

INSIDE

Yael Arnold joins Federation team • 5  
Einstein faced antisemitic criticism • 19  
Hamilton clergy marched in Selma • 23



# News

SEPTEMBER 2020 | TISHREI 5780

The voice of Jewish Hamilton

## Federation launches dual campaign to meet increased need

Emergency funds to be allocated to those most acutely affected by the COVID-19 crisis

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

AS THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic continues its insidious spread around the globe, Jewish communities everywhere are struggling to deal with the long-term effects of the public health crisis. For some, COVID-19 is a frustrating inconvenience. For others, it is life changing, frightening, and a very real threat. For the Hamilton Jewish Federation, it represents an opportunity to ensure that the community comes together in support of one another. That's why the community's central fundraising organization has decided to launch a one-time emergency campaign this fall alongside its Annual Community Campaign. Funds raised will help its front-line agencies provide basic living support, mental health counseling, and tuition subsidies for Jewish education.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE CONTINUES ON P5

“Never could we have predicted our project would be greenlit during a global pandemic.” Aharon Jinjhashvili P9

### Inside this issue

Israeli MD fellow at Firestone P10

A High Holiday season like no other P15

Not your everyday Israel tour P18

The story of a treasured inheritance P22



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

## New charity wants your old car

Georgina Rosenberg started Homeless Cars to make it easy for people to help those in need

FIND THE STORY, CONTACTS AND INFORMATION ON PAGE 7

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GUEST EDITORIAL

## Community and advocacy during uncertainty

Judy Zelikovitz



Rosh Hashanah is a time of new beginnings, a time to reflect on a year gone by and on the new year ahead. As is often the case with new beginnings, it is also a time of uncertainty. Last Rosh Hashanah, we wished each other a sweet year, unsure of the future but hopeful of things to come.

As we herald the arrival of this new year, we do so understanding that we control far less than we had thought. Normally, the uncertainty that comes

with a new start is imbued with hope for the possibilities ahead. This year, however, it is uncertainty itself that dominates. As 5780 draws to a close, we have learned that, during periods of uncertainty, we must seek what we can rely on: the strength of our community and our resolve to face these unprecedented challenges together.

In 5780, the challenges were many, and our community met them with an empowering, inspiring, and united response.

When urgent help was needed, social service agencies and not-for-profits mobilized, delivering food, providing services remotely, and offering support to those who needed it most. Jewish Federations shifted their focus to emergency fundraising campaigns to meet the immediate needs of service agencies on the front lines, ensuring that the changing needs of our most vulnerable were met. In Hamilton, Federation, along with local partners launched Kasher on Wheels. They made phone calls to the entire community to offer support and assess needs, ran an emergency Passover campaign, and delivered Passover food to Holocaust survivors and all those households in need. CIJA advocated for the inclusion of not-for-profits in government support programs, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, and helped ensure that Jewish schools were eligible. Volunteers mobilized by the thousands, responding to calls for assistance, helping the many seriously affected by COVID-19.

Our community was tested in other ways, as antisemitism, the crafty shapeshifter that is always on the move, found new outlets during the pandemic. With Statistics Canada reporting a rise in antisemitic incidents through 5780, our community from coast to coast continued to unite, offering support where it was needed most. Indeed, this was the year we learned the many ways we could help and, for far too many, how to reach out to ask for help themselves.

As we renew our talk of new beginnings at the conclusion of a year defined by uncertainty, many wonder: how can we plan for the year ahead?

For 5781, we must change our approach and, instead of planning according to dates on a calendar, look at our character for the coming year. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz z"l, wrote,

*"This does not mean, however, that on Rosh HaShanah one should make plans for the whole year. That would be impossible...What one should do on this day is form a general picture of what ought to be the character and direction of this year."*

For 5781, we can accept the uncertainty of what is to come and focus on the knowledge that we can rely on the tested strength of our community. And that continued strength is up to us. We can commit to volunteering our time and, if we can, donating our money. We can commit to finding creative ways to give back and offering support to those experiencing hardship. Instead of planning large events or travel, we can plan to lean on our community when in need and support it every way we can. We can plan to check in on those who are vulnerable, to be more understanding of ourselves and others, and to be more present when given the gift of company among our loved ones.

As we reframe what planning looks like for 5781, it can be difficult to determine how best to dedicate our efforts. There are many good causes that need our help. Instead of being overwhelmed, be reassured that, for whatever assistance you can offer, there is a worthy cause, organization, or initiative looking for someone just like you. Federations are great starting places. Check out their campaigns and learn what their various service agencies and not-for-profits are doing.

Though much of the past year has been uncertain, Rosh Hashanah presents us with a chance to start anew. We can still hope for and work toward a better tomorrow. 5781 will be a year defined not by our individual wishes and schedules but by our collective character and commitment to our community. Planning for uncertainty may seem counterintuitive, but history has shown that we have the capacity to come together and overcome even the darkest of times. As we look ahead to 5781, amidst all the unknowns, one thing remains certain: our community will continue from strength to strength.

Judy Zelikovitz is Vice President, University and Local Partner Services at CIJA, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.



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## A commitment to fight racism



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Moriyah Kleiman and Miriam Sager recently compiled a list of online resources for HJN readers that cover topics such as racism and the Black Lives Matter movement. The two activists made the compilation specifically for a Jewish audience, with an added focus on Canada and the City of Hamilton. Their article can be found at [hamiltonjewishnews.com/home-page/voices/resources-on-racism-and-black-lives-matter](http://hamiltonjewishnews.com/home-page/voices/resources-on-racism-and-black-lives-matter).

9

### SPECIAL MENSCHEN

A dream comes true

10

### FEATURE STORY

Israeli fellow at Firestone

16

### COMMUNITY NEWS

A High Holiday season like no other

19

### INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT

Einstein faced career antisemitism

### INSIDE: THIS ISSUE

- 2 Editorial
- 5 Cover Story
- 7 Local News
- 9 Special Mentschen
- 14 Community News
- 18 Israel Experience
- 19 Inspiration and Insight
- 20 Community Voices
- 22 First Person
- 23 Places and People

FEDERATION NEWS: 5,6, 12,13

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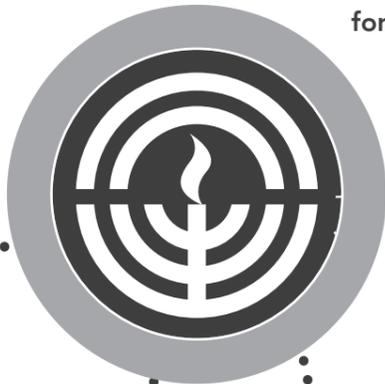
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# HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2020 | 23

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## Protecting the vulnerable in Hamilton, Israel and around the world



## Supporting and advocating for Jewish and Israel issues

## Educating, engaging and strengthening our Jewish community

Over the last year, the Hamilton Jewish Federation undertook the development of a strategic plan. With the help of two external consultants who worked closely with Federation board members and the CEO, the committee identified the top priorities of the community over the next three years. The process was grounded in Federation's core values of social justice (Tzedakah) caring for one another (Chesed), fostering belonging to community and the people of Israel (Klal Yisrael) and repairing the world (Tikkun Olam). In addition to identifying priorities, the strategic plan includes the ongoing development of resources such as funds, facilities and talent, and outlines a sound investment strategy. The strategic plan is intended to be both aspirational and practical, and build on the progress made to date in transforming the Federation into a central force in the community.

**Reduce marginalization of all populations**  
Low income singles and families, seniors, newcomers, Holocaust survivors, LGBTQ+ and the disabled.

**Facilitate participation in community life to the fullest extent possible**

**Build the awareness of the diversity and complexity of the Jewish community**

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Synagogues  
Beth Tikvah  
Shalom Village  
Hamilton Jewish News  
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Jewish Family Services  
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Hamilton Police  
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All levels of government

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Hillel Ontario  
CIE/UIA  
Jewish National Fund  
Synagogues  
Day and Afternoon Schools  
Jewish Federations  
BBYO Ontario

**Maintain a strong relationship with all of the Jewish, community and advocacy organizations** The Hamilton Jewish Federation is keenly aware of the growing antisemitism and BDS activity aimed at weakening and diminishing our value as a people and a community.

**Intervene with the relevant government bodies when issues arise that have an impact on the Jewish community**

**Ensure active participation on community boards and coalitions in order to make common cause with other community groups where appropriate**

**Become a champion of human rights & social justice**

**Ensure diverse opportunities for Jewish education, identity building, engagement and participation in all aspects of Jewish community life**

**Offer a variety of programs and activities, designed to educate, engage and develop leadership capacity**

**Create more informal and experiential approaches to reach both affiliated and unaffiliated community members**

**Increase the number of social and recreational gatherings such as community wide holiday celebrations. These initiatives would also provide extra opportunities to connect with Israel and other Jewish communities**

With both robust grassroots participation in educational and community engagement experiences and with capable leadership at the helm, the Hamilton Jewish Federation will increase its effectiveness and relevance for the future

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## Planning for an uncertain future, Federation takes proactive approach

CONTINUED FROM P1

In the pandemic's early days, there were many reasons to be optimistic about the Hamilton Jewish community's ability to weather the crisis. Federation ran an emergency Passover campaign, which raised an impressive \$30,000 in a few short weeks, mobilized staff and volunteers to conduct wellness calls and deliver food packages; Hamilton Jewish Family Services successfully applied for major grants that funded the community's first kosher meals on wheels program; and the city's three synagogues seamlessly switched to online services. Most impressive, Shalom Village immediately implemented strict regulations that have kept it COVID-19-free to this day.

None of these measures, however, address what are likely to be the long-term effects of the crisis. Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO, Gustavo Rymberg, said that Federation "had no choice" but to launch a dual fundraising

campaign to meet both its regular obligations and an anticipated surge in increased need.

"If the Kasher Food Bank is suddenly overwhelmed by an increase of 50 or more families per month, Federation will provide additional funds to meet the need," he said, adding that if a Jewish day school sees that parents are withdrawing their children because they're unable to pay tuition, Federation will provide tuition subsidies.

Community members will not be asked to increase their pledges from last year's Campaign, but rather top off their annual gift with a one-time emergency donation at whatever amount they feel they can afford. The emergency campaign fundraising goal is \$150,000.

"The reality is that Federation does not have reserves over and above what we raise during our regular annual Community Campaign," said Rymberg. "We hope that the community understands that our beneficiary

agencies rely on those funds."

Much thought went into the decision to run a dual campaign. David Loewith, a long time member of Federation's Campaign Cabinet, said he hopes people will react positively when canvassed.

"This is a really difficult time for a lot of people. This is where the more fortunate among us really need to step up and help as much as we can," said Loewith. "That's what we do as a Federation, to help out the vulnerable in our community."

Federation has held many emergency campaigns in its nearly 100-year history, but what makes this crisis particularly unsettling is not knowing how long it will last.

"What's going to happen in the fall, in the winter? Is there going to be a second wave?", said Rymberg. "That's why it's important to have an emergency campaign, because we have to be in a position where we can respond immediately."

## Former NYT journalist Bari Weiss: Rebuilding after pandemic will require hard decisions

BY STEVE ARNOLD  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

FOR FORMER New York Times opinion writer and editor Bari Weiss, that ability to respond to crises is a strength that has helped Jewish communities survive for centuries.

The keynote speaker at Hamilton Jewish Federation's annual Campaign launch in early July said that, while the Jewish people are a people who know how to reinvent themselves, there's almost no chance of a return to "normal" when the current pandemic dies out.

"We are a people who have renewed and rebuilt out of the embers more than any other people in history," she said.

Key to that rebuilding, however, will require hard decisions.

"We must decide what will be essential for healthy Jewish communities," she said. "Is it money for schools, for community hunger, for

camps?

"Fancy galas, as fun as they are, don't make the list because they don't secure the future of a healthy Jewish community," she added.

Weiss surprised the world July 14 when she suddenly resigned from the New York Times, citing persistent harassment and anti-semitism from colleagues.

Rather than trying to avoid such hatred by becoming insular, however, she argues the best response is to reconnect with what it is to be Jewish.

Antisemitism is a subject Weiss has studied closely. She won the 2019 Jewish Book of the Year prize for her volume *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*.

"The true response to antisemitism is to affirm our Judaism, it's about digging deeper into our Jewish identity," she added.

"Some communities have lost sight of what being Jewish is all about," Weiss said. The Jewish



**Bari Weiss** gave a keynote address at Federation's online campaign launch.

values to be reaffirmed and reconnected with are those that value people, community and the future.

"People are what is essential," she said. "We have to build not just for ourselves, but for the future.

"We are not famous for our magnificent cathedrals, we don't build grand monuments," she said. "Our monuments are our schools, our camps, our youth movements and our institutions of learning. Our monuments are our families and our children."

## Federation welcomes new staff member to its team

Yael Arnold brings a wealth of volunteer and professional experience

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

THE HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION is pleased to announce that Yael Arnold will be working for the organization as its new director of planning and strategic initiatives.

Montreal native Yael Arnold moved to Hamilton with her husband Donnie 19 years ago after he was accepted at McMaster for a residency in hematology. Their four children were born in Hamilton. Arnold received a Master's degree in Health Services Administration in Montreal, as well as a certification from McMaster University in non-profit governance and project management. Most of her work experience has been in hospital administration and long-term care where her duties included strategic planning, accreditation, overseeing organization-wide projects, and problem solving.

Alongside her professional obligations, Arnold has always made time, over the years, to volunteer in the Jewish community, including Shalom Village, where she served a three-year term as co-president. "Volunteering was always really important in my family, and was imparted to me by my grandparents and my mom, and I continued that when I moved to Hamilton," she told the HJN.

Arnold said she was drawn to work at Federation for the opportunity "to contribute to the community in a meaningful way" by working alongside

"It's a dream job, to be able to contribute to and build your own community, and to identify and support the game changers coming up."

Yael Arnold

its CEO Gustavo Rymberg, whom she regards as "a visionary and strong leader." Arnold's position will involve implementing new programs and initiatives in line with Federation's new strategic plan, a key component of which is engaging young families in Jewish life.

Gustavo Rymberg said that Arnold represents the community's next generation of leadership. "Yael is very well educated and has good relationships with a lot of people in the community. Hers is a voice that we have to hear and that has to be represented on our staff," he said. "We're hoping that Yael can be part of reinventing ourselves to adapt to these times." Arnold will take up her new position on Sept. 14.

"I'm super excited," she said. "It's a great team at Federation, and I really look forward to learning from them and supporting Gustavo in all the exciting endeavours and initiatives coming up this year."

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# New charity wants your old car

Georgina Rosenberg started Homeless Cars to make it easy for people to make a difference

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

WHEN GEORGINA Rosenberg's father passed away 10 years ago, she felt overwhelmed by grief and the myriad of tasks to attend to. The question of what to do with her father's car was a decision made on the spur of the moment when she drove it to a mechanic and handed over the keys.

Rosenberg would recall that period of her life years later when she, together with her partner, Benjy Katz, created Homeless Cars, a charitable foundation that helps people turn their old car into a meaningful donation that helps charities eliminate homelessness in Ontario.

Their timing would turn out to be prescient. Homelessness was already a serious problem when Rosenberg applied for charitable status back in the summer of 2019, a process that took effect only after COVID-19 began its deadly sweep through the region.

"We chose homelessness because there is a serious social issue in Southern Ontario and not one that people like to embrace and talk about. With the onset of COVID-19, there has been a surge in cases amongst the homeless, as well as an anticipated increase in the numbers of homeless people and food insecurity as a negative result of this pandemic. I think it's a timely start to our foundation," said Rosenberg.

There are hundreds of cars donated every day in Canada, and with Homeless Cars brand new to the scene, the charity will need to get 50 to 60 cars donated every month to have an impact.



PHOTO: BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN

**Cindy Richter**, coordinator of Tuesday night's Out of the Cold receives a donation from Homeless Cars' executive director, Georgina Rosenberg.

"We want more than that. It's just a matter of marketing and getting the word out there."

On a single day during their second week of operation, Rosenberg took in 10 cars.

"I get extreme satisfaction in helping the donors," said Rosenberg. "Often donors perceive having an old unwanted vehicle as a problem.

## NEED TO KNOW

### WHAT:

- Homeless Cars charitable foundation

### IN SUPPORT OF:

- Ve'ahavta, Seeds of Hope Foundation, Hamilton Out of the Cold, 541 Eatery and Exchange.

### HOW TO DONATE:

- Visit [homelesscars.ca](http://homelesscars.ca) and follow the instructions

### CONTACT:

- Phone: 1-833-HMLSCAR
- Email: [info@homelesscars.ca](mailto:info@homelesscars.ca)
- Online: [homelesscars.ca](http://homelesscars.ca)

Not only are we able to take that off their hands in a quick and efficient manner, they get the opportunity of giving charity to their community without giving money. People are so grateful for our help," like the woman whom Rosenberg assured, yes, Homeless Cars could indeed pick up her car that died in a Canadian Tire parking lot. Then there was the gentleman in Barrie, who was so happy to work with Homeless Cars that he offered to tow the car to Hamilton himself to save them from the expense.

Homeless Car's user-friendly website could be a factor in why the charity's been so successful at breaking into the competitive world of car donations. Once a donor visits [homelesscars.ca](http://homelesscars.ca), it takes literally seconds to call a number, send an email or fill out a form, after which their vehicle — contactless and free of charge — will be picked up within 48 hours. After their vehicles are evaluated for their value, donors will receive a tax receipt.

Homeless Cars has appointed a board of directors which will meet regularly to oversee the distribution of funds among four charities, including Toronto-based organizations Ve'ahavta, Seeds of Hope, and Hamilton's Out of the Cold program, and Barton Street's 541 Eatery and Exchange.

Cindy Richter, coordinator of Hamilton's Tuesday night Out of the Cold program, said that Homeless Car's commitment stands to make a significant impact on the charity.

"Georgina's visionary launch of Homeless Cars has come at a crucial time," said Richter. "Over many months of isolation, we have been shielded from seeing the increase of suffering and injustice, and we are thrilled to have a steady source of income to fund our effort. By bringing the problem of homelessness to the forefront, Homeless Cars is inspiring people to see their car donations build a holier world."

Rosenberg, a native of Toronto, who has many years of sales experience in the credit card processing industry, finds her new endeavour more fulfilling than any professional position she's held in the past.

"It's amazing," she said, "and it's just the start."

"I'm very fortunate to be in a position where I can give back to the Hamilton community, which has been very good to me," adding that she still gets excited by every car that Homeless Cars brings in.

"It is tremendously rewarding to know that my efforts are now going back into the community and there truly is no feeling like the one of giving."



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At this very moment, many of our sisters and brothers here at home and around the world are struggling.

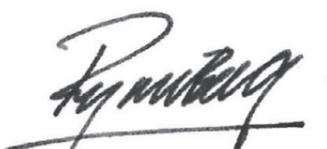
Many are hoping and praying that they can keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table for their families. Among our elderly, there are thousands who feel alone and hope for the warmth of human connection. There are Holocaust survivors whose health is failing and are afraid they can't afford their medicine and still be able to eat every day.

There are children who are hoping for the day when they can safely hug their grandparents again, and children who go to sleep each night, hoping that tomorrow, their mom won't feel so scared.

While we can't know what this year will bring, we do know that Hamilton Jewish Federation will continue to be there for all those in need in our community.

**Whether you wish to provide support - or receive it - we are here.**

**WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A SHANA TOVA U'METUKAH!**

  
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Jacki Levin | President

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## In the midst of a pandemic, a dream comes true

Filmmaker Aharon Jinjhashvili's *Pink Is In*, airs in January

BY ABIGAIL CUKIER  
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

AHARON JINJHASHVILI always wanted to be a filmmaker. Instead, he took a more conventional path toward studying law. Until one day, in the middle of a test in pre-law school, Jinjhashvili left. He had decided to pursue his dream.

Jinjhashvili, who was born in Tbilisi, Georgia and moved to Holon, Israel when he was eight years old, enrolled in film school at Camera Obscura in Tel Aviv. In 2015, he moved to Vancouver, where he attended InFocus Film School. He has worked as a writer, producer and actor in film and television for more than a decade.

"I was always fascinated by film. Growing up, we had a Turkish channel that was a part of our cable package and I would watch American movies, or any other movies and shows that were not available on the Israeli channels. I didn't understand the language, but I could follow the stories," he said. "I always wanted to tell stories. My grandmother was a storyteller and I knew I was going to be a storyteller."

Jinjhashvili moved to Hamilton in 2016, where he became friends with fellow filmmakers, Darren Stewart-Jones and Lisa Crawford. One night, while hanging out at a diner at 3 a.m., the three of them decided to create projects together and formed



PHOTO BY RAYMOND TUQUERO

Aharon Jinjhashvili and his partners are the creators of the new TV series, *Pink Is In*, scheduled to start shooting in Hamilton in September.

2020Productions.

During the height of quarantine, Jinjhashvili and his partners received confirmation that Bell Fibe TV had greenlit their series, *Pink Is In*, which is scheduled to start shooting in Hamilton at the end of September.

"Never in our wildest dreams, could we have predicted that we would have a project greenlit in the midst of a global pandemic," said Jinjhashvili, 36. "It felt weird. Not that we didn't feel worthy of it, but in the midst of lockdown, when no one knew what was going to happen, we got this news."

"It was very strange to say my dream of making something like this is coming true in the middle of a pandemic, but it felt amazing."

The series is expected to be on TV by January. *Pink Is In* follows the barely functioning administrative staff and the unruly prisoners of Chatsworth Hamilton Women's Correctional Facility. The privately owned prison is run by a completely inept prison

administration. The series will delve into the lives of key employees and prisoners.

"The main goal of the show is to make people laugh," says Jinjhashvili. "In these crazy times, that is the best thing to have, something to make you laugh."

The show will have a mostly Hamilton cast and an almost entirely Hamilton crew. "We want to showcase the diversity and talent this city has to offer," said Jinjhashvili. "Hamilton has a unique energy. It can be the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s. It can be anything you want."

Jinjhashvili says that his life has taken him to unexpected places for a reason. "I got introduced to these amazing people and now we have the opportunity to give a chance to people who don't always get a chance. Our goal is to make the set a reflection of our production company—a group of diverse dreamers looking for their big break."



Jeff Skarica displays "The Book of Back Scratches."

## Self-published book inspired by childhood recollections

BY BARRY ROSEN  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

JEFF SKARICA wanted to do something creative, and the idea of a book came to him with the rather intriguing title of *The Book of Back Scratches: Into the Blue Hole*. He reached out to Grace Vanderwaal, who impressed him when she was a contestant on *America's Got Talent*, who motivated him to continue his efforts.

He showed some of his drawings to local writer, Gary Barwin, who suggested Skarica write stories to accompany the drawings.

After attending a workshop on self-publishing, Skarica decided to go that route, hiring people to help with the artwork and layout. The book took a year to complete and is partly based on Skarica's childhood recollections, when he and his brother would give each other

back scratches. He also remembers his mother composing original jingles while she scratched his back when he was a kid.

The book consists of a series of stories, accompanied by drawings of backs, with little jingles under each drawing. Its characters are drawn from Skarica's imagination, except for Grace Vanderwaal. Each story takes place in an outdoor setting, where some of the author's happiest times were spent. Most settings are local, but one story is based in The Bahamas and another in Japan. Skarica has visited both countries, and even worked in Japan for a period of time.

*The Book of Back Scratches* is intended for readers aged 8 to 12, and is available for purchase on Amazon.ca.

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*L'Shana Tova*

**CHW wishes all of our supporters and friends a happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year!**

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# Israeli MD at Firestone welcomes learning opportunity

Respiratory specialist on fellowship hopes to contribute to learning atmosphere

BY SHARON GELBACH

SPECIAL TO THE HJN

WHEN DR. ELДАР PRIEL, an internal medicine specialist from Sheba Medical Center in Israel, decided to specialize further in respiratory illness, he never dreamed that within a few months the world would be caught up in the throes of a respiratory disease pandemic. But by the time the coronavirus spread to the West, Dr. Priel was already settled in the destination of his much-anticipated fellowship, the Firestone Institute of Respiratory Health in Hamilton.

“Fortunately, the case load in Hamilton was very low, and I was exposed only to a small number of patients – nothing in comparison to my colleagues at Sheba, who were on the front lines of COVID-19.”

From the time of his residency, Dr. Priel knew that he wanted to enrich his knowledge and expertise at a world-class facility so that he could learn from the best of the best. “I feel fortunate to have been accepted to this program,” Dr. Priel said, explaining that Firestone is famous for its contribution to research and treatment of lung diseases, specifically severe asthma and pulmonary fibrosis.

At FIRH, Dr. Priel is exposed daily to some of the world’s most



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. PRIEL

**Dr. Eldar Priel** plans to bring the advanced procedural skills he learns during his Firestone fellowship back to the Sheba Medical Centre in Israel.

prominent physicians who employ unique treatment plans and lab processes as well as revolutionary methods, such as bronchial thermoplasty and advanced endoscopic procedures. “I consider many of the physicians at FIRH, including Dr. Param Nair, Dr. Martin Kolb, Dr. Gerrard Cox, Dr. Andrew McIvor and others, as my

mentors. In addition to their vast experience, they integrate basic science, physiology, and patient care into one unifying plan, and they are a pleasure to work with,” he said.

Dr. Priel is gratified to be gaining experience and know-how in advanced procedural skills, which he plans to develop further at

Sheba after he returns home from his fellowship, in the summer of 2022. “Based on my years of work here, I hope to forge professional ties, both clinical and academic, between McMaster University/ FIRH and Tel Aviv University and the Pulmonary Institute at Sheba Medical Center.

Inasmuch as Dr. Priel came to Firestone to learn from the top physicians in the field, he too, feels that he has what to contribute. “Residency is very different in Canada and in Israel,” he shared. “I’m older than my colleagues and have more life experience, which includes military service, marriage and children. The six years that I worked at Sheba as a resident and junior attending have honed my ability to view the patient as a whole, a perspective I learned from my teachers at Sheba’s Internal Medicine ward.”

Another significant contribution is Dr. Priel’s “Israeli flexibility of thought.” Accustomed to the need to accommodate constantly changing realities, Israeli professionals are known for their out-of-the-box thinking and ability to devise creative solutions to stubborn issues, both urgent and mundane. “This creative mindset has led to some very positive changes within the residency program, which I’m happy to say will benefit future generations of residents here at Firestone,” he remarked.

Since arriving in Hamilton last July, Dr. Priel and his family have been getting acclimated to the Canadian personality and lifestyle.

“The quiet, polite culture here is

very different from the noise and commotion in Israel. And the lack of pressure is addictive,” he said.

“We’re enjoying all that Canada has to offer — the vast, open green spaces, seeing animals in our backyard, and of course, the snowy winter, which doesn’t exist in Israel. In our spare time, we try to go on trips, hiking in the woods and discovering the many waterfalls in the area, although sometimes we venture a little farther out. The children are becoming more proficient in English each day, and that’s exciting.

The Priels have enjoyed getting to know Hamilton’s Jewish community, which Dr. Priel describes as “very warm, spanning the entire spectrum of observance.”

Special mention goes to Laura Wolfson and Baya Vertes for their friendship and kind help in finding an apartment and settling in when the family arrived. Before COVID-19, the Priels attended Jewish community events and fostered social ties with community members, and Hila, Dr. Priel’s wife, volunteered at Shalom Village. “Strangers are very friendly in this city, and there is a feeling of community in most places, even far from our own neighborhood,” she noted.

Since COVID, life has changed for the Priels, as it has for everyone. “We’re home a lot, where Hila continues her work in design and illustration, and raises our two sons,” Dr. Priel said. “I wish robust health to all who are sick with COVID-19 and to their families, and hope that things will return to normal very soon!”



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Thank you to our members, donors and friends who have made these challenging times easier for those in need at our women's shelter, our day care centres and our vocational high schools throughout Israel.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Help make a difference this Rosh Hashana for the women, children and families in Israel.



For information on how to get involved contact [naamat@naamat.com](mailto:naamat@naamat.com) or call 1-888-278-0792



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As we adapt to celebrate the High Holidays in new ways, but still with an open heart and a generous spirit, Shalom Village extends our warmest wishes for this New Year, 5781. Rosh Hashanah marks the start of a New Year — a time of humble prayer, joyful celebration, and hope for a new beginning.

Now, more than ever, we must each look within, and to one-another as we seek to provide care and comfort to friends, family and community.

In these challenging times and during this season of renewal, we celebrate that spirit; we honour our fathers and our mothers; and rededicate ourselves to the work of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world.

This year, we offer each of you our deepest wishes that this year be a year of blessing, good health, and peace for you and those you love. May you be inscribed for blessing in the Book of Life.

**FROM ALL OF US AT SHALOM VILLAGE, L'SHANA TOVA TIKATEVU.**

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 WITH A TRIBUTE CARD**



The Shalom Village Charitable Foundation invites you to send one of our personalized Rosh Hashanah greeting and tribute cards this new year, featuring artwork by our residents. By reaching out to family, friends and loved ones this Jewish new year through the purchase of our Rosh Hashanah cards, you touch not only the recipients, but also the lives of our residents at Shalom Village.

To make your donation and send your card, visit [www.ShalomVillage.ca/Giving](http://www.ShalomVillage.ca/Giving) or contact [kathleen@shalomvillage.ca](mailto:kathleen@shalomvillage.ca)

*Tea For Two*

*Join us in celebrating the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual  
 Shalom Village Ladies Auxilliary Tea  
 October 21<sup>st</sup>*

☀️ Sadly, due to the pandemic, we are unable to host you and 200 of our closest friends for Tea this year. But fear not!

We refuse to allow this pandemic to stop us from celebrating Shalom Village, you and all the great people who call Shalom "home".

We may not be able to celebrate the Tea in person, but we can still be together to sip our tea, and wear our fascinators! Everyone who purchases a ticket will be sent a link to our online Tea Party on October 21st. We will be able to see one another, chat about the weather, and most importantly, we will draw our top prizes live, online, and YOU may be one of the big winners!

COVID-19 has meant a lot of changes for all of us, but Shalom Village has remained COVID-19-free, and we need your ongoing support to help us continue our efforts to keep our seniors safe.

☀️ *Please keep watch for your exclusive invitation and expect a call from one of our wonderful Ladies Auxiliary Tea Callers.*

*We look forward to seeing you on October 21<sup>st</sup>!*



# STRONGER THAN EVER, STRONGER TOGETHER.

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## Annual Community Campaign

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Protecting the **vulnerable** in Hamilton, Israel and around the world

Supporting and advocating for **Jewish and Israel issues**

Educating, engaging and strengthening our **Jewish community**

**GOAL = \$1,300,000.00**

## Emergency Campaign

Hamilton Jewish Federation must do something exceptional on a one-time basis to be able to respond to local unexpected needs and to avoid two great dangers

**two important challenges**

**The risk that the community's social service agencies and resources will be quickly overwhelmed by the needs of the Jewish vulnerable** MANY INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES are worried about their financial situation. There will also be a shift in financial support to essential activities, such as addressing food insecurity and mental health care. More resources will be allocated for local needs instead of redirecting overseas.

**The risk that we will see the greatest loss of participation in Jewish life in Hamilton, as community members withdraw from our day schools, supplementary schools and other cultural experiences** COMMUNITY is the best protection/vaccine from the social isolation many have experienced during this period – which may mean the establishment of a new set of rituals, mechanisms and activities. Online in real time and on-demand activities will be more of an expectation – which has implications for Service delivery, relationship-building and affiliation.

**GOAL = \$150,000.00**

# CAMPAIGN 2021



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Without buildings, we formed new structures of connection and creativity.

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Protecting our vulnerable ...  
Educating, engaging and strengthening the community ...  
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## Our community's future depends on our ability to adapt to new realities

Gustavo Rymberg | CEO

Hola! The past few months have been very difficult for all of us, but thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Hamilton Jewish Federation staff and volunteers, Federation has risen to the challenge. We've mobilized volunteers, provided hundreds of nutritious meals and found numerous ways for people to help each other. All this, despite the social distancing concerns that kept many of our Jewish communal facilities closed.

The success of our Federation in lifting up and supporting our community has been inspiring, and our collective work is converting crisis into opportunity through a number of new initiatives that are benefitting Jewish life in Hamilton. There is truly much to be proud of, and yet we know that our work is just beginning.

Communal leaders should be asking how our organizations will compete in a new world. To be successful and emerge from this crisis stronger, organizations and leader will need to focus on their value proposition, what is mission critical, what is essential, and the quality of outcomes, rather than the inputs or process.

A key challenge for our lay leaders and professionals will involve putting aside the fear of losing their organizational identity by asking the right questions, having risky conversations, and embracing change. The ability to get ahead of the curve and plan for a strategic response in the face of continued uncertainty will distinguish organizations that are successful from those that will be diminished or fail.

As always, our most effective response to any crisis is to work collectively to address the needs of the Jewish people, and that is what we are doing, and we will continue to do. The case for Federation leadership has never been as clear or compelling as it is right now. Every day, Federation and the agencies we are supporting are providing vital funding, services and leadership.

At the same time, the usual ways we have built the financial support for our work are not available to us right now, such as missions, community events, celebrations and even visits to our donors' homes and offices, are going to be severely limited for the near future. More organizations are going to be on financially fragile ground. This will further fuel consolidation and collaboration.

The strength of our community depends on successfully overcoming these barriers, finding what is essential for our community and finding new and perhaps even more effective ways of telling our story. We are confident that Jewish life will continue to flourish in our community and that our response to this crisis will be remembered as one of Federation's greatest moments.

To those of you who generously contributed to last year's Community Campaign, I thank you. We reached 98 per cent of our goal of \$1.3 million, breaking a new record. This year, in the face of an unprecedented challenges, we turn to you again. Your gift will enable Federation to direct increased funding to agencies such as Jewish Family Services, which provides essential services, including mental health and career counseling, support for Holocaust survivors, and the new Kosher on Wheels program. Your gift will also help ensure that no Jewish child is denied a Jewish education, no matter what their parents' financial situation.

I'd like to close with the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks who said that "when we lift something to give to another, it is we ourselves who are lifted. What elevates us in life is not what we receive but what we give. The more of ourselves that we give, the greater we become."

## TAS Religious School goes virtual

BY DORA-ANN COHEN

Singing, food, dancing and hands-on learning with friends are the activities that keep students excited to attend TAS religious classes, and create lasting memories that become a piece of a child's Jewish identity. While the worry of COVID-19 transmission is weighing on us all, including our anxious children, our education committee quickly realized that these were activities that could not be continued safely in close proximity to each other. However, we also decided that we can continue to sing, cook, eat, dance and learn together in a virtual learning space. In a way, virtual learning can do more to engage whole families in Jewish learning, as the walls between Temple and home are blended into one, bringing learning directly into our families' homes and daily lives. This year, we will create a kehila of many homes and families, who will learn, sing, and pray together on Wednesday afternoons and Shabbat mornings. We are planning engaging and exciting ways to teach Torah, Jewish history, traditions, rituals, prayer and values in virtual classrooms, with the goal of face-to-face learning opportunities in small groups when it is safe. Our families will be provided with monthly learning packages containing art materials, resources and fun surprises to bring our classroom right into their homes.

Families with children between the ages of one and four years are invited to begin Shabbat morning at 9 a.m. with Morah Dora-Ann at our drop-in Tot-Shabbat. School-age children and their parents are invited to gather in our Zoom room at 9:20 a.m. to sing, shmooze, and spend Shabbat together. Students will have several opportunities to learn in one of our five Zoom classrooms on Shabbat and on Wednesdays from 4:30 to 6:10 p.m.

Our goal is to return to in-person learning when it is safe and appropriate to do



PHOTO COURTESY OF DORA-ANN COHEN ELLISON

**TAS** brings Jewish learning into the homes of our families.

so, but an aspect of virtual learning will remain.

When we moved to a virtual space last spring during the complete shut-down of schools, we heard from several families who struggle to attend programs for medical or distance reasons, that virtual programs have opened doors to learning opportunities that they have never had before. We cannot close our virtual doors on these families.

This year has brought much uncertainty and many changes, but we believe that change can make us a stronger and closer community. Temple Anshe Sholom's engaging programs will continue, though our space has changed, becoming more open, accessible, and welcoming. We will continue to adapt as our Jewish learning program evolves throughout the years to come. All are welcome to join our learning adventure! To receive more details about Temple Religious School classes and schedules, please email Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison at [dacellison@anshesholom.ca](mailto:dacellison@anshesholom.ca) or visit [templeanshesholom.shulcloud.com/form/2020school-pre-registration](http://templeanshesholom.shulcloud.com/form/2020school-pre-registration).

## In-person classes are on at Kehila Heschel



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANITA BERNSTEIN

**Kehila students** are looking forward to getting back to class.

BY ANITA BERNSTEIN

FOR KEHILA HESCHEL, education is too important for us to make compromises! As the 2020-2021 school year approaches, Kehila Heschel has been preparing and is ready to keep students safe while learning at school. On Sept. 8, students were welcomed back to school, five days a week for the full day.

The Health and Safety Advisory Panel has been working cooperatively with the Board of Directors, school administration and teachers in developing guidelines and protocols for the opening of school. These groups have developed a planned occupational safety and health program to identify and resolve safety and health issues and to prevent the occurrence or spread of the coronavirus in the school. Kehila Heschel will be strictly adhering to the recommendations made by experts at the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, City of Hamilton Public Health Services and the Hospital for Sick Children.

Kehila Heschel School is ready. Our students will be learning in-person, as the preferred method for delivering our curriculum. Should it be required, our staff is prepared to quickly pivot to virtual learning as capabilities are in place to allow for

a seamless transition.

Class sizes will continue to be capped at a maximum of 10 students; grade-specific pods will have students learning, playing and eating together; and our teachers are dedicated to only teaching at our school to minimize spread of the virus.

Kehila Heschel's Ecoschool curriculum supports students' learning outdoors as it incorporates the natural environment into their studies. All grades will participate in outdoor classrooms for several periods a day, ensuring reduced time in an enclosed setting.

Students and teachers will be using face coverings as required while indoors. Kehila Heschel safety visors will be available.

We have instituted general separate entry and exit and safety protocols; the school has been thoroughly cleaned; cleaning staff and protocols have been increased; sanitization stations are located in every classroom; and all items that cannot be easily disinfected have been removed.

Classes are on at Kehila Heschel School. Contact us at [info@kehilaschool.ca](mailto:info@kehilaschool.ca) or 905-529-7725.

The lawyers and staff at Ross & McBride LLP wish the entire community a happy and healthy New Year.

# L'Shanah Tovah



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# A High Holy Day season like no other

Adas Israel will conduct in-person services, while Beth Jacob and Temple opt for online option

## Temple Anshe Sholom

BY **RABBI JORDAN COHEN**

WE STAND ON THE precipice of change. The forced distancing and isolation of the coronavirus, compounded by growing personal and communal fiscal hardship, profound shifts in societal norms, and new attitudes to institutional forms, have all contributed to the need to reimagine and recreate Jewish life. Some despair of our current situation. I don't. The brilliance of Judaism has always been its ability to not only survive but to thrive out of adversity, reinventing itself in a way that makes us stronger and even more relevant. This time is no different.

Since March, out of concern for the health and well-being of our community, Temple Anshe Sholom has moved almost all of synagogue life online with a great measure of success. As we enter into the new year, we will continue in this model until such a time when we can guarantee that it is both safe and equitable for all the members of our community to gather together. This approach is a strong expression of our values during a challenging and difficult time.

These measures will continue throughout the High Holy Day season. All services and programs for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur will be streamed online and everyone is welcome to join with us. It has been a challenge to configure our liturgy into a format that will be both meaningful and engaging; connecting our community while avoiding "Zoom fatigue." Our congregation has engaged in consultations throughout the past months to determine the elements that are most significant for our members. It quickly became clear that it is the High Holy Day melodies that most inspire our congregants. We recognize, however, that our choir will not be able to sing together, as singing presents a far greater risk of transmission. Thankfully, the technology is available to allow us to create virtual choir videos that will be featured along with our Cantor. Shorter services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom

Kippur will be supplemented with a wide variety of study opportunities and sessions of music, meditation, readings and discussion. Special services and programs for youth and young families will also be offered online throughout. There will be a few in-person offerings including a physically distanced and safe Tashlikh event, and a Drive-by Shofar Celebration on Second Day Rosh HaShanah.

I am heartened at the incredible creativity and thoughtfulness that is accompanying our shift into a this previously unimaginable New Year. We welcome everyone to celebrate with us and wish everyone a shanah tova u'm'tukah!

## Beth Jacob Synagogue

BY **SHIRA KATES**

IT HAS BEEN a challenging summer under COVID-19, and the health and safety of our families remains top priority. That said, we can't wait to jump into the holiday season with invigorated excitement over Conservative Jewish synagogue life.

## Hebrew School

Hebrew School resumes this fall, and we are gearing up for an entirely reimagined curriculum under new leadership. What can you look forward to this year? More hands-on learning than ever before; outdoor field trips and an exploration of the Jewish aspects of environmental care; a strong focus on Hebrew literacy; a dedicated education committee comprised of parents and teachers, in constant communication with Rabbis Hillel and Yonah; opportunities to learn in partnership with community organizations, including Temple Anshe Shalom and Shalom Village; Special events including a Chanukah party, Purim Carnival, and themed Shabbat services, with an emphasis on giving back to our local and global community through tikkun olam.

## What about COVID-19?

Until we are confident that the



PHOTO: NAME GOES HERE

The Adas Israel will hold socially distanced High Holiday services in their chapel and main sanctuary.

## Adas Israel Congregation

BY **RABBI DANIEL GREEN**

TWO MONTHS AGO, the Adas commenced in-person services, with strict health and safety guidelines that continue to include: Pre-screenings and screenings at door; designated seating that are sterilized between different uses; two metre structured socially distanced seating between all seats and aisles; enforcement of masks and hand sanitization at door; sanitization of books between uses.

Preservation of life is one of the highest Jewish value, and no one should feel pressured to attend. As a community, we respect each and everyone's individual health choices.

While we will be conducting multiple services on Rosh Hashana, space is limited. We will do our best to accommodate all those that would like to participate, by creating additional

services if necessary. Service times will be:

8 to 10:30 a.m. in the Main Sanctuary; 8 to 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel (Sephardic); 11 a.m. to noon: Main Sanctuary (Musaf) 11:15 to 11:45 a.m.: Youth Service in the Chapel for children in Grades 4-7 accompanied by their parents. 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.: Main Sanctuary (Musaf)

During Rosh Hashanah, shofar blasts will be done distanced from the congregation, with masking over the large Shofar end.

While a distance of two metres will be ensured between all seats and aisles, members of the same family circle can sit together. Initial seating preference will be given to members and residents.

There is no upper age limit for those who would like to attend.

Seniors are welcome. Children must be 12 years of age or older.

A separate youth service will be conducted for children in Grades 4-7, where children must attend

with a parent.

At 11:45 a.m. for both days of Rosh Hashanah, join us outdoors on the Cline Avenue lawn for a special kid's Shofar blowing and program. Open to all kids, of all ages, no reservation required.

Children participating in the youth service (for Grades 4-7) will join following the service.

Adults please mask outdoors. Please request your preferred service time by visiting [adasisrael.ca](http://adasisrael.ca).

We will confirm your seating, based upon availability, via email. This will include a pre-screening questionnaire, for each attendee, that must be completed.

To help support our Shul during these times, we will be requesting a \$50 donation for each reserved seat. (Complimentary seats will be available for those who require assistance.)

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy new year. Shana Tova!

COVID-19 risk to students and staff is minimal, instruction will remain predominantly online. Field trips or outdoor learning will continue with social distancing and masks required. Once our medical advisors, board, and education committee agree that classes may resume indoors, we

will ensure that the above-mentioned safety measures remain in place, in addition to cleaning and sanitizing indoor learning environments daily.

## High Holy Days

Our Torah teaches that all life is sacred, and that we must each be responsible for preserving life

above all else. In reverence of each member of our congregation, High Holiday services will be entirely online this year. This was not a decision made lightly, and Rabbi Hillel, board, and ritual committees discussed at length all options available to us. However, the idea of a High Holiday service without singing, without honours, without hugging our friends – and still putting each other at risk – was hardly acceptable to any of us.

We are proud of the virtual service we have planned for our members. Weather permitting, there will even be an outdoor shofar services.

Next year, in Jerusalem! Or at least back in our beloved Sanctuary. For more information, questions, concerns, or just to say hi, please contact synagogue manager Shira Kates at [shira@bethjacobsynagogue.ca](mailto:shira@bethjacobsynagogue.ca) or visit [bethjacobsynagogue.ca](http://bethjacobsynagogue.ca).



PHOTO: NAME GOES HERE

Temple Anshe Sholom will be conducting their High Holiday services online this year.

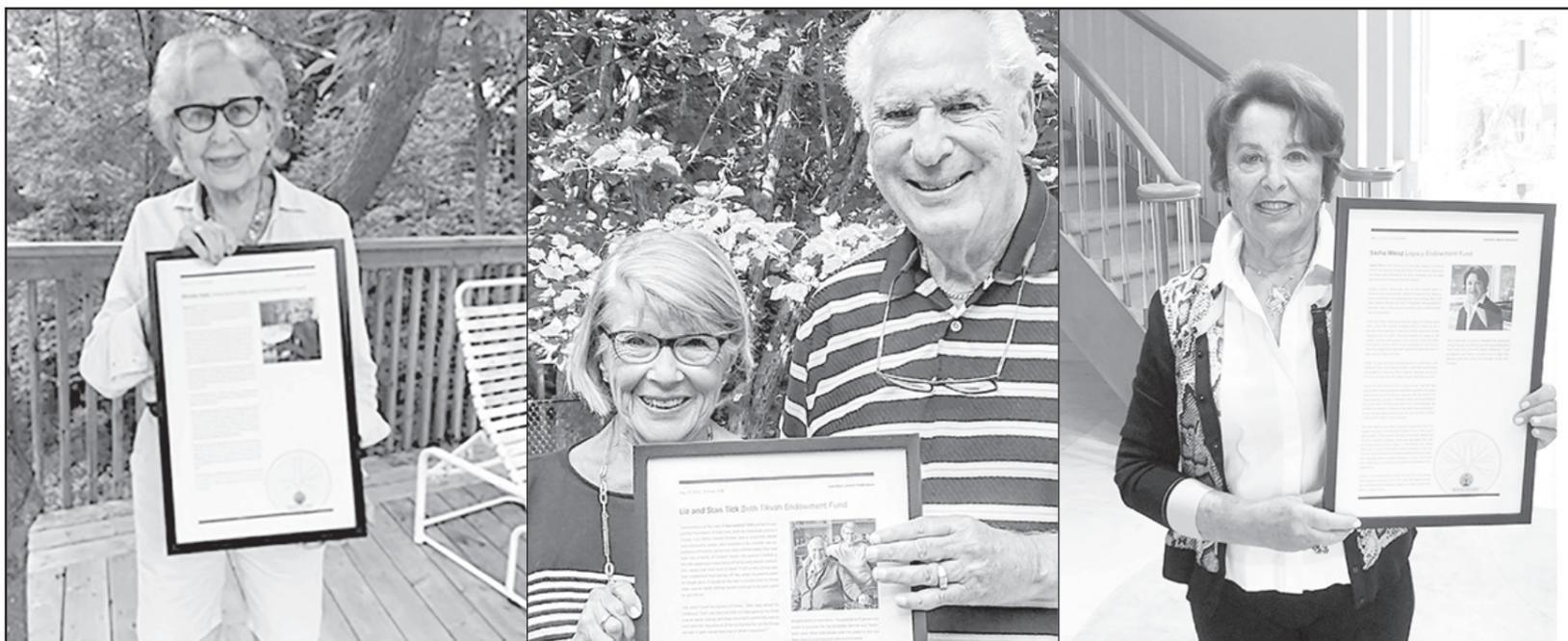


PHOTO: NAME GOES HERE

Beth Jacob Synagogue is holding pre-recorded High Holiday services.



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## Share yours at the Hamilton Book of Life

Three families have made a gift to the Hamilton Jewish Federation Legacy Endowment Fund through a charitable fund, life insurance policy, or bequest, ensuring the future strength and vibrancy of our Jewish community. For their forward-thinking philanthropy, these generous members of our community deserve our thanks.

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



If you have any questions about the Hamilton Jewish Federation, or would like information about how to include your family story in the Book of Life, please contact Gustavo Rymberg, 905.648.0605 or grymberg@jewishhamilton.org

## Shalom Village remains COVID free

BY DR. LARRY LEVIN  
INTERIM CEO

SHANA TOVA from Shalom Village. I am very pleased to report that Shalom Village remains COVID-19 free. Staff and residents are being tested every two weeks and all recommended public health protocols are being followed.

It is such an unfortunate circumstance that at this stage of their lives, residents have to put up with the difficulties demanded by the pandemic and have been deprived of many pleasant moments over the last six months. We have tried to mitigate these problems as much as possible.

The last few months have been a bit easier for residents since visitors are now allowed. For Mother's and Father's Day, our recreation team and other staff volunteers joined together to help distribute flowers and card donations. Our dedicated staff worked hard to help residents enjoy visits through windows, doorways, and video platforms to help bring families together. We know everyone would have preferred to see their loved ones in person, but thanks to our great staff, we were able to make the days fun and special for the mothers and fathers in our care.

We celebrated Staff Appreciation Week and Senior's Month, letting everyone know that COVID-19 can't stop the spirit in our home. We organized draws, snacks, treats and other activities to celebrate and provide a little fun along the way. I also want to tell you about a wonderful program that brightened the day for



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHALOM VILLAGE

many residents over the summer. The Hamilton Wentworth District School Board runs a program for kids that are considered at risk due to poverty, minimal education, learning challenges, lack of support at home, etc. Because the pandemic has prevented them from participating in their usual sports programs, they came up with a program called "Senior Connectedness."

With help from their their supervisor Zack, the kids developed a series of questions about the residents' interests and backgrounds. They reached out to our residents through a series of supervised phone calls, made flower pots and wrote letters for residents based on this information. The letters and flower pots were so sweet and the residents loved them.

Other groups of high school and university students have also reached out to residents for conversations and have sent cards. At a time of stress, it reminds us of the good in people and how little acts of kindness can brighten the lives of others.

It has been my honour to act as interim CEO during this time. Thank you for your support, and please stay safe and healthy!

**Social distancing**, along with other cautious practices, have kept Shalom Village COVID free.

### WHAT RESIDENTS SAY

"I am safe and secure here at Shalom. I am surrounded by a staff of committed, caring, respectful and warm hearted people."

"I was in the video pictures celebrating my Moms 91st birthday. It was a strange way to celebrate her birthday but we made it fun and the staff were there to watch and have fun with Mom. For this and so much more, we are thankful for all the staff have done and are doing for all the residents."

"I'm so relieved and pleased that our good fortune has placed my loved ones at Shalom. I am continually grateful for your regular communications and your constant care and attention to all that matters for staff and residents. With great appreciation."

"Thank you for putting your trust in the staff and leadership at Shalom Village. Keeping our residents safe and happy motivates us to continually strive to make the next day even better, for our residents, for their families and for our staff."

## Jewish Family Services

BY ALEXIS WENZOWSKI

ROSH HASHANAH marks the beginning of a new year and great new things. I felt it was important to discuss some of the new — and incredible things that have happened at HJFS over the summer.

In July, HJFS began its Intensive Client Services pilot program, which offers our clients access to a range of wellness courses, webinars and access to a registered social worker, case worker, and employment counsellor. These positions, funded by the Hamilton Jewish Federation, reflect a growing community need, made especially apparent during COVID-19. To date, we have more than 50 individuals and families utilizing these services, which are free or charge and accessible to anyone interested.

Other developments over the summer included our community garden program receiving support from the Hamilton Community Foundation, and our hiring of Lloyd Orson as our garden coordinator, who is working with our community partners to ensure families in need have access to fresh produce. Check out our sites at Hamilton Hebrew Academy and Temple Anshe Sholom/Kehila Heschel Day School.

HJFS also held its very first summer food drive. Organized by the Kasher Food Bank committee, our dedicated volunteers worked to fill two large trucks full of food. Community members were able to drop off donations at either Beth Jacob or J Hamilton or HJFS. By the end of the drive, we were stunned to see how much food



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HAMILTON JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

**JFS staff** and volunteers help stock up the Kasher Food Bank.

we had received. It made a real difference.

If you're interested in learning more about or supporting Hamilton Jewish Family Services, please visit [hamiltonjfs.ca](http://hamiltonjfs.ca) or connect with us at [info@hamilton.ca](mailto:info@hamilton.ca). You can also call 905-627-9922, ext 23 and speak with Chris.

David Sweet, M.P.  
and Almut Sweet

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## Not your every day Israel tour

Vivienne Epstein recounts her experiences on a nuanced tour of Israel during which participants were encouraged to engage critically with a diverse range of perspectives

BY **VIVIENNE EPSTEIN**  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

IN NOVEMBER 2019, my husband and I, together with our son, had the opportunity to participate in a fascinating tour with Kaleidoscope to Israel.

Kaleidoscope represents the Jewish Agency's new approach to tourism, with a focus on the vital relationship between Israeli society and diaspora Jews. Our tour, organized by Makom, a project of the Jewish Agency, placed more of an emphasis on giving us an authentic Israel experience over sight-seeing, and it was a privilege to hear and get a sense of the full range of the richness and complexity of Israeli life over an intense five days. "Come, look and listen," was the mantra.

Aynat Wilf, one of Israel's leading public intellectuals and a former advisor to Former President Shimon Peres, provided us with a sweeping perspective on Jewish identity. We are a people of passage through history, she told us, influenced by civilizational changes from premodernity to modernity. Entering mainstream society has added further complexity. Identity and conflict emerged as the pervasive themes. Wilf advised that we refrain from seeking solutions and making judgments, but instead enter this Israel experience through listening to the rich dialogue, and feeling the push and pull of multiple perspectives and complexities.

And so, we entered the tapestry of

Israel today. Arts and culture highlights included an encounter with Druze artist, Buteina Halabei, whose interpretive paintings and depictions of the Holocaust were the first that Yad Vashem accepted by a non-Jewish artist. We were also treated to a screening of film director Barak Heymann's controversial film, Comrade Dov at the Jerusalem Cinematheque, the story of Member of Knesset Dov Khenin's 13-year tenure at the helm of the Jewish Arab Party, Hadash. In describing what he calls the "open wound" of contemporary Israeli society, Khenin's passionate advocacy on behalf of Israel's Arab citizens left many of us grappling with our own thoughts and internal conflicts.

We were also introduced to exciting social enterprises, including the remarkable Bialik-Rogozin School in south Tel Aviv. The school, the subject of the award-winning film, Strangers No More, represents Israel's highly successful melting pot for the children of Israel's 100,000 illegal migrant workers and 40,000 asylum seekers. The school addresses the challenges of Israeli society in the absence of a refugee policy. A young man, a graduate of the school, told us a heart wrenching story about his experience as a victim of human trafficking and his fervent commitment to the state of Israel.

Another enriching presentation was given Shmuel Rossner, author of



PHOTO BY RAEFIE EPSTEIN

**Above:** Palestinian peace activist, Noor Al-Bein and Israeli peace activist, Rabbi Shaul Judelman are members of a joint Palestinian-Israeli grassroots peacemaking initiative dedicated to co-existence.

**Right:** Raefie and Vivienne Epstein during the Jewish Agency's Kaleidoscope tour.



Portrait of a Cultural Revolution, who spoke to us about Jewish identity and the religious fabric of Israel and North America. Rossner's talk was followed by our dialogue with two brave individuals working to reduce conflict in Israeli society: a Haredi rabbi who took personal risks by introducing

math and science to his young students to help them integrate into Israeli society, and a principal affiliated with the Reform movement who is integrating with an Orthodox school.

US Special Envoy, Kerry Diamond, also offered his perspective on how Israelis and Palestinians share an existential anxiety and desire for legitimacy.

Other encounters brought home the human stories behind the conflict, like that of the young woman from Israel's nationalist camp, who shared her experience of trauma during the intifada, and the testimony of Noor Al-Bein, a Palestinian from Gaza, who spoke about his fear of the Israeli soldier. We also heard from Rabbi Shaul Judelman who, together with Al-Bein, is advocating for reconciliation and co-existence through a joint Palestinian-Israeli grassroots organization called Roots/Shorashim/Judur. Through joint charity initiatives, including a kindergarten for the children of Jewish and Palestinian workers in the West Bank, the organization fosters understanding, non-violence and transformation.

On this trip, I learned that we need to move away from getting stuck in stereotypes; that listening to personal narratives removes political and institutional thinking; that existential identity needs to be the focus of successful dialogue; and that all of us need a legitimate identity, without which an "oppositionist identity" develops.

I am grateful to Kaleidoscope and the Jewish Agency for this opportunity to provide perspective and to feel the responsibility that we share.

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# Einstein faced criticism based on his Jewish heritage

Einstein's experiences with antisemitism can help us see the impact of prejudice on the way science is conducted and discussed

BY **ADAM RICHTER**  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

LAST YEAR, I gave a lecture on Albert Einstein in my class on the history of astronomy and cosmology. Einstein's relativistic physics is a cornerstone of our current understanding of the cosmos, so it was natural to include this material in my course. After a little deliberation, though, I also chose to include Einstein's experiences with antisemitism in the lecture. Long after relativity theory had made Einstein an international celebrity, Einstein continued to face criticism that focused on his Jewish heritage, particularly in his native Germany. Nazis and their sympathizers decried his "Jewish science," with its unusual ideas about the relativity of space and time, which they believed undermined the more credible "Aryan science."

After class, a student approached me and asked a question that surprised me: Where did all this prejudice against Jews "suddenly" come from in the 1920s and 1930s? Why would the Jews be singled out in the scientific community? I ended up explaining to the student at length that the growth of antisemitism in Europe was anything but sudden. Rather, its roots extended back as least as far as the Middle Ages, when Jews were expelled from numerous European cities and regions. This wasn't what I had expected to focus on that day,

but as an historian and a Jew, I was more than willing to have the discussion.

Einstein's troubles remind us that even science, which is typically celebrated as objective and value-free, has often been plagued by prejudice. From the 1920s onward, he and his "Jewish science" were routinely subjected to openly antisemitic criticism. These attacks were senseless for many reasons, one of which is that Einstein's science wasn't particularly "Jewish" and neither was Einstein himself. Born into a non-practicing Jewish family in Germany, Einstein rejected Judaism and, indeed, formal religion altogether at only 12 years old, when he decided that the biblical stories he had been taught were scientifically impossible. As a result, the young Einstein refused to proceed with his Bar Mitzvah.

Yet it would be too simplistic to say that Einstein wasn't religious. In fact, he consistently claimed to be religious, but for him this meant believing in a ubiquitous, impersonal force that structures the universe. Einstein was sympathetic to the ideas of Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher, who argued that God and Nature are two aspects of the same thing (though he stopped just short of saying that God simply is Nature). Spinoza, a lapsed Sephardic Jew himself, also claimed that free

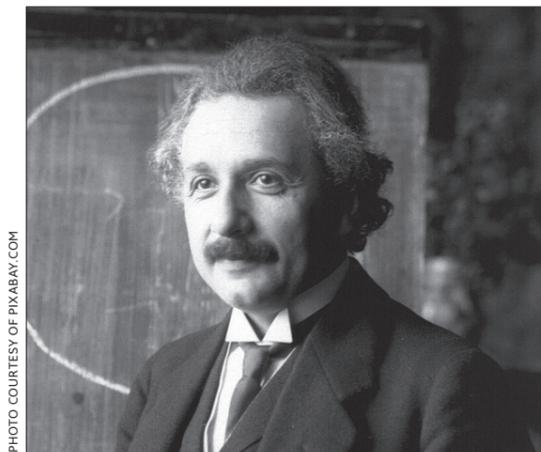


PHOTO COURTESY OF PIXABAY.COM

**Albert Einstein** was criticized by antisemites for practicing a "Jewish" style of physics.

In 1920, Einstein debated Lenard and had to contend with antisemitic demonstrations at the event. Two years later, fearing for his safety, he refused to speak at the same conference. In 1933, while Einstein was visiting the United States, Hitler rose to power and Einstein realized that he couldn't return to Germany. He took up a position at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where he worked for the rest of his life.

This was an uncomfortable topic to address in class, to say the least. But I consider it essential to examine the biographical details of a scientist's life, since these details offer invaluable lessons about how the world of science works. Einstein's experiences can help us to see the impact of prejudice on the way science is conducted and discussed. As much as we value science, we have an obligation to evaluate it critically like any other feature of the modern world. This means keeping an eye out for hateful, prejudicial ideas—whether antisemitic or otherwise—in scientific discourse.

Any reader who is eager to learn more about Einstein's religious views should consult Max Jammer's *Einstein and Religion: Physics and Theology* (1999). On Einstein's struggles with Nazis, see Philip Ball's *Serving the Reich: The Struggle for the Soul of Physics under Hitler* (2014).

Adam Richter is an historian of science who teaches at the University of Toronto Mississauga. His research focuses on the relationship between science and religion. He grew up in Hamilton and now lives in Burlington.

will is an illusion and that everything that occurs results from the laws of Nature.

All of this appealed to Einstein, who also believed in a deterministic universe governed by precise mathematical rules. However, as he explained in his essay, "Religion and Science," which was published in the *New York Times* in 1930, Einstein experienced a "cosmic religious feeling" when he investigated the mathematical beauty and complexity of the universe. He also seems to have believed that society needs religion just as much as science. Between the two, he claimed, only religion provides concepts of morality and justice. During a conference presentation on science and religion in 1940, he famously remarked, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind."

Yet, although Einstein was tolerant toward religious believers and considered himself "religious" in his own way, he was not a practicing Jew, much less a proponent of "Jewish science." The Nazis, of

course, regarded Einstein as a Jew anyway: he had been born Jewish, and this inevitably tainted his science. Thus, while some critics denounced him as an atheist, the Nazis interpreted Einstein's "religion" in a different way to serve their own purposes.

What is especially troubling is that Einstein's antisemitic detractors included high-profile German scientists. One of his most vocal critics, Philipp Lenard, won a Nobel Prize for Physics in 1905, the same year that Einstein published his special theory of relativity. An ardent Nazi, Lenard complained that Einstein exemplified a "Jewish" style of physics that featured too much mathematics and theory and not enough experimentation. This Jewish physics, he believed, was undermining German science. Lenard also claimed that the theory of relativity was incomprehensible, and that its popularity was due only to a Jewish conspiracy.

There was nothing subtle about the prejudice behind such attacks on Einstein and his work.



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## Pandemics and racism



Miriam Sager

IT'S FELT LIKE an impossible choice: what do I write about at this time? How can it be anything but the pandemic? But, too, how can I not write about the calls for racial justice? And then it all fell into place: these two issues are actually deeply connected, are both relevant to us as Jews.

No, I have no intention of blaming the Jews for any of this. Scientists have been warning for some time that the melting of permafrost and the continuing human encroachment on wildlife habitat are increasing the risk of future new, and therefore highly contagious, virus- and bacteria-caused diseases being unleashed. "It is a question of when, not whether," has been the message. We must urgently limit both if we wish to limit such future pandemics.

We, in the "developed world" cannot continue with some of the luxuries which we have taken for granted, such as unlimited consumption and travel. These have driven

the growth of extractive activities, industry, transport and an outpour of pollution. As well, government policies such as supporting urban sprawl and fossil fuel projects, and the weakening of environmental protections, drive both the dangerous proximity of wildlife to humans and the escalating heating of our globe. 2020 is well on its way to be the second hottest year on record after 2016.

COVID-19 and the recent uprising for racial justice have exposed for all to see the longstanding and disastrous, unhealed inequities in our society. Although slavery in Canada was abolished some 200 years ago, its fallout and the dehumanization of black people persist in big and damaging ways. As we wash our hands with soap and water yet again, let us remember that more than 100 Indigenous communities live with boil water advisories. The encroachment on Indigenous sovereignty by the government-backed fossil fuel industry continues in spite of heroic resistance, and despite both mounting evidence of the urgent need to drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions and international commitments to do so.

We know that the brunt of the

environmental harm will be suffered by those who have contributed the least to it: the young who will grow into a less-livable planet, and people of colour who have been rendered vulnerable by the stealing of their resources, first by colonization and still now by ruthless mining companies. Being a land defender, both at home and abroad, is a very dangerous occupation.

It all comes down to the ethos of our society, which is based on power and profit even if we like to pretend that it is not the case. Exploiting or sacrificing the environment, people, and ethics, are all permitted or at least ignored if profit is to be made by some corporation that is in a position to lobby and pressure the government. Ordinary people cannot escape being implicated in this system: almost every item we buy was grown or made by an underpaid worker, likely a person of colour; and many of us are unawarely invested in destructive and racist activities through our CPP and the banks we work with.

And antisemitism? That is one of the oldest tricks in the book. It has been used for millennia as a safety valve for oppressive rulers, having a convenient scapegoat

at times of social unrest. In more recent times, we have seen it used to undermine any push for systemic change. There have already been antisemitic rumblings against the climate movement, and the antisemitism in some of the black rioting has been highlighted and manipulated in an attempt to turn support away from the justified, and mostly peaceful, demands for racial justice. Divide and rule is another old colonialist trick.

The interconnectedness of the problems, far from being a source of despair, can give us hope that a broad, united front with a common goal of a sustainable, just society that puts human well-being ahead of profit and leaves no one behind, is possible. Many people are already working towards such a vision. You could look up the Just Recovery, Green New Deal, the Leap Manifesto or the Movement of Movements.

It is a huge and urgent task, but to paraphrase Theodor Herzl, if we wish it, and take action to make it happen, it is no fairy tale.

Miriam Sager facilitates sharing circles about climate change. She can be contacted at [mirsager@yahoo.ca](mailto:mirsager@yahoo.ca).

## High Holiday reflections in the age of COVID-19



Phyllis Shragge

AS THE HIGH HOLIDAYS approach and I reflect on the past year, I'm bombarded by thoughts of COVID-19. I realize the coronavirus pandemic has escalated my confusion about life in general. My muddled thoughts have lost their connection to their source (my brain) much like loose cables discombobulating the input from my TV cable box.

Uncertainty is the only constant but I want to plan ahead. Phrases like "flatten the curve" or "physical distancing" or "second wave" now insert themselves into my day-to-day conversations like the words "a" or "the." I no longer assume someone wearing a mask on his face is planning to rob a store.

All these months into this pandemic has ripped away my equilibrium.

I know I'm not alone. All of us have

changed. All of us are living in a constant state of apprehension. As these times throw us into an obsessive compulsive state (wash and rewash your hands; clean whatever you touch; keep far, far away from everyone) we wish we could go back in time, back to BEFORE. Back to when we didn't worry about doing the simplest things.

At the time of this writing, early in July, we are beginning to ease our way into the real world. We wonder if it's safe to do this, or to do that.

The phrase risk-worthy comes to mind. It's a take on the term sponge-worthy, a phrase coined by Elaine on TV's Seinfeld. In that now-famous episode, Elaine hoarded her stash of birth control sponges when she heard they were being taken off the market. She saved them for men she considered sponge-worthy.

As we adapt Elaine's descriptor to our times, it's just a bit of a tweak from sponge-worthy to risk-worthy. What is worth a perceived personal risk? For me, a trip to the hairdresser is No. 1 on the risk-worthy

scale. So is a quick run into a well-known soft ice cream shop for a chocolate dip cone.

Each of us has our own risk-worthy scale. However, as we ride what could be a lockdown roller coaster, our personal risk-worthy decisions may change week to week or month to month.

When Ontario's Stage Two of reopening began on a Friday in June, I felt a glimmer of hope for a more-or-less normal existence. I was intrigued that restaurant patios were now allowed to open. But I was wary. Maybe I'd eat on a patio in a month or so, when the dust settles. I would bide my time.

The next day, I called a nearby restaurant and made a reservation for dinner. Blink: For me, the restaurant's status switched from risky to risk-worthy.

That Saturday in June was wonderful. The sun was shining—perfect patio weather—as we joined the outside world for a meal. How I had missed the ritual: Perusing a menu, debating the choices, placing an order, sipping wine, and anticipating a delicious meal. The experience was

a much needed symbol of normalcy. But it was much more than that. It was a chance to wear something besides old clothes and running shoes.

Finally, instead of wistfully staring at my closet, I could pick something from it that I actually liked. I could even wear a necklace! And cute but uncomfortable sandals!

We felt safe dining out that night. Our table was far from others on the patio. We could relax. We could, albeit briefly, forget COVID-19.

What's happening in the fall of 2020? Has there been a resurgence of cases? Have there been renewed lockdown measures? Will there be a second wave of the pandemic? Do I really want to think about all this? I do not. One day at a time. Such is life as we now know it.

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

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## A pox on both our houses



Ben Shragge

THE US-CANADA border has now been shut for four months, which, since the War of 1812, is a four-month record. Expect new records to be set daily.

As a Canadian living in the US, I'm on the COVID-heavy side of the border and will be for the unforeseeable future. Though I've had to postpone a wedding, I don't bemoan my fate. A government's primary duty is to the safety of the people who graciously allow it to call itself a government. By that measure, shutting the border to non-essential travel is reasonable. The post on my Facebook feed telling Americans "We don't want your COVID germs up here" (like and share!) is not.

In addition to having a cellular immune system, humans evolved to possess a behavioural immune system, which is very much misbehaving right now. According to research psychologist Mark Schaller, who coined the term, because of our behavioural

immune system, "Aversive emotional and cognitive responses are aroused by the perception of other individuals who are known to be diseased, or who are judged to be at greater risk of being diseased; and these aversive responses are especially pronounced when the diseases are perceived to be especially infectious." Like COVID-19.

Who is judged to be at greater risk of being diseased? There are those who show signs of sickness—you there, coughing into your sleeve—and those we perceive as potentially spreading sickness: the old, the infirm, and the foreign. Schaller notes that "just as the 'real' immune system responds not only to actual pathogenic infection but also to intrusion by benign organic matter (as in the case of organ transplants, for example), the behavioural immune system also responds to an over-general set of superficial social cues." In other words, when we feel threatened, we use stereotypes as shortcuts telling us who we should avoid and fear.

The behavioural immune system is triggered by our vulnerability, whether real or perceived. A Harvard-UCLA study showed that pregnant women temporarily become

more xenophobic and ethnocentric during their first trimester of pregnancy, when their cellular immune system is suppressed and they're more susceptible to infection. In the second and third trimester, when the immune suppression stops, these attitudes decrease.

Globally, we are feeling as vulnerable as a woman in the first trimester of pregnancy, and it shows. In China, African immigrants were evicted and forced into quarantine simply for being African. The President of the United States tried and failed to rebrand COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" to deflect attention from his latest failings, then doubled down with the crass "Kung Flu." And even Canadians have tarnished an enlightened national reputation by harassing drivers with American plates perceived as violating the border closing (often simply other Canadians legally returning from the US).

Throughout history, pandemics have been an indiscriminate natural evil made worse by discriminatory human evil. Jews were accused of poisoning wells to spread the Black Death in 14th-century Europe, resulting in massacres of whole communities.

When syphilis was introduced to Europe in the next century, it was variously called the "French disease" (by Italians), the "Italian disease" (by the French), the "German disease" (by the Poles), the "Polish disease" (by the Russians), and the "Christian disease" (by the Turks). We, as a human race, are past that, we'd like to think. But we're never fully past that, because disease, and the overactive behavioural immune system, and the need to blame others will always be with us.

A viral map mischaracterizing the comparative number of infections in the US and Canada is obviously not an accusation of well poisoning. Inuit in Quebec being told to "go back to China" (!) is obviously not a medieval pogrom. But they are friendly Canadian reminders that xenophobia, whether large or small (and everything large starts out small), is, ironically enough, universal. In time, a vaccine for COVID-19 will be developed. A vaccine for fear-mongering and mass hysteria, on the other hand, will only be available in the world to come.

Ben Shragge is the digital editor of the Hamilton Jewish News. He currently resides in Boston.

## My journey to self publishing



Simone Rotstein

ABOUT A YEAR after she died, I began writing vignettes concerning my child. Never having written creatively before, the process of composing stories which were connected to my daughter and my relationship with her, grew into a satisfying activity and a rewarding outlet for my grief. Over the span of several years, I accumulated a collection of memories, some of which I shared with family members, a few friends and my newly formed writing group. Along with courses and workshops, this writing circle was crucial to my development as a writer. Each woman in our group read my stories with care and sensitivity and offered critical suggestions on how to proceed in order to improve my writing and nudged me to persevere.

Inevitably, the question arose, what am I going to do with these stories? It was at another workshop that I had a revealing moment. The facilitator was talking about different schemes of structuring a memoir and her words struck a chord; I could clearly visualize a way to put my disparate stories together. Finally, I knew I had the means of creating a body of work, albeit, a modest one.

All through this process, I was extremely lucky to meet writers and artists who inspired me to bring my venture to fruition. The writer-in-residence at the Hamilton Public Library, Nilofar Shidmehr, provided me with compelling and encouraging assistance, all the while challenging me to examine my motivations and my goals and, in the process, to write some interesting pieces. I found an editor to check my grammar, paragraph structure, and spelling and learned how to accept some changes as well as reject others. And, I walked around with my binder of stories, not sure how to move forward. My first thought was to create

a chapbook, a small publication, usually bound with hand-stitching, and began to make plans to have my stories printed. First, I needed to create an attractive publication.

I was introduced to an artist and book designer who gave me a crash course on publication. We met at the Central Library and, searching through the shelves, scrutinized and discussed the size of paperbacks, the different fonts, the paper's texture and colour, the chapter titles and the design used at the beginning of each chapter. I made decisions about table of contents and the title page, always veering to the simplest, the cleanest lines. In a few short weeks, the volume took shape and we began work on the cover. A photograph my husband had taken, was Photoshopped, we chose the cover stock and the lettering on the cover. The whole process was a huge learning curve and exhilarating. Finally, it was ready to be sent to press, and I learned even more.

The printer was willing to create signatures, groups of pages, which I could

hand-bind into chapbooks. He was also adamant that he was superbly able to create a lovely publication, cover and all. I decided to fashion a few handmade memoirs and have him print a small run of machine-made books and then I waited, counting the days until the project was completed. It was moving to see the final outcome of a long and satisfying undertaking. I have distributed the run to my extended family and to some friends.

I consider myself privileged, through these years, to have people who were willing to help me achieve my goals and I am delighted with the final product. There is a step, which I didn't pursue, since I had no plans to sell my work. Publications almost always have an ISBN number, a process that is quite simple to attain and assures that the publication is registered. It can then be listed on Amazon and sold on their site.

Simone Rotstein, wife, mother, grandmother, former teacher and a Hamiltonian via Egypt and Montreal, writes for pleasure.



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Your support in the midst of this terrible pandemic is especially impactful, enabling us to continue our mission of keeping Jewish Hamiltonians connected to each other and to Jewish life in our community.

# My grandmother's diary

When Hamilton Na'amat members were asked to share a story about a family inheritance, Tal Shaish recalled her miraculous discovery of her grandmother's record of life in the Lodz Ghetto

BY **TAL SHAISH**  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

IT WAS THE winter of 2002. I was living in Jerusalem, in my second year of a three-year acting course at the Nissan Nativ acting studio. We were sitting in a circle towards the end of the class, when our teacher asked us to prepare an exercise on a character that we know well, preferably someone who is still alive.

I felt no hesitation. I knew that I wanted to bring my grandmother to the stage. My grandmother, Esther Feldman Shaish, whom we called Grandma Edja, was my role model in so many ways, and I wanted to honour her. I was busy collecting memories, phrases and stories that she used to tell, when I suddenly remembered that she'd been interviewed for Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. The interview took place several years earlier, when I was still an officer in the Israeli army. However, I never had the courage to watch it. I didn't feel ready to hear difficult stories from her childhood spent in the Lodz ghetto during the Second World War.

But now, I took a deep breath and cleared my schedule for the night in order to watch the video. I watched it repeatedly, moved and sobbing, from the sad yet optimistic story. I was inspired by her story of how she managed to run

away from a Nazi soldier, and how she showed bravery along with kindness.

One thing in particular caught my attention. Her diary. After the war, my grandmother, then about 14 years old, was asked by her principal to write all that had happened to her and her family. She spent some time journaling and handed it over to him. She said that he had given the diary to a museum that no longer exists. And that was it. There was no trail.

But soon my heart lit up. I was so intrigued by the story and I felt sure that her diary could be found. After a sleepless night, I contacted my mother and we brainstormed about where the diary might be. Within a few hours, we found it at Yad Vashem, the largest Holocaust museum in the world.

I canceled my engagements and dashed to Yad Vashem to view the diary with my own eyes. There it was! I found a booklet written in Yiddish in beautiful handwriting signed by my grandmother, Ester Feldman. While the handwriting was nothing like my grandmother's handwriting today, her signature was the same! It hadn't changed over the years.

I was so moved and excited. I asked if I could take the diary home, but I was told that it wasn't possible. Instead, I made a photocopy and dashed back home, forgetting about the assignment and

my scheduled classes.

That evening, the entire family gathered at my uncle's house. We had a lovely dinner but the main surprise was yet to come. At the right moment, we showed my grandmother the copy of her diary. She was moved. We all were. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. We were all crying and hugging, surrounding her with infinite love and support.

Not so long after, my grandmother translated her diary into Hebrew and a new family tradition was born. Every time someone new joins the family, whether by birth or a wedding, they receive a copy of the diary.

My grandmother lived to see my brother and me get married and starting families.

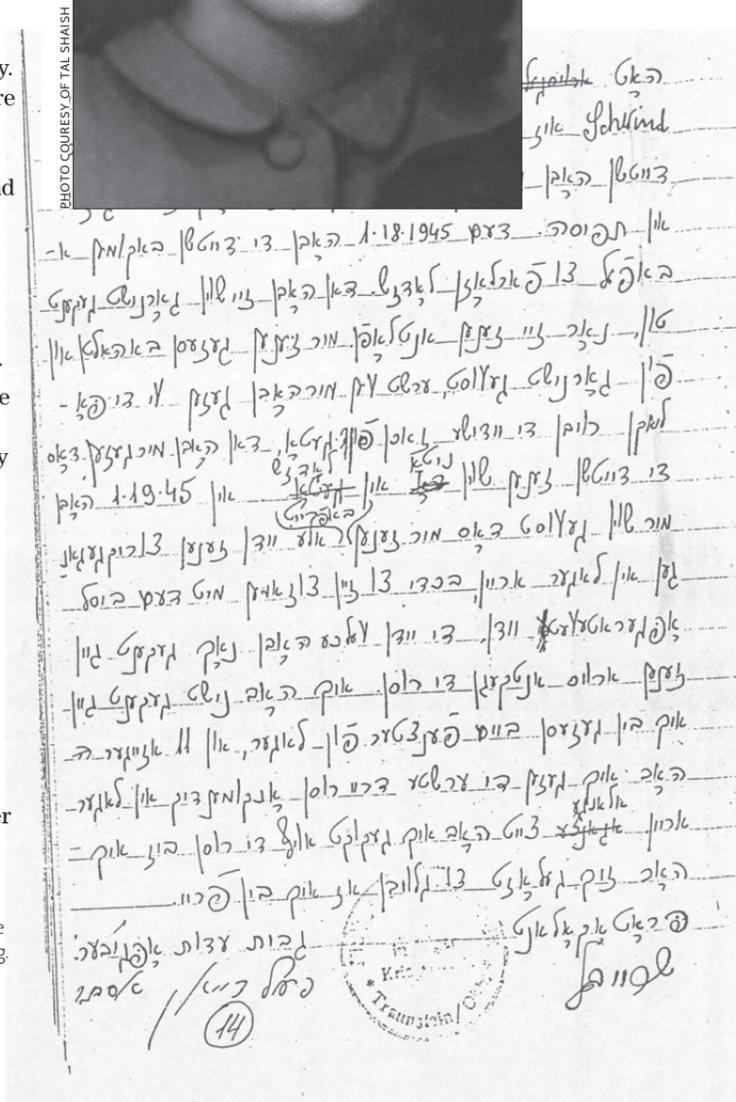
This was the most important and absolute victory over the Nazis.

Last week, my 10-year-old daughter looked at me and asked me if I missed Savta Edja. When I replied yes, of course. She said: but you have her smile. I hugged my daughter, took a deep breath and said: you too. You too have her smile.

If you would like to submit an essay to the "What we inherit" section, please email the editor at [wtschneider@jewishshamilton.org](mailto:wtschneider@jewishshamilton.org).



**Esther Feldman Shaish**, whose diary about life in the Lodz Ghetto was discovered by her granddaughter decades later at Yad Vashem.



# Life, legacy and a jar of jam

Steven Brock pays tribute to his late father

BY **STEVEN BROCK**  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

HOW CAN YOU measure the worth of a person's life? In Twelfth Night, Shakespeare wrote, "Some [men] are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." There are people whose achievements are remembered for generations to come, but does that mean that someone who leads an honest and pious, yet non-descript life, is any less great? Embracing Jewish values, we strive to earn a "Shem Tov" – a good name. In Proverbs 22:1, we learn that "A good name is more desirable than great wealth, more than even silver or gold."

When I think of my father, Louis Brock, who passed away earlier this year, I look at a man who did his best to do everything right, though much of his life was not easy. He and my mother were happily married for 66 years. They raised three children and subsequently enjoyed eight

grandchildren. With his kind, gentle nature, ever present smile and unremitting sense of humour, with never a complaint, he worked and struggled to provide for his family, yet always found time to volunteer and support his community.

Enjoying reasonably good health right up until a few months before his passing, he volunteered weekly at a B'nai Brith Senior's Residence in Montreal. With the self-anointed title of "Head Garbologist," he diligently scraped off dirty plates into the trash after lunch, preparing them for washing. If anyone would ask him why he continued to perform such a messy task at his age, the 92-year-old would reply without a hint of sarcasm, "I like to help old people".

Yet there always seems to be a desire to achieve more; to create a legacy that will endure beyond one's years on earth. In my father's case, his desired immortality centred around a jar of jam. He had once read that if you live to the age of 100, the Smuckers jam



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVEN BROCK



**Far left: Ruth and Louis Brock** on their wedding day, Feb. 13, 1954

Left: Louis Brock in 2019

company would put your picture on a jar of their preserves. Whether true or not – and I don't believe he ever checked – from the time he heard about it, his goal became to reach his 100th birthday.

Sadly, he missed his mark by seven years and never ended up being the face of grape jelly. I always found this to be odd, for a man who never ate jam.

While you will never read about Louis Brock in the history books, in

his own way, he achieved greatness and did his part to leave this world a little better off than when he entered it. His good name now lives on in the hearts and minds of his family, friends and all the many people whose lives he touched.

Sleep well, Dad. You have earned your well deserved rest.

Steven Brock is a frequent contributor to the HJN.

# Remembering Selma

Beth Jacob Zoom panelists recall Selma's one-time Hamilton connection

BY **STEVE ARNOLD**  
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

IN 1965 THE WORLD was shocked by television images of American police beating peaceful Black protesters who dared to march in Alabama for the right to be treated as equals.

In far-away Hamilton, Ontario, a young rabbi watched those images and, in his heart, heard the voices of ancient sages calling for action.

Heeding that call, Rabbi Eugene Weiner quickly organized a small group of other Hamilton clergy and flew to Selma, Alabama where they linked arms with civil rights legends Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, Weiner's former teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel and thousands of others to march for an end to American racism and bigotry.

The mission was recalled Sunday by members of Weiner's former shul, Beth Jacob Synagogue. The commemoration occurred as another hero of the events, U.S. Congressman John Lewis, was taken through Selma one last time on his way to be buried.

As well as the ancient teachings of his faith, Weiner was responding to a call directly from King for religious leaders of all faiths to come to Selma.

In an interview with the Globe and Mail after his return, Weiner said he put himself at risk to advance the cause of social justice.

He was quoted as saying, "I personally feel that the church and

the synagogue have been very remiss in their response to deal with the outstanding social issues. I agree with Dr. King that (the faith community) tends to be an echo rather than a voice and a taillight rather than a headlight."

In addition to Weiner the Hamilton delegation included two Anglican priests, a United Church and a Baptist minister. They were joined in Alabama by two Unitarian ministers and the pastor of a Hamilton church founded in 1835 by escaped slaves and freedmen.

Costs of the five from Hamilton were covered, quietly, by Jewish businessman Ken Soble, founder of Hamilton's CHCH-TV.

Baptist minister Alan Matthews was part of the group. On Sunday his daughter-in-law Ramona recalled how he joined the trip on a single day's notice because, like Weiner, he thought the cause was right.

He had just returned from a four-day trip visiting convicts at Kingston Penitentiary, but a phone call from Weiner put him on an airplane the next day.

"They all believed that telegrams and marches in Toronto were no longer enough," she recalled. "They went to proclaim what they thought was justice."

The Selma events, history records, were actually three marches intended to carry the call for voting rights to the Alabama capital of Montgomery. The first, on March 7, 1965, became known as Bloody Sunday because of the savage response of state police as



PHOTO BY BOB ADELMAN | COURTESY OF CORBIS

In this 1965 photograph former Beth Jacob Synagogue spiritual leader, Rabbi Eugene Weiner, left, and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. lead the singing of We Shall Overcome in Selma, Alabama.

marchers attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River.

It was television images of police brutally attacking peaceful protesters that ignited public indignation and increased support for the marchers.

Matthews wrote of the events years later "I never saw such hatred."

A second march on March 9 turned back after King saw the array of police waiting for them on the other side of the bridge.

The third, on March 21, after the Hamilton delegation returned home, got to the state capital after four days, but only under the protection of National Guard troops under federal orders.

In the face of the violence directed at marchers, King's instructions were, if attacked, they were fall face down and cover their heads with their hands.

"You are here to witness, not be abusive or to fight. Do not run away from the scene. You will feel and see hate — show love ... do not retaliate. Peace, love will win."

Weiner and the Hamilton clergymen arrived in Selma March 14 and on their second day Weiner stood in the pulpit of a local

church at a memorial service for James Reeb, a Unitarian minister killed after the second march.

As the rabbi intoned the sacred words of the Mourner's Kaddish hundreds of congregants hummed We Shall Overcome.

One witness to that event recalled how, as Weiner finished the prayer "from nowhere there came two little Negro girls who began to sing a high piercing descant above our singing. The rabbi leaned down, picked up the four-year-old, and held her in his arms. And the tears flowed down my face. And all around him, people were crying."

Weiner left Beth Jacob in 1969, moving with his family to Israel where he enjoyed a distinguished academic career as professor of sociology at Haifa University. He died in 2003 of cancer at age 69.

Today, 55 years later, the causes for which those tears flowed remain, shown daily in the wave of Black Lives Matter protests across the United States and in the calls for economic justice around the world among others.

The sentiment was captured by one of Sunday's participants. Michaela-Sue Goldblatt, who grew up at Beth Jacob, recalled one

recent protest she attended in Barrie where the sign she carried asked plaintively "I did this in the 60s. Why am I still doing it?"

Lyla Miklos, a Hamilton-based activist who joined other marchers in 2015 to mark the half-century anniversary of the Selma protests, said every generation seems to have an incident that sparks anger and protests.

For her it was images of Rodney King being brutally beaten by police officers in Los Angeles in 1991. For many today it is the image of George Floyd dying under the crushing weight of a police officer in Minneapolis earlier this year.

"Today it seems we are being bombarded by images of police brutality," she said.

For Rabbi Hillel Lavery-Yisraeli, the current occupant of the Beth Jacob pulpit, the demand for spiritual leaders to take action on injustice is also unchanged.

"We have to do what we can" he said. "We cannot remain silent when we can speak up. "We must protest what we can protest. We must use our voices and voting power and our money."



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