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**Hamilton
Jewish**

News

DECEMBER 2023 | KISLEV 5783

The voice of Jewish Hamilton

War unifies community

Fundamental aspects of Jewish life here in our community and around the world have been challenged by the Oct. 7 massacre and all that has happened since

STORY BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

THE DEADLIEST DAY for Jews since the Holocaust — and its aftermath — have shaken the foundations

WAR AGAINST ISRAEL CONTINUES **P4**
McMASTER JEWISH STUDENTS FEELING TARGETED AND UNSAFE SEE **P6**

of Israel and the Jewish world. Within days of the Oct. 7 massacre, Hamilton Jewish Federation launched an emergency campaign,

which raised more than \$1.1 million in three weeks for urgent needs in Israel. On the homefront, needs are equally urgent. The open hatred of Jews that's found expression on city streets and university campuses around the country has prompted Federation to put the safety of Jewish institutions at the forefront of its priorities, at the cost of more than \$20,000 a week.



PHOTO: DONNA WAXMAN PHOTOGRAPHY, SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Our community gripped by war in Israel

Cover story, local perspectives, columnists, photos and reactions from our community | **COVERAGE STARTS P4**

Luba and Yves Apel were among several hundred community members who came together to express their grief and solidarity for Israel in the days following the Oct. 7 massacre.

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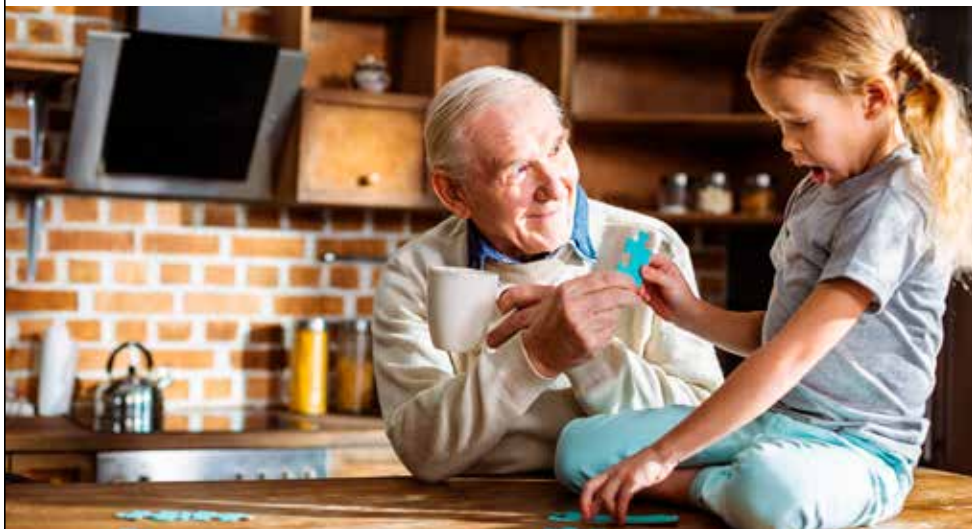
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GUEST EDITORIAL

Now is the time to do more than we have ever done before



Steven Shulman

PRESIDENT AND CEO
JEWISH FEDERATION OF CANADA - UIA

ALL OF US HAVE HEARD that the war between Israel and Hamas is a fight for Israel's survival. That's not just a statement about Israel's ability to secure families in their own homes; it's a statement about the need to ensure that Israel's civil society will recover and grow stronger.

The question is, what can we do?

Expressions of solidarity in the form of organizing and attending community rallies, supporting advocacy efforts, reaching out to our Israeli friends and family—all these are important steps.

We all have friends and coworkers who are not Jewish and, like most Canadians, are of goodwill. Reach out. We can't assume our neighbours understand the situation, trauma suffered by Israelis, and their need for security, as well as the shared values between the Canadian people and the Israeli people. As proud Canadian Jews, you are the most effective potential bridge to understanding.

Support your Hamilton Jewish Federation campaign. The community's need for Federation's leadership is greater today than ever. There is urgency on security and advocacy, as well as the critical need for the Federation to lead in the Jewish community's resilience, working with synagogues, schools, and all organizations. That takes money. Now is the time to increase or make your first generous gift.

Israel and the Jewish people have not faced such an emergency since 1948. If ever there were a time to reach into your pockets and accounts, as deeply as possible, this is it. The people of Israel need your help, now, and the most effective way to do so is by supporting Hamilton Jewish Federation's Israel Emergency Campaign.

So far, Hamilton has been very generous, raising more than \$1.1 million. Hamilton is doing its part in Canadian federations' efforts, which so far total more than \$125 million. These dollars have been raised in communities large, medium, and small. The amount raised, and growing, is a recognition of incomparable need, trust in federations, and reflects the deep bond Canadian Jews have with the people of Israel.

Canadian charities law prohibits funding any military outside of Canada.

So what do your Hamilton Jewish Federation donations support? The people of Israel and civil society are in desperate need. Your funds support The Jewish Agency's Victims of Terror Fund. With more than 1,200 murdered, thousands wounded, and thousands more family members affected, Hamilton's funds provide immediate and ongoing financial needs and professional supports to access all available services.

Together, our funds are helping special populations like families of hostages, seniors living in the confrontation zone, and new immigrants. They are traumatized and require respite, extra services, and care.

There are now more than 250,000 evacuees living in temporary residences from the south and the north who we are helping with essentials. We are also providing emergency medical equipment in hospitals, ambulances, and other mobile units. And, critically, we are ensuring trauma relief on a broad scale.

This list could change overnight, and Hamilton Federation, working with Jewish Federations Canada-UIA (JFC-UIA) will be able to respond to ensure the most effective use of funds. That's because JFC-UIA is providing a constant assessment of needs on the ground with our team in Israel.

Cadence is critical. This emergency will not be over in the next month or two, when most of the fundraising will be done. Federation's approach is to ensure that funds are provided for immediate emergency needs now; in the medium term when the Israeli people, communities, and society transition toward normalcy; and for the longer-term recovery ensuring that the people of Israel and their communities build back better.

Every Israeli has been directly affected. My colleagues exemplify that story. Eddy Azran, Toronto Federation's representative in Sderot, fought off Hamas terrorists on his kibbutz close to the Gaza border. Meytal Novidomsky, responsible for Canada's Coast to Coast federations' partnership in the north, has been evacuated from her home because of Hezbollah's rockets. A daughter of Sarah Mali, JFC-UIA's Israel Director General, has a best friend who was married for fewer than three months on Oct. 7. Her husband was murdered, leaving a 20-year-old widow. The list goes on.

Jews are under attack. Jews here and in Israel are responding. Now is the time to do more than we have ever done before. We will do it together.

Am Yisrael Chai.

The HJN welcomes letters to the editor. To submit a letter for publication, email wschneider@jewishhamilton.org.

Holocaust Education Week program



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Author Gioia Diliberto (right), shown here with Romy Friedman, a member of Federation's Holocaust Education Committee spoke at the community Kristallnacht commemoration about her novel *Coco* at the Ritz, a cautionary tale about the necessity of standing against evil.

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HJN

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The Hamilton Jewish News invites members of the community to contribute letters, articles or guest editorials.

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“This is a critical moment in Jewish history. Nothing is going to be the same, not in Israel and not in our community.”

GUSTAVO RYMBERG, CEO, Hamilton Jewish Federation

War in Israel

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

In this moment of crisis, Gustavo Rymberg, CEO, Hamilton Jewish Federation talks about the impact of the war on the Hamilton community

WITH HAMILTON'S Jewish community on high alert in the face of massive pro-Palestinian protests calling for the elimination of the Jewish state, fundamental aspects of Jewish life are bound to change, but for the Hamilton Jewish Federation, it's business as usual, because assessing and responding to community needs is what Federation has always done.

CEO Gustavo Rymberg has been spending a significant part of his days fielding calls from worried parents and concerned community members, consulting with representatives from the Hamilton Police Services, City Hall, the school boards, all while staying on top of regularly scheduled Federation programs.

As a native of Argentina, Rymberg lived through the 1992 and 1994 bombings of the Israeli embassy and Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires, and he has much to say about what he is calling a critical moment in Jewish history.

In the following interview, he discusses how the war in Israel has impacted the work of Federation and how they are overcoming the unique challenges they are currently facing.

Q How are you feeling about the crisis Israel and the Jewish world are facing?

A This is a critical moment in Jewish history. This has changed everything and nothing is going to be the same. Not in Israel and not in our community.

Q What is the most significant impact this war has had on Federation?

A The fact that our number one priority right now is security, that there are people who are afraid to send their kids to school. That Federation funds are going to security instead of our beneficiary agencies.

Q How much has been raised for Israel emergency funds being spent?

A The North American Jewish Federation movement has raised more than \$550 million, including \$120 million from Canada for medical supplies, trauma counseling, relocation for families living in the south, cash assistance for basic needs and to families of those killed, injured, kidnapped, first responders and more.

But this effort to help Israel in her time of need is not about one or two months — this is going to take years. We are not only talking about rebuilding towns and kibbutzim. We have to rebuild people. We have to rebuild mental health. Everyone in Israel has been affected by this traumatic experience. This is going to be a long, long road.

Q How has our community changed as a result of these terrible events?

A There are many changes. The community support for the emergency campaign was incredible. People who've never given are contacting Federation and asking how they can support the Campaign. People are also asking about security. There's a lot of anxiety. Another change is that young people who were very critical of Israel before Oct. 7 now have a deeper understanding of what Israel is facing.

Q What are you hearing from parents?

A Parents of children in the public schools are reporting troubling incidents, which we take up with the Board of Education.

There are a lot of problems in the public school system and I have to say



PHOTOS: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS



people will reconsider joining, belonging, or contributing to a Jewish organization. I think more families will consider sending their children to Jewish day schools. We have to be vigilant, but not stop living Jewish lives.

Q What would you say to someone who is considering removing their mezuzah from their front door?

A I think it's a huge mistake. What's next? Stop going to a synagogue or to a Jewish event? Every form of Jewish expression we stop doing is a win for Hamas and antisemites.

Q What message do you have for unaffiliated members of our community?

A Be in touch. Report incidents to Hamilton Police Services and Federation. It's very important to report incidents of antisemitism to the Hamilton police. If we know the numbers are high, it helps us make our case for the need for more security. Send letters to media outlets. Be active. It's not good to be upset and stay alone.

Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg addresses attendees at the solidarity rally in support of Israel at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. The rally was held just days after the Oct. 7 attacks.

they're in a very difficult situation because of the lack of a proper protocol to deal with antisemitism and anti-Israel issues, and their need to equally support both sides. The other problem is that the Board of Trustees voted two years ago against any police presence in the schools, so if there's an incident in the public schools the police cannot be there.

Q What does the day after look like for our community?

A I think our community will be stronger and more united. I think

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Left: Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Street a day before the war's outbreak. **Above:** A deserted Dizengoff Street later that week.

PHOTOS BY LARRY LEVIN, SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS



WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Hamilton Police Chief Frank Bergen makes a point during his opening presentation at the police town hall.

A postponed family bar mitzvah

BY **JACKI LEVIN**
SPECIAL TO HJN

ON OCT. 6, we travelled to Israel for our grandson Max's bar mitzvah. With us were our daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren. We had gone a few days early so the two-year-old could adjust to the time change. Less than 24 hours after our arrival, war broke out.

What was it like being in Israel as the rockets flew? When the first sirens blasted, we had no idea where to go. We were staying in an Airbnb in Tel Aviv with no bomb shelter. An Israeli friend showed us how to shelter in the basement stairwell from where we heard the deafening explosion of a rocket that hit a building 300 metres from ours.

After a number of times in that space, we learned to distinguish between the sounds of rockets hitting their targets and those intercepted by the Iron Dome. We slept in our clothes to be ready to run to the shelter during the night. We had to stay indoors, which was especially hard on the two-year-old.

We were able to order some groceries from a delivery service and at one point, my husband Larry braved deserted streets after hearing from an Israeli friend of

a pizza kiosk that was open for a few hours. Most of our time was spent on the phone trying to get a flight home. Three of our booked flights had been cancelled.

It was challenging and especially frightening for the children, but nothing compared with what Israelis in the south were dealing with. After three days, friends came and drove us to their moshav near Nazareth, feeling it was safer to be in the north than in Tel Aviv. It was good for the children to be able to be outside, but the moshav was situated right next to an airbase. The noise of jet fighters taking off constantly was deafening.

We were finally able to get a flight to Dubai. We worried about hearing sirens on our way to the airport but that didn't happen. Two hours after our flight took off, the airport closed and all flights cancelled when a rocket hit nearby.

We felt guilty leaving our friends and family behind, but we were truly a liability in Israel having to be housed and fed and not knowing what to do in a war. We are now glued to our screens for news, all the more understanding of what Israelis are going through and doing whatever we can from here to help Israel.

“... we learned to distinguish between the sounds of rockets hitting their targets and those intercepted by the Iron Dome. We slept in our clothes ...”

JACKI LEVIN
Community member

HPS and OPP hate crimes town hall

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

MORE THAN 120 people attended a town hall at the Adas Israel on Nov. 2 to hear from Hamilton Police Services and the Ontario Provincial Police what measures they have put in place to protect the Jewish community from anti-semitic hate crimes.

Hamilton Police Chief Frank Bergen, Hate Crime Investigator Fabiano Mendes, and other representatives from the Hamilton Police Services along with representatives from Ontario Provincial Police were among those who sought to reassure the community that the safety and well-being of the Jewish community is at the top of their concerns.

The evening began with Hamilton Jewish Federation president Jason Waxman's announcement of a \$7,500 grant from the Hamilton Community Foundation to help offset the exorbitant costs Federation has been paying on a weekly basis for Hamilton police paid duty officers and cruisers to patrol the city's Jewish institutions.

Chief Bergen set the tone of the evening with reassurances that the Hamilton Police Services, notwithstanding financial constraints and staffing challenges,

has put measures in place to ensure the quickest response possible should there be any kind of serious incident in the Jewish community.

Chief Superintendent Pat Morris, speaking on behalf of the OPP Provincial Operations Intelligence Bureau offered similar reassurances about the intelligence gathering that goes on daily.

The general mood among the attendees was one of appreciation and a measure of relief from what they heard. However, questions posed during the Q&A session made it clear that for some community members, concerns about inadequate security remain high. Those accustomed to seeing a large police presence in their countries of origin in the wake of terrorist threats, for instance, voiced concerns by what they perceive is a thin level of protection in the event of a major security incident.

As to what can be done to prevent such an attack, neither the Hamilton Police nor the OPP had any reassuring words to offer.

The major message all the presenters strived to get across was three-fold. Stay vigilant, report any suspicious activity, and know that things are likely to get much worse before they get better.

“Stay vigilant, report any suspicious activity and know that things are likely to get much worse before they get better.”

PAT MORRIS
Chief Superintendent,
Ontario Provincial Police

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McMaster Jewish students feeling targeted and unsafe

Response by the university administration has been surprisingly weak



BY **RACHEL BELMONT**
MCMMASTER HILLEL
CO-PRESIDENT

ON THE MORNING of Saturday, Oct. 7, McMaster Jewish students woke up looking forward to a relaxing and restful reading week. This anticipation was quickly replaced by pain, fear, and grief as we slowly learned of the horrific events transpiring in southern Israel. Young people, much like ourselves, who should have been enjoying a music festival, were being brutally murdered by Hamas.

With hardly enough time to even comprehend the magnitude of these attacks, students were already seeing the tone-deaf responses online. On Saturday afternoon, the president of CUPE 3906, a union representing teaching assistants, research assistants, and graduate students at McMaster, reposted a video of the barbed wire fence being torn down and captioned it: "Palestine is rising. Long live the resistance."

Bear in mind—this was at a time when Jewish students were frantically calling their loved ones in Israel to ensure they were safe, with some left to anxiously wait until the end of Simchat Torah to reach people. The union removed this initial post and issued a statement responding to the backlash received.

Nowhere in this statement was an apology of any sort. Even after representatives from Hillel McMaster reached out to express their concerns, the union defended its actions and again failed to apologize. The CUPE 3906 statement sent McMaster's Jews a clear message, which has been reiterated time and time again in the past weeks: our grief does not count.

The return to campus was met

with uneasiness and uncertainty of what lay ahead. In the weeks since the attacks, Jewish students' socials have been flooded with posts and direct messages from their fellow students which completely delegitimize their suffering. Hayley Kupinsky described how "disheartening" it has been to see her peers "posting misinformation on social media pertaining to the conflict, even going so far as to say that the terrorist attacks were exaggerated or the atrocities are being fabricated." Students have felt extremely uncomfortable attending classes for fear of how this online behaviour will translate in person.

As expected, comments made by professors and teaching assistants in class have fueled conversations which make Jews feel targeted and unwelcome. Atara Lipetz expressed her serious concerns regarding campus behaviour: "Students have made inappropriate Holocaust comparisons, spread denialism of the Oct. 7 massacre, and called for an Intifada," referencing signs seen at the recent pro-Palestinian silent protest and vandalism scrawled in campus buildings.

On the same day as the protest, posters of Israeli hostages that were hung up by a Jewish student were torn down. When this student tried hanging the posters back up, he was confronted by crowds of students who smiled as they eagerly ripped them down again.

This behaviour from fellow students is causing Jews on campus to feel outnumbered and unsafe. A recent vigil organized by a Jewish student had to be held at night, with its location unpublicized, due to security concerns. Despite campus security and Hamilton police being in attendance,



PHOTO COURTESY MCMMASTER HILLEL

McMaster students showed up to the vigil waving Palestinian flags and concealing their faces. Even under the cover of the night, we could not have a space to grieve and pray without being interrupted.

Actions taken by the university, while well-meaning, have largely been insufficient. "I feel like they are more focused on saying pleasant words in arbitrary statements than taking action against rapidly rising antisemitic rhetoric," said David Benbassat. "Just yesterday I saw people in the student centre plaza holding signs calling for violence against Jewish people.

"It's unacceptable that an institution that prides itself on diversity and inclusion can have such a weak-handed response to one of history's most deadly forms of discrimination."

McMaster's Jewish students are taking action. "The strength of the McMaster Jewish community is inspiring," says Kupinsky. "Being a part of

Hillel and knowing the staff and other students are here to support me is a huge source of comfort." Students and Hillel staff are working directly with various university-affiliated offices and organizations. "Fortunately, we are being supported by the security on campus," says Lipetz. "The special constables regularly check up on the Hillel lounge."

While the University's willingness to hear our concerns is much appreciated, time will tell whether the school takes concrete action to investigate antisemitic incidents.

Being a Jewish student on campus right now is challenging, but our voices deserve to be heard. We should not have to wait until after dark to be proudly Jewish. We should not have to choose between associating with Israel or keeping our friends. And we should definitely not have to stay silent.



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Canadian Jews and Israeli Canadians feel compelled to act

Three doctors from Hamilton rushed to Israel during the second week of the war to serve on Magen David Adom ambulance teams

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

IN THE IMMEDIATE aftermath of the October 7 massacre on Israel's southern border, three Hamilton area physicians, Daniel Kollek, Ira Price, and Michael Schweitzer, waited expectantly for the phone call from Magen David Adom they knew was coming. When the call came in days later, accompanied by the question, "When can you come?," Ira Price felt an immediate sense of relief.

"It was a sense that I was able to go and do something to help my family who was under threat. And I had to see for myself."

"We all sit there, we watch what's going on and we eat ourselves alive," said Kollek. "Here, at least I could do something."

That "something" was serving as volunteer paramedics with Israel's national emergency medical, disaster, ambulance and blood bank to fill in for those called up for military service. When the HJN caught up with the three doctors during the third week of October, they were approaching the end of their week-long stint working on ambulance teams in the Ashdod region.

Their days, said Michael Schweitzer, were filled answering routine emergency calls, "the usual things, chest pains, work related injuries," notwithstanding the all too frequent "red alert" sirens that saw them pull over and take shelter before carrying on with their duties.

Schweitzer, who has volunteered with Magen David Adom on several other occasions, was taken with the "tremendous sense of unity and resilience" he found among the people he encountered.

"People have moved on from shock to determination that this will be the last time that anything like this ever happens and to do whatever's necessary to make sure that Israel's safety is secure."

Daniel Kollek spoke about the "incredible pain" Israelis were feeling, reeling from the more than 1,000 funerals that were taking place in the country that week.

"There's a lot of sadness, but there is incredible resolve ... and this is an unbeatable people," he said.

Ira Price had a similar impression. "It's a really interesting time here. There's a sense of fear and depression, where streets are empty, and people staying at home. On the other hand, you feel a sense of unity like you've never felt. Every single person here is family."

Asked if Israel was undergoing an existential crisis akin to how Israelis felt on the eve of the Six Day War



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DANIEL KOLLEK



Above and left, Dr. Ira Price, who practices emergency room and sports medicine, Dr. Michael Schweitzer, who practices family medicine, and Dr. Daniel Kollek, an emergency room physician, take a break from their stint as volunteer paramedics with Magen David Adom.

when fear gripped the country, Daniel Kollek answered in the negative.

"This is not an existential situation in the sense of the destruction of the state," said Kollek. "There is a sense that it's going to be a huge financial burden. So many people called up and not working. There's no revenue coming in, and the cost of maintaining an army this size is incredible. So financially there's going to be a cost. But existential? No."

Michael Schweitzer agreed. "There's a tremendous mood of determination to see this through," he said.

Ira Price believes it's the "Jewish nation" that's facing an existential crisis.

"I'm not worried so much about Israel as much as I'm worried about the nation," he said. "As you can see from the mobs around the world that are beating people in the street ... the land is just an excuse."

"I believe we can have peace with our Palestinian cousins ... we have to show empathy and right now it's hard for people to do that, so hopefully, with time. Israel is strong. One thing we're not doing is going anywhere."

Israeli Canadians Hana Rothschild and Niv Shimshon find ways to contribute to their homeland in her time of need



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN

Hana Rothschild, social worker



PHOTO: NIV SHIMSHON

Niv Shimshon, photographer

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Hana Rothschild

Hana Rothschild knew something was wrong when she received a text from her son in Israel at 3 a.m. the morning of Oct. 7 telling her he was okay. Rothschild, an artist/curator and clinical social worker, lives in Israel, but had flown to Canada days earlier for what was supposed to be a brief visit to arrange for new tenants to move into her income property in St. Catharines and participate in an art exhibit in Oakville, spent the next hours watching in horror as the full extent of the atrocities committed by Hamas on Israel's southern border came to light.

Her return home delayed by the war, Rothschild immediately joined a WhatsApp group of volunteer therapists and has been offering counselling to "ordinary Israelis living in the centre of Israel, not in an area of direct conflict. You would think that these people would feel safe but of course they are not," she says. "Nobody feels safe in Israel. And after the attack, the anxiety level went up and people were very scared about terrorists entering their homes." The attacks in the south, she said, "shook the foundation of safety in Israel."

When Rothschild and her family lived in Hamilton in the early 2000s, she worked at SISO, then the city's largest immigration settlement agency, as part of a support team for newly arrived refugees, many of whom were from Arab countries.

"Very quickly they would ask, 'where are you from? You look like us.' And I would say I'm from Israel and I'm here to help you for the whole year. Initially they would be just stunned. I'm probably the first Israeli they met and over the course of the year, I helped them in many circumstances, and they learned I'm not a monster and I'm there to help them and I'm authentic and caring."

The irony hasn't escaped her that, today, living in limbo, she is spending much of time doing exactly what she used to counsel those refugees back in another reality.

"I remember when we visited the refugees at their homes, they

would be watching the news from their countries and we would recommend to them to reduce that because it heightens your levels of anxiety ... And now I understand the sense of worry for the people who are back home. I understand the pain, the trauma and the feeling of being displaced."

Niv Shimshon

When Niv Shimshon and his wife moved from Israel to Canada in 2013, they could hardly have imagined that 10 years later, they'd be longing to return. But that was their exact sentiment the morning of Oct. 7 when they woke to frantic messages from family members, including Shimshon's aunt, texting from her safe-room on Alumim, a southern Israel kibbutz which miraculously escaped the slaughter.

Shimshon is a local photographer best known for his large-format portraits of Hamiltonians, which explore the social intricacies of Canadian identity. But these days, he finds himself completely absorbed by events in Israel and what he sees unfolding on social media.

"When you grow up in Israel, you always hear about the Holocaust and all the antisemitism, but then you travel the world and everybody's nice to you ... We always felt that Canada was super welcoming, and that nobody really cares where you're from but after October 7, you see what's going on and it's just insane," said Shimshon, who describes himself as someone on the "liberal left" who always felt a natural affinity with left wing causes.

Shimshon has since taken to Instagram, previously devoted solely to his art, to express his profound disappointment in his progressive community and promote Photographers for Israel (photographersforisrael.com), an online print store he created that features the work of well-known Israeli and Jewish photographers, with all proceeds going to support survivors from Israel's southern kibbutzim.

"October 7, 2023, was the day my home in Israel bled, and my home in Canada looked the other way. No words can describe how I felt and have been feeling ever since."

STAND WITH ISRAEL, IN ISRAEL Many community members have donated money to Israel during the recent crisis. But you can do more. The IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) needs civilian volunteers to help on their maintenance and logistics bases. These volunteers (from

around the world) are doing needed tasks such as packing medics vests, building portable field hospitals, assembling kit bags, and many other necessary chores. For more information, visit sarelcanada.org or call Sar-el representative Gord Garshowitz at 905-906-6900.

We were not prepared for this

Can our Jewish day schools ever be the same?



Jason Waxman

DIASPORA JEWS in their thirties and forties have been living in a dream world — a perceived reality of security, tolerance and support. While antisemitism has always permeated North-American society in one form or another, it has mostly been relegated to the sidelines.

I can honestly say that in my entire life, I have not experienced any real antisemitism. I have never felt threatened walking down the street wearing my kippah or discussing my religion.

This naivité was shattered with the abhorrent slaughtering of our brothers and sisters in Israel on Oct. 7, when reactions of so many in Hamilton and around the world proved that hatred of Jews is alive and well.

These events were a harsh and permanent punch to the gut and to the hearts of Jews around the world. The simple fact that we are witnessing the resurgence of real and dangerous antisemitism in Hamilton in 2023 is devastating, disheartening, but most of all, frightening. The almost embarrassing sense of security and freedom I felt as a Jew was instantaneously destroyed.

The most difficult aspect of this deeply unsettling situation were my children's reactions.

I have four beautiful children ages two, four, seven, and eight. Thankfully, my younger two are oblivious to the impact this will have on their lives, but older girls, who have friends in Israel, were asking questions.

In my desperate attempt to articulate some comforting responses, I realized that they were grappling with something that never even entered my realm of consciousness before Oct. 7.

Like many parents, my mind quickly shifted from comfort to security. All four of my children attend the Hamilton Hebrew Academy (HHA).

While there have always been security protocols in place, no one was prepared for this new reality. Thankfully, the HHA and the Hamilton Jewish Federation moved swiftly to ensure that a robust security plan was implemented to protect our children and calm the understandable panic of parents. There was a police presence at the school the entire day. This has continued almost uninterrupted over the last few weeks, thanks to Federation support.

In addition to paid-duty police officers, the school has hired private security, tightened drop-off and pick-up procedures and ensured extremely limited access to the building even for staff and parents.

They have created a new security room and increased monitoring of CCTV cameras. The fact that all of this has become the necessary price of being a Jew in the year 2023 is monumentally sad.

The parents' response has also been one of vigilance. A volunteer group of parents has been formed to patrol the school as an additional set of eyes on top of the other robust security measures. The group should be applauded for their efforts as we navigate this unprecedented environment.

I do not profess to speak on behalf of the entire HHA parent body, but although far from perfect, I believe my children are as safe at school as possible.

Amid the darkness there is light.

The community has come together to put our kids first. They have mobilized to react to the real needs of our children's collective safety.

It is vital that the community remains vigilant. At the same time, we must never capitulate to the temptation to hide in the shadows. While these days are eerily reminiscent of 1930s Nazi Germany, one fundamental distinction comes to mind—the State of Israel. We must continue to teach our children to be proud Jews. We must teach our children to love Israel. Am Yisrael Chai!

Jason Waxman is president of the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

Our worries continue to grow

Do we tell our children to hide their Jewish identity?



Laura Waltman



Ari Levin

ON OCTOBER 10, our children went back to school. Our three children attend separate schools; our youngest, age seven, attends Kehilah Heschel, while the older two, ages 10 and 13, attend Hamilton public schools. That day was particularly challenging for the older two. It was supposed to have been the first day of their vacation for our son's Bar Mitzvah in Israel. Our dream trip was called off when we awoke to the news on October 7 and our flight to Tel Aviv was cancelled shortly after.

The kids were apprehensive. How were they going to explain to their classmates why they were back in school when they were supposed to be on a well-publicized two-week vacation to Israel? Would their friends even know about the past weekend's events? We emailed the teachers who responded immediately. They were supportive and compassionate consistent with many of our previous experiences.

Sending our two oldest children to public school has been a relatively positive experience. We've felt torn in our decision to choose public school over Jewish Day school. For religious and educational reasons, it felt like the right choice for us. Our children have had great teachers and made many friends. They are very open about their religion, taking any opportunity to proudly teach others about our traditions. Many of their friends and classmates have never met or connected with someone who is Jewish before.

But even before October 7, there were issues. Our son has experienced a few antisemitic incidents over the past two years. Whenever those occurred, we ensured the school was notified and that they addressed the situation. We would also report the details to the Hamilton



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN

Their family Bar Mitzvah postponed, the Levin family attended the Jewish community solidarity rally for Israel.

Jewish Federation, which has been working closely with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board to track and help address antisemitism. We were always met with an empathetic response and acknowledgment of concern. Unfortunately, that's where the story always seems to end. There have been no discernible or communicated actions that have come out of any conversation that we've had with school board administrators to better safeguard our children.

October 10 came and went, and so has each day thereafter. Our children's worries ease while, in the current climate, ours continue to grow. Ultimately, public school is just an extension of the greater community, the city, and the country we live in. Our children may be exposed to the realities of public discourse and antisemitism earlier than if they were in a Jewish Day School. Post October 7, we are nervous about our children showing visible signs of Judaism. Do we tell them to avoid talking about Israel and the war in school. How do you teach your child that they will be a target of hatred just because they are Jewish?

Laura Waltman and Ari Levin are long time members of the Hamilton Jewish community.



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On behalf of KMB Law, we wish you a **Happy Hanukkah!**
—www.kmblaw.com

A love letter to Israel

How a 1976 trip to Israel strengthened my Jewish identity



Helaine Ortmann

In March 1976, I travelled by train from Tübingen to Munich to catch an El Al flight to Israel. The plane was filled with Russian emigrants who, upon landing in Tel Aviv, wept to the piped-in recording of Hatikvah.

I stayed in Nahariya with my uncle's youngest sister Tamar and her husband, Seppel, German Jews who had made Israel their home. I spoke German with them, their friends, and the other family I met, all Holocaust survivors. Each one of them pressed me to explain why a "nice Canadian Jewish girl" was studying in Germany.

It was complicated. My uncle David, the middle sibling of this large family, had escaped a concentration camp by crawling under barbed wire and rolling down a hill. He never talked about this part of his life, but he did talk about his love of language and literature.

He inspired me to study German, pursue my Master's degree, apply for a year's scholarship at Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen, and ultimately teach.

Israel was a culture shock. I felt excluded in gatherings because I couldn't understand or speak Hebrew.

Worse, I was a Jew studying in Germany. The people I met wanted to erase Germany and its memories from their minds.

Without central heating, I could not get warm. One morning, soaking up the sun in the driveway, I heard blasts. War had broken out, I thought, leaving me all alone to die in that beautiful town of Nahariya so close to Lebanon I could see the purple-pink hills from Tamar's home.

It was not war, she reassured me when she returned from her part-time job at the hospital. It was reconstruction dynamiting along the beach, mere metres away.

Israel was noisy and chaotic. Streets were crowded; dogs ran loose, defying traffic; the telephones didn't always work; radios on buses blared the news. There were soldiers everywhere with machine guns slung over their shoulders that

almost bumped against me when I lined up behind them to buy a bus ticket or postage stamp.

Tamar's son Eytan drove us to the Golan Heights to visit yet another relative.

Handgun in the driver's door pocket, we circled the breathtaking Sea of Galilee, navigating pot holes, sidestepping passing tanks, and yielding to a shepherd crossing the road with his flock. Under the watchful eyes of soldiers positioned on rooftops, the young family welcomed us into their home and toured me through their bomb shelter, a small room kitted out with machine guns, cots on the wall, and oxygen masks.

My cousin from Hamilton met up with me in Nahariya, and together we went to Acre, Haifa, then Jerusalem to Yad Vashem. I immersed myself in video testimonies, artifacts and photos and read untranslated documents and accounts of the Holocaust. Mind, body and spirit in spasm, I agonized over my return to Tübingen; my inner self interrogating me as others had earlier in the month.

From Jerusalem, we travelled to Eilat on an exciting five-hour bus ride at top speed. We spent our days playing on the beach, our evenings dancing in nightclubs, and our nights sleeping on the floor of a rented caravan.

We visited Eilat's Coral World Underwater Observatory; day-tripped to see the Fjord (a mesmerizing emerald green); and hitchhiked until soldiers picked us up in an open army jeep where I clung to the roll cage bars as they tore over steep rugged cliffs.

I bussed my way to a moshav near Ashkelon to visit Tamar's niece, husband and young family. Etti, a couple of years older than me, donned a headscarf before she answered her front door. She was gracious, warm and curious about my experience in Germany and my life in Canada. The Shabbat I spent in this close-knit religious community was quiet and peaceful.

Back in Tübingen, my friends probed me for information about my month in Israel, listening deeply. Each time I shared my stories, my voice grew stronger, clearer and more confident about being Jewish. To this day, that voice has never left me.

Death's cheerleaders

We have seen the worst of humanity



Ben Shragge

On Oct. 7, Hamas brutally and indiscriminately murdered more than 1,200 men, women, and children in southern Israel. The attacks have been called "Israel's 9/11" for the horror and shock they provoked. But while the 2001 attacks were mediated by TV and radio news, most of us learned of the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust on our phones.

Technology has progressed over the last 20-plus years, but we should not confuse technical advancement with the moral improvement of the species. Instantaneously, news about the ongoing atrocities was available at our fingertips. But so, too, were horrific images and videos uploaded by the terrorists themselves to social media. Some of them even used their victims' phones to livestream crying children, call and taunt relatives, and share photos of the dead. Whether it's planes for al-Qaeda or smartphones for Hamas, our advanced technology becomes a blunt instrument of death in the hands of terrorists.

And beyond even its use by the terrorists themselves, a bloodthirsty mob went on social media to justify and celebrate the attacks in real time. Some justifications were cloaked in academic buzzwords, like McMaster University professor Ameil Joseph's tweet, "Postcolonial and decolonial are not just words you heard in your EDI workshop." But it took Mia Khalifa, an adult film star with more than 5.7 million followers, to express the mob's bloodlust most directly, tweeting, "Can someone please tell the freedom fighters in Palestine to flip their phones and film horizontal."

I was in high school on 9/11. My memories of that day are of listening to the news on the radio in a darkened classroom, and of an almost universally shared solemnity and respect for the dead. I say "almost" because there were a few students who celebrated the attacks, motivated by hatred of the United States over perceived injustices done to their home countries. Part of my political awakening

was realizing that not only does evil exist in this world, but that there are people around me cheering it on. They may use academic language to make their views sound respectable, but their true expression is the laughter I saw on 9/11.

Fortunately, there were no smartphones back in 2001. In 2004, the New York Times noted that, "Almost instinctually on Sept. 11, people recognized that they had an unfortunate view into an intensely private matter, an unseemly intrusion not just into someone's death, but into the moment of their dying." Al-Qaeda cheerleaders—and I saw with my own eyes that they existed—lacked a platform to spread hateful messages and gruesome media. We were able to process the attacks, horrific as they were, without social media compounding the horror.

Fast forward to 2023. A Politico article published just days after the Hamas attacks notes that a review of X (formerly Twitter) "discovered scores of videos that allegedly showed militants murdering civilians and Israeli soldiers; viral hashtags associated with the ongoing violence that praised Hamas' activities; and social media posts that included graphic pictures of those killed and antisemitic hate speech." On Oct. 7, the few students I saw laughing on 9/11 seem to have multiplied and been given megaphones. The decision, let alone the ability, to withhold graphic footage now seems archaic. What happened to 2001's "almost instinctual" respect for the dead? Did human nature change in the intervening decades? Have we simply gotten worse as a species?

Social media undoubtedly plays a role. Research has shown that out-group animosity (e.g. negative messages directed toward political opponents) is the strongest predictor of shares and retweets. Hatred of a perceived enemy, and celebration of that perceived enemy's defeat, is nothing new. Hatred of Jews, in particular, has a long and horrid history. But now social media incentivizes us to fan the flames of hatred by liking, sharing, and engaging with content that appeals to our worst instincts. Of course, social media alone can't make us hateful in the first place. On Oct. 7, we saw the worst of humanity not just in the Hamas terrorists, but in the vicious reactions close to home.

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The Hamilton Jewish Federation has been actively engaged in supporting Israel and addressing challenges faced by the Jewish community. This report highlights key initiatives undertaken by Federation to promote awareness, combat anti-semitism, and ensure the safety and security of the Hamilton Jewish community.

1. MONITORING AND REPORTING ANTISEMITIC HATE CRIMES:

Hamilton Jewish Federation has been diligent in monitoring and reporting the rising number of antisemitic hate crimes. By keeping a close eye on incidents targeting the Jewish community, the federation plays a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for appropriate responses from law enforcement and advocacy agencies.

2. ADDRESSING ANTISEMITIC SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS:

Federation has taken a proactive stance in addressing instances of antisemitic and anti-Israel social media comments. Specifically, the Federation reported HWDSB Ward 2 Trustee Sabreina Dahab's comments, leading to a thorough investigation. This action underscores the commitment to combating online hate speech and ensuring accountability for those who engage in such behavior. Hamilton Jewish Federation supports the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's decision to initiate an investigation of Dahab's comments and behaviour.

3. ADVOCACY FOR FAIR MEDIA COVERAGE:

Recognizing the importance of fair and unbiased coverage of the Israeli-Hamas War, Hamilton Jewish Federation has actively engaged with local media outlets (The Spectator, CBC, CHCH, In The Hammer, Global, and others). We have been working to ensure balanced reporting, providing accurate information to counteract misinformation and promote a nuanced understanding of the complex situation. Hamilton Jewish Federation met with editor-in-chief of Metroland newspaper, Paul Berton twice in October. Berton expressed understanding and agreement with our concerns over the coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. We discussed the antisemitic phrases used by pro-Hamas followers, and he agreed on the need for sensitivity, as well as a more balanced presentation of opinions and addressing these antisemitic references. At our second meeting, we presented historical inaccuracies and antisemitic content in the Spectator's articles. We suggested that they consider how local coverage on the war affects the Jewish community in Hamilton. We offered Federation's resources to fact-check and combat racism, and for the editor-in-chief to resume his weekly opinion columns. He expressed willingness to follow these suggestions, and to continue further discussions. We continue to send frequent opinion letters and articles to local outlets, with no intention of stopping anytime soon. We always welcome community participation in writing and sharing your opinions with the Hamilton Spectator and other local media.

4. COLLABORATION WITH FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT:

Maintaining open lines of communication with the federal government is a priority for the Hamilton Jewish Federation. Through regular contact with MPs, MPPS and other politicians and city authorities, we advocate for policies that support Israel and address concerns related to the safety and security of the Jewish community. The Hamilton Community Foundation gave Hamilton Jewish Federation a grant to use towards our security needs.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SECURITY TOWN HALL:

In addition to the solidarity gathering on Oct. 10 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, we have organized a town hall which took place on Nov. 2 in collaboration with Hamilton Police Services, offering community members the opportunity to ask security-related questions. This initiative fosters a sense of community and ensures that individuals can voice their concerns while receiving information on security measures and protocols from Hamilton Police Services, HPS Hate Crime Unit, and members of the OPP.

At the moment, police presence is costing us \$20,000 a week and we are still negotiating a way to cover these costs.

6. COLLABORATION WITH B'NAI BRITH CANADA AND CIJA AND HONEST REPORTING CANADA :

Collaboration with prominent organizations such as B'nai Brith Canada and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) strengthens the federation's advocacy efforts. By working together, these organizations can pool resources and expertise to address common challenges faced by the Jewish community.

7. MONITORING ANTI-ISRAEL PROTESTS AND SCHOOL WALKOUTS:

The Hamilton Jewish Federation actively collaborates with the local police and boards of education, to monitor anti-Israel protests and school walkouts. This partnership ensures that potential security threats are identified and addressed promptly, contributing to the overall safety of the community. Through this partnership we can respond swiftly to parents' concerns and report them to the Hamilton and Halton boards of education.

8. SUPPORT FOR JEWISH STUDENTS:

From Junior Kindergarten to university, we are committed to supporting Jewish students. By addressing their unique needs and concerns, the federation contributes to creating a safe and inclusive educational environment for young members of the community.

We are here to help: if you witness an antisemitic act report it at jewishhamilton.org and click on "Report and antisemitic incident" on the home page.

We have a lot of work ahead of us and the results won't be as fast as we would like them to be.

However, it is imperative that we continue to persevere in our collective efforts and commitment to communal security and protection.

Together, we will continue to face challenges ahead, but we will not let them stop us.

Demand McMaster University denounce PhD student Ghada Sasa's incitement of hate crimes change.org/p/demand-mcmaster-university-denounce-faculty-member-ghada-sasa-s-incitement-of-hate-crimes

The current McMaster PhD student has been one of the organizers of the Hamas-supporting hate rallies that have taken over Toronto and targeted Jewish-owned businesses like Aroma and Cafe Landwer, and the Miles Nadal Community Centre. Immediately after Oct. 7, she began praising the atrocities committed against the 1,200 Israelis who were raped, tortured, killed.

B'nai Brith Canada: Anti-hate App

This app empowers you to instantly report an online or real-world hate incident in the palm of your hand, 24/7.

Confirmed data is anonymously documented and allows B'nai Brith to take concrete action.

B'nai Brith Canada operates the country's only Anti-Hate Hotline combating antisemitism and racism.

If you have been the victim of an antisemitic incident, we encourage you to call our toll-free anti hate hotline

1-800-892-BNAI (2624)

CIJA: Take Action | cija.ca/tell_canada_s_leaders_to_stand_strong_with_israel

Tell Canada's leaders to stand strong with Israel



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ARE STILL HELD HOSTAGE BY HAMAS

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In moments like these,
your light is a beacon of hope.

Share Your Light

Community Commemoration

Join us on the eighth night of Chanukah as we come together as a community to shine a light of hope and solidarity for those currently held captive in Gaza.

We invite everyone to participate in a candle-lighting ceremony on behalf of those who are unable to do so themselves.

THURSDAY, DEC. 14 | 5.30PM

Indoor location to be announced after registration

Register by Sunday, Dec. 10 bit.ly/share-your-light-23

For more information, please contact Maggie at mnorris@jewishhamilton.org | 905.648.0605

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE

Morris Black contest's new format



An enthusiastic presenter at last year's Morris Black Public Speaking Contest.

PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN

MAGGIE NORRIS
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

THE MORRIS BLACK Speaking Contest is an annual event that was created to carry on the legacy of a man who believed that public speaking was an important skill to cultivate in our children. The contest has taken place in the Hamilton Jewish community for more than 50 years.

I was asked to help organize last year's contest and really enjoyed working with the Black family on an event they held so dear to their hearts.

Next year's contest will take place on Sunday, April 14 at the Hamilton Hebrew Academy, and will feature big changes, based on feedback we have received from previous years. The committee was open to new ideas, and eager to tailor the contest to fit the needs of the community to encourage participation and make the event bigger and better than ever.

This year, we will be extending an invitation to students from Guelph, Niagara Falls, and Kitchener to participate

in the contest. In addition, we have added a non-competitive speech presentation option where students from any grade will have the opportunity to deliver their speech and receive constructive feedback from a panel of educators.

Each student participating in the non-competitive track will be entered into a draw to win a prize. The competitive track will continue as it has in previous years, where students will deliver their speech while vying for a first, second or third place ranking. Carrying on with tradition, the Morris Black Speaking Contest will award every participating student with a certificate and kosher candy prize bag. A call for judges has already gone out in Hamilton and surrounding cities, and the list is growing.

We encourage anyone interested in being a judge to email me at mnorris@jewishhamilton.org. Look out for submission guidelines. We look forward to seeing all of the children develop their public speaking skills and giving them an opportunity to shine!

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

JNF launches Israel Resilience Fund

SUZY POLGAR

IN THE MIDST of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) of Canada stands shoulder to shoulder with the communities on the periphery of Israel, particularly in the south. These communities, including Sderot, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and others in the Gaza envelope, historically underserved compared to metropolitan areas, have long been at the heart of JNF's mission. The strong relationships we have cultivated over the decades are built on mutual care and respect, and now, even in their darkest days, JNF remains dedicated to providing vital support.

Over the years, JNF Canada has built essential infrastructure, including bomb shelters, which now play a crucial role in safeguarding residents during the ongoing crisis. In response to the current crisis, JNF immediately launched the Israel Resilience Fund to address urgent disaster relief and the long-term recovery needed in the months and years ahead.

JNF's close relationships with key members and leaders of these peripheral communities enabled JNF Canada to respond swiftly to the pressing needs arising from the conflict. As events unfolded, JNF promptly followed guidance from community leaders to identify the most critical needs and began delivering support in various ways:

URGENT DISASTER RELIEF

The Israel Resilience Fund provides crucial support such as rescue and relocation services, temporary shelter, essential supplies, and the upgrading of bomb shelters. It also fortifies emergency response teams, ensuring a rapid and effective response to emerging needs across the country.

LONG-TERM RECOVERY

These communities face years-long recovery and rebuilding. Through the Israel Resilience Fund, JNF Canada is focusing on various aspects of long-term rehabilitation. One noteworthy initiative is the expansion of the Resilience Centre in Sderot, a vital care facility in the region. JNF is doubling the centre's space dedicated to critical PTSD and mental health treatments, which will significantly contribute to the healing and recovery of the communities.

JOINING HANDS FOR HOPE

The brutal attacks on southern Israel have left an indelible mark on the region, with innocent lives lost and countless individuals wounded. This moment calls for solidarity, not just in Israel but also within the diaspora and global Jewish community.

In the face of this darkness, let us all continue to advocate for Israel and give generously to the many organizations tirelessly working to aid victims of terror, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and address the immense trauma that lingers. While there is no single correct way to take action, please consider JNF for two compelling reasons: First, 100 per cent of donations go directly to Israel, with no administrative fees deducted at this time. Secondly, Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel (KKL) is currently matching our donations to Israel's emergency needs on a dollar-for-dollar basis. This means every dollar donated will have TWICE the impact.

We have overcome unimaginable odds before, and we will do so again. Together, in harmony and unity, let us work to improve the lives of those suffering and may we see peace and security in the beloved land of Israel.

JNF Hamilton

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OUT OF THE COLD

Hamilton's homeless still need us



PHOTO: CINDY RICHTER

Sister Carole Anne Guay, Hamilton Out Of The Cold co-founder, alongside one-third of the Jewish community program's volunteer dream-team.

CINDY RICHTER

THE HAMILTON Out of the Cold program commemorates its 25th season this November. The ways in which the program has impacted both guests and volunteers is honoured to this day.

We can all agree that 25 years of cultivating a sense of community centres on common human experiences such as tikkun olam, seeing humanity in every person, caring for and respecting all people, being universalistic in our pledge to support the poor, Jewish and non-Jewish. By doing what our values and traditions teach, some good has come. That, especially in our time of need, has been a silver lining.

The following email was sent Oct. 24 to Beth Jacob Synagogue from an Out of the Cold guest.

"Given the events of Oct. 7 and the rising tensions since then, I have felt a need to reach out. Whichever side a person falls on, antisemitic voices seem to be yelling the loudest. Recent statistics seem to mirror it. I've been attending Out of the Cold for about five years. Cindy's group has always

shared their Jewishness with us, whether it's the delight of Hanukkah singing a song, gracefully dealing with someone's ignorance of Jewish tradition or their constant sunny smiles.

I can't imagine a world where their light or any other Jewish person would be dimmed. Please know that although voices of hate are loud and actions of depravity may continue, there are a lot of people like me who will always support our Jewish brothers and sisters."

Over five months last winter, 30,000 meals made their way to the vulnerable and homeless in Hamilton. That was 8,000 more than the year before. The Jewish community's group distributed 2,400 meals. We will continue to put dreidels and mishloach manot within our guest's takeaway meals as a symbol of what Jews value: *derekh erez* (civility and humanity) and *chesed* (mercy and kindness.)

Be our partner. Donate toiletries, adult hats and gloves, sponsor a dinner, donate to the Beth Jacob/Out of the Cold Fund, bake muffins, cookies, squares once a month, run a food drive. *Thank you.*

KEHILA HESCHEL

A safe and supportive environment



PHOTO: COURTESY KEHILA HESCHEL

Kehila students getting to know our community helpers who keep us safe.

ANITA BERNSTEIN

AS THE GLOBAL Jewish community watched in horror the developments of the war in Israel, Kehila Heschel teachers and staff implemented immediate measures to ensure a safe, supportive and calm school environment.

We worked together with Temple Anshe Sholom, Temple Playhouse and followed the lead of the Hamilton Jewish Federation to secure our school premises.

We kept our families informed of the additional security measures we executed so they would feel confident to send their children to school. We supported our families by sharing resources to assist them in providing information to their children at age appropriate levels.

At school, as our current student population is in the lower elementary grades, teachers did not bring up the topic of the war but listened and responded supportively to student's individual questions or concerns about family members who live in Israel and the current conflict. Discussion with all students centered on the individuals in our community who keep us safe.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation provided police protection by having a cruiser parked in front of the school building, daily, during school hours. In order to normalize the sudden police presence, we included the officers in classroom activities; recess and we encouraged interaction with them on a daily basis. Students showed their appreciation to the police through their art and thank you notes.

As suggested by Rabbi Edythe Held Mencher's article "How to Talk to Children About the Conflict in Israel," we continued our daily routines at school, which gave students a sense of security and reassurance.

A parent's perspective by Chelsea Margolis: Without the wonderful Jewish community we have in Hamilton and at Kehila Heschel, I would feel far more isolated right now. Talking to other parents at dropoff who are feeling the same concerns has been very helpful. I feel reassured by the friendly police presence and safety protocols in place at Kehila Heschel. I'm so thankful my daughter is at a Jewish day school so she- and we- can feel supported by our community.



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TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Doing what is right and just



DORA ANN COHEN ELLISON

THIS YEAR, the Temple Anshe Sholom Learning Program welcomed 50 students from

Grades JK through 10. Our school hallways are buzzing each Shabbat morning and Wednesday afternoon, as our students explore Jewish values, text, traditions and prayer.

We kicked off our September learning with a family shabbat. Everyone was excited to bring our families together for our first Shabbat morning of the year. Our next Family Shabbat morning included a school assembly and activity marking the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

Then, our world was rocked as Israel was brutally attacked by the terrorist organization Hamas. Suddenly, as parents and teachers, we were faced with conflicting and overwhelming emotions as many had family or friends in danger. We are struggling with how to keep our own students safe, sheltered from the violence, and still address the feelings and concerns of our students.

Rabbi Cohen and Morah Dora-Ann offered our teens a session to sort facts from sensationalized social-media misinformation, to talk about strategies for confronting antisemitic actions among peers, and to allow our oldest youth to work through their emotions together.

We offer a heartfelt thank you to Anshe Sholom parent Joy Pekar, psychotherapist (qualifying), who joined Dora-Ann for a session for staff and parents. We explored how to talk with our kids about what is happening in Israel and in our own neighbourhoods, and also shared

our feelings in a safe space. This online session was so valuable in helping our families source therapeutic resources and Canadian/Israeli Jewish resources for timely information. If you would like a copy of the document we compiled to help parents and caregivers work through these discussions, please email: dacellison@anshesholom.ca.

This month, our junior and senior students will be making Chanukah cards and notes of support for Israeli soldiers. We followed our month-long exploration of spiritual courage and the willingness to take risks for the right causes by incorporating the idea that we all can be heroic in our everyday lives by living an exemplary life, helping others where we can and doing what is right and just. This value connects students to the history of Chanukah, as well as the current events we are collectively watching unfold in Israel and across the world.

Students will be learning about how they can help others in our community, learning about the services offered at Hamilton Jewish Family Services and Hamilton Jewish Federation. We kick off our annual food and toiletry drive Nov. 30, and encourage anyone visiting the Temple to drop off items to our collection bin. Please bring non-perishable items with you when you join us Dec. 8 at 6 p.m. for our Chanukah-Shabbat dinner and 7 p.m. for a family Kabbalat Shabbat and Chanukah service. Don't forget your chanukiah and candles that we will light in our sanctuary windows!

To support our food and toiletries drive for Hamilton Jewish Family Services, register for the Dec. 8 dinner, or for more information about our Temple community, please contact Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison at dacellison@anshesholom.ca or visit anshesholom.ca

B'NAI B'RITH YOUTH ORGANIZATION

We are celebrating our 100th year



NOAH JAYE
BBYO EXECUTIVE

WHEN I joined BBYO in the fall of 2022, I had never heard of the organization. Apparently, the Jewish

youth group for teens in Grades 8-12 was just coming back to Hamilton but it had a long and storied tradition all across the world. This year marks the organization's 100th year, and that means that it is a good time to look back at how we have arrived where we are, and the history of BBYO.

BBYO was founded in Nebraska in 1924 with the help of advisor Sam Beber. By the end of the Second World War, the Southern Ontario Region — eventually the Lake Ontario Region — was founded. The first chapters in Hamilton were Young Sons of Israel AZA #589 (Aleph Zadik Aleph, BBYO's fraternity) and Bal-four BBG #235 (B'nai B'rith Girls, BBYO's sorority), founded in 1945 and 1947, respectively. Over the next five decades, chapters would continue to be founded in the region.

Twenty years ago, an organizational split from B'nai B'rith International saw the closing of many chapters, including those in Hamilton. It took a while for a new one to pop up, and we are the only chapter in current operation. Upon learning this, I decided to try and find members of these previous BBYO chapters to see how BBYO in Hamilton has evolved over the century.

First, I got in touch with the previous president of the Hamilton Jewish Federation, Howard Eisenberg, about his experience in BBYO. Howard grew up in Windsor, which bears a few similarities to Hamilton from a BBYO perspective.

Both have similarly sized communities of Jews located far from other BBYO locations.

Both have their own distinct identity, with Windsor's Hertzl AZA and Hamilton's Mishpacha BBYO. Lastly, they also serve as a welcoming and pluralistic Jewish community for teens who want to stay connected to their culture while maintaining a healthy social life. Eisenberg says that some of his closest friends are from his BBYO days, and when I asked him to reflect on his experience, he described it as "Lots of fun, lots of fun. Not trying to sugarcoat it."

I also heard from Brenda Burjaw, who was a part of Genesis BBG in Hamilton, which ran through the 1980s and 1990s and began to slow down soon after. Genesis BBG had its male counterpart, Phoenix AZA, and they both routinely attracted between 50 and 60 teens from as far as Kitchener for the sense of community and welcome that they brought. Burjaw joined because of her grandmother, Katie Papernick, who was a member a few decades before. She remembers sleepovers, chapter events, and being on the board as highlights of her BBYO experience.

She says that BBYO has also played a huge part in her life, through the leadership skills it conferred that she still finds use for to this day.

These accounts match up pretty well with my own experience of BBYO. It is an invaluable source of leadership experience, and one of the best sources of Jewish community I could ask for. As we celebrate 100 years of BBYO, I think that we should recognize that its history includes Hamilton, throughout many generations of Jewish teens.

Noah Jaye is the chapter president of Mishpacha BBYO.

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– Shirley L.



Special Thanks

We are very grateful to our donors, volunteers, Ladies' Auxiliary Tea CO-chairs, Rochelle Waxman, and Jo-ann Pomerantz, as well as our wonderful Ladies Auxiliary Tea callers: Sandy Fuss, Sheila Burman, Susan Goodman, Marilyn Foreman, Hyndy Halpren, Elaine Katz, Gayle Kepecs, Doreen Korman, Shirley Levine, Theresa Mensa, Pat Morden, Irma Perelgut, Rhona Rottman, Gwen Schwab, Judy Schwartz, Carol Shogilev, Sasha Weisz, and Marmie Wolfson.

Your support and dedication have made our event a Hamilton Institution!

Now more than ever the Chanukah story offers us comfort and hope for a world free of darkness and hate. We wish each of you a Happy Chanukah, and safe and peaceful New Year. You can support Shalom Village seniors and the staff who care for them by sending **Shalom Village tribute cards** to your friends & loved ones, this Chanukah.

Let us do the work for you! Shalom Village tribute cards are a great way to support our seniors, and remind people you've been unable to see, that you're thinking of them. To send cards simply visit shalomvillage.ca and click on the "Give Today" link in the top right corner. If you'd like to send multiple cards, or prefer to speak to someone at the foundation, feel free to call us at 905-529-1613 X264.



HAMILTON JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

The miracles keep coming



CINDY MARK
CHAIR, HJFS BOARD

AS CHILDREN, we learned the simplistic story of Hannukah. There was a destruction of the Temple and

in the ruins, there was only enough oil left to keep the Temple's Menorah lit for one day, yet the flames continued to flicker for eight days, leaving them time to find a fresh supply of oil. It was seen as a true miracle.

A parallel can be drawn with the recent "miracle" that happened at Hamilton Jewish Family Services. It has been well known in the community that HJFS has shared the same plight as many other social service agencies forcing some programs to be paused or completely stopped while we take time to properly re-imagine a sustainable future. We needed to be fiscally responsible while still delivering meaningful and impactful services. To say that the agency felt kicked down by these choices would have been a severe understatement.

As we were reeling from the agency changes, the world as we knew it changed on Oct. 7. We knew there were people suffering in our community, yet our mental health program was one of the programs

we had to "pause".

We used social media and our newsletter platforms to ask for community volunteers who would be able to provide professional mental health support to those who may need help coping with the devastating events in Israel and the rippling events around the world. The responses flew in almost immediately from over a dozen people. We were then able to match those requesting support with a qualified professional. Our hearts swelled, just as our days were seemingly so dark, they brightened suddenly with the love and caring that poured from our community. We had our own version of a "miracle," we were able to support those who were vulnerable when they needed us.

We are planning a phased-in program of integrated Mental Health and Wellness Services in early 2024, and have been re-imagining what this will look like and how we can best serve the needs of our community. For this we are intending to form a mental health and wellness programs panel. This will help us explore the needs of our community and how we can serve these needs as an agency. If you have an interest in joining this group, please email our executive director, Cara Bensimon at carab@hamiltonjfs.ca. We look forward to providing the community with details of the program as it evolves.

SHALOM VILLAGE

Spreading light in the darkness



MARIANNE KLEIN
CEO, SHALOM VILLAGE

OVER THE last few months, we witnessed some of the worst acts of hatred, brutality, and barbarity since

the Holocaust, simply unimaginable.

Like many of our residents, I have loved ones who survived the Holocaust, and others who have made Israel their home today. I understand and feel the anxiety, and even fear, that these events have caused us individually, and collectively.

Anne Frank taught us, that nobody needs to wait a single moment before we start improving the world and this is the attitude, we have adopted at Shalom Village every day by making moments matter wherever we can.

The Shalom Village community has been engaged in Tikun Olam, one mitzvah at a time.

Our staff are working diligently to provide additional comfort, and activities to support our residents and our community.

As Hanukkah approaches, we are reminded that even in the face of unspeakable tragedies, there is hope, love and light. As I walk through the halls of Shalom Village, I see a community that has become

a family; a family that is encircling our seniors with all the love, care, and commitment we can muster. To help us keep their spirits high and hopeful, the Shalom Village Foundation is bringing back the Snowflake Appeal.

The Snowflake Appeal was halted during COVID-19, but now is the right time to bring back this Shalom Village resident favourite.


For every \$25 donated, we will hang a snowflake with the donors name written on it, throughout the Shalom Village residences. Residents enjoy walking along the hallways and seeing the names of friends, past and present, while they reminisce about happy times and fond memories.

We hope you will join us in our effort to add more light, love, and laughter into the hearts of our seniors. To participate, watch your mailbox and your inbox for Snowflake donation information. Let's come together to create a snow-storm of names and snowflakes throughout Shalom Village – and give our residents hundreds of reasons to smile this Hanukkah!

Our residents, like the Jewish people, are resilient and together, we will bring light to the darkness and emerge stronger and more unified.

Chag Chanukah Sameach

Wishing you and your loved ones warmth and light this Chanukah season.



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CHANUKAH SAMEACH!

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BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE

The miracle of the Jewish enterprise



RABBI BENI WAJNBERG

WHEN I arrived in the United States to go to rabbinical school, I used every cent of the \$3,750 that I had in my bank account to purchase the best car I could afford. “Miss Daisy” was a 2002 Black Dodge Stratus or, as my wife called it, “a bathtub on wheels that had seen better days.” I, however, call Miss Daisy my personal Chanukah miracle. Every reasonable person would have given it six months of life left. Instead, Miss Daisy lasted for much longer, making it all the way to the end of my rabbinical studies – but not a second more.

Chanukah is a celebration of our ability to push further than we think is possible. It’s about believing, challenging ourselves, and engaging proactively in the world despite our surroundings. It is no coincidence that Chanukah happens in the darkest time of the year. Light, according to the Torah, is the first creation, so that it could counter the deep darkness that was abundant. The flood at the time of Noah was followed by a rainbow. Darkness is real, Judaism teaches, but it is never final.

This year, Chanukah is happening during the darkest hour of Jewish history since the Holocaust. We have yet to be able to heal from the atrocities that our people, really our family, went through in Israel last Simchat Torah. Perhaps we never will. But to be a Jew is to believe in light and goodness, to insist in our hopes and dreams, and to pursue them.

The reason that we are still here as a people, despite all historical odds, can be found in our refusal to give up making this world better. We insist on light especially when it’s dark, and on love when it’s scary.

Chanukah is also the celebration of the

rededication of the Holy Temple. This, too, is paramount today. We need to rededicate ourselves and our institutions to the higher purpose they seek to fulfil. We need each other. This is a time to rededicate ourselves to the unity of all of the Jewish people. This is a time to recommit, in all possible ways, to our local Jewish institutions. We need to believe in them, and participate in their growth.

This is a time to remember that we are all one big family directly responsible for one another. This is a time to remember that we must always come together. There is no other possible way. We must love one another, even if we practice Judaism differently. We are all one.

Light and unity go hand in hand. The first few glimpses of light, in the aftermath of the terrorist massacre in Israel, were obvious. Israelis averaged 11 hours waiting in line to donate blood. Soldiers were better fed than ever, because they had millions of Jewish parents taking care of them.

Heartbreaking stories from the massacre pointed out to parents hugging their children to make them feel loved as terrorists ended their lives, and young partners in love died by jumping on grenades to keep their bashert, their soulmates, from dying. We insisted on light, on togetherness, and on each other.

We are made stronger, more resilient, and more united by what happened. Perhaps we love one another more than we ever did before. And we will continue to build a meaningful future. If Miss Daisy could last more than six months, anything is possible. We will never forget this past Simchat Torah, but we will not let it keep us from what is truly our divine-given shlichut, mission, on this world: to bring light, to deepen our connection to Yiddishkeit, and to love deeply and completely each member of our family. There is no other way than love, unity and light. We only need to trust. Chag Sameach!

TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

We stand with Israel



RABBI JORDAN COHEN

TEMPLE ANSHE Sholom stands with Israel. Ever since the horrific events of Oct. 7, the TAS community has done every-

thing possible to support the great needs in Israel while also providing services for members of our own community who are struggling with the implications of the war, the hostages, and the increase in antisemitic hatred.

Initially we organized an online vigil with members of Shaarei-Beth El congregation to gather and bring comfort and updated information. Essential items continue to be collected to be sent to Israel, including knit black toques, socks, and t-shirts. And, of course, funds have been sent to support the efforts of Magen David Adom and the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism’s campaigns to help Israeli victims of terror. The members of our community have been incredibly forthcoming during this tragic time.

Numerous sessions have been held for adults and youth to discuss the events in Israel and Palestine and help them address the rapid increase in local anti-Israel and antisemitic activity.

Thank you to our Director of Religious Education, Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison, and school parent and psychotherapist, Joy Pekar, for their sessions with our students, staff and parents. Our religious school students are sending letters of support and Chanukah cards to Israeli soldiers, just to let them know we are thinking of them. Thank you also to Luba Apel for her great efforts to organize a Shabbat dinner to support Jewish students, staff and faculty at McMaster University and other Hamilton post-secondary institutions.

Through formal and personal channels, Temple Anshe Sholom will continue to support soldiers and their families, and the hostages and victims of Hamas Terror. We are reaching out directly to family and friends of our members in Israel. May peace come to them soon. Am Yisrael Chai!



May this holiday season bring peace, health and happiness throughout the coming year.

Chag Chanukah Sameach!

~ Moishe, Eli & Gabe Chaimovitz & their families ~

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Café Baffico: A destination bakery in Hamilton's east end

Sourdough Chanukah donuts and New York-style sourdough pizza are among the delicious offerings at Jordan Weisz' Café Baffico

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

JORDAN WEISZ, 35, is not exactly a newcomer to Hamilton, but since moving here 17 years ago to attend McMaster University, the Thornhill native has been a Hamiltonian by choice.

Weisz is the owner of Café Baffico, a bakery and pizzeria on King St. E. in Hamilton's Crown Point neighbourhood that specializes in all things. He established the eatery back in 2018 as a café by day and intimate French-Italian bistro at night, but the Covid 19 pandemic necessitated a new direction.

"We had really hit a stride and in March 2020, I took my first vacation in three years and came back and a few days later it was lockdown," he said. "We put our food in boxes and tried to do the pivot thing. It was going okay but it wasn't what a lot of my chefs aimed to do."

His pastries, meanwhile, were doing very well, and Weisz, who had honed his culinary skills over years of internships—including a two-year stint at the former Seven Windows restaurant on Aberdeen—"That was the military of food. It was crazy, but an amazing chef"—and summers in Rome and Sicily, started to get creative.

"I was making croissant cinnamon buns by hand, weird but really

good things. Then one day I found this recipe for a sourdough donut from my favourite baker. And I tried it and it was incredible."

Weisz's entrepreneurial experiences came about quite organically. It all began during his third year at McMaster when he decided to take a break from his studies and move downtown.

"I would go down to the Farmers' Market and James North before it was cool and drink coffee, eat pastries, people watch. That's when I really started connecting with the community."

He particularly loved the scene at a small café on Locke Street called Johnny's Coffee.

"Between James North, McMaster, and places like Johnny's, I just felt this sense of community that I never experienced before. And I loved that this city is really demographically diverse. It was cool. It wasn't the suburbs. It was gritty at times, but had great coffee, pastry and food ... So I opened a little café on James and Cannon."

That was Smalls Coffee, which did very well, until his business partnership failed. Undaunted, Weisz went on to manage the coffee and food program at Gore Park's Redchurch Cafe and spend a year at Berkeley North on King William, before finding a space that "combined everything I knew."

By January 2022, Café Baffico was solely a bakery, its sourdough donuts and cinnamon buns considered by many five-star Google reviewers to be the best in Hamilton. Weisz finds this amusing, considering that, prior to the pandemic, "I never made a donut in my life, not as a pastry chef, not as a trained baker."



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Last summer, Weisz took another leap of faith by returning Café Baffico to its restaurant roots, serving specialty coffee and sourdough donuts by day and serving up thin crust sourdough pizzas by night. This month, he'll be adding sourdough Chanukah sufganiyot (jelly donuts) to the menu, which are sure to be a big hit for Hamiltonians of all backgrounds.

Asked to reflect on his journey to success, Weisz gives a lot of the credit to his adopted city.

"In Hamilton, it always seemed like there was the opportunity to do something incredible on our own terms

... at least in 2018 when we opened. What's nice about what we're doing now is it's more financially accessible to buy a donut versus to buy a plate of pasta. More people can access it, which I really like. I like being somewhere where, regardless of demographic or financial background, we can serve them something really spectacular that truly is, I would argue, some of the best products around. And unique. No one's doing it the way we're doing it. It feels good."

To pre-order Café Baffico's Chanukah sufganiyot, call 289-246-9965.

Jordan Weisz at Café Baffico demonstrates how he prepares one of his signature sourdough pizzas.



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