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**Hamilton  
Jewish**

# News

JULY 2022 | TAMUZ 1 5782

The voice of Jewish Hamilton

## RECORD-BREAKING community CAMPAIGN EXCEEDS expectations

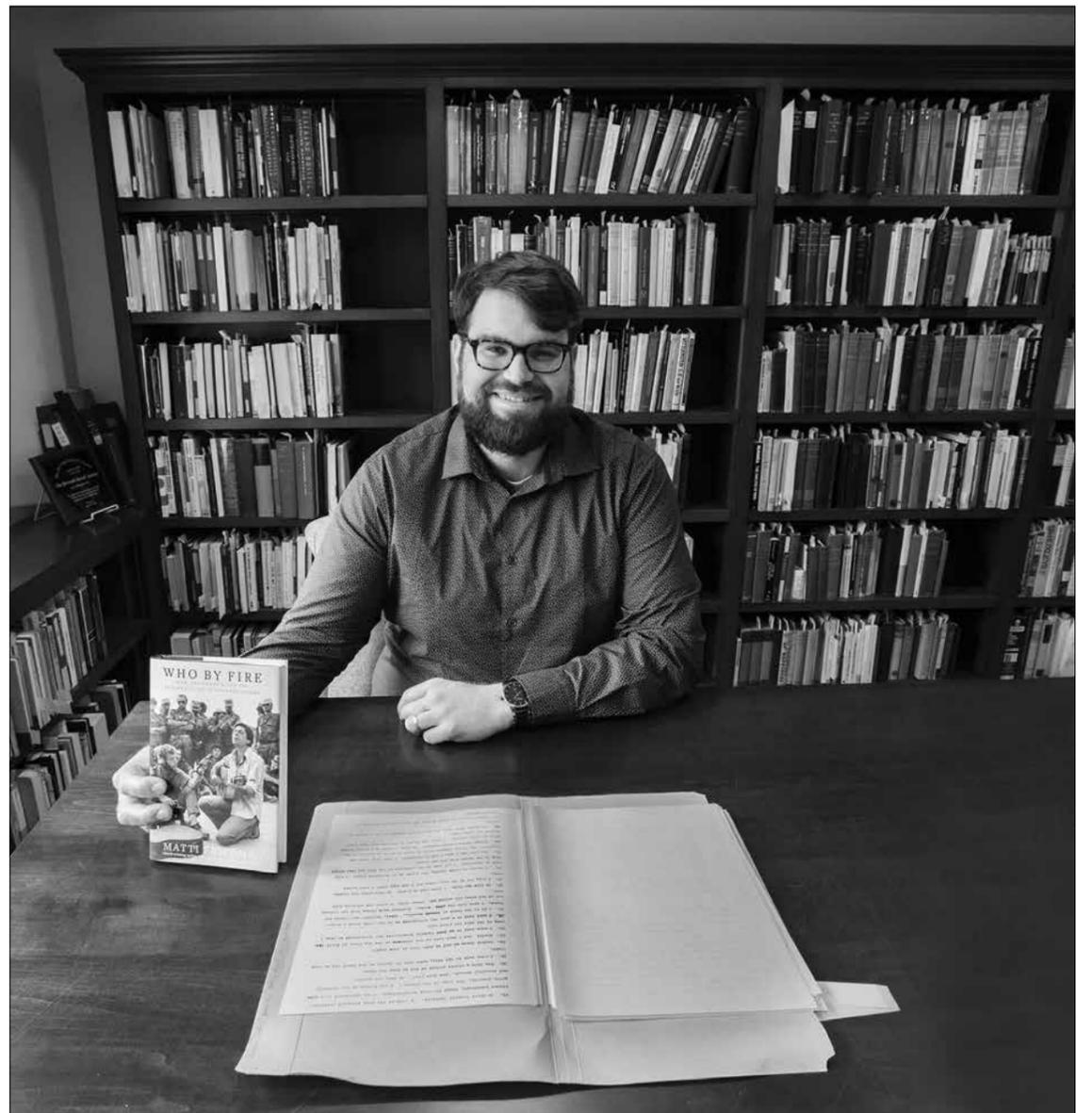
At more than \$1.6 million, this year's Annual Campaign was the largest in Federation history, despite unprecedented circumstances

STORY BY **ABIGAIL CUKIER**  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

HAMILTON JEWISH Federation's 2022 annual campaign raised more than \$1.6 million—its highest total ever. In addition, its Ukraine Emergency Campaign raised \$134,946, with those funds going to Federation's overseas partner agencies, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Joint Distribution Committee to provide humanitarian aid and support. Jay State, longtime member of Federation's campaign cabinet, attributes the success to community generosity. "Our community stepped up and said, 'Together, we are here for all of us. We know our help is necessary. Count us in. We are here to do good.' And good we did— with the help of the mitzvah-performing donors, the hardworking and committed canvassers, our incredible professional staff, our amazing Gustavo and the dedicated cabinet.

"We should be very proud of what we have accomplished, together, as a caring community, determined to do good. I think of the good we will accomplish with the funds raised and my heart swells with joy, pride and gratitude."

CAMPAIGN EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS CONTINUES ON P4



PHOTOGRAPH BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

McMaster librarian Chris Long with the manuscript he unearthed from the university's McLelland and Stewart archive.

## McMaster's Leonard Cohen manuscript

Obscure manuscript found in university's McLelland and Stewart archive sheds light on Cohen's experiences in the Yom Kippur War.

READ THE STORY AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ARCHIVE: **PAGE 7**

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FEDERATION EDITORIAL

## Looking back, Going forward



Gustavo Rymberg

CEO  
HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION

THE LAST couple of years have been difficult for all of us, but despite the lockdowns and many other obstacles, the Hamilton Jewish Federation accomplished great things. While continuing to offer vital services, we quickly adapted virtual programming that enabled us to reach new audiences and develop new relationships.

Most importantly, thanks to generous community support, we raised more than \$1.7 million in another record-breaking campaign.

I want to thank the Federation's board of directors for its ongoing leadership during this time, to our dedicated staff, and to everyone who made a gift to the campaign.

Now, it's time to go forward ... by embarking on the following exciting initiatives.

### PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE IN HAMILTON, ISRAEL AND AROUND THE WORLD

#### The Welcome Home Initiative

The Canadian government has set a target to land almost 1.3 million new permanent residents between 2022 and 2024. Some of these new immigrants will be Jewish, and will be looking for a new city to call home. The Welcome Home Initiative is a joint initiative of the Jewish Federations of Hamilton, London and Windsor, whose goal is to attract new Jewish residents to our respective communities by showcasing the quality of life and robust Jewish infrastructure available in all three communities through a new English, Spanish and Russian website and social media marketing and promotional videos. In addition, each Federation has developed the infrastructure to help settle newly arrived Jewish residents. To learn more, please visit [jwelcomehome.com](http://jwelcomehome.com).

### SUPPORTING ISRAEL AND FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM

#### #nomoreantisemitism International Conference

In response to the alarming rise of antisemitism and BDS activity, the Hamilton Jewish Federation has organized the first inaugural #nomoreantisemitism International Conference, which will take place from Nov. 19 to 21, 2022 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton and the David Braley Health

Sciences Centre at McMaster University. It takes all of us to stand up together and unite against hate and perpetual violence and that's why we're hoping to see broad community attendance. To learn more about our impressive lineup of speakers and workshops, please visit [jewishhamilton.org](http://jewishhamilton.org)

### EDUCATING, ENGAGING AND STRENGTHENING OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY

#### B'nai Brith Youth Organization's Hamilton Chapter

BBYO is the leading pluralistic Jewish teen movement aspiring to involve more Jewish teens in more meaningful Jewish experiences. With a network of hundreds of chapters across North America and in 60 countries around the world, BBYO reaches nearly 70,000 teens annually and serves as the Jewish community's largest and most valuable platform for delivering fun, meaningful, and affordable experiences that inspire a lasting connection to the Jewish people. BBYO is re-opening its Hamilton chapter this September. For more information, please call the Federation office at 905.648.0605.

#### Ontario Trillium Foundation

The Hamilton Jewish Federation has received a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation from its Resilient Communities Fund that will equip our board members and professional staff with new approaches, prepare for change and build resiliency. This grant will also increase our ability to access financial resources, develop new and alternative sources of revenues, and re-imagine the delivery of programs and services to meet the community, employees, and volunteers.

From a global pandemic to a war in Ukraine, the last years have indeed been challenging, but your generosity ensures that our community could respond immediately and effectively. Now, as we go forward to strengthen and build our community, we hope you will join us on Tuesday, July 26 at Theatre Aquarius at the launch of our 2023 Annual Community Campaign for former Hamiltonian Ben Caplan's riveting performance of Old Stock, A Refugee Love Story. Please see page 14 of this issue for details, or visit [jewishhamilton.org](http://jewishhamilton.org).



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## Dizengoff ... more than just a street



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN

**Stroll along Tel Aviv's elegant Rothschild Boulevard** and you'll come across a bronze statue of Tel Aviv's first mayor, Meir Dizengoff. Dizengoff was once described as a man who could reminisce about the future. He is famous for seizing the opportunity to transform a picturesque suburb of Jaffa into the urban heart of the Zionist endeavour, the financial and cultural arena of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel.

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### NEXT ISSUE: SEPTEMBER 2022

**DEADLINES** Booking ads: **Aug. 2, 2022**

Advertising copy: **Aug. 29, 2022**

Publication date: **June 29, 2022**

## HJN

The Hamilton Jewish News is published five times a year by the Hamilton Jewish Federation

### EDITORIAL POLICY

The Hamilton Jewish News invites members of the community to contribute letters, articles or guest editorials.

**Written submissions** must be forwarded by the deadline indicated in each issue. This newspaper reserves the right to edit, condense or reject any contribution for brevity or legal purposes.

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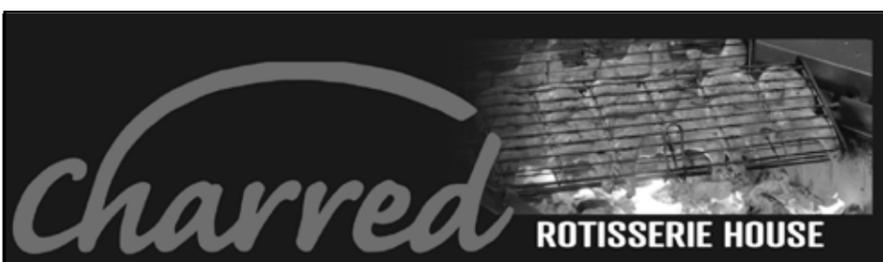
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## Campaign exceeds expectations

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

SINCE 2017, Federation has continually increased its fundraising goal and accomplished each one. In 2017, the campaign raised \$1,025,000. In 2019, the total was \$1,202,000 and in 2021, it was \$1,500,000. This year's total was \$1,603,464 and more than \$1.7 million including the Ukraine Emergency Campaign.

"The commitment from the people involved was fantastic," says Gustavo Rymberg, Federation CEO. "It's important to say thank you to our volunteers, the people in the campaign cabinet, the people making the phone calls for donations and all of the professional staff. And thank you to the community for its generosity. All the good everyone is doing is coming from across different generations, different genders and all backgrounds in the community."

Rymberg says Federation is now looking toward 2023. Its goal for next year's campaign is \$1.8 million. "That sounds like a big number, but with our campaign numbers from the past five years, I think it is realistic," he says.

"We have gone from lockdown to reopening to war, from known to unknown. And we always kept going. We adapted to changes and to emergency circumstances. We have to go forward and create a more diverse, more inclusive and secure Jewish community, which we all deserve."

Howard Eisenberg, Federation board chair, believes Federation and the community will reach next year's \$1.8 million goal.

"The generosity of our community is second to none. And it all starts with Federation staff and our volunteers and leadership," he says. "Our success since Gustavo came to Federation is no coincidence. He is able to get so many people on the bandwagon and it's contagious. He is able to reach people in this community who haven't been reached before."

Eisenberg says another key to success has been the rise in community programming, including events like the Jewish Film Festival and Holocaust Education Week, as well as regular weekly and monthly programming. "That keeps people in touch and that's really important," he says.

State agrees. "I, along with so many others, think the world of Gustavo. It is too easy just to say that he is a mensch. Gustavo is a leader with a heart, a vision and an ability to achieve," State says. "He pulls us to our objectives, brings us along with his ideas and goals. I firmly believe this is due to his drive to do good for our community. I think that is seen by the community, recognized and appreciated. It results in our being more motivated by him to pull together for the common good of our community."

## Committee works towards more inclusion of LGBTQ+ in Jewish life

BY ABIGAIL CUKIER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

LAST SUMMER, after two successful Hamilton Jewish Federation-sponsored events exploring LGBTQ+ experiences in the Jewish community, the J-LGBTQ+ Pride Committee was formed at the invitation of the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

"The attendance at these events affirmed the need for ongoing attention to the needs and interests of LGBTQ+ Jews in Hamilton," says Laura Wolfson, chair of the committee.

The committee's mandate includes advocating for LGBTQ+ representation and/or content in all the programs and services Federation offers and to plan monthly programs for LGBTQ+ Jewish adults and youth.

Events have included an online trivia night and a Lag BaOmer Bonfire and Storytelling Night at Valens Conservation Area, and a Pride Shabbat Dinner on June 17, co-sponsored by Federation and CIJA and endorsed by Temple Anshe Sholom, Beth Jacob Synagogue, and McMaster Hillel. The catered kosher dinner included rainbow challahs by local baker Rhonda Dahan, greetings from local dignitaries, as well as Sheba Birhanu, CIJA's associate director.

While these events are a chance to socialize and have fun, they mean even more to Wolfson.

"When I was growing up, there were no outwardly queer Jews for me to look up to as role models. There were no signs in any shul or JCC bearing rainbow flags and

saying, 'This is a Positive Safe Space' or 'Trans Jews are welcome here.' There were no Jewish rituals marking important life-cycle events for us," says Wolfson, who was recently appointed to CIJA's LGBTQ2+ Advisory Council.

Even now, synagogues and other Jewish organizations grapple with matters like how to define family membership or how to honour trans and non-binary Jews being called up to the Torah for an Aliyah when there is no traditional framework for their Hebrew names.

"My wife and daughter and I went to Toronto a few years ago with one other Hamilton Jewish family for a Pride Shabbat service and dinner, because there was no event for us to celebrate Pride in a Jewish way, here in Hamilton," Wolfson says. "It is important to me to claim our space as an LGBTQ+ family in the Jewish community. Having the Hamilton Jewish Federation sponsor a Pride Shabbat program feels like a very welcome, long-due acknowledgment that we belong."

And events like the Pride Shabbat Dinner are not just important for the J-LGBTQ+ community, but for the whole community.

"Not acknowledging this as a community sends the message that this is something we believe should be hidden because it is problematic at best, or shameful at worst," Wolfson says. "By identifying that LGBTQ+ Jews have been marginalized in the past, and by showing that we recognize a need to acknowledge the belonging of every Jewish person in the Jewish community, we lift ourselves up as a community."

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# A fond farewell for beloved community professional

Departing Jewish Family Services executive director praised for her compassion and get-it-done attitude

BY **ABIGAIL CUKIER**  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

The COVID-19 pandemic started only eight months after Alexis Wenzowski became executive director of Hamilton Jewish Family Services (HJFS). The agency had recently passed a new strategic plan that included adding mental health services. But that change was to happen at a slow and progressive pace.

Then, during the first month of the pandemic, HJFS staff were working remotely, except for Wenzowski, who went into the office to keep the food bank open. Many clients were coming in crying and sharing stories of stress and emotional hardship.

“I realized I had a choice. I can struggle through this, or I can write grants and get services and supports in place to really help these people,” Wenzowski says. Mental health counselling was soon added to the agency’s programs.

This compassion and get-it-done attitude are among what agency staff, volunteers and Hamilton community members are going to miss most when Wenzowski leaves her position in July to take on a new role as director of operations for Winnipeg Jewish Child and Family Services.

“Alexis came into our lives when we really needed her,” says Hanna Schayer, HJFS board president. “Carol Krames, who was universally beloved, was ill and we had to find somebody who could take the position of executive director. We interviewed Alexis and at the end of the interview, we were elated.

“She’s got all the skills you want in an executive director but what really came across was just how fine a person she is. There’s this really good mind coupled in this person who has a wonderful sense of humour and an enormous amount of compassion.”

Schayer says Wenzowski built on the foundation Krames had created of an agency rooted in compassion and Jewish values. Wenzowski also knew that to serve a community facing increasing challenges associated with mental health, poverty and aging, she needed to broaden connections outside of the Jewish community. “She needed to make our larger community understand that there are significant issues around Jewish poverty and food insecurity, that we needed the same kind of resources that other communities needed,” Schayer said. Through her outreach, Wenzowski was able to make connections and garner new funding.

Wenzowski says the agency reimaged how it could work with other Jewish organizations, such as through growing community gardens with Beth Jacob and Kehila Heschel School and partnering with Federation on grant applications. Wenzowski also worked on breaking the myth that HJFS only serves the Jewish population.

“It is part of our agency’s values that no one will ever be turned away. We wanted to invite them to participate in it,” Wenzowski says.

For the past couple of years, the Dundas Valley Sunrise Rotary Club has been growing produce for the HJFS food bank. This year, HJFS will



PHOTOGRAPH BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

**Alexis Wenzowski** at Federation’s AGM, after receiving accolades from CEO Gustavo Rymberg.

become a full member of Hamilton Food Share, which includes getting grants from the organization, being voting members at its AGM and being part of Hamilton’s Emergency Food Network. HJFS has also been able to increase its offerings to include food such as milk and eggs.

“Having worked alongside Alexis, I have seen her passion and genuine care of people accessing supports at Hamilton Jewish Family Services in action,” says Joanne Santucci, CEO of Hamilton Food Share. “Her commitment to ensuring that any member of the Jewish community in Hamilton experiencing hunger had access to kosher food resources was instrumental in helping shape the food diversity and inclusion work happening at Hamilton Food Share. We wish her well in her future endeavors and thank her for fight against hunger in our community.”

Christine Nusca, HJFS office manager, is also grateful for Alexis’ work for the community.

“It was an honour get to know and work beside her,” Nusca says. “Upon Alexis’ arrival she embraced the community and helped to strengthen the

bonds between HJFS, Jewish organizations and organizations at large to further the mission of Hamilton Jewish Family Services. Alexis was always compassionate, kind and understanding of all who walked through our doors. I know that staff and clients wish her well in her new endeavor but will miss her caring nature and her sense of humour.”

Along with the growth of the food security program and mental health services, Wenzowski is proud of the agency’s budget growth, which has gone from \$350,000 a few years ago to \$880,000 in 2022 through an increase in donations and grants. HJFS also added a second location at J Hamilton for its mental health services. When she started, Wenzowski was the agency’s only full-time staff member. Now there are seven, with five more part time.

“This has been the opportunity of a lifetime for me. Leaving has been the hardest personal and professional decision I’ve ever had to make,” Wenzowski says. “I have been privileged to lead an organization where I had an incredibly kind and dedicated board, presidents who gave me the space to be the executive director I could be and a tremendous staff with big hearts who were able to navigate change through the pandemic. And the community was so welcoming and loving to me.

“When I came in, I tried to think about what Carol valued and tried to make sure that the culture of the agency remained the same—and that was a kind place for everyone. I know the agency will continue to be run by the community for the community. I know it will continue to be a small agency with such a big heart.”



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# Something new is on the Horizon

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# Hamilton Hebrew Academy receives historic donation

Former student David McLean's gift made in honour of his parents, Stephanie and Jim McLean

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

THE HAMILTON Hebrew Academy has recently received a legacy gift that represents the largest-ever single donation made by an alumnus in the school's 60-year history. In an impromptu meeting with Rabbi Daniel Green last October, David McLean was inspired to dedicate the entire school, currently undergoing extensive renovations, in honour of his parents Jim and Stephanie McLean. The school will be rededicated as the HHA McLean Educational Centre at a gala event to be held on Sunday, Nov. 13.

The meeting took place last fall following a phone call David McLean made to Rabbi Green about a donation he was planning to make to his alma mater. Sensing an opportunity to share his vision for the school's future, the rabbi persuaded McLean to drop in for a few minutes.

"There was an annual gift that David generally gives and I think that's kind of what his mindset was," Rabbi Green told the HJN, adding, "He certainly did not come in ... to dedicate a building." But during their walk through of the building and its surroundings, McLean experienced what the rabbi describes as "an expansion of imagination."

"He took a look at the panoramic view of the building, the campus, and he said, 'I want to do this for my parents.' And that's how he articulated it. It isn't about

me. It's about them."

Jim and Stephanie McLean, together for 57 years and married for 53, have been stalwart members of the Adas Israel and Hamilton Hebrew Academy communities for nearly as long. Jim McLean converted to Judaism shortly before the couple was married and, from that day on, fully committed himself to living life as a Jew.

Rabbi Green first got to really know Jim McLean during a memorable March of the Living tour in 1989. "We were on the bus coming out of Auschwitz and ... Jim got up and took the microphone," recalled the rabbi. "Basically, he was talking about how bearing the name McLean, people don't necessarily know that he's Jewish ... 'I can tell you from the world I came from, if you think this kind of thing can never happen again, it can.' It was a very moving speech."

Jim McLean may often be effusive, but both he and his wife were rendered nearly speechless at their Shabbat dinner table the following Friday night when their son handed them a letter from Rabbi Green extolling their family and informing them that the HHA would hitherto be named the Hamilton Hebrew Academy McLean Educational Centre. Phonecalls to their daughters in London, Ontario followed.

"I just read (the letter) and I started crying," said the McLean's eldest daughter Sonya Taran. Her sister, Stacey Ublansky, said she was both surprised and not



PHOTOGRAPH BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

**Stephanie and Jim McLean**, in whose honour the HHA is being renamed.

standing at the back of the room at countless Adas Israel brotherhood fundraisers bidding up item after item. "He was doing that because it fit into his whole mindset where he could support a shul, buy gifts for other people, but always position himself in the back of the room out of the limelight."

The second memory was of David going out of his way at an HHA fundraising dinner a few years back to encourage his former classmates to sponsor a table. "He wanted to make sure that his class should do a scholarship together ... For him, it was always about bringing more people in. He doesn't just want to write a cheque. He wants to get people involved and acknowledge the gifts they got in their past."

The rabbi also had many words of praise for the McLean parents. "Jim is a person who lives and breathes Jewish community ... and Stephanie, over the years, was very engaged in a very tangible way — front and centre at every event," he said.

There's no question in Rabbi Green's mind that David McLean's extraordinary generosity can be traced back to the way his parents raised him.

"He's like an overflowing spring that wants to give, and I think it's a beautiful thing that he's concerned about the kids of our community and sees himself sandwiched between his past, the present and the future," he said. "I think at the end of the day, the apples don't fall far away from the tree."

surprised by the news, "because that's David."

"He has always made these sort of beautiful unexpected gestures and has always been very generous," she said. All three McLean children say the Hamilton Hebrew Academy played a foundational role in their lives.

"I always say I feel like I was raised by rabbis," said Sonya, "and when you're davening to Hashem every day and learning Torah in a warm environment, it has a major imprint on who you are."

Stacey, recalling parading down the halls singing during Jewish holidays, said the school "brought a very joyful aspect to being Jewish."

As for David, the HHA is like family. "The HHA helped raise me, my daughter Tia, my life-long friends, my sisters, and in many ways my parents too. The

HHA transcended into our home and our lives through my passionate teachers. I see the same spirit in Rabbi Green and Rabbi Morel which is inspiring. It has and always will be the people that make the HHA so special," he said.

Stephanie McLean, whose favourite song is Whitney Houston's Greatest Love of All, told the HJN that the first time she heard the words, "I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way," they went right to her heart.

That's why she and Jim could not be prouder that their daughters are so active in London's Jewish community and that their son has been one of the HHA's most ardent supporters and effective fundraisers. As if to illustrate her point, Rabbi Green shared two memories, the first of David



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# McMaster manuscript sheds light on Cohen's time in Sinai

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

A MCMMASTER University librarian played a critical role in the discovery of an obscure Leonard Cohen manuscript that would form the basis of a new book about Cohen's experiences during the Yom Kippur War.

The story begins in the summer of 2019 with an email exchange between Canadian Israeli journalist Matti Friedman and McMaster's archives arrangement and description librarian, Chris Long, about an obscure Cohen manuscript Friedman thought might be part of the university's McClelland and Stewart Archive.

When the email exchange occurred, Matti Friedman was deep into researching the story of Leonard Cohen's sudden appearance in the Sinai desert in the opening weeks of the Yom Kippur War.

Friedman had started thinking about the subject in 2009, when Leonard Cohen performed what would be his final concert in Israel. "At that time, I was just shocked how excited Israelis were that Cohen was here," Friedman told the HJN, until coming across an article in an Israeli newspaper about Cohen's showing up during Israel's darkest hour. "Israelis never forgot it."

Friedman would eventually track down Israelis who were at a series of impromptu concerts Cohen performed during the chaotic opening days of the war. "I had the memories of Israelis who saw Cohen," Friedman says. "Soldiers who were at the front. I had memories of musicians who travelled with Cohen. I had some of Cohen's songs that echoed this experience." What he didn't have was an account from the man himself.



PHOTOGRAPH BY YAAKOV DORON

Leonard Cohen performing with a young Matti Caspi on guitar during the Yom Kippur War as Maj. Gen. Ariel Sharon looks on. The McMaster University manuscript contains the only record of Cohen's thoughts about his experiences.

"Cohen never seems to have mentioned it afterwards," said Friedman. "It was clearly a difficult experience for him, and yet, I didn't have his own words about what had happened, and that was obviously a gaping hole at the centre of my book project."

When Friedman reached out to Long that day, he was following up on a footnote in a 1990s Cohen biography that referred to a manuscript in the university's McClelland and Stewart archive. It felt like a shot in the dark, which turned out to be the case. For Long was unable to find any mention of the manuscript at first, and it was only on further investigation that he found the mystery manuscript in a box in an off-site storage facility in Dundas.

"I was astounded by it," Long, a long-time Leonard Cohen fan, told

the HJN, recalling the moment he first laid eyes on the 44-page typewritten document that he immediately scanned and forwarded to Friedman. Friedman was just as excited. "He said very pointedly that the document was fascinating, that it would be very significant to his research and that it was real and raw Leonard Cohen ... that was very exciting for us," Long says.

Friedman told the HJN that finding the manuscript felt "like striking gold." "I hadn't been sure that this manuscript even existed or that it could be found. And then, suddenly, there it was," he says. "I opened it and realized what I was seeing, which was exactly what I was looking for. That doesn't happen a lot in journalism that you get exactly what you were looking for. But here was

Cohen in the first person telling us not only what had happened in kind of journalistic language, but also what it felt like in very Cohenesque, often very difficult, sometimes obscene, but always interesting prose."

When Friedman's book, *Who by Fire, Leonard Cohen in the Sinai* came out last March, Chris Long heard from his Jewish mother-in-law, who had read a review that mentioned a cardboard box in Hamilton being an important part of Friedman's research.

"Do you know anything about that?" she asked him. "Yes," he replied, laughing. "I know everything about that. It's my cardboard box."

When he finally got his hands on a copy of Friedman's book, Long was delighted to see

passages from the manuscript quoted "quite liberally" throughout the book. "It's really incredible that essentially, a single document could have such an impact on the final story," Long says that his department completes research requests for researchers around the world every day, with its material often ending up in books, papers and films. "But it's a rare thing when kind of a single discovery can be such a significant aspect of the final story. So that was very cool," he says.

Matti Friedman never got to interview Leonard Cohen, although he came close. In November 2016, he pitched his book idea to his editor surmising from a *New Yorker* interview with Cohen that the singer was in ill health. When his editor said he'd sent Friedman's proposal to Cohen's people, Friedman had visions of sitting in Cohen's living room within weeks. Alas, the following day, his editor sent him an email with the subject line, "holy s\*\*t" and a link to Cohen's obituary.

"I was pretty bummed out and I actually didn't do much with the book for a while after that," he says. Today, he sees it differently. "I think that fate decided to make it up to me in the form of Chris Long and McMaster because if I couldn't have Cohen in person, than a pretty good alternative is a Cohen manuscript, and in fact, in retrospect, if I had to choose between interviewing the elderly Leonard Cohen about this and 45 typewritten pages of raw Cohen written immediately after the war, there's no doubt that, journalistically, the manuscript would be the thing to choose. So I'm not angry at fate. I think that on balance I did okay."

## Matti Friedman on Leonard Cohen's "myth home"

Matti Friedman reflects on the implication of Cohen seeing Israel as a "myth home" and his lifelong attachment to the city of his birth

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

*In the manuscript Chris Long dug out of the McMaster archives, Leonard Cohen refers to Israel as his "myth home." Below, Friedman reflects on the deeper meaning behind the phrase.*

**Q:** What do you think Cohen meant when he referred to Israel as his "myth home."

**A:** I'm not sure if Cohen knew what it means, but I think a lot of Jewish people instinctively understand what it means, which is that, of course you have your normal home ... but you have

this idea that your mythic home is somewhere else. I think in Judaism, the myth home is really wired into the religion, which really revolves around this idea of a myth home and in the 20th century, with Zionism, the myth home kind of becomes real. And I think it makes it sometimes a bit upsetting for people to come to Israel expecting some kind of mythic home and to find a real country, which is of course as messed up as any other country. I think that can make it a bit jarring and I think in many ways it was jarring for Cohen. And you can kind of feel it in his writing that he doesn't leave the war waving the Israeli flag and singing the national

anthem. And he's quite shaken by it I think and part of it is obviously being in a war and part of it is, you know, expecting a myth home and finding a real country in the Middle East. So, I think that it's actually a very interesting phrase, not just for those of us who understand this particular moment, but for anyone looking at the Jewish experience. I think that the idea of a myth home is really interesting and important.

**Q:** Cohen chooses his hometown cantor to sing on his final album and Montreal as his final resting place. Was Montreal another kind of "myth home" to Leonard Cohen.

**A:** He spoke about Montreal often and I think it's kind of impossible to understand Leonard Cohen without understanding the Montreal that he grew up in. You have this franco-phone province Quebec, in which you have an English speaking minority, and inside the English speaking minority is this Jewish minority, so it's a minority inside a minority and everyone's very busy kind of defining themselves. There's no doubt in my mind that Leonard

Cohen's pronounced Jewish identity is at least in part because of that very specific experience of growing up in Montreal when he did. Jews were beginning to be accepted but weren't quite accepted and were actually quite separate. Cohen's family was quite wealthy and successful, but they were definitely Jewish and they were not assimilated and he takes all that baggage with him as he leaves Westmount for the greater country of Canada and eventually wanders out of Canada altogether but never really forgets that he's not just Canadian but from a very specific neighbourhood in Montreal at a very specific time.

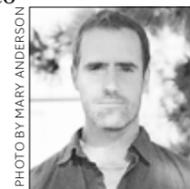


PHOTO BY MARY ANDERSON  
Matti Friedman



# Book of Life

Hamilton Jewish Federation

## WE PAY TRIBUTE TO THE SECOND BOOK OF LIFE GROUP OF HONOUREES

Their stories inspire us, they lift our spirits and they unite us with a common bond of gratitude.

We are recognizing the individuals and families who made a gift through a charitable fund, life insurance policy, or bequest, thus assuring the future strength and vibrancy of our Jewish community. For their forward-thinking philanthropy, these generous members of our community deserve our thanks.



**GEORGINA ROSENBERG AND BENJY KATZ**  
**Holocaust Endowment Fund**

Georgina and Benjy believe that the Holocaust must forever be a constant warning to all of us of the danger of hatred, bigotry, racism, and prejudice and where it can lead. It is their hope that the fund they created will help educate a new generation about their Jewish heritage, and the ultimate consequences of intolerance.



**RHODA KATZ Z"L**  
**Holocaust Education Endowment Fund**

When Rhoda was 12, she had an experience that changed her world. One of her close friend's parents were Holocaust survivors, and when they left Europe, they brought with them the books showing images of the atrocities. "It had a lasting effect on my life," said Rhoda, explaining that the incident marked the beginning of her lifelong thirst for books on the Holocaust.



**STAN AND LIZ TICK**  
**Beth Tikvah Endowment Fund**

The foundation of Stan and Liz Tick's lives, both as individuals and as a couple, is community. Stan and Liz's vision is that more Jewish developmentally delayed adults will have opportunities to benefit from Beth Tikvah services and that the agency continues to grow. That's why they established an endowment fund to support the agency in perpetuity.



**SASHA WEISZ**  
**Legacy Endowment Fund**

Sasha and her husband, Tom, have been extremely supportive and intimately involved in a multitude of Jewish causes. Sasha has held leadership roles at Temple Anshe Sholom, State of Israel Bonds, the Jewish National Fund and the Hamilton Jewish Federation. She is especially passionate about combating antisemitism on university campuses and in society. Education, in her mind, is the key to fighting what she sees as a frightening increase in misinformation.

The Book of Life is a program dedicated to the celebration of Jewish lives and values through the inspiring stories of our donors who have left a legacy for the future through the Hamilton Jewish Federation Endowment Fund.

If you have any questions or would like to enquire about including your story, please contact Gustavo Rymberg, 905.648.0605 or grymberg@jewishhamilton.org

# Boris Brott remembered as a “proud, spiritual Jew”

Cantor Gideon Zelermyer reflects on Boris Brott’s deep attachment to Judaism and the city of his birth

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Boris Brott was not an observant Jew, but, according to his good friend, Cantor Gideon Zelermyer, the late maestro always wore his Jewishness with pride. Brott and Zelermyer were frequent collaborators at the cantor’s Montreal synagogue, Congregation Shaar HaShomayim, but the two also shared the stage at a memorable concert at the Adas Israel in 2009. In the following interview, Cantor Zelermyer reflects on Brott’s spirituality and deep attachment to the city of his birth.

**Q:** When did you first meet Boris Brott and what was the nature of your relationship?

**A:** The first time I ever saw Boris conduct was at a concert that was put on by a colleague of mine in Toronto, Eric Moses at Beth Shalom Synagogue in Toronto. There was Boris, this big name in Canadian classical music, turning around as part of the encore, and singing a verse of To Life, L’Chaim from Fiddler on the Roof. He wore his Judaism so proudly and so easily. Boris conducted concerts in synagogues all the time. He loved collaborating with cantors. He loved sprinkling his speech with Yiddish.

**Q:** What do you remember about the concert Boris performed at the Adas Israel back in 2009?

**A:** As I understand, the Green rabbinic dynasty is a major force in the Hamilton Jewish scene and this was a proverbial passing of the baton from father to son. To walk around

Hamilton with Boris was a really unique experience. I mean, he could barely make it down any street corner without three people coming to him and embracing him and saying hello. He was a major celebrity in Hamilton and I know what it feels like to have a major cultural celebrity like that come to your synagogue. It just makes you puff out your chest a little broader and you feel a special sense of pride that it’s important to him to come to the Jewish community to do something like this, and he was so proud of it.

**Q:** Do you have a favourite moment you shared with Boris?

**A:** Yes. It was a Leonard Bernstein centennial year concert that turned out to be my last collaboration with Boris. We brought in Jamie Bernstein, Leonard’s daughter, to emcee. To see Boris and Jamie, who knew each other when they were relative kids, sharing their memories of being together in New York, and hear Boris speak so lovingly about the way that Leonard Bernstein mentored him ... It was a labour of love for everybody involved. As part of that concert, we performed a piece that Bernstein wrote in 1986 for the reopening of the newly renovated Carnegie Hall. It’s a piece that is very mystical—the way I hear it is almost beams of light emerging through the fog, and at the end of the piece, a solo voice sings the priestly benediction.

That night, I sort of crept up out of nowhere at the back corner of the stage and Boris’s and my eyes were locked on each other while I was singing this blessing that we offer as parents to our children every Friday



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CANTOR GIDEON ZELERMYER



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ADAS ISRAEL

**Cantor Gideon Zelermyer and Boris Brott performing at Montreal synagogue Shaar HaShomayim.**

**Boris Brott and Rabbi Morton Green sing together at a 2009 concert at the Adas Israel.**

night. It’s one of the most remarkable 15-word formulas of any liturgical text anywhere: “May God bless you and keep you; May God’s countenance shine upon you and be gracious unto you; and may God grant you peace.” This was a moment that Boris and I shared of intense spiritual connection and to do it in our magnificent sanctuary, as part of an evening and tribute to his mentor—Boris was aglow that night. It just meant so much to him and it meant so much to

me, not only to have him participate in it, but to be able in a small way to enable him to have that glow, to be back with Leonard’s daughter, and to perform this repertoire that meant so much to him. You know Boris was not an observant Jew, but he was a proud spiritual Jew and we shared many moments... not just concert moments.

**Q:** Can you speak about the importance of Montreal to both Boris and Leonard Cohen?

**A:** I’ve been in Montreal for 21 years now. Most of my colleagues who are cantors in New York are off for Passover because the city becomes a Jewish ghost town during Passover. People go to destinations or they go home, and Montreal is one of the places that people come home to. If you have that filtered by which to view Montreal, then it makes it much easier to understand why it was so important to Leonard Cohen to know that he would rest eternally next to the three generations of his family that preceded him. And in Boris’s case, and again, it’s a very different thing to contemplate your resting place when you’re 82 as Leonard was and facing all sorts of different ailments. It’s another thing to be taken so violently, tragically and suddenly like Boris was. But I was honoured to preside over his burial in Montreal next to his parents. And that wasn’t a surprise to me. Yes, he spent the lion’s share of his life based in Hamilton. But Montreal was home. Montreal was roots. Montreal was family. And so, I perfectly understood that choice in a way that I probably couldn’t have when I first moved here. But having had the experience of being here as long as I have been, it made perfect sense.

Jewish National Fund of Hamilton

## Save The Date

Join us at the Negev Summer Soiree for an intimate evening of delicious food, conversation, and surprises.

Thursday, August 25, 2022  
Beverley Golf & Country Club

Supporting the Ukrainian orphans who have found refuge at the Nes Harim Centre in the Jerusalem Hills. Event proceeds will fund the construction of a playground and outdoor obstacle gym to build strength, mental resilience, and aid in their recovery from trauma.



For more info, sponsorship opportunities, donations, and tickets:

🌐 [jnfhilton.ca](http://jnfhilton.ca) ☎️ 905-527-5516 ✉️ [hamilton@jnf.ca](mailto:hamilton@jnf.ca)

# 2022 LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY AWARDS

PRESENTED AT THE HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION'S AGM



**ADAS ISRAEL | DOVID KRAVETSKY**

Some individuals rise to the moment whenever they are called upon - others seek out opportunities. Oftentimes the phone will ring in the middle of the day with Dovid Kravetsky asking what needs to be done for the community. With understated humility, he fills a vital role both within the synagogue and in the community. He has brought smiles as well as physical and emotional support to countless individuals. "My volunteer commitment means I get the opportunity to serve Hashem while trying to beautify the world He created. Because it's a Mitzvah to help every Jew, no matter what and no matter who."

**BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE | DAVID WALMAN**

As chair of our building committee, David Walman's passion and expertise play a crucial role in our current exploration of sustainability opportunities. Never one to decline a request for help, David recently joined our security committee, developing active threat training and protocols to keep our congregation safe. David's infectious "can do" energy despite countless other commitments remains a true blessing to our community, and we are deeply grateful for his ongoing volunteerism. "I grew up in a family that believed in community service, and I too feel the importance of giving back and instilling that in my children. My involvement with Beth Jacob Synagogue, Out of the Cold program, and B'nai Brith has been an integral part of my life for many years."



**HAMILTON HEBREW ACADEMY | DEBBIE GINSBERG**

Debbie Ginsberg is a volunteer with selfless determination and resilience. Over the last two years, Debbie has been the volunteer coordinator of HHA's daily lunch program. Through her selfless contributions of time and energy, this important program meets the needs of our children. "I'm happy to help where help is needed and it is my pleasure to help serve the meals that the kids enjoy."

**HAMILTON JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES | CLINT RICE**

Clint Rice is an invaluable volunteer at HJFS. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, he has supported the most vulnerable. He has made regular food bank deliveries to the marginalized, helped us to secure additional food resources for the Hamilton Kosher Food Bank, and has recently begun to share his expertise with us in the mental health field. Kol Hakavod, Clint! We are stronger because of you. "My time volunteering with the wonderful people at HJFS has given me beautiful experiences that I will never forget. Food insecurity is more commonly experienced now than it has been in recent years. The help we give is very often, above and beyond. Carol's Cupboard should be considered as being an outstanding example of a Chesed project. Peace and blessings to you all."



**HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION | JOSH RAUCHWERGER**

Josh Rauchwerger is a valuable member of the Federation board. He headed up co-habitation discussions between Temple Anshe Sholom and Beth Jacob Synagogue, sat on Federation's Strategic Planning Committee, and had an active role in our Welcome Home, Grow Hamilton video. Josh is a most deserving Shem Tov winner. "It is important for our families to have an organization that supports and addresses different Jewish needs in our community. Volunteering is my way of contributing to building a cohesive and thriving Jewish Hamilton. I view volunteering as my duty to ensure the success of JHamilton and the greater Jewish community and am privileged to work with engaged, knowledgeable and dedicated leaders."

**JEWISH NATIONAL FUND | ROY POLLINGTON**

Whether it's stuffing envelopes for the Negev Dinner, driving around Hamilton and Burlington to pick up and drop off JNF Blue Boxes, canvassing the community for donations, or being an usher at our prestigious Negev Dinners, Roy Pollington always ready to lend a helpful hand at JNF with a huge smile on his face. We could not do the work that we do without him, and we are forever grateful for his support. "Volunteering was genetically programmed in me by my amazing parents. Their caring about our community taught me to watch for opportunities to give of myself. I believe in the JNF and the wonderful things they do and accomplish. Quite simply, I volunteer because I can. I believe it is everyone's duty to help wherever and whenever we can."



**KEHILA HESCHEL SCHOOL | LAURA WALTMAN**

As a member of our school's Health and Safety Panel, Dr. Laura Waltman has guided our procedures to meet and exceed the COVID Public Health guidelines. Laura provided sage advice in developing the safe return to school strategy, trained staff in the proper use of PPEs, contributed to the development of school safety routines and clarified ever changing government guidelines. Kehila Heschel thanks her for her role in keeping our students and teachers learning during such unprecedented times. "Schools help to create a foundation for children's health and wellness. As a pediatrician and parent, nothing is more important than ensuring schools can be successful. Partnering with Kehila Heschel to create a safe and thriving environment during this challenging time has allowed me to connect with my community when so much focus has been on isolation."



**MCMASTER HILLEL | HANNAH SILVERMAN**

As president of McMaster Hillel, Hannah Silverman managed a 25 person executive and was the face of Hillel for the campus and the McMaster Jewish community. Hannah has a strong commitment to community and to Jewish life on campus and did so with great strength and grace throughout the year. It was a pleasure working with Hannah in advancing Jewish life on campus. "My volunteer commitment to McMaster Hillel introduced me to the most supportive and welcoming community. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to make a positive impact on the student community and I look forward to watching McMaster Hillel continue to flourish."

**NA'AMAT HAMILTON | ELAINE LEVINE**

As a longstanding and valued member of Na'amat Hamilton, Elaine Levine can always be counted on to support our projects, attend meetings with her warmth and interest, and offer helpful suggestions. She is often the first person to send a warm and positive note of congratulations after an event. She brings a strong sense of community to our meetings and has done so for many years. We are proud to count Elaine as one of ours at Na'amat, wearing the Na'amat hat among so many others she wears. "It is my pleasure to be a supportive member and assist with the important work of Na'amat. Inspired by my parents, I have enjoyed the great feeling of stepping up to benefit many causes. Through my work at Federation, I also know the huge difference that volunteers make to organizations. We have a great community and being involved and giving back are very meaningful to me."



**SHALOM VILLAGE | SHIRLEY LEVINE**

Shirley Levine, 88 years young, has been a volunteer for over 20 years at Shalom Village. Shirley has been involved in a variety of volunteer opportunities. She is a loving, vibrant and positive person that lights up a room whenever she walks in and she is truly deserving of this award. "I love to help people, I love making people happy. Nothing else to do but to make someone happy and put a smile on someone's face. We are here for a short time in our lives."

**TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM | STEVE ARNOLD Z"l**

Steve Arnold's untimely and tragic passing put our entire community in shock. Since he became a member of the Temple Steve threw himself into every aspect of synagogue and Jewish communal life. He participated in virtually every adult learning opportunity. He served on our board and numerous committees and made

# 2022 LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY AWARDS

PRESENTED AT THE HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION'S AGM



**CECE SCHREIBER VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP AWARD | LARRY LEVIN**



**HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION PRESIDENT AWARD | LORRAINE COHEN**



**AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN JEWISH EDUCATION | ANITA BERNSTEIN**

This year, the Hamilton Jewish Federation presented its most prestigious volunteer award – the CeCe Schreiber Volunteer Leadership Award – to Dr. Larry Levin, who has been a tireless supporter of Federation and many other organizations in our community for decades. Larry has served Federation in a number of capacities for many years both as a board member and served terms as president and chair of the Annual Campaign. Larry has been equally devoted to the Hamilton Hebrew Academy and Shalom Village, where he served as president and as interim CEO in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2012, the Jewish National Fund honoured Larry and his wife Jacki as their Negev Dinner honourees. In addition to receiving numerous awards for his work as a healthcare professional and leadership at the Hamilton Academy of Dentistry, the Ontario Dental Association, and the Canadian Dental Association, Larry also received an award from the Hamilton Police for “inspiration, motivation and dedication to the Hamilton community.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation created the President's Award to acknowledge outstanding long-serving volunteers who've made substantial contributions to multiple agencies within the Jewish community. This year, we were delighted to present the award to Lorraine Cohen, for her devoted service to many organizations in our community. Lorraine has been a dedicated canvasser for Hamilton Jewish Federation's Annual Community Campaign for many years, and a valued member of its Campaign Cabinet and Allocation Committee. Lorraine is equally devoted to her synagogue, Temple Anshe Sholom, where she has served terms as board president, sisterhood president, and religious school teacher. Lorraine has also led Temple services on numerous occasions. Lorraine has also made time over the years to volunteer at Shalom Village and the Jewish National Fund. Finally, Lorraine is that rare individual who never hesitates to step up when called upon, and our community is truly blessed to have her in our midst.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation was proud to present Anita Bernstein with this year's Award for Excellence in Education. For the past four years, Anita skillfully led Kehila Heschel School in her role as director of education. She worked tirelessly to integrate the Kehila curriculum with the Heschel educational philosophy and improve the school's technological capacity. Anita understood that all students deserve accessibility to knowledge and information, in the way they learn best. Under Anita's supervision, Kehila Heschel has become a certified EcoSchool, and embraced the opportunity to take learnings outside the classroom and give back to the community in which we live, showing the students how our knowledge and our actions can positively impact the Hamilton Jewish community. Anita's commitment to collaboration and innovation have had a positive impact on the people, school, and community she serves. Beyond Kehila, Anita is actively involved in many other aspects of Jewish communal life, and our community is the better for it.



## C45 | E20 | THANK YOU CHRIS NUSCA AND ELAINE LEVINE FOR YOUR SERVICE!

At its Annual General Meeting on May 31, the Hamilton Jewish Federation recognized Chris Nusca, who has worked for the organization for 45 years, and Elaine Levine, who has been a Federation employee for 20 years. During his presentation to the long-time employees, Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg said that Loyal and dedicated employees are the foundation of any successful organization. “For the past 20 and 45 years, you have been essential and valuable members of our team and have demonstrated how much you love what you do. Despite complex and challenging situations, you are always there, ensuring that everything we do as a team is fantastic. As a colleague and friend, I would like to thank you for your help and support over the past five years of working together. None of our accomplishments would have been possible without your hard work and passion.”

# MAZAL TOV!

# KADIMAH JCAMP

*Around the World in 7 Weeks*

## REGISTER TODAY FOR SUMMER 2022

First session starts July 11



### KADIMAH JCAMP CLASSIC

JCamp classic features everything you know and love about Kadimah JCamp. Our specialists plan their activities according to our weekly destinations. Heading to Brazil? Pack a wetsuit cause we're heading to the Cataratas Iguacu! Heading to Finland? Bring some extra layers! Each week we will invite guest representatives from every country we are visiting. Every camper will be given their own passport issued by Kadimah JCamp and will collect a stamp from every destination. This is a first-class ticket around the world!

Activities include: Onsite programming according to weekly themes | Special Guests | Swimming | Shabbat parties

### KADIMAH JCAMP ADVENTURE

This is the adventure of a lifetime! Every week in the mornings, we will be joining our JCamp Classic campers to different international destinations. Every camper will be given their own passport issued by Kadimah JCamp and will collect a stamp from every destination. JCamp Adventure splits the day into two distinct programs: Mornings will be on-site destination-themed activities planned by our specialists such as sports, group games, swimming, dance/drama, cooking/baking, and more. In the afternoons our adventures include trips to Adventure Village, Safari Niagara, Wild Waterworks, Treetop Trekking, and more! Hungry for adventure? This camp is for you.

Activities include: 1-2 weekly field trips | Swimming | Onsite programming according to weekly themes | Shabbat Parties

### KADIMAH JCAMP L LEADERS IN TRAINING (LIT) FOR THOSE COMPLETING GRADE 7, 8, & 9

July 11th - 22nd | July 25th - August 5th | August 8th - 19th

This program runs in two-week sessions, each one offering a variety of different experiences. The first week of every session, our young leaders will be placed in cabin groups with our specialized staff. Together, they enjoy age-appropriate camp activities (arts and crafts, dancing/drama, sports, swimming, and more). In the second week, the LITs get to choose week-long placements around camp: assisting counsellors or specialists in their programs or assisting staff on JCamp Adventure. LITs will have the opportunity to earn up to 10 hours per session toward their High School volunteer hours. They receive regular feedback from their supervisor which they will use to develop their leadership skills.

JCamp LIT is a great opportunity to build your resume and create new memories at Kadimah JCamp.

**Get your passports today and pack light. The adventure of a lifetime awaits!**

**REGISTER TODAY!**

<https://hamiltonjewishfederation.regfox.com/kadimah-jcamp-summer-2022>

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SCHOLARSHIPS PLEASE CONTACT JENN LASLO, CAMP ADMINISTRATOR

JLASLO@JEWISHHAMILTON.ORG | 905. 648. 0605 X 300



# Orthodox Jewish non-profit saves Afghan lives

*“God placed a humanitarian mission on our doorstep. We had to respond.”*



**Rabbi Yossi Charytan**

“Oh, you are Muslim.” It wasn’t a question, just a straightforward

text message from a teenage boy who had been forced to grow up far too fast and careful about whom he could trust. Faizullah\* grew up in Kabul, Afghanistan, in a home identified only by its district name and neighborhood.

It was the end of October 2021 when I interviewed Faizullah, and I was eager to hear his story. Not only did he and I speak different languages and eat different foods, but his experience was far removed from anything I had ever known. By then, he was waiting in a refugee camp in the UAE with his siblings, and we communicated over Whatsapp.

In my role with the Aleph Institute, a Jewish non-profit advocacy organization working primarily in the justice arena, I never expected to interview a teenage Afghan orphan trying to escape Taliban rule. And, until August of last year, neither did anyone at Aleph. However, our decades of work within the judicial sphere and our international advocacy network led us to confront this unfolding humanitarian crisis.

From the Lubavitcher Rebbe I learned that wherever a person finds themselves is planned by God. Whatever situation one ends up in, and everything that

happens there.

God placed a humanitarian mission on our doorstep. We needed to respond.

We had learned about Faizullah and his siblings a few weeks earlier. Their mother, Sharbat\*, a women’s rights activist, passed away from cancer. Their father, Sameer\*, worked for Women for Women International and other American NGOs, until the Taliban assassinated him two years ago. Faizullah, then 17, was left to care for his younger sisters and brother. “These two years were really hard for me. Because it is very difficult to control four children while I have no experience.” He worked at a travel agency in the afternoons to support his siblings while still attending university.

When the Taliban takeover occurred in August, Faizullah desperately emailed his dad’s former American employers, spurred by memories of his father’s assassination. “The only hope of my family is first God Almighty, then you. Please help my family leave Afghanistan.” The five siblings hid at a friend’s home, fearing the worst. “I heard that the Taliban told our neighbors they should help find us.”

In conversations with Faizullah and other Afghans, I learned how Aleph’s humanitarian hand was generating a new narrative. One evacuee told our organization that, “Growing up Muslim, I heard a lot of things about Jews, and they weren’t nice. I never thought a Jewish organization would be willing to help me.” Hearing this feedback invigorated our Afghan mission with new meaning.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ALEPH INSTITUTE

**Afghan boy** who evacuated on the same Aleph flight as Faizullah.

Faizullah was unsure whether Yossi is a male or female name. So I shared my Hebrew name, Yosef, which I figured would be familiar. His response was quick: “Oh, you are Muslim.” I explained that I am Jewish and my name is in the original Hebrew form. “Ok, I will call you Mr. Yosef.” So, Faizullah learned about Shabbos, and I discovered ashak, an Afghan dumpling filled with a meat sauce.

At the time of their evacuation, there was still an assumption that resettlement would be quick and refugees would soon move to the United States and elsewhere. Aside from the general difficulties Afghan refugees face in processing their visa applications, Faizullah and his siblings aren’t eligible for special US visas.

After a couple of months of waiting in the refugee camp, Faizullah turned to his

Aleph family. “Sorry to bother you, Dear Yosef, I want you to apply for asylum in Canada. I did a lot of research and concluded that Canada is the best place for us. It is better to be in the same country with you.”

All of us at Aleph had come to admire Faizullah’s gentle determination to create a better future for his siblings. We needed to make his dream a reality. Through Aleph’s partnership with the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, we pursued private Canadian sponsorship with the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services Toronto, a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with the Government of Canada. All the necessary documents are waiting to be filed, pending funding.

Faizullah is extremely grateful, despite living in limbo for over eight months. “When I was little, my father told me that angels live in heaven, but today I realized that there are angels who also live on earth.”

We’re not angels. We are human beings endeavoring to see humanity from a Godly perspective. In the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, “To know God is to act with justice and compassion, to recognize his image in other people, and to hear the silent cry of those in need.”

Indeed, we are taking action.

*If you’d like to help Faizullah and his siblings, you can make a donation through The Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights website at [raoulwallenbergcentre.org/en/jias-donations](http://raoulwallenbergcentre.org/en/jias-donations) or by contacting [charytan@aleph-institute.org](mailto:charytan@aleph-institute.org).*

## Get ready! Kadimah JCamp is back!

BY **JAZMIN RYMBERG**  
PROGRAM COORDINATOR, JHAMILTON

THIS YEAR, Kadimah JCamp is going around the world in seven weeks! At the beginning of each session, campers will be given their very own passports that will enable them to travel to Canada, Brazil, Italy, Finland, Ethiopia, and Israel, where they will learn and interact with each country’s customs, landscapes, cuisines, and Jewish lives. Their passports will be stamped at the end of every week. This year, Kadimah is offering campers the option of enrolling in either its “Classic” or “Adventure” stream. The Classic stream features everything you know and love about Kadimah J-Camp: activities based on destination-based themes, swimming, special guests and Shabbat parties. Campers enrolled in our Adventure stream will enjoy the same programming, but have the opportunity to go on up to two weekly field trips to Adventure Village, Safari Niagara, Wild Waterworks, Treetop Trekking and more.

In addition to its Classic and Adventure streams, Camp Kadimah J-Camp is offering a two-week LIT program for campers in Grades 7-9 to develop their leadership



skills and get volunteer hours. During the first week of every session, our young leaders will be placed in cabin groups with specialized staff, where they will enjoy age-appropriate camp activities like arts and crafts, dancing/drama, sports, swimming, and more. In the second week, the LITs will get to choose week-long placements around camp, such as assisting counsellors or specialists in their programs, or assisting staff on JCamp Adventure. LITs will have the opportunity

to earn up to 10 hours per session toward their high school volunteer hours. In addition, they will receive regular feedback from their supervisor, which they can use to further develop their leadership skills. JCamp LIT is a great opportunity to build your resume and create new memories at Kadimah JCamp. For more information, look for Kadimah JCamp on Facebook or Instagram.

### NEED TO KNOW

**WHAT:** Camp Kadimah J-Camp 2022\*

### WHERE:

Temple Anshe Sholom, Churchill Park

### DATES:

July 11- 15 ➔ Canada  
July 18-22 ➔ Brazil  
July 25-29 ➔ Italy  
Aug. 2-5\*\* ➔ Finland  
Aug. 8- 12 ➔ Switzerland  
Aug. 15-19 ➔ Ethiopia  
Aug. 22-26 ➔ Israel

\* Scholarships available to help cover cost of camp tuition.

\*\* There is no camp on the Aug. 1 civic holiday.

### MORE INFO:

For Kadimah JCamp updates follow us on:  
Facebook: Kadimah JCamp  
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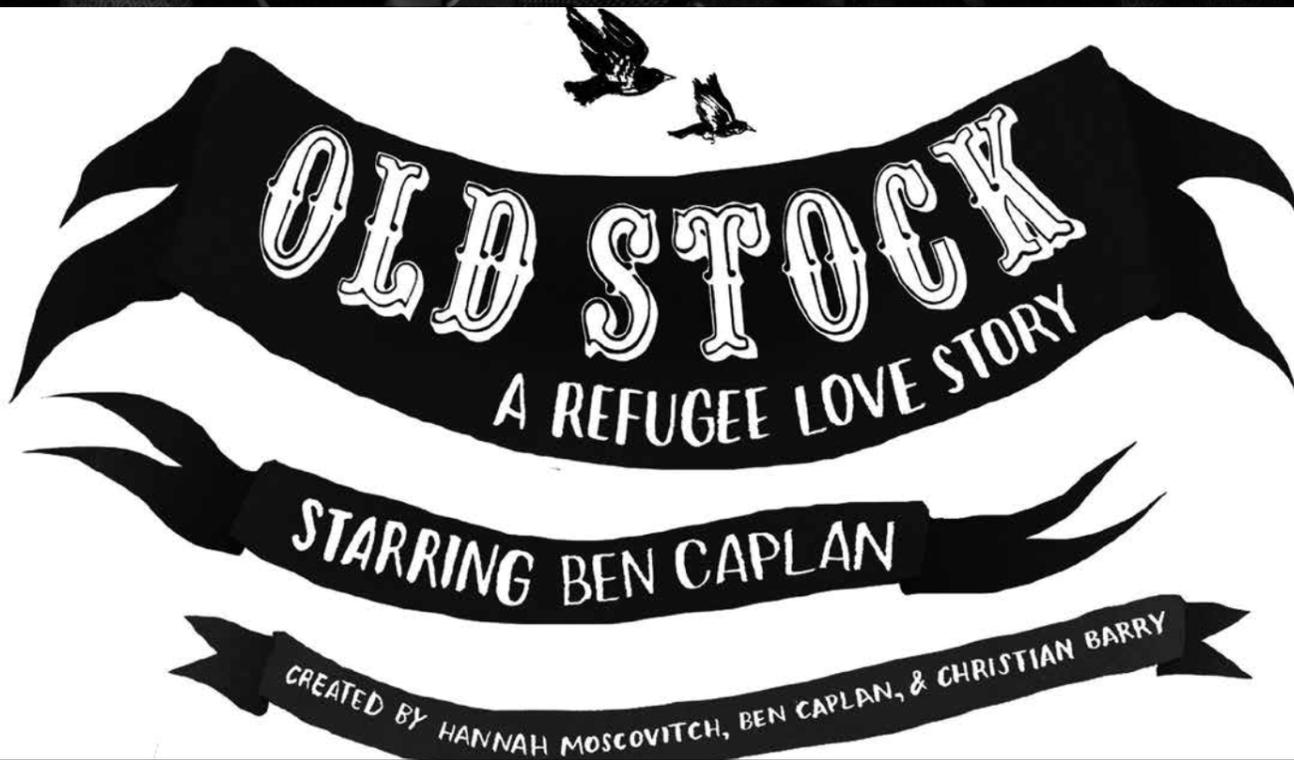
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Jenn Laslo at [jljaslo@jewishhamilton.org](mailto:jljaslo@jewishhamilton.org)

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#Here for Good



# A delayed but meaningful rite of passage

Cross-generational B'nai Mitzvah ceremony was both a bonding experience and point of connection to a family's past

BY JACKI LEVIN  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

WHEN I TURNED 12, I did not have a Bat Mitzvah. It just wasn't done for girls at that time. A few years ago, I was called up for an Aliyah at the home of a friend who was having shiva services at her home for her late mother. It was the first time in my life that I had seen the inside of a Torah, and I was very moved.

This past year, when it was time for my grandson Jackson to have his Bar Mitzvah, my daughter encouraged me to make it into a B'nai Mitzvah that would include me, and so a journey began.

Jackson and I studied together on a weekly basis for many months. We discussed our Torah portion with our teacher, who encouraged us to read widely on its themes of atonement, forgiveness, sexuality and women's place in Judaism. The study was stimulating and rewarding—more so because Jackson and I were discussing Judaism together, both in class and out.

To finally have the opportunity to read from the Torah, which was forbidden to me for most of my life, felt very special. To do so with my grandson and to know that through him, the tradition of our people continues, gave me a sense of joy and completion.

During my D'var Torah on that special Shabbat, I told the story of another significant Shabbat in our family's history.

My mother, Anna Constam, was a

Holocaust survivor, who spent the war hiding in small villages in the south of Holland and working as a maid with a false passport. When the south of Holland was liberated by Canadian soldiers, my mother returned to her hometown only to find her parents' home occupied by German collaborators. She eventually made her way to her brother's home which happened to be across the street from where Canadian soldiers were billeted. On the day she returned from hiding, my mother, who spoke perfect English, went to ask if there were any Jewish soldiers who would like to join her family, who had only recently emerged from hiding and the camps, for a Shabbat meal. There was only one Jewish soldier among them — and she ended up marrying him. Without that Shabbat invitation from my mother to my father, neither Jackson nor I would have been here to celebrate this incredible mitzvah.

During my research on our Torah portion, Acharei Mot, I came across an article by Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks called the "Seven Principles of Jewish Leadership, in which Rabbi Sacks points to Moses and the Temple High Priests as examples of exemplary leadership. After negotiating for his people's freedom from slavery, Moses led the Israelites through the desert for 40 years. But after the incident of the golden calf, Moses's leadership abilities were truly called upon when he interceded with God to spare the Israelites from his wrath



**Above:** Jackson Buchholz and his grandmother, Jacki Levin. The two recently celebrated a joint B'nai Mitzvah ceremony.



**Left:** A wedding photo of Jacki Levin's parents, taken in Holland. After surviving the Holocaust, her mother was employed by the Canadian army as a translator.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF JACKI LEVIN

and persuaded them to restore their faith. As for the Temple High Priests, on Yom Kippur they would first ask forgiveness for their own sins, before asking on behalf of their family

members and the community.

Just as the High Priests asked forgiveness for themselves first, our leaders must be role models for the people they represent. Leaders must act responsibly and when they don't, we must hold them to account. Moses was held to account for striking the rock rather than speaking to it as God had commanded. Aaron, for helping to build the Golden Calf. Neither of these leaders were permitted to enter Israel, the promised land.

The whole list of mitzvot in the Torah was a vision for the future of the Jewish people, a future to distinguish them from other nations. A leader must have a vision for people to follow.

Today, as I think about leadership, I cannot but think of and admire Volodymyr Zelensky—an unlikely but amazing Jewish leader who is holding his country together during the Russian onslaught against the Ukrainian people. Zelensky believes in his people and in democracy, and he inspires both them and us with his bravery and deep commitment to freedom. With his words, "I need ammunition, not a ride," he became a role model for righteous resistance. He is the right man for the right time, as was Moses.

Our Jewish community needs strong leaders today as antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment gain strength. It is my hope that with our study together, Jackson will have begun on a path that will take him into leadership positions, where his insight and his caring for others will make him a role model, be it in the Jewish or secular realm.

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#Here for Good

## Why Ukraine must prevail



Alex Wolfstein and Vladimir Khayutin

THE ROOTS of Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be traced back to Feb. 27, 2014, when Russian troops, masked and without insignia, took over the Crimean parliament and strategic sites across the Crimean peninsula. In August, the Russians occupied the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine.

On February 24 at 4 a.m., the Russians launched an attack on Kyiv, the capital city of sovereign Ukraine, in an act that shocked and united the whole world. As of this writing, tens of thousands of Ukrainians, including both soldiers and civilians, have been killed.

We have read that Russian President Vladimir Putin has the support of 71 per cent of the Russian people and that more than 50 per cent support the war. What is even more disturbing is the number of people in Europe, the United States and Canada who support Russia's position, due to the lack of information, wrong interpretation of available information, and the significant influence of Russian paid lobbyists.

The fate of the Jewish population of Ukraine has been difficult for more than 300 years since the forcible annexation of Ukrainian lands by the Russian empire. Russia incited Bogdan Khmelnytsky, the ruler of Ukraine at the time, to engage in bloody raids on Jewish communities. The Russian tsars were interested in spreading inter-ethnic enmity on the borders of the empire to strengthen and expand the Empire. This Russian imperial policy continued in Ukraine until the revolution of 1917 and continued in the USSR when antisemitism reached the level of state policy.

Jewish life had changed dramatically for the better after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the year Ukraine became an independent state, but since Ukraine gained independence, Russia has been trying to destabilize the internal political situation there through political assassinations, provocations, and through supporters who operate as a fifth column.

The Soviet Union always

discriminated against the Ukrainian language, requiring that Russian be the main language spoken across the USSR. As a result, 30 per cent of the population of Ukraine speak Russian as their first language, but Ukrainians rightly want Ukrainian to be the state language, and nobody can dictate otherwise.

There is no justifiable reason for this war, and the brutal abuse and killing of civilians, including women and children, by Russian forces.

According to a recent article in the Russian state news agency titled "What Should Russia do with Ukraine," Putin's government planned to exclude any mention of Ukraine from school textbooks and turn part of the Ukrainian population into slaves who would work to redeem themselves, to forcibly re-educate children and teenagers within the minimum period of one full generation. This reminds us of the Roman emperors who wanted to wipe out the Jewish people from the face of the earth.

Vladimir Putin has always questioned Ukraine's right to statehood, and falsely accuses the country of being governed by neo-Nazis who persecute the ethnic Russian minority, but Ukraine is a multinational country with a Jewish president who was elected by 73 per cent of the population.

It is difficult for us to imagine a peaceful resolution while Putin is in power, as his intentions are clear. This means that Ukraine has no other choice but to completely defeat the aggressor and liberate its territories.

This war is not local. It is a struggle for the future of Europe and the entire free world. Therefore, Canada, the US, the countries of Europe, and the rest of the world are helping Ukraine with modern weapons and other supplies until they completely defeat the common enemy.

Glory to Ukraine.

*Alex Wolfstein and Vladimir Khayutin immigrated to Canada from the Former*

## RBG and the right to choose



Rebecca Shapiro

A FEW YEARS ago, I had the opportunity to attend a five-day conference organized by the International Network of Orthodox Mental Health Professionals. Among the sessions I attended was a three-hour presentation by a world renowned *dayan* (a rabbi qualified to serve as a judge) on the topic, "Rulings on Halacha When Mental Health is a Factor."

Among the fascinating cases the speaker presented was one regarding an unmarried teenaged girl from an ultra-orthodox community with bipolar disorder. The young woman had become pregnant during a manic episode and was at high risk for suicide. Terrified of being cast out of her community and feeling unfit to be a mother, she sought rabbinic guidance about whether it would be permissible to terminate the pregnancy.

Those unfamiliar with halacha (Jewish law) might assume that a rabbinic court would recommend the young woman live outside her community until giving birth and then put the baby up for adoption. Sounds like a "typical" orthodox solution, no? But that was not the ruling.

In this particular case, the court recommended that the young woman abort the fetus, after giving it the status of a *rodef* — a term referring to one who threatens another's life. In making his ruling, the *dayan* took into consideration the mother's request, her mental health, the concept of *pikuach nefesh* (preservation of the mother's life) and many other complex factors. In other words, faced with the choice of preserving a life (the mother) or a potential life (the fetus), he decided to prioritize the life of the mother.

It's common practice among Torah observant Jews to consult with rabbinic courts about these kinds of decisions, and a woman who seeks rabbinic guidance about whether to undergo an abortion isn't giving up her right to choose. On the contrary, she is choosing to ask an expert who she trusts to give her the right guidance for her particular case.

If the US Supreme Court, as expected, overturns *Roe vs. Wade*, it will be as much a threat to the halachic process as it will be to a woman's right to choose. In its report on how various religions view abortion, the Pew Research Center characterized traditional Jewish teachings as sanctioning abortion "as a means of safeguarding the life and well-being of a mother. While the Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative movements openly advocate for the right to safe and accessible abortions, the Orthodox movement is less unified on the issue."

The orthodox movement is divided because that is the nature of authentic, orthodox Judaism. Halachic processes and rulings are never monolithic. They are nuanced and multi-directional.

The Torah views every life as having infinite worth, yet the status of a fetus is not equal to the life of a person. In halacha, a fetus certainly has rights, yet feticide is not treated as "murder" and under certain circumstances may even be considered a mitzvah.

Since Ruth Bader Ginsburg's passing on Rosh Hashanah two years ago, I have seen a rise in disturbing posts on social media that equate her advocacy for legalizing abortion to murder. Justice Ginsburg advocated for a woman's right to choose. Freedom of choice does not make her culpable for those choices. It does, however, provide orthodox women with a safe way to have a halachic abortion. It grants all women the God-given right to make our own choices.

I believe I speak for all Jewish denominations when I say that living a meaningful life and achieving personal growth can't happen without autonomy and free will. Providing women with a choice should never have been up for debate.

Justice Ginsburg advocated for free choice, inclusivity and mutual respect — all Torah concepts. She deserves to be recognized for the good she has done, the progress she made and the fact that she was respected by both sides of the political spectrum, which is not an easy feat.

*Rebecca Shapiro is a communications and media consultant specializing in mental health and education.*

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## Preparing for come what may



Ben Shragge

THESE DAYS, in the greater Boston area where I live, it's common to spot Ukrainian flags hanging from local homes and stickers on the backs of cars. What's perfectly normal now would have seemed utterly bizarre prior to Russia's February invasion, when a poll showed that only one in three American voters could identify Ukraine on a map.

The abrupt shift in public mood is a consequence of what former options trader Nassim Taleb, who made his fortune betting on the 1987 financial crash, calls a "black swan." In his 2007 book by that name, Taleb defines black swans as unexpected (to the observer) events that make an extreme impact and seem predictable only in retrospect. Taleb further posits that "A small number of Black Swans explain almost everything in our world, from the success of ideas and religions, to the dynamics of historical events, to elements of our personal lives."

Most experts didn't predict the unprovoked, full-scale invasion of a European country by its neighbor in 2022. But nor did they predict other major events of my lifetime, from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, to the September 11 terror attacks in 2001, to the financial crisis in 2008 (Taleb himself being an exception), to the election of Donald Trump in 2017, to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (though Taleb and Bill Gates, among others, did anticipate something like it).

The takeaway is not that experts should have predicted each of these exact events, but that we should learn to expect the unexpected (which Taleb calls turning black swans into grey swans) and look more skeptically at the predictions of "experts" in general. He advises prognostic humility because "The notion of future mixed with chance, not a deterministic extension of your perception of the past, is a mental operation that our mind cannot perform....

When we think of tomorrow, we just project it as another yesterday."

To that point: a few years ago, I would not have anticipated a future in which

wearing masks, toppling statues, working from home, and displaying Ukrainian flags became the norm in North American cities. But here we are.

Taleb traces his fascination with black swans to growing up in Lebanon during the outbreak of civil war. In his words, "after close to thirteen centuries of remarkable ethnic coexistence, a Black Swan, coming out of nowhere, transformed the place from heaven to hell." In North America, we take stability for granted, but the long view should cause us to reflect. Many of us are descendants of those who survived or escaped black swans: including, after over a thousand years, the destruction of European Jewish civilization in less than a decade. And from the start, Europe's colonization of the Americas was, for indigenous peoples, a black swan of catastrophic proportions.

Black swans are not necessarily negative, and they're not necessarily historical, either. Many scientific discoveries, from penicillin to the internet, were black swans: unexpected and unplanned. On a personal note, that I live in Boston at all is the result of a black swan. I didn't plan or predict it, but when presented, I seized the opportunity to move here from Hamilton for work. Taleb notes that "you can set yourself up to collect serendipitous Black Swans (of the positive kind) by maximizing your exposure to them." Among the strategies he suggests is living in a big city, where chance encounters that open up new possibilities are more likely.

We don't know what the future will hold. But we can learn—drawing on ancient wisdom, modern science, and everyday experience—to mitigate the bad and maximize the good. Unless life extension technology takes a dramatic turn, I don't expect to be alive in the year 2100. But my six-month-old daughter—God willing—will be 78 years old and still young at heart. I can't imagine what life will be like then, but I can do my best to prepare her for come what may.

*Ben Shragge is the digital editor of the HJN.*

## Ode to superficial relationships



Phyllis Shragge

TO MASK or not to mask, that is the question.

As we slide into another endless year of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of us continue to wear masks in public places, while others have tossed them away like costume masks the day after Halloween.

I'm in the "you can't be too cautious category," as I march into the beloved supermarket known as Fortinos—Main St. West location. I head towards the produce section clutching my grocery list. I will buy the necessary groceries and hightail it out of there.

Who am I kidding? The main purpose of this excursion is not shopping. My ultimate goal is to run into an acquaintance, any acquaintance, and start a conversation. I stand by the cucumbers (overpriced and possibly a bit mushy), scanning my surroundings. Do I recognize that woman near the tomatoes? I think I know her, but with a mask covering half her face, I'm not sure. Should I say hi? I hesitate. What if she's not who I think she is? Will she think I'm a nut job desperate for human contact? Her assessment of me would be right. I'm in a supermarket scouring the aisles on the off chance that I'll see someone I know.

I smile at the woman. I can't tell if she's smiling back at me. Damn these masks! As I inch closer, I realize that she's a stranger. I slink away and pretend to investigate the green beans.

And then, someone I actually know is standing by the strawberries. She belongs to my synagogue. I approach her. Her eyes light up. I think she's smiling. She thinks I'm smiling. We begin to chat.

"How're you doing?" she asks.

"Fine," I say.

"How's the family?"

"Good. And yours?"

"Good. Everyone's healthy."

"Thank goodness," I say.

We nod and wave good-bye. My shopping trip has been a success.

As I travel on the slow train to normal after more than two years of pandemic-related restrictions, I tread gently into the world at large. I get together with friends when I can, but usually outdoors, at least for now. When I dine at indoor restaurants, I feel both brave and reckless.

And as I anticipate a future with dwindling pandemic stress, I picture myself immersed in a huge crowd of people. I dream of mingling with acquaintances at a wedding, a Bar or Bat Mitzvah or even a meeting. I look forward to rekindling connections with people I haven't seen in a long time. I miss these superficial relationships.

I love being part of a group, part of a community of people with similar backgrounds, interests or values. I'm a better person when I consider myself within the framework of other people. Superficial relationships are more than they seem. They can broaden perspective, opening doors to the experiences and viewpoints of others.

For the past two years, my only link with the big wide world was through virtual gatherings. I groaned as I joined Zoom meetings, quite certain they would go on forever. I stared, bleary-eyed, at the images on my computer screen. I wished I could share my complaints about the presentation with a friend, but one friend lived in a box in the upper right hand corner of the screen while another resided in a compartment on the far left side. Any attempt at communication would look like an involuntary spasm. The best I could do was turn off my video and slide into obscurity.

Now, as I gaze into my crystal ball and dream about the future, I see myself chatting with acquaintances at many large gatherings. In this vision, I am maskless. I am completely at ease, with no concerns about the room's ventilation or how close I'm standing to the next person. If, or when, this dream becomes reality, will I continue to hunt for people I know at Fortinos? Absolutely!

*Phyllis Shragge is a local writer, mother of five, and grandmother of four.*

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## A message to the Jewish community

Many of you have seen the recent articles in The Hamilton Spectator concerning Shalom Village. As you are aware, COVID has had a devastating impact on our seniors, staff, and family members. Our leadership has made every effort to communicate our challenges and our progress through our townhall meetings, and in our resident and family communications. We realize that many of our stakeholders (donors, former family members, community program participants etc.) may not receive these communications, so we would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update.

Like all other LTC homes in Ontario and throughout the country, COVID has completely changed the realities of congregate living environments. It can be easy to forget just how frightening COVID was in the early days. The long-term care sector was not fully prepared for the onslaught of issues that surfaced, and Shalom Village was no different.

In December 2020, we were struck with a horrible COVID outbreak. We are a family, and the losses we experienced during that time were devastating to us all. Shalom Village worked with health care partners and accessed every resource possible to respond to these challenges. In hindsight, and combined with our recent government inspection, we have identified areas of improvement that our team is now focused on resolving. We strive to provide the highest level of care possible for our seniors, and our Board of Directors and staff, are taking all necessary steps to identify, rectify and resolve all issues. We look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress.

In addition to focusing on the above issues, Shalom Village staff remain vigilant in their efforts to provide meaningful and engaging activities to support the emotional, social, and mental health of our residents. Our staff are doing everything possible to support our seniors, who are once again taking tentative, socially-safe steps back into “normal life.”

We are pleased to announce that we are regularly welcoming new residents and participants to our Shalom Village family. Our café, Bubbi Bessie’s, has also recently re-opened its doors, offering snacks and a cozy place to socialize. The fitness club is again humming with activity, and our gardens are once-again full of people enjoying the warm weather and picturesque grounds.

As you can imagine, it is challenging to design and deliver safe, social activities, amid the backdrop of the pandemic. However, our hardworking staff have identified a variety of programs, games, trips and treats, to make this a wonderful summer for our seniors and their families. We are all excited to once again, see smiling, active, seniors engaging in meaningful activities and having fun throughout the campus.

We thank you for your patience and support as we continue to work together to “Honour our Fathers and our Mothers.”

David Horwood  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Shalom Village

Ken Callaghan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Shalom Village

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