

## PM Stephen Harper was warmly received at Negev Gala in YEG

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

The main ballroom of the Fantasyland Hotel was packed during a history-making evening for the Edmonton Jewish community. History-making, because this year's Negev Gala featured the Right Honourable Stephen J. Harper, 22nd Prime Minister of Canada. The former Prime Minister expressed warm sentiments about returning to Edmonton for the event, explaining that when he first moved to Alberta, he lived in Edmonton for three years. He also elaborated that he has a soft spot in his heart for the City of Champions because early in his tenure as PM, it was in Edmonton during the 2006 Stanley Cup Championships that he seized the opportunity, quite literally, to hold and raise the Stanley Cup above his head.

In a pre-gala interview with the *Alberta Jewish News*, Alberta's Executive Director of Friends of JNF Canada, Jay Cairns, emphasized how excited he and his team of organizers were to host such a high-profile guest to speak to the local Jewish community and its allies. "When I was growing up I had a general awareness of politics. As I have gotten older, I'm more conscious of how political exchanges and decisions affect my day-to-day life. Even for people who aren't politically minded, it's important to realize that these are big-picture issues that directly impact our community," he emphasized. "Since October 7th our communities in Canada have had some incredible speakers come to talk about their experiences on that day and what the aftermath looked like, but almost three-years past, now it feels like we need to navigate and position ourselves within a changing landscape," Cairns added thoughtfully. "We are looking around and asking where we are and a big part of this is the allyship of larger communities. Stephen Harper is more than an ally for the Jewish people and Israel; he is a friend. Allies are great but friends are unconditional. Being pro-Israel in this political climate," he paused. "I can't imagine it's easy for him."

The evening of the Negev Gala brought out support

## Sharaka members visit Calgary Jewish Academy



Jr. High students from Calgary Jewish Academy had an amazing session with members of Sharaka who were in Calgary to discuss their initiatives to foster understanding and partnerships between Arabs and Israelis.

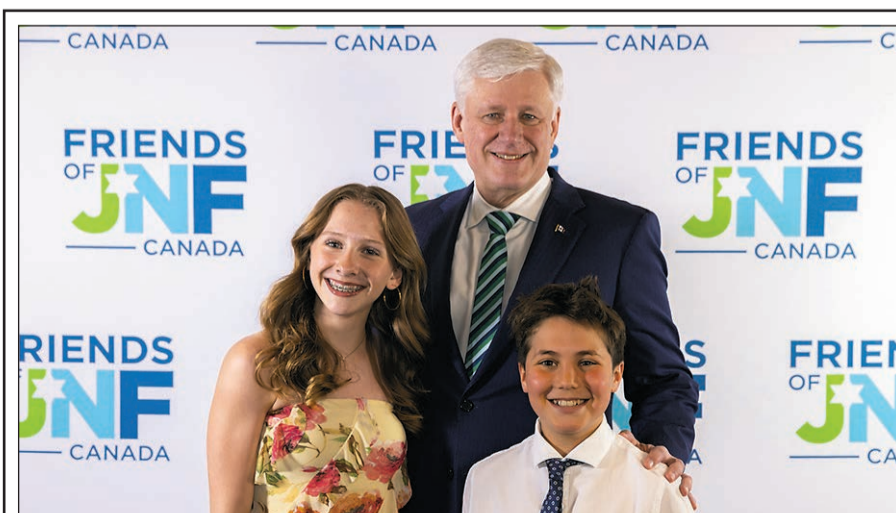
from every branch of the local Jewish community. With Cairn's twins manning the registration desk, there was a lovely sense of the closeness of Edmonton's Jewish world – a place where everybody truly does know your name. This close-knit atmosphere with familiar faces all around was profoundly welcoming, which made Stephen Harper's attendance really feel like having a good friend joining in the festivities – albeit a friend who is celebrated as one of the most significant leaders in Canadian history.

Stephen Harper points to his Christian faith as the foundation for his values, both as a civilian, and as a public servant. At the heart of all his decisions while in office was his desire to support the Canadian people. In a fire side conversation with Calgary Member of Parliament Shuvaloy Majumdar, Harper explained with conviction and sincerity that supporting Israel has always been a priority for him because Canada and Israel have shared values. These values unite the countries in friendship, and Harper noted that Israel's enemies are also the enemies of Canada, although the hostile nations are a lot closer in proximity to Israel.

This observation seemed to resonate deeply with the audience and resulted in an eruption of applause.

Harper's friendship to Israel was showcased when Majumdar (Shuv) asked the former Prime Minister about his history-making experience as the first Canadian Head of State to speak in the Knesset. Harper expressed that he was honoured to be the first Canadian leader to address the Knesset, but that he was also surprised that none of his predecessors, who supported Israel, had taken the opportunity to do so. He emphasized that speaking in a foreign country's parliament is always a humbling and profound experience, because for any Democratic nation, this is the symbolic home of their most sacredly held values. The 2014 speech emphasized anti-Zionism as the modern incarnation of antisemitism, and unequivocally positioned Canada as a supporter of Israel. At the time, the substance of the speech ruffled feathers for the far left, and far right, with two Arab-Israeli Cabinet Members jeering the former Prime

*Continued on page 3*



Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper accepted an award from Edmonton youth Carmi Reboh and Solly Singer (pictured above) as part of the Friends of JNF Canada Negev Gala fireside chat with MP Shuv Majumdar.

# Where Community Rises: Inside the JCC's Challah Tradition

By Jana Zalmanowitz, LJI Reporter

The smell of challah on Friday mornings is part of the landscape of the Calgary Paperny Family JCC. If you happen to be there by 9:30 you may get your hands on one of the sought-after loaves. It draws people in, delights the senses and completes Shabbat tables every week. But you may not know the full impact beyond delighting your tastebuds.

I recently spent a morning in Nessie's Kitchen, aptly named in honour of former Seniors Program Manager, Nessie Hollander, who passed away last year. This is where the baking began.

Nessie started baking challahs over 20 years ago. The evolution of Calgary's challah icons has been chronicled informally, passed down like a Jewish folktale. Initially assembled as a collection of women from the Bertha Gold residence attached to the JCC, they began to bake challah for fun.

Challah needs would arise. A bar mitzvah here or a shiva there. An occasional wedding. Nessie and her volunteer bakers soon realized there was a demand that they could fulfill, and it evolved into the weekly treat the community knows today.

What started as a fun project became a self-sustaining system that kept seniors programming affordable. Volunteers got together to bake and sell the challah. It brought them joy, and the funds raised went back into supporting programming. Everyone wins.

When Nessie retired, new program manager, Jackie Herman was tasked with overseeing this Friday morning staple. While preparing for my visit, Jackie filled me in on how Nessie's kitchen is currently run during challah days.

"Katie prepares the dough Thursday evening and puts it in the fridge overnight," she says, referring to the challah program's only official employee, Katie Goldig. She has a background as a Jewish professional, but it's her ten years of experience as a hobby baker that brought Katie into the fold. When I talk to her, Katie insists that aside from implementing a few efficiency measures, she is not the magic behind the challah.

Jackie continues the timeline. "On Friday morning, Shafi takes the dough out before he starts work," she

says referring to one of the JCC's security team. I checked with him on my way out of the building. This task is not in his job description, but he volunteers because, as he puts it, "I love this community."

"One of the rabbis comes around 6:30 to light the ovens," Jackie explains the essential step in ensuring the challahs are prepared with the rabbinic supervision necessary for kashrut.

Then the volunteers come at 7:00. When Nessie ran the program, she would get up at 4:30 in the morning to make the dough. Her army of volunteers would arrive around 5:00 am. As that dedicated crew started to retire and volunteers became scarce, Jackie realized she needed to adjust.

A couple of extra hours of sleep brought in a whole new cohort. Jackie clarifies it's not just seniors. Challah brings in volunteers of all ages. "Some of them have baked before," she says, "but others haven't and the veterans teach them."

There are perks to volunteering, like first dibs on a freshly baked loaf, but no one has said they're doing it for the free challah. Some have told Jackie that the process of baking challah for the community is therapeutic and they enjoy working on something tangible. She also suspects many enjoy the connection. "There's a lot of talking that happens over the braiding table."

I make arrangements and arrive on a Friday morning in May to talk to some of those who are vital in keeping this program going. I'm there by 7:00 but the group is keen and most were there by 6:30 to secure their space in the kitchen.

There are two groups. One stands around a large island braiding dough. Another group expertly weighs out portions of dough, applies egg washes and toppings while Katie watches the ovens. They introduce themselves as the Challah bobbies. This is because most of them are proud to call themselves grandmothers or even great grandmothers. I think maybe it's because most emanate grandmotherly warmth.

I want to talk to everyone but there are central figures the group tells me I must speak to. When I ask for last names, they shrug. This is how iconic the challah bakers are. They go by one name. Like Cher or Beyonce.



From left to right, Anna, Clara, Heather and Sandra pose at their stations around challah loaves ready to be baked.

Anna (Iourovitskaia) steps forward to give me her insight into the program. She's been in Nessie's kitchen for six years. Anna moved from Belarus with her family in 1993 when her granddaughter became ill from side effects of the Chernobyl disaster. With her bright red hair and air of competence you can tell Anna feels at home in this kitchen. This is likely due to her 27 years of experience in hospitality at the Banff Springs hotel. She was laid off during the covid pandemic and moved to Calgary. She came to the JCC for the pool and she found challah.

When I ask Anna why she keeps coming back she says, "Why not?! Because the nice people," and gestures around because the answer is obvious.

I ask her about working with Nessie. She smiles and says, "I love Nessie." It's a simple sentence that implies this may also be why she shows up. Anna feels strongly in carrying on the 20-year legacy started by Nessie. The others say Anna has been an integral part of continuity in the challah program and that she acts almost like an ambassador, bringing in many new faces to volunteer.

The next central figure in the challah operation is Clara (Gubnistkaia). Anna acts as translator as Clara explains in Russian that she's been in Nessie's kitchen for 13 years. She was born in Ukraine and came to Calgary via Israel. She represents the roots of the challah program, of which a large contingent were holocaust survivors.

Clara braids the dough with authority and expertise. She's one of the veterans, training many of the new volunteers on how to work with dough. A gesture of how to manipulate the strands. A shake of the head.

Continued on page 20





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Please join our family  
for the unveiling  
of  
**Judith Miriam Parker z"l**  
on  
Sunday June 28, 2026  
at 11:45 am  
at Erlton Cemetery  
in Calgary

Following the service attendees  
are invited for lunch at the  
Carriage House Hotel

## UNVEILING NOTICE

The family of  
**Galia (Ora) Renert Z"l**  
invites relatives and friends to attend  
the unveiling of her monument at  
the Chevra Kadisha of Calgary Cemetery,  
17818 37 Street SW, Calgary, Alberta,  
**on Sunday, June 28, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.**

Following the unveiling,  
family and friends are warmly invited  
to the Renert family home  
for light refreshments and remembrance.



# Stephen Harper *Cont. from page 1*

Minister openly. Despite this, Harper recounted this experience as a proud moment in his career.

Shuv was a charismatic and insightful moderator for the fire side discussion, respectfully yet jovially probing the former Prime Minister for juicy stories and personal insights. When asked by Shuv what he believes makes a good leader, Harper was quick to answer that the role of Prime Minister is a service position. He mused that during his time in office he met every kind of leader one could possibly imagine, but the good leaders were the ones guided by core value systems to help them uphold the strength and dignity of those who entrusted them with power. He continued by saying that he envies the expanse of seemingly limitless opportunities open to today's young people, and encouraged them to all go out, find what they enjoy doing, and work hard to do it better than anybody else – simple, but solid advice to be sure.

During the Negev Gala, Harper made several references to the deplorable state of affairs on many Canadian campuses of higher education. He was unapologetic in criticizing postsecondary administrations for allowing antisemitism to flourish and fester. Certainly not all Canadian campuses find themselves at the receiving end of Harper's accusations, but it is a disgrace, he said, when Jewish students feel they must conceal their identities for safety, and Jewish faculty hide fearfully in their offices during pro-Palestine demonstrations.

When discussing antisemitism in Canada, Harper said that he believes that the number of antisemites in Canada is small – even if they are vocal. He said that there are some places in the world where it is not safe to be Jewish, but Canada is not one of them. He added that if however, you find yourself in a situation where you don't feel safe, you should leave.

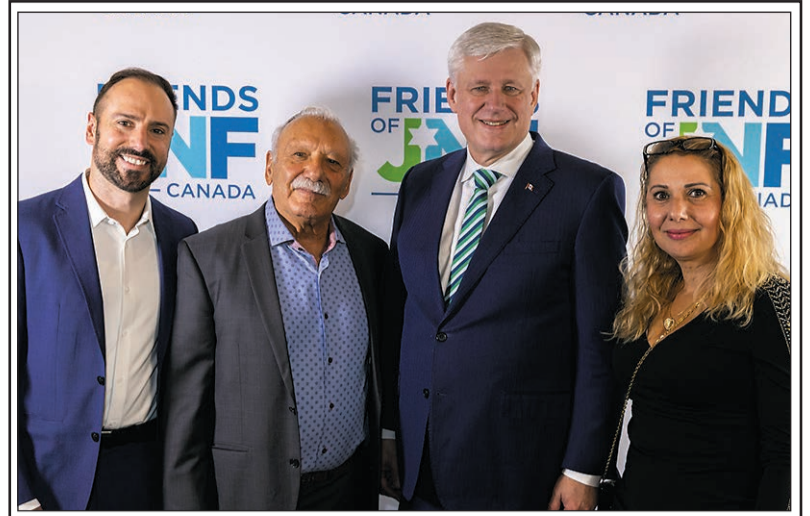
He diplomatically said that although US President Trump is treating Canada like an enemy, he may well be the only head of State who actively supports Israel as a friend.

As tensions with Iran continue to escalate, Harper was categorical in stating that there is no greater threat to Israel and the Jewish people than the Islamic Republic of Iran. He theorized, that President Trump's efforts in Iran came on the back of the successful dismantling of corruption in Venezuela, but Harper quite astutely observed that there is a fundamental difference between a leadership that enables drug lords and criminals, and one that has a fanatical leadership of religious extremists.

Harper recently became a grandfather, continues to go on speaking tours around the world, and invests heavily in the Israeli economy. On behalf of the Friends of JNF Canada, local young leaders Solly Singer and Carmi Reboh presented the former Prime Minister, and MP Majumdar with the inaugural L'Dor V'Dor Award. This was followed by a lively and engaging masterful performance of "Am Yisrael Chai" as the evening's dignitaries bid the crowd farewell.

Cairns knocked it out of the park yet again with an incredible Negev Gala evening enjoyed by the Edmonton community. He graciously thanked the speakers as well as the many generous donors, sponsors, attendees and dedicated volunteers who contributed to the success of the event. He took a

humble moment to remind everyone that their donations go to a rehabilitation center in Tzfat, and much needed bomb shelters in Israel. He delicately reminded guests that even as a smaller Jewish community, it is important to remember that Edmonton is part of the global Jewish community and investing in the strength and vitality of Israel is an investment in a collective home. With this, Cantor Bertrand Malo filled the room with the powerful reverberations of his operatic voice singing the most powerful melody shared by Jews from every corner of the globe, *Hatikvah*.



Negev Gala guests enjoyed a photo opportunity with Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.







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Protect a family of 4	<b>\$3,600</b>	x _____	= \$ _____
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- TEL AVIV CENTRAL ISRAEL
- ASHKELON SOUTHERN ISRAEL
- ARAD SOUTHERN ISRAEL
- BE'ER SHEVA SOUTHERN ISRAEL

**TOGETHER, WE CAN PROTECT 275 LIVES**  
FROM NORTH TO SOUTH — EVERY SECOND COUNTS.



*The Last Yiddish Speaker* starring Reva Faber, Galya Wornovitsky, Jonathan Top and Ari Cohen has been very well received by audiences to date. Tickets are still available online ([chailifeyc.ca](http://chailifeyc.ca)) or at the door for the last 2 performances on June 6 at 7 pm and June 7 at 2 pm.

## Chai Life presents *The Last Yiddish Speaker* to rave reviews

By David Sklar, LJI Reporter

Chai Life Productions is helping bring Jewish theatre back to Calgary and according to one of the founders Laura Shuler and director Zelda Dean, the timing could not be more urgent.

In a recent episode of the podcast *Chai There*, Shuler and Dean discussed the revival of Jewish community theatre in Calgary through Chai Life Productions and their current play, *The Last Yiddish Speaker*.

The play premiered in Calgary on May 20 with wonderful reviews and as this paper goes to print the show is at mid-point in the run with the final two performances being held on June 6 and 7 at Temple B'nai Tikvah.

For Dean, the reboot of the theatre group represents a continuation of a legacy that stretches back decades. She co-founded the Beth Israel Players in 1969, one of Calgary's earlier Jewish theatre companies, which operated until the mid-1980s. Now, she sees Chai Life

Productions as "the circle going all the way around."

The idea for reviving Jewish theatre in Calgary began unexpectedly during a community production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Shuler, who had not performed in theatre for nearly forty years, reunited with longtime collaborators and discovered there was still strong interest in creating Jewish stories on stage. "Build it and they will come," she recalled, describing how performers immediately rallied around the idea of starting a new Jewish theatre company.

Their latest production, *The Last Yiddish Speaker* by playwright Deborah Zoe Lafer, explores survival, repression, identity, and cultural erasure in a near-future America overtaken by fascism. The story follows a Jewish father and daughter forced to conceal their identity while struggling to survive under an authoritarian regime.

Dean described the play as a "cautionary tale" rather than a political statement. "The theme of the story is survival," she said. "How brave can you be in making sure that you will survive?"

Although the play was written years ago, both women said its themes feel especially resonant today. Shuler noted that when she first read the script, "my jaw dropped to the floor," adding that the play's relevance to current conversations around antisemitism and identity felt almost "divine."

Language also plays a central role in the production. Shuler described Yiddish as "a language that speaks from the soul of ancestors, of culture, of heritage." While many audience members may not speak Yiddish fluently, Dean explained that the playwright cleverly incorporates theatrical devices so audiences can still understand the emotional meaning and context

behind the words.

For both women, community theatre offers something deeper than performance alone. Shuler emphasized that community artists participate "for the love of it," creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose that cannot be measured financially. Dean added that community theatre can help break down barriers by bringing together people from different backgrounds, including many non-Jewish performers and audiences. "One of the most important things about community theatre is that it actually gives a voice to everybody," she said.

That spirit was evident in Chai Life Productions' first major production, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which drew enthusiastic audiences and demonstrated a strong appetite for Jewish-centred theatre in Calgary. Shuler and Dean both described the response as emotional and affirming, particularly at a time when many Jewish artists and audiences have felt increasingly isolated or hesitant to speak openly about their identity. Dean pointed to several productions in Western Canada that faced protests or cancellations in recent years, arguing that some theatre companies have become hesitant to stage work viewed as politically sensitive. Still, both women stressed that *The Last Yiddish Speaker* is ultimately about humanity, resilience, and empathy rather than partisan politics.

Dean, who directed much of the production remotely from Victoria over Zoom, admitted the process was challenging but rewarding. She praised the cast and crew for their dedication and believes audiences will leave deeply moved by the story.

Beyond the production itself, both Shuler and Dean see the company as part of a broader effort to create space for Jewish stories within the city's cultural landscape. They spoke about theatre not simply as entertainment, but as a way to foster dialogue, preserve heritage, and create empathy between communities. For Dean, who has spent decades directing socially conscious theatre, the goal remains simple: to engage audiences emotionally first and allow understanding to grow from there. "First, we engage an audience. Then we entertain them. And if we happen to enlighten them at the end, that's a bonus," she said.

Shuler hopes the production encourages audiences to reject intolerance and engage more openly with difficult conversations. "History does not have to repeat itself," she said. "One act of kindness, one act of tolerance, one act of acceptance at a time."

The final two performances of *The Last Yiddish Speaker* at Temple B'nai Tikvah are June 6 and 7, 2026. Purchase tickets at <https://www.chailifeyc.ca/>.

For *Chai There!* visit [chaithere.ca/](http://chaithere.ca/), [facebook.com/chaitherepod](https://facebook.com/chaitherepod) or on [spotify](https://spotify.com/chaitherepod).

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Episode 2 - Chai Life Productions  
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## Calgary mayor visits Halpern Akiva Academy

On Wednesday, May 20th 2026, Halpern Akiva Academy was honoured to host Mayor Jeromy Farkas.

The visit connected directly to students' Social Studies learning related to citizenship, leadership, and community engagement. Prior to his visit students spent time learning about his role and prepared thoughtful questions about his daily responsibilities and challenges of serving as the Mayor of Calgary.

Following a tour of the school with Principal Dr. Jenna Pappas and Head of Judaics Mrs. Hannah Andrews, Mayor Farkas met with the students in the gymnasium, where he engaged in a question and answer session. He spoke about his role as a mayor of a large city, and then fielded questions ranging from "Do you also work as a police officer?" to "What's your favourite part of the job?" and "Who is your security guard?"

Mayor Farkas shared that his two biggest concerns are the water main and public safety. He also spoke about the importance of community involvement and civic responsibility, encouraging students to take

an active role in helping make their communities stronger.

While students left with a greater understanding of his role and responsibilities, it is safe to say that many were most enthralled by the mayor's K-Pop Demon Hunters shirt, which he enjoys wearing as he visits schools throughout the city.

Mayor Farkas also expressed appreciation for the school's integrated approach to Judaic and General Studies education. He was impressed by the students' engagement and thoughtful questions and noted the value of an educational environment that

develops both academic knowledge and a strong sense of Jewish community.



Mrs. Hannah Andrews, Dr. Jenna Pappas and Calgary Mayor Jeromy Farkas at Halpern Akiva Academy.

## Weizmann Canada raises \$9 mil for environmental science

On May 26, Weizmann Canada held a sold-out national gala in Montreal that raised \$9 million net of expenses for scientific research on environmental sustainability. Seeding Hope: The National Gala To Empower a Sustainable Tomorrow, presented by the Dr. Joseph Lebovic and Dr. Wolf Lebovic Foundations, brought more than 300 Weizmann Canada supporters together from across the country. Held at Windsor Station, it was an immersive celebration of research focused on climate change, alternative energy, food security, and nutrition.

Speaking at the gala, Weizmann Canada CEO Susan Stern expressed gratitude for the science and those who support it. She said, "Thank you all. We could not have done it without each one of you. There is clearly much important work to do, and we are grateful for the groundbreaking science that continues to bring us new insights."

This fundraising effort comes at a time when the climate crisis is accelerating, from extreme weather and biodiversity loss, to rising pollution, and global food insecurity, and this is why the Weizmann Institute of Science has made environmental sustainability one of its priority areas of research.

The focus on environmental science at Weizmann began through the leadership of Canadians. Decades ago, Canadians funded early solar energy research that has now expanded into a multidisciplinary powerhouse of more than 60 labs dedicated to sustainability.

At the gala, guests were treated to an immersive,

multi-sensory event in which the science took centre stage. They heard from Professors Asaph Aharoni and Ron Milo, two world-renowned scientists who are redefining what a healthy planet looks like.

In his lab, Prof. Milo was able to genetically engineer bacteria that feed off carbon dioxide rather than sugar. He described how he is now developing new ways to use solar energy to fuel the fermentation process that pulls carbon dioxide out of the air with the goal of improving the efficiency of food and fuel production. Prof. Aharoni is focused on engineering plants and microbes to fight world hunger and malnutrition. His work looks for ways to improve crop nutrition and resistance to disease, drought, and other harsh conditions. His discoveries have also led to environmentally sustainable alternatives to the harmful chemicals in food, textiles, and other materials.

Prof. Aharoni said, "This is just the tip of the iceberg. We are doing all kinds of stuff that will make our world more sustainable, healthy, and environmentally friendly."

Former CBC broadcaster Heather Hiscox hosted the event and recognized Canadian visionaries whose generosity has had a global impact. There was a special tribute to the legacy of Tom and Mary Beck and their early support of environmental research at the Weizmann Institute.

Other honourees were Nathalie and Laurent Amar; Rochelle Rubinstein, representing the families of H & R; Darlene Switzer-Foster and Bill Foster, honouring



Zoya Shvartzman, Ayelet Cohen Weil and Darlene Switzer-Foster at the Weizmann Canada Gala in Montreal.

the memory of Sam Switzer; and Linda Cherry Soudack, honouring the legacy of Sigmund (Siggy) Soudack. Danielle Bitton received the Marvelle Koffler Award for Women of Distinction in recognition of her exceptional dedication to community leadership and philanthropy.

### SHIRLEY KSIENSKI Z"l

The Ksienski Families would like to acknowledge and thank all our caring family, friends and Community members for your overwhelming support extended to us in memory of our beloved sister, sister-in-law, mother and aunt.

The outpouring of so many expressions of condolence, kindness, the charitable donations, cards, meals, emails and numerous phone calls brought us all much feelings of love and comfort.

We would like to thank all the Foothills Hospital doctors, nurses and health care workers who cared for Shirley in her hours of need.

With heartfelt and grateful appreciation,  
The Ksienski Families.



## UNVEILING NOTICE

Please join our family for the unveiling of our beloved wife, mother and oma.

**Irene Ross z"l**

On Sunday, June 14, 2026 at 11 AM.

Beth Tzedec Cemetery, Calgary

Followed by a light luncheon at the Carriage House.

Check out our community calendar at [jewishedmonton.org](http://jewishedmonton.org).

# The Hub

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## A MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENTS REBECCA ASBELL AND BENARON GLEIBERMAN



In every generation, there are moments when a community is called to build—not only for today, but for the future we imagine for those who will come after us. For Edmonton's Jewish community, this is one of those moments.

**With the launch of the L'Chaim campaign, we can bring the Oshry | Kipnes Jewish Community Centre to life** as a vibrant, welcoming space where Jewish life can grow, connect, and thrive. The opportunity to support a project like this comes perhaps once in a generation, the chance to help shape not only a physical space, but the future of our community itself.

The vision for the Oshry | Kipnes JCC has been shaped by our community to last for generations. Through extensive consultation over many years, we heard clearly what matters most: a place for

connection, learning, and celebration. A place where youth can gather, families can engage, and individuals of all ages can feel a sense of belonging. Many of these priorities are already reflected in the plans for the centre, which will serve as a primary destination for Jewish communal life in Edmonton for years to come.

**Now, there is a role for each of us to play.** The Oshry | Kipnes JCC building has been purchased outright, and through the L'Chaim campaign we are building an endowment fund that will sustain programming and operations in perpetuity. This means that every gift made today will continue to support Jewish life in our community in perpetuity--forever.

What has inspired us most is the growing momentum. **Community members are stepping forward in meaningful ways—**

some choosing to name spaces, others adding their names to the L'Chaim Donor Board, and many are stretching so they can contribute at levels that reflect the generational opportunity before us. Each gift, regardless of size, reflects a shared commitment to the future we are building together.

**We invite every member of our community to be part of this moment.** Whether by naming a space, adding your name to the L'Chaim Donor Board, or participating at a level that feels meaningful to you, each contribution helps bring our JCC to life. To make your gift, visit [ecf.ca/lchaim](http://ecf.ca/lchaim).

L'Chaim—to life—and to the community we are building together.

Register for our upcoming events at [jewishedmonton.org](http://jewishedmonton.org).

# L'Chaim!

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# REPORT ANTISEMITISM WHEN YOU SEE IT.

[jewishedmonton.org/reportantisemitism](http://jewishedmonton.org/reportantisemitism)





Close to 180 'delegates' joyfully gathered in Victoria over the May long weekend to celebrate Barry Slawsky's Grand Slam 80.

# Jewish News founding publisher Barry Slawsky celebrates milestone birthday with friends and family

By Jennifer Kovacs, LJI Reporter

Friends and family gathered in Victoria BC over the May long weekend to celebrate the 80th birthday of founding Edmonton (now Alberta) Jewish News publisher Barry Slawsky. It was truly an amazing action-packed weekend with close to 180 people attending the festivities.

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In true Barry fashion, it was either go big or go home – and no one was going home! Barry has contributed much to the success of the Edmonton Jewish Community – particularly the Talmud Torah School and the friends that he has made along the way are friends for life. The eclectic group of people attending the party is a testament to Barry’s overall generational impact on the community, his good nature and his great sense of humour.

Barry’s vision for Edmonton Jewish News was that it celebrate community, and provide a platform for community members of differing viewpoints, politics and religious affiliations. That it connect people who might otherwise be unconnected. That vision has come to fruition with the expansion to the entire province, building and strengthening connections and friendships among all community members.

At the simcha, Barry’s longtime friend Gordy Hoffman gave a toast to Barry. He has known Barry since their days at Camp BB.

He said that “Barry Slawsky is a true mensch – an amazing, warm, and thoughtful individual. He is charitable and philanthropic, helps many in need all quietly and without recognition and he does not know how to say ‘No.’”

“Barry is what friendship is all about and he stays in contact with his friends regularly. He remembers all his friends regardless of their station in life – all 180 of them.”

Barry’s milestone birthday brought his friends and family together for a special heartwarming weekend of Jewish camaraderie. Much the way he lives his life.

“When Eva and I were walking through Butchart Gardens on the beautiful warm Saturday afternoon we met for the first time Jewish friends from all across Canada and the United States,” noted Gordy, “and we had an immediate strong relationship with them, with there being an instant bond and we realized that the weekend celebration brought home to us the value and importance of our heritage, our community and our long-standing friendships.”

Best wishes and G’zai G’zint to Barry on your milestone birthday and may you enjoy many more.

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# A tribute to Morris Dancyger z”l

It is with great sadness that Calgary Jewish Federation shared the loss of Calgary Holocaust Survivor, great patron of the arts, supporter and friend to many, Morris Dancyger, who passed away on May 11.

Born in 1940 in the Radom Ghetto in Poland, Morris was transported to Auschwitz in a cattle car in 1943 together with his family.

Morris was one of the very few children to survive Auschwitz-Birkenau, and was liberated at the age of four and a half by the Red Army in 1945. An iconic photograph taken after liberation shows Morris and other children revealing the numbers tattooed on their tiny forearms.

Morris’ father survived atrocities in the concentration camps only to be shot dead in 1946 at a Displaced Persons camp in Stuttgart, Germany, just one day after he had been reunited with his family; the street in Stuttgart named in his memory—Danziger Platz—remains to this day.

Together with his mother, sister and grandmother, Morris immigrated to the British Mandate for Palestine in 1947, just before Israel was declared an independent state.

His family began their new life in Canada in 1952 when they settled in Calgary. Morris earned a pharmacy degree with distinction from the University of Alberta.

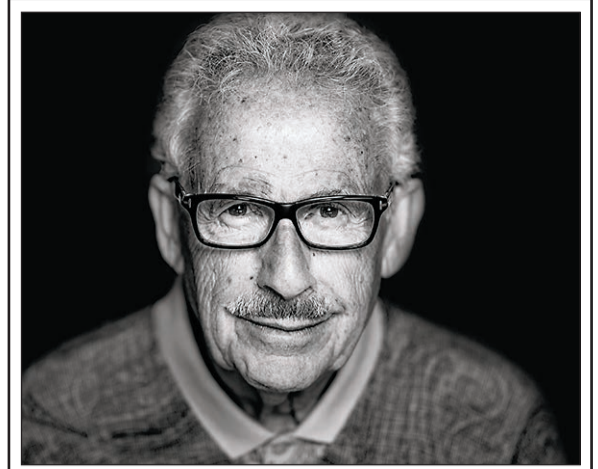
He and his wife Ann, who is also a Holocaust survivor, built a wonderful life in Calgary, which he was always proud of.

Morris will be fondly remembered by many, including those in the Calgary Arts community (especially Contemporary Calgary), the Jewish community, by friends, and his family, including his beloved wife Ann, his son Howard, his daughter Lisa, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

If friends so desire, memorial tributes in Morris’s honour can be made to a charity of their own choice.

On behalf of the City of Calgary, Mayor Jeromy Farkas extended deepest condolences to the entire Dancyger family. “Our city has lost a truly great Calgarian,” he wrote on social media. “Morris Dancyger was a remarkable man whose life embodied both the darkest chapters of human history and the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit. As a child, he survived Auschwitz. He came to Calgary to rebuild, and in doing so helped build our city through business, philanthropy, Jewish community leadership, and an enduring commitment to arts and culture. His life was a testament to courage, renewal, and the belief that even after profound suffering, one can still choose to create, contribute, and lift others.

“Morris’s advocacy was matched by action. From helping bring Contemporary Calgary to life, to decades



**Morris Dancyger. Photograph by Marnie Burkhardt, courtesy Here to Tell: Faces of Holocaust Survivors.**

of leadership in the Jewish community, healthcare, education, and philanthropy, his fingerprints are all over this city. After enduring humanity at its worst, he still chose to invest in beauty, community, and hope. Morris was a builder in every sense of the word. He built a family. He built institutions. He helped build modern Calgary. His life carried both weight and grace. May his memory be a blessing, and may we honour him by building a city worthy of the faith he placed in it.”

# Yad Vashem chooses Germany for first overseas education centers

By Toby Axelrod

(JTA) — BERLIN — For the first time in its 73-year history, Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial museum and archive, is establishing educational centers outside the Jewish state.

The institution announced on May 28, that the first centers will be in Germany — one in Munich, and a subsidiary in Leipzig.

The Conference of European Rabbis, which moved to Munich from London in 2023, said it looked forward to working together with the new center.

And Rabbi Zsolt Balla, State Rabbi of Saxony, said the decision to open an extension in Leipzig “sends a strong signal in support of a culture of remembrance, education and the protection of Jewish life.”

The sites will be shaped in consultation with partner organizations in Germany, Yad Vashem added. A brainstorming meeting is tentatively planned for early next year, with programming expected to begin in three years.

“Working together with our German partners, this center will help ensure that the truth of the Holocaust is preserved and passed on to future generations,” said

Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan.

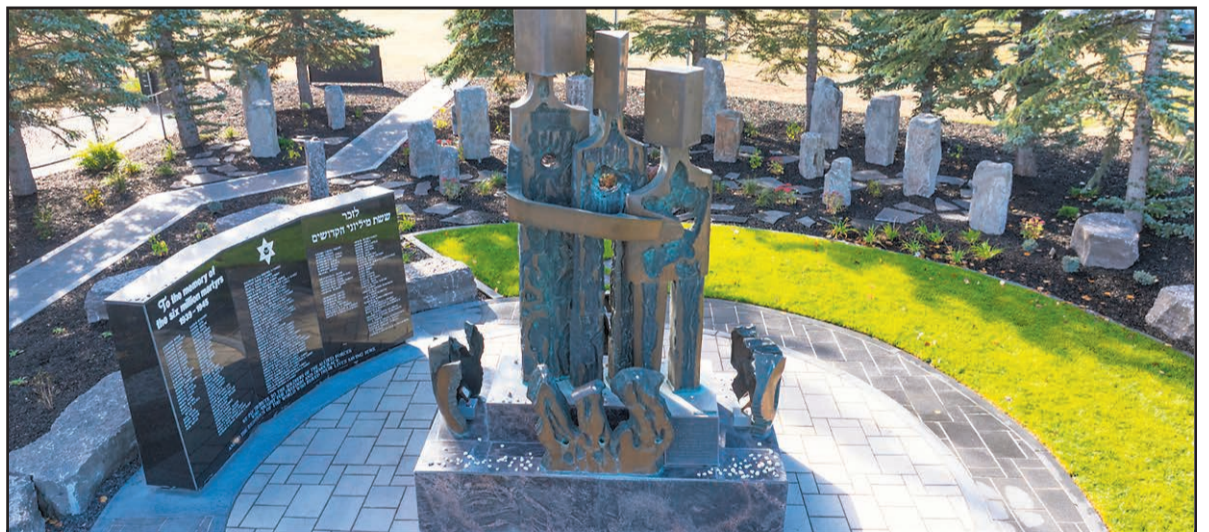
Wenzel Michalski, chair of the Berlin-based Friends of Yad Vashem, participated in talks leading to the decision.

“We’re coming to an era where the witnesses are dying,” Michalski said. His late father, Franz, spoke

with many school groups in Germany about his experiences during the Holocaust.

German Education Minister Karen Prien, who has Jewish roots, said that one of the goals of the centers is to help “combat antisemitism across Germany and Europe.” She added that many young people in the country “still know too little about the Shoah.”

“In a world without Holocaust survivors, one needs new ways to tell the story,” said Michalski. “It is the chief obligation and task of Yad Vashem” to ensure that they do.



## Calgary Holocaust Memorial Park a place of remembrance, education and reflection

**Over 100 additional names will soon be inscribed on the Memorial Wall.**

You can help sustain the Park in perpetuity through donations to the Calgary Holocaust Memorial Endowment Fund, held at Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary.



Donate Online

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Yad Vashem Center in Munich. (Sven Hoppe/via Getty Images).

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We will feature residential and commercial listings, short-and long-term rental opportunities, vacation property rentals, timeshare rentals, and more.

Submissions will be accepted for both properties in Canada, and internationally.

Visit our Real Estate Page online at [albertajewishnews.com/realestate/](http://albertajewishnews.com/realestate/)

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# JFSE facilitates rootedness and repair, not retreat

By Danielle Dolgoy

It is hard to pay attention these days without feeling overwhelmed.

Every hour seems to bring another crisis, another outrage, another conflict demanding our emotional energy. Our phones pull us endlessly outward: to global politics, social division, economic anxiety, war, antisemitism, and the relentless churn of information. The world feels loud, chaotic, and increasingly fragile.

And yet, in the midst of all this noise, there is a quieter truth unfolding much closer to home.

There are seniors in our own community choosing between groceries and medication. Families quietly carrying impossible caregiving burdens. People navigating isolation, grief, mental health challenges, disability, poverty, and uncertainty... often without anyone realizing how close to the edge they are.

When we look too far outward for too long, we risk forgetting who is standing right in front of us.

Jewish tradition has never asked us to disengage from the world. Quite the opposite. We are called toward responsibility. Toward compassion. Toward action.

At the heart of that call is *chesed*: loving care, kindness embodied through relationship and responsibility to one another. *Chesed* is not abstract. It is deeply practical. It asks: Who needs me? What can I do? How do I show up?

And from *chesed* flows *g'milut chasadim*: acts of lovingkindness. Not simply feeling compassion, but expressing it. Judaism does not ask us merely to know our values. We are compelled to live them.

This is the deeper meaning of *tikun olam*.

Too often, we speak about repairing the world as though it exists somewhere far away, in headlines and global movements beyond our reach. But *tikun olam* also lives in ordinary acts: delivering meals, visiting elders, supporting families in crisis, helping someone

access counselling, making sure a neighbour is not alone.

Repair happens through acts both large and small.

This is not retreat from the world. It is rootedness within it.

For more than 70 years, Jewish Family Services Edmonton has been quietly doing this work in our community. Often without fanfare. Often without enough resources. And always with the understanding that strong communities are not built in moments of crisis alone. Strong communities are built through consistent care, relationship, and responsibility.

Today, the need is growing rapidly.

Demand for counselling, seniors supports, food security programs is increasing. More Jewish and Hebrew-speaking newcomers are arriving and needing assistance, career counselling, and connection to our community. There are real and invisible costs to participating in community life can be real barriers for people. Across the board, the need for these services continues to climb. More people are asking for help than ever before. At the same time, social service organizations throughout Edmonton and beyond are stretched thin, trying to meet rising needs in an increasingly uncertain world.

This moment asks something of us.

Not panic. Not despair. Not performative outrage.

It asks us to refocus.

Jewish tradition gives us powerful language for this work. *Tzedek* speaks to justice: the vision of a fairer and more compassionate world. But *tzedakah* is the mechanism through which we move toward that vision. It is the act of giving. The choice to contribute. The recognition that justice is not built through intention alone.



JFSE provides a wide range of services to its clients. Pictured above: everyone enjoying a BBQ at Laurier Park last summer. Photo by Paula Kirman.

A just world is built brick by brick, action by action, choice by choice.

By whether vulnerable people are seen before they fall through the cracks. By whether institutions of care are sustained before they reach crisis. By whether we are willing to invest in one another not only emotionally, but materially.

Jewish communities have survived and endured for generations because we understood this instinctively. We built systems of mutual care. We supported one another through hardship. We recognized that communal responsibility was not optional philanthropy, it was part of covenantal life.

That lesson feels especially urgent now.

In times of instability, there is a temptation to become untethered... to live entirely in reaction to events elsewhere, to exhaustion, to fear. But our tradition calls us back to each other. Back to *chesed*. Back to responsibility. Back to presence.

The work of repairing the world begins by strengthening the ground beneath our own feet.

Rootedness, not retreat.

And there has never been a more important time to choose it.

*Danielle Dolgoy is Executive Director of Edmonton Jewish Family Services.*



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 ROB NAGUS

Dear community, there is so much happening at Calgary Jewish Federation these days that it is difficult to know where to begin. From our annual Holocaust Education Symposium reaching nearly 3,000 Calgary high school students...

As I began answering, I found myself unexpectedly emotional.

When my family moved from Montreal to Edmonton before grade 9, I struggled to find my place. During my first year in BBYO, it felt as though everyone already knew one another, and I often felt like an outsider.

our camps, youth groups, classrooms, and community programs today. The opportunities we create for them now will shape the future of Jewish Calgary for decades to come.

Speaking of the future, I could not be more excited to welcome our incoming Shinshinim (Israeli emissaries), Noam and Adva, at the end of the summer. Shinshinim are remarkable young Israelis who dedicate a year of service to Jewish communities around the world before beginning their military service in Israel.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant and growing community. Together, we continue to build a Jewish Calgary that is strong, connected, and full of possibility.

B'Shalom,

[Signature]

Rob Nagus CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

While all of these initiatives are deeply meaningful, I would like to reflect on a recent experience that left a particularly profound impression on me.

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to visit Camp BB Riback alongside my colleague Stacey Levitt-Wright from the Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

For those who may not know, BBYO played a transformative role in my own Jewish journey. As part of a question-and-answer session with the group, we discussed everything from antisemitism and Jewish identity to where we find our Jewish joy and what motivates our work in the community.

A participant asked how my time in BBYO (in the late 1990s) helped shape me as a Jewish leader.

At camp, I found friendships that remain some of my closest relationships to this day. Returning home, I became deeply involved in BBYO and gradually began taking on leadership roles. Simply volunteering and putting myself forward gave me confidence.

The confidence and sense of belonging I gained through Jewish youth leadership helped shape the person I am today. It instilled in me a lifelong connection to Jewish community and ultimately helped guide me toward a career dedicated to serving our community.

Experiences like these remind us why investing in Jewish youth is so essential. The leaders of tomorrow are sitting in

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

AGM AND COMMUNITY SHEM TOV AWARDS Monday, June 22 7:00-9:00PM Paperny Family JCC. We will provide an annual update, present the financials, elect our board of directors, and celebrate Jewish Calgary's amazing volunteers.

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL KOSHER STAMPEDE BREAKFAST SUNDAY, JUNE 28 10AM TO 12PM HOJMI PARKING LOT ALL ARE WELCOME! Life & Legacy® donors can skip the line for pancakes. Bouncy Castle and Pony Rides! FREE

BRIDGES of Faith CHRISTIAN-JEWISH ALLYSHIP IN OUR MODERN DAY Sunday, June 28 5:30 - 7:30PM Beth Tzedec Congregation. Register! Scan QR code or go to jewishcalgary.crowdchange.co

STRENGTHEN YOUR FAMILY'S CONNECTION To Israel! Open your home—and your heart—to an unforgettable experience. We're looking for host families to welcome our Shinshinim to Calgary! Curious about becoming a host family? Reach out to Diana Kalef at dkalef@jewishcalgary.org to learn more

...THAT'S FEDERATION Calgary Jewish Federation

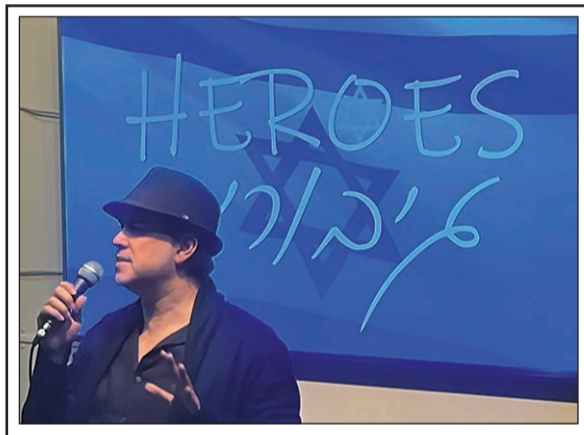


This month, CJA Jr. High students had an exceptional experience hearing a delegation from Sharaka use their voices to challenge hate, promote coexistence, and explore the potential of the Abraham Accords with the aim of building bridges across an evolving Middle East. Students from grades 6 to 9 also experienced a powerful presentation from Project Heroes, an initiative that uses music and storytelling to inspire Jewish pride.

## Inspiring global perspectives and leadership in CJA students

By Krista Wilson

This month, the CJA school community had the privilege of hosting two incredibly impactful presentations that brought vital global conversations,



history, and culture directly to our students. Through music, storytelling, and first-hand accounts, our students explored themes of resilience, dialogue, and unity.

Our Grade 6–9 students experienced a powerful presentation from Project HEROES, an initiative that uses music, storytelling, and conversation to inspire reflection, connection, and Jewish pride.

Through moving stories and songs, students explored the importance of shifting the Jewish narrative from victimhood to heroism. The presentation highlighted profound stories of courage, resilience, strength, and hope. Following the performance, students were encouraged to share their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a safe and supportive space, sparking thoughtful conversations that reminded everyone of the strength and unity found within the Jewish community.

In tandem with these meaningful discussions, our Jr. High students had the incredible opportunity to

hear from Sharaka, an organization born from the spirit of the Abraham Accords. Sharaka is dedicated to building dialogue, understanding, and friendship across the Middle East.

Students listened to powerful personal stories that highlighted the critical importance of people-to-people connection, cross-cultural understanding, and the belief that young people can actively help shape a more hopeful future. It was an enlightening session that challenged students to think globally about peace and collaboration.

As a Jewish school, Calgary Jewish Academy is proud to bring conversations like these to our students. Events like these deepen their connection to Israel, broaden their global awareness, and inspire them to be true bridge-builders in the world.

Our sincere thanks to both Project HEROES and Sharaka for sharing their voices, their experiences, and their visions for a more connected and empathetic future.



**SAVE the DATE**

# Walk with Israel



**Monday  
September 7  
11:00 AM  
Paperny Family JCC**

Join us at Walk With Israel as we kick off the 2026 UJA Campaign and ignite a season of community impact!

- 5km Community walk
- Meet the organizations that make up Jewish Calgary
- Children’s carnival
- Israeli snacks & treats
- Rosh HaShanah market

Together, we’ll celebrate the strength, pride, and connection of Jewish Calgary.

**...THAT’S FEDERATION**

For more information and to volunteer, contact **Diana Kalef** at [dkalef@jewishcalgary.org](mailto:dkalef@jewishcalgary.org)

# Israel celebrates Noam Bettan and his spectacular Eurovision performances

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

This year marked the 70th anniversary of the Eurovision Song Contest. Over those seven decades of history-making music, there have been 1,831 songs performed, and Israel has brought home first place four times since first joining the Eurovision ranks in 1973. In 1978 Izhar Cohen and the Alphabeta won over crowds with “A-Ba-Ni-Bi”, and a consecutive win was celebrated in 1979 with Milk and Honey’s unforgettable “Hallelujah.” Audiences were mesmerized by Dana International in 1998, and who could forget the innovative and gripping performance of Netta Barzilai in 2018!

The Eurovision Song Contest is an opportunity for nations to be united through a love of music, and celebration of artistic creativity. Inspired creators and performers come together to share their passion for music. Despite the vision of this undertaking being an artistic, and not political one, too often people can lose sight of the shared human experience in lieu of fortifying divisions. Since October 7th 2023, with rising global hostility towards Israel, even the lively and fantastically joyful Eurovision Song Contest has suffered from the malignance of antisemitism.

In Sweden, 2024, Eden Golan’s “Hurricane” may have sounded like a power-ballad to the average listener, but following the pogrom of October 7th, the lyrics “People walk away, but never say goodbye [...] Baby, promise me you’ll hold me again. I’m still broken from this hurricane,” resonated deeply. Golan, who suffered fierce animosity from audiences and fellow Eurovision contestants for being Israeli, showed the world that talent cannot be overlooked despite the rising tide of global antisemitism. She placed 5th overall, and braved vicious heckling and even outright threats of serious violence. For anyone who has ever been seized by stage-fright, the prospect of performing magnificently in spite of entire sections of the audience booing, is evidence of true artistic talent. Golan, a young solo artist, stood up in front of the world to represent her country at a time her people needed her strength most.

The following year, amidst continued backlash from extremist opponents of Israel, Yuval Raphael left the world speechless with her performance of “New Day Will Rise” written by Keren Peled and produced by Tomer Biran. Raphael, a survivor of the Nova Music Festival, is still hailed as a national hero for combating antisemitism through her art. The singer, born in Tel Aviv, lived in Switzerland for three years and brought her skills as a polyglot to her 2025 Eurovision performance. “New day will rise, life will go on/ Everyone cries, don’t cry alone/ Darkness will fade, all the pain will go by/ But we will stay, even if you say

goodbye,” were hauntingly poignant lyrics that cut even deeper into the hearts of international audiences with the stinging knowledge of what Raphael endured. On October 7, she, along with 50 other music festival attendees, hid in a shelter, with only 11 of them surviving camouflage by heaps of their murdered companions. She lay motionless beneath the bodies of the dead, pretending herself to be lifeless, all while enduring the pain of a shrapnel wound. Raphael remained like this, drenched in blood, for nearly eight hours, but her new day did rise!

She was greeted in Switzerland by anti-Israel protests and threats. Nevertheless, Raphael dazzled audiences and won the popular vote. She placed second overall, but the win might as well have been first place, because she was able to passionately give voice to all those who lost their lives on October 7 with 166 million viewers from around the world tuning in. Despite not winning the national jury votes, a reflection of geopolitical tensions, the audiences could not deny the magnitude of her talent. “New Day Will Rise” has been hailed by many across the spectrum of Jewish identity as the anthem of Israeli resilience following October 7. The popular Hasidic performer Simcha Leiner covered “New Day Will Rise,” as did noted tenor and Orthodox vocalist Shulem Lemmer to make the song accessible in religious communities as well.

On May 16, Austria’s capital, Vienna, hosted the 2026 Eurovision Song Contest, marking the competition’s auspicious 70th anniversary. Israel’s Noam Bettan, the third performance of the finals, captivated audiences with the fullness of his voice, and passion of his lyrics. “Michelle” may have felt like a romantic song of devotion to a departed lover, but, like Golan’s “Hurricane” carried a deeper symbolic meaning. “So I dance, dance with the pain/ You will see me laugh, laugh again/ You’re my pain, I was only a decoration/ I screamed, screamed, screamed.” Bettan, a French-speaking trilingual performer like Raphael, may sing like a scorned suiter, but Michelle, the object of his affection, could be symbolic of the connection many Israelis have with Europe.

Most of Western Europe has become a safe harbour for antisemitism and anti-Israel fanaticism – a sentiment echoed by the Anti-Defamation League stating that: “Antisemitism is nothing short of a global emergency.” Despite Israel being the homeland of the Jewish people, Europe was a long-term temporary home for many. For centuries Jewish communities



Noam Bettan, representing Israel, at the Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna. (Ian West/ Getty Images)

helped to build and cultivate a golden age of culture and innovation for the continent. Many communities felt established and rooted within Europe for generations. While Nazi Germany and its collaborators tried to systematically wipe out the light of European Jewry, this current wave of hatred fueled by misinformation and selective media coverage, seems to strive to extinguish any lasting remnants. “Michelle is a toxic love, I’m in the darkness/ How could you leave me in the shadows? / A star without fame, a great madwoman/ I rise and fall.” The relationship of Jews within the European societies they found themselves settling in was never straightforward, and full of challenges, but even in the wake of the Shoah European Jewry was resilient. In late December of 2025, both *The Jewish Star* and *The National* reported that although Israelis were opting to emigrate from the country in droves, Israel had recorded a significance rise in Aliyot from Western Europe.

The song “Michelle” was co-written by Raphael, giving an added layer of significance to the lyrics conveying loss, betrayal, and abandonment. Like Raphael, Bettan won the popular vote, while Poland was the only country whose Eurovision jury awarded Israel its 12 point vote. In an astonishing, and profoundly moving display of patriotism, Bettan declared at the end of his performance, “Am Yisrael Chai” and later covered his eyes with his right hand to recite the Shema as the final winner was being announced. The world looked on, while only Jews and their allies understood the magnitude of these brave demonstrations of pride.

Bettan returned home to a hero’s welcome, and with all the celebration and attention, it would almost seem that he won first place instead of coming in second overall. Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu even called the singer to personally congratulate him, *The Times of Israel* reported on May 17. Bettan’s victory at the Eurovision Song Contest was not one simply for that event, but a triumph for Israel, and Jews everywhere. It takes bravery, strength of character, and personal fortitude to stand tall and proud while antisemitism flourishes malignantly, and Bettan did just that. The Alberta Jewish community congratulates Noam Bettan for representing not only Israel, but Jews everywhere. Young Jews from every country can look to his example for inspiration as they too endeavor to embrace their own identities with joy, respect, and pride. Mazel tov!

## TT student competes in Toronto



Zoe Benjamin and the U13 Girls Maccabi Hockey Team competed recently at the Battle of Toronto. The Tournament featured over 100 girls, aged 9 to 17, representing 22 different organizations from across Ontario, New Jersey, Florida, Alberta and even Australia. Yasher Koach Zoe!

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# Canada announces new council to combat racism

By Shira Li Bartov

(JTA) — Canada's prime minister Mark Carney has announced a new government body to combat racism, saying its first priority would be tackling antisemitism.

Carney addressed Canada's surge in antisemitic hate crimes on June 1, during a speech at Holy Blossom Synagogue, Toronto's oldest Jewish congregation. He said the government had to "start with clearly admitting that Canada's civic compact is failing Jewish Canadians."

Carney referenced the wave of attacks on Canadian Jews since Oct. 7, 2023, including bullets fired at synagogues and Jewish schools and attacks on Jewish businesses, community centers and Holocaust memorials.

Over two-thirds of the country's religion-motivated hate crimes last year were directed at Jewish Canadians, who make up only 1% of the population, he said.

Carney said the government was responding by launching the Ministerial Advisory Council on Rights, Equality, and Inclusion, with the mission of advising Canada's government on combating all forms of hate.

"I am directing that the first responsibility of that council is to address antisemitism," he said.

The council will be chaired by the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, Marc Miller. Carney also announced that Marc Gold, a lawyer and Jewish community leader who retired last year from the Senate of Canada, will join the council.

Carney said the council will be tasked with reassessing the nature, scale and drivers of antisemitism, developing a whole-of-government approach to align federal policies and public safety programs, improving the collection of data on hate incidents, and measuring the impact of government efforts.

Several Jewish organizations are likely to be disappointed that Carney's announcement did not include more sweeping enforcement measures against antisemitism.

Rich Robertson, the director of research and advocacy at B'nai Brith Canada, said the speech was a "missed opportunity." The organization was advocating for a task force that could respond immediately to antisemitic incidents and a commission of inquiry to identify their root causes, he said.

"We were hoping for true tactical changes that could positively be actioned to change the lived experience of Jewish Canadians, and unfortunately, that is not what we received today," Robertson told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Pressures on Carney were mounting ahead of the speech. The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, an advocacy arm of the Jewish Federations of Canada, pushed for him to strengthen law enforcement.

"Government and law enforcement must address the drivers of this crisis, including radicalization, promotion of terrorism, and terrorist entities operating here in Canada," CIJA said in a statement shortly before Carney's address.

The group added, "The Prime Minister has an opportunity to set the tone from the highest office to make clear that nothing can justify the hatred, intimidation, and violence Jewish Canadians are experiencing and that every tool at the government's disposal will be used to confront it."

Carney's messages about Israel, Gaza and antisemitism have divided Jewish voters. In September, he led Canada to officially recognizing a Palestinian state. He said in October that he would fulfill the commitment of his predecessor, Justin Trudeau, to arrest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu if he visited Canada. (The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against Netanyahu for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza in 2024.) Last week, he spoke with Israeli President Isaac Herzog about the experiences of Canadians detained after trying to sail to bring aid to Gaza.



Prime Minister Mark Carney announces a new council to address racism in Canada.

But Carney, the leader of Canada's Liberal Party, has also introduced public safety legislation supported by national Jewish organizations, including CIJA and B'nai Brith Canada. Most significant among them is Bill C-9, which would strengthen Canada's criminal code by creating new offenses for intimidation and obstruction at houses of worship, schools and community centers used by religious groups.

That bill has also faced backlash from free speech advocates, including both Jewish conservatives and progressives. Pro-Palestinian Jewish groups say that it would wrongly criminalize protesting against events like real estate sales for Israeli settlements in the West Bank if they take place in synagogues.

Carney appeared to acknowledge those criticisms in his announcement of the new ministerial council.

"I want to be clear about what these measures are and what they are not," he said. "They are not curtailments of freedom of expression. They are not constraints on legitimate criticism of any government on any subject anywhere. But they are the basic standards we owe one another in our shared public institutions."

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# Talmud Torah students learn about Métis culture

Talmud Torah's K-6 students explored Métis culture through music, storytelling, dance, and beadwork. Hands-on experiences connected students to rhythm, tradition, identity, and resilience, while meaningful discussions highlighted the importance of community, Orange Shirt Day, and Ribbon Skirt Day.



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# The best no-bake Israeli ice box cake

By Sonya Sanford

(The Nosh via JTA) - One of Israel's best-loved desserts is a no-bake cake made with tea biscuits. You've likely seen Israeli tea biscuits in your local grocery store kosher aisle; they typically come in a bright colorful plastic sleeve and inside the packets are golden, flat rectangles with ridged edges and a warm hint of vanilla. They are thin and crumbly, buttery and not too sweet.

Israeli biscuit cake (ugat bisquivitim in Hebrew), is Israel's version of an icebox cake or tiramisu. It requires zero baking and is designed to be thrown together on a whim, with simple products found in most kitchens. Recipes vary from family to family; aside from tea biscuits, ingredients typically include instant vanilla pudding, heavy cream, and milk.

Many recipes call for gvina levana, a white cheese we call quark in North America and Europe. Quark is a fresh dairy product that tastes like a cross between sour cream and Greek yogurt, and adds a delicious tanginess to the filling. Instant vanilla pudding offers its unmistakable flavor and helps the cake set in the fridge.

While it's in the fridge, this cake transforms from a loose creamy consistency into a sliceable layered cake. The biscuits soak up and expand with the custard filling, creating a decadent celebration of dairy from the land of milk and honey.

**Prep Time: 15 minutes**

Refrigeration Time: 6 hours. Yield: Serves 12-16

## Ingredients

3 sleeves (238 g/9 oz) Kedem vanilla tea biscuits or 2 sleeves Osem petit beurre biscuits, 2 cups heavy whipping cream, 1 cup milk, 1 (80 g/2.8 oz) packet instant vanilla pudding mix (or 5 Tbsp), ¼ cup sugar, ¼ tsp salt, 1 cup (250 g/8 oz) quark or 5% Greek yogurt, 2 tsp vanilla extract, 1 cup cold coffee or milk chocolate, for garnish (optional)

## Instructions

In a large bowl using a handheld mixer or whisk, beat together the heavy cream, milk, instant vanilla pudding mix, sugar, and salt until the mixture starts to thicken and the mixer or whisk leaves ribbons in the batter, about 2-3 minutes. Be careful not to overbeat the mixture.

Add the quark and vanilla extract, and beat until just combined.

To assemble, dip one tea biscuit at a time into the coffee or milk for 2-3 seconds (if using Osem tea biscuits, dip for a few seconds longer). Line the bottom of a 9"x13" baking pan with the dipped tea biscuits. Cut any biscuits to fit the pan as needed. Top the layer of biscuits with a third of the filling.

Repeat the process twice until you have three layers



of tea biscuits and three of filling.

To garnish, top with milk or dark chocolate shavings; you can do this with a vegetable peeler and a bar of chocolate. Alternatively, you could also top with cocoa powder or sprinkles. Cover the baking dish tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight or for at least 6 hours. Cut into slices and serve cold.

## Notes

Kedem brand biscuits are ideal for this recipe as they are thinner and more delicate, Osem brand biscuits may create a drier cake.

Dipping the biscuits in coffee adds subtle flavor, but you can use milk instead if desired.

If you can't find quark, full fat 5% Greek yogurt will work as a substitute.

Lastly, brands of vanilla pudding mix vary, any packet that is around 2.8-3.1 oz will work, or you can measure out 5 Tbsp from a larger packet of pudding mix.

# BI Chesed Committee brightens the day

By Regan Lipas, LJI Reporter

Bright and early, on a lovely Sunday morning, a bus left from Beth Israel Synagogue with a shared mission of bringing joy and Yiddishkeit to a beloved community member, Jimmy Benanjamin.

"Members of the Chesed Committee and community of BI recently visited Jimmy Benjamin at Lynnwood," explained BI President, Philip Kirman. Some 25 adults, and many jubilant children made the trip to bring the warmth of community to Jimmy through song, smiles, and the enduring spirit of Yiddishkeit.

"The atrium at Lynnwood came alive with Jewish music as residents, families, and staff joined in the experience. The event reflected the importance of Chesed not only as a value that is taught, but as something actively lived within the Edmonton Jewish community," Kirman elaborated.

The Chesed Committee at BI was thrilled to be able

to bring a sense of enduring friendship to Jimmy, a community member whose presence is always felt. His wife, Sylvia Benjamin, BI's Office Administrator, provides the constant support that helps so many BI programs and initiatives run smoothly, and thanks to the Chesed Committee, this time she was the one that could enjoy the kindness of a community she herself gives so much to.

With Shavuot right around the corner, there was ice cream to add to the joyful atmosphere with smiles all around. "Beth Israel extends special thanks to its Chesed Committee for organizing the visit and to the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation, whose grant support has helped make this and many other acts of Chesed possible over the past year," concluded Kirman with gratitude and sincerity. Events like this one are a beautiful reminder that community is something to be nurtured and



cultivated. The amazing strength of community is continuously enhanced through acts of compassion.

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# Israeli report details 'systematic' Oct. 7 sexual violence, calls for accountability

By Deborah Danan

(JTA) — A sweeping new Israeli report on sexual violence committed during the Hamas-led Oct. 7 attacks and against hostages in Gaza concludes that the crimes formed part of a deliberate strategy. It also lays out a roadmap for turning two years of documentation into legal prosecution.

The report concludes that “sexual and gender-based violence was systematic, widespread, and integral to the October 7 attacks and their aftermath.”

The report comes from Israel’s Civil Commission on Oct. 7 Crimes by Hamas Against Women and Children, an independent panel convened in the immediate wake of the attack. The commission was led by Cochav Elkayam-Levy, an attorney and international law expert who was recently awarded the Israel Prize, Israel’s top civilian honor, for her work.

Starting by collecting online material filmed or circulated by Hamas, the commission labored for two years in an effort to generate a factual record that Elkayam-Levy said could withstand the scrutiny and denial that has accompanied claims about sexual violence on Oct. 7 and in its aftermath, particularly the idea that the sexual violence was systematic.

Researchers reviewed and analyzed more than 10,000 photographs and video segments, amounting to more than 1,800 hours of footage, alongside more than 430 testimonies from survivors, witnesses, released hostages, experts and family members.

They identified 13 recurring patterns of sexual and gender-based violence across Oct. 7 attack sites, abductions and captivity, including rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual assault, sexual torture, forced nudity, threats of forced marriages, postmortem abuse, the public display of victims and the filming and dissemination of sexualized violence.

The evidence “proves that it wasn’t isolated violence, it wasn’t random,” Elkayam-Levy said. “It was a strategy, carried out with exceptional cruelty on victims and on hostages in captivity.”

The report also says genocide must be examined as a possible legal characterization, citing the “scale, coordination, and systematic nature of the violence,” the targeting of civilians as part of a campaign to destroy Israelis and Jews, and the infliction of severe bodily and mental harm, “including through sexual violence and torture.”

The report devotes specific attention to sexual violence against men and boys, documenting rape, sexual torture, mutilation and sexualized humiliation that the authors say has often been overlooked in public discussion of Oct. 7.

The report includes testimonies that have already surfaced, such as from Amit Soussana and Keith Siegel, two former hostages who said they had been sexually assaulted by their captors.

But it also includes accounts that had not previously been made public, including cases of sexual violence inflicted in the presence or near vicinity of family members. In at least one case the researchers documented, family members held hostage together were forced to perform sexual acts on one another, an example of what the commission characterizes as “kinocidal” sexual violence, meaning violence aimed at destroying family structures by exploiting familial bonds.

Yet the report aims to go beyond simply documenting horrific traumas. A 70-page legal section argues that the documented acts support prosecution for war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and sexual and gender-based violence linked to terrorism.

It notes that victims of the Oct. 7 attacks represented 52 nationalities, giving multiple governments potential avenues to investigate and

prosecute through domestic terrorism laws, extraterritorial jurisdiction or universal jurisdiction.

So far, those efforts remain “scarce and fragmented,” the report says, with investigations or legal steps undertaken in the United States, France, Germany and Canada, as well as at the International Criminal Court in the Hague. In the case of the ICC, its prosecutor sought warrants for Yahya Sinwar, Ismail Haniyeh and Mohammed Deif over crimes including rape and other sexual violence, but all three Hamas leaders were killed by the IDF and the proceedings were terminated.

The report argues that sexual violence prosecutions do not have to depend only on direct survivor testimony, a central issue for Oct. 7 cases as many victims were murdered, witnesses were traumatized and released hostages could speak only after months in captivity. International courts have relied on direct witnesses, expert witnesses, forensic material, circumstantial evidence and digital documentation, while ICC rules do not require corroboration for sexual violence crimes.

“The report shifts the global conversation from whether this happened to what the consequences should be,” Elkayam-Levy said in an interview ahead of the report’s release. “We’re going to see a before-and-after moment with it.”

Whether that comes to pass remains to be seen. The report arrives in a climate of denial around sexual violence on Oct. 7 that was fueled in part by early accounts that were later challenged. Critics of Israel’s claims have repeatedly pointed to disputed elements in an investigation published in *The New York Times* in December 2023, including the case of Oct. 7 victim Gal Abdush, whose relative questioned whether there was proof she had been raped, and to accounts of sexual violence by ZAKA first responders that were later debunked. Those cases helped denialists attack the wider body of evidence documented by UN officials, Israeli investigators, journalists and groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Elkayam-Levy herself has been the subject of criticism, with a March 2024 report in *Yedioth Aharonoth* citing unnamed government officials questioning the commission’s structure and the accuracy of some of her early public claims, including a widely debunked account that a pregnant woman had been found with her womb cut open — criticism that was picked up by skeptics of Oct. 7 sexual violence claims.

In response, Elkayam-Levy said some of the early mischaracterizations reflected the confusion of the first days after the attack, when first responders and those recovering hundreds of bodies were working in traumatic circumstances.

“It is precisely because of that early chaos, and the widespread denial, that this report was prepared under the strictest international verification standards, with every testimony and piece of evidence carefully cross-checked and corroborated,” she said.

Elkayam-Levy said the backlash she personally experienced was “very scary,” with threats to her life and antisemitic groups circulating her image alongside accusations that she was “lying about Hamas.”



International law professor Cochav Elkayam-Levy meets with foreign leaders in Jerusalem, Nov. 23, 2023. (Nicolas Maeterlink / Belga Mag / AFP via Getty Images)

The team, made up of about 20 employees and additional volunteers and contributors, worked from a hidden location, with some researchers choosing to remain anonymous throughout.

Elkayam-Levy said the release of the archive may not stop denial from “social media trolls,” but it changes the evidentiary landscape in ways serious observers can no longer ignore.

She pointed to remarks made early on in the war by philosopher Judith Butler, who cast doubt on reports of rape on Oct. 7, comments Elkayam-Levy said caused deep anguish to victims and those documenting the crimes.

“Every item is now archived and here to stay, for her to feel ashamed of what she did and to be remembered as a person who did not stand with the victims, who forgot the purpose of her work as a feminist,” she said.

Elkayam-Levy is optimistic that prosecutions could result. She said accountability may unfold over years and across borders, with some Hamas leaders and perpetrators already hiding in Turkey and Qatar and others likely to reach Western countries.

“I think it will be the same as the Holocaust, that different Nazi leaders were prosecuted around the world,” she said.

Still, Elkayam-Levy said even successful prosecutions would not be enough to convey the magnitude of the crimes or preserve their place in historical memory.

“You don’t learn about the Holocaust from the prosecution of a single person,” she said. “You learn it from the documentation, from the witnesses, the survivors.”

The report calls for an “incontrovertible judicial record,” citing the Nuremberg trials, recent German prosecutions of ISIS crimes against Yazidis and Ukraine’s war-crimes documentation as models for legal efforts that can establish an enduring record as well as punish perpetrators. It recommends a coordinated strategy combining Israeli proceedings with international cooperation, evidence-sharing, specialized war-crimes units and prosecutors trained in sexual and gender-based crimes.

The Civil Commission is not alone in arguing that the sexual violence of Oct. 7 requires a legal response. The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel submitted an early report to the UN in 2024, and the Dinah Project, led by legal experts at Bar-Ilan University’s Rackman Center, published an 84-page report in July concluding that Hamas used sexual violence as a “tactical weapon” during the attacks and in captivity. A month later, the UN Secretary-General listed Hamas among parties “credibly suspected” of

*Continued on page 19*



# Alberta celebrates Jewish Heritage Month

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

May was Jewish Heritage Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the Jewish communities of Canada and the United States and pay tribute to the major ways the Jewish leaders have helped to positively shape North America. “As we mark Jewish Heritage Month, we are reminded of the importance of sharing our story – both within our community and with the broader public. I want to thank filmmaker Len Pearl for his initiative to have monuments across Canada lit up on May 20, including the Alberta Legislature, in recognition of Jewish contributions and presence. These moments of visibility matter deeply,” noted Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. “We continue to build the pathways that sustain and grow our community.”

In a statement published on May 1, the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture announced Canada’s commitment to its significant and socially productive Jewish citizens: “Canada is home to one of the largest Jewish communities in the world after Israel, the United States and France. Since the 18th century, Jewish people of different ethnocultural backgrounds have contributed to Canada’s society through their expertise in a wide range of fields, including medicine, science, philosophy, arts and business. At the same time, antisemitism remains a reality in Canada today and we must remain united in confronting it. During Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that all Jewish Canadians are able to practise their faith and express their culture freely, safely and without fear. One year after the National Forum on Combatting Antisemitism in March 2025, we remain more determined than ever to ensuring that Jewish people in Canada can safely express their faith, culture and identity as we continue to implement the national commitments made at the forum, with all levels of government and partners.”

Miller concluded by saying: “Canadian Jewish Heritage Month is also an opportunity to recognize the resilience of diverse Jewish communities and their enduring commitment to building a more inclusive and compassionate society. To honour this, let’s celebrate the bonds that unite us all and reaffirm our empathy and resilience.”

## Israeli report *Cont. from page 18*

patterns of rape or other sexual violence in armed conflict.

Elkayam-Levy said the new report should not be treated only as a document for prosecutors, legal scholars or women’s rights advocates. Sexual violence is too often treated as an issue that “belongs to women’s committees,” she said, when the findings should also be studied by those responsible for national security and counterterrorism.

Accountability should also extend to social media platforms, after Hamas-led perpetrators filmed and circulated images of victims to “glorify the atrocities in real time,” according to the report.

The commission has drawn support from high profile figures including David Crane, founding chief prosecutor of the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone, former Israeli Supreme Court president Aharon Barak, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and tech executive Sheryl Sandberg, who has campaigned internationally for recognition of Oct. 7 sexual violence.

The archive is led by Karen Jungblut, a former archivist at the USC Shoah Foundation. The

This month, Alberta did its part to encourage inclusivity, celebration and compassion, demonstrating that our Jewish communities do not live in fear. The annual Edmonton Jewish Film Festival enjoyed another year of great patronage celebrating Jewish contributions to the silver screen. Chabad of Edmonton held an impressive and enjoyable Lag B’Omer event at Westridge Park. The Dianne and Irving Kipnes Holocaust Education Symposium was held thanks to the great efforts of Jennifer Magalnick and her team of organizers. Jewish Family Services Edmonton hosted a free screening of *Shrek* to build community and help new arrivals form connections with other Jewish families. Beth Israel Synagogue hosted well-attended community lectures and a midnight Shavuot BBQ. The Edmonton Jewish community welcomed the 22nd Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper at the 2026 Negev Gala, masterfully organized and coordinated by Jay Cairns. Jewish Heritage Month wrapped up in the City of Champions with the launch of *Leadership and Legacy: Notable Jewish Edmontonians*, authored by Debby Shoctor and supported by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta.

The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta has an excellent rotating display on exhibit at the Paperny Family JCC and a special online exhibit is also available. Copies of their new publication *Building Community: Historical Traces of Jewish Calgary* are available at [jhssa.org](http://jhssa.org). From May 4 – 15, Calgary’s Jewish Federation in partnership with Calgary Public Library, hosted over 2800 high school students from Calgary and surrounding areas to the annual Holocaust Education Symposium. Alongside survivor and descendant testimonies, the program featured interactive presentations on the Holocaust and antisemitism by Dr. George Dalbo and Logan Greene of ‘Echoes and Reflections’ a leading Holocaust

commission has also been approached by people trying to document sexual violence in other atrocity settings, Elkayam-Levy said, including Druze contacts seeking guidance after recent attacks in Sweida, Syria.

The report’s release came a day after the Knesset overwhelmingly passed a law establishing a special military tribunal to try captured Hamas-led Oct. 7 perpetrators, with authority to impose the death penalty in some cases. But it warns that capital punishment could deter international support and extradition, noting that comparable hybrid courts combining domestic and international elements do not permit capital punishment.

Executions, Elkayam-Levy further argued, could overshadow the legal record, divert attention from victims’ suffering and turn the proceedings into a global controversy. “My fear is that the terrorists will be remembered more in the universal, historical memory than the victims themselves.”

In taking testimonies from survivors, Elkayam-Levy said, one of the final questions her team asked was what gave them strength and what justice meant to

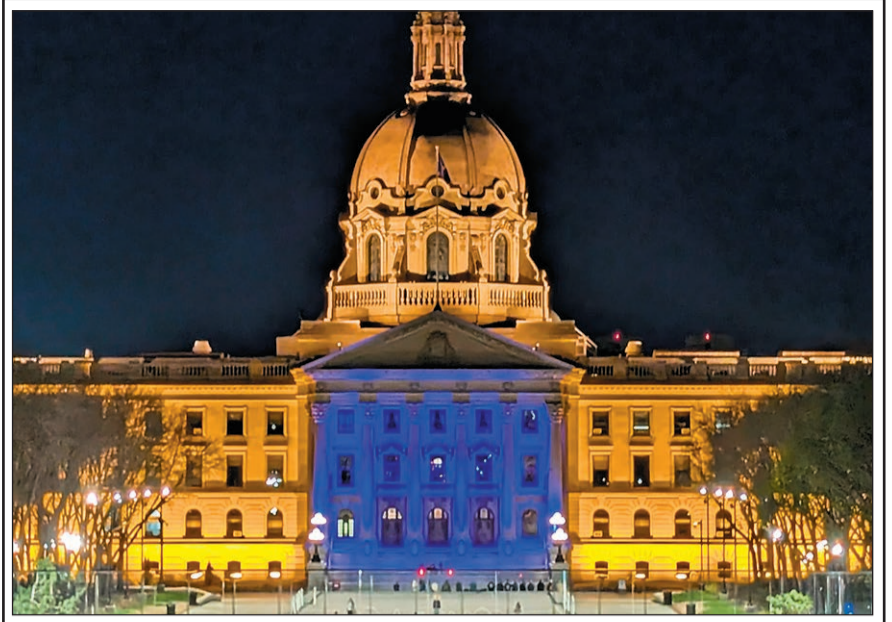
education initiative supported by Yad Vashem, USC Shoah Foundation and the ADL. Federation also hosted the Project Heroes Concert on May 12, and a thought-provoking lecture “The New Middle East: Voices of the Abraham Accord” on May 17. A special luncheon was held to celebrate Shavuot for Holocaust survivors, as well as a floral workshop to festively mark the holiday. Folk-singer Ezra Ben Shalom performed in Calgary on May 26 with another show in Edmonton on the 28. On May 31 Canadian Friends of Magen David Adom Calgary Chapter hosted an amazing Stampede with Purpose Gala where the purpose is saving lives in Israel. The event featured great entertainment, a delicious meal and keynote speakers Peace with Israel Arab advocate Loay Alshareef and Uri Shacham Deputy Director and Chief of Staff at Magen David Adom.

Perhaps in reality it was community and togetherness as always for Jewish Alberta, but certainly the abundance of activity and enrichment in May emphasizes that Jewish life is alive and flourishing.

Perhaps Jewish Heritage Month is more of an opportunity for outreach than introspection, when the Jewish community can welcome its allies and friends to ask questions, learn more, and grow in their appreciation of Jewish innovation in social justice, culture, the arts, technology, humanitarian revitalization, and industry.

them. The answers, she said, were striking for how little they had to do with indictments or convictions.

“More than anything else, they want the truth to be heard and for them to be recognized and believed,” she said.



The Alberta Legislature was lit in blue on May 20 to mark National Jewish Heritage Month. Photo by Seth Glick.

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# PJ Library's "Get Together" microgrant program reaches more North American Jews than ever before

By Josh Bootzin

Since its relaunch in September 2025, PJ Library's "Get Together" program has distributed over \$1 million in microgrants in its first six months, helping to fund more than 10,000 small, Jewish-themed gatherings across the United States and Canada.

Just over 120 of those get-togethers were hosted in the Greater Phoenix area, with over \$12,000 dispensed for Valley family gatherings.

"What a fun evening celebrating Shabbat with friends that we haven't done Shabbat with before," shared Rebecca Feinman, microgrant recipient. "We've done dinners with our friends, but this was the first time we've had some of the families over for Shabbat. It was so nice seeing all of the kids interact. So thankful for all of the wonderful PJ Library resources."

When "Get Together" launched in 2016, it was available in only 10 cities across North America.

Grants were then expanded to all 230,000 PJ Library member families in 2024, and the program was successfully relaunched in fall 2025, with the help of a larger team to review applications and distribute grants.

The program is now available to PJ Library subscriber families who host at least two other Jewish families for any gathering rooted in Jewish holidays, values or traditions.

"In Jewish tradition, community is essential. The popularity of our Get Together microgrants indicates just how much Jewish families from all different backgrounds and experiences are eager to embrace opportunities to meet up," said Jessica McCormick, director of Family Experience at PJ Library, in a statement.

Over 8,000 households held Jewish gatherings with help from PJ Library between September and December 2025, with more than a quarter of those being first-time grant recipients.

"PJ Library provides families with the tools, framework and, now, incentive to put Jewish traditions and values into action. These grants make it easier for families to celebrate in community," McCormick said.

So far, 23% of get-togethers have centered around High Holiday season activities, 31% around Shabbat and Havdalah gatherings and 26% relating to Chanukah celebrations.

"Families tell us that they've connected with neighbors and friends for Rosh Hashanah apple picking, Chanukah sufganiyot (jelly donut) tastings, challah baking, Havdalah ceremonies, neighborhood clean-ups and so much more," McCormick said.

She shared that while PJ Library has many subscribers in large cities, most of the PJ Library-funded get-togethers are taking place in rural communities that are not served by a Jewish community center or Jewish federation.

In an interview with eJewishPhilanthropy, McCormick said, "We're sending these funds into areas where people might be reaching out to the only other Jews in the area, or maybe they didn't know other Jews, but the microgrant has encouraged them to go out and meet families and find community."

The only eligibility requirements are that the family is a PJ Library subscriber and host two to 10 other Jewish families for a Jewish-themed gathering. No receipts are required. Families submit a brief report, and PJ Library reimburses them.

The microgrant program aligns with recommendations from the 2025 Jewish Families Today report to empower families to create Jewish experiences at home.

"In our most recent triennial study, we found that PJ Library has the largest impact on the families who need accessible, parent-led Jewish engagement the most," McCormick said. "They want tools that ground their children in Jewish identity, develop empathy and



PJ Library Calgary, powered by CJF, recently hosted two paint nights at Color Me Mine. Facebook photo.

help them engage with core values. The Get Together grants help them turn that learning into action, by inviting other Jewish families to experience holidays, celebrations and activities in the community."

The goal for Get Together in 2026 was to reach 4% of subscribers, but based on early returns, an estimated 8% may participate this year.

PJ Library supports Jewish childhood experiences by sending free books and activities to families around the world with children up to 12 years old. In 20 years, the organization has grown to distribute over 650,000 books in seven languages every month.

Josh Bootzin is a staff writer at the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix and Northern Arizona.

## JCC's Challah *Cont. from page 2*

A repositioning of dough. A smile when you get it right. Why does she do it? She tells us in Russian that she likes making challah and doesn't want to just stay at home. Again, it's obvious.

Heather Wax is a social worker who has been coming in before work on Fridays for the last five years. Between sprinkles of poppy seeds, she tells me, "I come for the hugs and the community".

Sandra Fromme arrived in Calgary this year and within two weeks found herself shaping Hamentaschen in Nessie's kitchen. "I was looking for a home and a community," she says, and has been coming ever since.

Other bakers want to mention another of the original challah crew, Frida (Sokolovski). Many would recognize her as a familiar face. For years she baked challahs, sold them and offered a "shabbat shalom" as she helped customers choose the best challah. Frida retired with Nessie, after 20 years of serving the community.

The current baking program makes an unspecified number of challahs every week. They supply the daycare and Shabbat programs in the building with their challahs. The dough is braided into small and large loaves. Buns. Sprinkled with various toppings. Made into large round spirals with raisins for Rosh Hashana, baked beside honey cakes. On Purim, the volunteers make hamantaschen. On Hanukkah, festive cookies.

This program serves many needs in the community. There are those who simply enjoy a good challah for their Shabbat table. Those who have never heard of challah and for whom it provides a friendly introduction to Jewish traditions. There is the profit that goes back into programming. There are the memories of a cherished figure in the Jewish community and her start-up volunteers. There are the current volunteers who come for the company, the connection and purpose.

Anyone who has tasted the challah will tell you it's magnificent. The stuff of folklore. By afternoon each Friday, the kitchen quiets down and all the bread has been sold, but the smell of fresh challah lingers long



Volunteers take their places at the braiding table at the Paperny Family Calgary JCC.

after the volunteers leave.

For information on how to volunteer, contact [jherman@cjcc.ca](mailto:jherman@cjcc.ca)

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# JAHSENA launches new book on community leaders

By Regan LJI Reporter

Audrey's Books, a cozy independent downtown literary hot spot, was the intimate venue for an exciting Edmonton book launch on May 27 during Jewish Heritage Month. Traffic may have been ghastly, but the Edmonton Jewish community came out in force to show their support and pick up their own copies of *Leadership and Legacy: Notable Jewish Edmontonians*, hot off the presses. The book's official debut attracted members from all of Edmonton's congregations and unaffiliated community members as well. Additionally, there was a noticeable representation of local academics highlighting the significance of this new publication not just as important to a Jewish readership, but as a historical and cultural resource.

Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of Jewish Federation of Edmonton delivered welcoming remarks, and hearty congratulations were extended to Debby Shoctor who authored the manuscript. Shoctor, who needs no introduction, and has been a staple of the Edmonton Jewish community for many decades, was called to the podium with a lengthy and comprehensive bio that summarized an impressive resume of service and accolades. Her work in researching and writing was supported by the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Norther Alberta (JAHASENA) and the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. Celebrated children's author Debby Waldman served on the book's editorial board along with Shoctor.

During the well-attended event, with limited time to showcase the contributions of all the Jewish Edmontonian's anthologized in the volume, Shoctor gave guests a small taste of the book's highlights. "In these pages, you will find stories of leaders in our community who have left lasting legacies in the city, for both the Jewish and non-Jewish people who live here. These are stories of men and women, business leaders, politicians, professionals, educators, and volunteers, religious and not, both Jewish and not, whose Jewish identity, either inherited or gained by lived experience, has informed their lives, and therefore their legacy to us. Their stories reflect the history of Edmonton's Jewish community, and other Jewish communities in Canada" (7).

Edmonton lost a tremendous leader when Gillian Horwitz passed in 2025. The void left in her absence is still being felt as her contribution to Holocaust education is acknowledged and trumpeted at community and scholarly gatherings. "She served as both host and emcee for annual Yom HaShoah and Kristallnacht ceremonies for many years, ensuring that commemoration remained a living, inclusive civic act" (31). *Alberta Jewish News* was on the scene in 2023 when Horwitz was recognized for her positive impact with the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal alongside a diverse group of honourees, emphasizing her contribution to both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. "Gillian's passing marked the close of a remarkable chapter in Edmonton's communal history" (35). Horwitz, who never missed Jewish Studies Week at the Wirth Institute for

Austrian and Central European studies was a crucial part of developing the Saul and Toby Reichert Holocaust Lecture Series, and the void left in her absence was noted in an address by Dr. Dominique Kirchner during this event in late 2025.

Dr. Eric Schloss and his wife Elexis (OBM) also have a chapter dedicated to their work within the Jewish community and beyond. Dr. Schloss was in attendance for the book launch, to the delight of all present. "In the tapestry of Edmonton's cultural and social history, few figures stand out as prominently for their humanitarian engagement and deep communal roots as Dr. Eric Schloss and Elexis Conn Schloss. Together they built lives defined not by self-interest, but by service – extending from local institutions in Alberta to humanitarian projects abroad, grounding their civic engagement in a proud Jewish heritage" (145). When entering the elegant atrium of Beth Israel Synagogue, Elexis Schloss's legacy can still be felt reflected in the aesthetically captivating and impressive design choices. "Elexis' lifelong passion was in service to her community and helping those in need through projects to numerous to mention" (151). Dr. Eric Schloss' impressive career in medicine was very much a result of being steered toward the sciences by English professor Dr. Henry Kreisel, a Holocaust survivor. This is a lovely story that Dr. Schloss previously shared with the *Alberta Jewish News*, and that is also immortalized by Shoctor. Dr. Schloss is a history buff and voracious book worm who impressively continues to write prolifically.

A third exciting inclusion in the manuscript is Senator Paula Simons. An Edmonton-raised, Stanford University educated career journalist, Paula Simons has been a Senator, sharing time between Edmonton and Ottawa, since 2018. "Simons described the transition from journalism to the Senate as significant, but not contradictory. She characterized her Senate role as an extension of the same civic engagement that had animated her journalism: examining evidence, questioning assumptions, and ensuring that public institutions functioned responsibly" (160). It was these same core values of critical thinking and global citizenship that she emphasized to a group of

Comparative Literature students as a guest lecture presenter at MacEwan University in September of 2023. "Simons represents a model of public service grounded in inquiry, memory, and institutional responsibility. Her trajectory from newsroom to Senate chamber illustrates how professional rigor and historical awareness can be carried into the highest levels of Canadian public life" (164). For anyone fortunate enough to have taken part in one of Senator Simons' local history walking-tours, her commitment to the Jewish community, Edmonton, and Canadian values is evident and instantly apparent.

The book launch was a marvelous celebration of the culmination of Debby Shoctor's efforts, and the author remained on site to sign copies of the manuscript for those who were interested. The volume is an impressive consolidation of some, but not all, of the Jewish community's most visible trailblazers. Readers can purchase their copy today and learn more about Edmonton's community shaping families.

"Although some of these individuals have never made their Jewish identity the most visible part of their public personas, their heritage quietly informs their worldview, especially their sense of community, belonging, and ethical purpose" (10).

Mazel tov to these incredibly inspiring Jewish Edmontonians, and many thanks to Shoctor for sharing their stories.



Author Debby Shoctor at the JAHSENA book launch of 'Leadership and Legacy: Notable Jewish Edmontonians.' Facebook photos.

## The 35th Annual JCC Sports Dinner featured special guest Kevin Pillar



## Berry spinach quinoa salad recipe

By Shannon Sarna

(The Nosh via JTA) — Quinoa and I have not always been friends. I much prefer rice and pasta over the hyped-up grain even though I know people love it. And what's not to love: It's gluten-free, packed with fiber and protein, and it's even Passover-friendly.

So since it's that time of year when everyone is eating lighter, and colorful vegetables and fruits abound, I decided to give it another chance and added some hearty red quinoa to a salad recently. Lo and behold, I became a quinoa convert, adding it to salad after salad. I served a spinach and quinoa salad with fresh local strawberries earlier this summer for a Shabbat dinner with friends, and it was devoured.

Then again, when I was in Los Angeles a few weeks ago, I made this salad with figs instead of berries, and

it was equally delicious. Try it with plums, peaches or any seasonal fruit that you love. You can even serve it with some grilled salmon, tofu or cannellini beans for a hearty and healthy entrée salad.

### Ingredients:

1 bag pre-washed fresh spinach  
3/4 cup cooked red quinoa  
1/2 seedless English cucumber  
1 pint strawberries, blackberries, raspberries or a mix  
1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, halved  
1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese (optional)  
2 tablespoons sunflower seeds

### For the dressing:

juice and zest of 1 lemon  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon honey  
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste

### Directions:

Place spinach in a large bowl or on a platter. Top with quinoa, cucumbers, tomatoes, berries (or other fruit), sunflower seeds and feta cheese, if desired.



Whisk together lemon juice and zest, Dijon mustard and honey. Slowly whisk olive oil until dressing comes together.

Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

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

## Finalists announced for lucrative Jewish literary award

By Lisa Keys

(JTA) — Amir Tibon's memoir about his family's ordeal during the Oct. 7 attacks on Israel and Laura Hobson Faure's history of Jewish children who fled from Germany to France during World War II are among the finalists for the 2026 Sami Rohr Prize.

The annual award — which alternates each year between works of fiction and nonfiction and which honors emerging Jewish writers — is considered one of the most prominent awards in Jewish literature.

The winner of the award, which comes with a \$100,000 prize, will be announced on June 16.

A panel of judges will decide among four nonfiction finalists for this year's award. Since the prize was established in 2006 — the first award was presented in 2007 — Sami Rohr Prize panelists and advisors have included historian and diplomat Deborah Lipstadt, historian Jonathan Sarna and longtime Columbia University journalism professor Sam Freedman.

"What strikes me about this year's finalists for the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature is the remarkable range of stories they tell and the depth of insight they bring to Jewish life and history," Debra Goldberg, director of the Sami Rohr Prize, said in an email. "Each of the four books explores questions of memory, identity, displacement, resilience and responsibility through deeply personal narratives that feel both timely and enduring."

The 2026 Sami Rohr Prize finalists are:

Laura Hobson Faure, "Who Will Rescue Us?: The Story of the Jewish Children who Fled to France and America During the Holocaust." Faure is a professor of modern Jewish history at Université Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne. Yale University Press, her publisher, describes "Who Will Rescue Us" as "the first comprehensive study of Jewish children's flight from Nazi Germany to France — and their subsequent escape to America from the Vichy regime." It is her second book.



The four finalists for the 2026 Sami Rohr Prize are, from left, Shaul Kelner, Amir Tibon, Jordan Salama and Laura Hobson Faure. (Anne Rayner, Ofir Berman, Becky Hale, Patrick Clavier/Archives de Paris).

Shaul Kelner, "A Cold War Exodus: How American Activists Mobilized to Free Soviet Jews." A professor of Jewish studies and sociology at Vanderbilt University, Kelner's second book details how American Jews transformed a largely overlooked human rights issue into a landmark 20th-century mass-mobilization effort.

Jordan Salama, "Stranger in the Desert: A Family Story." Salama, an author and contributor to The New Yorker, National Geographic and other publications, traces his Jewish family's history "from Moorish Spain and Ottoman Syria to Argentina and beyond." A mix of travelogue, memoir, history and reportage, "Stranger in the Desert" is his second book.

Amir Tibon, "The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope in Israel's Borderlands." The first book by the Israeli journalist is a first-person account of his family's ordeal as residents of Kibbutz Nahal Oz, which was violently attacked by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023. Alongside accounts of the day's losses, Tibon also

recounts the heroic efforts by his father, a retired major general, to race into the battle zone and rescue his son, daughter-in-law and two granddaughters from Hamas gunmen.

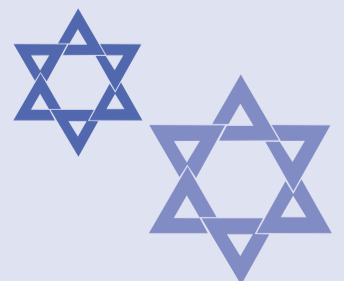
"As the Prize approaches its 20th year, I hope it will continue to support writers whose work expands our understanding of the Jewish experience and sparks meaningful conversation for generations to come," Goldberg said. "I am immensely grateful to share in the Prize's mission to honor excellence, nurture talent and connect Jewish voices across the globe."

The Sami Rohr Prize, named for the late American real estate developer and philanthropist who fled Nazi Germany as a boy, is administered in association with the National Library of Israel. 70 Faces Media, the parent company of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, is the prize's media partner.



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from the

# Sources

by Eliezer Segal

## Member of the Tribes

A favourite cliché of American humour involves encounters between Jews and American indigenous Peoples —“Indians,” according to the defunct terminology. This motif pops up in cinematic comedies like the Frisco Kid or Blazing Saddles, or in Canadian characters like Mordecai Richler’s Atuk and Solomon Gursky. The hilarity springs from the surprising unlikelihood of overlap between such totally dissimilar cultures—preferably if the Indians are speaking Yiddish.

Comical stereotypes aside, in the annals of the American west there was one Jew who did become the chief of an indigenous tribe. I am referring to Solomon Bibo who presided over the Pueblo village of Acoma, New Mexico, in the late nineteenth century.

Bibo’s family hailed from Prussia and was part of the wave of Jewish migration, mostly from central Europe, that arrived in the United States following the suppression of the liberal uprisings of 1848.

Shortly after landing in New York in 1869, Solomon joined his brothers who were already established in commercial activities in Santa Fe.

The Pueblo people had experienced a long and bitter history of genocidal warfare and oppression under the Spanish colonial régime and the Catholic church, who were determined to eradicate their culture. By the time of Bibo’s arrival, under American rule, matters had reached a relatively moderate *modus vivendi*.

Although the Pueblos were nominally Catholic, they maintained a clandestine “Marrano”-style spirituality, practicing many of their traditional religious rituals under the guidance of tribal elders.

During Spanish rule, the Pueblos adopted European terminology for designating their political and administrative offices. Notably, the tribal chiefs were known as “governors.”

In the course of his commercial dealings with the Acomas, Bibo became deeply integrated into their society and culture (his detractors argued that this was motivated solely by opportunism), and the tribe granted exclusive trading privileges to his firm. His marriage in 1885 to Juana Valle del Acoma, granddaughter of a tribal governor, secured his status as an acknowledged leader of the community.

In those days, commercial privileges and tribal land claims were administered by the office of the federal Indian Commissioner. Solomon tried unsuccessfully to represent the Acoma’s interests in a land dispute before the American authorities. The Department of the Interior upheld the claim of the rival Laguna tribe who were represented by a white trader who had also married into that tribe.

In 1884 Solomon Bibo and his brother Simon became embroiled in an acrimonious dispute with the Indian Agent Pedro Sanchez and the competing merchants of the Marmon family over trading rights with the Acomas. Each side was able to produce petitions in support of or in opposition to the respective spokesmen, including records of formal votes. Although Bibo did not emerge victorious from the legal battle, the Acomas so esteemed him, and were so afraid of losing him, that in 1885 they elected him the governor of their tribe, a position that he held for several terms.

The period of his governorship was one of rapid economic and social change in the United States; and the native communities of New Mexico were especially affected by the transcontinental railroads.

One of Bibo’s principal interests was building a functional school system. The prevalent model at the time was virtually identical to the “residential school” structure that has caused so much grief in its infamous Canadian implementation. Indigenous students were to be distanced from their homes and forcibly prohibited from speaking their native languages or following traditional customs. Bibo was a firm advocate of that philosophy, which he believed was essential for the integration of the natives into modern society. In 1889 (when he was not in office), he urged the arrest and punishment of a tribal governor who encouraged students to resist the official policy and follow traditional Pueblo customs. The controversy continued to divide the community and likely contributed to his decision to leave Acoma and settle in San Francisco.

Other than as an incidental feature of his ancestry, was Bibo’s Judaism a relevant factor in shaping his life and personality?

On the one hand, we must note that he married a

native woman in a union that had political and economic overtones; and the wedding was celebrated in both a native ceremony at a Catholic church and in a civil ceremony before a justice of the peace. However, this was likely dictated by the fact that in those days there was no available rabbi or Jewish institution in the territory. The fact that the couple chose to be cremated should also not be taken as a rejection of his Judaism, since the option seems to have been quite acceptable among many Jews at that time. Juana did undergo a conversion to Judaism, though it is not clear under what auspices. At any rate, their marriage was a stable one that lasted long after they had left New Mexico.

Indeed, Solomon’s father Isak had served as a synagogue cantor in the old country, so Solomon’s familiarity with Jewish traditions must have had some substance to it. A family friend recalled that Judaism was important to him. Although several factors (including the persistent political squabbles) might have motivated the couple to leave Acoma for San Francisco, there is good reason to suppose that a serious consideration was their desire to avail themselves of Jewish educational opportunities that enabled their children to be raised as Jews. In San Francisco, Solomon and Juana were active congregants of Temple Emanuel. Looking at the families of Solomon’s brothers who lived similar lives in New Mexico, we find that several of their offspring married Jewish partners and retained their Judaism—an unusual phenomenon on the American frontier.

A valuable element facilitating Bibo’s successful integration into so many diverse cultures was his aptitude for European and native American languages: Acoma, English, German, Laguna, Navajo, Spanish and Zuni.

One of the languages that he mastered was Yiddish—which might qualify him for a role in a Mel Brooks comedy.

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

## For the first time, a kosher restaurant has won a Michelin star

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – As golden confetti rained down around him on May 28, Israeli chef Raz Shabtai broke down in tears and was embraced by his cheering staff.

Moments earlier, a livestreamed Michelin ceremony had announced that his Miami restaurant, Mutra, had become the first kosher restaurant ever awarded a Michelin star, long regarded as the highest honor in the restaurant industry.

“It’s a moment of joy, it’s a moment of pride, it’s a moment of relief, it’s a moment of confirmation,” Shabtai told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Friday. “It’s not just about Mustra getting that star, but it’s about the entire Jewish community getting that, and I felt a lot of responsibility.”

Shabtai, who has worked in kitchens across New York and Israel, opened Mutra in February 2025, naming the kosher eatery after his Jerusalem-born grandmother whose cooking he said heavily inspires its menu.

“I really like to call the restaurant Jerusalem cuisine versus Mediterranean and Middle Eastern or Israeli or stuff like that, because the flavors that I’m trying to bring to the table, it’s flavors that came from memories and visiting in the market with my grandma,” Shabtai said. “I have to be very loyal to what my grandma fed me.”

A description of Mutra on the Michelin website

praised the restaurant’s “show-stopping plate of beets in a pool of ajo blanco and topped with beetroot sorbet” and “signature lamb kebab with smoked aubergine cream and tomato oil.”

“Israeli Chef Raz Shabtai has brought his take on Middle Eastern cuisine to Miami,” the Michelin inspectors wrote. “Named for his grandmother, this is a place where snagging a seat at the chef’s counter is a must.”

The award places Mutra among the world’s most celebrated restaurants and marks a breakthrough for kosher cuisine, which operates under strict dietary rules. For Shabtai, who has kept kosher for more than a decade, the award proved that culinary excellence can thrive under those constraints.

“Kosher is a beautiful spiritual way of me to bond with God, and the limitation that he gave me, but yet to do amazing good food that everybody can eat,” Shabtai said.

The recognition arrived after months of suspense. Shabtai said that Michelin inspectors visited the restaurant several times before sending an email in February requesting information and photos about the establishment, a sign he said alerted them that they were under consideration.

For Noa Figari, Mutra’s director of operations who joined the team after first working as Shabtai’s real estate agent to find the Miami location, the announcement Thursday was a “release.”



**Raz Shabtai, the founder of Mutra, a kosher restaurant in Miami. (N.A. Photography)**

“All the hard work that we put has been, you know, validated,” Figari said. “We carry a responsibility not only just for Raz’s cuisine, but for the whole entire Jewish community and kosher world we made history.”

Looking ahead, Shabtai said he hoped the achievement would inspire other kosher chefs.

“Be proud of where you’re coming from, get connected to those roots that you have,” Shabtai said. “Sometimes it’s not going to be a smooth sail. It’s okay, learn how to fix it, but believe in yourself. Don’t ever compromise, and don’t let other people compromise you.”

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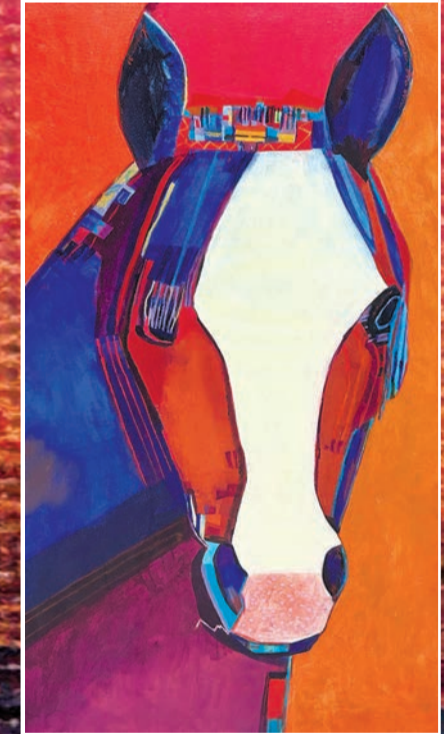
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