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 Anne Mayberger Blair

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# OTTAWA JEWISH BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 17, 2014 | 17 ADAR 1 5774

ESTABLISHED 1937

OTTAWAJEWISHBULLETIN.COM | \$2

## Shopify executive mentors younger Jewish entrepreneurs

Harley Finkelstein cites 'special connection' and 'particular responsibility' to Jewish community

BY MONIQUE ELLIOT

"I know I'm never going to be the smartest guy in the room, ever. But I will be the guy who works the hardest."

Harley Finkelstein is known for his hustle.

The 30-year-old entrepreneur has made his home in Ottawa as the chief platform officer (CPO) of Shopify, one of the fastest-growing tech companies in Canada.

"Hustle is just about persistence. It's about being smart and creative."

Finkelstein said his chutzpah was initially tested seven weeks into his first

semester at McGill University in 2001, when his mother called from the family home in Florida with a message: "We are broke."

Finkelstein's father had been "leveraged to the hilt" and now owed creditors millions.

He was given a choice: leave McGill, go back to Florida and try to work everything out as a family; or try to make it on his own in Montreal, without any financial support and tuition costs of \$18,000 per year.

He chose to stay in Canada.



PHOTO: MONIQUE ELLIOT

Harley Finkelstein started his first business as a university student when his family could no longer provide financial support.

"I needed to do something that would put food on the table and pay the bills," he said.

"Most people become entrepreneurs

out of passion, ambition. I wish that was the case for me. It wasn't. That, to me, sounds so glamorous, so awesome. But,

See Finkelstein on page 2

## 'Rolling Rabbi' reaches out with new online blog

Still recovering from an accident that left him a quadriplegic, Rabbi Yehuda Simes is using the Internet to inspire readers around the world

BY JOEL BALSAM

"Home screen. Mouse grid. One. Three. Seven. Five. Click."

With those words spoken directly into a microphone, the mouse clicks the bookmark "Rolling Rabbi" on Rabbi Yehuda Simes' web browser and his blog opens up on the screen.

"Well. Comma. There ya. Backspace. Delete. You, have it. Exclamation point," says Rabbi Simes into the voice-recording technology called Dragon that is set up on his home computer. The program allows him to navigate the computer and type posts on his blog without lifting a finger.

"Technology has been a life saver, actually, a life changer," said Rabbi Simes, who was in a tragic car accident three-and-a-half years ago that broke his neck and made him a C4 quadriplegic.

Six months ago, he started the *Rolling Rabbi* blog - [www.rollingrabbi.wordpress.com](http://www.rollingrabbi.wordpress.com) - which now has more than 14,000 page views. Most of those views have come from where he has lived or has family - Canada, the United States and Israel - but an astonishing number of views come from places as far reaching as Nepal, South Africa and Poland.

"Part of my mission is to inspire people," explained Rabbi Simes, who says he wants his blog to help others overcome obstacles and meet challenges. He eventually wants to expand the blog to offer Torah classes via Skype to students all over North America and in Israel. The American-born rabbi recently started a pet project of placing pins on a map of North America on the places he has been to or has Skyped with. He hopes to cover the map entirely in pins.

"We are about to enter my central  
 See Rabbi Simes on page 2

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Barbara Crook on hit Israeli TV series > p. 21

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# Finkelstein: 'Find your life's work early'

Continued from page 1

for me, it was disparity; it was having nothing."

Out of desperation, with no money or experience, and very minimal equipment, Finkelstein launched a promotional apparel company to sell T-shirts to McGill.

Finkelstein eventually had a run of success during his undergrad years, which involved a transfer to Concordia University, which had more flexible scheduling to accommodate working students.

Challenges aside, Finkelstein – who moved to Ottawa in 2005 to attend law school, a move that threatened his T-shirt business – said he knew he had generations of history of the Jewish community from which he could find inspiration.

"We've all come here over the last 100 years and, in some cases, we've built the largest, most successful businesses in North America – we're hustlers. There's a real connection with the Jewish community and entrepreneurship," he said.

"We're a self-made people and we're a survival people. The companies that I sort

of look up to the most, a lot of them are run by Jewish entrepreneurs."

It was Finkelstein's weekly meeting with a small group of local entrepreneurs, including Shopify founder and CEO Tobias Lutke, which allowed him to save his T-shirt business and ultimately realize his life's work.

Finkelstein took his business online using Shopify's software and launched *Smoof.com*, retailing licensed T-shirts.

Lutke later realized he wanted Finkelstein on his team at Shopify, and brought him onboard as CPO. Finkelstein said he couldn't be happier with the result.

"Most people spend their entire life working a job to eventually retire and start their life's work. What I'm saying is, find your life's work as early as possible and do nothing else. Shopify and building businesses like Shopify, that is my life's work," he said.

"That's really part of what I want to explain to students and younger entrepreneurs. They don't have to believe me, they don't necessarily trust me, but I do want them to at least have a different

perspective," he said.

Conventional wisdom that has typically come from school and parents, Finkelstein said, can be soul-crushing if a young adult chooses a secure career path simply for the sake of long-term security.

"Find something you love doing. To spend 40 years working a job and saving money, so when you retire you can start your life's work? I think that's backwards. I think we should start thinking about what our life's work is right now," he said.

"The Jewish community has always been very supportive of me and everything I've done. I'm not religious, but I'm very traditional. And, so, I give advice to a lot of people, but I feel a certain loyalty and a certain connection to the Jewish community."

Shopify has hosted Shabbat at Shopify for Young Professionals, including medical, law and graduate students, where the Ottawa office offers its space for the evening.

For an entrepreneur and CPO whose time is now his most valuable commodity, getting time with him can be a



Harley Finkelstein

challenge, Finkelstein advised.

"What's interesting is that people who really know how to hustle always figure it out," he said.

"I feel a connection to all entrepreneurs and all young people, but I feel a special connection, and a particular responsibility, to help Jewish entrepreneurs and the Jewish community in particular," he said. "I think that's really important."

# Rabbi Simes: 'Challenge is not physical, but emotional'

Continued from page 1

control office," said Rabbi Simes, as he shuttled down the elevator installed in his home.

There, he shows off the cardio-cycle machine that allows him to fix his fingers around two handles and spin for as long as he can. His record, he says proudly, is 31-and-a-half minutes, non-stop.

Rabbi Simes glances over to another machine in his office, a tilting table that allows him to briefly stand on his own two feet.

"This is the most challenging thing for me," he said describing the brief moments when he has been able to stand up over the past eight months. The challenge is not physical, he explains, but emotional, due to his longing to stand again.

Many other people might be shy about divulging such heart-wrenching personal

information, but Rabbi Simes insists on being open about his situation.

"I am who I am. I have nothing to hide," he said.

Still, he is happy most of the attention he garnered from stories in local, national and international media has died down.

"I want to be a regular, normal, person," he said.

Rabbi Simes' recovery is slow, painful and constant as he continues to work daily with a physiotherapist. But he is showing improvement. Lately, he and the physiotherapist have been forcing his wrist to bend in an intensive splint to shorten the tendons so he can eventually turn his wrist over and pick things up.

"That's the next frontier," he said.

Rabbi Simes also continues to teach at Torah High, the supplementary high school he co-founded.



PHOTO: JOEL BALSAM

Rabbi Yehuda Simes uses voice commands to "type" his *Rolling Rabbi* blog.

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\* March 12 is an early deadline for the April 7 community-wide Bulletin.

\*\* April 2 is an early deadline for the April 23 Bulletin because of Passover.

# The Social Action Mission to Israel:

## a retrospective and introspective journey

In this guest column, Social Action Mission participant **Jon Avery** reflects on what the trip meant to him as a young adult exploring his connection to Israel and his Jewish heritage.

**A**s a member of the emerging generation of young Jewish professionals, I've started to ask many questions about who I am, where I come from, and the type of life I'd like to live as I settle in to what many describe as the best and most productive years of one's life.

This process of retrospection and introspection is not uncommon for someone of my age – 31. So, when I found out about the Social Action Mission to Israel, I was immediately interested.

Funded by the Jewish Federation of Ottawa's Partnership 2Gether program, the Social Action Mission is a heavily subsidized 10-day trip to Israel for young Jewish professionals and graduate students between 22 and 35. The trip provides an opportunity to travel, explore and participate in Israeli life, culture and community. So, on the morning of December 26, as people lined up for Boxing Day sales, a group of 14 of us from Ottawa left for Israel to explore, live, breathe and participate in Israeli life.

For someone like me who has been exploring the deeper meanings of life, existence and purpose, this trip could not have come at a better time. Having the opportunity to get to know such an eclectic group of 14 amazing individuals, travelling to the most northern tip of Israel, so close to the border with Lebanon, to help renovate a youth centre, exploring the inner depths of the Old City of Jerusalem, and living with and getting



Social Action Mission participants at work helping to renovate a youth centre in Metulla: (from left) Adam Aronson, Eric Trottier, Shelby Levine, Abbey Murawnik, Renée Pelletier and Samuel Levine.

to know Israelis, gave me something my Jewish upbringing could not provide: first-hand experience, albeit brief, of our connection to the land of Israel.

Let me tell you a story.

About a year-and-a-half ago, I attended a pro-Israel rally at the Soloway Jewish Community Centre. People were singing, celebrating and dancing to express their

love, connection and passion for Israel. As I sat back, watched and experienced the energy in the room, I noticed I did not share the same level of connection to our Jewish homeland.

Why?

I grew up in a healthy Jewish home that provided me with opportunities and experiences to explore my Jewish

heritage. I attended synagogue on a semi-regular basis. I attended Ottawa Talmud Torah Afternoon School and Akiva High School. I was an active member of BBYO. I was somewhat active in the Jewish community as an undergraduate student at York University in Toronto and participated in a Birthright trip to Israel 10 years ago.

Yet, throughout all my Jewish experiences, what seemed to be missing was first-hand experience in exploring Israel the way I wanted to explore it by meeting, getting to know and living with Israelis. The Social Action Mission gave me that experience.

The opportunity to live with Israelis and the time and space to explore the land and the people – even if it was just for 10 days – gave me the first-hand experience I so desired, an introduction if you will, of what Israel means to so many people and what it may mean to me.

For anyone who feels a lack of connection to the land and to the people of Israel, I highly encourage taking some time and venturing out to such a beautiful place. Whether it's on your own or on a group trip, having the opportunity and time to connect with the land and to the people can make such a huge difference in our connection to the culture, to the faith and to the people.

For more information on the Social Action Mission, contact Samantha Banks at [sbanks@jewishottawa.com](mailto:sbanks@jewishottawa.com) or 613-798-4696, ext. 270.

## Federation and Glebe Shul work together on Social Action Mission

BY SARAH BEUTEL  
JEWISH FEDERATION OF OTTAWA

Fourteen young adults from Ottawa recently took part in a unique mission to Israel from December 26 to January 5.

The 10-day mission was the fourth Social Action Mission for young adults organized by the Jewish Federation of Ottawa under the auspices of the Partnership 2Gether program.

This year, for the first time, the Federation worked with the Glebe Shul to recruit young adults for the trip. Together, we designed a program with new elements that added more meaning and another layer of experiences for the participants.

A highlight of the trip was the social action project itself, which saw the Ottawans, working together with Israelis,

renovate a run-down youth club in Metulla in Northern Israel. The renovations turned out beautifully and the residents of Metulla, as well as the mission participants, were thrilled with the results.

Partnership 2Gether is a program that establishes bridges of understanding between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry. It brings people in Jewish communities together with Israelis to develop relationships through joint projects and shared experiences.

Ottawa is part of Canada's Coast-to-Coast Partnership and is paired with five small towns in northern Israel. This is a powerful way for Israelis and communities here to get to know each other and to develop real people-to-people connections – the type of special connection Ottawa's mission participants experi-

enced when they were matched with young adults from Metulla, who hosted them for four days in their homes. New friendships were established and, together, the group visited Canadian-funded programs, learned about northern Israel – the land and the people – and toured the region.

Mission participants and their Israeli hosts developed a plan for the renovation of the youth centre, which was much in need of a facelift. The results of all their efforts were unveiled in an emotional ceremony, which took place in front of the mayor of Metulla and a group of local youth who volunteered to help with the project. People who live nearby joined in the celebration and everyone thanked the team of young adults who transformed the youth centre, which now

includes a large mural featuring the Israeli and Canadian flags.

Both the Glebe Shul and the Federation's Emerging Generation division have developed reputations for providing programming geared to young adults in their 20s and 30s. This new collaboration on the Social Action Mission resulted in gathering a group that seamlessly worked together throughout the mission.

The mission participants spent the two Shabbats of their 10-day stay in Jerusalem enjoying home-cooked meals with local families, long walks through the Old City and meaningful discussions on a variety of topics.

For more information about Partnership 2Gether programs, contact me at [sbeutel@jewishottawa.com](mailto:sbeutel@jewishottawa.com) or 613-798-4696, ext. 253.

# Harper displayed moral clarity during visit to Israel

**O**n January 21, I prayed at the Western Wall with Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As a young Canadian Jew, involved in politics and active in my community, it was an extremely moving experience. It was the highlight of the prime minister's historic visit to Israel, a visit of great importance to Canada and particularly to the Canadian Jewish community.

In the face of a sea of hostility, it is rare to find a leader who stands up and supports Israel. It is even rarer to find one who does so in the manner Harper did during his trip.

In the Knesset, I was privileged to watch from the visitor's gallery as Harper pledged, "Through fire and water, Canada will stand with Israel." Then and several other times during the trip, he made it clear he would "refuse to single out Israel for criticism." He was just as unequivocal in his condemnation of the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

What Harper did, more than anything, was display moral clarity. In a world of politicians thinking only of not offending anyone, it is amazing to find one unafraid to say what our prime minister did. This was particularly true when he took on the rising tide of the new anti-Semitism.

"In much of the Western world, the

**DAN  
MADER  
GUEST COLUMN**

old hatred, crude anti-Semitism, has been translated into more sophisticated language for use in polite society. People who would never say they hate and blame the Jews for their own failings or the problems of the world, instead declare their hatred of Israel and blame the only Jewish state for the problems of the Middle East," Harper told the Knesset.

This was incredibly important. The enemies of the Jewish people have learned that overt anti-Semitism will bring rapid condemnation.

Unfortunately, they have also learned that, by twisting the language of anti-racism, they can find ways to veil their hatred. It is clear to us that, when Israel is held to a standard no other nation is held to and when it is condemned mercilessly for acts that in others don't warrant a mention, something is wrong. Unfortunately, it is incredibly rare for a non-Jewish leader to stand with us and make this point. In Jerusalem, the Canadian prime minister did just that.

Yet Harper's visit was about more than



Dan Mader (left) with Minister of Employment and Social Development and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney at the Western Wall, January 21.

just words. He strengthened ties between Canada and Israel, signing agreements to negotiate a deeper free trade deal and increase co-operation in many other areas.

Where he went also sent a message as strong as his words. When others are calling for boycotts of Israeli universities, Harper stood proudly at Tel Aviv University to accept an honorary degree. Even more important, however, was his visit to the Western Wall.

On his second full day in Israel, Harper visited Yad Vashem. This memorial to the victims of the Holocaust has rightly become an obligatory part of any official visit to Israel. The prime minister and his wife, Laureen, toured it along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and his wife, Sara, and then laid a wreath in memory of Holocaust victims. It was an extremely moving visit for all members of the delegation.

From Yad Vashem, the delegation went directly to the Western Wall. As delegation members, Israelis and surprised tourists looked on, the prime

minister walked up to the Wall and prayed. A visit to either Yad Vashem or the Kotel is moving. To visit one immediately after the other is to go from a contemplation of the darkest moment in Jewish history to the holiest site in Judaism. Every member of the delegation felt privileged to be there.

There was more than just a spiritual aspect to the moment, however. Visiting the Western Wall also made a political statement. Despite its central place in Judaism, and the fact that Israel allows full freedom to all religions, most world leaders refuse to visit the Kotel due to the disputed status of Jerusalem. Several American presidents have visited the Wall as candidates for office, but avoided doing so once they were in office. Our prime minister's visit, as head of a national government currently in office, is likely unprecedented. There could not have been a stronger show of support for Israel as a Jewish state, with Jerusalem as its eternal capital.

*Dan Mader is a public affairs strategist and management consultant.*

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# AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

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## Archives joins bid to create official Jewish Heritage district

By Emily Leonoff

In the 1970s, Shirley Berman was working at the National Archives on a contract to preserve a collection of Jewish documents. She was astounded that nothing similar to that venerable institution existed within the Jewish community to preserve its history.

That was when she paid a visit to the director of the Jewish Community Council and stressed the importance of a central repository to house the documents that recorded the history of the Jews of Ottawa.

In response, she was given a small box of files and an empty coatroom.

From those very humble beginnings, Shirley, with support from the Ottawa Jewish Historical Society, worked tirelessly to set up the foundations of the Ottawa Jewish Archives. Today, we are proud to be the keepers of more than 26,000 records and 8,500 photographs donated by Ottawa's Jewish residents.

Within our collection, we have birth, marriage and death records, bar and bat mitzvah records, family histories, audio and video interviews, immigration and

citizenship papers, correspondence, photographs, synagogue records, eulogies, artifacts and so much more.

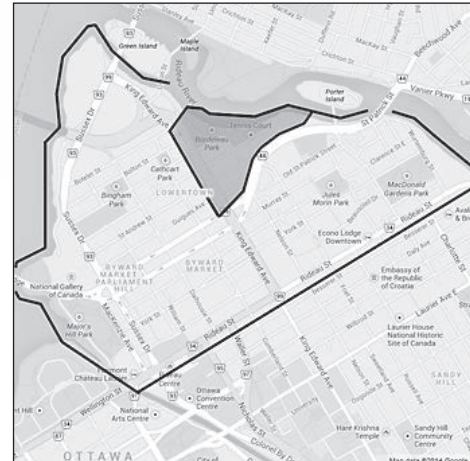
But we are not only a passive holding area. We also strive to assist others in any endeavour that may focus on the Jewish Heritage of Ottawa.

That is why we joined a project with the Ottawa Jewish Historical Society and the Lowertown Community Association to create an official Jewish Heritage District within the City of Ottawa.

The proposed district can be found within Lowertown, the traditional area of Jewish settlement, which started in the 1880s.

In the early 1900s, census records showed that Jews made up just slightly less than 2% of the entire city of Ottawa's population. In Lowertown, this 2% made up 70% of that population, with the remaining 30% being mostly a mix of French-Catholic, Irish and Italian settlers. This was an incredibly close and tight-knit community.

Within Lowertown (which includes the Byward Market and surrounding



The highlighted area shows the proposed Jewish Historical District, called The Wedge. Jews began settling in Lowertown in the 1800s and at one point made up 70% of the population of that district.

neighbourhoods), is "The Wedge." It is this small triangle of land a number of institutions want to see protected to help maintain the history and visible character of this significant neighbourhood.

There has already been some substantial redevelopment in The Wedge as was evident with the demolition of a handful of

historic "worker's cottages" located on Bruyère and St. Andrew streets by Claridge Homes in fall 2013. The Lowertown Community Association, a group dedicated to the preservation of the look and feel of historic Lowertown, fought hard against the demolition but was unable to halt it.

It is for reasons such as this that the Archives and other organizations are working hard to develop a proposal to be submitted to City Council for the consideration of The Wedge as a historical, and thus protected, district.

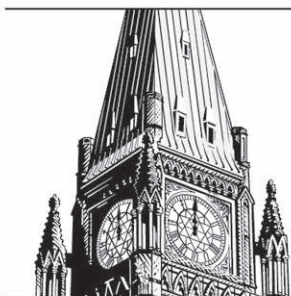
To learn more about the Jewish Archives or to view pieces of the collection online, please visit us on our Facebook page. We are also open to the public and welcome visitors looking to conduct research, or people looking to donate their family documents.

*Emily Leonoff is an archivist for the Ottawa Jewish Archives. For more information, please contact her at [archives@jewishottawa.com](mailto:archives@jewishottawa.com), or 613-798-4696, ext. 260.*

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FEDERATION  
REPORT



STEVEN KIMMEL  
CHAIR

With this message of togetherness in mind, since becoming Chair of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, I have spent a great deal of time working on creating productive partnerships. When Andrea Freedman, our CEO, and I meet weekly, we review our progress on this, and I'm pleased to report we've made much headway in a number of important areas while continuing to identify additional areas where we can do better.

We have specifically prioritized strengthening relationships with our

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

– Helen Keller

agency partners.

Firstly, we have started holding monthly Federation Board of Directors meetings on the premises of our partner agencies. This allows Board members to visit and see first-hand the good work the agencies are doing on behalf of our community. Our host partner agency is also invited to present to the Board, enhancing our knowledge and awareness of its work. To date, we have held meetings at Tamir and at the Bess and Moe Greenberg Family Hillel Lodge, and we have an upcoming meeting at Jewish Family Services. We are looking forward to expanding this list.

Secondly, to further strengthen relationships, Andrea, Bram Bregman and I have begun attending board meetings of agencies, where we present the Federation's “big picture” and discuss how we can best work together to build a stronger Jewish community. The

exchange of ideas is always interesting, and I believe we all gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of unique challenges and opportunities.

Thirdly, the Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Linda Kerzner, has held eight community consultations to gather feedback from community members. The discourse at consultations has been extremely productive and very respectful. While we are grateful to everyone who made time to participate, it is unfortunate that the sessions were all not filled to capacity. At each session, participants were eager to understand how their input will be used by the strategic planning committee. Therefore, we have invited everyone who participated in a consultation to hear an analysis of the feedback and explore trends and what changes are being proposed to the mission, vision and values at a meeting on March 24.

Our Jewish community is experiencing

similar challenges to those of many other North America cities. The Federation's role is to be a resource to our many schools, shuls and institutions, and to try our best to work together to meet the needs of our growing and ever-changing city. We want Ottawa to be a *kehilla* (community) where Jewish life is strong. We believe that our mission, vision, values and accompanying goals – strengthened through the strategic planning consultations – will be instrumental tools in creating the strong *kehilla* to which we all aspire.

As I write, we are just days away from Mitzvah Day (which will have taken place by the time you read this). The positive buzz in the community about this longstanding event is contagious. What a wonderful annual event that engages our Jewish community to participate in Tikkun Olam and show everyone what a great *kehilla* we have here in Ottawa. I am inspired that mitzvot have been deliberately selected to help members of the Jewish community, as well as the broader community. Yasher Koachachem to event chairs Linda and Warren Melamed and all the staff who work so hard to make this event so special.

Am Yisroel Chai and L'shalom.

FROM THE  
PULPIT



RABBI REUVEN BULKA  
MACHZIKEI HADAS

We made our way by cab to the airport from the final event of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's triumphant visit to Israel. The main road, the Ayalon, was closed. Our driver, who had given us a flat rate was obviously rattled.

I mentioned the road closure was probably to allow Harper and his entourage unimpeded escort to the airport.

The driver was skeptical. He thought there must have been an accident. A few minutes in, he contacted central control, and they confirmed it was a road closure for the Canadian convoy.

He turned to us and said that, for a friend like the Canadian prime minister, nothing is a problem. We, of course, gave him much more than the quoted price, but the important take-away was how much of an impact the visit by Harper and his

## Reflections on Harper's visit to Israel

delegation made on ordinary Israelis. I always gauge impact by what the people on the street are saying and feeling, and taxi drivers are the best source.

We know how momentous the prime minister's speech to the Knesset was. Already it is being hailed as one of the greatest Canadian speeches in recorded history. We do not yet know what impact it will have on the flow of history, but we know the speech, indeed the entire visit, was a much-needed uplift and energizer for a tiny country besieged by a strange concoction of annihilation threats and unrelenting reprimand.

To hear Harper put this all in context, both from an historical perspective, and from a balance perspective, and to reach the logical, inescapable conclusion that Israel today is once again facing the dangers inherent in the onslaught of unbridled anti-Semitism, was to hear the unadulterated, unvarnished truth.

And to hear the prime minister's uncompromising affirmation of Israel as a shining democracy in a region where there is no other democracy, and to further hear those ringing words, “Through fire and water, Canada will stand with you,” was enough to give Israelis the a much-needed boost to their collective sense of worth.

Make no mistake. Harper was clear about favouring a two-state solution, a

position Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly endorsed. And he backed this up with a significant financial contribution to the Palestinian Authority. But Harper would have nothing to do with Israel bashing.

This was NOT a political speech. This was a speech emanating from Harper's acute sense of history, his deep connection to the legacy of Israel and the Jewish people, and his unyielding resolve to fight the forces of hate and evil at every turn. It was the speech of an articulate, eloquent, resolute world statesman, a speech that solidified Canada as a moral superpower.

As if to accentuate this was vintage Harper, it should be noted the honorary doctorate he received from Tel Aviv University was actually bestowed in 2008! This was the first opportunity the prime minister had to pick up the degree. For years before, and six years following, the prime minister has been clear and unyielding. His is a determined, principled, stance that has only escalated over the years. His effusion toward Israel has been nothing short of incredible, as was the memorable Knesset speech. We who were there stood as proud Canadians in a sea of appreciative Israelis.

May the voice that brought us so much pride, bring sense, and courage, to an unsteady, often timid world.

OTTAWA JEWISH BULLETIN

VOLUME 78 | ISSUE 10

Ottawa Jewish Bulletin Publishing Co. Ltd.  
21 Nadolny Sachs Private,  
Ottawa, K2A 1R9

Tel: 613 798-4696 | Fax: 613 798-4730  
Email: bulletin@ottawajewishbulletin.com

Published 19 times per year.

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**PUBLISHER**  
Andrea Freedman

**EDITOR**  
Michael Regenstreif

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
Brenda Van Vliet

**BUSINESS MANAGER**  
Barry Silverman

The *Bulletin*, established in 1937 as “a force for constructive communal consciousness,” communicates the messages of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and its agencies and, as the city's only Jewish newspaper, welcomes a diversity of opinion as it strives to inform and enrich the community. Viewpoints expressed in these pages do not necessarily represent the policies and values of the Federation.

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\$36 Local Subscription | \$40 Canada  
\$60 International | \$2 per issue

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.



ISSN: 1196-1929  
Publication Mail Agreement No. 40018822  
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
Ottawa Jewish Bulletin  
21 Nadolny Sachs Private, Ottawa ON K2A 1R9

FROM THE EDITOR



MICHAEL REGENSTREIF

Far too often recently, we've seen news reports of suicides committed by members of the Canadian Forces who have served in the war in Afghanistan. The post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) suffered by many of these mostly young men and women are probably incomprehensible to those of us who have not been in their circumstances.

With *This Is War*, playwright Hannah Moscovitch focuses on the effect of war on soldiers in an attempt to bring some measure of understanding to what they go through in the unrelenting life-and-death circumstances in which they serve.

Moscovitch – who grew up here in Ottawa and is one of Canada's most acclaimed young theatre artists – has never shied away from difficult subjects.

## Hannah Moscovitch confronts difficult subject in *This is War*

In 2012, the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC) produced Moscovitch's *East of Berlin*, a play about the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and the son of a notorious Nazi death camp doctor who grew up not knowing about his father's evil experiments. The GCTC production of *This Is War* opened at the Irving Greenberg Theatre Centre earlier this month and continues through February 23.

The play, set in the Panjwahi district of the Kandahar province of Afghanistan in 2008, looks at war and inter-related issues of love, hate, sex and violence from the perspectives of four Canadian soldiers: Master Corporal Tanya Young (Sarah Finn), Sergeant Stephen Hughes (John Ng), Private Jonny Henderson (Drew Moore – well remembered for his lead role in the 2012 Ottawa production of *My Name is Asher Lev*) and Sergeant Chris Anders, the company medic.

The play takes the form of a series of interviews with an unseen journalist or, perhaps, a military debriefer. Each of the

four characters, who all show varying signs of PTSD after a joint mission with Afghan forces that seemingly led to terrible consequences involving deaths of children and fellow soldiers, recounts what happens back at the base as suppressed tensions came to the surface and exploded. As each of the four tells the story in turn, we see the same events re-enacted from the differing perspectives.

If there is a central character among the four, it is Master Corporal Young, a woman determined to prove her toughness equals or surpasses any of the men. Her tough exterior, though, masks a psyche bearing an overbearing weight of guilt over what happened on the mission-gone-wrong and her role in it. Her guilt plays out in an encounter with the sergeant who is her military superior that is utterly devoid of any love or tenderness and a violent attack upon the private who is infatuated, if not in love, with her.

While all four of the characters are at least somewhat deserving of empathy in

reaction to the horrors they've been through, it is the 20-year-old Private Henderson, a naïve and inexperienced boy who's forced to grow up fast in the circumstances, who garners the audience's pity. Reeling from the results of the mission he's brutalized psychologically by his sergeant and rebuffed and then violently attacked by Young. It is only the intervention of the concerned medic that keeps him from turning his gun on himself.

Sergeant Hughes is a veteran soldier who has probably seen it all far too many times. His PTSD is manifested in his indifference to the encounter with Young, his cruelty to the young private over it, and, perhaps, in the macho suppression of his true sexual identity.

The smallest role belongs to the most sympathetic of the four characters. The openly gay medic, Sergeant Anders, seems only to want to help the other three. Only with the private is it clear he has some measurable success.

*This Is War* is not an easy night at the theatre. Those of us sitting in the seats represent Canadian society and it forces us to think about the consequences of our decisions to fight wars and about the ways in which we respond to those consequences and to the effects on the people we put in harm's way.

Call the GCTC box office at 613-236-5196 for ticket information.

IDEAS AND IMPRESSIONS



JASON MOSCOVITZ

I have this sick feeling. Not because the Parti Québécois (PQ) will soon call a Quebec provincial election in which it can win a majority; I feel sick about how the PQ is going to go about it.

The Charter of Quebec Values is blossoming as a positive election issue for the PQ. Recent polls demonstrate how a growing majority of French Quebecers see the charter as a positive force to bolster their collective rights, emboldening them to almost scream out loud, "They are Quebecers and this is French Quebec."

A few weeks ago, a young woman boarded a plane from New York City to Montreal. She overheard a Québécois couple in conversation about Jewish religious people on the same plane. In French, and not thinking they were being

## Quebec charter can't turn back demographic clock 100 years

understood, one of them muttered, "I thought we were flying to Montreal not to Israel." That is the mindset behind the charter.

The charter was not as popular when it was first presented six months ago. Even two former Quebec PQ premiers opposed it, as did some nationalist interest groups. They believed proposed legislation eliminating "conspicuous" or overly noticeable religious symbols worn by people in the public sector in Quebec was uncalled for and not worthy of Quebecers.

They thought it silly to debate how people serving the public can wear a small crucifix or a small Star of David but not a big one around their neck. They opposed the whole notion of burkas, hijabs, turbans and kippahs being made matters of public policy.

What they also knew, but probably wouldn't say, is how the number of people who actually serve the public with any form of religious garb is so minuscule you would have to ask why any Quebec government would run the risk of having the majority look like heavy-handed bullies.

The reason reflects Quebec's French majority being a minority in North

America. Insecurity within that context has always made Quebecers keenly aware of the difference between collective and individual rights. To protect themselves from what they see as a never-ending threat to their language and culture, they believe laws need to be passed sometimes at the expense of individual rights of others.

The Charter of Quebec Values follows the template of the Charter of the French Language. The rationale behind both is to protect Quebecers, by protecting their language, their culture and their very existence and growth in Quebec.

Perhaps you can better see why that Québécois couple on the Montreal bound plane would ask themselves if they were flying to Montreal or Israel when they saw religious Jews on the plane. You could say they are small-minded xenophobes or you could try to explain it by adding they feel what they feel because the Quebec of their ancestors is, in their minds, threatened.

The Charter of Quebec Values may make some Quebecers feel better, but it is not going to change anything concretely. No charter of values can turn the demographic clock back a hundred years. But

feeling better is important. Politicians learned a long time ago that the better you make people feel, the more votes you get.

The Charter of Quebec Values is not just the product of instant electoral gratification, although it sure looks that way. To be fair, the thinking behind the charter goes back several years to Quebec's hearings on religious and cultural accommodation.

The thinking of that arduous process was accommodation was always possible and desirable in Quebec, as long as limits were set. And that brings us to the beginnings of the legislative word "conspicuous."

Some years back, a rabbi put up a big, "conspicuous" mezuzah in a Montreal condo where few Jews lived. For the record, the other two mezuzahs in the building were small and discreet.

Within a month, the condo owner, yours truly, got a call from the administrator of the building. It was a polite and respectful conversation in which I was asked if it were possible to replace the big mezuzah with a small mezuzah. He talked about accommodation.

My conclusion, long before the Charter of Quebec Values, was that, if you want a mezuzah in a shared building, make it small so Quebecers can hardly see it, or, perhaps more politely, remember they have a collective right, which enables them to tell you how big they think it should be.



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# 'High-level speed dating with CEOs' at ConnectOTT networking event

BY MONIQUE ELLIOT

Young professionals who feel like they have “been there and done that” at networking events can expect a refreshing, new way to meet industry leaders at this month’s first-ever ConnectOTT event, committee members say.

“With ConnectOTT, we really want to empower our attendees to meet successful executives within their industry in a dinner setting, so they can learn from their experience and potentially tap into their extensive networks,” event co-chair Martin Kratky-Katz said.

Young professionals will be able to interact with successful industry executives in a more relaxed dinner setting as opposed to the traditional mingling with hors d’oeuvres.

“Picture this: [It’s like] high-level speed dating with CEOs. We have executives from about five main industries and you can sit with your first choice,” said Samantha Banks, director of Initiatives for the Emerging Generation and the operations lead of the ConnectOTT committee.

The concept and setup is similar to Revolving Tables, a social fundraising and networking event hosted in Toronto by the Israel Cancer Research Fund’s Next Generation.

For every one or two executives at each table, there will be about eight to 10 young professionals hoping to gain industry insights.

Executives will stay at their tables and each get to share a course with about 30 of the expected 200 attendees, who will rotate three times throughout the night.

“It’s a networking event where, each course of the meal, you get to sit with a leading professional in the industry of your choice,” Banks said.

Committee members have a few strategic suggestions for attendees to maximize their experience.

“Make sure you have your networking hat on! Be prepared to meet new people and make new friends, and come with an open mind,” Kratky-Katz said. “Also, be sure to bring business cards, so that your new connections can follow up with you.”

The ConnectOTT committee says they are committed

to helping attendees generate more ideas about how to craft their personal brand, and can find more information on their Twitter page, @ConnectOTT.

“I find with young professionals, events aren’t enough anymore. So we’ve been giving people tips and tactics and tools on how to network and professionally engage themselves in Ottawa’s young adult community,” Banks said. “It’s not just a one-off thing for us.”

ConnectOTT has also partnered with the custom card company MOO, which will be giving away 50 free business cards to each attendee.

“It’s going to be a great event with amazing people, and, if you don’t go, you risk missing out on making great connections in whatever industry matters to you,” Kratky-Katz said. “Who knows? Maybe those connections can help you land a better job, or help get your business off the ground!”

Executives from various industries will be able to chat with young professionals about how they got their start in their industries and give career advice.

Among the 26 executives on hand will be Stephen Greenberg of Osgoode Properties, Mark Resnick of the Rothwell Group, Fred Seller of BrazeauSeller, and Lawrence Weinstein of LaBarge Weinstein.

Attendees should also take note that they may have something to learn from their own peers who organized the event.

“It’s entirely run by a team of young professionals in Ottawa,” Banks said.

ConnectOTT takes place Wednesday, February 26, 6:30 to 9:30 pm, at the Fairmont

Château Laurier. Tickets are available online at [www.connectott.com](http://www.connectott.com) and the dinner will be kosher.

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**Lifetime trip to Israel**

It was an honour to have been part of the JNF delegation on Prime Minister Stephen Harper's trip to Israel. When I arrived in Jerusalem, the first things that caught my eye – and which will be etched in my memory forever – were the Canadian flags flying all over the city. We received a very warm welcome and were given our itineraries, which had us busy from early morning to late every evening. On the first day, we visited a military base to see the Iron Dome, the safety net that covers Israel, and how it works. What amazed most of us was that it was controlled by young and very articulate Israeli soldiers. That evening we were hosted by Chabad at dinner. On the second day, we were off to Yad Vashem, where the Prime Minister laid a wreath, and then to the Western Wall. Then back to the hotel for a dinner sponsored by CIJA. These dinners were great opportunities to meet people from throughout Canada and share the experiences of our individual communities across Canada.

The third day was unbelievable. We were off to the Knesset, which had a huge sign welcoming us and Canadian flags flying everywhere, for the historic speech by Prime Minister Harper in which he received several standing ovations. It was followed by a state dinner in the evening, where we were warmly welcomed. The state dinner was sponsored by JNF and highlighted many of the projects we have throughout Israel. The highlight of the evening was being entertained by the Prime Minister as he sang three songs.

On the fourth day, we travelled to Hula Valley, where once again JNF was highlighted as Prime Minister Harper laid the cornerstone to the JNF Hula bird sanctuary. The JNF Presidents from across Canada were introduced and acknowledged. After that, we were off to Tel Aviv University, where the Prime Minister received his honorary doctorate, followed by a reception.

Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism Jason T. Kenney spoke on January 22 at a ceremony dedicating a first-of-its-kind greywater recycling pilot project in the city of Ra'anana. The site selected for the pilot was the central ritual bathhouse (mikvah) of Ra'anana, where shower water will be recycled to flush toilets and irrigate a garden. The pilot project, an initiative of the Israeli NGO Shomera for a Better Environment, was the Minister's selected project of the KKL-JNF London, Canada, Negev Dinner in 2012, where he was the JNF Honouree. "We're very proud of what JNF Canada is doing. You have no idea how encouraging it is for me to actually see the projects we've been promoting with KKL-JNF," he said.

**JNF Inscriptions**

**Sefer Hayered:** Frayda Raber and Charles Wiseman inscribed their grandchildren, **Samantha & Emma Bokhaut**.

**Golden Book:** Carol-Sue Shapiro inscribed her mother, **Bess Swedlove**, for her 100th birthday;

Sol and Sharon Reichstein and family inscribed grandmother, **Gerda Gottlieb** for her 95th birthday.

On a daily basis you can plant trees for all occasions. An attractive card is sent to the recipient. To order, call the JNF office (613.798.2411).



www.ottawa.jnf.ca

# Ontario court rules 13 children from haredi sect must return to Quebec

(JTA) – An Ontario judge ruled that children from a fringe haredi Orthodox sect, whose members fled Quebec while the community was being investigated by social services, should be returned to that province.

In a ruling February 3, the court upheld a Quebec order to place 13 children from the Lev Tahor sect into temporary foster care, Canadian Press reported. But the judge placed a 30-day stay on the order to give the families time to appeal.

The children, who live outside Chatham, Ontario, about two hours southwest of Toronto, were ordered into temporary foster care by a Quebec court in November.

Authorities in Quebec, where sect members had lived north of Montreal for several years, said they had evidence of neglect, psychological abuse, poor dental

and physical health, and a substandard education regime in the community.

But about 250 sect members fled Quebec to Ontario in November just before the order could be executed.

The 13 children belong to three families. A publication ban prohibits identifying them.

The community denies all allegations and has said it is the victim of a Zionist smear effort.

Last month, Quebec police, with the assistance of local officers, raided two homes in the Lev Tahor community in Ontario. Rabbi Nachman Helbrans, son of sect founder Shlomo Helbrans, said the search may have been an attempt to find evidence of illegal child marriages.

A former sect member testified in Quebec that he had personally witnessed seven underage marriages.

# Abbas says NATO force can patrol Palestinian state

(JTA) – Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said he would be willing to allow a U.S.-led NATO force to patrol a Palestinian state for an indefinite amount of time.

Israeli soldiers and Israeli settlements could remain for five years from the state's establishment, Abbas also said in an interview with the *New York Times* published on February 3, adding two years to a previous offer.

Abbas also said the Palestinian state would be demilitarized – it would not have an army, only a peace force.

The third party force would remain "to reassure the Israelis, and to protect us," Abbas told *New York Times* reporter Jodi Rudoren and columnist Tom Friedman at his Ramallah headquarters.

The NATO proposal had the support of former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert and former U.S. president George W. Bush.

"We will be demilitarized," Abbas said. "Do you think we have any illusion that we can have any security if the Israelis do not feel they have security?"

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry reportedly will

present the two sides with a framework agreement to guide the rest of the talks in the coming weeks.

The Palestinian leader called recognizing Israel as a Jewish state "out of the question," and pointed out that Jordan and Egypt did not sign anything to that effect when they signed peace treaties with Israel.

Abbas said that, at the end of the nine months set aside for the peace talks, he would be willing to extend the negotiations, if progress is being made.

## House Exchange

Ex-Ottawa couple living in Moshav Zippori, Israel, would like to exchange houses with someone in Ottawa any time from mid-August to mid-September, 2014.  
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# Chabad Student Network: You can't avoid the clichés

In writing about why the Rhor Chabad Student Network (CSN) is so important to students, I really wanted to avoid using clichés. It seems you hear them almost anytime students speak at CSN events. For example, you will inevitably hear CSN referred to as “a home away from home.”

Well, I tried my best, but when I asked fellow students for their thoughts, I quickly realized avoiding clichés would be like avoiding air.

Gideon Bell, a first-year law student at the University of Ottawa, described CSN as “a home away from home, a place of togetherness,” and noted the camaraderie and *ruach* (spirit) he enjoys there.

That was precisely the kind of cliché I wanted to avoid. Yet Gideon's words are undeniably true. Everyone knows CSN provides this.

So, I went out looking for someone whose university experience was completely unaffected by Chabad, someone who came to every event, but didn't make one friend.

“I'll turn this article into a nuanced, balanced portrait of Chabad,” I thought to myself. I made the mistake of speaking with Jeremy Finkelstein, a computer science student at Carleton University.

“I have made many friends from being part of Chabad on campus,” he said. “Were it not for this, I feel that my university experience would not have been the same.”

Well, that's just great Jeremy. There went my plan.

So, it's pretty clear that CSN provides an irreplaceable home, friends and a sense of belonging to many of

## BENJAMIN MILLER GUEST COLUMN

Ottawa's Jewish university students. But, maybe, there's not much variety to CSN programming.

Wrong again!

Victoria Frank, a regular participant in CSN programs, began listing some of them.

“Making sushi and delivering it to women with breast cancer, challah baking, pottery, chanukiah painting,” she started.

I put a cholent in the Crock-Pot at this point.

“Classes on Judaism, Shabbatons,” she continued.

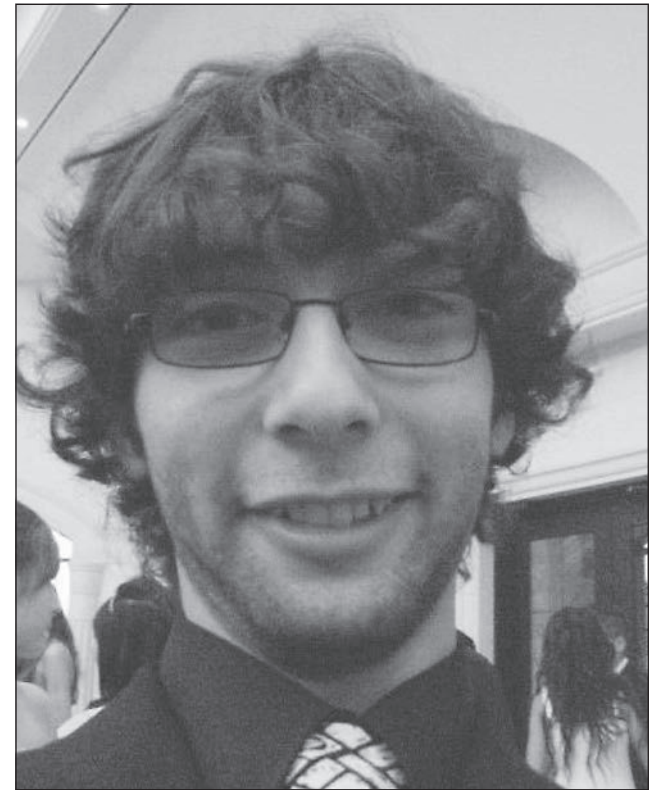
I checked the cholent's temperature.

“The Sinai Scholars program, travel to Israel,” she went on, “and so much more.”

By the time Victoria finished listing the many CSN programs, I had taken the cholent out and we were eating some fine Jewish cuisine.

As I said, it's impossible to avoid clichés when talking about CSN. It is a home away from home that seems to offer every Jewish activity under the sun and it unquestionably changes students' post-secondary experience.

So what's the catch? Oh yeah! You have to connect with your Judaism. Every student I spoke with said the most important thing Chabad did was to allow them to



Benjamin Miller says CSN connects students to Judaism.

participate in Jewish life, ritual, tradition, heritage and community.

Now this is all great news for outgoing Jewish students looking for Jewish life on campus. But, what about shy ones who don't know where to go?

Well, there's a rabbi for that.

That was my Jewish attempt to appropriate the cliché, “There's an app for that.”

Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky, who runs CSN with his wife, Yocheved, brings new meaning to the term “outreach.” He is known to literally reach out, grab your shoulder and start dancing with you. He's the rabbi that doesn't let a student get through four years without being asked at least 18 times if they're Jewish and are available for a minyan.

“We'll be done in 10 minutes, 15 max,” he's been heard to say.

In short, he's a Chabad rabbi.

So what's the best part?

I'll end this column about Chabad clichés with a student cliché.

As Gideon, the first student I spoke with, explained, “It is all free and that's all for the better, because free things with free food always encourage attendance.”



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**Max and Ellie Greenberg** on Jordana and Matt's engagement by Bernice Kerzner; by Jerry, Lily and family

**Maureen Katz** on the birth of your second grandson by Jerry and Lily Penso

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# MP Irwin Cotler won't run again in 2015 election

(JTA) – MP Irwin Cotler, a former minister of justice and attorney general, and a prominent international human rights activist, has announced he will not run in the next federal election.

“I have enjoyed the honour and privilege of serving my riding, Parliament and the Canadian people as a whole for close to 15 years,” Cotler said in a statement released February 5.

“I look forward to completing my mandate and continuing the pursuit of justice in other arenas.”

Cotler, a former president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and professor of law at McGill University, was first elected in the Montreal riding of Mount Royal in 1999 with 92 per cent of the vote. The Liberal Party member was re-elected in the ensuing five federal elections.

In 2011, when he was returned to office, Cotler made it clear it would be his last four-year term. He turns 74 in May; the next election is in October 2015.

“When I first ran in 1999, I viewed coming to Parliament as a temporary sabbatical from being a law professor and human rights lawyer,” Cotler noted in his statement.

“However, given the support and encouragement of my family, constituents and Parliamentary colleagues, I

continued to serve in Parliament, which I consider to be one of the highest forms of public service.”

His Mount Royal riding is about 36 per cent Jewish – the second highest concentration of Jews in any Canadian riding. It was the riding held by the late Pierre Trudeau when he was prime minister.

Cotler won re-election with just 41 per cent of the vote in the 2011 election.

“I did lose the Jewish vote last time. I won with the non-Jewish vote,” he told CBC News.

Cotler has spoken out frequently for Israel and warned often of nuclear threats from Iran. He chaired international groups such as the Inter-Parliamentary Group for Human Rights in Iran and the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism.

“What I was concerned about, in the matter of, let’s say, the Israel issue, is that it was made a wedge issue,” he told the CBC. “It should not be a wedge issue.”

During his tenure as justice minister from 2003 to 2006, Cotler introduced Canada’s first human trafficking legislation, as well as legislation for the protection of children and other vulnerable persons.

He also initiated Canada’s first prosecution under the War Crimes and



PHOTO: SYLVIA KLEIN

MP Irwin Cotler speaks at the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University Passover lunch, March 28, 2013, at Congregation Agudath Israel.

Crimes against Humanity Act while spearheading the first National Justice Initiative Against Racism and Hate.

Cotler has served as counsel to numerous prisoners of conscience around the

world, including Nelson Mandela, Natan Sharansky and Jacobo Timerman and is a leader of the international campaign for justice for Jewish refugees from Arab lands.



2013 G.J. Cooper Scholarship recipient Michael Kent received a scholarship of \$12,850 at the Foundation’s Annual General Meeting (presented by Steven Lesh, 2013 Scholarship Committee Chair)

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# Anne Mayberger Blair: secret to a long life is keeping busy

BY LORRI BENEDIK

In February 1914, a copy of *Vanity Fair* or *Vogue* magazine cost 25 cents and silent movie-goers got their first glimpse of Charlie Chaplin.

Anne Ginsberg was born in Ottawa on February 18, 1914.

“My mother gave birth to all eight of us at home,” she said during a visit last month. “That was the norm in those days.”

When she was 20, Anne married Hyman Mayberger. They raised five children together.

“It was the depression era and we didn’t have much, but we always made do,” she said.

While Anne prefers to direct attention away from herself in favour of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, one topic she doesn’t shy away from is her lifelong passion for fundraising.

When her kids were still quite small, she imported menorahs from New York to raise money for Pioneer Women. The order arrived very late. Anne recalls how she and a friend froze their fingers selling them door-to-door in the days preceding Chanukah.

Later on, she ran the gift shop at Congregation Beth Shalom for six years and raised funds for the Degania group (Israel’s first kibbutzim). In recognition of her dedication, Anne was chosen by them to travel to Israel with her father to see the results of their efforts.

“My mom has an outgoing way about her and is very kind-hearted,” said Anne’s daughter, Shelley Schachnow. “She has also mastered the delicate balance of being a toughie without being bossy. We are grateful for her good health and sharp mind as she reaches 100 years.”

Shelley explained that her mother’s life has not been easy.

“She has outlived three of her children,” Shelley said. “When this occurs, it is one of life’s cruelest blows.”

Anne’s daughter-in-law, Linda Nachfolger-Mayberger of Montreal, shares an anecdote about her mother-in-



Anne Mayberger Blair, with the Shih Tzus she takes care of twice a week, is celebrating her 100th birthday.

law: “I began dating Morty Mayberger after we met through mutual friends. It was a long-distance relationship, and we’d known each other for just a few months when I received a letter in the mail. It was from Anne, inviting me to come to Ottawa for the first night of Passover. I was deeply touched. I accepted and she welcomed me into her home so warmly, as if I was already family.”

Nearly 10 years ago, Anne suffered a mild stroke. She survived it well, but was told she could no longer drive.

“I am an independent person, by nature, and didn’t want to be a burden,” she said. “Shortly after recovering from my illness, I was visiting my daughter Ruth in Montreal and noticed a building being constructed close by.”

It was a seniors’ residence called Westmount One. She visited, liked it very much and decided to move in.

“It was a big change – but made sense,” Anne said. “I have a bigger *mishpucha* here, so they can take turns helping me out.”

It has been six years since she relocated to Montreal after 94 years in Ottawa. Anne is as active as ever. She looks after her granddaughter’s two Shih Tzus twice a week and continues her fundraising ways by organizing bingo games with the proceeds supporting a variety of causes.

“I have sent cheques to the Alzheimer’s society, the Children’s Hospital and Montreal’s Miriam Home,” she said. Running two bingo games a week is time-consuming with the paperwork she must do so that contributors

receive tax receipts.

Anne has no secret recipe to offer those who strive to be centenarians.

“I enjoy simple foods like homemade soup and a nice piece of flanken,” she said. Anne also loves borscht, fruits and vegetables and occasionally indulges in sweets.

“But I really believe that the secret to a long and healthy life is to keep very busy. I have recently taken up knitting and create scarves for homeless people,” she said.

“Knitting is something I can do, while conversing with my friends at the residence. It makes me feel good to be doing something useful.”

In lieu of gifts for her 100th birthday, Anne has suggested friends make donations to Children at Risk, an organization in Ottawa that supports children with autism spectrum disorders. Visit [www.childrenatrisk.ca](http://www.childrenatrisk.ca) for information.

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# Friends organize campaign to assist Issie Rabinowitz in his battle with ALS

BY LYNNE COHEN  
FOR "ISSIE'S FRIENDS"

A campaign organized by a group of friends to help Israel Rabinowitz continue to receive care for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) at home will be launched at a "Superheroes and Nerds" event on February 26 at the Ottawa Bagel Shop.

Take part in this fun evening by dressing up as a nerd or comic book hero, or just come as you are, to recognize Issie's work and volunteer activities and help raise funds for his expensive care.

"Issie has had ALS for five years," said his wife, Abby, a federal public servant. "We have certainly learned to cope psychologically, and to enjoy and be grateful for life every day. But we have completely run out of financial resources. The cost of supporting him at home is very high. After government grants, we pay about \$50,000 per year for caregivers and about \$20,000 per year for drugs, equipment and renovations. Our mortgage and credit cards are maxed out."

The evening, endorsed by the ALS Society of Canada, Jewish Family Services,

Machson Tzvi Hersh and the NewStart Institute, is the launch event of a fundraising website - [www.youcaring.com/keepingissiehome](http://www.youcaring.com/keepingissiehome) - dedicated to this worthy cause. The website notes "a few very generous donors and close friends" will match funds donated before the end of February. The initial goal is a modest \$30,000.

Although stretched financially, the Rabinowitz family is not out of spiritual, emotional or even professional resources. Virtually paralyzed from the neck down and in constant need of a breathing machine, Issie still takes part in family and community life.

"I run a successful charity online. I feel productive and I have a very good quality of life. I play chess, and often win, against my 13-year-old son," he said.

Ten years ago, Issie established NewStart Institute, a free online service that provides training for people in developing countries. It helps them create resumés and teaches math and accounting skills to help run or start small businesses.

"NewStart is completely free," Issie

said. "I spend hours each week operating it. But I also work from home part-time as an accountant."

He provides tax form services at very low rates and occasionally for free.

A father of five, Issie is regularly approached for advice from his four sons and one daughter and his adult children's spouses.

"He counsels our boys and spoils our grandchildren with cookies," said Abby. "Oh, and he is still the mediator and negotiator among his many brothers and sisters in Israel. He supports me with his great sense of humour and what I call his global perspective."

Issie and Abby admit that ALS, a

muscular degenerative disease that is often fatal within five years of diagnosis, has slowed them down.

"The stresses initially seemed overwhelming. Yet, when we look back, these past five years have been full of joy. Our youngest had his bar mitzvah. We have seen three of our children get married. And we've welcomed three grandchildren into the world," Issie said.

The "Superheroes and Nerds" event takes place Wednesday, February 26, 5 to 9 pm, at the Ottawa Bagel Shop, 1321 Wellington Street West. The evening will include refreshments, speakers, music and a film. RSVP to Leah Scarowski at 613-729-4444.



Issie Rabinowitz, seen here with his wife, Abby, maintains an active life despite his battle with ALS.

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Jacob and Clara Lowy in the library of their home in Montreal, circa 1970s, before the Jacob M. Lowy Collection was donated to the National Library (now Library and Archives Canada).

## Clara Lowy, 1925 - 2014 Holocaust survivor was co-benefactor of Jacob M. Lowy Collection

BY NORMAN BARWIN  
JACOB M. LOWY COLLECTION COUNCIL

The Jacob M. Lowy Collection at Library and Archives Canada is one of Canada's few public collections of incunabula (books printed before 1500), Judaica and Hebraica. The collection includes more than 3,500 rare books and first editions as well as 1,500 reference sources. Bibles with rabbinic commentaries share space with the Book of Isaiah in Labrador Inuktituk and a Scroll of Esther decorated with hearts and hieroglyphics. Stunning Passover Haggadot, some with wine stains, nestle against each other.

The collection was a gift to the Library in 1977 from Jacob Max Lowy and his second wife, Clara, a Holocaust survivor.

Jacob, the son of a rabbi in Slovakia, received a yeshiva education and was a passionate collector of books from his youth in Slovakia through his years in England from 1938 and then in Montreal from 1951. He died in 1990 at the age of 82.

As former Lowy Collection curator Brad Hill noted in 1981, "The product of nearly 50 years of careful acquisitions, the Jacob M. Lowy Collection [has an] estimated worth ... in the millions of dollars."

Clara Lowy, née Kroh, was a resilient and extroverted woman. She was born in Kisvarda, Hungary, in 1925 and died on January 2 at the age of 88.

Clara, her parents, and her younger adopted sister, Rifi, were amongst the Jews of Kisvarda deported to Auschwitz in May 1944. She was separated from her parents upon arrival and they perished there. Clara and Rifi toiled as part of a slave

labour group from Auschwitz digging trenches in Silesia.

In January, 1945, she and Rifi were forced to embark on a death march from Auschwitz to a train that continued on to Bergen-Belsen. They arrived there in late-February or early-March and were liberated on April 15. Sadly, Rifi, died of an illness shortly after.

In 1948, Clara immigrated to Montreal where she met and married Eugene Klein. Their daughter, Barbara, was born in 1949.

In 1968, Clara and Jacob, both having been widowed, were married.

Jacob, by then a philanthropist and Jewish community leader in Montreal, found a partner to his causes in Clara. They were both strong supporters of the Young Israel of Montreal and many other Jewish organizations. She was an excellent hostess, opening their home to dignitaries and friends alike.

Similarly, there was a shared support of the Jacob M. Lowy Collection, even after Jacob's death. She was proud of the collection and, even in her later years, would make the effort to travel to Ottawa to attend lectures or exhibits on the collection.

The defining sadness of Clara's later years was the tragic loss of Barbara, her only child, to lupus in 2001.

In 2006, on her own initiative, Clara donated 15 more books to the Lowy Collection. Perhaps this devotion to books should have been expected from a woman who exchanged food for a Book of Psalms when she was a prisoner at Auschwitz.

May her memory serve as a blessing.

# Israeli ambassador tours Jewish Community Campus



PHOTO: ISSIE SCAROWSKY

Rafael Barak, Israel's new ambassador to Canada, and his wife, Miriam, toured the Jewish Community Campus, February 6, visiting the Soloway Jewish Community Centre, Ganon Preschool, the Bess and Moe Greenberg Family Hillel Lodge, and the Ottawa Jewish Community School.

Ambassador Rafael Barak (centre) with (from left) Bram Bregman, Jewish Federation of Ottawa vice-president of community building; Steven Schneiderman, executive director of Hillel Lodge; Miriam Barak; and Andrea Freedman, Federation president and CEO.



PHOTO: ISSIE SCAROWSKY

Ambassador Rafael Barak (centre) at the Ottawa Jewish Community School with (from left) Grade 12 student Shir Haim; Heather Graham, school operations adviser; Miriam Barak; and Grade 11 student Stav Elimelach.



PHOTO: MICHAEL REGENSTREIF

Miriam and Rafael Barak enjoy singing and dancing by the children at Ganon Preschool.

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- As featured in Ottawa Life Top 25 in the Capital Region 2013 Issue



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*Members of the Jewish community are invited to nominate individuals to receive community awards at the Annual General Meeting of the Federation in early June.*

### Gilbert Greenberg Distinguished Service Award

The Gilbert Greenberg Distinguished Service Award is the highest tribute the Ottawa Jewish Community can bestow on an individual for exceptional service and leadership to the Jewish community over the course of many years.

### Freiman Family Young Leadership Award

The Freiman Family Young Leadership Award recognizes an individual under the age of 40, who has rendered exceptional service to the Jewish community.

### The Shem Tov Community Volunteer Award

The Shem Tov Community Volunteer Award recognizes an outstanding and active volunteer with the Jewish community who, through many years of service, has contributed to the enrichment of Jewish life in Ottawa.

### Submit Recommendations by Monday, March 31, 2014 to:

Chair of the Community Award Selection Committee  
Jewish Federation of Ottawa

21 Nadolny Sachs Private, Ottawa, Ontario K2A 1R9

or email: [rabenhaim@jewishottawa.com](mailto:rabenhaim@jewishottawa.com)

**For more information or to download a nomination form, please visit [www.jewishottawa.com](http://www.jewishottawa.com)**

## NATIONAL Holocaust MONUMENT

VIEW THE DESIGN CONCEPTS OF THE SIX FINALISTS AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE PROPOSALS

Thursday, February 20, 2014  
5:30 p.m to 8 p.m.  
Canadian War Museum  
1 Vimy Place, Ottawa

[info@pch.gc.ca](mailto:info@pch.gc.ca) • 819-997-0055 • 1-866-811-0055 • 1-888-997-3123 (TTY / ATME)

## Le MONUMENT NATIONAL de l'Holocauste

VOYEZ LES CONCEPTS DES SIX FINALISTES ET COMMENTEZ LES PROPOSITIONS

Le jeudi 20 février 2014  
De 17 h 30 à 20 h  
Musée canadien de la guerre  
1, place Vimy, Ottawa

# The Monuments Men recalls Allied effort to save Europe's heritage

BY PENNY SCHWARTZ

(JTA) – There's nothing like a star-studded Hollywood movie to shine a light on a little-known piece of history.

That's the hope of Robert Edsel, who wrote the book that inspired *The Monuments Men*, the new film directed by George Clooney starring Clooney, Matt Damon, Bill Murray, John Goodman, Jean Dujardin, Bob Balaban, Hugh Bonneville and Cate Blanchett.

The action-packed Second World War adventure film is a fictionalized version of Edsel's book of the same name. The book tells the compelling and surprising story of a special Allied military unit – known as the monuments men – sent into battle zones to protect historic buildings, churches and monuments across Europe.

Later, the unit of 345 members from 13 countries – many were art historians, archivists and architects – rescued more than five million pieces of Nazi-looted paintings, sculptures and rare manuscripts. Among them were some of the world's most treasured cultural objects, including works by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh.

Edsel says the visibility of a major feature film offers a chance to honour the legacy of the long-forgotten heroism of the monuments men, provide a path to reclaim art that is still missing, and galvanize the public's concern to prevent cultural destruction in war zones today and in the future.

Edsel suggests that, while he is not Jewish, he sees in the monuments men a

story that will resonate with young Jews, a different entry point to teach about Jewish culture and the Holocaust.

The movie provides historical context to events that reverberate in headlines today, from the discovery of a trove of Nazi-looted art in Germany to the destruction of ancient artifacts in Egypt and war-torn Syria.

Clooney says making a film about saving art isn't just about paintings hanging on a museum wall.

"It's about the fabric of our culture," he said at a news conference.

In the film, Clooney plays Frank Stokes, based on George Stout, an art historian at Harvard's Fogg Museum whose proposal to protect cultural property during the war led president Franklin Roosevelt to

establish the unit. General Dwight Eisenhower is credited with empowering the unit to carry out its mission.

It was a watershed moment in the preservation of cultural history, Edsel and others say.

Harry Ettlinger, whose Jewish family fled Germany in 1938 when he was young, is among the only five monuments men still alive. Ettlinger was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1944 at age 18, and eventually was assigned to the monuments men unit for his fluency in German.

"It makes me feel good that I did something of value for the rest of the world," Ettlinger, 87, told JTA in phone conversation from his home in Rockaway, N.J.

See Film on page 26



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In the Joseph  
and Inez Zelikovitz  
Long Term Care Centre

## Card Donations

Card donations go a long way to improving the quality of life for our residents. Thank you for considering their needs and contributing to their well-being.

On behalf of the residents and their families, we extend sincere appreciation to the following individuals and families who made card donations to the Hillel Lodge Long-Term Care Foundation between January 15 and 29, 2014 inclusive.

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

By making a contribution of \$1,000 or more, you can create a permanent remembrance for a loved one, honour a family member, declare what the Lodge has meant to you and/or support a cause that you believe in.

A Hillel Lodge **Honour Fund** is a permanent pool of capital that earns interest or income each year. This income then supports the priorities designated by you, the donor.

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Stan Katz by Ruth and Irving Aaron

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Jaelyn and Josh Krane Mazal tov on the birth of your daughter Annie Michelle by Sheryl, Harvey, Mallory and Ryan Kardish

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Stan Katz by Roz and Steve Fremeth; by Peter and Minda Wershof; by Arlene and Norm Glube; and by Merle, Ricky, Daniel, Michael and Robbie Moses

Betty Yan by Peter and Minda Wershof; and by Carolyn Weiss

Florence Rosenfeld by Alvin and Monica Stein and family

Jack Goodman by Bev and Bryan Glube

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Susan and Charlie Schwartzman Mazal tov on the birth of your granddaughter, Annie Michelle by Arlene and Norman Glube

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# Loved ones of dementia patients must learn to enter their reality

There is an elderly gentleman at a long-term care facility in Ottawa. I have not met him, but I have seen his photograph. At 99, he still has a spark in his eye. He looks much more robust than his biological age would suggest and his features retain the handsomeness I imagine he possessed as a younger man.

Recently, I spoke with his daughter, who I'll call Leah. Leah is keenly aware of the disconnect between how people may perceive her father – living to an age most of us will only dream of, still in decent physical shape, happy and smiling – and her awareness that he once was so much more.

It's not truly him, she explained, her voice cracking. Her father was always fastidiously groomed, courteous and extremely gentle. Now, under the spell of dementia, what she calls a cruel and insidious disease, on some days her father must be cajoled into showering. He has, on occasion, resorted to physical outbursts. And he has lost the social filter that we all depend on to carry us through everyday interactions.

"It destroys me on a daily basis," Leah explained. Every time she sees him, she feels he has "died a little bit more."

But, bring him to music, and his spirit comes alive again. Leah sometimes performs at the facility where her father lives. When she does, her father rises from his seat, singing, filled with joy.

"That's my daughter!" he beams with pride.

Rabbi Neal Rose recently retired as the spiritual director of the Simkin Centre, the Jewish long-term care facility in Winnipeg. He focuses on what he calls "spiritual care," connecting with the person's "inner reality," he



MIRA SUCHAROV  
**VALUES, ETHICS,  
COMMUNITY**

told me in a phone interview.

This may be achieved through the aesthetic markers of identity – things like food, music, language and holiday celebrations, or through more formal religious practice, like synagogue services.

And sometimes this means entering the person's current reality. A resident, who I'll call Mr. Cohen, Rabbi Rose recounted, was getting agitated. "Call the police!" Mr. Cohen yelled, as his children surrounded him, perplexed. Rabbi Rose put his arm around him.

"Mr. Cohen," he said, "I've placed the call. The police will be here in five minutes." Mr. Cohen relaxed, and went on his way.

It's not lying, it's not deception, Rabbi Rose emphasized. It's entering into *their* reality.

There's a fascinating paradox at work. While dementia in many ways robs the sufferers of their identity, it also forces their caregivers and loved ones to be in the moment with them, to engage in pure empathy.

I recently visited with an elderly relative who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. She seemed thrilled to see me, though she did not recall who I was. I realized I was desperately trying to penetrate through her fuzzy

memory, to crack the code, as if she had a cinematic form of amnesia.

"Do you recall the sharp corners on your glass coffee tables?" I asked her. "You used to place blankets over them when I brought my toddler daughter to visit."

I wanted to fill her metaphorical candy jar with memories, I explained to Rabbi Rose, when we later spoke. I knew how much pleasure my visits had brought to her and how much I enjoyed chatting over challah and hard boiled eggs at her home, the house she had lived in with her family for decades.

My instinct was understandable, but not realistic.

"Not if she no longer has a candy jar to fill," Rabbi Rose offered back.

What's more, too much pressing the dementia sufferer to remember can only leave both the sufferer and family members in a circle of frustration and anxiety. This is a dynamic Rabbi Rose emphasized, and which was echoed by Dr. Lee Blecher, a physician in Virginia who treats dementia patients.

Still, Rabbi Rose emphasized that it's important for loved ones and caregivers to comprehend the whole person. At the Simkin Center, a glass box is placed outside every room. Family members fill it with mementos. Of course the totality of who a person is can never fit inside a glass box. But it's a gentle reminder of the paradox that exists between engaging a person as they are, right here and right now, and imagining a past that puts the present into sharp, sometimes wistful, but ultimately poetic, relief.

Mira Sucharov, an associate professor of political science at Carleton University, blogs at Haaretz.com.

## Meditation for stress reduction

If you're not enjoying winter and its multiple visits from the polar vortex, or you're feeling stressed or depressed because spring seems far away, how about taking a trip into the calming world of meditation?

Perhaps you're already rolling your eyes at the thought of meditation. You may be accustomed to more mainstream types of health- and fitness-oriented activities. Perhaps you've shied away from meditation because of its association with different religions, or because, well, it just seems airy fairy. I consider myself to be a rather pragmatic person, yet I find meditation beneficial.

Meditation has a long history that dates back thousands of years. Originally a spiritual or religious practice, it also evolved into a proven technique for calming the mind and body. When we meditate, our breathing slows down, as does our heart rate. Our blood pressure can go down too.

A popular position for meditation is to sit on a mat on

the floor with your legs crossed. You can simply relax your hands on your knees with your palms up, or touch your thumbs to your middle fingers. If you have difficulty sitting on the floor, you can sit in a chair. There's no right or wrong method as far as I'm concerned. Essentially, you want to be comfortable, so wear loose or stretchy clothing and remove your shoes.

It's important to meditate in a quiet room with minimal distractions. During meditation, you may close your eyes and try to empty your mind of all thoughts – this takes lots of practice so don't be surprised if you suddenly start thinking about what you have to cook for dinner or the deadline on your next work project. Another way to meditate is to keep your eyes open and focus on an object such as a lit candle. Either way, breathe deeply. The aim is to relax and eventually, to enter a different level of consciousness.

Start with just five minutes. It may seem like the longest five minutes of your life if you're very anxious or fidgety and aren't accustomed to relaxing in this manner. Build up to longer periods. There's no magic number of minutes or frequency.

My first encounter with meditation was in the early-1980s, when I was a CEGEP student in Montreal and took meditation as an elective. The teacher was a monk from a nearby monastery and many of the students, like me, were Jewish. We learned about the roots of meditation during the lecture portion of class time and went into another room for meditation practice. Unfortunately, some of us 17- and 18-year-olds were immature. While the teacher meditated, we threw paper airplanes around the room. We giggled, thinking he was oblivious to our silliness. In hindsight, I bet he knew exactly what we were doing.

Three decades later, I began incorporating meditation



GLORIA SCHWARTZ  
**FOCUS ON  
FITNESS**

into my life. I do it from time to time at home. I prefer to lie on my back on a mat so I'm totally physically relaxed. I have several CDs of meditation music to choose from. One is purely instrumental, another is chanting in a language I don't understand – an intentional choice so the words can't distract me. I dim the lights, play some music, burn incense and close my eyes. After a few minutes of deep breathing, I find I am able to clear my mind of the worries or business of the day. When I'm done, I feel calm and refreshed.

Some people like to repeat a mantra while they meditate. This helps them clear their mind of distracting thoughts. A mantra can be a word or phrase in any language. "Om" is a common mantra originating from Hinduism, Buddhism and several other religions, although in modern times it's commonly used by people from all walks of life. When I took that college class long ago, the monk suggested "maranatha" as our mantra. He said it meant "Come Lord," so I adopted it. I recently Googled the term and learned it is of Christian origin. Oops! Well, I still find myself using that mantra at times. Whatever mantra you choose, say it over and over in your mind as your breath deeply.

Don't worry about the details. Just get comfortable and give meditation a try. After a few times, you'll get used to the feeling of being calm in mind, body, and spirit.

Gloria Schwartz is a personal trainer at the Soloway JCC.

Read the entire  
**Ottawa  
Jewish Bulletin**  
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[www.ottawajewishbulletin.com](http://www.ottawajewishbulletin.com)

## Prepare to be hooked on *Shtisel*

**Y**ou have to start watching *Shtisel*,” my Israeli friends kept telling me. “It’s amazing.” And so I did. And so it is. Fans of Israeli film and TV who are still lamenting the end of the excellent and compelling *Srugim* now have another well-written and beautifully acted series to enjoy.

While *Srugim* brought viewers into the world of Modern Orthodox 30-somethings in the Old Katamon neighbourhood of Jerusalem, *Shtisel* takes us across the city – and across a massive cultural divide.

The series – from the same producers as *Srugim* – is set in the ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood of Mea Shearim, and its characters are observant haredi Jews. While their mode of dress and rules of religious observance may seem foreign to outsiders, the characters are dealing with the same issues that drive any good drama: love and marriage, raising good kids, finding a place in the world, keeping family secrets, maintaining dignity.

What’s fascinating is that, while the characters explore personal struggles and conflicts, their religious life and rituals are never in question. This is not an attempt to condemn or satirize the haredi lifestyle, or to portray characters trying to escape this world.

One of the writers, Yehonatan Indursky, grew up in a haredi home, while the other, Ori Elon, was close to his haredi grandparents. Director Alon Zingman and the actors got a crash course in Yiddish, which makes up some of the dialogue, and spent Shabbats with haredi families in the neighbourhood to make their performances more authentic.

The award-winning series, which started airing in Israel last summer, begins as Shulem Shtisel is about to commemorate the first anniversary of his wife’s death.

His daughter Gitti’s husband can’t find work in Israel, so has to leave his family for six months to work as a kosher slaughterer in Argentina. He arrives safely, but then disappears without a trace – but with a whiff of scandal – leaving Gitti with five kids to feed.

Gitti finds a way to make money, but keeps it secret so that no one knows she’s been abandoned. Her adolescent

daughter is forced to take on even more responsibility in caring for her younger brothers.

One of Shulem’s sons hopes to get a paying position at the yeshiva where he’s studied for years. But the demands of family life, including interrupted sleep because of his wife’s belief that there’s a mouse in the house, scuttle his advancement.

The youngest son, Akiva, is the only child to remain unmarried. But not only is the dreamy and artistic substitute teacher in no hurry to make a suitable match, he has his heart set on Elisheva, the much older and twice-widowed mother of one of his yeshiva students.

“What’s the matter with you? Are you defective? A bed-wetter?” is the father’s response.

As the series progresses, we see how Shulem’s intransigence may have contributed to his children’s shattered dreams. But we also learn that the patriarch, who prides himself on paying six mortgages for his children, has his own secrets and disappointments.

The star-crossed relationship between Akiva and Elisheva drives the drama. As played by Michael Aloni and Ayelet Zurer (recently seen as Superman’s mother in *Man of Steel*), their chemistry is palpable – not just their physical attraction, but the sense that they are both lost souls who may have found their purpose (or not – I haven’t finished the first season yet!).



BARBARA CROOK  
MY ISRAEL

This could be the stuff of melodrama, but the superb writing and acting take it to a higher level. So does the restrained use of magic realism, such as a waking dream in which Akiva is reunited with his mother in a familiar restaurant that has turned into a snow-filled, icy café.

The scripts are also sprinkled with quirky humour. Settling into a nursing home, the grandmother wants the same kind of “box” as her neighbour. Much to her son’s chagrin, the “box” is a TV – forbidden in the haredi world – and she soon becomes addicted to talent shows and American soap operas.

Would an observant son really let this happen? Perhaps not. But the humour is a clever way to connect a secular audience to a world they’ve previously shunned, ridiculed or feared.

Alas, it’s not out on DVD yet. But Hebrew speakers can find the inaugural season of *Shtisel* on YouTube (the first episode is at [www.tinyurl.com/kx5bxnh](http://www.tinyurl.com/kx5bxnh)). And there are plans for screenings with English subtitles at the Soloway JCC in the spring.

Prepare to be hooked.



The Israeli TV show *Shtisel* will be shown at the Soloway JCC this spring.

## Two ears and one mouth: everyone’s voice has value

**W**hen Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited Israel in January, his unprecedented speech to the Knesset and some of the other events of his tour elicited much praise, but also much criticism.

In the Knesset, the response to his speech was overwhelmingly positive with the majority of the members rising to their feet in a standing ovation.

While many in Canada’s Jewish community were proud to see just how strong the relationship is between Canada and the Jewish homeland, there was cause for concern following controversial remarks at the Western Wall by Mark Adler, the Conservative MP for the Toronto riding of York Centre, who wanted a photo-op with Harper at the Wall.

“It’s the re-election. This is the million-dollar shot,” Adler was caught on video telling an aide to the prime minister.

Inevitably, reaction to those words was polarizing: ranging from thinking the comments were harmless political posturing, to full-on frustration or outrage that an MP might try to capitalize politically on Harper’s time at Judaism’s most important religious site.

Bringing together groups with different experiences and viewpoints can be a fantastic way to approach a lively discourse about Israel and the Canada-Israel relationship.



MONIQUE ELLIOT  
EMERGING GEN

However, some of the strongly worded online debates and outright verbal attacks I have read and witnessed call into question whether the right environment exists for a positive discussion to thrive.

Without safe and respectful forums for individuals to voice their opinions, the conversation all but stalls. And, with global public opinion currently reflecting a decline in support for the State of Israel, constructive dialogue within and between communities is necessary to maintain and build upon existing relationships.

According to the BBC World Service’s world public opinion poll for 2013, 52 per cent of respondents viewed Israel negatively, a two-point decline from the previous poll. In Canada, according to the poll, 57 per cent of respondents offered a negative perception of Israel, while only 25 per cent of Canadians held a mainly positive view.

So, is now the time to divide as a community by not

respecting those whose opinions we may disagree with? Cracks in community cohesiveness do begin to form when respect for those with differing opinions begins to falter.

One of the many messages we can take away from Harper’s speech in the Knesset is that criticism in and of itself is not necessarily indicative of malicious intent.

Criticism and constructive feedback – however unpleasant – is the cornerstone for improving society and ensuring everyone has a voice.

Hillel Ottawa, which has campus chapters at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, still reaches out to invite other campus groups (even those that may not support the right for Israel to exist) to their events, and promotes dialogue between them.

While the feedback may not always be easy to hear, this kind of dialogue in a safe space is what ultimately can spark a conversation that leads to understanding, peace, and even friendship. Both parties just have to be willing to listen and, when they speak to one another, at least attempt respect.

As always, the process is evolving constantly. It is of the utmost importance to treat our peers with dignity and respect, no matter how much we may disagree with them. Who knows? We may just foster unlikely new relationships that, like Canada and Israel’s, are special, important, and very strong.

The Soloway JCC Presents



# 'Schmaltz...Greased Purim'

'Schmaltz...Greased Purim' recounts the story of King Ahasverosh, Mordechai, Vashti, Queen Esther and the evil Haman through the familiar 50's era infectious tunes of the popular musical 'Grease'.



**Director:** Pierre Brault  
**Producer:** Roslyn Wollock  
**Musical Director:** Aviva Lightstone

**Sunday, March 9 • 7:00 pm**

General Admission: \$15

*Lyrics by Rabbi Richard Agler and Cantor Stephanie Shore  
Congregation B'nai Israel, Boca Raton Florida*

*Made possible in part by a generous donation by Mary Pressman.*



Contact: Roslyn Brozovsky Wollock | 613-798-9818 x254 | rwollock@jccottawa.com

## Ganon Preschool

### Registration

**Wednesday, February 19 – Wednesday, March 5**

2014-2015 Registration begins for Soloway JCC members currently enrolled in Ganon.

**Thursday, March 6 – Wednesday, March 19**

2014-2015 Registration for Soloway JCC members and non members currently enrolled in Ganon.

**Thursday, March 20**

2014-2015 Open Registration

### What's so great about the Soloway JCC Ganon Preschool?

- Exceptional licensed morning programs for 2 year olds, 3 year olds, and Junior Kindergarten.
- Part-time and full-time options.
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For a private tour of the Ganon Preschool please contact Preschool Director Lauren Lee at (613) 798-9818 ext. 280, ganon@jccottawa.com

[www.jccottawa.com/ganon](http://www.jccottawa.com/ganon)

# The Stardust Revolution:

The New Story of Our Origin in the Stars  
**Sunday, February 23 • 2:00 pm**

Carl Sagan famously noted that "We are star stuff". But how have we evolved from stars to us? *The Stardust Revolution* tells the amazing, unfolding story of our cosmic origins and connection, one in which the central question we ask about our place in the cosmos is changing from "Are we alone?" to "How are we connected?"

*Jacob Berkowitz is an award-winning science journalist, author and performer. He's the bestselling author of Jurassic Poop: What Dinosaurs (and Others) Left Behind, and his book Out of This World: The Amazing Search for an Alien Earth was a SkyNews magazine best astronomy book for 2009.*



**Admission: \$10 at the door**

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Continued on page 25

## The Women's Collective Philanthropy Program (WCPP) wants to hear from YOU



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Contributions may be made online at [www.OJCF.ca](http://www.OJCF.ca) or by contacting our office at 613-798-4696 ext. 274, Monday to Friday or by email at [tributecards@ojcf.ca](mailto:tributecards@ojcf.ca). Attractive cards are sent to convey the appropriate sentiments. All donations are acknowledged with a charitable receipt. We accept Visa, MasterCard and Amex.

## Natalie Portman joins Israeli effort to help Syrian refugees

BY JANA BANIN

(JTA) – Israeli-American actress and director Natalie Portman has donated money and clothing to Syrian refugees via Operation Human Warmth, the *Times of Israel* reported.

The initiative is the result of several Israeli organizations – the youth group Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed, the social and education organization Dror-Israel, and Israeli Flying Aid, a global humanitarian organization – coming together to collect winter supplies for those displaced by the civil war in Syria.

Portman, who is in Israel working on

her directorial debut, an adaptation of Amos Oz's novel *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, learned of the project through Israeli friends.

"When I heard about Operation Human Warmth, I felt deeply moved and compelled to get involved," she said in a statement.

"In the middle of a brutal winter, these children have no shelter and their lives are in serious jeopardy from the cold. I am proud to take part in an operation where Israeli youth of all backgrounds are taking action to help out those whom need it most."



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# Ambitious collection of Torah commentaries nets mixed results

*Unscrolled: 54 Writers and Artists Wrestle with the Torah*

Edited by Roger Bennett  
Workman Publishing  
375 pages

**U**nscrolled: 54 Writers and Artists Wrestle with the Torah is not your zaidy's Torah commentary. Fifty-four writers and artists, very few of whom have any education in Jewish scholarship beyond their b'nai mitzvot, tackle the 54 Torah portions in what the book's editor calls "a reinterpretation, a reimagining, a creative celebration." It is an ambitious attempt to make the Torah accessible and relevant to modern North American Jews.

Though the quality of the individual essays varies, overall the collection provides an accessible and unique entry into Torah commentary. However, readers looking for more in-depth analysis will not find it here.

Each chapter begins with a summary of the Torah portion, written ever so slightly tongue-in-cheek. Commentary follows in the form of short stories, photographs, personal reflections and a good number of scripts.

If you ask screenwriters, actors and photographers to give their interpretation of a Bible portion, you're likely to get insight that is insightful only for those who have similar levels of exposure to Torah commentary.

As a reinterpretation, the book often fails. The format is new and fresh, but the content is sometimes meaningless, such as architect Marc Kushner's drawings of the tabernacle placed upright in Manhattan. Author Adam Mansbach provides a profanity-laden description of Jacob's time with Laban that is amusing, but seemingly pointless, and frequently irreverent.

But perhaps irreverence is the point? For example, Rebecca Odes and Sam Lipsyte present the Ten

## NICOLA HAMER BOOK REVIEW

Commandments in graphic novel format from the point of view of Moses' wife, ending with a line that also includes profanity.

Other sections are more earnest, and yet still lack depth. Steve Bodow, a TV writer, has a script format discussion of the plagues, focusing on his distress over the discovery that God hardens Pharaoh's heart against Moses, thus necessitating increased suffering before the Israelites go free.

"But the God of unnecessary baby-and-cow-killing plague number ten? Sorry. I'm never going to feel it," writes Bodow.

Why God does this has been wrestled with for centuries, and "I'm never going to feel it" is not much of an insight.

Amichai Lau-Lavie similarly falls short in his commentary on Leviticus and homosexuality. His description of his personal journey to the realization that he too is created in God's image and therefore worthy of love is reflective of the same journey of many other gay Jews, but in that, is utterly unoriginal. Some insight into the recent reinterpretation of Leviticus by scholars such as Shawna Dolansky and Richard Elliott Friedman's in *The Bible Now*, wherein they make a compelling case that those passages reflect concern about social status rather than any interest in homosexual love, would have been far more relevant.

There are contributors who manage to use their

unusual formats to get a meaningful point across effectively, and sometimes quite beautifully. Among them are Justin Rocket Silverman's lovely short story tackling the often-ignored ritual of *sotah* (testing a woman for adultery), and Samantha Shapiro's engaging and lyrical essay on the meaningfulness of keeping kosher.

Eli Attie, another TV writer who uses script format, has a great piece with Moses talking to PR guys who want him to glitz up the religion and dial back on some of the harsher bits. Moses responds that giving away prizes and cute slogans could be more appealing, but that isn't the truth.

"And the TRUTH happens to be beautiful and ugly and confounding and uplifting ALL AT THE SAME TIME ... because IT is THAT WAY, because ALL OF life IS THAT WAY. It's a riddle. An undertaking. There are CONSEQUENCES. It doesn't fit on a bumper sticker," writes Attie.

A.J. Jacobs, author of *The Year of Living Biblically*, writes a clever letter-from-the-editor to God suggesting that, in his commandment to not mix linens, God might want to explain why he included such apparently odd rules in his book, something like: "I make this command because rituals can be fulfilling, even if these rituals seem strange from the outside." God has placed a large X through the whole explanation and scribbled, "Nah. They can figure it out."

Chapters like Jacobs' and Silverman's successfully meet the challenge of the book – they provide meaningful commentary in a new, fresh and accessible way. Even many of the chapters that do not manage to rise this high are still easy to read and digest, which makes this Torah commentary an enjoyable book and a good introduction for what is clearly a target audience of younger Jewish adults.

But, if you are easily offended, you probably won't like this book much.

## Film expected to resonate with Jewish audiences

Continued from page 19

In the movie, British actor Dimitri Leonidas plays Sam Epstein, a character based on Ettliger. Following a recent private screening, Ettliger gave the film a thumbs-up.

In November 2012, Ettliger accepted an award from the American Jewish Historical Society on behalf of all the monuments men. The society also awarded its legacy award in memory of Colonel Seymour Pomrenze, an archivist who served 34 years of active and reserve service in the U.S. army, for his unique leadership role in the monuments men recovering and restituting millions of Jewish books and artifacts and nearly 1,000 Torah scrolls confiscated by the Nazis. Pomrenze died in 2011.

In many ways, Pomrenze's work is a parallel story to the saving of looted art, said Lisa Leff, an associate professor of history at American University in Washington, D.C., and a specialist on the fate of Jewish archives in France during and after the Second World War.

But, while the monuments men's mission was to return the art to its original countries, much of what Pomrenze rescued became "heirless," as the original Jewish owners and entire Jewish communities perished in the war.

An organization of Jewish scholars was established to



(From left) John Goodman, Matt Damon, George Clooney, Bob Balaban and Bill Murray star in *The Monuments Men*. PHOTO: CLAUDETTE BARIUS/COLUMBIA PICTURES

deal with the books and manuscripts and other property, which was disbursed to Jewish institutions in Israel and the United States.

While the film is not an explicitly Jewish story, Leff imagines it will garner significant attention from a Jewish audience because so much of what was stolen was owned by Jewish collectors or created by

Jewish artists.

Edsel said he hopes increased prominence of the monuments men story will inspire similar efforts today.

"Looking forward," Edsel said, "we want to put their legacy to use so that the U.S. and other countries re-establish the high bar set by General Eisenhower during the war."

# WHAT'S GOING ON | February 17 to March 2, 2014

FOR MORE COMMUNITY LISTINGS, VISIT [JEWISHOTTAWA.COM](http://JEWISHOTTAWA.COM) AND SELECT 'CLICK TO SEE MORE MONTHS'

## WEEKLY EVENTS

### MONDAYS

**Drop-In Playgroup** for newborn to 3 years of age, 9:00 am. Info: 613-798-9818, ext. 263.

### TUESDAYS

**Israeli Folkdancing:** Learn contemporary Israeli dances. No partner required. 6:30 pm - Introductory Steps; 7 pm - Beginners and Requests; 8:30 pm - Intermediate and Advanced Requests. Ottawa Jewish Community School Gymnasium, 31 Nadolny Sachs Private. Info: 613-256-6272.

### FRIDAYS

**Shabbat Drop-in:** After playtime, recite blessings, sing songs, and enjoy a snack of challah and juice, 9:30 am. Info: 613-798-9818, ext. 263.

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

**Birthright Israel:** Registration opens for returning applicants with an existing username, 12 pm. Info: [www.israelforfree.com](http://www.israelforfree.com) or Noah Borer 613-236-2345, ext 2 or [studentlife@hillelottawa.ca](mailto:studentlife@hillelottawa.ca)

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

**Birthright Israel:** Registration opens for new applicants to this free 10-day trip of a lifetime to Israel for young Jewish people, 10 am.

Info: [www.israelforfree.com](http://www.israelforfree.com) or Noah Borer 613-236-2345, ext 2 or [studentlife@hillelottawa.ca](mailto:studentlife@hillelottawa.ca)

**OJCS Parlour and Parent Meetings - High School:** Parents are invited to learn about the school, at the home of Ned Steinman and Golda Feig-Steinman, 1 Aldridge Way at 7 pm. Info: [sl.levine@theojcs.ca](mailto:sl.levine@theojcs.ca)

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

**ConnectOTT:** Young professionals across various industries participate in this unique networking experience, rotating tables during a Kosher meal with peers and community leaders. Fairmount Château Laurier, 1 Rideau Street, 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Tickets: [www.connectott.com](http://www.connectott.com)

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

**Kabbalat Shabbat and Dinner:** services include song, mediation and learning. Everyone is welcome! Song sheets provided. Dairy vegetarian potluck afterward. The Glebe Minyan, 91A Fourth Avenue, 6 to 9 pm. Info: 613-867-5505, [glebeminyan@gmail.com](mailto:glebeminyan@gmail.com)

### SUNDAY, MARCH 2

**Machzikei Movie Night:** *Ever Again*, narrated by Kevin Costner. Admission Free, donations for the Kosher Food Bank welcomed. Congregation Machzikei Hadas, 2310 Virginia Drive, 7 pm. Info: 613-521-9700

## COMING SOON

### SUNDAY, MARCH 9

**PurimPalooza**, hosted by PJ Library and OJCS. Activities, songs, Megillah reading, treats and more. Ottawa Jewish Community School, 31 Nadolny Sach Private, 10 to 11:30 am. Info: 613-722-0020, [andrea.black@theojcs.ca](mailto:andrea.black@theojcs.ca), <http://www.theojcs.ca>

**"Schmaltz A Greased Purim,"** SJCC Purim shpiel directed by Pierre Brault, 7 to 9 pm. Info: 613-7989818, ext. 254

### TUESDAY, MARCH 11

**Ottawa Jewish Community School Open House,** 31 Nadolny Sachs Private, 9 to 11 am. Info: Sara-Lynne Levine, 613-722-0020, [sl.levine@theojcs.ca](mailto:sl.levine@theojcs.ca)

### SUNDAY, MARCH 16

**Agudath Israel Purim Carnival:** Join us for our annual Purim Carnival, featuring fun games, activities and prizes for the entire family, Agudath Israel Congregation, 1400 Coldrey Avenue, 3 to 5 pm. Info: 613-728-3501

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE AT THE JOSEPH AND ROSE AGES FAMILY BUILDING, 21 NADOLNY SACHS PRIVATE

## Early Deadlines

\* March 12 is an early deadline for the April 7 community-wide Ottawa Jewish Bulletin.

\*\* April 2 is an early deadline for the April 23 Ottawa Jewish Bulletin because of Passover closures.

## CONDOLENCES

Condolences are extended to the family of:

Jack Goodman, Winnipeg (father of Diane Arkin)

May his memory be a blessing always.

The Condolence Column is offered as a public service to the community. There is no charge.

For listing in this column, please call 613 798-4696, etc. 274. Voice mail is available.

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