

This morning I woke up to the [devastating news](#) that a tragic car accident resulted in three Kfar Blum teens being killed last night. Daniel Porat Z"l, 16, Uri Malul Z"l, 17, and Ariel Shtern Z"l, 17, were all from Kibbutz Kfar Blum and students of Emek Hahula High School. One of them, Ariel Z"l, is Avihai Shtern's, mayor of Kiryat Shmona, nephew, and the son of one of Galil Up participants, Asaf Shtern. The kibbutz is home to over 760 residents while the high school caters to over 1,000 students. This is such an immense loss for a small Israeli community.

As we tell law enforcement and elected officials, what happens across the globe and in Israel affects us locally. Emotions from this catastrophic event will ripple among many in Jewish Edmonton. The people from this sector are an extension of our community—we are family. I will extend our deepest condolences on behalf of our community.

People have expressed unease to me about the current government and what this will do for engagement with Israel. Whether you agree with state actions or are concerned about civil society in Israel right now, I encourage you to read articles from a variety of sources. I was particularly reassured by Gil Troy in [this article](#) and appreciated the approaches expressed in [this writing](#). As those who attended our annual general meeting will recall from the presentation made by Yaron Deckel, there is an expected amount of gesturing while the coalition is being formed. However, we will need to wait and see what the real action shows. Will they deliver the promises that were being made? Will they fall short?

Last week, the leadership of Jewish Federations of North America, along with other agencies including the Jewish Agency for Israel, signed a letter to the Israeli government. This letter showed "deep concern regarding voices in the government on issues that could undermine the longstanding status quo of religious affairs that could affect the Diaspora." As expressed by Doron Almog, chair of the Jewish Agency, "The Jewish Agency...wants to represent all denominations of Judaism to the Government of Israel. If a committee is formed, we want to be there to express the voice of the Diaspora."

When you contribute to our United Jewish Appeal campaign, we allocate a portion of the funds to the Jewish Agency for Israel, and our partner region in the Galilee panhandle. The Jewish Agency has the added challenge this year of the absorption of 28,000 olim, including Ethiopians, the largest wave of immigration from Russia since the 1990s, and helping those fleeing Ukraine. An allocation of money raised in Edmonton is building capacity in the Galilee Panhandle through projects supporting mental health, economic development, education, and more. Volunteers and mayors in the region bring forward projects. Then volunteers and leaders in Canada discuss and vet the projects. People to people, working together.

I will head on vacation this week with my husband Erin, visiting Dubai and then flying to Israel. As Andres Spokoiny, Jewish Funders Network CEO, expressed, "engaging

does not mean full agreement with what the government does. It means being true to your values and funding the areas you care about."

I look forward to meeting with the chief rabbi in Dubai to learn more about their community, and visiting with family and friends in Israel, all the time marveling that the Abraham Accords will make this journey possible and that we have a Jewish state to call home.

Shabbat Shalom,



Stacey