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September 2026



Shana Tova!

The day we were told not to cry

By Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein

Shanah tovah u'metukah! A good and sweet year! This is our traditional greeting that carries a slight edge because we also know that Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment. The oldest description we have of a community observing the day is in the Book of Nehemiah, and it begins in tears.

The exiles have come home from Babylon and gathered in the square before the Water Gate. “On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding.” (Nehemiah 8:2)



Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein

When people heard the teaching, they broke down in tears. They realized what they were meant to be, and how far they had drifted. But Nehemiah offers them these words of comfort: “This day is holy to the Eternal your God: you must not mourn or weep (...) Go, eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Sovereign.” The day of judgment is declared a feast day, not a time to cry.

On the other side of the emotional ledger we have a teaching from the Talmud. The tractate Rosh Hashanah records that the ministering angels came before the Holy One with a complaint: why does Israel not sing Hallel (praising hymns) on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as they do on every other festival? And the Eternal answers them: is it possible that the King sits on the throne of judgment, with the books of life and death open before Him, and Israel sings praise songs?

These days carry two opposite instructions: we are commanded to feast, but we are also commanded to tone down our celebration. Why is that? The answer is hidden in the nature of the Days of Awe.

Almost every holiday in human civilization points to an event: a liberation, a birth, a victory, a founding. Nations mark their independence, their revolutions, the birthdays of their founders. Yet no other tradition sets aside its highest holy days for an audit of the human soul.

When our calendar reaches its most sacred days, we do not celebrate a victory, commemorate a hero, or even retell the story of a miracle. We place ourselves on trial. Once a year, the Jewish tradition asks each individual to account for the life they have lived: what have I done, whom have I harmed, what have I neglected, and what kind of person have I become? We made the examination of a human life into a sacred communal obligation and placed it at the very height of our year.

And perhaps an honest audit of the human soul cannot produce a single emotion. If we look carefully enough, we will find reasons for grief and reasons for gratitude; things we wish we had done differently and things that make another year worth welcoming.

That is why Nehemiah tells a people who have begun to weep: “Do not be sad, for your rejoicing in God is the source of your strength.” Their tears are understandable, but grief is not where they are meant to remain. The purpose of seeing the distance between who we are and who we ought to be is not to condemn ourselves. It is to make change possible.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur ask the hard question – what have you made of yourself this year? – and then set honey down beside it.

Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein is Rabbi at Beth Shalom Congregation in Edmonton.

Alberta court allows UofA to dissolve endowment named after Nazi collaborator

By Zenith Wolfe, LJI Reporter

An Alberta justice ruled on Aug. 7 that the University of Alberta was within its authority to dissolve a \$30,000 endowment linked to a Nazi collaborator.

The Yaroslav and Margaret Hunka Ukrainian Research Endowment Fund was created in 2019 by the family of Yaroslav Hunka, who fought for Ukraine in

the Second World War as a member of the Waffen-SS Galicia Division. The endowment was meant to help fund research about the Ukrainian Catholic Church at the university’s Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS).

On Sept. 22, 2023, during a visit from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, members of the House of Commons gave Hunka a standing ovation. Canada was condemned internationally for the incident after

Hunka’s relation to the division became public. Speaker Anthony Rota was forced to resign, and former prime minister Justin Trudeau publicly apologized.

The Waffen SS was founded by Heinrich Himmler in 1943 and soldiers swore an oath to Hitler. The entire SS was declared a criminal organization by the International Military Tribunal during the Nuremberg trials after the war. The 1986 Deschênes Commission, which investigated how Nazi war criminals arrived in Canada, concluded in a decision that was disputed at the time by Jewish groups,

that membership in the Waffen SS was not a war crime.

A week after the incident in the House of Commons, the university started the process to close the endowment and return funds to Hunka’s family. It applied to the Court of King’s Bench of Alberta for permission to dissolve the fund in January 2024 to address antisemitism and the “international controversy” around Hunka.

Hunka’s son Martin opposed the application, saying the endowment was meant to fund research into “pro-Semitic figures.” He argued that the university knew about Hunka’s history in the Waffen-SS when they signed agreements for the endowment, and that dissolving it was “unlawful termination.”

Alberta Justice Debra Yungwirth said in her August 2026 decision that the university “did not thoroughly consider the possible implications if the donation and its association with a member of the Galicia Division came to light.”

Yungwirth wrote that dissolving the fund was legal because the university had a greater obligation to its students than to one endowment.

“The University owed fiduciary duties to the Hunka Trust. At the same time, as a corporate board, they also had a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the University. That duty is broad and multi-faceted, and the University cannot be faulted for choosing a course of action that advanced some interests over others,” Yungwirth wrote in her decision.

“The University did not terminate the Hunka Trust because it determined that Yaroslav was a war

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High Holiday Services 5787/2026

The Leaders of High Holidays Services 2026/5787 at Beth Shalom are Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein & Cantorial Soloist Bert Malo



Rosh Hashanah

Friday, September 11

Erev Rosh Hashanah 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 12

1st Day Rosh Hashanah

Shacharit 8:30 a.m.

Torah Reading 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, September 13

2nd Day Rosh Hashanah

Shacharit 8:30 a.m.

Torah Reading 9:30 a.m.

Mincha (at Beth Shalom) 6:00 p.m.

Followed by Tashlikh

Erev Yom Kippur

Sunday, September 20

Fast Begins 7:18 p.m.

Kol Nidre 7:30 p.m.

Yom Kippur

Monday, September 21

Yom Kippur Shacharit 8:30 a.m.

Torah Reading 9:45 a.m.

Yizkor Following Torah Service

Mincha 5:45 p.m.

Neila/Maariv/Havdalah 7:30 p.m.

Fast ends 8:26 p.m.

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Yaroslav Hunka, front centre, is seen with fellow members of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, Undated photo FSW website.

Healing a Broken Soul: On regret, repentance, and the possibility of repairing what has already been done

By Rabbi Guy Tal

Sorrow and regret often accompany us as we wander back through the errors of our past, revisiting fateful moments that can never be undone – a wrong turn, a moment of carelessness, whose price proved almost unbearable.

This is especially true of moral failings, or what we commonly call sins. Whether the transgression is against religious belief or ethical principle, or committed in a moment of weakness, the return to those moments – coupled with the knowledge that we can neither intervene nor make amends – can torment the soul with remorse and despair. In its darkest forms, such remorse gives rise to self-loathing and inner fracture, as a person recognizes the depths to which he is capable of falling, discovering that there may be no barrier within him strong enough to halt his descent toward his darkest impulses.

Rabbi Guy Tal

The impossibility of changing the past is a real barrier between the wounded heart and the peace it seeks.

"For indeed, how can a person repair what he has distorted, when the sin has already been committed? Suppose a person has murdered his fellow; suppose he has committed adultery – how can he repair such a thing? Can he remove the deed that has already been done from existence?" (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, The Path of the Just).

And yet, against this seemingly impenetrable barrier, the great sun of teshuvah rises before us. Teshuvah is the great hope and aspiration of human life – a vast, far-reaching idea concerned not merely with repairing our sins, but with guiding the world

itself toward its ultimate restoration in the fullness of time.

"Universal teshuvah, which is the elevation and restoration of the world, and individual teshuvah, which concerns the particular personality of each and every person, down to the finest details of the specific rectifications of teshuvah, which the Holy Spirit knows how to delineate to their most minute particulars – all of these together constitute a single substance. Likewise, all those processes of cultural development through which the world emerges from its destruction – the structures of social and economic life, which continually become more refined alongside the rectification of every sin and transgression, from the gravest of offenses to the minutest enactments of the sages and the most exalted measures of piety – all form a single whole and are not severed from one another, 'and all of them ascend to one place.'" (Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Orot HaTeshuvah).

The very meaning of the word teshuvah is to return. But return to where? To our essential selves, to the innermost truth of our souls. This is true of the individual, who is good at his very essence, as Scripture declares: "G-d made man upright." And it is true of creation as a whole: "And G-d saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." At its source, within the divine thought that preceded creation, everything is pure, unblemished, refined, and good. Yet along the passage from the primordial ideal to the tangible reality of this world, the vessels were shattered, creation fell into disorder, and our deeds were tainted with it. Teshuvah is the journey back to that original purity, to the primal wholeness embedded within the very thought of creation.

Yet here we return to the question with which we began: is this aspiration truly possible? We cannot undo the past. Our gravest mistakes stand before us, seemingly forever, barring our path back to that pure ideal. How, then, can the past truly be changed? "The person has murdered; the person has committed adultery – can he remove the deed that has already been done from existence?"

The Ramchal's answer to this question is both

profound and astonishing. He locates the possibility of teshuvah in the boundless grace of G-d, in the attribute of divine mercy, and proposes a spiritual paradox that at first seems almost impossible to grasp:

"Yet it is the attribute of mercy that provides the answer... that repentance should be granted to sinners through complete grace, so that the uprooting of the will should be regarded as the uprooting of the deed."

At the root of every action lies the will. An act devoid of intention cannot truly be attributed to a human being created in the image of G-d – in the language of the Sages, it is merely "the act of a monkey," bearing no moral responsibility. It follows that when an action is rooted in conscious will, its essential character lies not in the physical deed, but in the will that gave rise to it.

What, then, does it mean to say that the uprooting of the will is regarded as the uprooting of the deed?

Teshuvah shifts our gaze away from the deed itself – a finite act, confined to a particular moment, place, and material reality – toward the more elusive realm of the will. The will is alive, dynamic, and capable of transformation. And precisely because it belongs to the spiritual realm, it is not imprisoned within the linear boundaries of time. It can therefore be transformed even retrospectively.

Can the deed already done be undone? The past does not yield – but the will that gave it birth is not bound by the same law. It remains alive, reachable by a grace that moves backward as freely as forward. This is teshuvah's quiet work: not rewriting the past but redeeming the hand that wrote it. It is this same turning that echoes in the changing year – an invitation to let old sins perish, and begin again, mild and unburdened. While some souls cannot see past their despair to such a dawn, feeling that the past comes "too late" and is here to stay, the answer insists that no winter is final, and that the very will to change is itself already a kind of arrival.

Rabbi Guy Tal is Rabbi at Beth Israel Congregation in Edmonton.

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The Covenant of life



Rabbah Gila Caine

By Rabbah Gila Caine

What did Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe mean when he taught that “Gratitude and thanksgiving are not merely good virtues, but rather the essence of the soul!”?

I think he wanted to teach us that recognising the good around us is an essential part of what it means to be human. This isn’t about feigning thankfulness or feeling coerced into an “attitude of gratitude” (yuck!). Rather, it’s the joy of seeing our children or partners, or pets, enjoying themselves, hugging someone we love and recognising expressions of life in the world within and around us.

Rosh Hashana, the New Year, is not merely a celebration of creation, but more fundamentally it’s a celebration of the existence of life in the universe.

Lift your head up and out of our planet Earth - there might be life out there in the Milky Way, or in other far-away galaxies, but we haven’t found it yet.

What we have here is precious for its rarity and for its very existence, and in the grander scheme of things there’s no difference between us and a sea urchin,

between humans and moss.

I like exploring ideas through prayer and ritual language, and have found the best way to express my thoughts on this is by writing up a covenant between us and all life on Earth. I wrote the original in Hebrew and have added a translation into English (but the original says it better....)

Rosh Hashana is an opportunity to renew our covenant with all life on Earth, and with it, our commitment to the sanctity of life our tradition teaches. It begins within us and our own community, with a pledge to centre life-giving narratives in all that we teach and do. Our work is to dig deep and wide within our tradition to find all the richness of life it holds for us, and uplift that.

We’ve had enough of death and pain.

There is room for those at specific moments in our calendar but the majority of our communal effort and the foundation of all that we teach and do must focus on our inherent vitality and on the courageous, life-giving beauty which is the essence of our spirit.

Our Torah is Torat Hayim, a Torah of life.

העידותי היום את השמים ואת הארץ את כל כוכבי השמים וערפלי היקום את כל נימי הדם ופעימות הלב העידותי כל נשימה ורטט כנף: הברית בינינו היא ברית עולם, ברית מלח ברית דמים כל חיה ונחיה כל נשמה ונשמה: מבית הזוחלים ובית היונקים ובית המתעופפים ובית הנובגים, מבית השוחים ומבית החד תאיים: זו אות הברית שאנו שמים על לוח לבנו שאנו קושרים על גופנו שאנו מניחים על שפתינו שאנו מניחים לפניכם היום.	My witnesses today are the Heaven and the Earth All the stars of the sky and mists of the universe flowing blood and heartbeat. My witnesses are every breath and flutter of wings: The covenant between us is an eternal covenant, a covenant of salt a covenant of blood; Every living thing with every living thing every breath with every breath: From the house of reptiles, and of the house of mammals, the house of fliers, and the house of those who spore, from the house of the swimmers, and of the house of the one-celled: This is the covenant which we have written on our hearts which we have bound upon our bodies which we have placed on our lips which we place before you today.
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May this year be a year of good and healthy life for all Am-Yisrael, and all Creation.
Shana Tovah.

Rabbah Gila Caine is the Spiritual Leader at Temple Beth Ora.

Jewish teens see a place to belong at the Oshry | Kipnes JCC

By Tammy Vineberg

Most Edmonton teens spend their free time at coffee shops, malls, recreation centres or libraries. For Jacob Pellett, those spaces have often come with a reminder that he is different.

As a Jewish teen, Jacob says there are times when he chooses not to draw attention to his identity. That's why the Oshry | Kipnes Jewish Community Centre represents something much bigger than a building.

It will be a place where Jewish teens can simply be themselves.

For Jacob, Scarlett Abougouche, and Lily Ploit, the new Oshry | Kipnes JCC will provide opportunities to build friendships, strengthen their connection to Jewish life, and create memories in a space designed with them in mind.

Unlike previous generations of Jewish teens in Edmonton, Jacob, Scarlett, and Lily grew up without a Jewish community centre. While they have heard stories from parents, relatives, and friends about the

role the former JCC played in everyday Jewish life, the Oshry | Kipnes JCC will be the first JCC experience they can truly call their own.

Jacob became more involved in Edmonton's Jewish community through BBYO and an Israel trip connected to the JCC Maccabi Games. Along the way, he discovered a network of friendships and support that helped shape his sense of identity.

Being Jewish hasn't always felt easy outside those spaces. "I feel like in most community spaces in life, you kind of hide the fact that you're Jewish," Jacob says. "Whereas if you can just live your everyday life being able to express that in everyday activities like going to the gym or like going to a JCC just to study or do your homework instead of a library, I feel like it just

Continued on page 6





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5787 / 2026-2027

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A MESSAGE FROM UJA CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS
FARREL SHADLYN KC AND JOSH RAIZMAN



As we launch the 2026 United Jewish Appeal (UJA) campaign, we are reminded that every generation faces defining moments. This is one of ours.

Over the past several years, our community has experienced uncertainty and increased challenges. We have seen antisemitism rise at an alarming rate. We have watched Israel confront unimaginable losses while communities work to rebuild. At the same time, we have witnessed something remarkable: Jewish communities coming together with strength, resilience, and a renewed commitment to one another.

That spirit is at the heart of this year's campaign theme.

As One.

No individual, family, agency, or

organization can meet these challenges alone. **But together, we can.** Through Jewish Federation, every gift becomes part of a collective effort to strengthen Jewish life in Edmonton, support those in need, protect our community, and maintain our enduring connection to Israel and Jews around the world.

Your support helps provide security at community programs, strengthens advocacy efforts through our partners, creates opportunities for Jewish connection and belonging, and supports a wide range of programs and services that touch lives every day.

As co-chairs of the UJA campaign, we have had the privilege of meeting people whose lives have been positively impacted by the generosity of our community. We have seen

firsthand how a single gift, combined with hundreds of others, can create opportunities, inspire hope, and strengthen our collective future.

For Josh, this campaign marks his final year as co-chair. Looking back, one lesson stands out above all others: our community is strongest when we come together with a shared sense of responsibility for one another. That commitment has sustained generations before us and will sustain generations to come.

The future of Jewish Edmonton will not be built by one person. It will be built by all of us.

As one community. As one people. As One.

Register for our upcoming events at jewishedmonton.org.



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Valleyview IGA opens with a wide variety of kosher products

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Kosher shoppers of Edmonton, rejoice! IGA on 142nd Street has returned, with a kosher selection that is bigger and better than ever! The Valleyview IGA, under new ownership, had its grand opening on Sunday, August 23, and the community could not be happier. It is like the welcome return of an old friend, but with a great new makeover. Through the support of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, and consultation with past IGA management, Stuart Trenchard is ensuring that the kosher selection under his watch goes above and beyond.

Alberta Jewish News stopped by IGA to meet with Trenchard and tour the kosher sections. The previous IGA was always a go-to for the Edmonton Jewish community, and the new facility has upped its game. Shoppers may recall a portion of a larger cooler dedicated to kosher meats. Trenchard's set-up boasts a full stretch that takes up the entire side of a full-sized horizontal meat cooler. "We have several different kinds of chicken at the moment," he pointed out. "We're getting beef in very soon. And all the way down on the left there's salmon. It isn't here yet, but we also carry smoked meats."

Three side-by-side standing freezers showcase challah and other baked products. "As you can see, we already have the circular challahs in for Rosh Hashanah," said Trenchard. "The Federation is helping me learn what foods are needed for what holidays, and I'm staying on top of things." Beside the challah, burekas, and blintzes, Trenchard has a designated standing refrigerator for dairy. IGA will carry Chalav Yisrael milk, cheese selections, and various yogurts.

Where once there was a dedicated portion of an aisle, there is now one full side, from end-to-end, stocked with kosher dry products. "We have these larger bags of Bamba ready to go for back-to-school, but the smaller sizes too. I haven't tried them yet, but I'm looking forward to it," he added with a smile. All the standard favorites in plentiful variety line the shelves in ample supply, along with some newer goodies previously only available when visiting Toronto or Montreal.

"We have the braided candles here," noted Trenchard holding out a Havdalah candle. "But we also have a few different sizes of Shabbat candles," he noted, indicating the tea-sized, medium-tall, and full-height candles. "We have the memorial candles too," he pointed out. "I've been in this industry for 30 years, and I knew the previous management, so I've gotten a lot of help figuring things out." Scanning the aisle thoughtfully he added: "This egg matzoh is going fast. I'll definitely have to have a healthy supply ready for Passover. Beneath several brands of matzoh, lines of Kedem grape juice jugs had recently been re-stocked. "This is also a big seller!"

Each IGA location is independently operated, and when the Valleyview store reopened under different ownership, they donated \$2,500 to the local Jewish community. "This is our way of supporting our larger community," emphasized Trenchard. The funds will be allocated for community events hosted by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, and some will be distributed by Jewish Family Services of Edmonton to those in need.

"I make sure our prices are competitive," said Trenchard. "It's about community, so we want our prices to reflect that." He explained that his kosher



Valleyview IGA store manager Stuart Trenchard.

products are mostly sourced from Montreal and Toronto. "I'm working very closely with our supplier, and he knows what he's doing, but if there are products, kosher and not-kosher, that customers want to see on the shelves, I'm taking suggestions."

Trenchard would like to remind shoppers that the first Tuesday of every month any purchase over \$50 will earn an automatic 15% discount. That makes shopping for the High Holy Days easier and more affordable than ever! "We have our honey cakes stocked and ready to go," said Trenchard with enthusiasm. This year, instead of ordering kosher ingredients from out of town, or asking visitors to schlepp things cross-country in checked luggage, the IGA Valleyview grocer is conveniently located and equipped for holiday cooking. With the support of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Trenchard and his team are committed to helping serve the kosher needs of the community. Shana Tova!

Jewish teens *Cont. from page 4*

it feels different."

He believes the centre will become a gathering place where Jewish teens and young adults can build and maintain relationships long after high school.

For Scarlett, the Oshry | Kipnes JCC will create opportunities she never had growing up. Her mother spent much of her youth at Edmonton's former JCC, working there, attending programs and building lifelong friendships. Scarlett hopes to create similar experiences of her own. "I'm so excited to share the same experiences that my mom had," she says.

Scarlett says there have been times when she felt uncomfortable bringing up that she is Jewish because she worried she would be treated differently. She recalls friendships changing after others learned she was Jewish. That's one reason she is excited about what the centre will offer.

She also sees the new building as increasingly

important for Jewish youth today. "There's been a lot of hate on Jewish people recently," Scarlett says. "At places where it's just Jewish people, there is no hate. It is just a place where you can be yourself, be Jewish freely."

While Jacob and Scarlett focus on identity and belonging, Lily sees another benefit: having a dedicated space where Jewish teens can gather, learn and spend time together.

Over the years, BBYO programs have taken place in a variety of borrowed and rented locations. Having a permanent home for youth activities will make it easier to bring people together and provide a welcoming environment for teens throughout the city.

"It's definitely easier to know that you always have a location to host a program, to hang out with your friends," Lily says after experiencing Calgary's JCC through BBYO events. "It is just such a wonderful thing to have, to know that you're in a safe environment with your friends around you."

She is particularly excited about having a place to gather with friends after school, study, host programs, and connect with other Jewish teens.

"Knowing that we have a safe environment that we want to come to is really exciting for everyone," Lily says.

Although each teen shared a different perspective, all three described the same need: a place where Jewish youth can gather, form friendships, and strengthen their sense of belonging.

For some, that means discovering new opportunities through organizations such as BBYO. For others, it means having a place to study, attend events or simply spend time with friends. Most importantly, it means having a space where being Jewish isn't something that needs to be explained.

The Oshry | Kipnes JCC will provide that space for today's teens and for future generations.

As Jacob puts it, the facility will become "the center of Jewish community in the city."

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Community leaders commend resilience of volunteers and performers after Edmonton Heritage Festival threat

By Mark Cooper

Edmonton’s Jewish leaders are commending the resilience of volunteers, performers, allies and attendees who stood firm against intimidation and a security threat at this year’s Heritage Festival.

The praise follows a tense final day marked by a loud anti-Israel protest and a frightening security threat that led to the apprehension of a knife-wielding man who allegedly attempted to force his way into the Israeli pavilion.

Despite the dangerous situation, witnesses say the community’s pride and unity shone through at the event billed as one of the world’s largest multicultural celebrations, held annually at Edmonton’s William Hawrelak Park.

“We as a community don’t let adversity change our determination to exist and to spread joy,” said Ashley Kravetsky, the emcee for the Israeli pavilion.

“The people who were there were examples of our resilience, examples of our joy and we just all came together and embraced each other and enjoyed each other’s company and celebrated who we are.

“And I think that’s what Heritage Days is supposed to be and we weren’t going to let anybody tell us different,” she said of the event that features the food, music and traditions of over 100 countries.

Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton agreed that the community shone through the darkness of the protest and some tense moments that forced pavilion volunteers and performers to shelter in place while the area was secured following the incident and the alleged perpetrator’s apprehension. Some 70 volunteers and 30-plus performers attended the Israeli pavilion over the weekend.

Protests and Security Threat Disrupt Festival

Leavitt-Wright said the incident occurred in the

middle of the loud gathering of several dozen protestors that began in the early afternoon of Aug. 3.

The protest aimed to shut down the Israeli pavilion – a 47-year fixture at the festival – was organized by Palestinian Students Alliance (PSA) MacEwan, Independent Jewish Voices Edmonton and other collaborators and featured chants such as “One solution – revolution” and “All Zionists are racists.”

One protestor wearing a shirt with an upside-down red triangle – a Hamas symbol that signifies targeting the enemy for elimination – could be seen on video posted on social media shouting “Israel does not exist. It’s a fake state” and alleging “Israel has genocided (sic) 700,000 Palestinians.”

Leavitt-Wright said the acts of intimidation began even before the event started when anti-Israel activists posted photos online of volunteers setting up the Israeli pavilion.

“I don’t know if this was psyops (psychological operations) or something, but it was pretty disgusting,” she said.

She said the incident that followed during the festival was the real-world consequences of what happens when hate is allowed to be normalized.

“I’m not saying this group came out to do violent action but when people hear this kind of language and



Shiru HaShir dancers showed cultural pride and resilience in spite of an encroaching protest. Photo by Bar Lavy, Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

rhetoric there’s a normalization, a permissiveness that happens, people internalize the messaging and are inspired to take action,” she said, adding she doesn’t know if the alleged perpetrator was one of the protest group or a lone actor.

Security Subdues Knife-Wielding Intruder

The incident began just as Leavitt-Wright’s husband Erin Wright was starting a shift in the kitchen of the pavilion and was at the back entrance of the kitchen tent.

It was then that Wright came upon the man who had breached the security fencing and “interacted with him,” said Leavitt-Wright. Within seconds private pavilion security joined and brought the situation under control.

Continued on page 13

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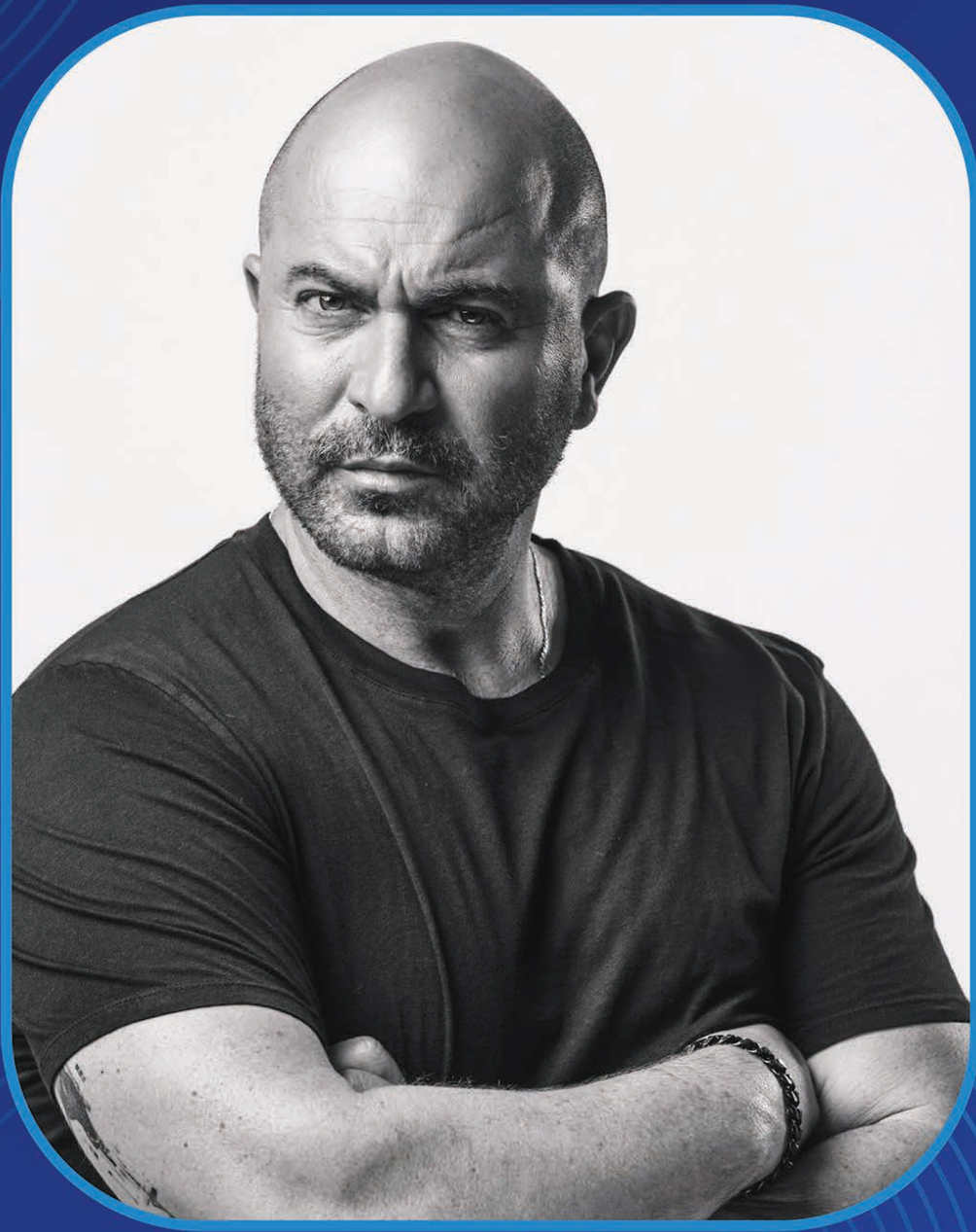
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Camp BB Riback: Summer of 2026

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

Winds of change wafted through Camp BB Riback during the summer of 2026, as Cecil Horwitz welcomed campers for his first time as camp director, joined by Adar Latak in the newly established position of associate camp director.

Hired this past February, Horwitz began his new chapter in March, taking up summer residence at the camp in May.

Though Horwitz had been aware for some time that the camp was looking to hire a new director, he at first did not bite.

“It wasn’t even a thought for me,” chuckled Horwitz, who had recently developed a business and was on hiatus after moving away from it.

“I was spending some time thinking about what I wanted to do,” mused Horwitz who had worked in the corporate for-profit world for a long time. He got to thinking that he should turn his attention to the

Jewish community and the not-for-profit sector, potential moves he says that aligned well with his values.

“There was a month where I was waking up every morning at like 2:00am with dreams of camp. And then I thought, okay, well, this is a sign,” Horwitz recalled.

He still has vivid memories of 16 or more years at the camp, beginning when he was seven years old and continuing into his 20s, and Horwitz describes his experiences as an older camper in Machon, LTP and CIT as formative.

“Those years were the most special in my life,” he told *AJNews*, adding that his most enduring friendships were formed during those years, including a life-long bond with immediate previous camp director Stacy Shaikin and other buddies including Calgarian Craig Lister and Edmontonian Howie Silverman, to name just a few.

“The hardest parts of our lives and the best parts of our lives all happened out here,” he said.

Horwitz, who earned a degree in psychology, springs from a family of entrepreneurs and quite naturally gravitated toward developing retail businesses. A bit of a renaissance man, he eventually went back to school, earned a graduate degree in traditional Chinese medicine and opened a specialty practice in acupuncture and Chinese medicine he says was the first in Alberta, if not Western Canada, devoted to women’s and children’s health.

Originally from Calgary, Horwitz has lived in Edmonton for some 30 years.

He refers to his return to the camp as “a real full circle moment,” an example of which is having the children of some of his previous camp buddies either attending as campers or working shoulder to shoulder with him on the camp staff.

“It’s so powerful, so meaningful,” he said.

Horwitz is the namesake of his late grandfather Cecil Horwitz, once a prominent community leader in Calgary. Cecil Horwitz the elder was a founder, and served as president of Calgary’s first

Conservative Synagogue, Beth Israel (which later amalgamated with the Shaarey Tzedec Synagogue to form Beth Tzedec Congregation). He also established Calgary’s first AZA chapter – forerunner of the B’nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO) – and was president of B’nai Brith District Six. His wife Ida was also active in congregational and community life.

Proud of the leadership roles various family members played in Jewish Alberta – including his great-grandparents, the Baltzans of Edmonton – Horwitz is clearly thrilled to be making his own mark at Camp BB Riback, which was generously supported by his grandfather Cecil, a close friend and fellow volunteer of camp co-founder and namesake Ted Riback.

Fast forward to 2026, and Cecil Horwitz Camp Director is enthusiastically working side by side with Adar Latak.

Hiring both a director and an associate director was a strategic move that bodes well for succession at the camp, says Board Chair Jessica Switzer, who characterized Horwitz and Latak as great partners with complementary skill sets.

Born in Israel and raised in Calgary since the age of seven, Latak will work with Horwitz year-round.

“It’s critical to our mission to develop a strong community at Camp BB, says Horwitz, who has a foothold in both Edmonton and Calgary and is raring to go when it comes to getting each community more involved in the camp and attracting more kids from those cities, and beyond, as both campers and staff.

He says that the camp leadership is building a three-year plan addressing both infrastructure and programming. They are laser focused on improving functionality and strengthening programming and leadership development.



Campers had a great time at Camp BB Riback this summer learning new skills and making new friends.



Camp Director Cecil Horwitz and Associate Director Adar Latak.

Best wishes
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Happy Rosh Hashanah

Healing from hate: The power of small conversations

By NCJWC – Edmonton Section

Across Canada, antisemitism has been harming people’s well-being. What difference can one conversation make?

One conversation can connect people who have felt isolated or frightened. It may even prompt those who have casually brushed off instances of antisemitism as “no big deal.” From the casual comment to the violent attacks, every moment of racial and religious violence adds to poor outcomes for health and well-being.

Seeing this, the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC) applied successfully for a grant from Heritage Canada to engage 3,000 people across the country in conversations about antisemitism. The small group conversations, happening regularly through 2029, are meant to surface antisemitism in ways that bring healing to those who experience it.

Says Linda Steinberg, president of the NCJWC, “by initiating small conversations in communities across the country and sharing our experiences of antisemitism as well as discussing the implications of hatred for Canadian society, we believe that we can contribute to greater mutual understanding.”

Edmonton’s first conversation takes place on

Wednesday, October 14 at Beth Israel Synagogue. Participants will hear from a national panel about the effects of antisemitism on individuals and communities. Storyteller Ashley Kravetsky will then share how hatred has affected her life before participants break into small group conversations.

Ashley, a Jewish Latina in Edmonton, is a strong advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights. She works with organizations and community groups to promote inclusion, raise funds, and support marginalized communities.

“I decided to share my story because I felt very alone. I didn’t really understand why I was being treated the way I was, and when I shared my story, I was met with similar stories from others, making mine feel less of a personal attack, and making it easier for me to understand that I was not the problem, rather, that a problem was occurring to the Jewish people in our country and beyond.”

Jodi Zabłudowski, president of NCJWC – Edmonton Section, agrees. “I am incredibly proud to see the Power of Small Conversations take place in Edmonton from a meaningful National initiative. At a time when antisemitism, hate, and division can feel overwhelming, we believe change can begin with something as simple and powerful as a conversation.

By bringing people together to listen, share personal stories and learn from one another, we can build understanding, strengthen our communities and create a safer, more compassionate Edmonton, Alberta, and Canada. I encourage everyone to take part, because every conversation has the power to make a positive difference.”

For Ashley, there is hope in participating. “Attending this event can help others find strength and tools to push through their difficult times, and to find new friends and support. Community building is so very important when one feels so very ostracized and alone.”

Special thanks go to the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation for their generous financial support of this event.

Tickets are open to everyone who is willing to have respectful and productive conversations.

The Power of Small Conversations takes place on Oct. 14, 2026, 5 – 7:30 p.m. at Beth Israel Synagogue, 131 Wolf Willow Road NW

A light, dairy kosher meal will be available, No cost.

Register at zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/power-of-small-conversations

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ASHLEY KRAVETSKY

Ashley is a Jewish Latina living in Edmonton and is a strong advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights. She will share her personal story of adversity following the tragedy of October 7.



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Heritage Festival *Cont. from page 8*

A video posted to social media, taken by a customer ordering food, shows what looks like a terrifying shadow puppet display of a man appearing to attempt to slash the tent and then be restrained.

Another video posted online shows the pavilion security members taking the man away.

As of press time, police have yet to lay charges against the man.

“Members of the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) who were working at Heritage Fest became aware of an incident at the Israeli Pavilion and are investigating,” said EPS Spokesperson Nancy Carlson.

The incident and protest raise questions about the organizers’ preparedness for such aggression and whether the protest violated the festival’s code of conduct, which prohibits “any behavior that creates a hostile or unwelcoming environment.”

“I believe the code of conduct was violated,” said Leavitt-Wright, who approached directors in the middle of the protest to tell them that.

“I feel that the atmosphere was one of harassment and intimidation. The intention was clear. They stated it before. They wanted to shut us down. This was not in keeping with the spirit of the festival.”

Leavitt-Wright knows the festival has a lot to deal with and appreciated that some festival directors had good intentions of keeping the protest from getting out of hand by standing in the buffer zone between protestors and the pavilion.

But as more protestors showed up they were overwhelmed and efforts to negotiate with the protestors, rather than having them removed, failed.

Emcee Kravetsky, who is also chair of the Pride committee of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and is involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy, was heartened by the support she saw during the protest.

Performers and Allies Defy Intimidation

She recounts how a group of Persian Canadians entered the Israeli tent, while she was working at a table with information about the Pride Festival in Tel Aviv and asked her for Israeli flags that they could wrap around themselves to act as buffers between the protestors and the pavilion.

“This Persian community was really adamant about creating this beautiful human chain with their flags as well as the Israel flag,” said Kravetsky.

“That was completely unexpected and really beautiful to see. The protestors were yelling ‘Free Palestine’ and these beautiful Persian people were yelling ‘From Hamas’ in retort. They were not going to let these protestors have their way.”

Neither were the Israel Pavilion performers from Shiru Hashir and Aviv dance groups, who continued to perform throughout the protest.

Despite some being yelled at by protestors accusing them of “committing genocide,” the dancers chose to perform.

“I looked at them and I said ‘if you don’t want to go on stage, it’s OK, we’ll shut this down but all of them went on, all of them danced beautifully with smiles on

Continued on page 25



Friends and allies offer support to the volunteers at the Israeli Pavilion. Photo by Bar Lavy, JFED

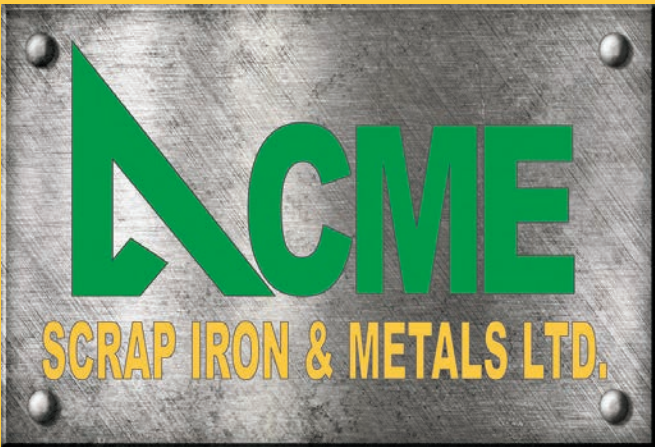
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Alexander Marcus finds common ground to help move initiatives forward

By Tammy Vineberg

One year after arriving in Edmonton as the Belzberg Professor in Jewish Studies at the University of Alberta, Alexander Marcus has become a familiar face across both campus and the local Jewish community.

Since moving to Edmonton with his wife, Rachel Colwell, and daughter, Lilah, Alexander has immersed himself in Jewish communal life while helping expand opportunities for learning, dialogue, and engagement.

"We're really happy here in Edmonton," he says. "We feel like it's just right for us."

That sense of belonging quickly translated into involvement.

In addition to teaching Jewish Studies courses at the University of Alberta, Alexander has delivered talks and adult education programs at local congregations, joined the Beth Shalom Synagogue board, where he chairs the ritual committee, and recently became a board member of Talmud Torah Society.

At Beth Shalom, one of his first initiatives was advocating for supervised childcare during Shabbat morning services, making participation easier for families with young children. At Talmud Torah, he hopes to help navigate conversations about the school's future. He described his role as helping connect different perspectives while focusing on what people share rather than what divides them.

"My interest is, obviously, security is important, but the way that we move forward as a community is to lower the temperature and remember that we're all working together," says Alexander.

The same philosophy shapes Alexander's work at the University of Alberta, where he has spent the past year rebuilding and expanding Jewish Studies.

Alexander says his courses have been "received extremely well," though increasing awareness remains

a challenge after several years without a dedicated Jewish Studies professor on campus. Many people simply do not realize the courses exist.

Once learners find their way into the classroom, meaningful conversations begin.

His courses explore Judaism, Jewish history, and contemporary issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In an environment where many students arrive carrying strong opinions and assumptions, Alexander focuses on helping participants engage thoughtfully with difficult subjects.

"What actually is required is to give students the time and the space to realize these things for themselves, to have these sort of light bulb moments," he says.

Those moments often come when students encounter historical context they had never considered before. Discussions about the Holocaust, Jewish communities from around the world, Zionism and the founding of the State of Israel frequently prompt participants to revisit assumptions and ask new questions.

"My goal is to help them see that they can actually have this conversation," says Alexander.

Beyond the classroom, Alexander has worked to strengthen Jewish life on campus. One of the year's most significant developments has been progressing toward establishing a dedicated Hillel Edmonton space at the University of Alberta. The effort required months of advocacy, persistence, and collaboration.



Rachel, Lilah and Alexander are having a positive impact in Edmonton.

opportunities for collaboration.

As a result, an informal interfaith student group has begun taking shape, bringing together young people interested in creating opportunities for dialogue and engagement across faith communities.

"I'd like to highlight that some of the reason I've made progress, where not a lot of progress has been made before, is by pairing everything I'm doing with interfaith work," he says.

He believes many minority communities share common interests and can accomplish more by working together.

"Our interests in Edmonton align," adds Alexander.

Looking ahead, Alexander is focused on continuing to build Jewish Studies at the University of Alberta. Plans include expanding course offerings, introducing additional instructors and laying the groundwork for a Jewish Studies minor. Donor support has already helped secure additional Jewish Studies instruction for years to come.

He is also incorporating community service-learning opportunities into future courses, creating partnerships with local organizations where academic study can intersect with real-world experience. Jewish Family Services is among the organizations already involved, with additional partnerships planned through Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and other groups across Edmonton.

For Alexander, these initiatives all point toward the same objective: creating opportunities for people to learn from one another, engage with different perspectives, and discover common ground.

Whether around a synagogue board table, in a university classroom or through interfaith partnerships, much of his first year in Edmonton has been shaped by that pursuit. And, in the process, he has already begun leaving a lasting mark on both the university and Edmonton's Jewish community.

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



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Shanah Tovah!

Ambassador urges Canadian Jews to stand firm amid frosty relations

By Mark Cooper, LJI Reporter

Israeli Ambassador to Canada Iddo Moed is urging Canadian Jews to stay and fight for their civil rights, amid feelings that Ottawa’s response to surging domestic antisemitism is not meaningful and reflects a diplomatic double standard toward Israel.

While Moed emphasizes that Israel will always welcome those who choose to immigrate, he maintains that mass departure is not the best path forward for Jews in the Diaspora.

“You hear Israeli government ministers saying to the people in Canada, ‘Just come here, forget about Canada.’ I don’t think that’s the solution,” said Moed in an interview on the sideline of events hosted by the Israeli Embassy at this year’s Calgary Stampede.

“Try to solve it from where you are. You can’t escape from the problem, you have to face it. This is a Canadian issue. In the free world we have to fight for our values as free people, for democracy. This is what this fight is about. It starts with the Jews but never ends with the Jews.”

That broader battle for democracy comes amid a profound freeze in bilateral relations, which Moed warns have plummeted to an all-time low.

While Ottawa initially offered brief empathy following the October 7 Hamas attacks on Southern Israel, the ambassador has faced a steady, deeply disappointing shift toward increasingly frosty Canadian foreign policy.

Most recently, the Prime Minister’s Office failed to respond directly to Moed’s letter outlining his concerns about what many Jewish organizations are calling a deeply one-sided “Nakba” exhibit at the publicly-funded Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

“I think where we are right now is a very bad place on the federal level,” he said.

“The government has little attention for Israel. What we find again and again, is strong criticism,

condemnations. I’ve been called in numerous times for issues, that by the way, were never substantiated.”

Among the issues Moed highlights is Canada’s continued freeze on armored vehicle exports to Israel—which he states are needed to protect first responders—while Ottawa considers strengthening defense trade ties with Turkey, a nation increasingly hostile to Israel.

“I would have expected Canada would take a different stance on these issues and understand that Israel is in the midst of its existential fight. This is something that will stay with Israel. We will remember that Canada made that choice when we were in that time of need.”

He enters his likely final year still hoping to rebuild trust and collaboration with the government, despite three years of routine scoldings from Canadian foreign ministers. This optimism persists despite what critics label as weak federal actions against violent attacks on Jewish institutions, Canada’s controversial recognition of a Palestinian state—which Moed termed a “reward” for Hamas—and his ongoing concerns over reported IRGC and Muslim Brotherhood members operating in the country.

“To be frank, I don’t think Prime Minister Carney has anything in particular against Israel but I am very disappointed in the fact that he does not take the time to reflect to the public the way he sees Israel’s role within the bilateral relations, because I do believe he sees the importance of Israel’s innovation, culture, business and technologies.

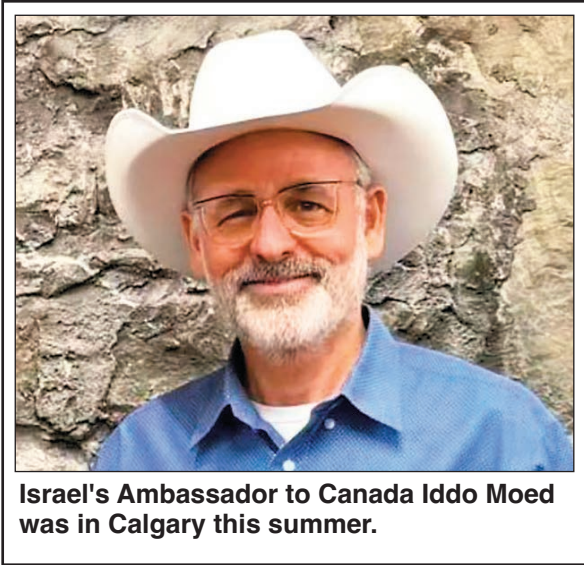
“I think that he of course, values very much the Jewish community’s contribution to Canada... But what is missing here is the component of Israel and that part of the relationship is sort of abandoned (by the government).”

Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, agrees with Moed that Canada’s Jewish community must continue to fight hard for its rights.

“We need to have a very strong Israel but Israel needs a strong Diaspora,” said Leavitt-Wright, who has spent countless hours in the trenches fighting for the Jewish community and for Israel during her more than five years as CEO.

Like many Jewish leaders around the world, she has been called upon to respond to a rising wave of anti-Israel sentiment—including remarks from Edmonton’s mayor and a city councillor—since the Oct. 7 attacks.

But she is not deterred. “There is no reason to pack it up and leave when we’ve been so integral to the development of this



Israel's Ambassador to Canada Iddo Moed was in Calgary this summer.

country, and have a rightful place here like every other Canadian.”

She is confident strong, vibrant Jewish communities will continue.

“We just have to fight for them a little bit harder.”

Calgary Jewish Federation CEO Rob Nagus also agrees Canada is worth fighting for.

“Canada has been a great home for our Jewish community in recent history and we have so much to fight for,” said Nagus, who with Leavitt-Wright and other organizations co-hosted about 700 guests at the annual *Spuds ‘n Suds* Stampede Breakfast in early July.

The event drew a robust turnout of Jewish allies from all walks of life and politicians from various parties. Notable attendees included Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, who stayed for an extended period, Alberta’s Official Opposition Leader Naheed Nenshi, and several MPs and city councillors.

“Though these are undeniably precarious times for Canadian Jewry, now is the time to stand firm, not walk away. We must be steadfast and united in championing our shared Jewish and Canadian values.”

Ambassador Moed is banking on advanced technological partnerships and a shared commitment to the values of a strong, inclusive, and moral democracy to help rebuild a once ironclad bilateral bond.

It is a strategic focus on productivity and commercialization that the ambassador believes aligns with the exact types of economic initiatives coveted by Prime Minister Carney.

That emphasis on economic cooperation over traditional political channels was recently on full display in Alberta as Moed spent nearly a week in Calgary during the Stampede, showcasing at events hosted by the embassy Israel’s high-tech companies in pioneering fields such as AI, cybersecurity, energy, agri-tech, cleantech, and more.

Along with economic and innovation partnerships, Moed is heartened by what he sees as a growing allyship between Jews and Canadians of other faiths, something he says is critical in the fight for Canadian values.

“I see that so many Christian supporters of Israel show up and pray for Israel,” said Moed. “I’m moved by that so often. They want to see Israel prosper and live in peace and security.

“We hear them in Israel. We feel their prayers and we are eternally grateful for that.”

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Building Edmonton
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Beit Halochem: Throwing the Cane

By David Wallach

Beit Halochem Canada's Calgary Gala Dinner, *Heroes Among Us*, takes place on Thursday September 17. It features Captains Eytan Fassberg-Yaffe and Israel Ben Shitrit, two defenders injured in Gaza during Swords of Iron.

Dinner attendees will meet and hear from these young men just now embarking on their life-long rehabilitation with Beit Halochem.

Illustrating the organization's significant role in the lives of Israel's disabled veterans and the importance of our collective support in their rehabilitation, I introduce you to Amir Meir, a longtime Beit Halochem member.

Amir was 20 years old when he was injured on October 25, 1992 inside Lebanon. I recently spoke with him and our condensed conversation follows:

David: How and where were you injured?

Amir: We were in a convoy travelling from the Israeli border to our post inside Lebanon. A roadside bomb planted by Hezbollah detonated as we drove past. Five soldiers were killed and I was declared dead. I had suffered a critical head injury. Once they realized I had a pulse, I was first treated by our troop's medic - a gynecologist! I was stabilized and airlifted, and, on the helicopter, Doctor Albertal saved my life by cutting a hole through my neck into my windpipe. I was transferred to Rambam hospital where I was rushed into surgery. I was in a coma for over a week and spent five months in hospital.

David: When did you join Beit Halochem?

Amir: When I was released from hospital I was living with Sharon, my girlfriend, now-wife, at her parent's house near Beit Halochem Tel Aviv. I started going to the Centre even before I had wounded veteran's status from the Ministry of Defence.

David: What was your experience as a new Beit Halochem member?

Amir: I was only 20 years old when I was injured. Soon after joining Beit Halochem, I met with an in-house doctor. I was using a cane, and he recommended that I join gym classes for those with amputated limbs. When I told him, "I'm not an amputee," he explained this would be the best gym for my injury; not everyone in the class is an amputee. I have less feelings on my right side. I can't do many of the things amputees can. The doctor was right. It was the best class for me. I also took jewellery classes and participated in many other activities.

Q: What is the social interaction between Beit Halochem members?

Amir: One of the most important places at Beit Halochem is the cafeteria! That is where you meet many people, including those who had been where I was. It is a safe place in which we exchange information about the opportunities we have thanks to Beit Halochem. You feel less vulnerable because everyone's in the same situation. Your injury doesn't matter. There is a willingness to help each other.

David: Based on your experience, how important is Beit Halochem's role in Israel's wounded veterans' rehabilitation?

Amir: Aside from the physical rehabilitation, the most important thing is the social aspect. We see people the same as us, dealing with a sudden change in life. We share the same gym and swimming pool. Our families go through similar struggles. On the physical side, no one judges how you look. You know you are safe.

A big part of healing is having our families with us. At the swimming pool, our kids see every injury imaginable. It's natural for them. Beit Halochem realizes families are dealing with injury no less than the wounded; this unexpected change in life has an impact on partners, kids, and parents.

David: How do you summarize Beith Halochem's importance?

Amir: It is my family's second home. In one word: AMAZING!

Amir has done much with his life since the day he was pronounced dead on a road in Lebanon. He and Sharon have three children, Rotem, Ophir, and Shaked. In May 2005, he led the Beit Halochem

Canada group delegation in a visit to Calgary and Vancouver. In May 2026, he completed the Riga Marathon in less than three hours. He is a Personal trainer, starts each day with a run, and owns his business Koshers4Life, (kosher=shape). He is a motivational speaker. The title of Amir's talk? "Throwing the Cane!"

At *Heroes Among Us*, Eytan and Israel, two young, injured men in the early days of rehabilitation, will speak of their own hopes and dreams for the future. Beit Halochem will do all it can to help them achieve their goals.

Please use the QR code to purchase Gala tickets, sponsor the evening, or donate to Beit Halochem Canada. You can also contact me at davidw@baithalochem.ca for further information. Thank you for supporting our commitment to rehabilitate, rebuild, and enhance the lives of Israelis disabled in the line of duty. *Am Israel Chai!*



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Alberta educators launch online courses to teach young people how to read classic Jewish books

By Zenith Wolfe, LJI Reporter

When Darren and Suzanne Alexander’s eldest daughter aged out of Jewish day schools and youth programming in Edmonton in the late 2010s, they didn’t know how to keep her cultural Jewish education going.

Now, as their youngest son reaches that same threshold, the pair of educators are launching Yid Lit Club to help teenagers and young adults understand classic Jewish literature.

Students enrolled in one of the club’s three courses for the 2026-27 academic year will read one Jewish text or graphic novel per month from the 1930s onward and use the book’s literary techniques to write their own stories. Students will eventually publish their work in a Yid Lit Club podcast and a magazine, called *Dor Almagor*, that they design as part of the course.

“It’s a bit like the way being part of a high school play is so powerful for some kids,” Suzanne says of working on these collaborative projects. “You’re working together to create something, so that sense of purpose is so big.”

The Alexanders have more than 45 years of combined experience in education. Darren, originally from Toronto, has taught remedial literacy programs for adults, and communications courses at several colleges and universities across Canada. Suzanne worked in alternative schools before becoming an adult writing educator.

The couple have also run online workshops in the past. Over the 2025-26 academic year, they started Nifty Lit Club as a pilot project to help general audiences read classic books from as far back as the 1880s. They had a total of 28 students across five shorter courses.

But the dream to create a curriculum around Jewish reading existed years before the pilot project. Nifty Lit Club helped them test the at-home assignment format, which involves no video calls or lectures, before they brought it to their own community.

Yid Lit Club students will do close readings of their books independently to discover “the building blocks of the text,” a practice that’s often found in university

literature courses, the couple says. Students will then work on creative writing assignments where they recreate the author’s style using their own worlds, characters and plots.

Suzanne says this format “demystifies the text” for students, which helps them appreciate it more. To Darren, it’s a format that can help youth regain higher-level reading skills as literacy rates drop for Canadians.

“I really do believe that this workshop approach is the way forward,” says Darren on improving literacy skills across the country.

Their three courses, especially *Shmues*, which is for 14- to 18-year-olds, will help youth learn to read advanced texts, Suzanne says. The syllabus includes works by Mordecai Richler, Chaim Potok and Dara Horn. Literacy rates have declined because teachers no longer help students bridge the gap between children’s books and adult literature, Suzanne says.

“It’s not that young people are not bright. They are very bright, and they are potentially just as capable at reading complex texts,” she says. “But they have not had the scaffolding that you need. You don’t go from reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* to Dickens.”

She adds that students will share their stories with peers as they progress through the workshops. This will help them connect with each other and their Jewish culture, which she says is crucial for adolescents who are still building their identities.

“The developmental task at that time for children is to become more independent, and to go outside of the family more,” Suzanne says. “Part of the impulse here is to provide a Jewish community experience and Jewish education that’s not explicitly religious in nature.”

Yid Lit Club’s course *Shvel* will give students aged 12 to 15 an “out of the box” extracurricular option by covering young adult books like Judy Blume’s *Are You There God? It’s Me*, Margaret and Karen Hesse’s *Letters from Rifka*.

Their last year-long course, *Schtick*, draws on the history of Jewish graphic novels to teach children of any artistic skill level about visual storytelling.



Yid Lit Club Educators Darren and Suzanne Alexander.

“I think it makes sense to try and teach young people to read those in an insightful, creative way. Looking at those texts not just as a quick, pleasant read, but look at them as ‘How is this author-illustrator using the structure of the page to tell this story, and what is gained by having it in pictures instead of just in texts?’” Suzanne says.

Tuition for a year of workshops is \$288. Each course has a maximum class size of 20 students.

But the couple says nobody is turned away from Yid Lit Club courses if they can’t afford tuition. They know enrolling children in extracurricular activities can be a difficult, expensive task for parents, and they want to increase access to literacy programs as much as possible.

“We really want to make sure that there’s no barriers,” Darren says. “It’s the beginning of something that’s going to be bigger down the road, and we really want to make sure that we’re giving back and making it available... Ultimately, in the end, it feels good to do that.”

This article was originally published in The Canadian Jewish News.



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שנה טובה

Wide variety of children's books bring the High Holidays to life

By Penny Schwartz

(JTA) — A bumper crop of new kids’ books about the High Holidays is hitting shelves in 2026, surprising close observers of Jewish children’s literature.

“It is unusual for multiple Sukkot books to be published in the same year, especially of consistently high quality. It’s very exciting,” said Heidi Rabinowitz, a Jewish librarian and host of the *Book of Life* podcast, which describes itself as “a podcast about Jewish kidlit (mostly).”

Rabinowitz noted with appreciation that one of the books was coming from a mainstream secular press, rather than from the smaller boutique presses that tend to release books about Jewish holidays.

She offered a possible explanation for the surging interest in the harvest holiday in particular: “Sukkot is family- and environmentally friendly, and I think that is a big part of its appeal.”

But the new books showcase a wide range of Jewish traditions and values, from apologizing for Yom Kippur to engaging with tashlich on Rosh Hashanah. They also feature communal celebrations, festive foods and, well, fake burps. Here’s what is new on shelves for the season:

“Rosh Hashanah: Square-Circle-Star!: A First Shapes Book”
Joy Nelkin Wieder; pictures by Aura Lewis
Abrams Appleseed; ages birth to 3

Preschoolers will enjoy finding shapes in their favorite Rosh Hashanah traditions with this large-format board book – square bites of honey cake, a round swirl of challah, the curves of the shofar and even apple slice semicircles.

“The Sweetest Rosh Hashanah: Festivals of the World”
Mara Bergman; illustrated by Aura Lewis
Candlewick Press; ages 4-8

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, Ellie looks forward to a visit from her relatives and her favorite cousin, Lara. But last year, Lara was bossy and borrowed Ellie’s cherished paint set and didn’t return it. This year, Ellie decides to hide all of her favorite toys. When Lara arrives with a hand made Rosh Hashanah card, the cousins apologize for their misdeeds and embrace. Mara Bergman’s sweet story is accompanied by Aura Lewis’s large, bright illustrations that include a multiracial family.

“Stella’s Special Recipe: A Rosh Hashanah Story”
Melissa Stoller; illustrated by Valerya Milovanova
Kar-Ben Publishing; ages 2-8

Stella is eager to help her mother prepare her family’s special stuffed cabbage for Rosh Hashanah — a well-worn recipe that includes extra touches from

both her grandmothers and her mother. She and her mom gather the fresh veggies from their garden — cabbage and tomatoes and eggs from their chickens. What can Stella add? Her creative idea is perfect for a sweet new year.

“Diving Deep on Rosh Hashanah: Reverse Tashlich for a Better World”
Rachelle Burk; illustrated by Craig Orback
Intergalactic Afikomen; ages 4-10

This children’s book illustrates a relatively new Jewish tradition that has gained wide traction in recent years: the reverse tashlich. It recounts the story of Ed Rosenthal, who — years after watching “The Underworld of Jacques Cousteau” and dreaming of one day seeing the wonders beneath the sea — snorkeled in the Red Sea after hiking in Israel. As a rabbi at a college in Florida, he created the “Scubi Jew Club” for his students to share his passion. At a service for tashlich, the Rosh Hashanah tradition in which Jews cast symbols of their sins into bodies of water, a student suggested instead clearing the water of trash to make a cleaner, better world for the start of the Jewish year. Now, synagogues across the country and world include a reverse tashlich in their High Holiday plans. The title comes from the team behind “The Space Torah,” an award-winning depiction of a Jewish astronaut’s journey with a miniature Torah.

“Awe! It’s Everywhere”
Chana Stiefel; illustrated by Susan Gal
Scholastic; ages 4-8

In Chana Stiefel’s simply worded, lavishly illustrated book, young readers can experience awe, in perfect time for the Days of Awe — another term for the period from the start of Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur. Awe can be small or miraculous, according to the book, which features mesmerizing illustrations including a double-page spread that unfolds to reveal the waterfalls of Yosemite National Park.

“I’m Sorry for the Bagel Burps: A Yom Kippur Apology”
Jacob Sager Weinstein; illustrated by Jason Kirschner
Rocky Pond Books; ages 5-8

In this story optimized for children with a penchant for the gross, a young boy and his older brother have a spat when the older one calls him a baby because he’s not old enough to fast on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In turn, during synagogue services, the young boy teases back. By story’s end, they apologized for their hurtful words and are back to their playful ribbing — all involving fake burps. Jason Kirschner’s cartoon-style illustrations match the levity of the moment.

כתיבה וחתימה טובה



“The Sukkah Hop”
Barbara Lerman-Golomb; illustrated by Talia Drigues
Green Bean Books; birth to 4

Kids will have a hoot bopping along with a multi-generational procession of families and friends as they visit each others’ sukkahs in this book that illustrates the popular community tradition of the sukkah hop. Barbara Lerman-Golomb’s simple, rhyming verse comes alive in Talia Drigues’ colorful illustrations.

“A Purr-Fect Sukkot”
Jenna Waldman; illustrated by Erica J. Chen
Apples & Honey Press; ages 3-7

The youngest kids will have fun along with a family of kittens who gather branches for the hut’s open roof, decorate their sukkah with paper chains, shake the lulav and enjoy a festive holiday meal.

“Build a Sukkah With Me”
Katie Moss; illustrated by Orit Magia
Green Bean Books; ages 4-8

Katie Moss creates a delightful sukkah-building story around a catchy, simple rhyming verse, using only three words that are easy for kids to repeat. Orit Magia’s cartoonish illustrations bring the pages to life.

“A House With No Door: A Sukkot Story”
Amy Fellner Dominy; illustrated by Rotem Teplow
Kar-Ben Publishing; ages 2-8

Join a young boy and his kitty as he explores the simple outdoor hut his family is building for Sukkot. In a stunning pairing of Amy Fellner Dominy’s sparsely worded verse and Rotem Teplow’s beautiful illustrations, young children join in the boy’s wondrous observations of his sukkah. A lovely connection with the meaning of the holiday.

“Our Spectacular Sukkah”
Sidura Ludwig; illustrated by Sophia Vincent Guy
Candlewick Press; ages 4-8

In Sidura Ludwig’s heartwarming story, illuminated by Sophia Vincent Guy’s sparkling illustrations, a young girl and her family build a seasonally decorated sukkah. Drama builds when a storm knocks down their beloved structure. Neighbors of all backgrounds come to the rescue and return the scattered sukkah parts in parade-like fashion. They all pitch in to rebuild the sukkah, which becomes a truly welcoming space for all.

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JFSE: Different lives, shared roots

By Danielle Dolgoy

We grew up together.

Not in the same family, and not with exactly the same experiences, but in the same Jewish community, same Talmud Torah class. Then life happened. We became adults, built very different lives, and recently reconnected as friends.

It turns out, we are still pretty different people.

One of us is a mission-driven nonprofit nerd who can turn almost any conversation into a discussion about strategy, systems, or, if given enough time, a spreadsheet. The other is a new realtor who loves people, loves to schmooze, and definitely isn't lacking in charisma.

Our families look different. Our careers look different. Our personalities definitely look different.

And yet, when we started talking about Jewish community, we kept finding common ground.

Maybe that's because there is no one way to be Jewish.

There is no single Jewish family, Jewish identity, Jewish personality, or Jewish experience. Some people find connection through synagogue. Others find it through friends, culture, volunteering, philanthropy, social services, or a Shabbat dinner around someone's kitchen table. Some are deeply involved in Jewish institutions. Others are still figuring out where, or whether, they fit.

All of those people are part of Jewish Edmonton.

But if there is no one way to be Jewish, there is also no one way to contribute to Jewish community.

So, what does our community actually need from us?

The answer is different for everyone. Some people are good at building relationships, identifying exactly what it is that someone else needs. Others organize, fundraise, advocate, volunteer, or build the systems that make sure people get the support they need. Some bring ideas. Some bring energy. Some bring expertise. And some have a particular knack for making the person who walked into a room alone feel like they belong.

A strong community needs all of it.

It also needs people who don't always see things the same way.

Finding common ground doesn't mean pretending

our differences don't exist. Some of our most interesting conversations have come from approaching the same question from completely different directions.

But we share some basic beliefs: Jewish community is worth investing in. People should have a place where they belong. We have responsibilities to one another. And the future of Jewish Edmonton depends on making room for more people to see themselves in it.

Maybe that means asking a little less whether people are participating in Jewish life in the "right" way, and a little more about what would help them feel connected.

And maybe it means asking not only, "What does this community have to offer me?" but also, "What do

I have to offer it?"

The answers will be different for everyone.

That's not a weakness. That's our sweet, little prairie community.

We may never approach it in quite the same way. One of us will probably keep making spreadsheets. The other will probably keep schmoozing.

But maybe we need both.

Because community can't run entirely on systems, and it can't run entirely on relationships.

It runs on people: different people, with different lives and different ways of showing up, finding common ground, and choosing to build something together.

Danielle Dolgoy is the Executive Director of Jewish Family Services Edmonton and a longtime advocate for building a stronger, more inclusive Jewish community. Josh Binnington is a realtor and community volunteer focused on building relationships and helping strengthen Jewish life in Edmonton.



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The JCC Maccabi Games combined athletics and Jewish community for their teen athletes

By Emma Paidra, The Canadian Jewish News

The 2026 JCC Maccabi Games, the biggest athletic event for Jewish youth in the world, took place in Toronto this month, with over 2,000 teenaged athletes aged 13-17 participating in Olympic-style sporting events.

Teens from 75 communities across North America, as well as delegations from Israel, Europe, and South America, not only competed on the field and in the pool, but they also were encouraged to participate in activities building Jewish community and pride, such as packing lunch bags for those in need and painting mezuzahs, as well as attending talks by former hostage Omer Wenkert and Israeli-American basketball player Tamir Goodman.

For many participants, being part of the Maccabi Games is a chance to compete in athletics on an international scale. However, the Games, which ran from Aug. 2-6, also offered an opportunity to participate in what, for many, will be the largest Jewish event of their year. “The medals may eventually be forgotten, but the confidence, friendships and sense of Jewish peoplehood these athletes take home will stay with them for a lifetime,” said Andrew Levy, CEO of the Schwartz/Reisman Centre and Prosserman JCC.

With teens coming from communities across the globe, athletes were exposed to all kinds of Jewish backgrounds and experiences. Violet, 14, a softball player from Calgary, is used to being one of the only Jewish students in her grade, making her much more hesitant to be open about her religious identity.

“I’ve never seen so many Jewish kids at once. It feels safe,” she said. “I can wear my Star of David necklace. At school, I tuck it under my shirt.”

Maya, 14, a volleyball player from Edmonton, attended a Jewish elementary school and is often surrounded by other Jewish teens. But much like Violet, being at the JCC Maccabi Games still felt like a step up in terms of exposure to Jewish community.

“It’s so cool to see there are many Jewish buildings and restaurants (in Toronto). It’s not like that in Alberta,” she said.

Between sporting events, athletes gathered in a space known as “The Hub” where they could post a message of hope on a replica Kotel Wall, or even wrap tefillin. If athletes needed a moment of relaxation, they could find a bean bag to lounge on at the “Tel Aviv Beach Lounge.” For those with a little more energy, foosball and table hockey stations awaited.

“It’s incredible to see two years of planning come to life,” said Perry Schwartz, vice-president of marketing for the Prosserman Jewish Community Centre. “Every morning, we see 2,000 athletes who go out to participate in their sports and come back with smiles on their faces and new friends. That’s what it’s all about.”

For athletes coming from outside of North America, being part of the Games represented the first time they had set foot in Canada. Rachel, 16, a volleyball player from Budapest, goes to a Jewish school in Hungary. Still, she found value in being part of a major Jewish sporting event.

“We don’t need to hide our Jewishness, we can just be here,” she said. During the Games, Rachel connected with Jewish youth she wasn’t necessarily expecting to. “When I saw that there were Jewish kids from Argentina, I was excited. I didn’t know they would be part of the Maccabia.”

Lea, 14, who is also from Budapest, enjoyed meeting Jewish teens from across the globe. “It’s very exciting to be here. We all have a similarity in that we are Jewish,” she said. “It warms my heart.”

The Games can provide an exciting opportunity not just for athletes, but also for their coaches. Neil Grunberg, who coaches the Toronto delegation girls hockey players, says the event offers a uniquely welcoming space for Jewish athletes.

“I think for a Jewish girl, a locker room can be a very overwhelming space. But here, you’re in a locker room where there are 16-17 girls who are like you, who see the world like you and who make you feel united,” said



Grunberg. “That’s a very special thing.”

For Miller, a 15-year-old basketball player from Toronto, playing sports and going to school with other Jewish teens is the norm. But being part of the Maccabi Games has been an eye-opener when it comes to the realities of other athletes who live in areas with smaller Jewish populations.

“There are a lot of kids from CHAT here,” said Miller, referring to the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto. “That shows me how many people are from where I live. It makes me realize that the Jewish community isn’t just this little bubble that I’m part of here in Toronto.”

Phoebe, 15, a track athlete from the Washington, D.C. -area, said the Games provided a chance to form relationships with other Jewish teens, and gain new experiences in her sport. “I’ve been trying out a lot of new track events and competing against people from different areas, which is super cool,” said Phoebe.

On top of racing in new events, participating in the Games allowed Phoebe to connect to her Jewish identity in a way she doesn’t get to do in her daily life. “I don’t go to shul often or go to a Jewish school, so it’s really nice to be in this environment,” she said. “I feel at ease.”

This article was originally published in the Canadian Jewish News.

Shana Tova

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Shiru HaShir Dancers mark 45 years in Edmonton

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Truly seasoned Edmontonians, with deep roots in the community might remember a very special performance at the Israeli Pavilion for Heritage Days in 1981. Menachem Begin of the Likud Party was the Prime Minister of Israel, Olivia Newton-John’s “Physical” was playing on the car radio assisted by a protruding metal antenna, and Maya Goldberg made Edmonton history! She had only been in the city for a few years, but the Israeli-born, kibbutz-raised, natural performer put some major moves in motion with the inaugural Shiru HaShir folk dance recital at Heritage Days. For those not old enough to remember, not to worry, Maya and her dancers have only gained in popularity and momentum, and the costumes have only become more colorful and vibrant, so even forty-five years after they first took to the stage, Shiru HaShir is still a dazzling and captivating sight to behold.

“I have been performing since I was a child,” explained Maya in a recent interview in her comfortable living room. “Look,” she pointed around her. “You see how all my furniture is against the wall, nothing in the middle of the room? That’s so people can dance.” At eighty-five-years-young, Maya has more spirit and energy than most people half her age. She never sits for long, getting up to make coffee, offer up Israeli confections, demonstrate a dance move or two, or to collect old photos to unleash the time-capsule of Shiru HaShir’s memories. She grew up on a kibbutz near Caesarea, and although she lives in Canada, Israel is always in her heart. “My father, he came from Latvia, and my first dance, that I can remember was the Kozachok,” she recalled with clarity. “But I’ve been dancing since my father would hold me as a baby and dance with me in his arms.”

When the Jewish Federation of Edmonton approached Maya in 1981 to choreograph and perform a series of Israeli folk dances to showcase the brightness and joy of Eretz Yisrael, she gracefully leapt at the opportunity. “Shavuot is my favorite holiday,” explained Maya. “These dances are about the earth, planting, harvesting, connecting with

nature,” with this she sprang up from her seat and demonstrated how particular dance moves were inspired by working the land. Another set of dances reflect the time-honoured rituals and traditions of Jewish teaching. “Some of the dance movements show how men pray in shul, and all part of a greater story.” -A third compilation of dance is devoted to the wonder and radiance of Israel itself. “I want to show people how amazing and beautiful Israel is, how alive and healthy, and I can do that through dance,” she emphasized.

The walls of Maya’s warm and welcoming home are an endless collage of artwork and dance photography. Moving from picture to picture, she noted: “I remember everyone, but only by their first name. How often do you use last names anymore? Everybody’s first names, I remember.” In other times Shiru HaShir performed for the community during holiday celebrations. Now the Jewish community, and greater Edmonton, look forward to their Heritage Days recital once a year. “It was all thanks to the volunteers,” Maya stated firmly. “Nothing here,” she gestured to a montage of dance shots, “Nothing would have happened without the volunteers and those who supported us. Nobody was getting anything out of this except for the fun of dancing.” Even now, as she works on repairing costumes and drumming up participation for the year to come, Maya is categorical that she can only do what she does because of the people around her.

“I want to thank all the Shiru HaShir dancers from 1981-2026,” added Maya. “Thanks to all who made a contribution with a donation, sewing the costumes, Carla Nolan z’l, Cynthia Blackman, Carla deYeager, Naomi Sharir, Erica Reshef for a beautiful painting for the stage, Hayim Hamburger who donated material for



Maya Goldberg's Shiru HaShir Dancers once again delighted the crowds at the Edmonton Heritage Festival. Photo by Bar Lavy, JFED.

costumes and others.”

“I just want people to dance and have fun,” she said. “We had some neighbours over for dinner, and my daughter was joking and saying that I wasn’t going to feed them till after everyone danced. It wasn’t really a joke; I wanted everyone to dance and have fun.” She is proud that in past years, three generations of her family have danced together representing Israeli pride. “You don’t have to be a good dancer, but you do need to have fun!” Maya has no intent to slow down, and she’s already thinking about next year. “The mud this year! The costumes were soaked.”

Maya and Shiru HaShir are always looking for new faces and an infusion of fresh energy for their group. “Nobody is too old, but we don’t take anyone younger than sixteen,” she explained. “Somebody came to me and said they couldn’t dance because they’re in their sixties,” she waved a hand with mocking dismissal. “I’m eighty-five so sixty seems young.” Those who may be new to Edmonton and are looking for some healthy cardio and kibbitzing should contact her at 780-233-4252. Maya is hesitant to take praise without pointing to her fellow dancers, volunteers, and supporters as the stars of the show, but it really is this firecracker of a woman who ignited Edmonton’s love of Israeli folk dance forty-five years ago.



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‘No Secret Monuments’ examines the way history is chronicled

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

On Sunday, August 23, Beth Israel Synagogue hosted the soft launch of *No Secret Monuments*, a documentary and labour of love by local Jewish documentarists Paula E. Kirman and Adam Bentley. The film examines the way history is being chronicled with monuments. The BI sanctuary filled quickly and transformed into a mini movie theatre. The subject matter was serious, but the atmosphere was supportive and excited.

Internationally renowned scholar Deborah Lipstadt noted in her 2020 work “Holocaust Denial” in *Modern Judaism*, that: “Generally speaking, people differentiate between facts and opinions – you can have your own opinions, but not your own facts” (47). Many Eastern European countries, especially those that once struggled for autonomy, suffocated behind the Iron Curtain, are now adjusting their national narratives to distance themselves from inconvenient, and unflattering, historical truths.

For countries that suffered under Nazi occupation, and under the heavy hand of the Soviet Union, redefining and establishing a narrative of their national identity has proven to be a challenging, and often problematic endeavor. As members of the European Union, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have managed to distance themselves from their Soviet pasts, but the veneration of those who fought to liberate their homelands from the Soviet Union has resulted in heroic status being bestowed upon historical figures whose hands are unclean.

Kirman and Bentley’s film chronicles a 2024 European voyage that most definitely takes a detour off the beaten path. The Baltic countries are known for their beautiful amber jewelry, picturesque Old Towns lined with cobblestones, and charming rural scenery, but in fact, it was these forests that troubled the team of filmmakers most of all. Kirman described them as mounds in the earth that covered mass graves. She said these remain public forests, where civilians walk for leisure, gather mushrooms, and children play. Beneath the surface, thousands upon thousands of human remains are all that is left of once vibrant Jewish civilizations.

The film assumes more of a vlogger’s perspective with Kirman speaking in the first-person as the two interrogate history in painful and necessary ways. The more personal tone helps to draw in viewers to the journey itself in a voyeuristically experiential way. Shots from the flight from Toronto to Frankfurt allow the audience a sense of departure, while the

interspersing of shots of countryside from the window of a moving vehicles provide for a feeling of perpetual movement to uncover larger truths.

Perhaps the most haunting scene was the pair’s visit to a museum in Lagedi, not far from the Estonian capital of Tallinn. The private museum is the current home of a problematic monument which was first unveiled in 2002 and decommissioned in 2004 resulting from the protestations of the public. The statue was originally located in Lihula as a tribute to Estonians who fought to free the country from Soviet aggression. Framed within the context of Estonian sovereignty, the monument might at first sound legitimate. Yet, the figure is emblazoned with Nazi medals and a full uniform complete with insignia. Kirman and Bentley traveled to this so-called museum, only to find that it was a private home boasting chilling war memorabilia, and a basement bunker full of guns, many of them used by the Nazis. “You can hear me in the film quietly telling Adam, ‘we’ve got to get out of here’ while we’re in that room full of weapons.” The two did not openly film the museum, but their surreptitious camera-work showed enough of the house of horrors to emphasize why current trends to reshape national narratives are harmful and dangerous. “He didn’t know we are Jews,” said Kirman with relief. “I was wearing a hoodie and zipped it up all the way so my Star of David didn’t show.”

The filmmakers chose not to name the museum operator, or his translator in the documentary, and are still haunted by the experience. This was one significantly valuable moment in the work where the lingering antisemitic undertones of some local inhabitants even today, showed through. Instead of the antisemitism being simply repackaged as nationalism, the preservation of such troubling memorabilia illustrated one Estonian man’s indifference to the deportation of Jews and mass genocide in an open and unapologetic way.

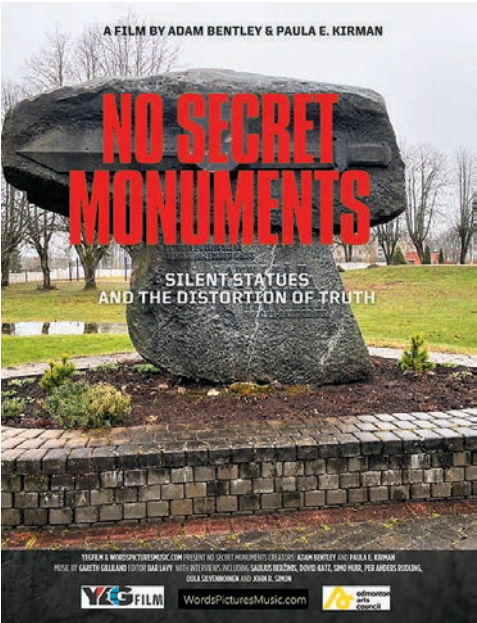
The team of filmmakers had originally been interested in three Finnish Jews who had fought

alongside the Nazis to thwart Soviet attempts for conquest. Leo Skurnik, Salomon Klass, and Dina Poljakoff all were awarded the Iron Cross for their valour and refused the honour outright. They were Jews who fought for Finland, but this also meant allying with the Nazis. This original project quickly evolved to include the Baltic countries too, despite Finland not having been part of the Soviet Union.

Kirman and Bentley, unearthed veiled truths across four counties, many in heavily trodden places. As they purposefully filmed prominent monuments, tourists snapped photos haphazardly, likely without an understanding of the layers of antisemitism immortalized before them. There are also some memorials to victims of the Holocaust, like the *Hands Begging for Mercy* tribute to eight Jewish refugees in Finland who were deported into the hands of the Nazis.

Lithuania’s capital, Vilnius, once dubbed ‘Jerusalem of the North’ no longer buzzes with the sounds and smells of flourishing Yiddishkeit. The country, to date, is recognized as having 924 Righteous Among the Nations, yet the most prolific rescue of the country’s Jews, was in Kaunas by a Japanese diplomat. Latvia records 138 Righteous, and Estonia 3. On the streets of their capitals now it will only be older generations that still speak Russian, and even those that do will only do so in hushed whispers. The national narratives paint the Soviet Union, and now the Russian Federation, as the enemy, dismissing their own participation in the Second World War. Aside from Lithuania, the Baltic countries still issue passports acknowledging identities, but denying citizenship to select minorities, mostly Russians, further demonstrating that ideologies of xenophobia are still alive and well in the name of national solidarity.

During the question-and-answer session following the screening of the film, the audience had no shortage of ideas and queries for Kirman and Bentley. Such enthusiasm, even for such an excruciating topic, truly demonstrates the need for larger discussions around how history is chronicled, and the additional narratives that can blur the divide between fact and fiction. Kirman and Bentley, who have previously examined the troubling antisemitic layers of some of Edmonton’s own monuments, hope to extend their research further, and travel to Ukraine once geopolitical conditions allow.



Shana Tova

from Na'amat Canada

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Heritage Festival

Cont. from page 13

their faces with such pride, with such triumph,” said Leavitt-Wright.

“It was such a feeling of triumphant joy. This is what defines us. We’re going to decide what defines us. We’re going to live this and I’m just so proud of them.”

Melodie Greyeyes, an Indigenous Minister and dancer, joined the Shiru Hashir dance group several years ago as an ally to the Jewish community that she honours.

She said it was important to dance at the festival in the face of hate.

“We say we dance our prayers and I really feel there’s a power spiritually when we dance and I had to come alongside the Jewish people, especially as someone Indigenous to the land,” said Greyeyes.

“It is always light that conquers over darkness. Instead of coming against them (the protestors) just go higher.

“They want you to be hooked into their hate but you don’t. You just go higher.”

Leavitt-Wright has asked for a meeting with Heritage Festival board about several issues and one of them will be about the interpretation and application of the code of conduct.

Heritage Festival organizers did not return a call or respond to an email from the *Alberta Jewish News* about whether they felt the code of conduct was violated by the protest groups and collaborators and whether lessons were learned that can be applied to festivals in the future.

Leavitt-Wright knows the festival has a difficult job picking the many battles that can come up at the event.



The Aviv Dancers perform at Edmonton Heritage Festival. Photos by Bar Lavy, JFED.

She does everything that she can to ensure they give festival organizers respect and collaboration as they understand the monumental task of putting on the long-standing event.

That’s why when the Israeli pavilion was asked by festival organizers to take down its festive triangular pennant flags used to decorate the pavilion in years past, they obliged in respect of a rule that flags can’t be flown and must only be flat.

Meanwhile social media posts show pennant flags flying in the Palestinian pavilion and other pavilions during the festival.

Leavitt-Wright herself apologized to festival organizers after a streaming service playlist of Israeli music unexpectedly queued a Hebrew song that some might find politically offensive.

The song played during a highly chaotic period, when Israeli pavilion organizers quickly decided to play Israeli music to drown out the noise and uplift visitors.

“It’s not a song we would have chosen or played at the best of times. It came on, a volunteer heard it, realized what it was and ran over to get it changed. It played for about 20 seconds.

“We have sent an apology to Heritage Festival about this song and about how we will ensure in the future that there are vetted playlists at the ready so something like this does not happen again.”

Pavilion Showcases Culture, Not Politics

She regrets the error as the Israel pavilion organizers work diligently to ensure that nothing is politicized about the pavilion, which this year had a marketplace, a drip irrigation display, a talk on Israeli technological innovation, a large backdrop of landscapes of Israel, religious and cultural displays and the Tel Aviv Pride table among other displays.

“Nothing was political, just general facts about the country and about the people.”

Food available included a mixed Israeli salad plate with pita, bagels with cream cheese and lox, Hamantaschen and other Jewish and Israeli delicacies.

Leavitt-Wright says she continues to process her emotions about the festival but will not be deterred from coming back year after year as the event is so important to the community.

She said it’s hard not to be angry at the situation and that people had to be put through the ordeal and tested like they were.

“But there’s great pride that so many people showed up as volunteers and felt this was so important. So many people came to us who were just passersby said ‘I can’t believe what is going on here and we stand with you, we support you.’”

“There’s all these emotions at once, but I believe we have been able to pull this forward. That’s what we do. That’s who we are as Jews. We are resilient. We know this has happened before and we don’t let others define us and we’ve just got to double down on that.

“So as much as we are certainly investing in security, awareness and safety in the community, we also need to double down and invest in our kids and making sure they know who they are and feel proud about it.”

Mark Cooper is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.



Aviv Dancers have a group huddle before performing at Edmonton Heritage Festival. Photo by Bar Lavy, JFED

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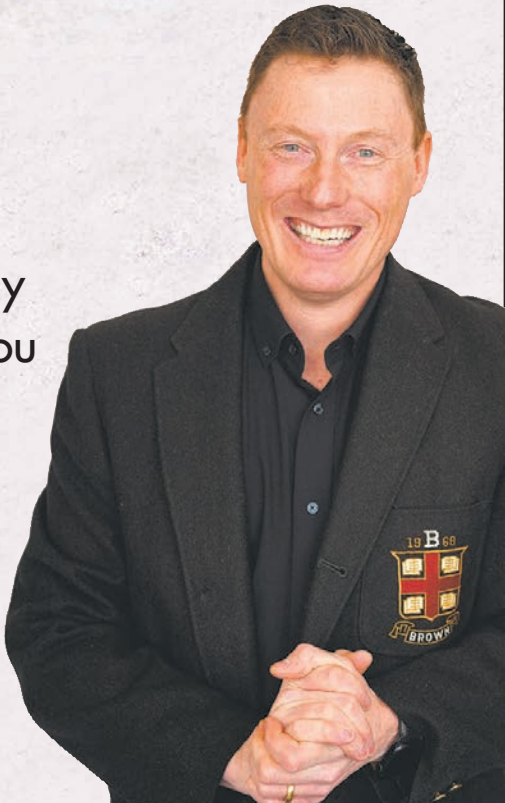


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Official opening of the Talmud Torah outdoor classroom



A special ribbon cutting ceremony was held on August 31 to open the new Talmud Torah Outdoor Learning and Leisure Space, in loving memory of TT alumni Nathan Reboh z"l.

Camp BB *Cont. from page 10*

“This is a gem,” says Horwitz of Camp BB Riback. “There is no other place that is like this, and so we need to do all we can to remain competitive with other camps across Canada.”

Adar Latak is ever aware of the intergenerational appeal of Camp BB.

“It’s really cool to work at a place where people have made everlasting memories. People in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, you ask them, they say I met my wife or I met my husband here,” said Latak. “It’s so cool to be part of a place where people have made memories that will last forever.”

Latak, 27, previously served as Cochavim counsellor and Machon counsellor and later worked on the operational side in camp maintenance. He went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in psychology at the University of Victoria.

Horwitz describes Latak as “a consistently positive and upbeat person” who has a “special calming way with people, especially kids.”

While the buck stops with Horwitz, and he does assign specific tasks to his Associate Director, Horwitz says that he and Latak have “naturally created paths of responsibility” in their first year, becoming a duo that works seamlessly together.

The fact that Latak is Israeli has made a big impact at the camp, Horwitz says, adding that he has connected well with staff and campers in general and, especially, with Israeli staff and campers, some of whom moved to Canada with their families following the October 7th Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel.

Notably, the camp has also attracted a few kids currently living in Israel because they have cousins or friends living in Calgary or Edmonton who attend Camp BB Riback.

In addition to his other responsibilities, Latak has assisted with programs relating to Israel, including Israel Days, a camp program supported by a generous grant from the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation.

Latak describes the connections he has made with campers as “magical.”

Horwitz says that much of the magic rests in sharing with campers the traditions and experiences that many of the Jewish staff experienced themselves under the leadership of a previous generation of counsellors who influenced their own lives in positive ways.

“It’s a beautiful thing,” he adds.

In July, first session was attended by 152 kids, down a little from the previous summer, said Horwitz, which he chalked up to the fact that he was hired so close to the beginning of the camp season.

“Parents want to have some reassurance of who [the camp director] is going to be and what their experience is,” he said, adding that some parents also had security concerns given a sharp rise in antisemitic acts throughout the Diaspora.

Security has been beefed up at the camp, including the installation of cameras and additional lighting and the hiring of a full-time security expert, thanks to support from the Canadian Jewish Security Network and a federal government grant from the Canada

Community Security Program (CCSP).

Outreach to community members about augmented security measures helped to increase registration for the summer of 2026, Horwitz said. One thing that makes the camp more secure is well-established relationships with bordering neighbours over 71 years...and counting, he added. “Our neighbours are our allies.”

Camper and parent feedback about both first session and second session have been overwhelmingly positive, says Jessica Switzer, despite a few bumps in the road, including the resignation of 14 inter-national staff members.

“We were disappointed that they made this choice,” says Switzer, adding that the rest of the staff really came together to help ensure that campers had a great experience.

By all accounts, they did. Toward the end of first session, the inevitable phone calls began, with parents wondering if their kids wanted to extend their time at the camp or, conversely, the camp contacting parents to say that their children hoped to stay.

This led to 78 kids in second session, well exceeding the minimum the camp strives for in a session that typically attracts fewer campers (making it ideal for kids who thrive in a more relaxed environment or need more support).

“Parents have mixed feelings because they want to be with their kids, but they also want their kids to be out somewhere experiencing the Jewish community in a closed environment,” Horwitz says.

“It’s safe and secure for them, gets them off their phones, and puts them in scenarios where they learn how to be and build resilience,” added Horwitz, whose 16-year-old son Arlo, a BB Riback veteran, is with him at the camp, working in operations and taking part in some camp programs with his peers.

Horwitz acknowledges that it is challenging to spend months away from his wife Erin, a busy horticulturalist who has visited the camp a couple of times.

Other camp directors agree that their work requires sacrifice on the part of their families. Horwitz did his due diligence, speaking to as many directors as possible – both at Jewish and non-Jewish camps – and really talking things through with his family before committing to Camp BB Riback.

“This is more than a job. It really is a calling, you know. For me, it’s not surprising, given my love for this place for so many years.”

Horwitz says he’s enjoyed his interactions with campers, parents and his staff, the latter of which peaked at 70 during the first session.

There are a couple of exciting developments at Camp BB, including new quarters for visiting camp doctors and the camp medic, medical supply storage and an examination room. The infirmary – a project initiated by former camp director Stacy Shaikin – was donated by Leonard and Faigel (OBM) Shapiro and named in loving memory of Aron and Ida Eichler, the camp’s inaugural directors.

The infirmary has been relocated closer to the Hadar where camp meals are served.

In addition to a full-time medic or nurse, there is a long-standing tradition of doctors volunteering their

time at the camp, including Teddy Braun, who has assisted the camp for years in person and via telemedicine. Other doctors supporting the camp include Alon Lazarovich, Rebeccah Rosenblum, and Erica Dance, always just a phone call away.

One camp improvement this year arose from an urge Horwitz felt the moment he made his return to Camp BB. He went searching for the earthen amphitheatre carved out of the hill overlooking the lake some 30 years ago. Though overgrown by vegetation, the steps remained. Thanks to a generous donation of wood from Homes by Avi, there is now comfortable seating and a podium that serves as the bimah for Shabbat services. Emblazoned on a delightful wooden sign in the shape of a stylized Magen David are the fitting words “Amphitheatre by Avi.”

Since the 2026 season opened, campers and staff have gathered at the site for Shabbat services with a million-dollar view overlooking the lake, another full-circle moment for Horwitz.

Other camp improvements include plumbing upgrades and new siding and rooves for previously existing buildings. Camp infrastructure still in need of improvement or replacement include the director’s house, the kitchen, the olam, and the cook’s house, Horwitz said, some of which may become part of the three-year plan as priorities are established. He also hopes to eventually add heating to camp buildings wherever possible.

Rental of camp facilities during the off-season would provide a significant revenue stream for the camp, explains Horwitz, who adds that there is no shortage of organizations in touch with the camp about potential rentals. One tenant over the past few years has been Camp Maple Leaf, which rents space at the end of the second BB Riback camp session.

On the programming side, camp staff have made it a priority to build upon the Jewish programming traditionally offered at the camp, bringing in leaders of community organizations that help campers to understand the breadth – and, sometimes, the challenges – of what it means to be Jewish.

“The current leadership of the community, and it has been this way for as long as I can remember, had something to do with this camp,” said Horwitz, adding that both he and the camp board are keen on providing increased opportunities for Jewish young adults to work in every area of camp operations and programming, gaining experience that will help them to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Tips for campers and staff on how to function beyond the Jewish community, especially when facing challenges such as antisemitism, are also important, especially given the current situation in the Middle East and the fallout in the Diaspora, Horwitz says.

While helping campers to navigate the “oys” facing Diaspora Jews, Camp BB Riback also focusses on the joys of Jewish heritage. In addition to Friday night and Saturday morning Shabbat services and Havdalah at the conclusion of the Sabbath, the camp is providing more ways for Jewish kids to further identify with their heritage, like making Challah covers and mezuzahs.

Continued on page 27

Memorial Tribute

A tribute to Joseph Sabbah z”l

By Eli Sabbah

In everlasting memory of my father, the Superhero, Joseph Sabbah. He came back for me. And every action he performed and every word he spoke in my lifetime was for my benefit. He sacrificed so much more than most parents and worked harder than most people. He was the kindest and most generous and honest man in the world.

Everything I do, every action I take, every thought I have, every belief I hope onto, and most of what I learned about the world we live in is from you. You encouraged me through the impossible. You believed in me regardless of how impossible the situation seemed. You wanted me to be happy more than you wanted you to be happy. You returned when you knew what you were getting yourself into. You always focused on doing the right thing, no matter what. I learned so much more from you and all your stories more than you ever realized.

You were my best friend in the world, and the best human the world has ever seen. There is nobody like you. I swear that for the rest of my life, I will keep your voice and lessons in my head, and I will choose to lead by your example.

You gave everything you had and expected nothing in return. You never ever gave up on any idea if you felt it was right. You had the ability to stand up against one hundred people and not buckle to pressure.

You are the reason I am who I am today. All the Torah I learned was a direct result of all your sacrifices, and most of all your selfless and unwavering love.

The biggest reason I believe everything is possible and nothing is impossible is because of you.

I almost ran away, and nobody would have blamed me if I did. I stayed and have everything I had to fight back because of your example. A large majority of my life was shaped by you directly.



Joseph and Eli Sabbah.

You were the best and number one father. You acted and lived very simply. There was no greater person in the world other than Joseph Sabbah. You went out of your way to give constantly, even when you knew what you gave wouldn't be reciprocated. You did good for the sake of doing good.

Rest in peace , Papa Joe the Warrior. I love you.

Endowment *Cont. from page 2*

criminal or anti-Semitic. Rather, it did so because it perceived that any continued association with an individual who had served in a regiment connected to the Nazis would adversely affect the University of Alberta. The House of Commons incident, and the public response that followed, made it clear that maintaining the Hunka Trust was not in the University's best interests," the decision stated.

Jewish organizations see the decision as a positive step in combatting antisemitism.

Steve Shafir is a past-president of Jewish Federation of Edmonton and the grandson of Holocaust survivors. He told The CJNI that he's upset the university was aware of Hunka's history in the Galicia Division when they accepted the endowment, but he finds the decision encouraging because it shows they have "recognized the errors of the past."

"I don't believe that they accepted the money in any way in which they condoned the antisemitism or the actions of the SS, or the Galicia unit," Shafir says. "This proves that there's more education that needs to be done so that people fully understand the atrocities committed by this unit."

In an Aug. 10 statement, University of Alberta provost and vice-president (academic) Dr. Verna Yiu said they have eight more endowments that support

Ukrainian studies named after people connected to the Galicia Division. The endowments total around \$1.1 million according to Yungwirth's decision.

Among them is an endowment named for Peter Savaryn who served as the chancellor of the University of Alberta in the 1980s. He died in 2017. In 2023, days after Hunka was recognized in the House, the Governor General's office expressed "deep regret" for awarding Savaryn the Order of Canada in 1987.

Yiu said the university worked with CIUS, the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and other organizations to address these endowments. The university decided not to "undertake the time- and cost-intensive application process" to dissolve or change the funds.

"Instead, together with our partners, we will expand and deepen scholarship and education about the Galicia Division and other complex and difficult aspects of twentieth-century history," she said in the statement. "The university has committed \$100,000 over the next three years to fund this important work."

The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) said in a press release that this investment doesn't "resolve the fundamental concern" that the university is continuing to honour members of the Waffen-SS.

"The university should now exercise its authority to dissolve its remaining endowments honouring individuals who served in the Waffen-SS," said Jaime

Kirzner-Roberts, senior director of policy and advocacy at FSWC, in the press release. "The university must act without delay to right this longstanding wrong and ensure all future naming and gifting practices reflect historical truth and respect the victims and survivors of the Holocaust."

Shafir says litigating each of the endowments would take years. He understands why people are advocating for name changes, but he says Jewish Federation of Edmonton believes erasing the endowments "isn't going to teach anybody anything."

"It's just going to cancel the individuals who these endowments are named after, and perhaps harm their families," Shafir says.

He says Jewish Federation of Edmonton doesn't know what steps the University of Alberta is taking yet, but they sent a request to work on solutions with the university.

Shafir says the university could create Holocaust education courses or invite scholars to classrooms to discuss the Shoah. It should also put notes next to the other endowment names to explain how they're linked to the Galicia Division.

Representatives from the FSWC or the University of Alberta were not available for comment.

This article was originally published in The Canadian Jewish News.

Camp BB *Cont. from page 26*

Horwitz describes the work of his current staff as both challenging and rewarding, giving a particular shout-out to the head staff and coordinators he says show "unwavering commitment to the community, to the camp, and to the kids." In addition to Horwitz and Latak, head staff during the summer of 2026 included Hannah Pertman, Ellie Vogel, Dana Wolle and Noam Rosenblum.

"It was a very good summer," says Camp Board Chair Jessica Switzer, adding, "It was exciting to have a new director and an associate director."

Both Horwitz and Switzer have been hearing happy noises from campers and parents, and the camp looks forward to more detailed responses on a parent survey, the first in many years.

"This was the start of a wonderful team," said Switzer of Horwitz and Latak. "It has been many years since they were at camp, and they are finding their footing. It was a great summer, and it will just get better from here on out."

"We want to build on this year's momentum and keep doing everything we did well while working on things we can improve on," Switzer added.

Plans are already in the works for 2027, and the camp community will be getting the details on a new and improved website that will be up and running around Rosh Hashanah. Parents will want to keep their eyes open for the early-bird discount.

Camp BB Riback is committed to ensuring that any kid who wishes to attend can do so. Bursaries provided by the Edmonton and Calgary Jewish communities go a long way to ensuring that families needing a helping hand can also give their children the summer of their lives, but, says Horwitz, the need for community support is growing.

While it is expensive to send kids to camp, generations of Jewish kids from Alberta, Saskatchewan and points well beyond will tell you that their camp BB experiences were, and remain, priceless. "It's so important for the kids to be one with nature, one with their friends," said Adar Latak, adding that the opportunity to connect with their Jewish identity is every bit as important.

"I can tell you what an impact my Jewish friends have had on me and how special that has been. That was all because of camp, and it's the same for these kids here," Latak said. "There's something that's so special that's shared between us, and having that here, in a place for ourselves where we can



also disconnect from the world and just have this time together...It only makes you a better version of yourself."

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter with Alberta Jewish News. .



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Everyone had a great summer at Camp Gan Israel!



From top to bottom, everyone had a great summer at Camp Gan Izzy, powered by Chabad of Edmonton.

Chabad’s Roving Rabbis visit Yukon and the Northwest Territories

The Roving Rabbis of Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, led by Rabbi Menachem and Rebbetzin Rochel Matusof, made history this summer with their first-ever journey to Canada’s Far North. While the program has traditionally focused on communities throughout Alberta, this year it expanded to include Yukon and the Northwest Territories, offering the first opportunity of its kind for many Jews living there.

This historic visit was months in the making. Rabbis Avremy Matusof of Calgary and Shloimy Stern of Brooklyn, both 23, worked closely with the leadership of the Jewish Cultural Society of Yukon and the Jewish Cultural Society of the Northwest Territories, coordinating efforts to connect with as many Jewish residents as possible through community gatherings and personal visits.

In the Yukon, the visit built upon a longstanding relationship between Rick Karp, President of the Jewish Cultural Society, and Rabbi Menachem Matusof. Over the years, Chabad of Alberta has supported the community by providing Shmura Matzah for Passover, Chanukah kits, the Alberta Jewish Calendar, which includes Whitehorse Shabbat candle-lighting times, as well as ongoing guidance, encouragement, and other Jewish resources.

In the Northwest Territories, where the Jewish Cultural Society is fostering a new chapter of Jewish communal life, Chabad is proud to support the community’s growth, strengthening Jewish identity and practice.

The impact of the Roving Rabbis was felt even before they arrived. In Yellowknife, news of the upcoming visit prompted additional Jewish residents to come forward and connect with their local Jewish community. In Whitehorse, people eagerly reached out to purchase Tefilin and Mezuzas, which the rabbis brought up north alongside a wide range of Jewish books and other resources.

“While showing them around Whitehorse, it was incredible to see how everyone we encountered reacted

so positively to their appearance,” said Rick Karp. “At Miles Canyon, as soon as we stepped out of the car, we heard someone call out, ‘Rabbis! Rabbis!’ It turned out to be a Jew visiting from Southern California who was delighted to see them. Later, while sitting in their hotel lobby, we met Ben, who was visiting from England for the 1,000-mile paddle race down the Yukon River. He put on Tefilin with us for the first time in his life – and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah right here in Whitehorse.”

“We’ve also encountered many friends and supporters who told us they pray for the Jewish people and stand with us,” said Rabbi Shloimy Stern.

In all, the Roving Rabbis distributed more than 60 Jewish packages for children and adults, including Shabbat candle kits, kosher treats, Mitzva crafts, and easy-to-use educational materials. Ten new Mezuzas were affixed to homes across Northern Alberta and Yukon, proudly displaying Jewish identity.

Many people purchased inspirational books and learned about Chabad of Alberta’s various adult education programs available virtually, as well as the Nigri Jewish Online School, which serves students around the world. One Jewish resident of Whitehorse put on Tefilin for the first time in his life using his newly purchased pair.

Tali, who recently moved from Toronto, was thrilled to spot the Roving Rabbis near her workplace. “Are you guys Chabad?” she asked as she ran over. “This is amazing! Tell whoever is responsible that we need more of this up here.”



Left to right: The Roving Rabbis Avremy Matusof and Shloimy Stern, were with Rick Karp in Whitehorse for several days before travelling on to Yellowknife.

“They’ve moved the community to a whole new place,” said Karp. “We’ve never had anything like this here before.”

The Roving Rabbis completed three weeks of travel and engagement across northwestern Canada during the month of July. They began their journey in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie before continuing to Whitehorse, followed by 4 busy days meeting Jewish residents in Yellowknife.

This summer also marks the 85th anniversary of the arrival of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in North America in 1941. The Roving Rabbis Program was among the first of the many outreach initiatives he established shortly thereafter, and has since grown into a worldwide effort that has touched millions of souls.

For more information about the Roving Rabbis in Alberta contact Chabad in Calgary at info@chabadalberta.org or in Edmonton at chabad@shaw.ca. Contact Jewish Cultural Society of Northwest Territories at nwtjewishculturalsociety@gmail.com.

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Michael Norris
Dealer Principal, Volvo Cars Edmonton

They came to Canada to build a life. Can they stay?

By Jana Zalmanowitz, LJI Reporter

Israeli newcomers who arrived in Canada following October 7 have built homes, careers and community in Alberta. For some, however, their future here remains uncertain.

If you were told today that your new Jewish neighbours might have to leave Canada, what would you say?

For some Israeli families who came to Canada following October 7, 2023, that possibility is becoming increasingly real.

They came on a temporary status. They found jobs, bought homes, enrolled their children in daycare and schools, made friends and became part of their local Jewish communities. Now, as their temporary permits approach expiry, they are trying to find a way to stay.

One of them is Calgary resident Idan Shmuel.

Idan arrived in Calgary with his wife and young daughter in March 2024. Their daughter was born in June 2022. Before she was even 18 months old, she had already experienced three security escalations in Israel that involved waking up in the middle of the night to rocket sirens and going to a shelter. The couple became increasingly concerned about raising her amid the threat of war, so they came to Canada looking for safety and a chance to build a future.

For four and a half months, they lived off their savings while waiting for work permits. Once they were able to work, they started their search for jobs.

The couple had done their homework before coming to Calgary. They spoke with an international consultant who assured them that their professional backgrounds as a software developer and IT manager could translate into opportunities for them in Calgary's technology sector.

Idan found a job after two weeks. His wife had a more difficult time finding steady employment but after 18 months had secured a position.

In the meantime, the family put down roots. They bought a house. Their daughter, has been attending the same daycare for the last two years. They have developed friendships in both the Israeli and the broader Jewish community.

For Idan this is no longer simply a place where his family came to work temporarily. It's home.

But this home comes with an expiry date.

The government of Canada introduced temporary

measures that allowed eligible Israeli nationals already in Canada to apply for open work permits. These were introduced in response to the conflict and have since expired for new applications. Families who received permits under the measures can remain only as long as their individual status allows. For Idan and his wife, this means their work permits will expire in 2029.

For families hoping to remain permanently, the path forward can be complicated. One route is through Canada's Express Entry system, which uses the Comprehensive Ranking System, or CRS, to rank candidates according to factors including age, education, language ability and Canadian work experience.

The system can feel like a game, but the stakes are not.

In March 2025, the federal government removed points for job offers from the CRS. Previously, qualifying job offers could add points, depending on the position. For experienced professionals, age can also become a significant disadvantage in a points-based system.

"Most of the people that have come, already have lots of experience in their field of work," Idan says. "But this experience comes hand in hand with age."

At 37, Idan is trying to improve his score wherever he can. "I never thought as a 37-year-old, with a career and young daughter I would be learning French," he says. He has spent the past eight months doing exactly that.

Idan is not giving up on the options currently available to him. At the same time, he is advocating for a broader solution for Israelis who have established lives in Canada but may not have a viable path to permanent residency.

The Immigration Collaboration Alliance Network (I-CAN) is a Toronto non-profit providing support to Israelis across Canada. When their findings suggested



Like many Israeli newcomers, Idan Shmuel and his family are looking for ways to make Alberta their permanent home.

a Canada-wide approach may not achieve results, Idan stepped up to be a local and provincial representative of I-CAN.

As part of this role, he has been meeting with Jewish organizations in Alberta, seeking a partner to help advocate for pathways that would allow Israeli newcomers to remain in Canada.

For Idan, the issue is about more than his own family. It is about the educated, experienced and hardworking Israelis who want to continue contributing to the communities they have become a part of.

When he thinks about what happens if he cannot find a path forward before his status expires, he struggles to imagine it.

"I can't even think about it," he says. "Our daughter has her life here."

That is where the question becomes a communal one.

Jewish communities across Canada have spent decades thinking about how to grow, sustain and strengthen Jewish life. Winnipeg offers one example.

For 25 years, GrowWinnipeg has helped Jewish newcomers settle in Manitoba by connecting them with Jewish organizations, employment opportunities, social networks and other supports. The program has welcomed more than 6,800 people since 2000.

The program was created in part to address a community facing decline and an aging population. Today, its work continues to bring newcomers into Jewish life in Winnipeg. Could Alberta do something similar?

Perhaps the opportunity here is slightly different. The community does not need to convince these people to come. They are already here.

They have jobs. They have homes. Their children have friends and routines. They are members of synagogues and Jewish organizations. They are building their lives in Alberta and they want to stay.

The question is whether the community can help make that possible.

How you can help

1. Make a connection.

Know an elected official, government decision-maker or immigration advocate? Help connect them with Israeli newcomers who are trying to find a pathway to remain in Canada.

2. Ask your Jewish organizations.

Ask local and national Jewish organizations whether they are advocating for Israeli newcomers facing the expiry of their temporary status, and what community members can do to support that advocacy.

3. Help someone put down roots.

A job connection, professional introduction, French-language conversation partner, community connection or simply a welcoming invitation can make a difference to a family building a life in Alberta.

The goal is not simply to welcome people when they arrive. It is to help those who have chosen to build their lives here have the opportunity to stay.

Wishing a Happy New Year to the entire community

**From
all of us at
Alberta Jewish News:**

*Deb Shatz, Dan Moser, Sandra Edwards,
Sandy Fayerman, Maxine Fischbein, Regan Lipes,
Jana Zalmanowitz and Mark Cooper.*



Mitzvah project: A good deed & community action

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

There is a time-honoured lament that when it comes to Bar Mitzvahs there is sometimes more bar than mitzvah. That is not the case for the Groberman family, who recently celebrated the Bar Mitzvah of son and brother Carmine at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue.

Carmine’s mitzvah project reveals a young man and family that prioritizes *maasei tovim*—good deeds— the kind that a community can really get behind.

For his mitzvah project, Carmine chose to help raise funds in support of out of country medical treatment for Calgary Jewish community member Tamara Polo, who suffered catastrophic spinal injuries three years ago.

Tamara’s application to the Out of Country Health Service Committee for coverage by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan was denied, as was her subsequent appeal, despite the fact that her condition could not be properly diagnosed and treated here at home due to a lack of vertical imaging capability and highly specialized neck surgeons.

Despite constant pain, Polo still summoned the strength to get to her children’s school from time to time, volunteering at The Calgary Jewish Academy on special occasions like the Chanukah Latke Lunch.

Carmine’s mother, Samantha Groberman, sometimes encountered Polo at CJA, but the women did not know each other beyond casual hellos. Samantha saw Tamara’s neck brace but was unaware



Carmine dedicated his project to helping community member Tamara Polo.

of her circum-stances and did not want to pry.

When they once again saw each other this past March, Samantha felt compelled to stop and ask Tamara a simple question: “How are you?”

Nothing could have prepared her for the answer she got.

Set to host a Rosh Hashanah gathering at her home in September 2023, Polo was out picking up a fruit platter. In the blink of an eye, her life was changed forever by a careless driver who blew through two stop signs, mowing her down in a Costco parking lot.

And suddenly, Polo, a wife and mother of three—who had enjoyed a great career with a multinational tech company— ended up bedridden for 20 hours a day, unable to stay upright because the pressure of her head on her unstable spine made her feel so ill.

For her part, Samantha Groberman recalls sleepless nights wondering what she could do to help Polo. Another thing that was on her mind was Carmine’s rapidly approaching Bar Mitzvah.

And then it dawned on her.

Samantha had a chat with Carmine, suggesting that he consider taking on a big Bar Mitzvah project, one that would make a difference in the life of a person living in his own community.

Moved by Tamara’s story, and supported by both his mother and father, Josh Groberman, Carmine personally solicited donations for Tamara’s GoFundMe page, which has a goal of \$300,000, a modest number given the mounting costs of Tamara’s health care and the associated travel costs, something no young family should have to bear.

After initially travelling to Spain to consult with specialists there, Tamara chose a surgeon a little closer to home, in New York City.

Interviewed last month, less than two weeks before his Bar Mitzvah, Carmine expressed a bit of trepidation in the lead-up to his big day, a sentiment that is not unusual in the evolution of a Bar Mitzvah. By all accounts, he knocked it out of the park to the delight of his family and a special guest...Tamara Polo.

Attendance at the simcha was a herculean feat for a



The Calgary-based Groberman Family helped with Carmine's Bar Mitzvah project. Photos by Paula Bitner, Limelight Photography

woman recovering, since early June, from a complex 10-level spinal fusion from her skull to the middle of her back to stabilize her spine.

Some days she wakes up wondering if she’s going to make it.

“You don’t bounce back from what I’ve had,” said Tamara “It’s shocking to think how quickly a life can change.”

She says she is uplifted by the outpouring of support by her community, and there is a special place in her heart for Carmine who raised over \$17 thousand on her behalf.

“He’s got a very bright future,” says Tamara, who adds that she’s glad Carmine is “learning about advocacy and not accepting the status quo.”

“Those are qualities we all need these days,” Polo added.

Carmine has learned some other great skills along the way. With a little help from his dad, he made personal pitches to potential donors at Barrel Oil Corp, Josh Groberman’s company, which generously matched their donations.

“Carmine was emotionally bothered by the fact that he had done all of this and it felt like a drop in the bucket,” added Samantha, who is outraged that families like Tamara’s must incur enormous debt to get medical care for a loved one when it is not available here.

“I sat up all night thinking about what we could do that would make an impact and make Carmine feel that he’s done something,” added Samantha, who suggested to Carmine that they launch a petition urging the Alberta government to make changes to out of country health care policies they themselves

Continued on page 33

Flaws and Facets

By Rabbi Leonard Cohen



Then an angel of G-d called to him from heaven: “Avraham! Avraham!” And he answered, “Here I am.” And the angel said: ‘Do not send your hand forth against the boy, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you are a God-fearing man, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’ (Bereshit / Genesis 22:11-12)

The Kotzker Rebbe asked: Why did the angel call to Avraham twice to command him to stop at the Binding of Isaac? Wouldn’t Avraham have ceased and sighed a sigh of relief once he heard G-d’s message, “Do not send your hand forth against the boy”? Why did the angel add, “and do nothing to him”?

Astonishingly, Rashi claims that Avraham did not stop in response to “Do not send your hand forth.” In fact, Avraham asked for permission to at least wound Yitzchak! His fierce commitment to Hashem risked leading him to insist on violent action. In response, G-d added “do no *me’umah* to him,” where *me’umah* is a play on the word *mum*, or blemish – in other words, cause him no injury whatsoever.

Why would Avraham become sadistic, rather than celebrate the relief from causing his son pain?

The most difficult temptations are those which convince a person that their actions are righteous. I might be convinced that my inclinations are truly selfless, and experience rousing passion to act on them. In fact, when evidence is presented to challenge or counter my beliefs, I might stubbornly increase my actions and commitment to those initial beliefs, in other words, ‘doubling down.’ In my passion, I can readily lose sight of the fact that the *Yetzer Hara* – the wicked inner voice – might be driving me.

I might even go so far as to believe that it is the very absurdity and intensity of my action which proves I am right. How better to show commitment to G-d than to go to extremes of observance? In so doing, I might convince myself that I am performing G-d’s will rather than my own.

There is a risk in not acknowledging our own humanity and imperfection. High Holidays are a reminder of that.

The period between the month of Elul (preceding Rosh Hashanah) up until Shemini Atzeret is a time of *cheshbon nefesh* – “soul accounting,” or perhaps more accurately, “soul auditing.” Just as a business is challenged to examine its books in order to evaluate its financial performance critically, so too are we demanded to examine our deeds and thinking thoroughly. We are challenged to seek personal forgiveness from people we have wronged. This requires not only humbling ourselves but listening to others’ feedback.

Hashem did not create us as perfect beings. Just like a diamond, every Jew has their own particular flaws and facets which makes them unique. In acknowledging that imperfection, we invite the possibility of change and self-improvement. It took me many years until I could acknowledge shortcomings



In 2026, Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on Friday, Sept. 11 and ends at sundown on Sunday, Sept. 13.

without defensiveness, and I continue to learn how to do so better. It is my profound hope, in a time of continued political and social polarization, that we as a Jewish community continue to listen to one another – and perhaps more importantly, allow for possibilities of change and self-improvement.

May the coming year be one of positive change for each of us as individuals and for all of us together. Shana Tova u’Metuka!

Rabbi Leonard Cohen is Rabbi at Congregation Kehilat Shalom in Calgary.

Rosh Hashanah One Bowl Honey Cake

By Sheri Silver

(The Noshers) - Honey cake is a High Holiday staple, and it doesn't get more classic than this delicious version. And the good news is that it is a true one-bowl recipe.

Honey cake is a traditional dessert served for the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. Honey symbolizes the hope for a sweet year to come, and plays a starring role in this cake. While often maligned as dry, dense or even old-fashioned, I think you'll agree that this recipe puts to rest any negative associations. Yes, it is a brown cake, but this easy honey cake bakes up tender and moist, with a beautiful, burnished bronze color that will be a hit on your holiday table. Naturally dairy-free, the cake gets its tender crumb from the eggs and oil, while the addition of brewed coffee offsets the sweetness.

I've deployed one of my favorite tips for a clean release from the pan that also yields a beautiful finish, by using granulated sugar to replace the flour typically used to prep the pan. The cake releases perfectly, without that chalkiness that flour leaves. Instead, the sugar gives a slightly jeweled effect, and a subtle crunch – no frosting needed.

That said, if you are Team More is More and want to top this cake, a simple glaze made from confectioner's sugar and the zest and juice from a large orange or lemon works beautifully. You'll need about 2 cups of confectioner's sugar, and can add water (a bit at a time) if needed to create a pourable consistency. Drizzle over the cake and let set at room temperature before serving.

This honey cake stores beautifully, making it a

perfect treat for days to follow. To store the cake, wrap in plastic wrap and keep at room temperature for up to one week. Its sturdy nature makes it a no-fuss travel companion (if you're going to glaze it, wait till you get to your destination for the prettiest finish). Serve for breakfast, with a cup of tea or for a delicious afternoon snack.

This one-bowl honey cake is an easy Rosh Hashanah dessert that bakes up tender and moist. It keeps for up to a week and travels well, making it a perfect High Holiday gift. With a beautiful bronze, sugar-speckled exterior, this simple honey cake doesn't even need frosting!

Total Time: 1 hour 5 minutes
Yield: Serves 8-10

Ingredients

nonstick cooking spray
1 cup granulated sugar + extra for prepping the pan,
3 large eggs, at room temperature, 1 cup honey,
1 cup vegetable oil, ¾ cup strong brewed coffee,
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour, 2 tsp baking powder,
½ tsp baking soda, ½ tsp kosher salt, 2 tsp ground cinnamon, ½ tsp ground cloves

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray a Bundt or tube pan with nonstick cooking spray. If using a tube pan, cut a parchment circle to fit the bottom and spray again. Pour in a few tablespoons of sugar and tap the pan to coat, adding more sugar if needed.

Using the whisk attachment of an electric mixer, whisk the eggs til combined. Add 1 cup of the sugar, the honey, vegetable oil and coffee and whisk again till



Classic honey cake. Photo by Sheri Silver

well combined.

Add the remaining ingredients and whisk till smooth and well blended. Pour the batter into your prepared pan and bake the cake till a tester comes out clean, about 50 minutes.

Cool the cake in the pan on a wire rack for 20 minutes. Place another rack on top of the pan and carefully turn over to release the cake. Remove and discard the parchment paper, then re-invert the cake so it is upright. Cool completely before serving.

To store the cake, wrap in plastic wrap and keep at room temperature for up to one week.

This article was originally published in myjewishlearning.com.the-noshers.

Thank you, God, for not yet accepting me as I am

By Rabbi Mark Glickman

“Mom and Dad, why do you keep *pushing* me? Why can't you just accept me for who I am?”

My guess is that, if you have ever parented an adolescent, you're heard that plaintive line repeatedly, or perhaps others expressing the same sentiment. That's because most teenagers yearn for affirmation – for acceptance of who they are, even if they haven't quite figured it out for themselves yet.

To be sure, there's a part of all of us – teenagers or not – that wants others to accept us. It's nice to receive kudos; it enjoyable to get pats on the back; it feels great when friends and family compliment us for who we are.

That's why I find it a little weird that two of the most “popular” Jewish holidays of all – the sacred occasions that draw more Jews to synagogues than any others, and indeed the days that many refer to by the Christian-influenced moniker “High Holidays,” are days that focus on the very *opposite* of such affirmations.

The major focus of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – more appropriately called “The Days of Awe” (after the Hebrew *Yamim Nora'im*) isn't that of telling us



Rabbi Mark Glickman

how wonderful we are. Instead, these days call us to look at our sins, our transgressions, and our shortcomings. Collectively, we say “*Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu*...we have been guilty, we have betrayed, we have robbed.” In Hebrew the list of sins is alphabetical, with the traditional liturgy having us recite an A-to-Z of the many ways we've failed to reach our potential during the previous year.

And even though those transgressions are recited as a community, Jewish law calls upon each of us to use this time on the Jewish calendar to take an accounting of our souls, looking at ourselves closely in the moral mirror, and taking stock of what we see, warts and all.

We may be striving for affirmation, but if we hope to find it in the Jewish practices of this time of year, it won't be easy.

Indeed, while there are areas of Jewish life that affirm the beauty and majesty of each of us as creations of God, the central message of these days is that we're not good enough. Instead, these days call upon us to look at our faults and fix them – to engage in the sacred work of teshuvah, repentance, and to become better than we are right now.

It's as if God were looking at each of us and saying “Accept you who you *are*? What, do you think I'm nuts? Just look at you. You gossip; you're greedy, you're not as attentive to your friends and family as you should be. And I'm just getting started! Let me remind you of some of the many other ways you fall short...I don't accept you for who you are – I made you so you can be better than this, and that's what I want you to be!”

These days, in other words, call us to engage in nothing less than what Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik

referred to as “a re-creation of the self.” They insist that we not rest on our laurels and be satisfied with our selves as they are now, but that we constantly do the hard work we need to do in order to improve.

That might come across as demeaning – as a “dis” on each and every one of us as human beings – but I believe it's just the opposite. Remember, God wouldn't command us to do something impossible, and insisting that we improve ourselves therefore conveys an implicit message that we can improve. Yes, we are the way we are, flaws and all, but the message of these Awesome Days is that we don't need to remain that way. In fact, one of the greatest things about being a human being is that we're not stuck with the selves we have now, but that we can constantly be creating new selves – new and *improved* selves – and achieve great things in the process. We can become kinder, more compassionate, stronger fighters for justice in a world that so desperately needs it. And we can improve in countless other ways, as well.

We might not be perfect yet, our tradition teaches us, but we can grow toward perfection each and every day. What greater compliment is there than *that*?

“Why don't I accept you as you are?” God says. “Because I know you can do better.”

Perhaps the greatest Jewish response of all would be to thank God for the vote of confidence, and then to proceed with the sacred act of repentance, and thus traverse the path toward human greatness.

Shanah Tovah.

Rabbi Mark Glickman is Rabbi at Temple B'nai Tikvah in Calgary.

Chai There!



an ajn podcast

Shana Tova
from the team at
Chai There! the podcast:
Dan Moser, David Sklar, Addy Borhaven,
Shayna Cairns and Deb Shatz

Mitzvah *Cont. from page 31*

acknowledge to be out of date.

While Samantha had to be the public face of the petition, she credits Carmine with doing much of the legwork.

Their Change.org petition, which has so far garnered some 1,700 signatures, calls on Premier Danielle Smith, Health Minister Justin Wright, and Alberta Health leadership “...to urgently review and improve the Out of Country Health Services Committee’s processes in light of Polo’s case and that of two-year-old Myla Lieskovsky, who has also been denied coverage.

Myla suffers from a rare vascular condition called a vascular birthmark, or CM-AVM, which has disfigured her face causing further health complications.

The petition asks that Tamara and Myla’s cases be reviewed “...with compassion and reconsideration where possible” and that the government ensure “...a clear, fair, and accessible pathway for patients requiring out-of-country care in exceptional circumstances,” and “...review and modernize the OCHSC framework to reflect modern medical realities and complex patient needs.”

“We believe no Albertan should be left without a medically reasonable pathway to care when specialist consensus supports treatment that is not available in Canada,” the petition says.

“If the government will not fund out of country health care that could cure a two-year-old with treatment that is not available in Alberta, and if they are denying to cover the treatment of a mother in her 40s with three children, who couldn’t even be diagnosed in Alberta, well, then who can be approved,” asks Samantha Groberman.

In an online story posted on May 9, 2026, Meghan Cobb reported that *Global News* received a statement from the province acknowledging that the policies regarding coverage for out of country health care are nearly 20 years old.

“...Since then, patient needs have grown more complex and medical treatments and technologies have improved,” the statement went on to say.

The government has promised to review their policies, but the fear is that change may come too late to help people like Tamara and Myla.

If so, Tamara says she hopes the extreme nature of their cases will “help the next guy.”

In the meantime, Tamara takes comfort in an outpouring of support both at home and well beyond Calgary, where she was born and raised.

She told *AJNews* that following her first surgery—an occipitocervical fusion (C0-C2)—it became evident that the damage to her spine was far greater than had, at first, been thought. The more extensive spinal reconstruction she underwent this past June, necessitated the addition of a second surgeon to her medical team.

In an act of loving kindness, that doctor operated pro bono, knowing that Tamara did not have coverage.

From the hands of that angel of mercy to those of others, Tamara was cared for by the Hatzalah Air Response Team, part of an extensive network of similarly named Jewish non-profits that, in addition to other medical services, provides emergency medical aid transport all over the world for qualifying individuals in urgent need of medical support, regardless of their religion and at no cost to them.

Tamara is also grateful to the anonymous Toronto philanthropist who made a generous donation via Chai Lifeline Canada to cover the cost of the post-surgery flight home in a medically equipped plane.

Carmine’s B’nai Mitzvah classmates at Beth Tzedec have, like him, been engaged in tzedakah projects supporting a variety of causes, such as donating to Magen David Adom; raising funds and collecting used sports equipment for kids in need; and spending time with residents living in seniors’ homes.

“I’m so proud of Carmine,” said Samantha Groberman, adding, “He has great friends. They’re all really, really good kids.”

Fittingly, a *Global News* story about Carmine’s efforts on behalf of Tamara and Myla aired the same day he celebrated his 13th birthday. Gathered in the Groberman family’s living room, Carmine and his friends and family, which includes younger brothers Charlie and Chandler, enjoyed a watch party as part of the birthday festivities.

Carmine says that in the lead-up to his Bar Mitzvah, Rabbi Cantor Russell Jayne shared an interesting observation as they discussed an important mitzvah referred to in his Torah portion, Ki Teitzei: *If you see your fellow’s ass or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it; you must help him raise it.* (Deuteronomy 22:4.)

“The Rabbi explained that...if we see someone struggling, then we have to help,” Carmine told *AJNews*.

Rabbi Jayne says that as he and Carmine were going over the Torah portion, Carmine became very focussed “...on this idea that Jewish people don’t ignore problems in the world, whether they occur within their own community or society at large.”

“I love it when my students can take the Torah and actually see it in universalistic terms,” Rabbi Jayne added.

Tamara Polo says that during her excruciating



Carmine's Mitzvah Project is to help raise funds for Tamara Polo's surgery and recovery fund and to raise awareness about unfair medical funding procedures in Alberta.

journey she has “experienced the worst and the best of humanity.”

“It’s people like Carmine and Samantha who have lifted me up,” adds Tamara. “They took an interest in what I was going through and then made the decision not to turn a blind eye, to actually do something.”

Accepting help has not been easy for Tamara and her family, who are more accustomed to giving than taking, helping others in their community, their hockey community, and their neighbourhood.

Tamara says she could never have imagined being in a position where she would have to rely on others and turn to crowdfunding.

“But what are you going to do,” asks Tamara. “I cannot look at my children and say that they will not have a mother because of money.”

There is probably not a single person who cannot imagine themselves or a loved one, God forbid, in the position that Tamara Polo now finds herself. On September 14, she and her family, including husband Richard Brunner and children Nathan (16), Sydney (11), and Jordan (9), will mark three years since the disaster that altered their lives forever.

By then, the Jewish community will have entered the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The High Holidays liturgy tells us that in addition to engaging in prayer and repentance, we can lessen God’s decree through acts of kindness, charity, and justice.

We can tip the scale, and it is a cause for both celebration and emulation that a Bar Mitzvah—Carmine Groberman—has helped to show us the way.

To donate to the GoFundMe page in support of Tamara Polo, go to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/hope-for-tamara-surgery-and-recovery-fund>

To sign Carmine and Samantha’s GoFundMe petition, go to <https://c.org/qDbw4Lz9Kn>



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שנה טובה

Shana Tova!

Wishing you a happy and sweet new year!





MICHAEL COOPER MP
ST. ALBERT—STURGEON RIVER
michael.cooper@parl.gc.ca
michaelcoopermp.ca
780-459-0809



DANE LLOYD MP
PARKLAND
dane.lloyd@parl.gc.ca
danelloyd.ca
780-823-2050



BILLY MORIN MP
EDMONTON NORTHWEST
billy.morin@parl.gc.ca
780-634-7499

This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah



From Zoo to U and Rock the Spectrum to yoga, the Valley Zoo, children’s theatre, and so much more, the Talmud Torah Early Learning and Out of School program students have enjoyed an enriching summer filled with new experiences, discovery, and plenty of smiles. The summer months are over and staff and students at TT are eagerly heading back to school. For information about Talmud Torah Society contact Natalie at information@talmudtorahsociety.com or call 780-481-3377.

This Sephardi Simanim Soup is steeped in symbolism

By Sharon Gomberts and Rachel Shieff

(The Noshers) - Every Rosh Hashanah, my mother Rica made a special and delicious simanim soup, which contained all the “simanim” (signs), symbolic vegetables that are used in the Sephardic Rosh Hashanah seder. Rooted in Kabbalah and with a clever play on the Aramaic names of the vegetables, at the seder, Sephardim say blessings over these vegetables, which include butternut squash, zucchini and Swiss chard.

My mother and father were born in Larache, an ancient port city founded by the Phoenicians on the northwestern coast of Morocco. Providentially located where the Loukkos River meets the Atlantic Ocean, Larache is the most important city in the Tetouan-Tanger region of Morocco. Larache is also where my ancestors found refuge after the Expulsion from Spain in 1492.

My paternal grandfather Salomon Emquies was the proprietor of a spice shop (so appropriate that Sharon and I are the Sephardic Spice Girls). My maternal grandfather Moshe Bensabat was the chief Rabbi of Larache. He was the mohel, the shochet and conducted all the weddings.

One of the last wedding ceremonies that he performed before he made aliyah (emigrated to Israel) was that of my parents. Soon after, my parents moved to Casablanca, where my two older brothers and I were born.

When we emigrated to Los Angeles, my parents brought the jewelry that both sets of grandparents gifted my mother. They brought the menorah they had received as a wedding gift from her parents. And they brought with them the rich religious traditions of their childhood homes.

A treasured Spanish Moroccan custom, this recipe has been handed down over generations. This soup includes apples for a “sweet year,” as well as beef cheek meat or beef neck bones, which symbolize the ram’s head and the fervent wish that we should be “the head and not the tail.” In making this soup, my mother

would soak the leeks and Swiss chard. She would peel the apple, carrots, sweet potatoes and turnip. She would patiently chop all the vegetables. Then everything would slowly simmer with the meat in a big pot.

After the brachot (blessings), my mother would serve this nutritious, flavorful soup as the first course of our meal, a tasty connection to the many generations that came before us, passing down the faith and the Mesorah (Oral Torah).

Over time, as more and more of my family became vegetarian, my mother started making this soup without meat. This year, I want to go back and make my mother’s original recipe. To accommodate all my guests, I will cook the meat cheeks separately in my pressure cooker, then the meat eaters can add it to their bowl of soup.

Notes: This soup makes a very large pot, so you should have enough to serve this soup for two meals. Store soup in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for 5-7 days.

Total Time: 3 hours 35 minutes. Yield: A lot!

Ingredients

For the meat:
3–4 lb beef cheek meat, ¼ cup olive oil, 1 large onion, finely diced, 2 bay leaves, 1 tsp salt, ½ tsp white pepper, pinch of saffron (optional), 1 cup water.

For the soup:
¼ cup olive oil, 4 leeks, washed thoroughly and sliced thinly, 1 bunch Swiss chard, with stem removed and chopped thinly, 2 cups butternut squash, cubed (or acorn or Delicata squash), 1 large green apple or quince, peeled and cubed, 2 large zucchini, peeled and diced, 2 small sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed, 4 medium Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cubed, 1



Simanim Soup contains all the symbolic vegetables used in the Sephardic Rosh Hashanah seder.

large turnip, peeled and cubed, 4 celery stalks, diced, 3 large carrots, peeled and diced, 2 parsnips, peeled and diced, ½ small cabbage, thinly sliced, 2 Tbsp chicken consommé powder, ½ tsp white pepper, 1 tsp turmeric salt, to taste.

Instructions

For the meat: In a pressure cooker or large pot, add oil and warm over medium heat. Add onion and sauté for 5 minutes. Add meat, bay leaf and spices. Cook for 1 hour in a pressure cooker or until tender in the pot.

For the soup: In a very large pot warm oil over medium heat, then add sliced leeks. Sauté for 5 minutes until they start to soften.

Add all the ingredients, except Swiss chard, zucchini and butternut squash (set them aside).

Pour enough water to cover the top of the vegetables. Bring to a boil, cover the pot then lower heat to medium and simmer vegetables for 1 hour.

Add the zucchini and butternut squash. Simmer for another 30 minutes.

Add the Swiss chard, continue to cook on a simmer for an additional 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning.

The changing face of antisemitism in Canada

By Regan Lipes

The face of antisemitism is changing, and it can be more difficult to immediately detect threats. Less than a decade ago Neo-Nazi skinheads marched through Charlottesville full of rage and hatred. This was an easy danger to identify. For all its frivolity and silly memes, the internet is a brewing caldron of antisemitic tropes disguised as free speech and pseudo legitimate discourse. On quasi academic social media platforms, antisemitism is being rebranded and given a whole new look – one that blends much more easily into mainstream society. Celebrated Indigenous jurist Harry LaForme wrote recently in *The National Post*: “Anti-Zionism is a libel-driven hate movement that incites violence and targets Jews with the goal of wiping Israel off the face of Mother Earth and the death of all beings within it.”

People may hide sheepishly behind the argument that they are anti-Zionist but have no problem with Jews, however what they fail to consider is that every anti-Israel venom infused post they put online, and every masked campus take-over they stage is an act of antisemitism, newly made over for a Gen-Z audience. Canadians are all too aware of the destructive legacy of colonialism, but LaForme had this to say: “As an Anishinaabe man, a member of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and someone who spent almost 25 years as a judge interpreting the laws of this country, let me be clear – Canada is a colonial country. Israel is not.”

B’nai Brith Canada’s mission is simple and direct, but monumental in scope. “We are dedicated to eradicating racism, antisemitism and hatred in all its forms, championing the rights of the marginalized, while providing basic human needs for members of our community.” In a piece on their website “The Demonization of Zionism” B’nai Brith reported: “Problematic framing around Zionism has had dire consequences for the Jewish community. In June, a former City of Ottawa lawyer vandalized the National Holocaust Monument. This was a gut-wrenching crime that deeply impacted Jewish Canadians. The perpetrator justified his grotesque, antisemitic actions as an expression of his anti-Zionist beliefs.” The piece

concludes stating: “B’nai Brith Canada has heard from many Jewish Canadians across the country who no longer feel comfortable expressing their support for Israel in public. This inability of Jewish Canadians to express what is for many a core tenet of their faith is, in part, due to the external pressure from those demonizing Zionism. This, in turn, has caused many Canadian Jews to suppress a central feature of their Jewish identity.”

Alberta Jewish News caught up with Austin Parcels, the Manager of Research and Advocacy at B’nai Brith Canada about a recently published report: “A National Crisis of Antisemitism: Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2025.”

“We are observing a shift in the types of incidents that are reported,” explained Parcels. “We unfortunately, still have antisemitic vandalism and violence that takes place in our communities, but there’s a lot that has moved online. People feel safer hiding behind a computer screen, so some of the incidents we investigate are rather disturbing.” He added with gravity: “This is the worst year we’ve seen for reported incidents of antisemitism since we began doing these audits in 1982.”

In 2025, 6,800 incidents were reported to B’nai Brith and investigated. Of these, 6,248 were reports of online hate. “This is where our investigations can become trickier, because we need to geolocate the offender,” elaborated Parcels. “We consider it an incident within Canada if the material is posted online here, or if the intended target who receives it is here.” These numbers equate overall to 18.6 individual antisemitic actions per day and a 9.3% jump from the previous year. “Our data comes from things reported to us, which we investigate to confirm, and from data we’ve collected from open-source, so it’s both reported and gathered incidents,” added Parcels. Interestingly, numbers increased in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. They decreased in Quebec, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Alberta. When asked about this decrease in Alberta, Parcels theorized: “We may be seeing decreases in areas where we have consistent and reliable support from law enforcement.”

Parcels expanded on B’nai Brith’s cooperation with



local law enforcement stating: “We are exceedingly appreciative of law enforcement and their tireless efforts.” He noted that combatting antisemitism is an effort shared by communities, law enforcement, and decision makers. “For compiling our statistics, we diligently monitor information provided to us by our partners in law enforcement. We’ve had input from 68 police forces nationally.” He added that before a reported antisemitic incident is included in the annual audit, it is systematically investigated – thoroughly and exhaustively.

The world has changed significantly even in one year. The parasitic encampments that terrorized students and faculty on postsecondary campuses throughout North America have been thankfully dismantled, but that is only one contemporary forum for hate-speech. “Antisemitism morphs over time. If things aren’t going well economically, the Jews get blamed and we see a rise in the number of reported incidents of hate. The numbers we’ve collected up to this May of 2026 have already surpassed what we saw last year.” Perhaps there are no longer encampments, but the hate is still rampant and finding new and creative ways of spreading malignance.

Parcels would like communities to stay vigilant and know that there is never a reason to tolerate hate-speech or intimidation of any kind. “People should report to both their local law enforcement and B’nai Brith. We have a dedicated hotline that anybody can call.”

The hotline is for reports of antisemitism and racism, and those who experience or witness such incidents are asked to call 1-800-892-2624 (1-800-892-BNAI)

Regan Lipes is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Help make life more livable for all

By Rabbi Russell Jayne

*Who shall live and who shall die?
Who by fire and who by water?
Who by sword and who by beast?
Who by hunger and who by thirst?*

These are not comfortable words. And I would go so far as to hypothesize that they were never meant to be.



Rabbi Russell Jayne

For generations, we Jews have wrestled with the *Unetaneh Tokef*, the climactic poem of the High Holiday liturgy to which these words belong. For many of us, they paint an image of Divinity that is both theologically and spiritually unhelpful. Do we really relate, anymore, to a God who determines with precise calculation who will live and who will die in the coming year? Is it spiritually fulfilling to imagine a heavenly ledger in which our fate is written and then sealed?

I believe that there is a better way to approach the *Unetaneh Tokef*. I believe there is a way of relating to the themes of the poem that can help these powerful words speak to us with a relevancy that can be easily lost in the deluge of the High Holidays.

But first, we have to name and acknowledge the reality of our present moment. We live in an anxious world.

Here in Canada, we have watched a summer marked by wildfires and communities threatened by extreme weather. We live with economic uncertainty and concern about the kind of world our children and grandchildren will inherit. Canadian Jews also continue to experience an unprecedented rise in antisemitism and an unsettling change in the tone of public discourse about Jews and Israel.

Perhaps that is why these poetic words from centuries ago can speak to us even today. Because the message at the heart of the *Unetaneh Tokef* is something modern life often encourages us to forget. We are vulnerable.

We spend so much of our lives constructing the illusion that we are in control. We plan our careers, our retirement, and our vacations. We monitor our health. We insure our homes. We follow the news, hoping that if we know enough about what is happening, perhaps we can prepare ourselves for whatever comes next. Much of this is sensible. Judaism does not ask us to abandon responsibility or prudence. But eventually, all of us will encounter the limits of our control.

The *Unetaneh Tokef* brings us face to face with that truth. Yet remarkably, the poem does not leave us there. After its terrifying catalogue of uncertainty, the poet proclaims, “*Uteshuvah, utefillah, utzedakah ma'avirin et roa hagezeirah.*” Repentance, prayer and charity avert the severity of the decree.

Now, you could understand these words in a magical sense. If I perform enough mitzvot, pray fervently enough, and give sufficient charity, perhaps God will change what has been written. But there is another way to understand them. *Teshuvah, tefillah* and *tzedakah* may not give us control over what happens to us, but they can give us something equally important, a way to decide how we will live in a world

we cannot control.

Teshuvah asks, “What can I change in myself?”

Not everything can be repaired by us. But there are relationships we can mend, apologies we can offer, habits we can change, and priorities we can reconsider.

Tefillah asks, “What am I connected to that is larger than myself?”

Prayer interrupts the illusion that we stand alone at the centre of the universe. It reminds us that we belong to a story, a people and a covenant stretching across generations. Prayer may not change our circumstances, but it can change the person who must face them.

And *tzedakah* asks, “Who needs me?”

When the world feels frightening, our instinct can be to turn inward. Judaism, however, sends us in the opposite direction. Visit someone. Support a community. Defend someone who is vulnerable. Give generously. Do something that makes another person's world less precarious.

These three responses are how we, as Jews, answer a profoundly unsettling and chaotic world.

We cannot know what 5787 will bring. No government, technology, expert or rabbi can promise us a year without upheaval. And the High Holidays themselves offer us no such reassurance. But, maybe this is the deep wisdom of the *Unetaneh Tokef*. Not that we should be terrified of what God and God’s world might do to us, but that our days matter precisely because we can respond to the anxiety of this moment and help to make life more livable for all.

Perhaps that is what it means to ask to be written in the Book of Life.

L’Shannah Tovah Tikateivu v’Teichateimu! May we, and all humanity, be written and sealed for a year of life, blessing and peace.

Rabbi Russell Jayne is Senior Rabbi and Cantor at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Calgary.



Holiday Greetings

Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah from
The Antflick Family



Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah from
Susan Baram



שנה טובה
from Judi Card

Shana Tova. We stand
with Israel. In loving
memory of Sharon and
Bobby Cairns z"l



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

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Roen, Zoe, Shaun and Beth

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



Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Yuri, Chelsey,
Emerson & Marnie Gerchikov

Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
Shulamit Gil & Keith Dannacker



חנה טובה
from Leor, Melissa,
Zoe and Jamie Benjamin

Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community from
Darlene and Gordon Bushewsky

Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from the
Bass-Haines Family



Shana Tova. We stand with Israel.
from Gary, Mira, Nathan, Leah,
Noah and Rivka Campbell

Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Colin, Jen, Asher,
and Nooni Muscat



Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Miriam Devins and daughters
Carolyn and Susan

Wishing family and friends all
the best this Rosh Hashanah
from
Stan and Faith Greenspan



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Mindy Jacobs
and Eoin Kenny



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from The Hatch family



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Ben, Brittany, Bria,
Blake and Bennett Feldman

Wishing family and friends all the best this
Rosh Hashanah from Freda & Marvin Abugov
Cera & Andrew Dixon, Breckon,
Ramona & Poppy

from
Sharon Bookhalter



Wishing everyone a Rosh Hashanah
filled with love, peace and hope.
from
Mark Dolgoy
& Francie Ratner



Chag Sameach,
may the new year bring joy!
Am Yisrael Chai.
from Judy Goldsand
and Family

from
Leeor, Ohad, Noa,
Shai and Daniella



Shanah Tovah! Wishing our
community a happy Rosh Hashanah
and a peaceful year ahead.
from
The Heimpel
Family

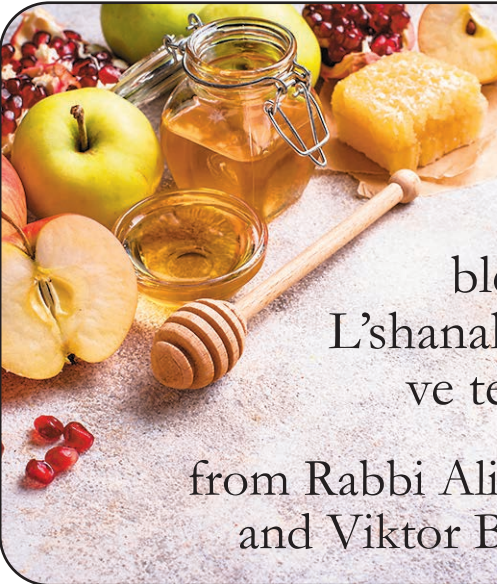


שנה טובה
from Aliya, Andrew,
Orly, & Simon

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Farrel, Cara, Wyatt,
and Grace Greenspan

שנה טובה ומתוקה
Wishing family & friends a happy, healthy Passover
from Nikki, Naomi, Stephanie,
Jared & Michla, Malka & Henry

May this
New Year
bring sweetness,
renewal, and
blessings to all!
L'shanah tovah tikatevu
ve techatemu!
from Rabbi Alisa Zilbershtein
and Viktor Burkalsky



שנה טובה
Shana Tova!
from Rhonda, Danielle & Danny,
Jennifer, Benji & Rachel,
Jason & Shara & Aly
and Tom Matan, Eliza, Eden
Eli Dina, Estee, Yisroel,
Ruby and Rio





Shana Tova
to everyone
from Dan and Jen



Wishing family and
friends all the best this
Rosh Hashanah
from the Juskiw Family



Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Lesley Jacobson
and Family

Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.



Thom & Cindy Jarvis



Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah from
Jake Kondor and Julia Rivait

Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Samuel Koplowicz



Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah
from Jackson and Joshua



Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
from the Lipes Family

Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah from
The Lerner Families





Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel,
from Valda Levin

Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community

from
Terri Mann,
Dr. Fedoretz
and Adina Dvorkin



Chag Sameach, may the new
year bring joy! Am Yisrael Chai.

from Joel and
Christina Reboh
& Family



שנה טובה
from Mona and Dan Rosenberg
& family

שנה טובה
from
Malkie, Gavi, Dani, and Elie

Shana Tova to everyone.
We stand with Israel.



From the
Linetsky Family

Wishing everyone a
Rosh Hashanah filled with love,
peace and hope.



from Stephen Zepp,
Karen Leibovici,
Adam and Anika Zepp
& family

Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Ed Lazar
& Kim Murch



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community

from
Stacey Leavitt-
Wright



Wishing family and friends all
the best this Rosh Hashanah from
Jonah, Jamie, and Ben Mozeson



Happy New Year!
from Carter, Ayla, Arielle, Oscar,
Léah and Dylan Muscat

שנה טובה
from Francie & Jon Nobleman

Wishing family & friends a
happy, healthy Rosh Hashanah
from Anat, Brian, Noah,
Eva and Maya



Happy New Year!
from
Frank & Netta Phillet



שנה טובה ומתוקה
Shana Tova. We stand with Israel.
Aubrey and Draytin Rogerville

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Nomi, Greg and Maya



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community

from
Michele and
Josh Miller



Happy New Year!
from
Susan and Bruce Mintz



Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
Sherry and
Alfred Muscat



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from
Matthew and Cheyenne



שנה טובה
from Kyle, Claire,
Jacky, Rosy,
and Franky

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from
Jack and Sandy Margolus

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from
Sharon Marcus



Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from the Massarsky family



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Moses Management



Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah
from Barbara Mandel



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community

from
Paul Polushin



Happy Rosh Hashanah to the
entire community from Ron Sorokin,
Lisa Redmond and family

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Josh, Sarah, Jonah,
and Sammy Raizman





Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
Carol and Ron Ritch

לשנה טובה תכתבו
from the Soifer Family
עם ישראל חי



Happy New Year!
from Beverly and
Stephen Shafran

Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
Howie & Debbie Sniderman

Happy New Year!
from
Sukalsky Family





Wishing family and friends
all the best
this Rosh Hashanah
from Esther Sklofsky



Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
The Snobel Family

Wishing everyone
a Rosh Hashanah
filled with love,
peace and hope,
from Allan
and Dalia Wolinsky.

Wishing family and friends
a peaceful and uplifting
Rosh Hashanah

from
Naomi Wolfman



Chag Sameach,
may the new year bring joy!
Am Yisrael Chai.

from
Connie and Danny
Zalmanowitz





Wishing family and friends
all the best this
Rosh Hashanah from
Hersh and Jane Sobel

שנה טובה
from Ari, Faren, Noam, Maya



Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
from Jeff, Erica,
Liam & Annie



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Zev, Micah, Becky,
and Daniel Shafran

Happy New Year!

from the
Talmud Torah
Student Council





Shana Tova.
We stand with Israel.
Lewis Wasel

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah

from
Sue Winestock



Wishing family and friends
a peaceful and uplifting
Rosh Hashanah

from
Allan, Syma and
Steven Uram



שנה טובה ומתוקה

from
Forrest, Anna,
Adina, and Naomi



Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from
Jodi & Michael Zabłudowski

חנה טובה
from Hal Zalmanowitz

לשנה טובה!
from Starkman Realty Ltd

Wishing the entire community a
wonderful Jewish New Year! from
Gaylene Soifer & Jeff Rubin and family

Wishing family and friends a
peaceful and uplifting Rosh Hashanah

from
Esther and Howard
Starkman & family



Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah



from Natalie
and Ken Soroka
and family

חנה טובה

from
Jeff & Shira Sheckter
and family

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah
from Jason, Dani, and Iyla Uretsky

שנה טובה
from Jonathan Tankel



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Rick and Nikki, Zach and
Amanda, Jordan, Kayla and Isaac

Wishing family and friends
all the best this Rosh Hashanah from
Shelley Weinstein and Bruce Bradley

שנה טובה

from
Riva and Howard Shein
and family



Happy Rosh Hashanah
to the entire community
from Eva Weisz and family

from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

Weight-Watching

The judgement of Rosh Hashanah is often depicted as the weighing of our deeds on a scale. The imagery, of course, refers to one of those contraptions with trays or pans suspended on each of its sides so as to allow the heavier side to drop to the bottom.

During this crucial season, it is our spiritual qualities that are being weighed. Our good and bad deeds are placed on the respective trays of the scale. If the meritorious deeds outweigh the sins, the individual is pronounced innocent, but if the sins press their tray downwards, then the individual will be condemned to an unpleasant fate.

Among non-Jewish contemporaries of the talmudic sages, the symbolic personification of Justice as a lady holding a scale achieved prominence during the reign of Augustus Caesar, and a temple to Justitia was established by Tiberius. Vespasian and other emperors minted coins on which she was shown sitting on a throne holding up the scale to symbolize their roles as protectors of justice.

The Talmud recommends that everybody should imagine themselves as if they were exactly on the borderline, half guilty and half meritorious, so that the performance of just one mitzvah or transgression will tip the scale's balance whether to the side of merit or of guilt, for one's individual's destiny—or even for the entire universe!

But there is some good news in store for us imperfect mortals. The supreme Judge does everything in his infinite power to rig the process to our advantage. The sages of the Talmud adapted this idea to the scale metaphor, understanding that God tweaks the mechanism so that our good deeds will outweigh— or at least *seem* to outweigh—our sins.

The prooftext for this idea was a verse in the book of Psalms that addresses the awesome mysteries of divine providence: “Your righteousness is like the highest mount, your justice like the great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.” The talmudic rabbis understood the Hebrew root that translates as “righteousness”—SDK— in the sense of “mercy” (as in “*tzedakah*”), creating a contrast between God's two modes of relating to his creatures.

The third-century Babylonian sage Rav Judah

expounded the verse as teaching that, were it not for God exercising his mercy toward us, “who could ever withstand the depths of thy judgment?” His student Rabbah reversed the causal relationship between the two clauses and interpreted them as saying: because of the depth of thy judgment, “thy mercy is like the highest mount.”

The Talmud equates this arcane dispute with a different disagreement between two scholars in the land of Israel: “Rabbi Eleazar says that God presses down and Rabbi Yosé bar Hanina says that he lifts up.

Rashi's commentary explained that the allusions to lifting and pressing refer to the scales of justice when mortals are brought to judgment before the heavenly tribunal. According to Rabbah and Rabbi Eleazar, “when a person's deeds are evenly divided [between good and bad], the Almighty grabs hold of the sins and presses them down into the depths of the sea” removing them from the record in order to tip the balance in favour of exoneration.

According to the opposing position of Rav Judah and Rabbi Yosé bar Hanina, God “places his hand beneath the sins and lifts them upwards, so that the merits [which now drop to the bottom] will appear to outweigh the liabilities.”

Is there any deeper significance to these differing explanations of divine tampering with the scales of judgment?

Well, for one thing, each one is focussed on a different scriptural text. The idea of “lifting” iniquities is derived from the “thirteen attributes of divine mercy” in Moses's prayer for forgiveness, where God is said to “bear [or lift] iniquity.” The image of “pressing” the scale fits better with the mention of the “great deep” in Psalms, and with the prophet Micah's assurance that God will “cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

In the eighteenth century, Rabbi Jacob Reischer proposed that the talmudic dispute reflects fundamental ideas about the moral underpinnings of the universe. A midrashic tradition noted that the opening chapter of the Torah refers to God by the divine name that is understood to designate his standard of strict justice; but later, when speaking

about the creation of humans, it combines the two names that designate both justice and mercy. The sages concluded from this that at first he had considered creating the world only according to the standard of justice, but afterwards, realizing that humanity could not live up to that demanding standard, he tempered it with mercy. This, argued Rabbi Reischer, is reflected in the thesis that the initial default position of the scale is tilted towards a guilty verdict, which can only be counteracted by removing some of the sins and “casting them into the sea.”

There is however an opposing view—that mercy always had priority over justice in God's blueprint of creation. Based on this belief, Rav Judah and Rabbi Yosé bar Hanina expressed appreciation to the Almighty for tilting the scales in favour of us fallible mortals. According to this approach, the scales were never predisposed toward guilt; for if they were, none of us could survive strict divine judgement.

A different perspective was offered by Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz in his influential *Sh'nei Luhot he-B'rit*. He understood the talmudic sources not only as descriptions of the heavenly procedures for adjudicating human conduct, but as guides for imperfect humans who are seeking to repent and improve their moral qualities. Such people, even those who are already very virtuous, should humble themselves in their own eyes by downplaying their merits and highlighting their sins. When humans underrate their successes and emphasize their faults, they evoke a complementary response in the heavenly court.

It is of course to be hoped that we all prove genuinely deserving of a favourable verdict by virtue of our actual merits, with no need to tamper with the scales of judgement.

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

From Camp BB to Edmonton Folk Fest: Mike Felber finds community through music

By David Sklar, LJI Reporter

Mike Felber made his unforgettable Edmonton Folk Festival debut August 8, on the Saturday night main stage, as part of the Leif Vollebekk band which rocked Gallagher Park with a performance of Purple Rain that had the whole crowd on their feet, singing, with arms swaying in the air, totally immersed in the show.

It was a magical Folk Fest moment for Mike, and the 25,000 people on the hill.

For the Alberta-born performer, music has never belonged to just one genre or one community. Over a career spanning decades, he has moved comfortably between Jewish folk music, indie rock, jam bands, Inuit music and Canada's folk scene, building connections wherever the music takes him.

Speaking on the *Chai There!* podcast, Felber reflected on a career shaped as much by community as by performance, one that began with childhood friendships and summers at Camp BB (now called Camp BB-Riback).

Felber credits camp with introducing him to musicians who would influence both his taste and his future career. Alongside friends from the Alberta Jewish community, he discovered artists like R.E.M., The Grateful Dead and Phish, whose improvisational style continues to shape his playing today.

“It was at such a point in my life where that music became the nucleus of my influence,” he recalled.

Those early friendships eventually evolved into *Highway 2*, an Edmonton-based jam band formed with

fellow BBYO members Jared Shore and Brian Horwitz. Although the band eventually disbanded, it launched Felber into a professional music career that has taken him across North America and Europe.

One of the defining figures in that journey has been Montreal musician Josh Dolgin, better known as *SoCalled*. After meeting, the two began collaborating on a variety of eclectic projects, including *Gephilte*, a klezmer jam band that blends traditional Jewish music with the improvisational spirit of jam bands.

“It's an outlet to get weirder with klezmer,” Felber said of the project, which explores lesser-known Jewish compositions while embracing musical experimentation.

That collaboration also introduced him to Ethel Raim, one of the foremost interpreters of traditional Yiddish folk music. Felber recently recorded and performed with the 80-year-old singer at the National Yiddish Book Center in Massachusetts, bringing together centuries-old Yiddish songs with contemporary reggae and funk-inspired arrangements.

“It really felt like I was working with royalty,” he said of the experience.

While Jewish music has remained an important part of his career, Felber has also spent more than 15 years performing and managing acclaimed Inuit singer-songwriter Beatrice Deer. Together they have toured northern communities across Canada and are preparing for a cultural exchange tour in Greenland.

Felber says one of the most rewarding parts of the partnership has been helping amplify Deer's voice as both an artist and role model.



“It feels good to help her grow her platform so that her voice gets heard more and more,” he said.

Today, Felber continues to perform with acclaimed Canadian singer-songwriter Leif Vollebekk while balancing his many other musical projects. This summer, he returned home to Edmonton for another milestone: performing on the main stage at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival.

For someone whose musical journey began around campfires at Camp BB, the moment felt especially meaningful.

“I never thought I'd be doing this when I was growing up in Edmonton,” Felber said. “It's a huge bucket-list gig.”

Visit chaithere.ca/chai-there-podcast-episode-7-michael-felber-musician/ to hear the conversation with Michael. This episode is also available on Spotify, Apple Podcast and Youtube.

Enjoy and Chai There!



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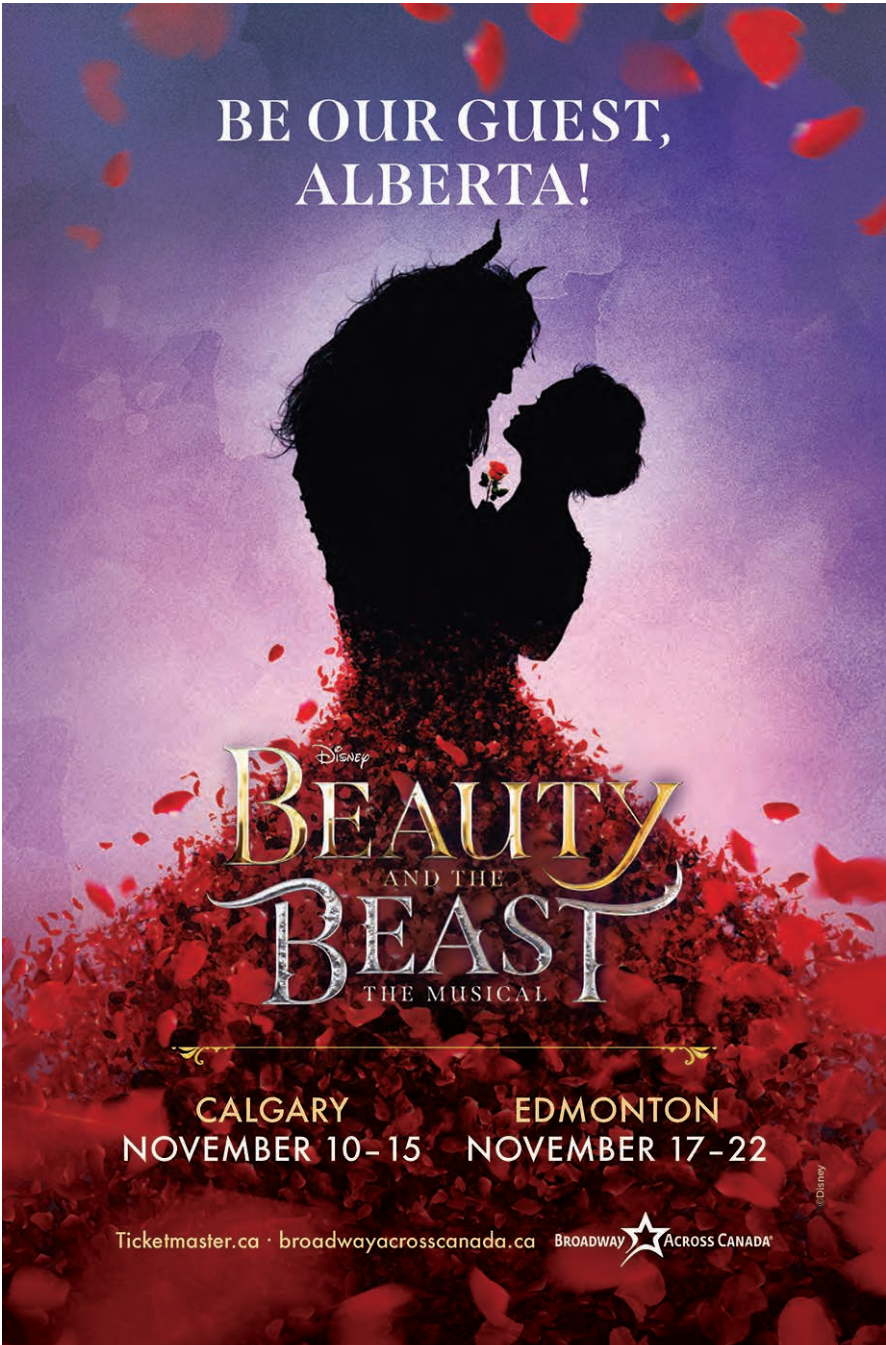


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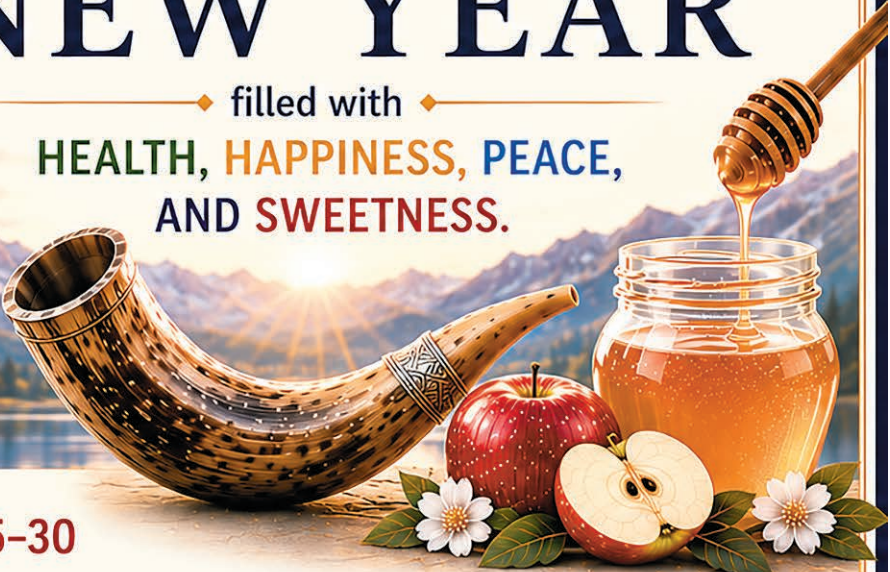
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