



The Jewish Federation OF EDMONTON

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I remember a close friend running into some financial trouble a few years back, and they applied for an interest free loan. Their parents, when they found out, were horrified. They felt ashamed that people would know and that the child had not come to them directly.

It's a situation that arises in many people's lives. Life is not predictable and financial challenges happen to many of us. Whether it be our car breaks down, an unexpected death in the family where funeral costs are a challenge, or your child's teeth has a run in with a hockey puck, we all could use a hand up when there is a financial strain. We should never feel embarrassed to reach out for support. With the focus this week on removing mental health stigmas, I hope people will avail themselves of the many resources that our community provides.

Since 1927, the Edmonton Jewish community has fulfilled the mitzvah of helping a person to help themselves through the Jewish Free Loan Association. What began as a small group of people seeking to foster self-sufficiency for newcomers has grown into a program that continues to assist Jewish Edmontonians in all stages of life. In present day, a small group of dedicated and compassionate volunteers provides a confidential and dignified process enabling community members to access a range of interest-free loans. You can learn more about Edmonton Jewish Free Loan [here](#).

This week's Parsha Mishpatim ("laws") lays out the laws between the people of Israel and God. Regarding money lending, one should not be pursuing to exact a profit. "If you lend to My people, the poor person with you, do not be to them as a creditor: do not lay interest upon them." (Sh'mot/Exodus 22:24).

Removing the burden of the added interest and providing a hand up makes Edmonton Jewish Free Loan an inherently Jewish endeavour. In funding this program, Edmonton UJA ensures that our community members have access to funds when they require it the most. By doing this, we are fulfilling our mission of mobilizing resources (both financial and volunteer) for the betterment of our community reflecting the values of achavat chesed (loving kindness) and Yisrael Arevim Zeh l'zeh (all the people of Israel care for one another).

How you can help the association are two ways—spread the word within your network that this program is available and offer to be a guarantor to someone who needs to apply for a loan. Currently, only six loans have been issued recently. This moderate amount may reflect that people aren't aware of the Jewish Free Loan Association or that they do not want to approach others to be their guarantors because of possible shame. Please show your support of the organization and the individuals who need this short-term assistance.

In anticipation of the economic effects of the pandemic, the Federation board ensures that the Jewish Free Loan would have additional funds accessible should there be a rise in loan applications. We're here to help each other in the community.

Shabbat Shalom,

D. Lewitt

Stacey