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What does 'inclusion' mean for Jews?

Harvey Goldberg, a retired senior policy analyst at the Canadian Human Rights Commission, provides an overview on February's Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) in Ottawa.

Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) is a long title for the simple idea that inclusion matters, and that our community is stronger when everyone has a chance to participate and contribute. JDAIM is a time to reflect on the barriers, social, attitudinal and physical, that make it difficult for people with disabilities and mental health conditions to be involved in Jewish life and a time to resolve to remove them.

So what does inclusion mean for Jews? A quote from the Talmud sums it up well:

A human being mints many coins from the same mold and each one is the same, but the Holy One, blessed be God, strikes us all from the mold of the first human and each one of us is unique. Therefore, every single person is obligated to say, "The world was created for my sake." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5).

We are all – people with disabilities and those who do not yet have a disability – created in the image of the Holy One.

Unfortunately, inclusion has not always been high on the Jewish communal agenda. Whether it be a raised bimah that makes it impossible for a

person who uses a wheelchair to have an aliya, a Jewish school or camp that will not accommodate a child who learns differently, or a concern that people with a mental health condition will "disrupt" a community program, people with disabilities face barriers to inclusion every day.

But change is happening. A community-wide conference held last April, "Pushing the Boundaries: Disability, Inclusion and the Ottawa Jewish Community" provided the momentum. The goal of the conference – co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, Jewish Family Services of Ottawa (JFS), the Jewish Ottawa Inclusion Network (JOIN) and Tamir – was to educate about the barriers faced by people with disabilities, present best practices that foster inclusion, and help to inspire innovation in the Jewish community.

And the push has paid off. The sponsors of the conference have continued to meet, and with the facilitation of Federation, have agreed to create the Committee on Inclusive Jewish Life (CIJL) with a mandate to promote inclusion for all members of our community. The committee's invitation to other institu-



HOWARD SANDLER

Folksinger Craig Cardiff and choir director Deborah Davis lead the Tamir Neshama Choir in singing Cardiff's song, "Safe Here," during Tamir's Stepping Out in Style 2.0 fashion show, November 4, 2019 at the Canadian Museum of History.

For more on JDAIM, see articles and columns on pages 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14 and 16.

tions in the community to participate in the committee's work has been warmly received. If your synagogue, school, or agency has not yet joined in, make sure they do.

Jewish communities in Montreal, Toronto and several U.S. cities have dedicated Jewish staff professionals to

support volunteers in promoting and advancing the inclusion agenda. One of the first priorities of the CIJL is to lay the groundwork for hiring an inclusion specialist for Ottawa.

- More immediately, exciting activities have been planned to mark JDAIM in Ottawa. Throughout February, watch the Facebook feeds of Tamir, JOIN, JFS and Federation to see videos of community members explaining

See JDAIM on page 8

inside:

International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Ottawa > p. 2

Limmud Ottawa 2020 to offer speakers from near and far > p. 16

Key points of Trump's peace plan, explained > p. 20



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It is easy for memories to fade into nothing

Holocaust survivor **Pinchas Gutter** gave moving testimony at Ottawa's International Holocaust Remembrance Day program. **Dana Simpson** reports.

In 2005, the United Nations designated the anniversary of the January 27, 1945 liberation of Auschwitz, the Nazis' largest death camp, as the annual International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In Ottawa, about 300 people gathered at Library and Archives Canada, January 27, to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz at an event organized by Library and Archives Canada, the Centre for Jewish and International Affairs (CIJA), the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, and the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship at Carleton University.

The keynote speaker was Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter. His story spanned 88 years, eight countries, countless untimely deaths, and one concentration camp bar mitzvah.

Recalling his boyhood as the Second World War broke out, Gutter told a story of living in the Warsaw ghetto before he was deported to the Majdanek death camp in 1943.

"By the end of 1941, the ghetto could only be described as an apocalyptic hell," said Gutter.

But he distinctly remembers one moment of pleasure in which, while running through the open, nearly destroyed buildings of the ghetto, he found a book. This book had no cover, but at the top of one of the pages was the name "Scarlett O'Hara."

"I read it avidly over and over again," said Gutter. "It was only after the war when I saw a movie that I learned the book I had read was *Gone with the Wind*. Much later, the irony struck me. My world and much else had gone with the wind."

This memory would set the tone for the rest of



Attendees at the International Holocaust Remembrance Day program, Jan. 27, at Library and Archives Canada, participate in the #WeRemember social media campaign.

the evening.

In 1943, the Gutters were deported to Majdanek, where all except for Pinchas were murdered upon arrival.

Choked up with emotion, Gutter reminded the audience how easy it is for memories to fade into nothing.

"For some reason my brain has shut out all memory of my sister," said Gutter of his twin, Sabina, whose long blond hair was tied back the day she was murdered. "And I can't remember anything except that braid. That's all I remember."

After avoiding constant selections and escaping his would-be death with the help of an ally, Gutter was liberated by the Soviet army on May 8, 1945.

For 60 years, Gutter shared very little of his story. But since 2005, he has taken part in the March of the Living multiple times, given speeches, and was the subject of a film, "The Last Goodbye," which was dedicated to the memory of his twin sister.

He has also offered his form and memory to a hologram so that he will continue to teach as a witness to the Holocaust after his passing. Gutter says it is important for people to learn directly from witnesses but notes "the survivors will not live forever."

He hopes that technology will be the way to maintain the personal connection to the past and continue to educate everyone about the Holocaust for even longer than humanly possible.

"If the Holocaust is to have any positive value at all, it's in its role of Holocaust education," said Gutter. "If you and I draw value from the lessons of the Holocaust, that's one of the best means of defence, I believe, against the difficult, often dangerous world that we are living in at the moment."

Gutter ended his presentation saying, "Regardless of the difficulties, we must never cease to attempt to restore the world to a better health and try to light the path to a better future."

During his opening remarks, Robert McIntosh, director general (Archives) at Library and Archives



Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter tells his story at the International Holocaust Remembrance Day program, Jan. 27, at Library and Archives Canada.

Canada, said that acknowledging and remembering the Holocaust is crucial to the future.

"We believe that preserving the memory of and educating about the Holocaust is essential to the mission of 'Never Again,'" said McIntosh. "Only by learning from past human travesties can we expect to develop as a free and democratic society."

In his closing remarks, Martin Sampson, vice-president (communications) of CIJA, echoed that sentiment.

"One of the things that links us is the deeply held belief that antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem," said Sampson. "Antisemitism infects and destroys societies... [and] we have to fight it at every opportunity."

As the event ended, attendees stood together to participate in the International Holocaust Remembrance Day social media campaign and held up signs with the hashtag #WeRemember.

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The National Holocaust Monument was defaced with thrown eggs on January 29. The incident occurred just two days after International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Ottawa Police were called to the scene and are investigating the incident as a hate crime.

Ottawa Police reinstates Hate Crimes Section

BY MICHAEL REGENSTREIF
EDITOR

In an announcement January 23, the Ottawa Police Service announced the reintroduction of its Hate Crimes Section.

The reintroduction of dedicated hate crimes officers is one of several changes to Ottawa Police Services that have been announced since Chief Peter Sloy was sworn in last October 28.

“We are very pleased that the Ottawa Police Service is reinstating a specialized Hate Crimes Section. Specially designated units and sections ensure that hate-motivated crimes are investigated by officers equipped with the knowledge, experience, and resources necessary to address such incidents,” said Jewish Federation of Ottawa President and CEO Andrea Freedman in response to the announcement.

“Sarah Caspi, CEO of Jewish Family Services of Ottawa, and I had the opportunity to meet with Chief Sloy and his senior leadership, along with leaders from other at-risk communities as the new policies were brought forward,” added Freedman. “These are critically important measures that Ottawa Police Services is taking and it is clear, that under Chief Sloy, OPS is deeply committed to combatting hatred, in all forms in our nation’s capital. While the rise in antisemitism is deeply disturbing, the Jewish community has a real partner in the OPS.”

“As a result of community and stakeholder feedback, we’re adding two new Hate Crime investigators to the Security Intelligence Section to help identify trends and community safety concerns,” said Sloy. “We re-evaluated how we accepted hate-motivated incidents from the public and we know that responding

to incidents of hate will have a far-reaching impact on the well-being of our communities... We know that hate-motivated crimes are often under-reported. We want people to know that we take such incidents seriously and we are here to help.”

According to the announcement, “Officers in the Hate Crime Section will monitor and triage all incoming reports to ensure a timely, consistent and effective response to all hate-motivated incidents in the city. The section will focus on the prevention of hate-motivated incidents through public education, outreach, and the development of intelligence to address extremism. It partners with the province’s Community Safety and Well-Being plan, and includes sharing of information with other police services in the Nation’s Capital.”

The importance of the Hate Crimes Section was underscored in the days after the announcement when the National Holocaust Monument was defaced with thrown eggs on January 29 and an Indigenous art piece at Algonquin College was defaced with yellow paint on January 30. Police are investigating both incidents as hate crimes.

“The bolstering of hate crime units has long been an advocacy priority for both CIJA [Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs] and Federation, and we commend the Ottawa Police Service for taking this important step. We will continue to encourage other jurisdictions to follow in Ottawa’s lead, and establish hate crime sections in their cities and municipalities,” said CIJA Vice-President (Communications) Martin Sampson.

According to Ottawa Police Services, there were 110 reports of hate crime in the city in 2019, an increase from 104 in 2018 and 95 in 2017.



OTTAWA JEWISH
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Calling all artists! We’re looking for new card designs!

The Jewish calendar is filled with a rich variety of holidays. From upcoming Purim in March and Passover in April, there are always reasons and occasions to send a Tribute card.

To help us celebrate these holidays and all of life’s moments, the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation is looking for new card designs and we would love your input!

Please send us your original artwork and help us design brand new cards!

All cards will be printed on recycled paper. Designs should be submitted in a high-resolution image, suitable to be printed on 5” x 7” cards.

Explicitly Jewish imagery is not required, but is an asset. Consider images suitable for celebrations, sympathy, encouragement, wishes for good health, as well as Jewish holidays.

For more details visit our website, or email Nathaniel at nfinestone@jewishottawa.com.

All chosen designs will carry the artist’s name and will be featured on our website, on social media and will be published in the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin.



Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

Lessons on how we should treat people with disabilities begin in Bible, expert explains

Ora Horn Prouser, who speaks at the SJCC on February 20, says the Bible has much to teach us about disabilities and inclusivity. Louise Rachlis reports.



Ora Horn Prouser is academic dean of the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York.

While we sometimes see the issue of disability as “being of today,” says Ora Horn Prouser, “it has been important for millennia.”

Horn Prouser, CEO and academic dean of the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, N.Y., is keynote speaker at “Limping Toward the Promised Land: How the Bible Pioneers Inclusion,” a Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month event taking place Thursday, February 20, 7 pm, at the Soloway Jewish Community Centre (SJCC).

She is the author of *Esau's Blessing: How the Bible embraces those with Special Needs*, as well as many articles about making the Bible speak to existential concerns, specifically regarding ethical dilemmas and individual growth.

The event is presented by Tamir and co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation

of Ottawa, JOIN (Jewish Ottawa Inclusion Network), Jewish Family Services of Ottawa and Kehillat Beth Israel.

Horn Prouser told the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin that her interest in the topic was piqued when her family was young.

“I was very involved in my children’s schooling, at the day school in our area, where it was very clear to me that the children, even with minor disabilities, were not receiving the services that were needed,” she said.

She began doing a lot of reading about disabilities like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition in which a person has trouble pay-

ing attention and focusing on tasks, and has trouble sitting still.

“I went to a lecture where the speaker said Esau was ‘impulsive.’ I leaned over and said ‘Ha, Esau had ADHD.’ I put it together. I really was joking at the time, but I loved that lecture and was thinking about the topic. I realized that right there in the biblical text, the personality type has always been there.”

Horn Prouser did further study, looking for other references in the Bible to people differently involved. Disability studies was still relatively new, she said, and not a lot of information was available.

“Once I started, it was very enlightening both from a scholarly point of view, and then regarding the contemporary Jewish community, and what our responsibilities are. It impacts on our communal priorities in terms of serving all communities.”

Horn Prouser served as adjunct faculty at the Jewish Theological Seminary for 20 years and has consulted on the development of Bible curriculum through the Matok Torah Curriculum Development Project and the Day School Hebrew Bible Curriculum Project.

In *Esau's Blessing*, Horn Prouser looks at Biblical characters who exhibit signs of ADHD, depression, intellectual disabilities, speech impediments, gifted learning, and physical disabilities, and discusses how the Bible can guide us in

responding with acceptance and compassion.

Horn Prouser plans to begin her address in Ottawa by providing an understanding of disabilities in the Bible and then move into “our responsibility to the full contemporary Jewish community.”

“The text contains a fair number of characters with a number of disabilities. It really enhances and widens our understanding of what it means to be in God’s image in a beautiful way,” she said.

“For example, Jacob the Patriarch was physically disabled after an altercation and had a limp. When we study these texts in general, people will think Moshe had a speech issue – but he had it his whole life. How did it impact the rest of his life? Jacob continued to have that limp. We forget that these characters are full individuals.”

She hopes to make her Ottawa audience “really feel that inclusivity is deeply Jewish, and to be really proud of our ancient text... I hope it will make people go back and look at the Biblical text they know and are already comfortable with, and find new things.”

Tickets for “Limping Toward the Promised Land: How the Bible Pioneers Inclusion” with Ora Horn Prouser are \$18 and available at www.tamir.ca or by contacting Jodi Green at jodigreen@tamir.ca or 613-725-3519, ext. 115.

Inclusion is about connections

Tamir mission statement: “Tamir is a proud and caring team of participants, families, volunteers and professionals dedicated to assisting people with developmental disabilities realize their potential in a supportive Jewish environment through opportunities for personal growth and community involvement.”

**BY JODI GREEN
TAMIR COORDINATOR OF
JUDAIC OUTREACH AND INCLUSION**

Twice annually, the National Consortium on Developmental Disabilities holds its Leadership Institute at the University of Delaware. The Consortium is a partnership of 17 national developmental disabilities organizations and is the North American centre for research and leadership training for professionals in the field. This year, I was privileged to be the third Tamir representative in recent years to attend the Institute alongside 28 professionals from across North America.

During the week-long conference, participants learn about trends in the field, examine how they may become better leaders and network, all with the backdrop of improving the lives of the people we support.

A major theme of the conference was community inclusion. All week I was thinking about ways Tamir and our Ottawa community might work together better to improve inclusion. What policies and practices could be designed to identify and remove physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers that hamper the ability of people with developmental and other disabilities to fully participate and experience a deep sense of belonging and attachment to Jewish life?

Lee Waxman is one of the three original residents of Tamir. He has been a member of Agudath Israel, now Kehillat Beth Israel, for 35 years. He is a regular at Shabbat services and cherishes Saturday mornings with the congregation. However, one thing was missing. While

he has the whole service memorized, he could not read Hebrew. Recently, he asked for help to learn.

Through community connections, a teacher was found for Lee and classes began last October. Since then, his Hebrew skills have greatly improved, but what’s more special is that he and the teacher have formed a friendship.

“I recently started teaching Hebrew to Lee and it has been one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever had in my life. We have had some very interesting conversations on halachah and other topics pertaining to the Jewish holidays. I look forward to seeing Lee weekly and spending this special time,” said Marian Leimovici.

Lee’s new learning experience, and their new friendship, came about through community connections, community partnership. It was a meeting with an executive director that led to a meeting with a rabbi that led to identifying the Hebrew teacher.

See Tamir on page 14



Hebrew teacher Marian Leimovici says friendship with her student, Tamir participant Lee Waxman, is “one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever had in my life.”

Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

'Inclusion enthusiasts' JOIN together to create positive change

"The purpose of JOIN is to create a network of mutual support for families dealing with the joys and challenges of raising exceptional children," says Rabbi Deborah Zuker.

BY LOUISE RACHLIS

When Madelaine Hill Werier once went to sign up her special needs child to participate in a general program, she recalls being told, "We don't do that here." Fortunately, such negative experiences are not often the case.

"I have experienced some great examples of inclusion for my kids within the community," said Hill Werier, a co-founder of the Jewish Ottawa Inclusion Network (JOIN). "I feel embraced and welcomed by my synagogue, our schools, and camps. It's not always that way, however, and it never fails to shock me when exclusion or discrimination does occur."

JOIN is collaborating with the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, Tamir, Jewish Family Services of Ottawa and Kehillat Beth Israel to sponsor Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month in the city.

Hill Werier says that although those negative moments "temporarily stun and sting," they also "inspire and drive us to put the daily hours into our JOIN endeavours. Being there for other families when they have those moments is another rewarding part of this work."

Hill Werier, Rabbi Deborah Zuker and Ruchama Uzan, all mothers of special needs children, founded JOIN in December 2017.

The self-described "inclusion enthusiasts" created JOIN to advocate, network and develop programs for the inclusion of children with diverse abilities in Ottawa's Jewish community.

"We all had children who attended Ganon Preschool at the Soloway Jewish Community Centre and knew each other," said Hill Werier. "Rabbi Zuker and I have children with similar issues and noticed there was an opportunity to fill a gap in our community. Ru seemed like a good third person and she was very enthusiastic."

Rabbi Zuker, associate rabbi at Kehillat Beth Israel, has two children, Uzan has four and Hill Werier has two. The busy mothers took a bit of time to figure out what would be most "impactful" and the best use of their time.

"We all have different professional experience," said Hill Werier. "We're not social workers or psychologists, we're parents. The best way for us to be useful is to connect people to other people, and to be a constant and positive advocate for inclusion whenever our energy



(From left) Ruchama Uzan, Madeleine Hill Werier and Rabbi Deborah Zuker founded JOIN to advocate for the inclusion of special needs children in Jewish community life.

and schedules allow."

"The purpose of JOIN is to create a network of mutual support for families dealing with the joys and challenges of raising exceptional children," said Rabbi Zuker. "Too often we come up against roadblocks for our children and can feel quite alone. Knowing others who have been there before, and who have insight to share, builds power and makes us each better parents and advocates. Our children belong in our shared Jewish spaces as much as any children do, and those spaces – not the children – can make this happen by committing to deep principles of inclusion."

"JOIN also seeks to raise the profile of disability inclusion for people of all ages in our Ottawa Jewish community," said Rabbi Zuker. "We have seen that while most have good intentions, there is too much 'old thinking' about what is possible, who belongs, and how to make that happen."

"Our kids inspired us to do this, but our work doesn't have to always be about our own individual children," explained Hill Werier. "We've all had experiences, positive and negative, that have lit the fires for advocacy and volunteer work."

"We have had to advocate for inclusive placements for our son in both public school and private schools," said Uzan, owner of A Dashing Pinch, a kosher caterer. "We have advocated for camp and extracurricular activities. JOIN has helped as a place for support through the processes. A place where it is OK to not be OK with the status quo. Where ideas are shared in a proactive and supportive way."

While Uzan says JOIN's advocacy has

had productive outcomes, there is still "a long road ahead to take the advocacy from basic permission to systems and institutions inviting and welcoming our kids and families."

JOIN has held several workshops –

including "Disability Rights 101" with Harvey Goldberg, which was held January 30 at Jewish Family Services of Ottawa. Among the attendees at their workshops are parents, teachers and educators from the community, as well as therapists and others both inside and outside the Jewish community.

They have also arranged social events that included children of all abilities and participated in events like Mitzvah Day where their "Sensory Squad" provided sensory break stations at busy community children's events, and community education about sensory sensitivities. The quiet area lets kids regroup and then return to the activities.

JOIN has a Facebook page and is in the process of forming a board of directors.

"Experiencing discrimination or exclusion in a faith community, especially concerning one's child, is profoundly hurtful and devastating," said Hill Werier. "Using our shared lived experience and engaging other families in our community, we are creating positive change in our community. It's a gradual shift but it is happening. JOIN has participated in some wonderful collaborations and is continuing to find community partners who share our desire for inclusion. It is a beautiful thing."



Limping Toward the Promised Land: How the Bible Pioneers Inclusion

JOIN TAMIR'S JDAIM INITIATIVE!

"Thinking about some biblical characters as individuals with disabilities has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in the Jewish world."

- Dr. Ora Horn Prouser

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FEDERATION
REPORT



**MICHAEL POLOWIN, CHAIR,
JEWISH FEDERATION OF OTTAWA**

‘Inclusion is not an end – it leads to belonging’

recognizes and embraces the need to embrace all of our people. We are striving to create a welcoming and inclusive community for all people. Here’s some of what that means:

We all have the right to choose our own Jewish journey. Sometimes that journey will be harder, as people work to deal with their personal situations. We recognize that, and we will continue to strive to make it easier, even though that will be an evolution, not a revolution.

We encourage empathy and a welcoming spirit, while urging all Jews to welcome people with disabilities and mental health conditions into their communities and personal lives. We will include people with disabilities and mental health conditions in all aspects of communal life.

Federation will advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and mental health conditions, and support them in making their own decisions about how

they want to belong to their Jewish community. Having a disability or mental health condition must never be used as a reason to exclude someone from meaningful participation and contribution to this wonderful place we call “The Jewish Community.” Everyone has gifts to share as well as needs for comfort and community.

How have we done this already? Federation was a major sponsor of the wonderful “Pushing the Boundaries: Disability, Inclusion in the Jewish Community” conference. We are partners with the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) in its efforts to advocate for people with disabilities and mental health conditions. That was a salient part of the questions posed by Federation and CIJA of the political parties in our last federal election. We support Tamir financially, and support their efforts to better the lives of their members. Personally, it was a great joy to participate in Tamir’s fash-

ion show in November.

In that respect, we do not do things for people with disabilities or mental health conditions. We do things with people with disabilities and mental health conditions. JDAIM is a time to teach our organizations that inclusion is simply treating people as individuals, not as a group of “those” people whose needs can be met through special programs or occasional visits to synagogues. Just like you, people with disabilities can and must make decisions about how they participate in Jewish life.

Inclusion is not an end. It leads to belonging.

Recognizing Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month is only the first step. What you, your friends or organization does in the next 11 months will determine your commitment to ensuring that all people feel that they belong.

Belonging to our community has always been important to me. I trust that it is for you. Those confronting disabilities or mental health conditions are no different. They aren’t “just like” you and me. They are you and me.

We were all at Mount Sinai. Our traditions hold that at the time of receiving the Torah from Hashem, all Jews, past, present and future, were there to receive it. Those confronting disabilities or mental health conditions were there with all of us.

February is Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM). It is a month where we recognize that all of our people are, our people. The Jewish Federation of Ottawa

FROM THE
PULPIT



**RABBI ELIZABETH BOLTON,
OR HANESHAMAH**

Parshat Yitro – Our most central defining moment

river and brings him up. The second is his wife Tzipporah, daughter of the Midianite priest Yitro, whose name identifies the parshah in which the Torah is given. There is rich meaning to be derived from this name heading the parshah, chapters and verses of the most central defining moment of Jewish peoplehood.

“Yitros” and “Tzipporahs” abide in our communities, our families, our synagogues and chavurot. Though their origins are in other tribes, they bring up Jewish children, marry Jewish partners, and live lives that are deeply impacted by Jewish life cycles and year cycles. Some chose to stay affiliated with their own tribes, some formally convert, yet all are living some form of the pledge offered by Ruth, who declares to her mother-in-law: “Wherever you go, I will go. Your people will be my people.”

At the core of these experiences and the layers in our peoples’ narrative is the notion that folks from varied tribes can walk a common path, one of integrity, sacred experiences and shared humanity.

Contemporary Jewish life is complex and nuanced. Terms like interfaith, concepts like conversion, or Jew-by-choice, or families-formed-by-adoption do not do justice to the layers of experiences in our families’ lives.

Think back to Moshe, who was

adopted at a very young age into a different culture, and whose closest sibling during his childhood years was not Aaron but the son of the Pharaoh, who was enslaving his people of origin. Looking at our biblical narrative in this way helps us see more fully the impact many of our own community’s children and parents, in the fullness of their stories.

Jayne K. Guberman and Jennifer Sartori, founders of the Adoption and Jewish Identity Project put it this way:

“The biblical narrative in fact recounts a very complicated adoption story. With its traumatic passages back and forth, from one mother and one identity to another, this foundational story of the Jewish people may resonate in complex ways with all members of the adoption triad: adoptees, their adoptive families, and their birth families... In an age of increasing Jewish diversity and boundary-crossing, reading the story of Moses through an adoption lens may lend richness to our understanding of this foundational text and a more nuanced sense of the source of his greatness.”

Nuance and complexity. Diversity and boundary-crossing. This is part of our origin story as well as the contemporary Jewish story, and the Jewish future. Our people are enriched by the Yitros and Tzipporahs in our lives.

The book of Exodus contains many familiar stories, ones that come with enduring iconic imagery: the Hebrew baby, who would become the great leader, floating in a basket on the river Nile; Moses slaying a cruel taskmaster who is beating a fellow Hebrew; the shepherd Moshe, awed by the bush on fire, called by the Divine voice to free his people back in Mitzrayim; the river divided for the Israelites to escape on dry land; and the most magnificent gift of Torah, with the people assembled at the base of Mount Sinai.

Woven through these stories are also the stories of the women and men in Moshe’s life who come from other tribes. While his mother Yocheved and sister Miriam clearly had the foresight, and the plan, for saving the newborn boy’s life, figures from other tribes play critical roles in his life’s journey.

The first is Pharaoh’s daughter, who plucks the baby in the basket from the

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FROM THE EDITOR



MICHAEL REGENSTREIF

Israel's election and Trump's peace plan

premiership or a third Israeli election in less than a year.

Attempts to form a unity government failed. Blue and White insisted that it would not form a unity government with Likud under Netanyahu as long as Netanyahu faced the possibility of criminal charges in several corruption cases. They would have been open to an agreement with Likud if the prime minister stepped aside, at least until he was cleared of criminal wrongdoing. Netanyahu, for his part, refused to accommodate the demand.

So Israelis will go to the polls on March 2 for the third time in less than a year – and the country remains under a Netanyahu caretaker government with a limited mandate to act in many areas.

Polls taken in late January once again suggest a stalemate similar to the previous two elections (assuming that Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Liberman once again refuses to support anything but a unity government).

The situation with Netanyahu's indictments came to a head last month. The prime minister had been trying to engineer a vote in the Knesset that would have given him immunity from prosecution while still in office. On Jan-

uary 28, with it obvious that a majority of the Knesset would not support him, Netanyahu withdrew the immunity request and Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit immediately filed charges of fraud, breach of trust and bribery against Netanyahu.

The charges were filed as Netanyahu was in Washington for U.S. President Donald Trump's unveiling of what he'd promoted for three years as the "Deal of the Century" for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Although embraced enthusiastically by Netanyahu, the Palestinians, who did not participate in its drafting, have rejected the plan.

Here in Canada, Foreign Affairs Minister François-Philippe Champagne released a statement that Canada "will carefully examine the details of the U.S. initiative for the Middle East peace process," but reiterated, "Canada has long maintained that peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties. We urge the parties to create the conditions for such negotiations to take place."

However, it is very interesting to note that ambassadors from three small Arab countries – Bahrain, United

Arab Emirates and Oman – attended the White House event unveiling that plan. I would agree with analysts who suggest their attendance signals that the Palestinian issue has become less important to them than threats from Iran. Opposition to Iranian hegemony in the Middle East has opened the door to improved relations between Israel and parts of the Arab world.

The timing of the plan's release was telling. It came on a day when Trump was on trial in the U.S. Senate for impeachment from office for abuse of power, and Netanyahu, due to face voters five weeks later, was charged with criminal offences that, if he is convicted, could lead to a prison term. It's hard not to see the timing as an attempt to change the conversations in both the United States and Israel – and, to some extent, it did, at least briefly.

I don't expect anything to change very soon based on the Trump plan. First, there needs to be an Israeli government with a real mandate to govern. And while it's a foregone conclusion that Trump won't be removed from office after his Senate trial, he may or may not be in office a year from now following the U.S. election in November.

It's been three months since I last wrote about the political situation in Israel. In my November 11 column, I noted that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader, had failed to form a governing coalition in the weeks after the September 17 election – Israel's second inconclusive election of 2019. The mandate to attempt to form a government had passed to Blue and White Party leader Benny Gantz.

"It is unlikely that Gantz will be any more successful than Netanyahu in putting together a coalition that commands at least 61 of the Knesset's 120 seats," I predicted, noting two possibilities: a unity government alternating the

IDEAS AND IMPRESSIONS



JASON MOSCOVITZ

Trump will stop at nothing to win

up never believing it possible that such a flawed individual would be the most powerful person in the world.

There are those who like Trump's "America first" politics, his support of Israel, and there is no denying how employment and American stock exchange numbers have improved since he became president. But, as Shakespeare wrote, it still smells "rotten in the state of Denmark," no matter how you cut it.

Trump's behaviour led to the impeachment process – even though the Republican majority in the U.S. Senate would never vote to remove Trump from office. While Democrats argued impeachment was about protecting the constitution, Republicans maintained it was about protecting the presidency from unhinged partisanship, and so went the straight-laced politics.

While experts and pollsters will sway back and forth on who won the impeachment bunfight, the impeachment cannons on both sides are loaded and ready to fire with the primaries, the nominating conventions, and the presidential election now just days, weeks and months away.

The key question for many is whether Trump can win again. For many outsiders around the world, like us looking in, it is hard to imagine Trump winning

again. However, hold on, anything is possible in America.

The Democratic candidates for president who are still standing represent a political party in disarray as the Democrats seem to sorely lack the necessary policy cohesion and discipline to move forward. The candidates offering to go to war against Trump in November appear weak, or at least, no one has yet been able to stand up and lead from a position of strength.

I've nothing against old people – I'm one of them – but former vice-president Joe Biden is past his best-before date. Senator Elizabeth Warren may have had it, but then blew it when she couldn't gravitate to the centre. Mayor Pete Buttigieg is an intelligent, interesting newcomer, but the question remains, is a gay president even possible in today's United States of America? Senator Bernie Sanders is further left than Warren. Senator Amy Klobuchar shines in that crowd, but can she shine throughout the country in sufficient numbers to win the presidency?

Democratic Party candidates are just not impressive and it makes you wonder how Hillary Clinton must feel about that. What a story it would be, if, because they couldn't do better, Democrats drafted Hillary Clinton or dragged

her into another battle with the same Trump she was once friends with until he savagely nicknamed her "Crooked Hillary" and then went on to beat her in the states that counted the most in the 2016 election.

What a rematch that would be, another battle of titans Trump and Clinton. It would be electrifying entertainment, but it would also do something positive and concrete. Somehow it would be good to know if Trump was a fluke in 2016 because a whole bunch of bad things happened to poor Clinton – when bad luck, bad judgement, and a bad campaign cost her the presidency.

Trump beat her in the Electoral College. He did it by belittling his opponent. When Trump threw dirt all over Clinton, he proved how far his killer instinct could bring him in politics. History will remember that Trump bullied his way to the presidency in 2016.

Post-impeachment, Trump appears to be ready to bully some other Democrat this year. We now know this man, this president, stops at nothing. There is a scary side to Trump that goes beyond him.

And what is actually scarier than Trump are the thousands of crazed, angry Americans who egg him on at his rallies.

While the world watched the impeachment trial of U.S. President Donald J. Trump, you had to wonder if Mad magazine mascot Alfred E. Neuman had it right when he'd say, through that sizable gap in his front teeth, "What, me worry?"

I can imagine Trump's face on Mad having the same impact as Alfred E. Neuman. The look is the same. A satirical idiot is still an idiot and, guess what, Trump has graced the front cover of recent editions of Mad. Actually I had no idea Mad was still around until I Googled it.

How could baby boomers know one day that someone just like Alfred E. Neuman would be occupying the Oval Office? For me, that's the tragedy. I grew



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– Barbara Sherman



Madelaine Werier and her son Sam.

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AUSCHWITZ

I did a wanderjahre [year of travel] in 1975-76 with my good friend Neil Blacher. This was before the Iron Curtain fell, and Poland was on our list. We took a city tour of Warsaw, and were amazed by the tour guide’s reference to Poland’s Jewish problem. This was clearly a script she was following – and several people on the tour were astonished to the insensitive way the history was being recounted. While much effort had been made to rebuild Warsaw, the one shul that was left was a train wreck of broken windows and mortar – filled by 30-40 survivors on a Saturday morning. We even managed to attend a Yiddish performance of “The Dybbuk” performed by well-meaning Poles who had learned the lines.

Neil and I were determined to go to Auschwitz, even though our Orbis tour guide did his best to dissuade us from doing so. We made our way by train and bus to the town – and had to hitchhike to the site. I still laugh at the irony of two young Jews, hitching a ride to Auschwitz.

When we got there, there was nothing to welcome us. There were no admission charges, no lineups, no guides, no cafeteria; it was barren, save for a few administrative buildings, the barracks and the famous Arbeit Macht Frei gate. We conducted our own tour. As 23 and 25-year-olds, we knew something about the Holocaust – but we were not prepared for large halls filled with shoes, and prosthetics, and the suitcases, each carefully hand-lettered with names and addresses that we knew had

vanished years ago. And you could smell the leather. It was numbing. We had no one to explain anything to us – as if one needed commentary.

We made our way through the barracks, and if memory serves me correctly, there was one basement station that housed ovens used for cremation.

We were looking for anything to reference the Jewish lives lost. There was no one to ask, and it seemed that we really were the only two people on site. We did find one small barrack, and through the window, we could see prayer shawls and tefillin. It was locked, but since there was no one around, we jimmied the door open and found a tiny treasure house full of Jewish artifacts.

There was no shuttle bus to Birkenau, and we had had enough. Neil and I hitched a ride back to the town and made our way to another Polish youth hostel for the evening. I never forgot that day.

My late mother-in-law was from Poland, and had told me that she could not even imagine Warsaw without Jews. Certainly the historical footage I have seen confirms her memories. My late father-in-law told me of the Yiddish newspapers and the “Herren Gonneem” column which let Jewish thieves negotiate their bounty with Jews wanting to reclaim their goods.

It is a world that is lost forever, but thankfully, we now have people in our community like Mina Cohn [of the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship] working to preserve its integrity and spirit for future generations.

Irv Osterer

JDAIM: ‘Change is happening’

Continued from page 1

- what inclusion means to them.
- Kids from kindergarten to Grade 12 have until the end of the month to participate in JOIN’s Youth Leadership Award Challenge by proposing ways of making the community more inclusive for people with disabilities. (Find JOIN on Facebook for more details.)
- On February 20-21, Tamir, in conjunction with Kehillat Beth Israel, JOIN, Jewish Family Services, Federation and the Soloway Jewish Community Center (SJCC) will be host the visit to Ottawa of Ora Horn Prouser, the academic dean at the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York and author of *Esau’s Blessing: How the Bible Embraces those with Special Needs*. The title of her talk to be held at the SJCC on February 20 is “Limp-

ing Toward the Promised Land: How the Bible Pioneers Inclusion.” An interview with Horn Prouser is page 4 of this edition of the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin. Visit www.tamir.ca to purchase tickets.

This year, 2020, is a particularly good time to focus on inclusion because it is the bat mitzvah year of the coming into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD ratified by Canada, Israel, and 179 other states, established in international human rights law the inherent right of all persons with disabilities to equality, autonomy, independence, respect and full inclusion in all aspects of life on the same basis of all other members of the human family.

People with disabilities ask for no more, they deserve no less. Together we can make it happen.



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Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

Anxiety and dystonia can be troubling for those with Parkinson's disease

BY DIANA RACHLIS

A shaking tremor in my left hand, my writing hand, was the catalyst for seeing the doctor and being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2009. I was 35 years old.

Parkinson's is a progressive disorder of the central nervous system that may lead to tremors, rigidity, slowness of movement, gait disorder and loss of balance. I also suffer from bouts of anxiety and am celiac.

Here is a typical day for me:

6 am: Within 15 minutes, my toes on both feet curl under, all the way under. OMG, it hurts. Then my feet cramp, twist and go on their side. If I needed to go anywhere, I'd use my wheelchair. I have a travel wheelchair that folds up and we take it on outings just in case. With very, very, painful foot cramping, you don't know how long it will last. Sometimes it seems that it won't end at all. The dystonia cramping can happen up to several times a day. I do my meditation and breathing to help me get through it.

7 am: I begin taking the pills I take every three hours throughout the day, and once during the night. My first medication is Levodopa for Parkinson's.

8 am: I take pills for stomach acid, vitamin B12, iron supplement, and magnesium.

When the dystonia stops in the morning, I go to the Y gym across the street at Carlingwood. I do weights three times a week, and a 30-minute walk or stationary bike when I can.

I have also been going to the Good Companions Centre on Albert Street for about three years now, even though I'm younger than most people there. For me the Good Companions is a safe and happy place both for people of any age with disabilities, as well as seniors. It has given me so much confidence, despite my anxiety.

10 am: I take my second Levodopa, my first calcium pill and Rocaltrol which helps bones absorb calcium, and the first of three anti-nausea pills.

1 pm: Another Levodopa.

4 pm: Another Levodopa, and another calcium and Rocaltrol.



Diana Rachlis says learning to cope with her Parkinson's disease symptoms has helped her to participate and feel included in community life.

7 pm: My antidepressant pill, and anti-anxiety pill as needed.

10 pm: My last Levodopa of the day.

Some days I need a nap, some days I don't.

One of the things that surprises people and is difficult to understand is the unpredictability of my symptoms, both physically and mentally.

For instance, when I was flying to the Dominican Republic on a family trip, my legs were so seized up from dystonia that the flight attendants had to carry me up the stairs to my seat.

It took two big strong men to lift me up in the wheel chair and onto the plane. As soon as I was in my seat, buckled in and feeling safe – POOF! – the dystonia was gone, just like that. When we landed, I was fine and walked off the plane. It must have been quite a show for anyone who saw how I was carried onto the plane and was walking on my own when I left. I have to deal with that kind of situation every day.

Anxiety also comes and goes, and so at the theatre, synagogue or a restaurant I like to sit on the aisle so I can leave quickly. I find I find I'm less anxious in the morning and at noon than at evening activities. I never had anxiety before but it is now a big part of Parkinson's and I now have pills that help.

One of the best things I do about the dystonia attacks I learned from Eric Peters, my yoga therapist. I learned how to relax and use yoga breathing to fight my worry and anxiety. What Eric taught me helps the episode end more quickly. Before Eric, I used to get panic attacks, fear of unexpected dystonia in unexpected places. He told me to take a picture in my mind of where I'm going to tell myself I'll be OK.

Over the years I've learned to cope with my symptoms. I now feel I belong and am included.

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How much can you contribute to an RRSP?

RRRSP contributions can lead to a nice surprise at tax time because they're deductible. But everything has its limits, including your RRSP.

It's little wonder why we Canadians love our registered retirement savings plans (RRSPs). Not only do they let us set aside money for retirement and allow the money to grow tax-free until it's withdrawn from the plan, but contributions can also lead to a nice surprise at tax time because they're deductible. In fact, for some of us, it's the one bright spot in an otherwise dreary season of receipt-wrangling.

Your RRSP contribution limit for 2019 is 18% of earned income you reported on your tax return in the previous year, up to a maximum of \$26,500. Sounds

simple, right? Well, not exactly. Robb Engen, co-author of the Boomer & Echo blog, says there are a few important things to keep in mind:

1. UNUSED RRSP CONTRIBUTION ROOM

If you haven't contributed the maximum in previous years, you could have unused contribution room to carry forward. This will bump up the amount you're allowed to contribute. No need to do the math. Each year, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) does it for you. Just check the handy-dandy notice of assessment it sent you last year after processing your tax return and you'll find it lists and adds in your unused RRSP room when calculating your RRSP deduction limit for the current year.

2. CONTRIBUTIONS TO A PENSION PLAN

If you're a member of a pension plan at work, then you have to subtract your "pension adjustment" (PA). Once again, the CRA does this for you on your notice of assessment. There's no need to worry about this the first year you join a pension plan, as your PA for a year reduces your RRSP deduction limit for the following year.

3. RRSP OVER-CONTRIBUTIONS

You're allowed to over-contribute up to \$2,000 to an RRSP. But if you go over that, you can be charged 1% per month on the excess amount. (Although, if you withdraw the extra funds right away and send a letter to the CRA explaining that it was a legitimate mistake, you may be able to obtain a waiver of the excess contribution tax.)



There's no question RRSPs are one of the best ways to save for your retirement. Just remember, everything has its limits, including your RRSP.

Submitted By Diane Koven, CFP, Sun Life Financial

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ADVERTORIAL

A tale of two investors

By now, most investors have seen commercials from discount brokers telling them to retire 30% wealthier by leaving their advisor to save on fees. Is it that easy? Passive investing may save investors a bundle on fees, but a more important question is: will it also provide a comfortable retirement?

To answer this question, let us look at a real-life example. After many years of contributing and compounding your money, you achieve a portfolio worth \$1 million. You would now like to withdraw \$50,000 a year and index that payout by 3% a year to keep up with inflation. Will passive investing in one of the best performing indices get the job done?

No, and here is why:

Let's look at two potential investors, Noah and Jacob, who have each invested in the S&P 500 index and paid fees of 0%. To see how they would do, we can back test their strategy by looking at the historic returns from the S&P 500.

Between the years 1989-2008, the S&P 500 averaged 10.36%. It also produced strong positive returns during the first few years of retirement. If Noah withdrew \$50,000, indexed at 3% inflation each year for 20 years, he would still have a balance of \$3,073,301 left at the end of year 20. However, if Jacob earned the same average annual return of 10.36%, but experienced the same historical

returns in reverse order, (i.e. year 20 becomes year 1 and year 19 becomes year 2 etc.) he would run out of money in year 19. Despite having the exact same investment strategy, and the same average rate of return, Noah and Jacob experienced vastly different outcomes due to the sequence of those returns.

While Noah was lucky enough to achieve strong double-digit returns early in his retirement, Jacob was not so lucky. When the returns were reversed, his portfolio produced stronger negative returns in the earlier years of his retirement, which changed his outcome. Do not leave your financial future up to fate. Hire a good financial advisor to structure your portfolio against the risks associated with the sequence of returns. This way you will

not be like Jacob who ran out of money. Advice matters and in this case, I advise you to consider the sequence of returns when preparing for retirement and making investment decisions.

To learn more about potential solutions on how to successfully navigate these and other financial matters, feel free to call Brian Aarenau BA MMS Financial Advisor with Raymond James. To book a complimentary consultation you can reach Brian at 613-369-4610.

Brian Aarenau is a financial advisor with Raymond James Ltd. The views of the author do not necessarily reflect those of Raymond James. This article is for information only. Raymond James Ltd. member of Canadian Investor Protection Fund.

ADVERTORIAL

Protect your mortgage with the right life insurance

If you're thinking about selling your current home this winter to upgrade to something a little bigger or better, it's important that you take time to consider how you will pay off your new mortgage if something unexpected happens to you.

While it's often tempting to opt for standard mortgage insurance, many people don't know that the right life insurance policy can offer this same protection alongside several additional benefits - including:

You name your own beneficiary. This means that, in the event something happens to you, your beneficiary can decide how the death benefit payment will be allotted. A typical mortgage insurance policy names the financial institution as the automatic beneficiary for the amount due.

You have more choice. When selecting your life insurance coverage limit, you can choose any amount subject to policy limits. Traditional mortgage insurance has fewer options in terms of both the amount of coverage you can choose and the length of the coverage period.

Your coverage does not decrease. Traditional mortgage insurance policies only offer a decreasing benefit for the length of the policy's term - so just enough to cover the remaining balance of the mortgage itself. A life insurance policy would provide you with the full value of the death benefit - regardless of what you still owe.

You can add additional coverage options. If you opt to protect your mortgage through a life insurance policy, you can take advantage of many additional coverage options. A disability waiver of premiums, for example, is a type of coverage that helps preserve your policy in the event your income is affected by an unexpected disability.

Buying a home is a big and often-intimidating process so it's important to ensure you're well-prepared. Be sure to consult an insurance and financial services professional to confirm you're on the right track and determine the best mortgage protection option for you.

For more information, contact Elena Rose, Agent, www.kanatainsurance.ca



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Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

Our community must become ‘hearing accessible’

BY TOBY J. BROOKS

During the days of the ancient Temple, officiating priests had to be of “unblemished body.” I suggest that we Jews have a large body of tradition to confront if we are to move to an inclusive community. I look specifically at hearing impairment as I have been an advocate and activist on the issue for over 30 years.

Hearing impairment is an invisible disability. The public knows that people in wheelchairs need accommodations. They see a person with a white cane and know that the person is visually impaired. But we hearing impaired folks don’t stand out. That means that we are often an afterthought in making accommodations.

The hearing impaired include people who are born deaf, those who lost their hearing after learning to speak, and people like myself, who have hearing loss. I wear hearing aids and manage fairly well. Without my aids, I live in the world of the deaf. Please note that my beloved aids do not restore normal hearing. They help. I manage listening situations by positioning myself to look at the face of the speaker. If someone throws a remark over her shoulder while walking away, I miss it. I also have problems in



Toby J. Brooks says assistive listening devices in all community facilities are necessary for hearing impaired people to participate fully in community life.

some classrooms, theatres and auditoriums and will discuss this later.

Historically, Jewish tradition has excused certain groups from mitzvot (Mishnah in Hagigah 1.1). Those excused are the deaf, mentally confused, women

and minors. Since most who are born deaf have limited speech, the ancients believed that deaf people could not understand. This is far from the truth.

Being excused from a mitzvah means a deaf person could not count in making up a minyan, could not lead grace after meals, or act as a witness in legal proceedings (Tosefta Shevuot 3:6). Today, we strive for inclusion of everyone. For that reason, the exclusion of the mentally confused and women deserve their own platform. Space does not allow that important discussion in this article. There seems to be a cross-over in traditional thinking between the deaf and the mentally confused.

In the 19th century, serious education was developed for the deaf, which led traditionalists to realize the deaf do indeed have understanding. As with most changes in law, equal standing for the deaf was not immediately achieved. Bit by bit things improved. On May 24, 2011, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, which speaks for the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative movement, ruled “the deaf are of the same ability as those without disabilities... The categorization of the deaf as mentally incapacitated is to be revoked, and they are to be considered completely lucid.”

My own campaign to get assistive listening devices (ALD) into classrooms, theatres and auditoriums has been full of starts and stops. Because the systems cost money, they are sometimes seen as a frill. In fact, their cost is well under the cost of most other interior improvements, such as elevators. An example of starts and stops is the City of Ottawa. After advocacy by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, an ALD was installed at City Hall. So far so good – but I recently attended a program at the city building in Centrepoinette. Staff had arranged for the ALD but it did not work with the microphone used by the speakers. I got very little from the program. Sometimes organizations will get a system but not keep it in repair. My own shul, Adath Shalom, although small, has an ALD and is conscientious about its working condition. I am happy that Soloway Jewish Community Centre has a system that works in the large social hall. However, sessions in the smaller rooms are not equipped for hearing accessibility.

Maybe you think that I’m a complainer. Please note that most people over age 65 develop some hearing loss. It might be a good idea to make our community hearing accessible before you need it.

Israeli president pushes back against Holocaust revisionism

BY SAM SOKOL

JERUSALEM (JTA) – Israeli President Reuven Rivlin assailed Polish complicity in the murder of European Jews during the Holocaust during a visit to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Speaking at a joint appearance with Polish President Andrzej Duda in Krakow on January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Rivlin said that both Jews and Poles were victims during the Second World War. He then launched into a subtle rebuke of recent efforts to rewrite Poland’s wartime history.

“Poland, the place where the Jewish people flourished for centuries, became its biggest cemetery,” Rivlin said. “We remember that during the war, the Polish people fought with courage and strength against Nazi Germany. But we also remember that many Poles stood by and even assisted in the murder of Jews.”

Rivlin’s comment came amid an ongoing effort by some European countries to shift the narrative around their responsibility for Holocaust crimes, an effort that historians deride as a betrayal

of the past but one that Israel – with some notable exceptions – has been reluctant to publicly oppose.

Poland has been engaged in a multi-year campaign to burnish its wartime record and shed the stigma of Holocaust collaboration, an attempt most prominently reflected in the 2018 passage of a controversial law making it a crime to accuse the country of responsibility for Nazi crimes.

Similar laws have been passed in Ukraine and Latvia, and Lithuanian lawmakers are currently considering one as well.

The Polish law led to a crisis in relations between Jerusalem and Warsaw that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to tamp down with a statement that avoided the pointed observations Rivlin made in Krakow. In a 2018 statement issued jointly with Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Netanyahu said that “structures of the Polish underground state supervised by the Polish government-in-exile created a mechanism of systematic help and support to Jewish people.”

Netanyahu’s attempt to tone down the rhetoric was seen by many scholars as an acceptance of the Polish narrative.



Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (left) and Polish President Andrzej Duda speak at a joint appearance marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Jan. 27, 2020.

But Yad Vashem, Israel’s usually apolitical Holocaust authority, issued an unprecedented statement criticizing his “grave errors and deceptions.”

On January 27, Rivlin said that both Israel and Poland “must sanctify the

purity of history, to leave the work of historical research to historians and experts from Israel, Poland and other countries who research the Holocaust, and let political leaders take responsibility.”
See Revisionism on page 16

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Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

‘I am who I was always supposed to be’

Zahava Barwin, who grew up in Ottawa’s Jewish community and now lives in Toronto, discusses issues of awareness, acceptance and inclusion of transgendered people.

BY ZAHAVA BARWIN

When I am asked how long I have known, a line I hear frequently rings true, “I have known that I am transgender for as long as you have known you are not.”

We queer kids rarely get to grow up as ourselves. We grow up performing a false version of the person we are expected to be. My childhood memories are a cloudy arrangement of self-discovery, of learning that my story would be different. Before, during, and after the age of b’nai mitzvah, becoming a ‘man’ never made sense to me. As a teenager, I hid my true identity in the crevasses of the internet. For hours at a time I stared at photos of girls on my laptop, girls like me. I was aware of the treatment available but I feared immense disapproval from my peers. I internalized this transphobia. It followed me. The worst kind of hate is self-inflicted. Until my transition, I could never see myself as any sort

of adult. I could not imagine growing into my true self.

My gender dysphoria, the discomfort with my assigned sex, heightened in my early 20s. I came out to my family at 24 – only when I knew I could safely be myself. Ultimately my transition was not a choice. Transition was a drastic change for me: to align my outer physical and inner spiritual self. Over the past year, I have experienced a level of growth I could not ever have imagined. I must frequently remind myself that most problems are not exclusive to being trans, but a part of being oneself. My journey as a transgender woman is an undeniable part of who I am, though it is not the entirety. My passion as a cyclist, my sense of humour, and my values did not change through my transition. I am not a wholly different person, I am a more calm, content, and fulfilled version of myself. I am who I was always supposed to be.

In Judaism we teach acceptance: “Do unto others as you would have done unto you.” When I think back to my attending NFTY-NEL and URJ summer camp, the overwhelming theme was to be a caring and respectful person. To be an ally. Allyship means finding ways to understand and foster compassion for those who are different from you. Voicing support often takes bravery, and the Jewish and LGBTQ+ communities are more powerful and less endangered when we work together. Schools and organizations have a responsibility to both believe and protect transgender youth. No one in my trans community has false intent when



seeking to use a washroom or play on a sports team that varies from the gender they were assigned at birth.

Society must find ways to be accessible for and accommodate transgender people. What can you do? Contact your employer’s human resources department and vocalize the need for inclusion or sensitivity training to be provided. Volunteer at or donate to organi-

“Allyship means finding ways to understand and foster compassion for those who are different from you,” writes Zahava Barwin.

zations that offer drop-in services and crisis support. Listen and ask respectful questions, read books and articles published by trans authors, consider ways to use gender-neutral language, always check with people about their pronouns. Apologize and politely correct yourself if you make an honest mistake. Uplifting the LGBTQ+ community should not be complex and difficult, however we all must engage in this conversation.

My life in Toronto can be sheltered. It is most often free from the hardships and transphobia others must face. Research done by The Trevor Project shows that of transgender adults, 40 per cent have reported making a suicide attempt, 92 per cent of those before the age of 25. This feeling of hopelessness is escalated when a person’s family does not support them in their transition. Internationally, the level of violence and hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community is intensifying. These attacks disproportionately affect trans women and non-binary people of colour. We should not have to argue for or justify our identity, our selves, or the need for acceptance. We should simply just be accepted and our reality supported. We have always existed regardless of public awareness. Political ignorance will never erase us. My trans community will always and forever be resilient, just as the Jewish community will be. It was the visibility of trans women that gave me a feeling of safety when I needed it most. I can name countless women, sisters, who have given me more strength and inspiration than I could ever thank them for.

My name is Zahava Barwin and I am a 25-year-old transgender woman. If you have questions about how to make your daily space more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community please do not hesitate to ask. I can be reached at zahava@barwin.ca.

Tamir: Let us ensure everyone feels welcomed in our Jewish community

Continued from page 4

We have been reaching out to identify other opportunities for interaction between those supported by Tamir and the larger community. I’m excited to report that Tamir participants now attend events sponsored by AJA 50+ at the Soloway Jewish Community Centre. Our participants chose to attend the weekly music program on Tuesday afternoons. The Ottawa Jewish Community School creates a weekly Torah story sheet that we distribute to all our homes for use at their Shabbat dinners. Participants can read, or be read to, about the parsha, complete the word games, and learn a little Hebrew.

In March, Tamir will be baking

Inclusion, in large part, is about connections. There are so many ways for families and individuals in the community to become involved.

hamentaschen and assembling mishloach manot with the Emerging Generation group of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa. After the baking and assembling is done, we will deliver the baskets together to family, friends, and those in need as part of Tikkun Olam. By the way, we will be baking in Hebrew with the help of Marian, Lee’s teacher!

Inclusion, in large part, is about con-

nections. There are so many ways for families and individuals in the community to become involved. Light Shabbat candles with people at Tamir homes. Lead or co-lead Kiddush and Hamotzi on a Friday evening. Come visit a new friend on a Saturday and play cards or checkers. Let’s find a time to create Purim masks, fry latkes, or bake challah together. There is so much we can learn from each other

and so much more we can accomplish and benefit from together.

During Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month, let us all reflect upon people with any kind of disability in our community who may be prevented from entering the same places we do, enjoying the same experiences we enjoy, who long to feel included. As I reflect upon my experience at the Leadership Institute, I am excited at the prospect of Tamir and the entire community working more closely together to ensure every Jewish person has ample opportunity to experience a strong sense of belonging and to feel welcomed as full citizens of our Jewish community in Ottawa.



(From left) Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Co-ordinator on Combatting Antisemitism Georg Georgiev, Jewish Federation of Ottawa President and CEO Andrea Freedman, Bulgarian Ambassador to Canada Svetlana Stoycheva-Etropolski and Federation Community Relations Chair Victor Rabinovitch gather in the Greenberg Family Families Library at the JCC, January 27.

Bulgarian officials discuss antisemitism efforts

Meeting with Federation leadership focuses on Holocaust education and combatting antisemitism in Bulgaria and Canada

Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Co-ordinator on Combatting Antisemitism Georg Georgiev and Bulgarian Ambassador to Canada Svetlana Stoycheva-Etropolski visited the Soloway Jewish Community Centre, January 27, for a special meeting with Jewish Federation of Ottawa officials to discuss Bulgaria's unique actions to protect its Jewish population during the Second World War, and its latest efforts on fighting antisemitism.

Federation President and CEO Andrea Freedman and Community Relations Chair Victor Rabinovitch welcomed Georgiev and Stoycheva-Etropolski and answered their detailed questions on measures taken in Canada against antisemitism and on Holocaust education.

Georgiev outlined recent initiatives to educate Bulgarians about the role played by members of the public, some politicians and the Orthodox Church in 1943 to block the deportation of Jews to the Nazi death camps. He stressed that while Bulgaria managed to protect its 48,000 Jewish citizens, it gave in to German demands to deport over 11,000 non-Bulgarian Jews living in the country. Bulgaria recently acknowledged its role in these deaths and has apologized formally.

Bulgaria today endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism and has developed its school curriculum on

Holocaust education, relating this to the wider challenge of historical literacy on antisemitism, actions during the Second World War and the later Communist regime, Georgiev explained.

"We point to the specific hatred of antisemitism, and we use education as well as tougher criminal laws to fight against it," he said.

As well, he said, Bulgarian authorities cooperate with Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum to train schoolteachers and have created a coordination group within the central government linking government departments, representatives of the Jewish Community and municipal authorities, to respond to antisemitic incidents.

Freedman outlined efforts on Holocaust by education undertaken by Jewish communities across Canada and explained that other episodes of mistreatment of Canadian minorities, notably the treatment of Indigenous women and children, are central to the national human rights agenda.

Freedman explained that Federation, together with the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, naturally places its priority on combatting antisemitism, such as in schools and on university campuses. One key element is to maintain close relations with political, educational and police authorities to ensure that hate incidents are recognised for what they are, and are confronted.

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Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

On inclusion as a sacred value

BY RABBI REUVEN P. BULKA
RABBI EMERITUS
CONGREGATION MACHZIKEI HADAS

Who is included? That is the question. It is not a new question. It is a question that goes back thousands of years.

Ironically, it was a question posed by Pharaoh to Moses. When Moses demanded that he, Pharaoh, release the Children of Israel from bondage to freedom, Pharaoh asked, “Who exactly is going?” In other words, who is *included* (in your demand)?

Moses gave an answer that resonates for the ages. He responded: “With our young ones and our elders we will go; with our sons and our daughters.” (Exodus, 10:9)

Put bluntly, no one will be left behind. *Everyone* is included.

Why would Pharaoh have thought otherwise? Why would he have thought that Moses would leave anyone behind?

Perhaps this relates to the “intelligence” he had gathered, or the dirty tricks that Pharaoh engineered in Egypt, creating and supporting an anti-Moses group among the Israelites to undermine the effort to extricate the Israelites from bondage.

It is likely that Pharaoh was stunned by Moses’ response. Everyone, even those who opposed him, even undermined him, was part of the exit strategy.

Whether they would want to leave was another matter, but as far as Moses was concerned, everyone counted, everyone mattered, everyone was welcome to join, be it Israelite friend or Israelite foe.

Pharaoh’s surprise related to how he would have reacted were he in Moses’ position. He would not have wanted adversaries coming along. If anything, he would have eliminated them. But that was not the way of Moses. Moses was an inclusivist.

And the bar of who exactly was included was very clear to him. Everyone who wanted to join, everyone in the community of Israel who wanted to align their destiny with the Children of Israel, was welcome.

Of course, inclusion then had a different connotation than it does now. Then it meant young and old, male and female, allies and adversaries.

Today, inclusion connotes all of the above, plus. It includes all those who in our incessant embrace of “progress” might be left behind, or given less attention, or not have needs addressed, among other reasons for neglect.

Think for a moment about the “inclusion” response of Moses. As a leader of a large community, he had to be concerned about elementary logistics. People in their most energetic years did not pose a problem. But the young who were not yet walking and the elderly who could no longer walk



“By caring for each other, by looking out for each other, by seriously addressing the needs of each other, we become truly whole, or wholly holy!” writes Rabbi Reuven Bulka.

could be a problem.

One way or another, these groups were sure to slow down the movement of the group toward their destination. An argument could have been made at least regarding the elderly that it would be better for the totality if the elderly were left behind. There would be less health related worries, less concerns about the burdens of the extra care they

would need.

Yet for Moses and the rest of the leadership, it was a no brainer. Nothing would stand in the way of taking everyone – not arguments about logistics, not arguments about practicality, not arguments about diversion of resources.

If the community leaving Egypt was not a caring community, it would by definition be a community of compromised values, less than a noble and deserving community.

In other words, by his response, Moses was telling Pharaoh, and all of us, then and now, that a community in which any segment is left out is a deficient community.

There is another significant difference between then and now. Then, it was a matter who was joining the Exodus. Now, it is a question who exactly do we care about, and for? We care about family, we care about friends, and we surely should care about those who need our care and concern. It is we who need to make sure that those who doubt if they are welcome are made to feel welcome. That process starts in the head and in the heart, and then branches out into real life, and tangible, meaningful action.

By caring for each other, by looking out for each other, by seriously addressing the needs of each other, we become truly whole, or wholly holy!

Revisionism: History ‘must be told in its entirety and completely truthfully

Continued from page 12

bility for shaping the present and the future.”

This is not the first time that Rivlin has spoken out against the perceived historical revisionism of a European ally. On a visit to the Jasenovac death camp in 2018, the president thanked his Croatian hosts for their efforts to take responsibility for their wartime legacy while gently chiding those who repress their past.

“Some believe especially today that the historical circumstances of the Second World War, the fact that they were under Nazi occupation, exempts them from any moral responsibility, personal and national, for the horrors that took place in their land,” Rivlin said.

Addressing the Ukrainian parliament in 2016 during commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre, Rivlin took lawmakers to task for legislative efforts to whitewash the record of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, a far-right movement

Other than Rivlin, senior Israeli officials have been largely quiet in the face of resurgent European revisionism, a movement seen as driven by a desire to forge new national identities after decades of communist repression.

whose members collaborated with the Nazis and were complicit in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians during the war.

In a speech that elicited harsh criticism from ultranationalist lawmakers, Rivlin condemned the “sin of concealment and destruction of the [victims’] memory.”

“We must not be partners in a second crime,” Rivlin told lawmakers. “We must not play a part in the sin of forgetting or denial.”

Shuli Davidovich, a senior foreign policy adviser to Rivlin, said the president believes history should be left to historians and cautioned that failing

to keep those domains distinct harms efforts to combat rising antisemitism.

“This is very dangerous and can easily run against democratic values and might endanger the foundations of democracy around the world,” Davidovich told JTA.

Other than Rivlin, senior Israeli officials have been largely quiet in the face of resurgent European revisionism, a movement seen as driven by a desire to forge new national identities after decades of communist repression.

Netanyahu has said nothing about the bill under consideration in Lithuania saying that neither the country nor its leaders participated in the Holocaust.

Some 95 per cent of the 250,000 Jews in Lithuania were wiped out during the war, and historians say its leaders and citizens were enthusiastic participants.

“The president has always been absolute in his insistence that history is the realm of historians and must be told in its entirety and completely truthfully,” Jason Pearlman, Rivlin’s former media adviser, told JTA. “He has also been unwavering in his stand that one cannot be antisemitic and pro-Israel just as one cannot be anti-Zionist and not be antisemitic.”

Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office, said the difference between how Rivlin and Netanyahu have approached this issue can best be explained by the offices they hold.

“The role of a president is far less political, ostensibly, certainly in the international arena,” Zuroff said. “And consequently [Rivlin] has more latitude to describe a very unpleasant reality than Netanyahu has.”

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'You must understand the words you are saying'

In 1999 I began a weekly Talmud shiur class. The intent was to expose members of Temple Israel to the most important text of the rabbinic period. Many thought that this was counterintuitive. How interested would members of a non-halachic community be in the primary legal document of our people? Others wondered how long individuals committed to Jewish life, but not committed to the traditional understanding of mitzvot and obligation, would be interested in studying Talmud. Now entering our 21st year of weekly study, the questions remain, but the answers are more obvious. We study the texts searching for the meaning obscured by the legal arguments. We study the texts to understand how the brilliance of the *Amoriam* (writers and editors of the Talmud), can be applied to our lives in 2020.

As Rabbi Asher Lopatin writes in the Daf Yomi newsletter from My Jewish Learning (January 16, 2020), "The second chapter [of Masechet Berachot] begins with a question that focuses on the internal: Do we need to have intention during prayer or is it sufficient to merely recite the words? In Hebrew, the word for this is *kavanah*, which literally means direction, but also implies intention." This is especially true in the context of the performance of obligatory behaviours: mitzvot.

The Gemara records a dispute:

The Sages taught that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and the Rabbis disagreed with regard to the language in which the Shema must be recited:

The Shema must be recited as it is written, in Hebrew – this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi.

The Rabbis say: The Shema may be recited in any language.



RABBI STEVEN H. GARTEN
**A VIEW FROM
THE BLEACHERS**

As Rabbi Lopatin further notes, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi argues "that you achieve *kavanah* by saying the actual Hebrew words of the Shema. But the rabbis disagree – you have to say the words in a language you understand."

It is commonly understood, Rabbi Lopatin continues, that "the first word of the Shema is normally translated as 'hear,' but in this case the rabbis read it to mean 'understand.'" The rabbis seemed to be saying, regarding the words of any prayer, "you must understand the words you are saying. And in fact," as noted by most denominations, "the practice among observant Jews today is in accordance with the rabbis: the Shema may be recited in any language a person understands."

Some might believe this conversation is purely academic, intended only for those with a sincere and ongoing commitment to a life of prayer. Yet it appears the rabbis were interested in something more than just prayer. They seemed to be cognizant that many individuals claim to understand the nature of obligation, but in reality are only playing out their commitment. The rabbis seemed to be aware that there are many individuals who make claims regarding their adherence to the law, but in truth do not understand the

intention behind the laws.

While this Talmudic conversation ostensibly took place 1,500 years ago, the same conversation is taking place in the Israeli Knesset and United States Senate. Two individuals, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump, are asking their respective elected bodies to ignore intentionality.

Trump has chosen to defend himself against two bills of impeachment by seeming to declare that what he did is not the issue; that it does not matter if he is guilty of the charges; it only matters if these are impeachable offences.

He appears to be similar to the individual who goes to pray daily, but conducts business and gossip continually. The obligatory responsibility to make prayer meaningful is lost on him/her. The president claims that as long as he shows up and doesn't commit an impeachable offence, anything is OK. Not exactly the words of the presidential oath of office.

Likewise, Netanyahu is asking the Knesset to postpone his criminal trial until he is no longer prime minister. He does not want to argue innocence or guilt. He does not want to argue whether an indicted prime minister has the moral standing to lead his country in perilous times. He seems to be saying that it does not matter how he does his job as long as he shows up and appears to be acting in the best interests of the country. He wants the job to protect him from harm as opposed to his responsibility to protect others.

The Gemara understood that just showing up and just doing things without commitment to the values which the actions imply is not good enough. If it wasn't good enough for the rabbis, why should it be good enough for us?

What keeps you motivated past January?

How's the year going for you so far in terms of your fitness and overall well-being? Did you start off the year with enthusiasm for living a healthier lifestyle? Has your enthusiasm fizzled out? Perhaps you started a diet or made a few tweaks to your eating habits. Or maybe you joined a gym or decided to increase your daily step count. Whether you made plans for big or small improvements, efforts can sometimes be short-lived. For some people, the hardest part is getting started – that is, turning thoughts into action. For others, the hardest part is sustaining motivation in the long-term.

Positivity can be a factor that drives you in the right direction. Because we're bombarded with negativity on a daily basis – whether on the news, on social media or from people in our lives – we may need to proactively seek out positivity. There are many ways to do that.

Toward the end of December, I asked my clients if they'd like to do a free gift exchange. I told them that if they emailed me some positive feedback, I would do the same for them. I received several thoughtful messages that made me feel appreciated as their trainer and I then emailed them personalized messages including praise for their hard work and for overcoming various challenges. We often take for granted that the people in our lives know how we feel about them; however, this isn't always the case. Taking a few moments to tell someone something positive about your relationship with them or about them as individ-



GLORIA SCHWARTZ
**FOCUS ON
FITNESS**

uals can have a lasting impact and provide much needed encouragement.

Something I started on the first day of the new year is taking one photo of myself each day when I do something physically active. Either I take a selfie or I ask someone to take a photo of me. The purpose is to motivate myself to increase my physical activity, either by exercising more regularly (daily is ideal) or increasing the intensity and variety of my workouts. So far it has been a lot of fun. I edit each photo on my cellphone to include the date and I keep the photos together in a folder. When I open the folder, I can see the series of photos and what I did on each day. There are a few missing days when I didn't exercise but there are many more days when I did do something. And it's fun to see the variety of activities, such as weightlifting, yoga, pickleball, running, trampolining and attending various classes.

Whatever the time of year, it's not too late for you to take stock of your fitness activities using whatever methods work for you. For many years, well over a decade actually, I have been noting what exercise I

do each day. I keep the notes very brief. For example, one day may say "full-body workout" and another day may say "attended boxing class" or "ran 5 km." The point of my list is that it allows me to see at a glance all of the positive things I have done for my fitness and health. It's very motivating to see the list grow over time. It's like a bank account. Each time I make a deposit, the account balance gets bigger. Health is wealth after all.

Another way to increase or maintain your motivation may be to consider your intentions. Reflect on the reasons underlying your actions or inactions. Why are you exercising? Are you doing it to improve your health? Perhaps you're living with chronic disease or your doctor has alerted you to some risk factors (e.g., low HDL cholesterol) that you may be able to control better with exercise. Similarly, think about your dietary habits. Why do you eat the way you do and what are the consequences? Do you feel better physically when you make healthier choices? Has an occasional treat become more of a regular eating pattern that has led to unwanted weight gain or health problems? It's easy to ignore why we do what we do and simply act out of habit or take the path of least resistance. It's most comforting but not always most helpful to do what's the least psychologically distressing. Once we face the truth and understood the whys, we can be better equipped mentally to make the necessary adjustments to our lifestyle behaviours. The key is to find positive approaches that work for you.



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Brenda Levine Mazel Tov on your Birthday by Issie and Evelyn Hoffman

Ken and Leah Miller Family Fund

In Memory of:
Bill Miller by Lillian Zunder

Ratner/Levine Family Fund

In Memory of:
Tristan Ferreira Meyer by Rhonda and Danny Levine

Label and Leona Silver Family Fund

In Honour of:
Leona Silver Mazel Tov on your 91st Birthday by David Silver

Monica and Alvin Stein Family Fund

In Memory of:
Ron Weir by Monica and Alvin Stein and family
Sonia Traves by Monica and Alvin Stein

Ethel and Irving Taylor Family Fund

In Memory of:

Corinne Levine by Barbara and Larry Her-shorn

Toby and Joel Yan Family Fund

In Memory of:
Bertha “Birdie” Lubert by Joel and Toby Yan

Feeding Program

In Memory of:
Corinne Levine by Don Maher

In Honour of:
Sol and Estelle Gunner Mazel Tov on the birth of your grandson Grant Jack Gunner by Ruth Poplove

Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Rosenberg With love and best wishes in your new home by Carol Gradus

In Memory of:

Bertha “Birdie” Lubert by the residents, staff and Boards of the Lodge and LTC Foundation

Gerry Blackwell by the residents, staff and Boards of the Lodge and LTC Foundation

David Van Praagh by Lewis Dobrin
Corinne Levine by Sam and Sandra Zunder
Ronnie Joy Hollander by Ruth and Dale

In Honour of:

Donna and Howard Strauss Thank you for sharing a wonderful Chanukah with us and belated Happy Birthday to Donna by Joan and Howard Spunt

Rhoda Shabinsky Wishing you a very Happy Birthday by Karla Moryne Krane and Lesley Cramer

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Key points of Trump's peace plan, explained

BY GABE FRIEDMAN

(JTA) – U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled his long-awaited Middle East peace plan on January 28.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu joined Trump at a news conference and compared it to president Harry Truman's recognition of the State of Israel in 1948. Netanyahu also snuck in the fact that as part of the plan's starting framework, he will look to apply Israeli sovereignty over territory that much of the international community considers illegally occupied.

In the most basic sense, the plan is a two-state solution. But the statements from Trump and Netanyahu, along with the text of the plan have triggered a wave of speculation and more than a little confusion.

Here's a breakdown of the plan's most basic components and what they mean moving forward.

TWO STATES, SORT OF

At its core, the plan proposes a two-state solution, ideally envisioning an autonomous Palestinian state. This line of thinking, endorsed by every U.S. president since Bill Clinton in the 1990s, has lost some support since Trump took office.

However, as U.S. Ambassador to Israel



U.S. President Donald Trump points to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, Jan 27, 2020.

David Friedman stressed in a phone call with reporters following the news conference, Israel would retain security control over all the land that would include a Palestinian state. So even though the

Palestinians would have their own system of government throughout their state, Israeli forces would still be allowed to patrol and exert their will in the area – as Friedman described it, “from the

Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.”

That is essentially how Israeli soldiers act now: They are not a constant presence in Palestinian areas, but they move in and out as they please. In that sense, life for Palestinians in the West Bank would not change much.

But another provision of the plan – allowing Palestinians to move freely between the West Bank and Gaza – would be a major change. Palestinians currently cannot move between the two areas without Israeli approval, which is rarely granted. Family members and others would no longer be separated as they are now.

BORDERS FOR A PALESTINIAN STATE

The plan also contains something that past U.S. proposals haven't included: a specific map that delineates what the potential Israeli and Palestinian state borders would be.

The proposed Palestinian state would consist of most of the West Bank (about 80 per cent, according to estimates), the mostly undeveloped territory between Jerusalem and Jordan, and Gaza.

The plan also leaves the possibility of later adding the so-called “Triangle” – a collection of Arab towns adjacent to the West Bank but part of Israel proper

See Trump Plan on page 22

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Talmud lessons on education, teaching, lifelong learning

I have written before about how lifelong learning is a fundamental Jewish value. Indeed, we are obligated to study and to learn until we breathe our last breaths, says 12th century sage Maimonides in his code of Jewish law, *Mishneh Torah*. We are never too old to learn.

As I write, all four Ontario teachers' unions are engaged in some form of job action, including rotating strikes. Sticking points exist between the unions and the province regarding support for students with special needs, wages for teachers, maintaining full-day kindergarten, class sizes, and hiring practices. Our children, who are both in public school and are impacted by what is going on, have asked what this all means. We have responded by reiterating how important and special and fundamental their teachers are (our kids know that!), and how they and the provincial government are trying to figure out important questions about work conditions and school, and how the current labour action is about trying to make sure that students are best able to succeed.

My kids got me thinking about what our tradition has to say about teachers and education.

The obligation to learn also incorporates the duty to teach, particularly our children. Not once, but twice in the Shema blessings we are commanded to teach Torah to our children (Deuteronomy 6:7 and 11:19). Proverbs 22:6 adds, "Train youth in the path s/he should follow. S/he will not swerve from it even in ripe age." The Talmud obliges parents (I am interpreting it in a gender inclusive manner) to teach our children Torah, a craft,



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and how to swim (Kiddushin 29a).

The sages of the Talmud realized that not all parents were capable of providing their children with a formal education. So, the sages instituted a mandatory system of public education that looks quite similar to what we have today. The Talmud says this was based on the orders of first century Jewish high priest Joshua ben Gamla to institute public education for the masses, "that teachers of children should be established in each and every province and in each and every town, and they would bring the children in to learn at the age of six and at the age of seven."

Class sizes and wages are also discussed in the Talmud. Classes are capped, and assistants are required if there are more students: "The maximum number of students for one teacher of children is 25 children. And if there are 50 children in a single place, one establishes two teachers, so that each one teaches 25 students. And if there are 40 children, one establishes an assistant, and the teacher receives help from the residents of the town to pay the salary of the assistant. (Bava Batra 21a)." We see here how local

residents contribute to pay the relevant salaries.

Overall, the value and import of the teacher in the learning process is emphasized in the Mishnah, in Pirkei Avot, and throughout the Talmud. Further, as stated in the Jewish Virtual Library entry on "Education," the Talmud repeatedly highlights "the significance of motivation in teaching and of vocational training principles, which are basic to effective instruction and a modern educational system."

For example, in Pirkei Avot there is found the famous Jewish proverb, "Make for yourself a teacher, and acquire for yourself a friend (1:6)." Later, Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua says, "Let the honour of your student be as dear to you as your own, and the honour of your colleague as the reverence for your teacher, and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of heaven (4:12)."

Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua's statement speaks to the deep care and respect that my children's teachers give to them and the other kids in their classes, in terms of how I see them teaching our children. It also speaks to the respect that we have, and that our children have, for our teachers. May the current labour action be resolved in a manner that expresses this fundamental respect for teachers, for children, and for public education.

Note: I wish to extend a special thank you to my teachers, past and present, and family, friends and community who have supported me through my lifelong learning and enabled me to obtain my rabbinic smicha on January 12, 2020. I promise to keep on learning and teaching through the rest of my days!



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Temple Israel



Jewish Life Happens Here

Trump Plan: Could it jump-start talks between Israel and the Palestinians?

Continued from page 20

– to a Palestinian state, if both parties agree.

CONTROVERSIAL MOVES AHEAD FOR ISRAEL

Under the plan, controversial parts of the West Bank would become officially recognized Israeli territory.

This includes all of the Israeli “communities” – code word for settlements – that are dotted throughout the potential future Palestinian state, as well as the Jordan Valley, the strategically important swath of land that Israel has largely controlled since the Six-Day War in 1967.

FOUR-YEAR TIME FRAME

The plan gives the Israelis and Palestinians four years to accept these borders.

Netanyahu announced at the January 28 news conference that during that time, Israel will freeze any new settlement construction that would encroach on the Palestinian state outlined in the peace plan.

However, he also said that Israel will look to immediately “apply its laws” to existing settlements and the Jordan Valley, whether or not the Palestinians signal that they will buy into the U.S. proposal.

SUBTLE SEMANTICS

To some, this may sound like Netanyahu is using the plan’s release as an oppor-

The mere release of this plan is a big win for Netanyahu and the mainstream Israeli right.

tunity to annex that territory right away, as he has long desired.

Netanyahu was careful not to use the word “annex” in his remarks at the press conference, preferring the “apply its law” usage. That could be his way of making the dramatic move more palatable to the international community, which undoubtedly will criticize the Israeli leader.

Moving forward, look for the language over this issue to be debated.

HAMAS HAS TO GO

Another key part of the plan involves the dismantling of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, two Palestinian groups seen as terrorists by a large part of the international community. Hamas currently governs Gaza with an iron fist, so removing it would significantly change the coastal strip.

Palestinian officials also would have to agree to stop its policy of paying the families of terrorists who attack Israelis.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL AND OTHER INCENTIVES

The plan also aims to create a high-speed rail connection between the West Bank and Gaza, two Palestinian areas

that feel physically sequestered because of Israeli security policies.

The “Trump Economic Plan” portion of the document says that the accord has the “potential to facilitate more than \$50 billion of investment over 10 years.” It doesn’t get into detail about where that would come from, but it likely means from the U.S. and a coalition of Arab states that support the plan.

SLIM CHANCES OF SUCCESS

It’s safe to say, at least at this point, that the plan’s chance of success – success meaning that the Palestinians will agree to it – is close to nil.

That’s because the mere release of this plan is a big win for Netanyahu and the mainstream Israeli right. It codifies the full U.S. support of Israel’s eventual annexation of the West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, which Israel says is both vital to its security and is part of its rightful ancestral territory.

It also keeps security control of both states – essentially everything from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, as Friedman put it – under Israel’s purview.

The only thing that might remotely worry Netanyahu is how the proposed

settlement freeze will play among Israeli settlers, a demographic he has fiercely courted over his record tenure as prime minister, especially since 2015.

Trump likely hopes that this will give him a boost not just in Israel, where the key aspects of the plan are popular, but also at home, where his impeachment trial rages on. The plan’s unveiling also could be a ploy to distract some Americans’ attention from the trial.

The plot has thickened considerably for Benny Gantz, Netanyahu’s political rival. Since Gantz has dismissed the idea of governing with Netanyahu under a unity coalition and rotating the prime minister’s title, it’s notable that he has wholeheartedly endorsed the plan (at least according to Trump). It could signal that some form of reconciliation is on the horizon before yet another Israeli election in March – the third in less than a year.

As for the Palestinians, they are almost certain to object to the map in the plan from the outset. The proposed lack of security control will be seen as a deal breaker, and the Israeli West Bank settlements present all kinds of complications. It would be a Swiss cheese state.

But even if the Palestinians completely reject the plan, could it jump-start a new series of talks between Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas? We’ll have to wait and see.

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ONGOING EVENTS

Connecting to Hashem Meaningfully Through Hebrew Prayers

7 - 9 pm, weekly on Mondays until April 27, 2020, Congregation Machzikei Hadas, 2310 Virginia Dr.,
Contact: Ilana Sultan-Benzaquen 613-523-0279, helene.ilana@gmail.com
Learn the meaning behind prayers and how to work through your connection to Hashem. Discover the *Lashon Hakodesh* (Holy Language of Hebrew) from the prism of your prayer book.

Judaism's Gifts To The World – New Course with Rabbi Blum

7 - 8:30 pm, weekly on Tuesdays until March 3, 2020, Ottawa Torah Centre 111 Lamplighters Dr.
Contact: 613-843-7770 rabbi@theotc.org
Cost: \$90. Modern society still grapples with the big moral issues. Join us to unpack six of the world's most cherished values and how they were delivered to humankind by the Torah.

Women's Torah Study

7 - 9 pm, weekly on Wednesdays, Kehillat Beth Israel 1400 Coldrey Ave.
Contact: Deborah Zuker, 613-728-3501 rabbizuker@kehillatbethisrael.com
Join Rabbi Zuker in her home for Torah Study, on Wednesday evenings near Rosh Chodesh, on subjects related to women in the Torah and Jewish tradition.

Motzei Shabbat Video Torah Lecture

7 - 8:30 pm, weekly on Saturdays until April 25, 2020, 1724 Kilborn Ave.
Contact: Elie Benzaquen, 343-882-3702 eliebenz@gmail.com
Join us every Motzei Shabbat for a video Torah Lecture presented by top English speakers in the Jewish world, followed by open Q & A. For men and women. Please text each week to confirm attendance.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Music of the Heart

1:30 - 2:45 pm
Contact: Roslyn Wollock, 613-798-9818, ext 254, rwollock@jccottawa.com
Cost: \$15. Classical guitarist and vocalist Andrew Mah and violinist Anna Baksheeva will present a program of music, including pieces composed by John Dowland, Edward Elgar, Giacomo Puccini and Jerome Kern.

Tu B'Shevat Seder

7 - 9 pm, Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr.
Contact: Catherine Loves, 613-224-1802 reception@templeisraelottawa.com
Rabbi Mikelberg will lead a creative seder intermingling traditional sources with contemporary responses. Snacks and refreshments provided.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Info Sessions – Join Team TDSO and Run with the Rabbis

Morning session: 11 am - 12 pm, evening session 7:30-8:30 pm, Torah Day School of Ottawa, 1119 Lazard St.
Contact: Sara-Lynne Levine, 613 274-0110 sllvine@torahday.ca
Join Rabbi Pertont and his all-star team of rabbis, for one of two meeting sessions, as we train together for the upcoming half marathon and marathon relay during Ottawa Race Weekend and raise money for Torah Day School and Jewish education in Ottawa.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Winter Israeli Film Series

6:40 - 9 pm
Contact: Ella Dagan edagan@jccottawa.com
Presenting: *Zero Motivation*.
Sponsored by Vered Israel Cultural and

Educational Program, SJCC, The Embassy of Israel, CICF.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Shabbat Services and Bring-Your-Own -Dinner

6:15 - 8:15 pm, Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr.
Contact: Heather Cohen, 613-224-1802 x4 execdir@templeisraelottawa.com
This month we welcome Tamir to services and dinner. Join us to honour JDAIM.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Jbaby Shabbat Playgroup

10:30 am - 12 pm
Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr.
Contact: Ranit Braun, 613-400-3430 jyg@templeisraelottawa.com
Bring your little ones for playtime at Temple Israel. Music, movement and crafts. Kiddush lunch to follow. Ages 0-5.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Limping Toward the Promised Land: How the Bible Pioneers Inclusion

7 - 8:30 pm
Contact: Jodi Green, 613-725-3519 x115 jodigreen@tamir.ca
Cost: \$18. Ora Horn Prouser, CEO and Academic Dean at The Academy for Jewish Religion, and author of *Esau's Blessing: How the Bible Embraces Those With Special Needs*. will join us in honour of JDAIM (Jewish Disabilities, Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month). Sponsored by Tamir, Federation Microgrants, JOIN, A Ripple Effect, KBI, JFS, SJCC.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Esau's Blessing: the Bible's Embrace of Those with Special Needs

6:30 - 8:30 pm., Kehillat Beth Israel,

1400 Coldrey Ave.
Contact: Jodi Green, 613-725-3519 x115 jodigreen@tamir.ca
Cost: \$30 adults, \$18 children. Join us for a Shabbat dinner in recognition of JDAIM. Building on her Thursday night lecture, Horn Prouser explores how our founding families supported each other to success even when challenges were evident. 5:15 pm services optional.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23

For you were once Strangers: Standing up for the Yezidis

10:00 - 11:30 am, Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr.
reception@templeisraelottawa.com
Contact: Catherine Loves, 613-224-1802 reception@templeisraelottawa.com
Guests Debbie & Gary Rose from Project Abraham will discuss the genocide of Yezidi Jews and the work to resettle them in Canada. Cosponsored by the Bora Laskin Law Society

More Than Just Mosaics: The Ancient Synagogue at Huqoq in Israel's Galilee

7 - 8:30 pm
Contact: Roslyn Wollock, 613-798-9818, ext 254, rwollock@jccottawa.com
Professor Jodi Magness presents a slide-illustrated lecture, describing the exciting finds. Sponsored by Soloway JCC and the Zelikovitz Center

CANDLE LIGHTING BEFORE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14	5:10 PM
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21	5:20 PM
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28	5:30 PM
FRIDAY, MARCH 6	5:39 PM

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FOR ISSUE	DEADLINE
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MARCH 23	MARCH 4
APRIL 6	MARCH 16

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Bernard Waldman

May their memory be a blessing always.

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