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Hundreds perform good deeds at Federation's 10th annual Mitzvah Day

“Giving back” was a theme echoed by many of the hundreds of community members who gathered at the Soloway JCC and several off-site locations to participate in Ottawa’s 10th annual Mitzvah Day. **Louise Rachlis** reports.

Young and old made mitzvah magic during the Jewish Federation of Ottawa’s 10th annual Mitzvah Day, February 7, on the Jewish Community Campus as well as at several off-site locations.

Between 700 and 800 people took part this year, performing good deeds to help make the world a better place, said Mitzvah Day Chair Tamara Scarowsky.

“It’s a great crowd, and the best part is that I see a mosaic of faces across the community,” said Federation Chair Linda Kerzner as she surveyed the packed Soloway Jewish Community Centre (JCC) social hall during the opening ceremony.

“There are faces I don’t recognize, and that’s exciting for me. There’s everything to feel good about,” said Kerzner. “The word mitzvah has come to mean a good deed, but it’s a commandment. Jews want to live their lives as a model of how we hope all people will choose to live. We want to portray that for our children and friends.”

Ottawa Modern Jewish School teacher Aaron Kaiman, 24, kicked off the first good deed of the day by donating 13

inches of the 25 inches of hair he’d been growing for the past five years. He was accompanied by his former student, Jake Feldman-Starosta, 10, who was also donating his hair.

Nine people made donations of at least six inches of hair to Hair Donation Ottawa, an organization that raises funds for cancer research and empowers kids with hair loss by giving them free wigs.

Mitzvah Day began with a massive bagel breakfast buffet by Creative Kosher Catering and ended around noon with an ice cream party.

Mitzvah opportunities abounded. At Hillel Lodge, children spent time with the residents of Hillel Lodge making crafts to help brighten up their rooms, and there was a singalong with children’s entertainer Monkey Rock.

At the Soloway JCC, Birthday Celebration kits to be distributed to children living in shelters were being put together in one room, and Radiance of Shabbat kits were being made in another room while discussing the value of Shabbat.

“I come to give back,” said Elaine Vininsky who has been participating in



Children hold signs proclaiming “I performed a mitzvah today” at the finale of Mitzvah Day, February 7, at the Soloway JCC.

BH PHOTOGRAPHY

Mitzvah Day for years. “It’s a very upbeat and positive environment.”

Vininsky’s mitzvahs this year included Sandwich Making for the Homeless and putting together therapy kits for children

and youth at Crossroads Children’s Centre.

Anna Silverman, executive director of the Shepherds of Good Hope Foundation, See Mitzvah on page 2

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Mitzvah: 'Day embodies our concept of tzedakah'

Continued from page 1

said sandwich distribution is often the first connection made to a homeless person.

"Food is a great connector. We make about 800 sandwiches a day [at Shepherd's]," Silverman added. "I figure this morning has made enough for a day."

Social worker Cara Kaiserman of Crossroads Children's Centre gave a presentation about children's mental health issues, while Sylvia Greenspoon, a first-time Mitzvah Day participant, also put together therapy kits with balloons, worry stones, journals and other components.

"It brings all aspects of the community together," said Greenspoon. "It's a wonderful, wonderful event. It makes me feel really good to see young families engaged in the community."

One of the youngest in attendance at Mitzvah Day was three-month-old Eliana Leah Gray, snuggled on the chest of her mother, Rachel, to attend the "Honouring Parents Workshop."

The workshop was one of several new "specifically Jewish mitzvot linking the Jewish world and the wider community," said Scarowsky. It centred on discussions about why and how we honour parents and included making keepsakes for parents to show gratitude.

"The day embodies our concept of tzedakah and passing it on to the next generation," said Michael Polowin, Federation Annual Campaign chair for 2017-2018. "It's wonderful."

More than 40 Temple Israel Religious School pupils and Rabbi Rob Morais were among those rolling the dough for Challahs for Hunger, making 150 challah loaves to be frozen and donated to the Ottawa Koshers Food Bank.

"It was a great opportunity for families to come together from all parts of the community to live Jewish values," said Rabbi Morais, experiencing Ottawa's Mitzvah Day for the first time.

For Operation Winter Warmth, Ottawa Jewish Community School students collected new and gently used hats, gloves and scarves, which were assembled into warmth packages to be distributed to the city's homeless population via Jewish Family Services.

Congregation Beth Shalom led the creation of baskets of necessities to be



Mitzvah Day Chair Tamara Scarowsky holds hair she'd just cut from Jake Feldman-Starosta, one of nine Mitzvah Day participants who donated at least six inches of their hair to be used for wigs for children experiencing hair loss during cancer treatment.

donated to women living in shelters throughout Ottawa.

The Shalom Group, a joint effort of Agudath Israel Congregation, Congregation Beth Shalom and Adath Shalom Congregation to sponsor a Syrian refugee family in Ottawa, had a table at Mitzvah Day where participants could write welcoming notes to the arriving family or sign up for volunteer duties.

In the Mitzvah Fun Zone in the gymnasium, children who had finished other mitzvot wrote letters to lone soldiers in Israel, made cards for sick kids or just ran around for a bit.

Max Morgan, 18, was a captain in the Fun Zone. "I like giving back to the community that has done so much for my family," he said.

There were also many offsite mitzvot.

At Shepherds of Good Hope, Mitzvah Day volunteers helped to prepare and serve a meal, and cleaned up afterward. At NCSY, students prepared meals to be

See Mitzvah on page 3



U.S. Ambassador to Canada Bruce Heyman and his wife, Vicki Heyman, were among the many at Mitzvah Day making challah for the Ottawa Koshers Food Bank.



Children and Hillel Lodge residents make crafts to help brighten their rooms during Mitzvah Day.

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Mitzvah: 'An amazing day for the community'

Continued from page 2

distributed by Ten Yad, an organization that helps individuals and families in the Jewish community during life-altering situations.

At Temple Israel, volunteers joined in the Temple Israel Quilting Project, which makes and sends baby quilts to places in Israel affected by terrorism, and to CHEO for premature babies. And the Agudath Israel TOV Team spearheaded volunteers making sandwiches for the needy at the Dovercourt Recreation Centre.

An integral part of Mitzvah Day was the collection of many items to give to the needy or disadvantaged, including food for the Ottawa Kosher Food Bank (OKFB).

"We've gone from 118 clients to 152 in seven months, so we really appreciate the donations," said OKFB volunteer Donna Hicks. "We expect 40 new families to be referred to us in the next few months."

Gently used board games and arts and crafts supplies were collected for Crossroads Children's Centre and new or gently used children's pyjamas were collected for the Bethany Hope Centre.

Purses and pieces of jewelry were collected for Dress for Success, which provides economically disadvantaged but

employment-ready women with interview-appropriate suits and accessories.

"This was our first time for Mitzvah Day, and the community has come through," said Dress for Success volunteer Roberta Goldmaker, pointing to six large bags of donations. "It's really wonderful."

Scarowsky, who chaired Mitzvah Day for the first time after years as a volunteer, said she had expected "organized chaos," but was pleased to see "more organized, and less chaos." She praised the hands-on involvement of the Mitzvah Day sponsors, GGFL Chartered Professional Accountants, which sponsored the event for the seventh year in a row.

GGFL partner Josh Engel said his firm is celebrating its 70th anniversary and hopes to sponsor Mitzvah Day for many years to come.

"It's just an amazing day for the community," said Federation president and CEO Andrea Freedman while she watched the finale with children holding up signs saying "I performed a mitzvah today" as balloons dropped from the ceiling.

"Good job," she said. "Children starting at a young age will do this their whole lives."



Participants in the "Honouring Parents Workshop" look up from their discussion about why and how we honour parents.



Mitzvah Day participants make sandwiches for the homeless to be distributed by Shepherds of Good Hope.



2015 G.J. Cooper Scholarship recipient Tal-Or Ben-Choreen was awarded a scholarship of \$15,505 at the Foundation's Annual General Meeting (presented by Paul Finn, 2015 Scholarship Committee Chair).

For complete details and list of eligible programs, please visit www.ojcf.ca or contact Mike at 613-798-4696 ext 252 or by email at mbazuk@jewishottawa.com

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The award, valued at approximately \$15,000, is granted each year to support a member of the Ottawa Jewish Community, or Ottawa student, between the ages of 18 and 30, who has displayed leadership qualities, academic excellence and has an interest in the Jewish Community. As per Mr. Cooper's wishes, the award must be used to advance one's formal education or apprenticeship in the fields of artistic, literary or social sciences.

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Interior of the Jewish Community Chapel before current renovations began.

ISSIE SCAROWSKY

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Ottawa Chevra Kadisha renovates Cuba Avenue chapel

BY MARK SILVER
OTTAWA CHEVRA KADISHA

The Ottawa Chevra Kadisha has announced that renovations have begun at the Jewish Community Chapel, the burial society's facility at 1771 Cuba Avenue.

"We acquired the building in 1997," said Henry Molot, Gabbai Rishon of the Ottawa Chevra Kadisha. "We are renewing the premises so we can continue to meet the standards and expectations of the Jewish community."

The project will update the equipment and spaces downstairs. There are also plans to replace fixtures and refresh the décor of the chapel and entrance areas upstairs. Public washrooms and shomer facilities are to be remodelled.

The Chevra Kadisha will continue to function in its traditional capacity while renovations are being carried out, until

about mid-March. However, during that time, the chapel will not be available for funeral services.

Congregation Machzikei Hadas has graciously offered its sanctuary for funeral services said Gabbai Issie Scarowsky.

"Families may also ask their rabbi about holding services in their own synagogues. The Chevra Kadisha will cover any associated costs incurred by the shuls," he added.

The Cwinn Chapel at the Jewish Memorial Gardens Osgoode cemetery remains an option, as usual, for funeral services.

The Ottawa Chevra Kadisha is a volunteer organization that has been providing traditional burial services to the Ottawa Jewish community since 1918. For information, contact Gabbai Issie Scarowsky at 613-729-4444.

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The Jewish Community Chapel at 1771 Cuba Avenue, summer 2015.

ISSIE SCAROWSKY

Western Wall prayer fight ends with historic compromise

BY BEN SALES

(JTA) – On January 31, Israel’s government approved a compromise to expand the non-Orthodox Jewish prayer section of the Western Wall, putting to rest the decades-long fight between Women of the Wall and Israel’s haredi Orthodox religious establishment.

The deal achieves what had been an elusive goal: an interdenominational consensus on Judaism’s holiest site with official recognition. The non-Orthodox prayer section will become larger and more accessible, but haredi control of the Orthodox section will also be solidified.

The deal still contains a few unknowns. It is unclear how long construction will take. It does not say whether clear signage will direct visitors to the non-Orthodox section. Nor does it say exactly when Women of the Wall, a women’s prayer group, will move its monthly services from the Orthodox Jewish main prayer section to the non-Orthodox one.

Still, the Conservative and Reform movements can declare victory. The size of the non-Orthodox section of the Western Wall will double to nearly 10,000

square feet, and a committee of non-Orthodox leaders and government officials will manage the non-Orthodox section. A single entrance will lead to both sections.

The Western Wall’s haredi Orthodox management, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, also safeguarded its interests. Non-Orthodox leaders had campaigned for a share of control of the Orthodox section of the wall, but the Heritage Foundation will retain full authority over it and the larger plaza behind the prayer sections.

“They all came to the conclusion that they must make serious compromises because they want it to remain one Kotel for one people,” Jewish Agency for Israel Chair Natan Sharansky said. “It’s the place that must unite us more than anything else, and it turned into the most ugly war.”

Plans for the non-Orthodox section’s expansion began in December 2012. In October 2012, police arrested Women of the Wall Chair Anat Hoffman for wearing a tallit during the group’s monthly service – an act that at the time was illegal at the site.

Talks on a plan to expand the non-Orthodox section of the wall, located in an archaeological park known as Robinson’s Arch, began in April 2013. Sharansky and outgoing Israeli Cabinet secretary Avichai Mandelblit led the negotiations, which included representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements, the Heritage Foundation and Women of the Wall.

Nearly three years later, the deal calls for the creation of an “official and respected,” 9,700-square foot prayer space in the non-Orthodox section of the Western Wall that Sharansky said will fit approximately 1,200 people. It will have government-funded staff, Torah scrolls

and other ritual objects, and be open to all forms of Jewish prayer. Sharansky estimated its construction could take up to two years.

Even after it is completed, the non-Orthodox section will remain smaller than its Orthodox counterpart. The Orthodox section measures 21,500 square feet and has some 27,000 visitors on an average day.

The area is divided into two sections: a larger one for men and a smaller one for women. The rules prohibit women from reading from Torah scrolls in the Orthodox section.

A committee composed of two Reform
See Wall on page 9

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On March 9, 2015, Hungary took over the Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)

In this capacity, Hungary’s Ambassador to Canada, Balint Ódor organized many Holocaust events in Canada.

He will be discussing Hungary’s initiatives in combating anti-Semitism in Hungary and worldwide, in revitalizing the Hungarian Jewish community, in restoring Hungary’s synagogues and cemeteries and Hungary’s commitment to Holocaust education.

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FEDERATION
REPORT



MICHAEL POLOWIN
CAMP B'NAI BRITH OF OTTAWA

For the past seven years, it has been my distinct privilege to be chair of Camp B'nai Brith (CBB) of Ottawa. In that time, we (the camp's board and a fabulous staff lead by Jonathan Pivnick) have accomplished a great deal.

A camp on the edge of financial ruin, with failing and ancient infrastructure

Help us put smiles on the faces that need them most

and dropping enrolment has been reborn. The infrastructure and buildings are being rebuilt and renovated and we have a healthy balance sheet. Best of all, the camp is filled with *shayna punim*, shining with smiles and laughter. In fact, the first day of this summer will set an 81-year record for number of campers! This is truly a matter of immense pride to our families, our campers, our staff and our community. We thank our generous donors from our camp community and friends for their help in accomplishing this. The job isn't finished, but we are well on our way.

What we have planned for the future includes renovating the rest of our cabins – we have seven done and 26 more to go. This doesn't include the two new cabins built for this summer. We're

also planning for the improvement or replacement of a lot of old facilities, including the gym, rec hall, dance stage, dining hall, and more (and elements you don't see, like pipes) all to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

All of this is exciting news for the camp, but today I am looking for your help on an issue dear to the heart of our camp and our community.

Our camp was founded in 1935 by visionaries. It was part of the North American "fresh air" movement intended to help get inner city children, usually from families without means, out into the "fresh air" of the country for the summer. It is our task to continue that job today.

A look at the bylaws of the camp reveals that of the three objectives of the

camp, two of them deal with providing a summer's experience to families that cannot afford camp. For me, it is the most important thing we do.

Children from families with limited resources often do not have easy access to skills, social development and recreation that other families do. They do not have the disposable income to do the fun things that other families do. Often, even the availability of three nutritious meals a day can be a struggle.

At camp, everyone is the same. They do the same things, eat the same (kosher) food, and have fun and learn in the same way. They celebrate Shabbat in a beautiful and wondrous way. But they have to get through the gates to experience all of this. For this reason, CBB of Ottawa is immensely proud of our financial assistance program. It is easy, fair and confidential. All we need are the kids.

And that is all I ask of you today – just send us the kids in need of what a camp experience can bring to their lives. Find the kids for us, and we'll find the money to look after them.

If you have, or know children, who would benefit from a few weeks at camp, but can't afford it – please, please, please contact, or have their families contact Jonathan Pivnick at 613-244-9210 or director@cbbottawa.com. Help us put smiles on the faces that need them most.

FROM THE
PULPIT



RABBI HOWARD FINKELSTEIN
BEIT TIKVAH

We are living in the age of mergers and acquisitions in the business world – and in the Jewish community. In Ottawa, two venerable congregations with a great deal of history are merging, and talks are taking place between the two Orthodox day schools about coming together.

In the world Jewish community, we read about what is called NewOrg. This multifaceted organization is designed to address the needs of Jewish educational institutions across the denominational divide bringing together educational arms of the Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and community school networks. The common theme, to preserve the future of Jewish education in North America for all students – regardless of affiliation and Jewish school – by working together on issues of finance, governance, fundraising, educational innovations and the enhancement of Jewish teaching and learning, is an imperative. The salient point of this merger is that there will be no discussion or validation of any one

Of mergers and immersions

particular ideological approach to Judaism, but there will be an emphasis placed on the need to provide the best educational opportunities for students.

But, there is a drawback. Day school attendance in North America is suffering. Solomon Schechter schools are closing, community schools are experiencing dwindling enrolment and Modern Orthodox day schools are exhibiting zero growth. Only the haredi Orthodox schools in major Orthodox centres such as Lakewood, Monsey, Toronto and Flatbush are growing due to high birth rates in those communities.

A contributing factor to the decline in enrolment in Ottawa's Jewish day schools is the emergence of French immersion programs in the public school system. It is understandable in Ottawa, a bilingual city, that parents want their children to be fluent in French in order to eventually gain employment in positions demanding that ability. Obviously, the learning of a second language redounds to the benefit of the child in many ways.

What is not understandable is the sacrificing of Jewish education on the altar of French immersion. How important is Jewish identification and adherence to Jewish law and practice to the parents who see French immersion as a *sine qua non*?

Can pre bar/bat mitzvah training and a modicum of Jewish education offered on an ad hoc basis serve to strengthen Jewish identity and continuity for those who choose the route of French immersion?

The ideal answer is for day schools in Ottawa to provide a French immersion program, for language taught in a Jewish day school, immersion or not, brings into focus the Jewish component of the school.

Language is not taught in a vacuum, but in the context of the cultural atmosphere of the school. In a Jewish school, the teaching of French encompasses the celebration of Jewish holidays and Jewish themes, unlike public or private schools, which bring the teaching of French into the realm of celebrations of holidays of other faiths. The challenge posed by French immersion in the public school system is of great concern to the Jewish community day school here.

We are facing an uphill battle in Ottawa to preserve the future of the Jewish community through our support of the Jewish educational system. We have suffered the loss of the Jewish community high school, a bad omen for Jewish continuity here, and we are seeing further diminution of student enrolment in the day schools. The Orthodox day schools see the need to coalesce because of diminishing numbers as there is no critical mass to sustain each institution individually. The fledgling yeshiva high school has to import students from out of town to survive, and the girls' seminary high school has barely a handful of students.

While highly appreciative of the contribution of Federation to Jewish education in Ottawa, it is not enough to simply accentuate the dollars and cents needed to sustain our schools financially. Attention has to be paid to the non-monetary aspects of school survivability and, consequently, Jewish continuity. Schools have to constantly re-evaluate their programs, and parents must ask themselves what priorities they are setting for their children in regard to their faith. These are daunting challenges for all parties involved.

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FROM THE
EDITOR

MICHAEL REGENSTREIF

I get a lot of emails every day: press releases, editorial enquiries, submissions to the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin, news reports and feature stories from our wire service, news digests from Israeli and other Jewish publications, messages from readers and colleagues, and much more.

Once in a while, though, I'll get something that is blatantly anti-Semitic. Such was the case, earlier this month, when I got an email from what purported to be a pro-democracy organization in Moscow (it was in English).

The email included a long list of what it claimed the Talmud teaches Jews, including such things as it's not a sin for a Jew to kill a non-Jew and that only Jews are actual human beings.

It went on to say that communism

Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories still thrive

was a Jewish plot under which all the banks, media, business and property in communist countries were controlled by the Jews. And the kicker was that, since the fall of the Soviet bloc, Jews have fanned out into the Western democracies and taken control. These were "the most successful countries in the world," but are all now on the verge of economic collapse, thanks to the Jews.

This so-called pro-democracy organization has a website chockfull of strange conspiracy theories covering four focus topics: Jews; Israel; the war on terror (which, it seems, is an international scheme controlled by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu); and, for some reason, Hillary Clinton.

More than a century after the creation of infamous forgery known as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (which also originated in Russia), there are still hate-mongers sitting in little rooms dreaming this stuff up. Scratch the surface of social media and the Internet, and it's all too easy to find.

One of the strangest such examples was earlier this month when rock star Ted Nugent – who was already well known for extreme positions on a

number of issues – said on Facebook that efforts toward gun control in the United States was a Jewish conspiracy led by such figures as Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of "Jew York," and 11 other Jewish American political figures identified by a photo with their name and an Israeli flag.

As editor of a Jewish community newspaper, I spend a great deal of time immersed in news from around the Jewish world. In addition to the articles and columns for our print edition, I edit hundreds of additional articles each month for the online Bulletin – www.ottawajewishbulletin.com – and there's no shortage of articles dealing with resurging anti-Semitism around the world, both classic anti-Semitism expressed as hatred of Jews and of individuals because they are Jewish, and what eminent experts like former justice minister Irwin Cotler have described as the "new anti-Semitism," in which Israel is targeted as "the collective Jew" among the nations.

So, while I'm only too well aware of anti-Semitism in today's world, it is still disconcerting to see it flourishing in an era when so much real knowledge is so easily and so readily available.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN ISRAEL

The lack of Jewish religious pluralism in Israel is an issue I have raised before in this column. Much of Israel's Jewish religious life is regulated through the haredi Orthodox lens of Israel's Chief Rabbinate – and with the support of the haredi Orthodox political parties in the Knesset (and currently part of Netanyahu's governing coalition).

I have long advocated that Israel, as the homeland of all Jewish people, needs to embrace all of the Jewish denominations equally. But that wide *Big Tent* embrace has been slow in coming.

In recent days, though, there have been two big steps forward for Jewish religious pluralism in Israel.

As described in the JTA article on page 5, the Western Wall – regarded as Judaism's holiest site – will soon have a much expanded and accessible non-Orthodox section in which egalitarian Jewish observance will be practised. And the section will be administered by non-Orthodox authorities.

Then, just as we were going to press, we learned that Israel's Supreme Court had ruled that mikvahs in the country must open up to Reform and Conservative converts for their ritual immersions. Until now, only Orthodox converts were allowed to use mikvahs in Israel.

These are most welcome developments.

IDEAS AND
IMPRESSIONS

JASON MOSCOVITZ

Getting older means rabbis and doctors my daughter's age

I recently attended a Shabbat service where the rabbi was the age of my oldest daughter. It was a milestone for sure. It is all happening so quickly. After all, just a few months ago, the government of Canada was put in the hands of a new generation. So many members of the present cabinet weren't even born, or, were small children, when Pierre Trudeau was prime minister.

When you enter your senior years, there is always a tell-tale moment that drives it home. It is, for example, when you have to give your age. When you say your age, and the questioner records it without a double take, that is the moment you know. The mirror can still tell a lie, but no one would believe it except you.

Once you know the truth, you get used to things. Like when you are registering for something online. That simple question about what year were you born makes for a giant scroll backwards to reach the right year. When you find the year and press "continue," that birth year number looks like the "olden days."

When I think of my "olden days," I think of huge flashy American cars and bad westerns on black-and-white TVs with rabbit ears. I have a feeling many of you reading this won't know what "rabbit ears" are. You should Google it.

This makes me wonder how young people see me. At first blush, probably, as an old-timer from a bygone era that is no longer relevant. That is why, more and more, I do everything possible to stay relevant.

I will always want to know what my children and grandchildren are talking about. It is a huge challenge to keep up because technology continues to change everything ten-fold; a trillion-fold since "Father Knows Best." Please Google that, too.

I learned the lesson about respecting my elders and I am sure today's movers and shakers will too. I was part of a generation that went from a manual typewriter to a smartphone – which is as amazing as my parents' generation that went from the speed of passenger ships to commercial jets. Interestingly, in both instances, speed is the magic measure of

progress.

Interesting and obvious, too, is how you naturally grow older with other people who were born around the same time as you. Some are siblings, friends, enemies, colleagues and former colleagues. And then there are all those many professionals you dealt with for decades.

There is a replacement doctor filling in for my family doctor of 35 years who is now, deservedly I am sure, taking a few winter months off. It is time for my annual physical and, when I made the appointment, I was clearly told the doctor is female. I said to myself that if I say I no longer want an appointment, I will be opposing every principle I've ever had about gender equality. So, wanting to be true to myself, as well as with the times, as Justin Trudeau said when he formed his gender-equal cabinet, I made the appointment.

If I had a bad knee or something there would, of course, have been no second thought at all about a woman doctor, but an annual physical involves getting undressed! Anyway, long story short, I didn't cancel.

And, as I sat waiting, undressed, in the examination room, I was clueless as to what was next. The door opened and, just like the rabbi, a doctor my daughter's age walked in.

We both survived the examination.

It never stops being shocking when you begin to realize how old you are getting to be. I know first-hand that will never change. My father is 93, my mother is 90 and they both often say how surprised they are to be as old as they are. Surely, when you are over 90, there can be no more pretending, but the pretending actually stops long before that.

Approaching 65, I see the senior label coming at me. Although I look forward to the senior discounts, I am not looking forward to much else. I recently asked an older friend if turning 65 had been tough. He thought about it, looked away, then looked right at me and said it was the day he realized "Forever Young" was just a song.

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JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

Jewish Family Services (JFS) is a praiseworthy example of Jewish values while also meeting its civic commitments as a social services agency. The guest column by a social worker-in-training at the agency is a case in point ("We are all trying to make the world a better place," February 8). Najma Ahmed's misconceptions that the Jewish community was insular and primarily self-interested indicate that Canadian society is not succeeding in educating the next generation on the major contributions of Jewish values to a civil society.

By now, Ahmed should be aware that JFS is only one example of a vast system of social and educational services that Jews have provided not only for themselves, but for everyone: hospitals, universities and public institutions around the world.

It would be most interesting to hear of a similar example of the Muslim community providing a work placement for a young Jewish intern. The only one I am personally aware of was when my daughter worked for a year for the Aga Khan Foundation in Africa. Unfortunately, she did not feel comfortable sharing her religious identity with anyone in her workplace. That was revealed in a CBC radio interview in 2005 about her experiences there, in which the interviewer particularly attempted to focus on that aspect.

Although Ahmed draws parallels between her own religious community and the Jewish community, she

must also know that Muslim communities have far fewer public institutions that widely provide for the welfare of the less fortunate. Let's hope she has the opportunity to do so herself in her future career.

Barbara Okun

It's a Boy!

Neuman/Shapero

Johanna and Elliot Shapero are thrilled to announce the birth of their son Jacob Adam, born on December 29th, 2015, at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, weighing in at 8 lb 10 oz. Proud Bubbies and Zaidies Pat and Morris Neuman, Fern and Arthur Shapero, great-grand father Abraham Neuman and great-grandmothers Ettie Weintraub and Libby Taub. Excited aunts and uncles Cindy and Steven, Todd and Chantal, Richard and Melissa and Rebecca, as well as the many cousins, who can't wait to play with their newest family member!



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Letters to the Editor are welcome if they are brief, signed, timely, and of interest to our readership. The *Bulletin* reserves the right to refuse, edit or condense letters. The *Mailbag* column will be published as space permits.

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JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

Israel's Hanni Arnon visits Ottawa

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On February 3, university students and community members had a unique opportunity to meet Hanni Arnon, an educator and entrepreneur visiting from Israel's agricultural hotbed, the Arava region.

Hanni Arnon's view on prosperity stems from the Chinese proverb "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for life." The founder of AICAT, the Arava International Centre for Agriculture Training in Israel's Arava desert, Hanni is living proof that transforming lives through education is more than theory.

1,200 "goodwill ambassadors" graduate annually

The doors of AICAT opened over two decades ago and over 1,200 students now attend annually. Arriving from China, Vietnam, Laos, Burma, the Philippines, Thailand, Rwanda, Uganda, Nepal, Nigeria, Myanmar and Ethiopia, the students soak up Israel's sun and innovative agricultural techniques in exchange for improving their futures and those of their country-mates. At the end of their term, they leave understanding agriculture, food security, the agribusiness and each other. The rich cultural and religious mix of students enriches and empowers each other. The next wave of students is set to include young minds from India and Kenya.

For Hanni, students are also fertile minds for diplomacy and tikkun olam. Every year, she and her staff and the people of the Arava nurture 1,200 goodwill ambassadors for Israel. These students return home and build model farms and establish farm co-operatives based on the techniques they learned in Israel. Since they are paid for working in the fields during their year, they return with sufficient funds to become entrepreneurs. And 30 per cent of the students pursue higher education.

Started as pioneering spirit

AICAT was born from the pioneering spirit of Jews who reclaimed the rejected and malaria-infested Arava. Within 20 years of Israel's independence, the pioneers had doubled the standard of living and transformed a breeding ground for mosquitoes into what would become Israel's hothouse. Today, says Hanni, over 65 per cent of Israel's fresh vegetables for export are grown by the 560 families who call the Arava home.

Pharmatech is next horizon

The growth engine for AICAT, says Hanni, is their Research and Development Centre. There are two streams of R&D conducted at AICAT: agriculture and scientific. On the agricultural side, research is done to discover new agricultural methods, biotech and new crops. The scientific research delves into properties of plants that survive in the desert - hoping that one day the Arava will find answers to help solve the mysteries behind cancer, ALS and Alzheimer's disease.

As former Israeli president Shimon Peres has said of the Arava, Israel's high-tech industry began with agriculture and with learning to do more with less.

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Wall: Non-Orthodox section will be 'open to all forms of Jewish prayer'

Continued from page 5

leaders, two Conservative leaders, two non-Orthodox women representatives, the Jewish Agency chair and six government officials will run the non-Orthodox section.

The Orthodox and non-Orthodox sections of the Western Wall will share an entrance near the Old City of Jerusalem's Dung Gate, one story above the Western Wall plaza's current entrance. Currently, the path to the non-Orthodox section is long, narrow and accessible only through a gateway tucked in a back corner of the plaza. The deal will create a wide and visible walkway to the section.

The deal does not specify, however, whether there will be signs at the entrance informing visitors of the non-Orthodox section or anything else notifying visitors of its existence.

"The vision of the new section of the Kotel is a physical and conceptual space open to all forms of Jewish prayer," a statement from Women of the Wall read. "Instead of splitting up the existing pie into ever more divided, smaller pieces, we are making the pie much larger and sharing the new space."

The Western Wall's haredi management, headed by Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, has long pushed for Women of the Wall to leave the site. Under the deal, the women's group has agreed to move to the non-Orthodox section only once the deal is implemented. But a faction of Women of the Wall has vowed not to budge from the Orthodox section - regardless of what the deal says.

The Western Wall's religious status has been under contention for decades. Women of the Wall was founded in 1988 to advance women's prayer at the site and, until 2013, much of the group's activity contravened the Heritage Foundation's regulations and thus was illegal. Police regularly detained members of the group.

Non-Orthodox groups also suffered persecution at the site. In 1997, an egalitarian Conservative Shavuot celebration behind the prayer section

was attacked by protesters throwing bottles, diapers and refuse at the worshippers. The incident led to the establishment of the non-Orthodox prayer section at Robinson's Arch in 2000.

Following an international backlash to Hoffman's 2012 arrest, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tasked Sharansky with forging a compromise solution to the dispute. An outline Sharansky proposed in April 2013 called for the non-Orthodox section to be equal in size and elevation to the Orthodox section, but it proved unworkable due to objections from the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Waqf, the Islamic body that governs the Temple Mount.

In August 2013, Diaspora Affairs Minister Naftali Bennett tried for an interim solution by building a 4,800 square-foot platform that created more space in the non-Orthodox section. Women of the Wall rejected the platform, calling it a "sundeck." Now the architects of the compromise hope all sides of the debate will put their differences behind them for the sake of the Western Wall's symbolism.



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Thursday, February 25:

Hungarian Ambassador His Excellency Balint Odor to speak to the Ottawa Jewish Community, 7 pm. Reception to follow. All are invited.

Sunday, March 13: "Shanghai Legacy" by Marion Cuba will be reviewed by Rabbi Robert Morais, 9:30 am.

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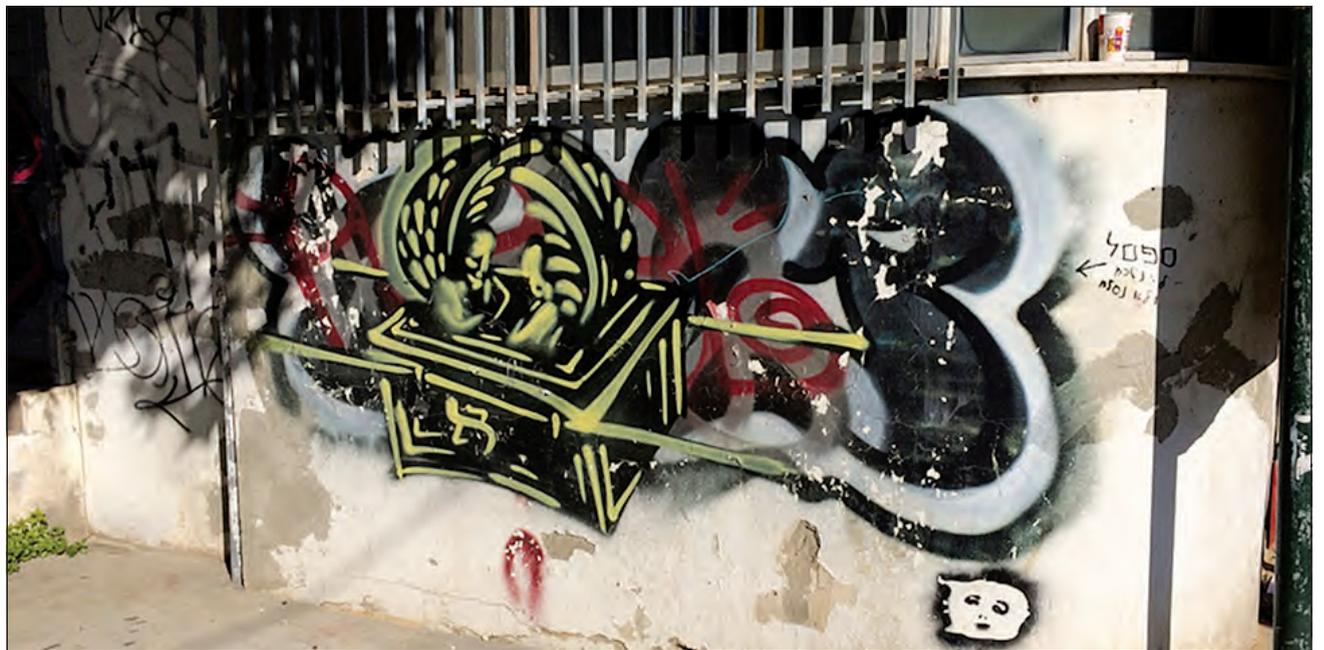


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Graffiti in a poor neighbourhood of Tel Aviv showing the Ark of the Covenant.

ARIEH ROSENBLUM

A picture worth a thousand words

Last month, as I walked with my friends and colleagues through Tel Aviv's Neve Tzedek and Neveh Shaanan neighbourhoods – magnets for migrant workers, transient populations, and some of the most challenging social conditions in Israel – I noticed a peculiar sight. On a wall, just ahead, was the most unusual piece of graffiti I had ever seen. Couched within a gritty streetscape was an image of that most holy of Jewish artifacts, the Ark of the Covenant.

On that street corner I saw articulated in spray paint what Israel is challenged by every day: The intersection of the sacred and the profane; the connection between the most high and the lowest depths; the call to the Jewish people's great capacity for good, and the conflicts that can drain all aspiration in a struggle to simply survive.

In January, I discovered the Israel that rarely enters discussions around North American tables. Not the Israel of war and battle, nor the Israel of field and harvest. The Israel I encountered as part of Fundraising University, a project of the Jewish Federations of North America's Mandel Centre for Leadership, was one grappling with practical and conceptual problems – but also one overcoming those problems with innovative 21st century thinking.

Israel hasn't yet figured out exactly what to do with migrants and refugees. But it is making sure their children receive a good, even great, education such as we saw at Rogozin Bialik

ARIEH ROSENBLUM
GUEST COLUMN

School in Florentin.

Arab and Jewish Israelis have chasms to span in understanding one another. In the meantime, though, they have figured out how to share a community centre in Lod.

Too many organizations bring out-of-date thinking to entirely new challenges, but a forward-looking think-tank in Tel Aviv has an innovative approach for planning.

I saw Israel's challenge, and, indeed, in a small way, the challenge we face in our own communities, in that graffiti image: How can Israel maintain its purest values in a dark and dangerous environment? And how do we exemplify those values in our communities?

How can Israel preserve its Jewish identity and, at the same time, fulfil its commitment to tolerance and pluralism without stirring a reactionary beehive? Are we reaching out to all of the constituencies in our communities to learn what their Jewish identity means to them?

Can young women entering the first military prep academy for women, new immigrants just arrived from France, and haredim who want to break the cycle of poverty, get the support they need in Israel, and from communities, like ours, halfway around the world? Are our communities rising to the challenge of meeting critical needs at home and abroad?

Our Israel experience was central to our year-long course of inquiry, study and collaboration. I am grateful for the wisdom shared by my fellow senior development professionals from across the Federation world. We've cemented friendships we began last summer, and we've learned a great deal from one another. We've learned the most, though, from our incredible and talented mentors, Elissa Maier and Vicki Agron. Influenced by their passion and commitment, we've determined to look forward, every day, to make our communities better, every day, and make the philanthropic aspirations of our community members a reality today and for years to come.

Arieh Rosenblum is director of development for the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation.

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International Holocaust Remembrance Day



Shlomit Sufa (left), chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of Israel, speaks at the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event organized by the Wallenberg Citation Initiative at Ottawa City Hall, February 1.

Several ambassadors, members of Parliament, and Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders also spoke at the event held five days after International Holocaust Remembrance Day which marks the anniversary of the liberation by Soviet troops of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz on January 27, 1945.

"It is a mitzvah to remember," said Rabbi Barry Schlesinger of Agudath Israel Congregation (right) at the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event.



Chabad Student Network: The Chabad Student Network Girls Group gathers, January 19, to bake cinnamon challah rolls and Chana buns.

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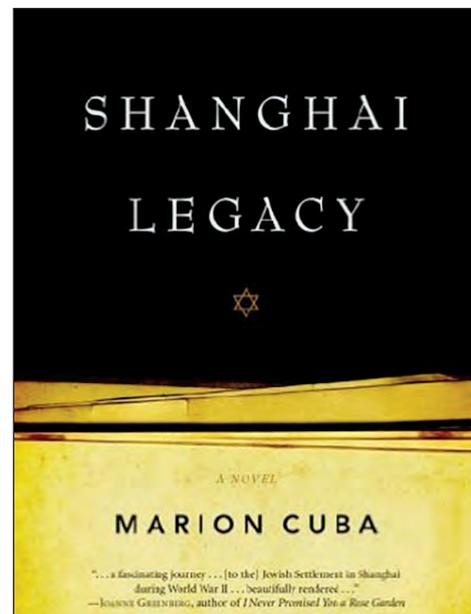
BY ANNE ALPER
FOR TEMPLE ISRAEL

The Books and Bagels series at Temple Israel continues with monthly sessions from March to May.

Each session takes place on Sunday mornings and begins with a bagel breakfast at 9:30 am, followed by a book review and discussion. All sessions are held at Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Drive and pre-registration is not required. There is no charge, but a voluntary donation to cover the cost of breakfast is appreciated.

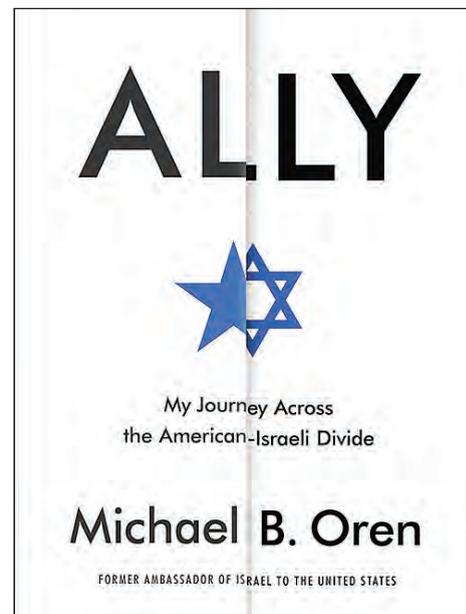
March 13 – Rabbi Robert Morais will review *Shanghai Legacy* by Marion Cuba. This book of historical fiction chronicles the period from 1938 to 1945 when nearly 20,000 Jews fleeing Hitler sought safety in the only place left in the world that would take them without a visa. The book weaves actual events with an imagined mother-daughter drama of dark secrets, generational conflict, and the search for love and fulfilment. Rabbi Morais will provide a unique perspective on this book as his grandparents lived in Shanghai during this period and his mother was born there.

April 10 – Rabbi Steven Garten will review *Ally: My Journey Across the American-Israeli Divide* by Michael Oren. Oren's memoir describes his years – between 2009 and 2013 – as Israel's ambassador to the United States, a period of transformative

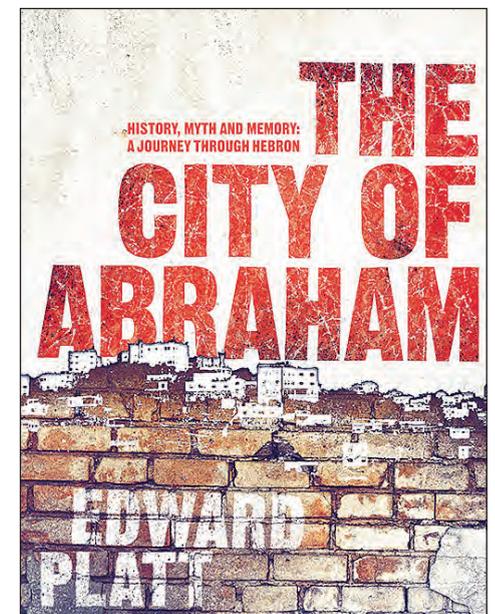


change for the U.S. and of violent upheaval throughout the Middle East. Oren provides a frank, fascinating look inside the special relationship between the U.S. and its closest ally in the region.

May 1 – Howard Alper will review *The City of Abraham, History, Myth and Memory: A Journey Through Hebron* by Edward Platt. *The City of Abraham* is a journey through the history of one of the world's most divided cities. It begins with a hill called Tel Rumeida, the site of ancient Hebron, where, according to Genesis, the patriarch Abraham lived when he arrived



in the Promised Land. Platt tells the history of the hill and the city in which it stands, and explores the mythic roots of the struggle to control the land.



For more information during February contact Dar Blue at blued@me.com. During all other months, contact Shayla Mindell at shaylamindell@rogers.com or 613-594-4556.

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Camp B'nai Brith of Ottawa: A real family affair

For Cindy and Steven Poplove and their four boys, Noah, Justin, Josh and Max, their relationship with Camp B'nai Brith (CBB) of Ottawa spans almost four decades, beginning in 1977 when both Cindy and Steven attended CBB for the first time. Steven remembers standing right behind his future wife in the 1977 camp photo.

"I guess it was meant to be," says Steven.

The Poplove boys have done it all at camp, from the Weekender program right through to staff.

Max, the youngest, is quick to remind his brothers that he skipped the Weekender and registered for two weeks his first summer. When it was time to come home, he begged his parents to let him stay longer.

"I was having too much fun and meeting tons of new friends," says Max. "There was no way I was going home."



The Poplove family (from left to right), Steven, Josh, Noah, Justin, Cindy and Max, share a love of CBB Ottawa, where the boys return every summer to be with friends from all over the world.

When asked what it is about CBB that is so special, the answer is the same for the entire family – the

amazing friendships they have made and continue to have.

"My closest friends today are my

CBB friends," states Cindy. "To see our boys growing up in such a loving environment and so excited to go back to CBB every summer to be with their friends from all over the world makes us so happy. And, thank G-d, no electronics."

For Noah, the oldest, and now a second year staff, having his brothers together at CBB is special.

"It's comforting to see them so happy at camp. The truth is, we get along better at camp than at home."

Ranging in age from 9 to 17, the Poplove boys agree that there is nothing better than leaving the stress of home in the city to enjoy the freedom and friendships of CBB – that special place the entire family calls its home away from home.

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For Claims Conference, funding foreign language Oscar nominee 'Son of Saul' was a big gamble

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ

(JTA) – Set during a 1944 prisoner uprising at Auschwitz, “Son of Saul” stood out as a long shot when its producers first applied for funding from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany. Director László Nemes had no experience with feature films and the script included long, silent and out-of-focus shots.

But the Claims Conference, which negotiates restitution for Nazi victims, ultimately decided to help bankroll the film. It’s a gamble that now seems prescient, as “Son of Saul” is favoured to win for best foreign language film at the

Academy Awards on February 28.

“People all over the world are realizing we’re facing the last generation of Holocaust survivors, so we’re in a race against time to cling to the experiences of the survivors still amongst us,” Greg Schneider, the Claims Conference’s vice-president, told JTA.

The Claims Conference, which devotes a small portion of its budget to funding educational Holocaust films, provided about \$50,000 of the “Son of Saul” budget. But even that relatively small contribution was subject to “serious internal debate,” Schneider said.

“It was a risk that paid off,” he said.

The Claims Conference receives funding requests for about 50 films a year. One factor that helped clinch the deal with Nemes was the quality of a short Holocaust film, “With a Little Patience,” that he had made in 2007. Another factor was the director’s meticulous attention to historical accuracy, as demonstrated by the “Son of Saul” script.

While fictional, the plot uses an accurate backdrop in telling the story of Saul Auslander, a member of the Sonderkommando, a group of Jews whom the Germans forced to work in the gas chambers. In the film, an unemotional Auslander is seen herding

transport after transport of his brethren to their deaths before becoming unhinged at the sight of a Nazi doctor suffocating a boy of 14 who somehow survived the poison. Oblivious to the rebellion being planned around him, Auslander abuses the access that his gruesome job affords him in an attempt to bury the teenager.

“Auslander’s story is fictional, the rest is accurate,” Schneider told JTA last month in Berlin, where the Claims Conference organized the film’s premiere in Germany. (The Sonderkommando at Auschwitz did stage a rebellion in

See Film on page 17



**In support of the Bess and Moe Greenberg Family Hillel Lodge
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Card donations go a long way to improving the quality of life for our residents. Thank you for considering their needs and contributing to their well-being.

On behalf of the residents and their families, we extend sincere appreciation to the following individuals and families who made card donations to the Hillel Lodge Long-Term Care Foundation **between January 20 and February 3, 2016** inclusive.

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Unlike a bequest or gift of life insurance, which are realized some time in the future, a named **Honour Fund** (i.e., endowment fund) is established during your lifetime.

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Here’s a great opportunity to recognize an event or convey the appropriate sentiment to someone important to you and at the same time support the Lodge. Call orders may be given to Cathie at 728-3990, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. You may also go to: www.hillel-ltc.com and click on the “Donate Now” button to make your donations. Cards may be paid for by Visa or Mastercard. Contributions are tax deductible.



Géza Röhrig as Saul in "Son of Saul."

COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Film: Fictional story based on historically accurate events

Continued from page 16

October 1944. Separately, two teenagers were murdered after surviving the gas chambers.)

Since 2008, the Claims Conference has spent a total of \$2.25 million, or an average of \$282,000 a year, to fund Holocaust films. The organization's total annual budget has ranged from \$700 million to \$870 million, with the vast majority going toward improving the quality of life for Holocaust survivors.

"Son of Saul" is the first film funded by the organization to win a Golden Globe or be nominated for an Oscar.

The remainder of the budget for "Son of Saul" came mostly from the Hungarian National Film Fund. "Son of Saul" is Hungary's first Oscar nominee since 1988.

But the funding from Hungary is also

exposing "Son of Saul" to criticism from critics of Hungary's right wing prime minister, Viktor Orbán, whose government was recently accused of down-playing Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust.

"I wonder if getting money from the Hungarian state is a problem for you, or you just don't mind," one critical viewer, who accused the government of anti-Semitism, said at a post-screening Q&A.

In reply, "Son of Saul" producer Gábor Sipos noted that, while requests for funding "Son of Saul" were "rejected in countries that are seen to be less anti-Semitic," including France, Germany and Israel, "the Hungarian film fund decided to support us, meaning this film would not have existed if not for their help."

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- Choose Window Coverings For Bathroom
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Spring 2016

A Taste of Melton We Are What We Remember

with Rabbi Robert Morais



Tuesday, March 8, 15, 22
and April 5

7:00-8:30 pm
\$80 M - \$95 NM



This four week course addresses the important role of collective memory in the ongoing development and adaptation of Judaism throughout the generations.

What do we remember and why? How are the Jewish people's memories formed and preserved?

The course opens with the Torah's directive to remember the attempted genocide perpetrated by Israel's arch-enemy, Amalek. The next three lessons each explore significant historical periods and the memories formed around them: reflections on the Spanish expulsion, recollections of Poland just before and following the *shoah*, and the State of Israel as envisioned by its founders and as experienced by its citizens today.

Register for this course online at www.jccottawa.com or in person at the SJCC Front Desk.

Jewish Mysticism & Kabbalah: Secret Knowledge in Judaism

with Rabbi Steven Garten



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Despite the public chatter about Kabbalah, for many, this important aspect of the Jewish tradition remains a "closed book." This **Graduate** course represents the rich history of Jewish mysticism, along with understandings of many of the texts that have been so central to that tradition, speaking to the deepest mysteries of human existence and to many of life's eternal universal questions.

To register for this course students should either consult Rabbi Garten, or, be a graduate of the two-year Florence Melton Core program or have taken Adult Jewish Education classes at the SJCC.



Registration and text purchase take place online through Florence Melton (*not* the SJCC) at www.events.org/MeltonOttawa - use code **First15** when registering.

New government means new challenges for leaders and new questions for Canadians

The enemy of our enemy is our friend – especially if he buys \$15 billion worth of armoured vehicles and generates thousands of Canadian jobs.

We can make nice with bullies while claiming solidarity with their victims.

And we can jump at the chance to lift sanctions against a country determined to wipe Israel off the map, because we are eager to believe its promises of change.

Welcome to Canadian politics in 2016, where engagement is the name of the game and political expediency muddles moral clarity.

Much of the federal government's foreign policy is still evolving, including how our new "train, advise and assist" policy will be as effective as fighter jets against Islamic State (ISIS). But it's clear that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister of Foreign Affairs Stéphane Dion are determined to return Canada to its glory days as an "honest broker" in world affairs.

So far, this means professing support for Israel while downplaying Palestinian terrorism and thinking settlements are the biggest obstacle to peace.

To be fair, the new Liberal government continued Canada's policy of voting against anti-Israel resolutions at the United Nations (UN) instead of abstaining.

Although former prime minister Stephen Harper is usually credited with this voting pattern – and he certainly championed it – it was actually the Liberal government of Paul Martin that made the pro-Israel voting switch in 2005.

Let's hope that Trudeau's plan to thaw relations with the UN does not change this pattern of support for Israel.

But February has already seen disturbing trends in Canada's new foreign policy.

The government plans to go ahead with a \$15-billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia – originally negotiated by the former Conservative government – while continuing to



BARBARA CROOK
MY ISRAEL

ignore that country's appalling human rights record.

According to Reuters, Saudi Arabia has beheaded at least 85 people in 2016, and is advertising for new executioners to carry out an increasing number of death sentences.

And, despite a new Nanos poll that indicates the majority of Canadians oppose the deal, the prime minister has been tone-deaf on this issue.

During the election campaign, he dismissed the project as a sale of "jeeps" to the Saudis. These are actually light armoured vehicles, which have been used against civilians by Saudi forces in the past.

However, the deal will mean 3,000 advanced manufacturing jobs in and around the General Dynamics Land Systems Factory in London, Ontario, as well as thousands of other jobs for suppliers.

This is a difficult balancing act for any politician, especially a neophyte prime minister.

But Trudeau has a chance to take a principled stand here – at the very least to take a close look at the deal and understand its full ramifications before bounding ahead.

The Liberal government is also planning to re-engage with Russia "in a cautious way," according to Dion, despite its annexation of Crimea in blatant violation of international law. We can apparently do this while still proclaiming unwavering support for Ukraine – a position

endorsed by Andriy Shevchenko, Ukraine's new ambassador to Canada.

And, like the U.S., the government is lifting many of Canada's sanctions against Iran – to benefit Canadian businesses, says Dion. It is also preparing to resume diplomatic relations with Iran because of the P5 + 1 agreement on Iran's nuclear program.

Shimon Koffler Fogel, CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), said in an open letter about the deal (<http://tinyurl.com/jcmpl6>) that it is encouraging that Canada still lists Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism, and that other sanctions against perpetrators and sponsors of terror in Iran remain.

However, he expressed concern over "the very real danger that the international community, out of naive enthusiasm over the nuclear agreement and growing fear regarding the spread of ISIS, will welcome Iran as a legitimate member of the international community even as the regime continues to sponsor terrorism, abuse human rights, foment chaos in the region, and issue genocidal calls for the annihilation of Israel."

CIJA plans to mobilize the Canadian Jewish community to encourage Dion to maintain economic and political pressure on Iran, since "history shows diplomacy without economic pressure has never been effective in changing Iran's behaviour."

A new government means new challenges for our leaders and new questions for Canadians.

Do we follow our allies, and "go along to get along?" Do we ignore our trading partners' human rights violations to create Canadian jobs? Do we believe that the signing of a flawed nuclear accord justifies détente with one of Israel's worst enemies?

The answers are easy during an election campaign. Now it's time for tough moral choices.

Shabbat around the table

Congregation Or Haneshamah has announced a new initiative called Shabbat Around the Table to which members invite Jewish and non-Jewish guests to join them for Shabbat dinner at their homes. The first event took place in January, and I was reminded of a time when I was welcomed at a Shabbat table.

I lived in Amsterdam for a few months in 2014 and I sought out the Jewish community there. I was so moved by the generosity of the people I met at Liberaal Joodse Gemeente and Beit Ha Chidush. Just one week after meeting Mirjam at a Shacharit service, she invited me to her house one sweltering Friday afternoon to bake challah or, rather, to bake challot, because, in the Dutch Ashkenazi tradition, you always bake two loaves for Shabbat and offer them both, holding them up together, when you bless the bread. Other communities do this too, of course. I also saw this custom in Poland at Beit Krakow in the dreamy and mystical Kazimierz neighbourhood.

Mirjam invited me up three flights of steep stairs to her apartment with its grand piano and bookshelves filled with Judaica. She told me that she usually bakes challah from a mix, but that day we would try it from scratch. Mirjam's English is good, but not perfect, and my Dutch is *niet so goode*, but we persevered, combining the challah ingredients while I tried to calculate how to half the Dutch recipe. We laughed at how to translate "until bubbles appear in the dough" and then, later,



SARAH WAISVISZ
DISPATCHES
FROM THE
DIASPORA

when we were kneading the dough, how to render this from the Dutch original: "knead until the dough feels like a baby's bottom." I joked that this recipe is prejudiced towards mothers, and she quipped, "Why not fathers?" and then we agreed that knowledge of parenting, or at least babysitting, is required. I said that, either way, I am ill-equipped for the job.

It was my first time ever baking challah. Mirjam explained that her ex-husband used to be the challah-baker, but, for 10 years, it had been up to her. She hosts Shabbat dinner every week for her sons and her friends. Her daughter made aliyah a few years ago to Tel Aviv.

We glazed the braided challah loaves, two of course, and sprinkled poppy seeds. I asked how her daughter was doing and Mirjam said that, when they last spoke, she was on her way to a surfing lesson. Later that weekend, we learned about the four children from Gaza killed on a beach just down the coast.

We put the two loaves into the oven and set a timer. I

felt honoured to be invited to the Shabbat table in this bright home. The guests arrived, and we collected on the tiny balcony to sit in the breeze. There were Mirjam's two sons, two family friends, and the lady *rabbijn* I met last week at the *sjul*. And there was me: the stranger. I was grateful to be there and wondered how I could reciprocate this act of radical hospitality.

It was still bright outside at about 8:30 pm when we decided to light the candles and we discussed whether candle-lighting protocol varies the further north or south you live. We blessed the candles, and Mirjam's older son made Kiddush over the wine.

We brought out the challot to great acclaim. The loaves looked beautiful, and everyone was impressed we made them from scratch. Much care was taken to salt each piece of challah. For me that summer, the salted challah symbolized awareness of the contemporary violence in Israel and Gaza, and also the history of the Shoah, which is never distant for us in Europe and for our families. At services in Amsterdam, for example, I learned that everyone stands for the whole of the Mourner's Kaddish to commemorate the social grief. This has been a tradition for decades, a tradition to collectively mourn the world that was lost.

That evening, around that Shabbat table, conversations in Dutch and English ranged widely. I announced that, when I try baking challah on my own, I will invite a friend or stranger to help. We left in good spirits, after having eaten well and drunk much wine. I cycled home in the hot dark night feeling very grateful for the kindness of strangers.

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Mural at York University incites hatred

Many of you are aware of the recent disturbing decisions of a university to defend a mural they categorize as “artwork” despite its conveying a very clear hateful message.

The mural in the Student Centre at York University depicts a Palestinian holding rocks (which are frequently used by Palestinians as weapons) while staring at an Israeli vehicle. In the mural, the Palestinian is wearing a scarf featuring a map of Palestine that seemingly forgets to include Israel. The mural creates a toxic, frightening environment on campus. It fosters ignorance and encourages a great divide amongst York’s diverse student population.

As I write, on February 1, York has announced it will defend the art work and the mural will not be removed. Hopefully, by the time this column is published, the university’s student union and administration will wake up and recognize the mural is not simply an artistic expression of free speech, but rather an excuse to incite pure hatred.

Toronto’s mainstream media has largely failed to address the severity of this situation, improperly framing the narrative of these events. What has made the news is the decision of a major financial donor to the university to pull out. Film executive Paul Bronfman told the National Post he would withdraw his financial support to York unless the mural comes down.

“That’s not artistry, it’s just pure hate ... It wouldn’t be tolerated by any well-respected institution, whether it’s a university or any other public body,” said Bronfman.

His actions have been greeted with support from other York alumni and donors. His response, however, was also met with heavy criticism.



ARIELLE ELLIS
CAMPUS LIFE

The University of Ottawa, which I attend ... has its flaws. However, I am confident that my university’s administration would never allow something like the York mural to hang. A few years ago, I wouldn’t have been so sure. But, thankfully, things seem to have calmed down on our campus.

In defending York’s decision to keep the mural, National Post columnist Chris Selley wrote, “The short answer is: Too bad. It’s university.”

You’re right, Chris. Too bad it’s university. Universities exist to deliver a high standard of education to their students. A university that is reputable and delivers such education is not a university that condones, much less allows, the display of such an uneducated hatred.

Though I do not go to York, I feel a strong connection

to what goes on there. No Jewish university student anywhere should ever be made to feel uncomfortable or frightened while walking down the hallways of their school.

One of the fundamental policies our country rests on is fostering a tolerant and accommodating environment for all minorities within Canada. Forgive me, York, for I’m sure every member of your administration is well aware that Canada’s multiculturalism policies enacted in 1971 are still in fact applicable to our daily lives. I’m sure that a mural depicting Muslims as terrorists would never fly at York University, or any other Canadian institution of higher learning.

The University of Ottawa, which I attend, has also received negative attention in the media for absurd reasons on occasion when certain student groups have tried to prohibit things its students could possibly derive joy from. This includes an attempt to ban Sabra hummus from campus (really?) to a claim that yoga on campus should be banned due to “cultural appropriation” (that stunt made international news).

The school has its flaws. However, I am confident that my university’s administration would never allow something like the York mural to hang. A few years ago, I wouldn’t have been so sure. But, thankfully, things seem to have calmed down on our campus. That being said, anything is possible, and it is very scary to know the nation’s mainstream media would fail to condemn publicly something like the York mural.

I would hope that, under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s leadership, Canada’s new government will stand up and condemn the actions of York University and will follow in the past government’s footsteps by reinforcing Canada’s loyal friendship with Israel.

How to eat healthily despite high food prices

Not everyone has the financial freedom to purchase fresh produce and meat at the current over-inflated prices. The low Canadian dollar coupled with drought in California and the Canadian beef-producing provinces have put some foods out of reach for low-to-average income earners. High prices are also leaving a bad taste in the mouths of consumers who have the means. You have to want strawberries really badly to pay \$9.99 for a one-pound box.

With a bit of education and the luxury of time, you can become a savvy shopper and continue to enjoy healthy whole and minimally-processed foods. Start by researching before you shop.

You can manually compare grocery store flyers or conduct a more efficient price-comparison exercise via a free app. I use Flipp to view local flyers on my cellphone as well as search for a particular food in order to instantly find the cheapest advertised price. A few grocery stores offer price-matching. Show the cashier the best price available elsewhere and that’s what you’ll be charged. That’ll save you from running from store to store in pursuit of sales.

If you have the time, you may also want to peruse the aisles of your local grocery store on different days for non-advertised specials. I sometimes find lean ground beef, veal scaloppini, whole chicken and boneless chicken and turkey breasts marked down by 50 per cent because they are about to expire. You can cook them the same day or stock up and freeze them. My friends tell me that they find similar discounts on kosher meat as well.

In January, cauliflower became a hot topic in the



GLORIA SCHWARTZ
FOCUS ON FITNESS

media. At \$7 for a small head, this cruciferous vegetable became the poster child for exorbitant price hikes. Consumers, including myself, were doing double-takes and experiencing sticker shock at the grocery store. Soup kitchens, food banks and restaurants were substituting more affordable alternatives for cauliflower, as well as for celery, cucumbers and other over-priced produce. Gary Clement’s comic in the National Post depicted a couple telling a loans officer, “We’re thinking of putting a down payment on a cauliflower.”

Over several weeks, I kept my eye on the price of cauliflower and sure enough, it slowly came down. In late January, it ranged from \$5.99 at a major grocery store chain to a somewhat more reasonable price of \$2.49 at an independent store; however, many other produce prices remained high.

I asked Christine Devaney Towsley, registered dietitian for Loblaws College Square and Loblaws Merivale, to share some tips for healthy eating on a budget:

- Frozen veggies are a great alternative and are just as nutritious as fresh. Keep several varieties on hand to throw into pastas, soups and stir-fries. Canned veggies are also a good option. Just give them a rinse to remove some of the sodium; or buy varieties that are packed in

water only. Veggies that are generally available at a good price year round include carrots, onions, potatoes, beets, mushrooms and cabbage. Having these on hand in your pantry can help you boost your plate with vitamins, fibre and antioxidants;

- Purchase less expensive cuts of meats and cook them using a slow cooker to help tenderize;
- Chickpeas, beans and lentils contain iron, protein and zinc, just as meat does, but they are more affordable, and also provide lots of fibre. Some ideas of how to use these include meatless chili, black bean soup, hummus or chickpea stir fry;
- Firm tofu is another great meat alternative that is versatile and will take on whatever flavours you’re marinating or cooking it with. Other affordable sources of protein are sunflower and pumpkin seeds, nut butters and eggs;
- Plain, un-battered frozen salmon filets or canned salmon are both great options. Quick canned salmon meal ideas include salmon salad sandwiches, mixed green salad topped with salmon or pan seared salmon patties;
- Whole grain pasta, barley, oats and brown rice are affordable and nutritious.

Gone are the days when I’d throw food into my cart willy-nilly and throw out a lot of it after it rotted in my fridge. Instead, I plan better, buy less and use it up.

Jewish Family Services of Ottawa has access to several food security programs for those who are struggling to feed themselves and their family. The Tikvah program offers support to those in our Jewish Community who are low income. For more information, contact Andrea Gardner at 613-722-2225, ext. 321.

How Israel became a global water superpower

Let There Be Water:
Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World
By Seth M. Siegel
Thomas Donne Books
352 pages

Seth Siegel is a lawyer, entrepreneur and writer who became fascinated with how Israel used innovative technology and imaginative management to overcome chronic water shortage. *Let There Be Water: Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World* represents the distillation of hundreds of interviews about Israel's water problems and the slow but steady routes to their resolution. It shows how Israel became a global water superpower, something not previously thought conceivable in the Middle East.

The text is presented in four parts reflecting different time periods in Israel's development as a nation, and different perspectives on water development: "The Creation of a Water-Focused Nation"; "The Transformation"; "The World Beyond Israel's Borders";

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DAVID BROOKS BOOK REVIEW

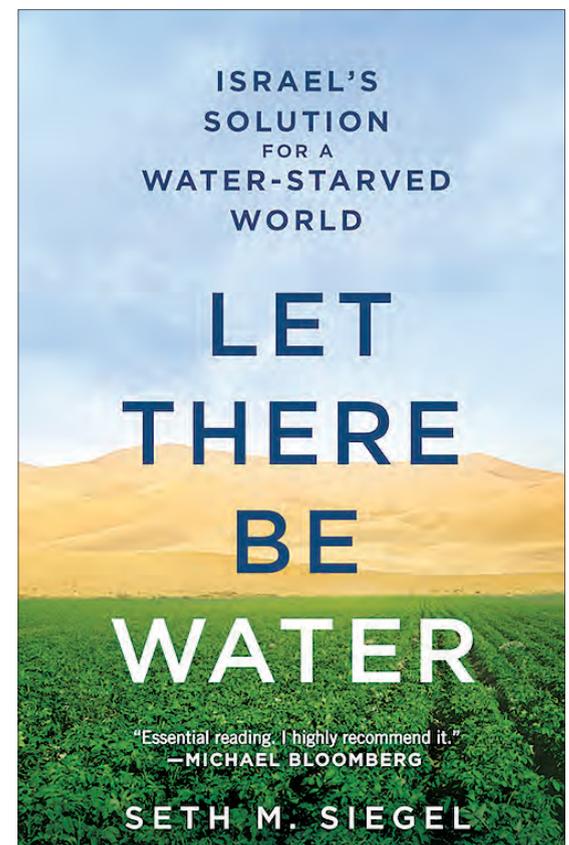
and "How Israel Did It."

Bracketing the four sections is an introductory chapter on the global water situation and a final chapter entitled, "Guiding Philosophy." Each chapter is full of information about a particular shift in water management or about a particular water technology that was needed to change Israel from a water-deficit nation to a water-surplus one. The book is well organized and well written – probably better so than any previous book on Israel's water history.

However, the book may be too detailed for someone who wants an overview, yet too narrowly focused on technology for someone who wants to know "why" rather than just "how." Both domestic and regional politics are neglected in favour of the creation and development of technology. True, Israel has a superb record in taking technological opportunities and transforming them into commercial realities. However, the availability of technology is just the opportunity; it is politics (in the broadest sense) that determines when and where the technology will be used.

Lack of attention to international politics is particularly evident in the chapter, "Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians: Finding a Regional Water Solution." No doubt, there are many technologies that can help these three nations move toward resolution of the use of their interconnected waterways. However, is there any point in proposing technical improvements in water efficiency to the Palestinians so long as Israel has its hand firmly on all the pumps and valves and Annex Two of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty provides for the division of the flow of the Jordan River without even mentioning the Palestinians?

Politics also play a big role. Siegel is correct to emphasize the importance of drip irrigation and improved pricing of water to greater efficiency in Israeli agriculture. However, drip irrigation was not discovered in Israel; among other places, it was commonly used by Incan farmers when Europeans first came upon them.



But it was Israeli scientists who found ways to overcome its technical limitations and then Israeli farmers who adapted "drip" to their large but thirsty farms. However, large-scale transition to drip agriculture might have come a decade – possibly two decades – earlier had not the cost of irrigation water been so heavily subsidized and had not what was then called the Office of the Water Commission been kept in the Ministry of Agriculture for many years after agricultural production was no longer a significant part of the Israeli economy.

Siegel has written a useful book, but not one that is nearly as useful as it could have been. Too much of the information comes from interviews and too little from professional literature, and each of the chapters must be integrated with Israeli and regional political information for the full story to emerge.

David B. Brooks, a natural resource economist, is co-author of a draft water agreement between Israelis and Palestinians.

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WHAT'S GOING ON | February 22 to March 6, 2016

FOR MORE CALENDAR LISTINGS, VISIT WWW.OTTAWAJEWISHBULLETIN.COM/EVENTS AND WWW.JEWISHOTTAWA.COM/COMMUNITY-CALENDAR

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

The Role of Authenticity in Remembering the Holocaust: A lecture by Piotr Cywiński, director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Polish Embassy, 443 Daly Ave., 11:30 am to 1 pm.
Info: Mina Cohn, 613-695-9700, minacohn@yahoo.ca

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Soloway JCC Annual General Meeting & Awards Night: Recognizes volunteer leaders in our community, 7 pm.
Info: Maxine Miska, 613-798-9818, ext. 263, mmiska@jccottawa.com

Temple Israel presents Hungarian Ambassador Balint Ódor: He will discuss Hungary's initiatives in combating anti-Semitism in Hungary and worldwide, in revitalizing the Hungarian Jewish community, in restoring Hungary's synagogues and cemeteries and Hungary's commitment to Holocaust education. Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr., 7 to 9:30 pm.
Info: Julie Taub, 613-222-4446

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

EG Gratitude: The Emerging Generation Division thanks its EG donors with an unforgettable night of drinking, music and delicious treats. HUB Ottawa, 71 Bank St., 6th floor, 8 to 11:30 pm.
Info: Ariel Fainer, 613-798-4696, ext. 240, afainer@jewishottawa.com

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28

PJ Library School Age Book Club Adventure: Join the SJCC for a PJ Library book with a mitzvot, Tikun Olam or Pirkei Avot lesson plus crafts and activities related to the story. 10:30 am to 12 pm.
Info: Gail Lieff, 613-798-9818, ext. 303, glieff@jccottawa.com

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2

Deepening Jewish Experience: Faith and Politics: Do we have a religious right to the entire land of Israel? Join Rabbi Scher for this second of a four-part series to explore Jewish wisdom and teachings. Machzikei Hadas, 2310 Virginia Dr., 7:45 to 8:45 pm.
Part 3, Tuesday, March 15; Part 4, Tuesday, March 29.
Info: Rabbi Idan Scher, rabbischer@cmhottawa.com

SUNDAY, MARCH 6

Soloway JCC 3rd Annual Biathlon: A fun day of fitness where teams of 12 will spin and swim to raise funds for the Soloway JCC, 8 am to 6 pm.
Info/Register: Carla Gencher, 613-798-9818 ext. 278, cgencher@jccottawa.com

COMING SOON

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

Art and Soul...Live Creatively: Explore Judaism's insights into the arts and how they beautify and transform our lives, 7:30 pm. **Also Thursday, March 10, 9 am.**
Info: Devora Caytak, 613-729-7712, dev18@sympatico.ca

SUNDAY, MARCH 13

Daylight Savings Time starts: When standard time is about to reach Sunday, March 13, 2 am, clocks are turned forward ONE hour to 3 am daylight time.

Books and Bagels Book Review and discussion: Breakfast followed by review and discussion. Rabbi Robert Morais reviews "Shanghai Legacy" by Marion Cuba. 9:30 to 11:30 am. Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr., 9:30 to 11:30 am.
Info: Shayla Mindell, 613-594-4556, shaynamindell@rogers.com

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

Book Launch - "A Heroic Life:" The Canadian launch of "A Heroic Life," a new biography about Raoul Wallenberg by the Swedish journalist and author Ingrid Carlberg. Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa, 57 Louis Pasteur, 4 to 6 pm.
Info: Mina Cohn, 613-695-9700, minacohn@yahoo.ca

CANDLE LIGHTING BEFORE

FEBRUARY 26	5:25 PM	MARCH 11	5:44 PM
MARCH 4	5:34 PM	MARCH 18	6:53 PM

BULLETIN DEADLINES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2	FOR MARCH 21
TUESDAY, MARCH 15	FOR APRIL 4
MONDAY, MARCH 28 *	FOR APRIL 18

* Early deadline: Community-wide Issue

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CONDOLENCES

Condolences are extended to the families of:

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Max Mendel Levitt, Winnipeg
(father of Marsha Saper)

Zelma Palef (née Mandelker)

May their memory
be a blessing always.

The Condolence Column is offered as a public service to the community. There is no charge. For listing in this column, please call 613 798-4696, ext. 274. Voice mail is available.



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