminate the position of Special Envoy for Holocaust Remembrance and the Fight Against Antisemitism, which has been vacant since last July. According to a press release issued earlier this month, the government will instead create a new Advisory Council on Rights, Equity and Inclusion (ACRI) within the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia will also be scrapped.

“It’s about folding in those two positions into a new committee on national unity and advisory committee on rights, equity and inclusion,” Minister of Culture and Canadian Identity Marc Miller told journalists.

“The new Advisory Council on Rights, Equality and Inclusion will help build a more inclusive and united Canada; one grounded in our shared values, with a strong focus on community involvement, and rooted in the belief that far more unites us than divides us,” stated Miller. “By deepening mutual trust, unity, respect and solidarity, we can ensure that every person feels included and valued, and that rights and equality are protected for all Canadians.”

The names of the members of the Advisory Council will be revealed at a later date.

“We hope this initiative will serve the interests of Canadians and help develop real strategies to combat the spread of hate in our society,” said Richard Robertson, Director of Research and Advocacy at B’nai Brith Canada. “Unfortunately, the government failed to fully utilize its Special Envoy, leaving the position vacant in the midst of an antisemitism crisis... The new advisory council must prioritize the fight against antisemitism. The numbers don’t lie. It is urgent to act to address this problem without delay.”

In announcing this project, the government stated that the Advisory Council would draw on the expertise of leading academics and community leaders. Its mandate will focus on antisemitism, among other forms of hate and racism, within the context of Canada-wide efforts to enhance social cohesion and protect rights and social inclusion.

“The new Advisory Council must not dilute Canada’s efforts in the fight against antisemitism,” said Simon Wolle, President and CEO of B’nai Brith Canada.

“Antisemitism has reached unprecedented levels in Canada and requires increased attention. The government must ensure that it appoints only credible and competent experts who understand the specific nature of antisemitism and grasp the issue we are facing.”

B’nai Brith Canada will also urge the Advisory Council to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which was adopted by Canada in 2019.

“The creation of this new council does not change the need for Canada to establish a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Antisemitism,” said Mr. Wolle. “According to official statistics, Jewish Canadians are targeted more often than other minorities. This problem has worsened since October 7, 2023, when Hamas attacked Israel, massacred civilians, and took dozens of hostages.”

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) also had early concerns about the announcement. “Our immediate reaction was really the same as the reactions of so many people, and so many messages that we got from our community, and that is (a) general sense of disappointment that we won’t have a dedicated office or a point person that takes up a special interest and advisory role when it comes to tackling violent, systemic Islamophobia,” said NCCM spokesperson Steven Zhou to CTV News.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) also expressed concern. CIJA CEO Noah Shack stated, “We want to acknowledge the important work led by the Office of the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism under both Deborah Lyons and Irwin Cotler.

“With antisemitism and extremism continuing to surge across the country, the status quo was untenable. Impact requires leadership from the federal government in coordination with all other levels of government. We expect immediate concrete action on solutions that the Jewish community has long advocated for, including support for security and addressing the sources of hate. This is essential to safeguard the future of our community and all Canadians.

“It is crucial that the government’s new approach and the composition of the advisory council are designed to achieve meaningful outcomes in combatting the unprecedented wave of antisemitism



Minister of Culture Marc Miller.

and extremism in Canada.”

The Abraham Global Peace Initiative (AGPI) also expressed serious concern. AGPI stated, “While AGPI has long acknowledged that the previous structure was ineffective and in need of reform, the outright deletion of the office raises fundamental questions about how Canada intends to meet its international obligations to preserve Holocaust memory and combat antisemitism.

“The role of the Special Envoy was not symbolic. It was established to carry out Canada’s commitment to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) – including advancing and operationalizing the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism across government, public institutions, and civil society.

“With the office now abolished, it is unclear who will be responsible for implementing this mandate, ensuring accountability, or coordinating national policy at a time of unprecedented antisemitism.

“The absence of a dedicated body also brings into question how the memory of the Holocaust will be preserved in Canada. Holocaust remembrance is not merely an educational exercise; it is a moral obligation and a cornerstone of preventing the repetition of history. Without a clear authority, leadership risks being fragmented, inconsistent, or sidelined altogether.

“AGPI believes antisemitism cannot be addressed effectively when it is absorbed into broad advisory frameworks. It is a distinct, historically rooted, and globally coordinated hatred that requires focused expertise, measurable outcomes, and institutional authority.

AGPI recommended that the former envoy structure be replaced with a Commission on Antisemitism – one that is independent, empowered, and explicitly mandated to uphold IHRA principles, preserve Holocaust remembrance, and confront antisemitism in all its contemporary forms.

CIJA names Marley Gillies as Senior Director for the Alberta Region

(Calgary) – The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the advocacy agent of Jewish Federations of Canada–UIA, has announced that Marley Gillies has joined the organization as Senior Director, Alberta.

Marking the establishment of CIJA’s first office in the province, Marley will work closely with the leadership teams of the Calgary Jewish Federation and the Jewish Federation of Edmonton to strengthen and expand Jewish advocacy efforts across Alberta. CIJA’s immediate priorities in the region include deepening relationships with elected officials and decision-makers, advancing community security initiatives, and driving coordinated action to confront antisemitism at all levels of government.

“Home to more than 15,000 Jews whose roots in the province stretch back to the mid-19th century, Alberta’s Jewish community has made enduring contributions to law, business, the arts, philanthropy, and public life,” said Noah Shack, CEO, CIJA. “The opening of CIJA’s first Alberta office will significantly enhance our advocacy and help build a brighter future for our community and for all Albertans. This milestone is also a lasting legacy of

Al Osten z”l, whose generosity and commitment made it possible.”

Marley Gillies has extensive experience in municipal politics, public affairs, and community engagement. She has worked at the intersection of policy, communications, and operations, supporting elected officials, candidates, and organizations in navigating complex political environments and delivering meaningful results.

Most recently, Marley served as a Mayoral Campaign Advisor, acting as lead strategist for a competitive citywide campaign. She oversaw campaign planning and execution, advised on messaging and media relations, managed cross-functional teams, and developed data-driven outreach strategies to strengthen voter and community engagement.

Previously, Marley was the Executive Advisor in the Ward 1 City Councillor’s Office at Calgary’s City Hall, where she provided strategic guidance on policy, communications, and constituent relations. She managed day-to-day office operations, led policy research and briefing development, coordinated stakeholder engagement, and directed public



Marley Gillies

communications and crisis response efforts.

The Jewish communities of Calgary and Edmonton have long been engaged in local advocacy but have never had a representative of CIJA onsite. The establishment of a permanent CIJA presence in Alberta will strengthen their collective ability to respond to emerging challenges while proactively advancing priorities that benefit these communities, the province, and Canada as a whole.



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We backed Birthright. Now it's time for more big ideas.

By Charles Bronfman and Jeffrey Solomon

For more than two decades we have sat across the same tables — in Jerusalem conference rooms, Montreal board meetings, New York offices and plenty of late-night conversations — asking the same question: How do Jews feel more connected to one another? Through the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (ACBP), we helped launch Birthright Israel and more than a dozen other initiatives, driven by the belief that if you bring Jews together — on buses, in classrooms, around Shabbat tables — a sense of shared peoplehood can take root.

From the beginning, our work has been guided by a simple idea: “the unity of the Jewish people, whose soul is in Jerusalem.” We have sought to cultivate a sense of Jewish Peoplehood — a global family bound not only by heritage, but by shared values and mutual responsibility.

Today, that unity feels more fragile than ever. In this post-Oct. 7 world, we believe it is urgent to take action to sustain Jewish Peoplehood, so that it can withstand rising antisemitism, political polarization, and threats to democracy both in Israel and across the diaspora.

For decades, our philanthropy focused on connecting Jews through familiar avenues — Birthright trips, summer camps and cultural exchange programs that nurtured identity and community. Now, we believe it is time to go further: creating political networks, advocating for minority rights within Israel, and embedding Israeli culture more deeply in diaspora life. Our new agenda shifts from cultivating bonds to shaping policy, redefining responsibility and tackling the hard questions of Jewish Peoplehood in a time of global uncertainty.

It wasn't long ago that we believed we were in the golden age of the Jewish people. A set of unique circumstances allowed Jews to constantly say “shehechyanu” for gratitude for what they did. In the United States, the very lessons as documented by de Tocqueville in the 1830s was the concept of creating voluntary associations to achieve important purposes. Combining that ethos with the richness of Jewish values, and the concept of Jewish community permitted us to build an unprecedented diaspora perhaps the greatest since the times of Maimonides.

Metaphorically, we believed that the creation and building of the State of Israel was our generation's Third Temple. As Jonathan Woocher pointed out, this became our civil religion and organizational life became the new synagogue. Together, we created an unprecedented relationship between those in the family who are citizens of Israel and those of us choosing to remain in the rest of the world. In addition to the economic and quality of life measures, we shared values. The American Declaration of Independence and the Israeli Proclamation of Independence have far more in common than in difference. Both countries were aspirational societies, born in war, that could see beyond the immediate grievances to a time of justice and peace.

We also learned how to use our respective places to fulfill Jewish and Zionist visions of freedom and fairness. Israel alone could not have freed Soviet or Ethiopian or Syrian Jewry. It took the combined resources of the American Jewish community and Israel to achieve these miracles of our time.

However, democracy is under attack in Israel, the United States and many countries throughout the world. We know too well that when democracy is under attack, antisemitism is a woeful byproduct. Society became hyperpolitical; everything is seen in political terms, often right versus left. Sadly, the unifying vision is distorted by these political lenses, which, to us, often feel irrelevant to the core issues of Jewish Peoplehood. We love the Jewish people more than we dislike our political Others. Our intra-family debates require stepping back and looking at what unites us and what divides us.

More specifically, we believe that in this post-Oct. 7, when democracy itself is being stress-tested and debated, we need to take a number of actions that ensure a dynamic Jewish people, whether in Be'er Sheva, Berlin, Beijing or Boston.

These actions include:

More engagement: The secret sauce of Birthright Israel is the engagement of the young adult participants with their Israeli peers without curation. They discover for themselves how much they have in

common and, indeed, how much they share in respect and love. We should be doubling down on these *mifgashim* (encounters), arranging for Israeli participants to visit the communities that are the home of their new diaspora friends. We should expand the campus fellows' programs so that young Israelis can serve as concierges on campuses throughout the world. Israeli counselors should be the norm at summer camps throughout the globe. For example, ENTER, a relatively new organization, is responsible for over 30,000 digital engagements between Israeli and Diaspora teens. It has recently been expanded to mothers' *mifgashim*. It identifies and upgrades elementary schools in Israel to teach and engage educationally and emotionally with the Diaspora.

Creation: It is time for those of us in the Diaspora to create DIPAC: The Diaspora-Israel Political Action Committee. Modeled after AIPAC, this organization, led and staffed by like-minded Israelis, would represent the Diaspora's interests in Jerusalem vis-a-vis the Israeli government and the Knesset. Never again would there be an incompetent Diaspora Affairs Minister who does damage to local Jewish communities throughout the globe. No government would unilaterally withdraw an agreement such as that taken in 2018 regarding the Western Wall, which impacts only on the Diaspora. The teaching of Diaspora Jewish history and sociology would be no less prevalent in Israeli schools than the teaching of Israel is in Jewish schools throughout the world.

Redefinition: We would also advocate for a redefinition of *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh l' zeh* (All Israel is responsible, one for another). Let us redefine Israel beyond its traditional definition — “the Jewish people” — to include, almost 80 years after the creation of the State, all Israel. We should care about the quality of life of Druze, Bedouin and Palestinian Israelis in Daleit-el-Karmel, Rahat or Sahnin, no less than we



Talmud Torah alumni Noam Rosenblum on his Birthright trip in May 2024.

care for the quality of life of Israeli Jews in Tel Aviv or Haifa.

Culture as Community: For those of us in the Diaspora, bringing Israeli culture to our communities should continue and be increased. Every Jewish film festival should include a range of Israeli films. Music, literature and dance opportunities must be expanded to allow Israel to be seen not only as the Sparta depicted on news channels, but the Athens that enriches quality of life. Let us appreciate as well the value of effective contemporary education in the age of screens: edutainment that enriches our and the world's understanding of Israel and the Jewish people.

Take a Stand: We must use our voices to challenge clear and obvious violations of the very principles of the Israeli state. Non-residency is not an excuse to avoid speaking out against settlers who destroy olive groves, and do so with no fear of governmental intervention. If we are partners in Zionism, we need to

Continued on page 26

JEWISH STUDIES WEEK | WINTER 2026

2026 Annual Tova Yedlin Lecture Series:



The Sound of Reading

Presented by

Oren Cohen Roman

MARCH 12, 2:00 PM
SENATE CHAMBER, ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

In the past, Jews often read aloud—and even sang—their books, inviting anyone interested to listen. The melody was usually chosen freely by the reader, but some Hebrew and Yiddish books clearly indicate the melody to which they should be sung. Interestingly, these tunes were borrowed from diverse sources, ranging from Jewish prayers to Christian German folk songs.

This talk explores why this style of reading was popular among Jews and Christians alike, what it looked and sounded like, and why it gradually changed into the silent, private kind of reading we are familiar with today. To illustrate the effect of melody on a text, some examples will be played from recordings or performed live.

Oren Cohen Roman is associate professor of Yiddish at Lund University in Sweden. He is a cultural historian of Ashkenazi Jews and scholar of Yiddish literature from its medieval beginnings until the present day. His research interests include Jewish and Christian relations, literature on biblical themes, music, and gender.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA Presented by the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies



Book your Passover Greeting with Alberta Jewish News

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

It is more important than ever that we have a community newspaper to connect us and you can show your appreciation by purchasing holiday greetings in the newspaper three times a year – Rosh Hashana, Chanukah, and Passover. There are three different sizes available – small for \$36, medium for \$72 and large for \$180 – something to suit any budget. If you enjoy receiving the newspaper each month, this is a great way to let the whole community know it.

If you've already bought your holiday greeting, thank you – we appreciate you!

Your participation helps us get the paper out. It helps pay for the high costs associated with printing and mailing so it is very much appreciated because we are committed to providing Alberta Jewish News to as many people in our Alberta Jewish communities as possible. It also allows us to give generous discounted pricing to our beloved Jewish community organizations to help them advertise their events. With the funds

generated from greetings, we are also able to promote and amplify community activities across the wide spectrum of Jewish affiliations within our community. As a service to community members, we also provide further discounts for personal notices of appreciation, announcements of milestones and obituaries.

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

You can also book your greeting independently. We have recently streamlined our booking system and you can now easily book your holiday greetings online on our website albertajewishnews.com/greetings. Our new system allows you to book one holiday at a time or several at once – and the site allows you to specify the size of greeting that you'd like as well as your choice of holiday message. You can also now pay for greetings when you book them – on a secure site. Many of our readers have been asking for this ease of booking online and we are very happy to announce that it is now available.

The holidays are a time to connect with family and friends and this is our way of connecting with each of



you. See you soon, on the greeting pages of Alberta Jewish News!

'Marty Supreme' nets 9 Oscar nominations for Jewish sports fable

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) - Conan O'Brien will take the Dolby Theatre stage to host the 98th Academy Awards on March 15. Timothée Chalamet and the heavily Jewish period sports comedy he stars in – "Marty Supreme" – picked up nine Academy Award nominations, including best picture and best actor for the red-hot Chalamet, the 30-year-old thespian who is seen as likely to nab his first Oscar for the role.

The film also earned nods for best director for Josh Safdie; original screenplay for Safdie and Ronald Bronstein; cinematography; editing; production design; and costumes.

"Marty Supreme" was also nominated in the brand-new category of best casting, acknowledging a supporting cast stacked with ringers, many of them Jewish – including Odessa A'zion, Gwyneth Paltrow, Fran Drescher, Sandra Bernhard and Isaac Mizrahi.

Elsewhere in the nominees, "The Voice of Hind Rajab," a film about the death of a Palestinian child during the Israel-Gaza war told from the perspective of the Palestinian Red Crescent, was nominated for best international feature.

The film, submitted by Tunisia and co-produced by upstart pro-Palestinian distributor Watermelon Pictures, won a groundswell of support from the pro-Palestinian filmmaking community during the awards circuit. Jonathan Glazer, the British Jewish filmmaker behind the acclaimed Holocaust drama "The Zone of Interest" whose Oscars speech last year took aim at Israel's conduct in Gaza, co-produced the film.

In addition, Jewish super-producer and director Steven Spielberg was nominated as a producer for best

picture nominee "Hamnet," which picked up eight nominations total.

A critical and box-office hit for distributor A24, "Marty Supreme" follows an aspiring ping-pong athlete in the postwar Lower East Side as he prepares to sacrifice everything for the chance to play in the world championships in Japan.

It is loosely based on the story of Marty Reisman, a real-life Jewish ping-pong champion and street hustler, though much of the rollicking tale – which includes detours into Auschwitz and the Pyramids of Giza – is fictional. Marty's journey also puts his own American Jewish identity under the microscope as he tangles with an antisemitic businessman and a dog named Moses.

The film is the most evident Jewish rooting interest among the Oscar front-runners this year, especially since beloved Jewish actor Adam Sandler – who memorably starred in Safdie's previous film "Uncut Gems" – missed out on a supporting actor nomination for his work in "Jay Kelly."

"Blue Moon," a biopic of Jewish songwriter Lorenz Hart, picked up two nominations: best actor for Ethan Hawke and best original screenplay. Other films with prominent Jewish angles, including the World War II drama "Nuremberg," came up empty-handed.

By contrast, last year's nominations brought a slew of Jewish-interest selections including "The Brutalist," "A Real Pain" and "A Complete Unknown," the Bob Dylan biopic that also scored a nomination for Chalamet. Several of those films went on to win in major categories.

A few minor Jewish connections can be found in the year's second-most-nominated film, Paul Thomas

Anderson's political-rebel action drama "One Battle After Another" (which picked up 13 nominations, second only to "Sinners" with 16).

The British Jewish composer and Radiohead band member Jonny Greenwood, who has faced backlash from some fans over his collaborations with Israeli musicians, was nominated for best score for the film. Israeli-American actress and musician Alana Haim, a frequent Anderson collaborator, also has a small role, and one of the movie's storylines involves a secret cabal of white supremacists who restrict membership to the "Gentile-born."

The Brazilian espionage drama "The Secret Agent," nominated for four Oscars including best picture and best international feature, also notably features a cameo from recently deceased German actor Udo Kier. In one of his final roles, Kier plays a German Jewish refugee hiding out in Brazil whom the state's fascist-friendly police force mistakenly believe is a Nazi.

The Safdies cast a longer shadow over the morning's nominations. "The Smashing Machine," a different sports biopic directed by Benny Safdie – Josh's brother, his collaborator on "Uncut Gems" and other films – was nominated for best makeup. And "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You," directed by Jewish filmmaker Mary Bronstein and produced by her husband Ronald – a Safdie collaborator nominated this year for co-writing "Marty Supreme" – picked up a best actress nomination for star Rose Byrne.

Diane Warren, the Jewish songwriter and erstwhile Oscar nominee, was once again nominated – for the 17th time – in the category of best original song. This time, Warren's nomination came from writing a song for "Diane Warren: Relentless," a documentary about herself.

Other Jewish nominees to root for are in the category of Best Actress: Kate Hudson ("Song Sung Blue") and in the category of Best Supporting Actor Sean Penn ("One Battle After Another").

March is our Passover Edition!

Book your holiday greeting in Alberta Jewish News online
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Our Calgary paper print date is March 17, 2025
Deadline is March 12 - but book it today!



Our Edmonton paper print date is March 19, 2025
Deadline is March 16 - but book it today!

Israel's bobsled team is chasing more than medals in its first Olympic outing in Milan

By Jacob Gurvis

(JTA) – No matter what happens when Israel's bobsled team hits the ice this week at the 2026 Winter Olympics, team captain Adam "AJ" Edelman has already had a year for the history books.

The 34-year-old Brookline, Massachusetts, native is the first Orthodox Jewish athlete to compete at the Winter Olympics, and now the first Israeli to qualify for the Games in two sports. He placed 28th in skeleton at the 2018 Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.

But for Edelman, the 12-year journey that culminated in Israel's first-ever Olympic bobsled appearance – which he has nicknamed "Shul Runnings," a spin on the 1993 movie about Jamaica's bobsled team – is about more than success on the track.

"The Olympics were never a goal," Edelman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in an interview prior to the Games. "The Olympics were the tool, or the stepping stone, to get to the goal, which was to fundamentally redefine, or change, how our community – both the Israeli and the Jewish one – view investment into and the role of sport."

Edelman's journey began in 2013, when Israel attempted to recruit him to play for its national hockey team. Hockey had been Edelman's first sport, which he played through college at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he was the first Shabbat-observant player in program history.

Edelman discussed the idea with the long-time alumni director of his Jewish day school, Brookline's Maimonides School. Mike Rosenberg pointed something out to Edelman that ultimately sparked a calling.

"AJ, no one from this school has ever gotten to the level of sport beyond high school that you've gotten to that didn't go to, let's say, [Yeshiva University] or Brandeis," Edelman recalls Rosenberg, who died last year, telling him about the two historically Jewish colleges.

Edelman couldn't believe that. Out of thousands of Maimonides alumni (including his older brother, Emmy award-winning comedian Alex Edelman), only Edelman – who called himself "not a very gifted athlete" – had reached that level? He had a theory as to why that might be.

"I came to the conclusion that it had to be a self-selection process," Edelman explained. "That people were selecting out of sport as a journey before they got to that level. And why were they doing it? Because there was no priority placed on sport."

It wasn't something people in our community aspired to do or invest in."

Edelman said the lack of investment in sports led to a lack of infrastructure and a dearth of role models for Jewish kids to look up to. He set out to change that – to "be the change."

"The only way to do that was a certificate, so to speak, of excellence in sport, and that's the Games," he said. "The Games are essentially the certificate of, 'you did something.' So in that way, the Olympics became very, very much the tool for which I wanted to make the change."

Edelman began training in skeleton after graduating from MIT in 2014. His initial scouting report was not promising: he was told he was "not athletic, would never make the Olympics, and would never be competitive in sliding sport."

That did not deter him. Edelman moved to Israel in 2016, where he kept training, teaching himself the sport on YouTube when he couldn't afford a coach. He ultimately clinched Israel's first sliding sport Olympic appearance in 2018.

Then the pandemic hit. Edelman was pursuing an MBA at Yale University when classes were suspended. Edelman was visiting Jordana Balsam, a close friend who is an attorney in New York City, when the Olympics came up.

"He was telling me about his history with skeleton, and how he competed in the 2018 Games, and how he was actually really intrigued by bobsled," Balsam recalled. "And in an offhand comment, I'm like, 'Well, why don't you pursue that, since you have this time off from Yale?' And I guess something clicked in his brain, where he was just like, 'Yes, I'm gonna do that.'"



Israel's Adam Edelman pilots in the bobsleigh men's two-man training Heat 4 during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo on Feb. 13, 2026. (Photo by Stefano Rellandini / AFP via Getty Images)

And the rest is history."

Edelman began working toward bringing Israel to the Olympics in bobsled. Again, there were hurdles.

He had to recruit a team from scratch. Israel's own athletic authorities were skeptical – its Olympic committee almost didn't accept an invitation to the 2026 Games. Funding was practically non-existent. Still, the team continued training, ultimately missing out on Olympic qualification for the 2022 Games by 0.1 second.

Then came Oct. 7, 2023, and the subsequent Gaza war, in which five members of the team were called into combat and multiple team sponsors backed out. Still, Edelman kept his eye trained on the 2026 Games. He used Instagram DMs to recruit a new team – most of whom play other sports and had never been in a bobsled – which also features Israel's first Druze Olympian, Ward Farwasy.

Israel ultimately qualified in late January at an event in Lake Placid, the same location where Edelman had been told 12 years ago that he'd never make it. The team often trains there, as well as in Park City, Utah, British Columbia and elsewhere. Edelman said he is rarely in the same place for more than a few weeks at a time.

"Once he had something in his head – an idea, a concept, a goal that he has – he dives into it 200%, and it's something that I admire greatly," Balsam said. "I've never seen anyone so dedicated to their craft, to their sport, to their goal. It really is inspirational."

But even qualifying for the Games didn't end the obstacles. Due to Olympic security, Edelman said his team's training time in Cortina was limited. Then the team's apartment in the Czech Republic, where they were training prior to leaving for Italy, was robbed on Feb. 7. Edelman said thousands of dollars in personal belongings, including passports, were stolen.

Throughout the process, Edelman said the wave of support, particularly from American Jews, has been "pleasantly surprising" – especially compared to the reaction after he qualified in 2018, which he called more of a "blip."

That support has manifested through donations and merchandise sales, with Edelman fundraising to support the team's Olympic costs. There has also been ample news and social media coverage, inside the Jewish and Israeli communities and out. U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee has given the team a shoutout, too.

Edelman said the positive response has been all the validation he needed.

"There was a constant question of, at the end of the road, you're doing this for a reason, right?" he said. "

And the only reason to do this is for the goal, the goal of making a change. Of people caring about sport. Of being the change. So if the change doesn't come and it doesn't make an impact, then all of it is irrelevant... I think that, from what we've seen in the last [several weeks], the answer is an unequivocal yes. It was 100% worth it."

In Israel, sports fans are proud of the historic nature of the bobsled team's Olympic appearance, but the story has not broken through to the same extent, according to David Wiseman, who lives in Jerusalem and runs the popular "Follow Team Israel" Facebook page that tracks Israeli sports.

"The media are very football [soccer] and basketball-centric, so they get all the headlines," Wiseman said. "Someone like Deni Avdija gets significantly more coverage. They know of him being the first Israeli to play in the [NBA] All-Star game far more so than this. They think it's cool that [Edelman] made it, but they don't devote any more thought to it. Independent of Israel, bobsled is a niche, niche sport."

Still, Edelman and some of his supporters have seized on the narrative draw of Israel's underdog bobsled story – not to mention the apartment break-in and other obstacles – to amplify an almost muscular form of pro-Israel advocacy. Edelman commonly uses the phrase "victors, not victims," in reference to his team and to Israel's spirit more broadly.

Jared Firestone, who is representing Israel in

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Puck Drops
April 5-6, 2026

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community calendar

Want to know what's going on in Jewish Calgary? Check out the Community Calendar at jewishcalgary.org

Have an event? Click on "Suggest an Event" to add it to the calendar



jewishcalgary.org



A MESSAGE FROM SANDRA MORTON WEIZMAN

Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) was established in 2009 by the Jewish Special Education International Consortium and is observed every year in February. JDAIM is a unified effort among Jewish organizations worldwide to raise awareness and foster acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities and those who love them. It is a call to action for all of us to act in accordance with our Jewish values, honouring the gifts and strengths that we each possess.

Calgary Jewish Federation has been holding annual events to celebrate JDAIM since 2011, when we launched our Inclusion Task Force and committee. Some of our past events have focussed on building awareness while others have centred on training lay and professional leaders in the concepts of inclusion.

There exists a misconception among some in the Jewish community that JDAIM events, whether

concerts, films or lectures, are meant only for individuals in our community with disabilities and their families. In fact, this is simply not the case; JDAIM events are meant for the entire community. While they are often entertaining, they are also meant to raise awareness, to educate and often provoke us to question what more we can do to be welcoming and accepting of all. The truth is, while JDAIM brings the issues of disability inclusion to the forefront every February, inclusion is something that we must mindfully embed in our community activities all year round.

Please join us for this year's JDAIM event: *Chair or Not Chair - That is the Question: Celebrating JDAIM 2026*, an inspiring afternoon exploring the power of inclusion. This free program on Sunday, February 22 from 2:30 to 5:00PM at the Paperny Family JCC, includes a screening of *Itzhak*, a powerful

documentary film directed by Alison Chernick about the life, artistry, and accessibility journey of world-renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman. This inspiring event asks an important question: "What would have happened if Itzhak Perlman had been denied the opportunity to perform seated?" The film will be followed by a discussion and live performance by violinist Mariya Usachev Bukhta and pianist Rachel Kreyner. Childcare is also available. Register online at jewishcalgary.crowdchange.co or scan QR code.

B'Shalom,

Sandra Morton Weizman
Inclusion Committee Chair
and Board Member
Calgary Jewish Federation



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

EITAN CHITAYAT
JEWISH IDENTITY IN A COMPLEX WORLD

TUESDAY
MARCH 10
7PM
PAPERNY FAMILY JCC

TICKETS: \$18
STUDENTS: FREE



Join us for an inspiring evening with **Eitan Chitayat**, international brand-builder and founder of Natie Branding Agency in Tel Aviv.

Through his creative work and global advocacy, Eitan empowers Jewish voices, elevates authentic narratives, and brings pride and strength to Jewish identity. With antisemitism on the rise, *I'm That Jew* has become more than a viral video—it's a movement.



PURCHASE TICKETS AT QR CODE OR GO TO JEWISHCALGARY.ORG

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2026



IBP opens doors

Calgary Jewish Federation's Integrated Bursary Program

can help you, if you find it's a financial struggle to participate fully in Jewish life in our community.

With a single application followed by a discreet, personalized session with a Federation volunteer, you can access subsidies for day schools, and summer camp – depending on your need.

More information and application form available online at: jewishcalgary.org/financial-aid or email: ibp@jewishcalgary.org



Calgary Jewish Federation is a participating charity in Rogers Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink. All donations made through Birdies for Kids will be matched up to 50% making your donation go even further!



All events on this page are made possible by your gifts to Calgary Jewish Federation's annual UJA Campaign.

CALGARY JEWISH FEDERATION STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS



We are thrilled to announce that **SYDNEY TRUAX** is stepping into the role of Associate Director of Development with Calgary Jewish Federation.

Over the past four years, Sydney has served as PJ Library® Program and Development Manager, strengthening family engagement and deepening connections with families across our community. Under her leadership, PJ Library has continued to grow as a vibrant entry point into Jewish life in Calgary.

In her new role, Sydney will work alongside Director of Development Diana Kalef to further strengthen and expand CJF's philanthropic impact. Together, they will focus on deepening donor engagement, expanding pathways into giving, and supporting the continued growth of CJF's Annual UJA Campaign and broader development strategy.



Calgary Jewish Federation is pleased to welcome **BRENNA PERERA** to the team as our new Marketing and Communications Coordinator!

Along with her education, Brenna brings a strong background in communications, sales, administration, training, and public and education programming, with experience at well-known Calgary institutions such as the Calgary Stampede Foundation, Heritage Park Historical Village, and Shaw Communications.

A lifelong member of the Calgary Jewish community, Brenna is especially excited to give back and contribute in this new role.

PLEASE JOIN US IN CONGRATULATING SYDNEY AND BRENNA ON THIS EXCITING NEXT CHAPTER FOR CJF!



GIVE TODAY. STRENGTHEN TOMORROW. TOGETHER WE CAN



Together we **lead**, **secure**, **celebrate**, and **connect** – shaping a vibrant Jewish future for Calgary and beyond.

We lead with vision, investing in the next generation of Jewish leaders. We secure our community – protecting what matters, standing against antisemitism, and safeguarding our values. We celebrate with pride, embracing our heritage through acts of Jewish joy and resilience. And we connect – to each other, to Israel, and to Jewish communities around the world.

Every gift you give is a promise: to care for the vulnerable, to nurture identity, and to ensure our people not only endure, but thrive.

Thank you for standing with Jewish Calgary—your commitment matters now more than ever.

What we build today becomes the Jewish Calgary of tomorrow.

WAYS TO GIVE



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- 1607 90 Avenue SW



Building Jewish Tomorrows—Starting Today

Through the power of legacy giving, Life & Legacy endowment funds at the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary generated more than \$120,000 this past year – providing vital support to organizations across Jewish Calgary and sustaining the programs and traditions we cherish.

You can help secure Jewish tomorrows in Calgary by creating a meaningful legacy gift. Regardless of age, affiliation, or means, a gift of any size can be tailored to reflect your values, family, and financial goals – ensuring a vibrant Jewish future for generations to come.

Why Create a Jewish Legacy?

- To pass on your values to your family and community.
- To help ensure a strong future for Jewish Calgary.
- To sustain the programs and traditions you care about.
- To be part of something larger than yourself.
- To make a lasting impact, even if the gift comes later.

Learn More

Explore how a legacy gift can reflect what matters most to you.

Contact **Diana Kalef** at dkalef@jewishcalgary.org or **Joseph Tappenden** at josephappenden@jcfcc.ca.



New book intersects geo-political economics with Torah learning

By Regan Lipas, LJI Reporter

A new publication, with ties close to home, showcases the spiritual wisdom of a rabbi, and the intellectual scholarship of an academic. Rabbi Dr. Guy Gavriel Tal, of Beth Israel Synagogue in Edmonton, has not only impressively published his innovative synthesis of the realms of theological studies and the social sciences, but he has done so in English, Hebrew, and Spanish translations of *The Portion of Silver: The Gold of That Land is Good*. This is a two-volume undertaking, and the first installation, which applies a geopolitical-economic analytical lens to Bereshit and Shemot, will certainly spark inquisitive debate in university lecture halls, among Torah scholars, and across dinner tables. The second volume deals with Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim. Although the work would certainly catch the eye of a Jewish reader, the insights also find their footing in the tangible realm – a world where too often money prevails where G-d's teachings should stand supreme. It is this multifaceted approach to discussion that distinguishes the text as uniquely Jewish, and universally relevant.

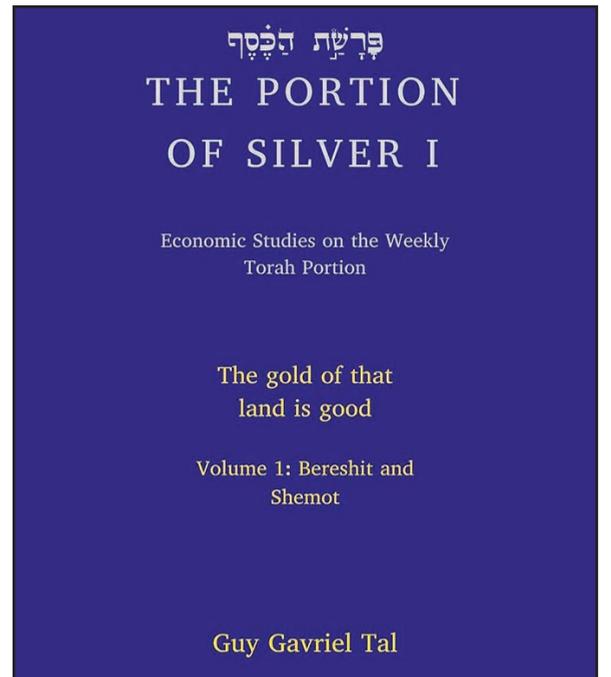
Rabbi Tal articulates this, noting in a recent interview with the *Alberta Jewish News*: "I believe the text remains highly accessible for two main reasons: First, many non-Jewish readers hold the Bible in high regard and can readily identify with the analysis of its verses and stories. Second, the intellectual and ethical principles explored in the book are universal. By addressing broad public issues and global dilemmas, the work offers a perspective that I believe is worthy of discussion and reflection for anyone, regardless of their background or religious affiliation." Additionally, the English version of the book assumes an accessible tone that helps to engage a diverse readership; one need not be a Torah scholar to extrapolate Rabbi Tal's meaning, nor a Wall Street 'captain of industry.'

Rabbi Tal's two volume project found its inception in a more incremental approach. "The book was originally written as a series of columns for *Bizportal*, a leading Israeli investment news site catering to the general public rather than a specifically religious audience." As Rabbi Tal himself puts it: "...the writing style inherently assumes that not every reader is intimately familiar with the details of Torah narratives or necessarily holds a belief in its divine origin. This approach was carefully preserved in the English translation, keeping in mind that non-Jewish readers would also find interest in the work."

The text integrates a refreshingly modern

perspective. In his first chapter *Bereshit: Who is Suitable for Independent Trading in the Stock Market* Rabbi Tal writes: "Psychology has a tremendous influence on stock market trading. Fear of loss on one hand, and the FOMO (fear of missing out) phenomenon, along with a sense of hope and desire to profit on the other, drive people to act or not, often not in a rational manner. The desire to make large profits in a short time leads people to take irrational risks, while the fear of significant losses prevents them from engaging in sensible and profitable actions" (Tal 12). While some would be reminded of the dangers of greed, broader audiences engage with pop-cultural relatability. Putting aside the whimsical use of colloquialism, there is a deeper observation being made about the human experience. "If we could enjoy the journey as much as we do when we achieve goals, we would be much happier for a much longer time, because during the majority of our lives, we are on a path to a destination. There are cases where satisfaction and joy can be derived from the journey, and there are fortunate people who indeed enjoy the means, whether it is in studies or in a chosen profession. These are the truly happy ones who have overcome the sin of the earth. But most people, at least most of the time, do not achieve that" (Tal 18). Indeed, there is a spiritual lesson here, as well as a practical observation around long-term investment. Rabbi She'ar Yashuv Cohen echoes that Jewish teachings and the observable physical or economy-driven world cannot be examined in isolation in his article *Modern Economics in Light of Halakha* where he states: "The Torah ascribes great importance to socio-economic matters" (Cohen 64).

The social sciences as a reflection of foundational Torah teachings are showcased in Rabbi Tal's chapter *Why Did G-d Decide to Thwart the Development of Communism?* where the ever-constant obstacles of injustice and inequity propel an earthly desire for revolution without the consideration of the nature of man. The author notes that both The Flood and Tower of Babel should act as reminders when ruminating on the disastrous impacts of the Communist experiment. "The underlying ideas of Communism may seem enlightened and progressive – questioning why some should have more than others and whether it is better to share all means of production and the fruits of human labor. However, the implementation of these ideas, which contradict human nature and the free initiative that enables the world's development, created rivalries, class warfare, and battles against human freedom. This brought destruction to entire nations, poverty and suffering to many communities, and the murder of countless innocent individuals" (Tal 25). Certainly, if even examined from the Jewish perspective alone, the aftermath of Communist



doctrine has left an unquantifiable number of people with Jewish heritage estranged from a connection to their identity. From an economic vantage point, the failure of Communism has left social turbulence in its wake, and fertile ground for corruption and exponential greed. When the Soviet Union collapsed, splintering the fifteen republics under its occupation, new borders fractured the perceived unity of a corrupt regime. Rabbi Tal notes: "Without delving into the nature of these sins, we can understand that 'violence' and 'corruption' are serious matters, justifying G-d's harsh reaction that eradicated the entire world and essentially initiated a universal 'reboot' for creation" (26). As any scholar of the Former Soviet Union would attest, this 'reboot' may still be underway, but as Rabbi Tal concludes optimistically: "Creating competition and diversity and developing unique cultures and national characters are preferable over the uniform universality that erases identity. The construction of the new world after the flood encourages diversity and differences, not forced and degenerate uniformity, and creates healthy competition that leads to human development" (35). Rabbi Cohen supports this with his observation that "... trading in good faith in the central, overall principle in ethics generally, and in economic areas particularly" (66).

In Canada, where Socialist idealism often tries to unsuccessfully overtake the natural human compatibility with Capitalism, it is worth noting that the equity and justice sought for in non-economically-driven societal models, should be spoken to by the ethical lessons and morality of faith. "The book is a staunch advocate for the free market, capitalism, and the principles of liberty and faith in the human spirit. It is an attempt to apply logic and a realistic reading of our world through the lens of Torah principles. While some may disagree with specific conclusions – which is perfectly legitimate, as the tradition of Torah study is built upon diverse perspectives – the core lesson is that the Torah is vibrant, illuminating, and profoundly relevant. The fundamental laws by which the world operates, including those of economics, are reflected in the infinite wisdom

Continued on page 20

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— R E A L E S T A T E —

Steps you can take to start preparing for home ownership

(NC) Even in the face of rising real estate prices and a rocky economic environment, many Canadians are unwavering in their desire – and goal – to buy a home, according to a recent survey by TD.

It revealed that nearly three quarters of respondents are hopeful they'll be able to purchase a home within five years. But half also said a challenging market means it will take them at least two years to be financially ready to buy.

Two years might feel like a long wait for home ownership. But 24 months can be enough time to make a solid financial plan, fill your knowledge gaps, get familiar with the mortgage and home buying process and manage any feelings of anxiety or stress by seeking advice from a mortgage professional. Here are some tips on how you can help prepare your finances:

Make a personalized financial plan

How much income does your household bring in? How much are you saving? How do your monthly

expenses stack up against your income? What about investing?

One of the best ways to help answer these questions is to create a personal or household budget. Use it to evaluate your spending, make changes to your habits and create a financial plan that includes saving for a home.

The first step when buying a home is knowing how much you can afford to spend. In addition to how much mortgage you're comfortable with, you'll also want to consider your expenses, plus the new ones that come with home ownership. By looking at your budget, you'll get a better idea of what's possible and achievable for you.

By regularly revisiting your budget to factor in any changes to your circumstances, like a new job, a vehicle loan or the birth of a child, you can better determine if you will need more or less time to reach your goal. Tools like the TD mortgage affordability



calculator can help with planning.

Seek guidance about your options

Part of getting ready to purchase a home should include getting more information about your financing options. If you're a prospective buyer with concerns about mortgage rates and the home buying process, you're not the only one.

To feel better equipped to keep up with the housing market, seek advice from a professional. Working with a mortgage specialist can help you better understand your unique financial situation and home financing options.

New book *Cont. from page 18*

contained within the Torah. My hope is that this book contributes, even in a small way, to that understanding," Rabbi Tal noted in his interview. "I believe that because the Torah's principles are divine and eternal, they are inherently relevant to every aspect of human existence. Uncovering a new field where the Torah applies – such as economics – reveals a hidden light within the Torah that was previously obscured. Every insight derived from the Torah is a form of study; it expands the Torah's presence in reality and reveals its hidden light."

Contemporary society is plagued with cries for justice. The Humanist would ask whose definition of 'justice' is being applied to the evaluation, while a person of faith would cite that there really is only one 'justice' with myriad human interpretations. Rabbi Tal explains: "State power is essential for the preservation of law and order, yet it is also prone to becoming a corruptive and overbearing force. Therefore, it is imperative to use it sparingly. Caution must be exercised to ensure that the laws of the state are never turned into the laws of Sodom" (56). Readers of the book might take this moment to ponder the profound simplicity of trumpeting justice, because the global community relies on it being maintained. Later in his book, Rabbi Tal expands on this: "Jealousy, especially of successful people, is a familiar human trait. Sometimes, it leads to behavior that does not benefit the envious individual, where they try to harm others' success even at their own expense" (71-71).

In the fast-paced competition of the professional 'rat race', people have become plagued by anxiety, depression, and any number of vocationally specific ailments. The need to rest is not only a spiritual one, but a biological one that when ignored, slowly debilitates the corporeal form. Rabbi Tal writes: "bodily rest on Shabbat is also, and perhaps primarily, intended to provide the space and time for a person to engage in matters beyond daily existence. This is also a human need: In daily life, under the burden of work, it does not receive proper priority. A healthy person in body and spirit knows how to set boundaries to the pursuit of livelihood, even if he loves his work and it fulfills his world, and even if it is an important and urgent economic need, and finds space in his life for rest, for family, for hobbies, and also for spiritual life" (246). What is meaningful here applies not to a religious reader, or a secular one, but to the human experience, reminding audiences that the teachings of Torah are for all to be uplifted and bettered by. Rabbi Tal brings these lessons of Torah to a modern Japanese context, citing a contemporary term that came about as Japan's economy rose like a phoenix from the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

'Karoshi' is a Japanese term meaning 'death from overwork.' "In Japan, it is a real epidemic, which causes hundreds of deaths each year. The Japanese government has mobilized to combat this phenomenon through education, hotlines, and legislation. Japan represents an extreme example of overwork, stemming from cultural and economic factors, but the phenomenon is more widespread and common worldwide to some degree. Sometimes overwork stems from a genuine financial need, when wages are insufficient and people must work extra hours to make ends meet. In other cases, it arises from excessive demands of employers or

an employee's exaggerated personal commitment to his work. In other, more positive cases, the worker simply enjoys the work and prefers to spend his time doing what he loves rather than engaging in other activities. Either way, it is a troubling phenomenon" (240). While readers may chuckle at the pessimism of the Japanese language, the existence of such terminology does indicate a harmful societal trend with physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual implications. The Stock Market may close on weekends, but after-hours trading ensures that money never sleeps. A day of rest is a Commandment for a reason, and humans would be wise to remember this.

Rabbi Dr. Guy Gavriel Tal has done something special with this book; he has seamlessly constructed a bridge between mainstream global readers and the sacred wisdom of Torah study. During his interview, he explained that: "The divine and eternal nature of the Torah is uniquely expressed through the principle that timeless truths can be applied to ever-changing realities. This is a central theme of the book, demonstrating how the analysis of past events described in the Torah remains profoundly relevant in providing solutions to contemporary challenges. I am confident that the principles presented in the book – even when discussed in current contexts or as answers to specific modern questions – are inherently universal and eternal. Future generations will find them equally valid as they look back to learn from our experience and from our method of interpreting reality through the lens of the Torah."

Rabbi Tal is certainly correct that this delicate balance of disciplines has indeed yielded a provocative and insightful analysis of universally relevant topics and issues. As he illustrates through his nuanced and highly textured exploration, what may seem ancient is the substance of current debates, and what may seem like breaking news is in fact a tale as old as time. To recommend this book solely for economists, or only for scholars of Torah would be shortsighted as this is a universally human discussion.

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The hidden cost of being underinsured: What businesses only learn after a claim

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

For many business owners, insurance sits quietly in the background. Premiums are paid, certificates are issued, and policies are renewed year after year. As long as operations run smoothly, insurance feels like a compliance requirement rather than a strategic consideration. That perception changes the moment a serious claim occurs.

How underinsurance quietly develops as businesses grow

Underinsurance is rarely intentional. Most businesses do not choose to leave themselves exposed. Instead, it develops gradually. Operations expand. Revenues increase. Contracts become more complex. Equipment values rise. Yet insurance structures often remain tied to assumptions made years earlier. What once aligned with the business quietly becomes outdated. This misalignment is usually discovered only after a loss.

Why coverage gaps usually appear only after a claim

When a claim occurs, insurance responds strictly to the policy as written, not to intent or expectation. Limits that once appeared adequate suddenly fall short. Coverage extensions that were assumed to exist are missing. Business interruption protection ends long before operations return to normal. These gaps are not technical details. They translate directly into financial exposure.

Consider a business that has grown steadily over several years. New equipment has been added, contract sizes have increased, and operational reliance on key sites or suppliers has deepened. After a major loss, replacement costs exceed insured limits,

downtime lasts longer than the policy allows, and contractual obligations continue regardless of recovery. Insurance performs exactly as designed. The issue is that it was never updated to reflect the reality of the business.

The financial, operational, and contractual costs of being underinsured

The first cost of underinsurance is immediate and measurable. Out-of-pocket expenses exceed deductibles. Rebuild or replacement costs surpass insured values. Lost income extends beyond coverage periods. Cash flow tightens precisely when stability matters most.

The second cost is operational. Recovery slows when capital is constrained. Expansion plans are delayed. Hiring pauses. Leadership focus shifts from growth to damage control. In closely held or family-run businesses, this strain often extends beyond the company into personal finances and relationships.

Claims also have a way of exposing contractual blind spots. Many businesses sign agreements containing insurance requirements, indemnities, and risk transfer provisions without fully understanding how those obligations interact with their coverage. After a claim, it can become clear that contractual responsibilities extend well beyond what the insurance policy responds to. At that point, the exposure belongs entirely to the business.

Another issue claims reveal is reliance on assumptions. Assumptions that coverage is standard. That exclusions will not apply. That interpretation will be flexible when circumstances are difficult. Insurance does not operate on assumptions. It operates on wording, conditions, and limits. Claims are where those details become real.

There is also a less visible but equally real cost. Underinsured losses carry a human toll. Stress

increases. Decision-making becomes reactive. Confidence erodes. For owners and senior leaders, realizing that a critical risk was misunderstood or underestimated can be deeply unsettling.

Why insurance should be treated as a strategy, not paperwork

Addressing underinsurance is not simply about buying more coverage. In many cases, it is about alignment. Coverage must reflect how the business actually operates, where value is concentrated, and how risk is transferred through contracts and partnerships. Insurance that is technically in place but structurally misaligned offers false comfort.

The businesses that navigate claims most effectively tend to view insurance differently. They treat it as part of an ongoing risk strategy, not an annual transaction. Coverage reviews are triggered by change: new contracts, new equipment, new locations, or shifts in revenue. Insurance decisions are made in the context of operations, not in isolation.

Leadership plays a central role in this approach. When insurance is viewed as a strategic decision rather than a cost line, the focus shifts from price to preparedness. The real question becomes not "Is this the cheapest option?" but "Does this reflect the risk we are actually carrying today?"

In practice, the most expensive insurance decision a business can make is not paying a higher premium. It is discovered after a claim that the coverage relied upon was never designed for the reality of the business.

Insurance cannot prevent loss. But when it is structured thoughtfully and reviewed with intent, it can prevent a difficult event from becoming a defining one. That difference is often understood only after a claim, when the hidden cost of being underinsured becomes impossible to ignore.



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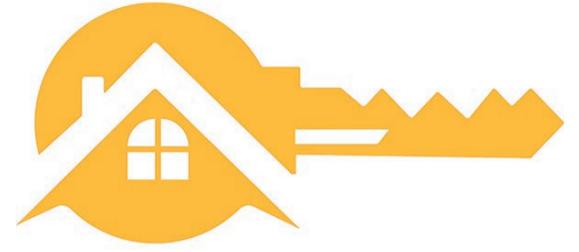
4 things to test for when buying a home

(NC) Moving into your new home is an exciting and sometimes overwhelming time. Between all the organizing and settling in, safety tests are probably the last thing on your mind. But there are still important things to check. Here are a few simple but important issues to look for:

Insulation and airflow. More than 10 per cent of the energy used in Canada every year goes to heating our homes, and poor insulation can waste a lot of it. One way to check airflow is with a blower door test. A membrane goes over an external doorway with a powerful fan built in. It depressurizes the home by drawing air out quickly, and infrared cameras can show where air is being drawn in from outside to fill the low-pressure interior.

Radon gas. Every home in Canada has some level of radon. It's an invisible radioactive gas that makes its way into homes from the ground through cracks and gaps in the foundation. Exposure increases the risk of lung cancer considerably, so it's important to test for it. Radon levels go up and down, but you can estimate your annual exposure by using a simple test kit for three months. If your levels are high, a professional can reduce them by up to 90 per cent for less than the cost of replacing your furnace or air conditioner.

Moisture and mould. High moisture levels can damage the home and lead to mould growth. Mould may cause a number of health issues such as wheezing, shortness of breath and the worsening of asthma symptoms. Health Canada doesn't recommend testing the air itself for mould, but reducing moisture levels can be an effective prevention. Pay special attention to the kitchen, bathroom and basement, where moisture can be greater. Using dehumidifiers or ventilation can help you keep the humidity level between 30 and 50 per cent.



Plumbing. Faults in your plumbing can worsen existing moisture issues and damage drywall, bricks and foundation materials. Look for signs of current or past leaks—discolouration on ceilings or walls, as well as spots where the paint seems to bulge or sag. It's also important to verify your pipes' material: some homes still have lead fixtures connecting them to the municipal service lines. Consider testing your service line connections early and replacing them if necessary.

Not every safety risk in the home is obvious. Some, like radon, are literally invisible, and the only way to know is to test. You can learn more about getting started with a do-it-yourself test kit or electronic monitor at takeactiononradon.ca.

IHRD commemorated at MacEwan

By AJNews staff

To commemorate the eighty-first anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD), MacEwan University marked the significant occasion by opening its lecture room doors to students, staff, faculty, and community members to hear about how the next generation of learners will be exposed to topics related to the Shoah in an event titled *Looking Forward: The Future of Holocaust Education*. *Alberta Jewish News* was on the scene as an auditorium in the Robbins Health Learning Centre filled quickly with attendees. In cooperation with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and The University of Alberta's Department of History, Classics, and Religions, MacEwan University's Office of Human Rights was pleased to welcome Dr. Melanie Carina Schmoll direct from Hamburg, Germany. Edmontonians may remember Dr. Schmoll from her visit in November 2025 to the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies in honour of Jewish Studies Week. A frequent guest in Alberta because of her research position at the University of Calgary, Dr. Schmoll was joined at the podium on January 29 by Dr. Alexander Warren Marcus the Belzberg Family and Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies. This marked

both scholars' first speaking engagements at MacEwan University, but hopefully a prelude of many more to come.

The event was moderated by Dr. Regan Lipes, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of English at MacEwan University. Dr. Lipes, a seasoned contributor to *AJNews*, has organized Shoah awareness programming at MacEwan for the past two years for IHRD. "I feel strongly that fostering greater understanding around what took place during the Shoah needs to be a focus within education," she explained. "Denial, distortion, and revisionism are terrifying prospects, and educators have a duty to ensure that students are presented with authentic learning experiences." She hopes that a lecture to honour IHRD will become an annual MacEwan event. "Last year we were joined by Dr. Joseph Patrouch, a noted historian and professor at the U of A, and we also hosted the Azrieli Foundation's, Manager of Academic Initiatives, Dr. Carson Phillips." She noted that there was a modest, but solid turnout in 2025, "But I think that our speakers were so insightful and engaging, that people were really motivated to attend this year's event."

Indeed, this seemed to have been the case. By the time the program was ready to commence, people were scrambling for seating, and additional chairs needed to be brought in. In attendance were Dr. Leon Kagan and Dr. Francie Cyngiser, co-chairs of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton's Holo-caust Education Committee, as well as other members of the greater Jewish community. Federation CEO, Stacy Leavitt-Wright, and Associate Director of Holocaust Education and Community Initiatives,



Melanie Schmoll



Alexander Marcus

Jennifer Magalnick were also present, accompanied by Zion Barany, an archival specialist working with Shoah artifacts, test-imonies, and documentation.

In her introductory remarks, Dr. Lipes noted: "Eighty-one years ago, on January 27, 1945, Soviet Red Army soldiers in Poland were met by a sight that would haunt each of them to their dying day. Bodies, barely recognizable as having once been human were heaped in unceremonious and tangled piles of decay. Eighty pounds of eye glasses that belonged to eyes that would never see again, twelve thousand pots and pans that would never cook another meal, forty-four thousand pairs of shoes that would never cradle another set of feet or tread another step, and fifteen thousand four hundred pounds of human hair of all colours, textures, and lengths lay eerily discarded but meticulously inventoried at a sight now synonymous with death – Auschwitz-Birkenau." She proceeded to respectfully named the other death camps that operated in Poland: Chelmno, Majdanek, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec, before introducing the occasion's distinguished panelists. Dr. Marcus facilitated an insightful and probative discussion about the trajectory of Shoah education with Dr. Schmoll referencing her book: *Hatred of Jews: A Failure of Holocaust Education?*. The two examined a diverse sampling of critical topics: educational deficits, adequate training for teachers, the dangers of

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Simchas and Celebrations

CJA students celebrate Tu B'Shevat with Israeli Educators and FJNFCA

CJA students in Grades 1 through 4 participated in a meaningful Tu B'Shevat Seder this week, led by representatives from Friends of Jewish National Fund Canada (FJNFCA) and visiting shlichim from Israel. The special program offered students an engaging opportunity to learn about the New Year of the Trees and its deep significance within Jewish tradition.

During the seder, students explored why Tu B'Shevat is celebrated and how it reflects the Jewish people's historic and ongoing connection to the land of Israel. Through storytelling, discussion, and hands-on activities, students learned about the importance of trees, environmental responsibility, and sustainability, while gaining a greater appreciation for nature and Jewish heritage.

The program emphasized the values of stewardship and continuity, helping students understand how caring for the land is both a cultural and spiritual responsibility passed down from generation to

generation. The presence of Israeli educators added a meaningful personal connection, strengthening students' bonds to Israel and bringing the lessons to life.

The school expressed its gratitude to FJNFCA for providing this enriching experience and for its continued commitment to educating young people through the sharing of knowledge, values, and a love for the land. The Tu B'Shevat Seder was a memorable way to blend tradition, learning, and connection in a way that resonated with

students long after the program ended.



CJA students enjoyed a Tu B'Shevat Seder led by representatives from Friends of JNF Canada and visiting shlichim from Israel.



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Simchas and Celebrations

Tu Bi'Shvat at BI was joyful

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Tu Bi'Shvat this year in the Edmonton Jewish community was uncharacteristically warm, and that hint of spring to come, almost felt like a reality on the evening of February 1, when the ground was, astonishingly, visible underfoot. In a wonderful community gathering to mark the holiday, Beth Israel Synagogue's social hall was full, with robust representation from the home congregation, and other local shuls too. Thanks to the sponsorship of Howard and Leah Goldford, the evening was a joyful occasion for all.

What stood out as fantastically inclusive was how the evening's programming catered to all ages of the community. BI has been very actively engaging its youthful members with regular NCSY events for teens, and collaboration with AJP's weekly afterschool

enrichment for elementary-aged children. The growing camaraderie of the teenagers and little kiddos was evident in the wonderful atmosphere of the night. NCSY teens who might normally stay home on a Sunday night to study, were out in full force encouraged to participate in their community because of the friendships they have been building at shul. Smaller children did not miss a beat in freeing themselves from their parents and resuming their games from their last meeting. This energy of representation from all age groups truly illustrated that BI is indeed 'the family shul'.

To plant the feeling of Tu Bi'Shvat in hungry bellies, the wonderful event organizers and volunteers served up a delicious menu boasting ingredients of the holiday. Notable, was the piping hot carrot kugel, soul warming barley soup, and bean salad. Of course, there were plenty of grapes, pomegranates, olives, dates, and figs to go around. Two tables were set up to allow for guests to learn more about the Kabbalistic traditions of the Tu Bi'Shvat seder.

BI President, and kitchen superstar, Philip Kirman welcomed everyone to celebrate the new year of the trees and reminded everyone that Tu Bi'Shvat is a time to reflect on how to look optimistically toward the future. He encouraged attendees to think about hard work today as a valuable investment in the success of tomorrow. Then he welcomed Rabbi Guy Tal to officiate the Tu Bi'Shvat seder, as the NCSY kids took the younger children into the sanctuary for a scavenger hunt. It was lovely to see the teens, with some adult supervision, facilitate such a fun, and energetic, activity for the little ones.

Meanwhile, in the social hall, Rabbi Tal explained the spiritual and earthly significance of the foods of Tu



Tu B'Shevat at Beth Israel in Edmonton featured a delicious seudah and a scavenger hunt for the children.

Bi'Shvat: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. One bit of explanation that seemed to illuminate listeners was the fact that the 'honey' in the "land of milk and honey" referred to in Shemot is the sweet secretion of dates. This rabbinical interpretation was a revelation for many, who immediately associate 'honey' with the only kosher substance to be produced by a non-kosher creature.

As the evening ended, children reunited with parents carrying newly planted seeds in clear plastic cups they had lovingly decorated. In the days following, the children would water their seeds and eagerly wait to see a sprout sneak out. They may have just been excited for their plants to grow, but they had also internalized Kirman's holiday message. They had now learned the lesson that when one plants a seed, they do not do it for today, but for tomorrow, and that it is only with attention and care that the seed will come to full bloom.



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Tu B'Shvat at Calgary Halpern Akiva Academy



On February 2nd, 2026, The David and Tibeale Halpern Akiva Academy hosted a Tu B'Shvat themed Grandparents and Special Friends Day. Loved ones, dear friends, grandparents and great-grandparents joined students schoolwide to participate in arbor themed activities in honour of the day. Special thanks to Friends of JNF Canada for sponsoring the parsley plants that the students brought home.

Birthright *Cont. from page 13*

stand with the overwhelming, but endangered, Israeli majority.

Welcome Zionist Thought: We must go backward in order to move forward. How many of our children and grandchildren have read "Altneuland" and the other writings of Herzl and the early Zionist thinkers, in order that they might connect to the founders' aspirational vision of fairness and justice? There is buried in Jewish thought throughout the ages and in Zionist thought throughout the last century and a half revolutionary passion that speaks to the values of our times. We can't let our enemies define Zionism. It is an enriching component of Jewish thought

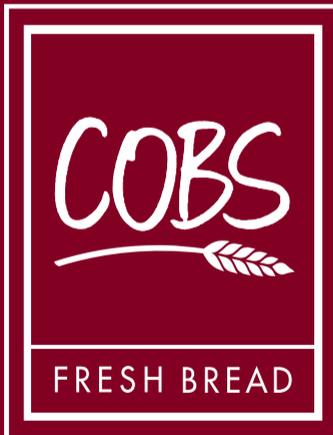
and needs to be re-embraced.

Create Networks: Finally, we must create more networks, like The London Initiative, which is a network of 360 individuals, half from Israel, and half from the rest of the world, that believes in Israel as a liberal democracy, built on and for fairness and equality and seeking secure peace. How many of us who look to the political right or the political left cannot agree with those principles?

These action steps are just a beginning of redefining what can drive the Jewish people at a moment when everything has to change. Like those who had to pick up the pieces after the destruction of the First and Second Temples, who overcame their fears of change, we need to think beyond tactical differences while

retaining long-term principles and values. The past five years brought us a global pandemic, an existential threat to democracy in Israel, the scourge of a brutal terrorist invasion and worldwide condemnation of the very idea of a Jewish state. Our challenge/opportunity is to re-double our efforts and to overcome these challenges on behalf of our timeless beliefs and an amazing global family.

Charles Bronfman is co-founder of Birthright Israel and chair of the Charles Bronfman Family Foundation in the US and the CRB Foundation in Canada. Jeffrey Solomon is senior advisor to Chasbro Investments and past CEO of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies.



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Bobsled team *Cont. from page 15*

skeleton in Italy, said there was "no chance I'd be here without AJ's guidance." Edelman helped coach Firestone in skeleton after he made aliyah in 2019, and the pair co-founded the nonprofit Advancing Jewish Athletes to support other Jews in sports.

"I think it means so much to Israelis and to the Jewish community at large to see, with a little investment, how much can be accomplished," Firestone said. "Unfortunately for me and AJ, we've had to dedicate so much of our time that could've gone to training and progressing on the ice to fundraising, but hopefully we'll be inspiring people who could help to create that infrastructure so the next AJ and Jared could just focus on sport and being even better than we are."

Balsam, who also serves as a director of Advancing

Jewish Athletes, said it's hard to articulate how meaningful Edelman's achievement of making the Olympics is to him, and to her.

"AJ has been very, very passionate about trying to cultivate the idea that sports can be a career path for Jewish kids," she said. "He wanted to make it to the Olympics. He wanted to show that this is possible. So for him to combine both of his passions and achieve his dream, I think is something that he can't put into words, that I can't put into words, but it's just immense pride."

Now comes the actual tournament. Israel will compete in the two-man races on Feb. 16 and 17 and in four-man on Feb. 21 and 22, with Edelman piloting the sleds. His Shiba Inu Lulu, the team's mascot, is staying with Balsam in New York, where they'll be cheering him on.

But no matter where Israel places, Edelman has one more box to check to fully accomplish his mission to change Israeli sports.

"There is one thing that I wish beyond anything, and it's that I'm not the only one to do it," he said. "

What I really wanted to accomplish through it was that someone else saw it and decided to do it themselves. That they saw that pathway opened by someone who was less than stellar, who was not, like, a God-gifted athlete, and went, 'You know what? I'm pretty good at what I do. I can do that.'

"You have to leave it better than you found it, and it has to be for a purpose, and that purpose is always going to be to inspire someone to do it better than you did."

WHICH HAMANTASCHEN ARE YOU?
by N. SHER

 poppyseed - has hosted Shabbat dinner - in bed by 10pm - will be the Abbi to your Ilana	 apricot - loves leftovers - total yenta - returned to camp to be a counselor	 prune - mom of the friend group - loves to discuss "staying regular" - has a 401k	 nutella - eats snacks in bed - loves camping - studied in Israel
 raspberry - had an over the top bat mitzvah party - calls everyone "bb" - reads daily horoscope	 sprinkle - IG influencer wannabe - will remind you "it's a mitzvah" to be drunk on Purim	 chocolate - doesn't know when Purim is - uses airpods - wears yoga pants, doesn't do yoga	 pizza - begins tweets with "actually..." - celebrates a birthday month - was in a Jewish greek house

Simchas and Celebrations

Your wedding videographer should be a Reel Mensch

By Jared Paull

Never let a wedding videographer's confidence fool you. The service itself is relatively very young, and we are constantly inventing the medium as we go. Furthermore, folks don't always know what they are seeking from this type of service. One thing is certain, the expectations are high.

Couples want the events properly documented, and with the accessibility of in expensive HD equipment, there is no reason why it can't have the look of a Hollywood movie. I can tell you one thing, there is no tougher Executive Producer than a Bride, and no tougher shoot than a wedding.

The exciting thing from an artistic perspective is that before the videographers even arrive, there has been tens of thousands of budget dollars put towards set design, props, makeup and wardrobe to create a sensational world to capture. Also, there is no need for contrived emotion, because all of our key players are experiencing something genuine and exciting.

When our company began creating wedding videos, we needed a way to separate ourselves stylistically, so that potential shoppers would see our work, and need to have it. Our company is very versatile. In a normal week, it is very possible that we will be working on a television commercial at the same time as a safety and

orientation video, or a music video, or webcasting events around the world.

Style has always been a derivative of the function of our work. So when creating a style for our product 'wedding video', we created the term 'romantic, cinematic, documentary.' This term has driven the style of our wedding videos for the past 10 years. The 'romance' is derived from the subject matter, so that our narrative is always about love. Our 'look' is cinematic, meaning the shots are always carefully composed, with broadcast quality cameras, and movement tools such as stabilizers and dollies – the very same equipment used in our TV commercials. The 'documentary' aspect is our capture style. Our shooters act as flies on the wall, not interfering with the event, but documenting it. We don't create beautiful moments, we skillfully capture them, and present them romantically and cinematically.

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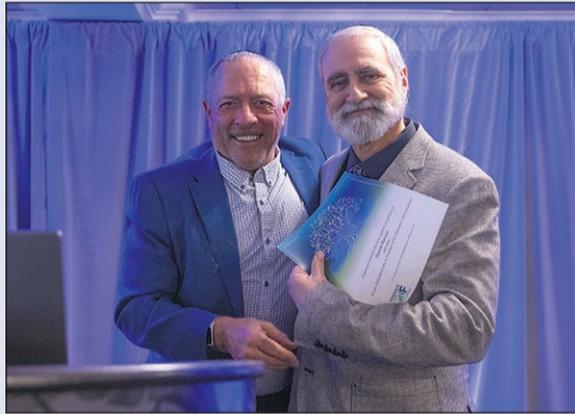


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Mensch. I often remind couples when choosing photographers and videographers that the most important thing is to pick somebody you wouldn't mind having around you on the most important day of your life.

We are over 15 years into this business, which has taken on a life of its own by now, but it wouldn't have without a lot of support from our community, many of whom gave us a shot before we had much professional experience. I had my first videography gig at the age of 9 and I haven't put the camera down since. To keep tabs of the work we are doing, go to reelmensch.com or like Reel Mensch on Facebook.

Chevra Kadisha celebrates 118 years of service in Edmonton



Edmonton Chevra Kadisha held a lovely afternoon event to celebrate the founders, contributors and volunteers who have worked so hard to provide 118 years of service to the Jewish community. Photos by Bar Lavy.

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Update on Edmonton Talmud Torah School



It was a busy month at Talmud Torah. In Kinder OSC and the ELC, children explored the English alphabet through BINGO, letter tracing, and sounds, created colourful artwork, and celebrated Shabbat together in a joyful week of learning, creativity, and community.

IHRD *Cont. from page 22*

misinformation, and even multi-disciplinary approaches to increasing Shoah literacy. Looking around the packed auditorium, it was impressive to see a high turnout of student attendees, but what was more notable was how drawn into the topic they all appeared to be.

The scholarly discussion was informative and provocative, punctuated with moments of lightheartedness that helped to soften the seriousness of the topic. Following this, Jennifer Magalnick provided a packed overview of all the initiatives and available Shoah education programming offered by the Federation. Educators in the audience, including professors from MacEwan, U of A, and Concordia University of Edmonton, who were present, may have

been surprised at the wealth of resources they are able to access, and inspired to reach out for more information. Many students approached Magalnick for follow-up questions and reading recommendations. One young woman admitted that she would like to know more but was at a loss for where to begin.

What inspired hope amidst the sobering topic was that when the floor was opened for questions, most of the hands that shot into the air belonged to students. One MacEwan student asked about what the panelists thought of fictionalized narratives dealing with the Shoah. Another asked Dr. Schmoll about how to move beyond teaching the Shoah only within history lessons. A third asked about how to make sure that learners are exposed to Jewish studies removed from discussions of the Shoah. There were no simple answers, but the thoughtful questions coming from the university-students was an indication that good work

is being undertaken locally to promote Shoah knowledge and literacy. Thanks to a donation from the U of A Department of History, Classics, and Religion, two signed copies of Dr. Schmoll's books were raffled off, while many more copies sold to audience members eager to understand more. For those who missed their chance to pick up their copy of *Hatred of Jews: A Failure of Holocaust Education?*, it is available for online purchase.

"We are so grateful to MacEwan University, and their dedicated Office of Human Rights for supporting and hosting this event," Dr. Lipes stated. "With the help of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, we were able to bring a highly respected international scholar to MacEwan, and that's really something exceptional. I'm so proud to be at an institution that values opportunities to provide students with additional scholarly enrichment, and I'm really hopeful that we will be able to build on this success for the future." When asked about what IHRD programming should strive to do, she answered: "The students who came to hear Dr. Schmoll and Dr. Marcus speak are going to be our next generation of decision makers, community leaders, jurists, and educators. Those of us entrusted to be their teachers now have a responsibility to support them to be global citizens who see the humanity in everyone. My wish is that the next generation will do a better job at combatting hate."

Those interested in learning more about the educational resources offered by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton should reach out to Jennifer Magalnick and her team at magalj@edjfed.org.




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The best basic hamantaschen

By Shannon Sarna

(JTA) – Hamantaschen weren't always my favorite cookie to enjoy. These triangle treats are enjoyed for the Jewish holiday of Purim, when the wicked king Haman (BOO!) was defeated through the brilliant intellect of a Jewish woman, Queen Esther. There's a bit more to the story, of course. But we were blessed with hamantaschen cookies as one of the many ways we are encouraged to celebrate the holiday. My other favorite part about Purim is that you are commanded to "drink until you cannot tell good from evil." Consider it done.

However, hamantaschen do not actually date back to Queen Esther; they are a far more recent addition to Jewish cuisine. Triangle-shaped, yeasted dough pastries filled with poppy seed (known as mohn) were common in Germany during the 18th century, and that's when Jews started adopting them and enjoying them for Purim, the triangle shape a nod to the hat supposedly worn by Haman.

My recipe below (which, yes, is one of the best you will ever try) is inspired by my dear friend Rachel Korycan and her mom Susan who took me under their wing to show me their recipe, which yields a far more delicate and delicious hamantaschen than many other old-school recipes. It is not made with a yeasted dough,

but rather a sugar-cookie like dough which bakes up sweet and tender.

My favorite fillings include raspberry jam with mini chocolate chips, cookie butter, chocolate hazelnut spread and store-bought poppy seed filling (you can find it in the baking aisle near the cherry pie filling). But really, the sky is the limit, and the most important thing is to have fun.

Hamantaschen can be tricky to make sometimes – they are notorious for leaking or losing their shape – so make sure to follow my genius hamantaschen trick to ensure you have picture perfect cookies every time. Chill the dough for at least one hour before rolling it out, and pinch the corners very well to ensure the cookies keep their shape.

Ingredients

- 1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter (or margarine), at room temperature
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp milk (or other non-dairy milk)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp grated lemon zest (optional)
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour plus more flour for rolling
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt

Directions

- Beat the butter and sugar together until smooth.
- Add egg, milk, vanilla and lemon zest until mixed thoroughly.
- Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt.



Add dry mixture to wet mixture until incorporated. *Note: if the dough is too soft, increase flour amount by a few Tbsp at a time until firmer.*

Form dough into a disk and cover with plastic wrap. Chill dough for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

Dust surface with flour to keep from sticking. Roll the dough to about 1/2 inch thick.

Using a round cookie cutter, cut out and place onto cookie sheet. To keep the dough from sticking to your cutter, dip in flour before each cut.

Fill each round with 1/2 tsp of your favorite filling, and using your favorite method, pinch corners together tightly.

Pop into the fridge for 10 minutes, or freezer for 5 minutes, to ensure hamantaschen hold their shape.

Bake at 400° for about 7-9 minutes.



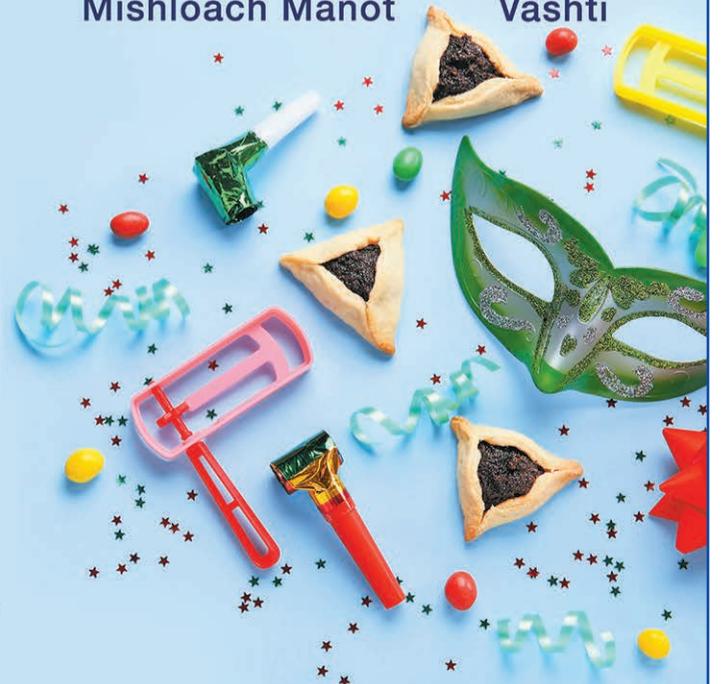
Purim Word Search

Oy vey! Our Editor has lost all the Purim Words!
Help us find them in the meshugas below!

R	O	S	S	Y	U	P	U	R	I	M	I	O	S	C
A	A	R	V	E	R	U	M	S	H	O	C	S	R	H
A	C	H	A	S	H	V	E	R	O	S	H	I	M	A
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H	A	M	A	N	T	A	S	C	H	E	N	R	U	L
M	A	T	A	N	O	T	L	E	V	Y	O	N	I	M

Lost Purim Words:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Achashverosh | Megillah |
| Chag Sameach | Purim |
| Haman | Ra'ashan |
| Hamantaschen | Seudah |
| Mordechai | Shpiel |
| Matanot L'evyonim | Ta'anit |
| Mishloach Manot | Vashti |



Talmud Torah Students compete at the Running Room Indoor Games



Congratulations to the Talmud Torah athletes and their coaches Markey Soroka and Jennifer Kovacs.

Steven Spielberg wins Grammy and joins elite EGOT ranks

By Phyllisa Cramer

(JTA) – The legendary director Steven Spielberg has become the ninth Jew to secure “EGOT” status after winning a Grammy for producing a documentary about the music of John Williams.

Spielberg was awarded the Grammy for producing “Music by John Williams,” which won best music documentary, before the televised ceremony on February 1. The win makes him the 22nd person to win the coveted quartet of Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony awards.

Spielberg has won three Oscars, including best picture for the 1993 Holocaust drama “Schindler’s List”; four Emmys for TV programming including two World War II dramatic miniseries; and a Tony for producing the Broadway show “A Strange Loop.”

Spielberg adds to a large proportion of Jewish artists

to win all four of the top entertainment awards. Nine of the 22 EGOTs have been Jewish, including the first person to ever reach the status, composer Richard Rodgers. Rodgers and Marvin Hamlisch, –xwho was also Jewish, are the only people to have added a Pulitzer Prize to the EGOT crown. The most recent Jewish winner before Spielberg was the songwriter Benj Pasek, who secured the status in 2024 with an Emmy.

One of Spielberg’s more celebrated recent works was a drama based loosely on his own Jewish family. “The Fabelmans,” released in 2022, earned him three Oscar nods – for best picture, best director and best screenplay – but no wins.

In promoting that movie, Spielberg said antisemitic bullying when he was a child had informed his sense of being an “outsider,” which he translated into his filmmaking.



Steven Spielberg.

“Schindler’s List,” meanwhile, spurred the creation of the USC Shoah Foundation, a leading center for preserving Holocaust testimonies that has also recently embraced the task of preserving stories of contemporary antisemitism, too.

“It was, emotionally, the hardest movie I’ve ever made,” Spielberg said about his most decorated movie – for which John Williams earned an Oscar for the score. “It made me so proud to be a Jew.”



Congratulations to Talmud Torah alumni Harry Gregg and his band secondhand dreamcar for being nominated for a Juno Award in the category of Blues Album of the Year.

Israel's Ambassador to Canada



It was an honour for CJF and JCC leaders to meet the Ambassador of Israel to Canada, Iddo Moed. Staff and community members enjoyed a great visit and meaningful conversation.

from the Sources

by Eliezer Segal

...Like Casting Stones into the Sea

When Mordecai instituted the celebration of Purim, he ordained that it be observed as a time for “sending portions each to one’s fellow, and gifts to the poor.” As regards the “sending of portions,” it seems clear that the reference is to distributing edible treats to fellow-Jews. Purim is, after all, the commemoration of a distinctly Jewish deliverance.

As regards the “gifts to the poor,” however, the matter is not quite as obvious. Most rabbinic authorities assumed that one fulfils the obligation by giving charity to a poor Jew. Maimonides explained that this is not a normal instance of charitable generosity, but a specific expression of the rejoicing appropriate to this festival.

Yet other texts from the medieval era tell of a custom in the Rhineland communities of including non-Jews among the recipients of Purim charity. In a statement ascribed (incorrectly) to Rashi, Rabbi Kalonymus ben Isaac the Elder of Speyer (11th - 12th centuries) voiced his opposition to the practice of giving holiday gifts to gentile household servants. He argued that those who did so were thereby depriving the legitimate Jewish poor of their proper entitlement. Furthermore, they were creating the misleading impression that they were properly fulfilling the scriptural precept.

Rabbi Kalonymus recognized that the custom was pervasive in his local community; however, he argued that it had originated under specific circumstances. At first, indigent Jews were embarrassed to approach their more affluent coreligionists directly to ask for the alms, so they sent children to knock on their doors; and for that purpose they would be accompanied by non-Jewish maidservants or wetnurses (the theory seems to assume that even members of the poorer classes employed their own servants and nannies). Eventually, the servants came to feel that they were entitled to the gifts independently of any children that they might have been escorting.

Rabbi Kalonymus dismissed that custom as a religiously meaningless act equivalent to “casting a stone into the sea.” This capriciousness only served to discredit their otherwise admirable generosity. Those

fools who hand out gifts to ineligible non-Jews were demonstrating that their initial donations to the Jewish poor were no more than habitual acts of kindness and should not count as fulfillment of their Purim observance.

From a responsum of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (thirteenth century), we may get an idea of how firmly the practice had become entrenched. He wrote expressing his opposition to “the custom of bestowing gifts upon maidservants in new towns where there was no established custom.” In such recently established localities, we must take care not to introduce it.

In support of his position, Rabbi Meir cited a remarkable exposition by Rabbi Ephraim (apparently of Regensburg, 12th century) that was virtually identical with that of Rabbi Kalonymus, who compared the Jews’ misdirected generosity to that of the Israelites in the wilderness.

Both interpreted the words of the prophet Hosea, “and I multiplied her silver and gold which they prepared for Baal,” to imply that after earning spiritual merit for their willingness to devote their gold jewelry to the sacred project of constructing the holy tabernacle, the Israelites forfeited that merit and trivialized their motives when they proved themselves to be indiscriminately magnanimous by contributing to the fashioning of the idolatrous golden calf.

Rabbi Meir conceded, however, that in localities where the practice of giving to gentiles had already taken root, it need not be abolished. He adduced justification for the custom by referring to instances in the Mishnah that mandate supporting gentile poor alongside the Jews in the interest of “the ways of peace.”

The fact that the issue was still not resolved in the generations of Rabbis Ephraim and Meir, some two centuries after its earliest mention by Rabbi Kalonymus, attests to the persistence of communal customs among Ashkenazic Jews, as well as to the fluidity in the establishment of new Jewish communities in central Europe.

A very different attitude was indicated by a text in the Jerusalem Talmud which stated that “one should

give to any person who extends their hand.” Based on this, Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban) in thirteenth-century Gerona wrote that “it is the prevalent custom throughout Israel to give Purim alms even to non-Jews. Since we are not required to verify their eligibility too thoroughly, one may give it to anybody. Otherwise, it might provoke hostility; and we have learned in the Mishnah that ‘we support the non-Jewish poor along with the Jewish poor for the sake of the ways of peace.’”

Rabbi Yom-Tov Ishbili inferred that, because the obligation is part of the festival rejoicing and not motivated by generic philanthropy, it may be observed even by donating to people who are not needy. “For this reason it is customary to give Purim money to gentiles and even to the wealthy.”

The attitudes of subsequent generations continued to diverge on this issue. The heirs to the Spanish tradition did not discourage distributing Purim donations to gentiles, in order to promote peaceful coexistence, and out of concerns for arousing hostility. Ashkenazic authorities, on the other hand, were more insistent about following the teachings of Rabbis Kalonymus, Ephraim, Meir of Rothenburg and others who were determined to uphold the distinctly Jewish religious character of the holiday and its observances.

In the talmudic retelling of the Purim story, the Persian Jews accepted Ahasuerus’ invitation to attend his banquet (where they were provided with kosher food) – but some rabbis questioned whether they should have stressed their religious distinctness by distancing themselves from the general feasting.

It appears that the complexities of the relationships between the Jewish community and its non-Jewish neighbours have remained a major theme in the interpretation and celebration of Purim – though concealed in an ostensibly technical question of religious law.

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

Honouring the memory of Alex Buckman

By Ellie Vogel

In 2023, I had the privilege of participating in the March of the Living, a two-week international Holocaust education program in Poland and Israel. I travelled with the Coast to Coast delegation of 51 Canadian high school students. Together, we attended sites of unimaginable loss bearing witness to our history.

Each delegation was accompanied by a Holocaust survivor to bring a personal perspective to the experience. Our delegation was honoured to travel alongside Alex Buckman. Alex shared his testimony with us to ensure that his story and other survivors’ stories would live on through our deeper understanding. Tragically, Alex passed away while in Poland with us. Though his loss was devastating, the impact he had on each of us was immeasurable.

While sharing his testimony, Alex spoke of his Aunt Becky and her experience in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. While imprisoned, she found a way to write down a recipe for “gâteau à l’orange” (orange cake). In these circumstances, it was an act by her of hope and resistance. In memory of Aunt Becky and the other victims of the Holocaust, Alex asked us

to bake the orange cake with our friends and families and share his story.

This past year, alumni of the Coast to Coast delegation came together to fulfill that promise. We created *A Taste of Hope*, a student-led initiative spanning five cities across Canada, to honour Alex’s memory and fulfill our promise to Alex to share his and his family’s story.

On February 1, more than 100 people in five cities gathered to bake gâteau à l’orange and listen to Alex’s recorded testimony. The event was successful with all participants impacted by Alex’s story and the history he represents. People shared meaningful conversation and connection over slices of delicious orange cake.

Through this event, we raised funds for the World Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants, an organization Alex was heavily involved with. The Federation works to build community among survivors and their descendants while advancing Holocaust education to combat



Alberta students were part of the 2023 March of the Living delegation.

antisemitism, bigotry, and hate in all its forms. Supporting this mission is a natural extension of Alex and his life’s work.

A Taste of Hope is more than a baking project. It is a commitment to remembrance, to education, and to ensuring that stories like Alex’s are never forgotten. In sharing a simple orange cake, we share history, resilience, and hope.

To learn more about *A Taste of Hope* and support this initiative, please follow us on Instagram @tastehope or visit our go fund me fundraising page.

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Purim Unmasked: The Ten Sefirot Behind the Hidden Miracle

Purim is the holiday of masks.

Hashem's Name never appears in the Megillah, yet Divine guidance fills every line.

When we unmask the story, we uncover something deeper, the structure of the Ten Sefirot.

The Ten Sefirot are the channels through which Hashem's infinite light (Ein Sof) flows into the world. They describe how Divine will becomes thought, emotion, and ultimately action.

The Sefirot originate in early Kabbalistic teachings, especially the Zohar, and are later explained in detail by the Arizal and in Chassidic thought. They describe not only how Hashem relates to the world, but how our souls are structured.

But when we list them, something curious happens. Sometimes it looks like there are eleven.

- Keter – Will
- Chochmah – Insight
- Binah – Understanding
- Da'at – Connection
- Chesed – Kindness
- Gevurah – Discipline
- Tiferet – Harmony
- Netzach – Endurance
- Hod – Humility
- Yesod – Bonding
- Malchut – Expression

So why are they called Ten Sefirot?

Because Keter and Da'at are never counted together. They represent two dimensions of the same level of consciousness.

Keter is the hidden crown, the super-conscious will that stands above intellect. It is beyond awareness, the deep root of intention before a thought even forms.

Da'at is conscious connection, when knowledge becomes internalized and lived.

When Keter is revealed and counted, Da'at is hidden. When Da'at is counted, Keter remains concealed.

It is either ten including Keter (without Da'at), or ten including Da'at (without Keter). Never eleven.

This itself reflects Purim.

Keter is like the hidden Divine plan, Hashem's Name never mentioned.

Da'at is like Esther's moment of commitment, "If I perish, I perish." The will becomes embodied.

One is concealed. One is revealed. But they are part of the same flow.

We are created b'tzelem Elokim, in the Divine image. So when we act with kindness, we express Chesed.

When we set boundaries, we use Gevurah. When we endure, we embody Netzach. When we connect deeply, we live Yesod. When we bring purpose into action, we step into Malchut.

Purim Unmasked teaches us that what seems missing is simply hidden. Just as Hashem's Name is concealed yet present, so too Keter may be unseen – but it crowns everything.

Behind every mask, there is a Crown. And behind every hidden layer, there is Divine design.

Wishing the community a Joyful Purim Sameach.

Interested in learning more email YesKosherFriendship@gmail.com