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Hamilton Jewish News

DECEMBER 2026 | KISLEV 5787

The voice of Jewish Hamilton

SHALOM VILLAGE: WHERE CARE IS A WORK OF THE HEART

A new chapter of innovation and support

Marianne Klein leads the transformation of Shalom Village to provide the highest standard of quality long-term care

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

When Marianne Klein first arrived at Shalom Village on July 17, 2023, she knew she had big shoes to fill. The Hamilton Jewish community's long-term care home and seniors' residence had built a strong reputation over more than five decades, but the COVID-19 pandemic had been a difficult period, testing the organization and affecting the confidence people had in its leadership and care. Klein's approach to rebuilding was straightforward: before worrying about reputation, Shalom Village had to get its own house in order. Nearly three and a half years later, she believes the organization has come a long way.

WORK OF THE HEART CONTINUES **P6**



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

The Shalom Village executive team from left to right: Kathleen Thomas, executive director, Maddi Steller-Cain, director of assisted living and community programs, Joe Xamin, HR manager, Marianne Klein, CEO, and Fiorinta Flammia, senior director of operations.

BUILDING A FUTURE IN CANADA

Israeli families in limbo

Permanent residency remains a challenge for those who came on special work visas

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THEN AND NOW

Back to India where it all began

More than 50 years after meeting in the Himalayas, two old friends return to India to the places that changed their lives

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Federation events to look forward to
Mark your calendar for these programs

AN EVENING WITH MARSHA LEDERMAN



MARSHA LEDERMAN

Join award-winning journalist and The Globe and Mail columnist Marsha Lederman for a timely conversation about reporting on Jewish life and Israel in the aftermath of October 7. Drawing on her experience in Canadian journalism, Lederman will explore the challenges of navigating today's media landscape as a Jewish journalist, the complexities of covering Israel and antisemitism, and what it means to tell Jewish stories at a time of heightened tension and scrutiny.

- Monday, December 7 at 7:30 p.m.
- Location to be announced upon registration at: **jewishhamilton.org/signup**

CHANUKAH MARKET

Celebrate the season with local holiday shopping!
Featuring Hanukkah essentials, Judaica, menorahs, candles, books, and handmade art by local community artisans.

- November 16 to December 11
- Mondays and Wednesdays: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Tuesday and Thursdays: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Fridays: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- 1605 Main St. W., Hamilton

INSIDE THE MIDDLE EAST, BEYOND THE HEADLINES AND NARRATIVES

A foundational briefing and geopolitical analysis with Avi Melamed

- Sunday, November 29 | Noon to 3:30 p.m.

FROM ANTIZIONIST TO PASSIONATE ZIONIST: THE JOURNEY OF KILE JONES

Discover the remarkable transformation of a non-Jewish academic whose study and research led him from antizionism to a passionate embrace of Zionism. Presented by Zionism Unfiltered in partnership with Federation

- Sunday, December 6 | 2–4 p.m.

WHY ISRAEL IS THE GREATEST MORAL TEST OF OUR GENERATION

Robert Walker of HonestReporting Canada offers insights into media coverage of Israel and practical ways to respond to misinformation and bias. Presented by Zionism Unfiltered in partnership with Federation.

- Sunday, January 24, 2027 | Time TBA

ART EXHIBIT: BROKEN: A HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL IN FUSED GLASS

One family's journey through displacement, survival, and new beginnings, told through the powerful art of fused glass.

- Monday, November 2 to November 30 by appointment only

- To register for all of the above events go to: **jewishhamilton.org/signup**

HAMILTON JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

Save the Date! The Hamilton Jewish Film Festival returns for three days on **March 7–9, 2027**, at the **Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre,** with an exciting new addition to this year's program. For the first time, we're kicking off the festival on Sunday, March 7, with a special family-friendly screening for children ages six and up. It's a wonderful opportunity to introduce younger audiences to the magic of Jewish cinema and enjoy a film experience together as a family. The festival continues with three days of outstanding Jewish and Israeli films, compelling stories and opportunities to connect with our community. Mark your calendars and watch for details about the film lineup and ticket sales!

AN HJN READER **WRITES**

RETHINKING HOW WE TEACH ABOUT ISRAEL

I WANT to thank you for publishing the piece about rethinking how we teach Israel by Devora Liss in the Sept. 2026 edition. Many older Jews who are closer to the Holocaust and may even remember the world without Israel, or at least the pre-1967 Israel continue to see Israel as central to Jewish identity. But younger generations are questioning or outright rejecting that perspective and even their connection to Israel. This trend has been observed both in Canada and the USA, and I believe that the clash between reality and the unrealistic picture of Israel they have been given contributes to this shift. In their personal experience they have only known Israel as an aggressive occupier. The idealized, unrealistic and outdated perspective of a generation that hopes that they, too, will love, admire and identify with Israel, is not serving them well in figuring out how to survive and function among their peers.

MIRIAM SAGER, CANADIAN-ISRAELI JEWISH COMMUNITY MEMBER

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

New ‘Windows to Witness’ exhibit



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Judy Schwartz (centre) poses with her husband, Dennis, and daughter Noa Daniel in front of Windows to Witness, a new interactive installation at the Margaret’s Legacy Holocaust Learning and Jewish Advocacy Centre at JHamilton. Created in honour of Schwartz’s 80th birthday, the installation was initiated by her daughters, Noa Daniel and Ora Goldin, and formally unveiled on Sunday, Nov. 8, before a large gathering of community members. Windows to Witness allows visitors to search by keyword through 55 interviews Schwartz conducted in the late 1990s with Holocaust survivors from Hamilton and surrounding communities for the USC Shoah Foundation.

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NEXT ISSUE: **PASSOVER 2027**

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Resilience: A defining Jewish strength

Federation CEO Marion Zeller reflects on the enduring Jewish capacity to persevere, adapt and find strength

BY **MARION ZELLER**
HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION

THE JEWISH story is, in many ways, a story of resilience. Across generations, we have faced challenges, adapted to changing circumstances and found ways not only to survive, but to thrive. Yet if there is one quality that has defined the Jewish people throughout history, it is resilience.

Resilience is often described as the ability to recover from adversity, but for Jews it has always been something more. It is not simply about surviving challenges. It is about continuing to build, create, learn and contribute despite them.

Throughout history, the Jewish people have faced countless hardships. Empires have risen and fallen. Governments, rulers and ideologies that once seemed permanent have faded into history. Through it all, the Jewish people have remained. While there are many reasons for this enduring strength, I believe one of the most important is our tradition of questioning.

Judaism has never encouraged blind acceptance. From a young age, we are taught to ask questions, seek understanding and engage in debate. The Passover seder revolves around questions. The Talmud is built on discussion and differing viewpoints. In yeshivot around the world, students often study in chavruta pairs, wrestling with texts together, challenging assumptions and learning that truth is often discovered through dialogue rather than certainty. In synagogues, classrooms and around kitchen tables, questioning is not only welcomed, it is encouraged. These practices do more than strengthen Jewish learning; they teach us how to think critically, adapt and persevere when faced with life's challenges.

This instinct to question does more than deepen our faith and understanding. It helps us become resilient.

When difficult events occur, our natural response is often emotional. We can feel overwhelmed, fearful or discouraged. Yet questioning allows us to pause and move from reaction to reflection. It helps us challenge assumptions, explore alternatives and search for solutions. Rather than remaining stuck in adversity, we begin to identify a path forward.

This ability to examine, debate and rethink has been woven into Jewish life for generations. It is one of the reasons our community continues to adapt and thrive in changing circumstances. Resilience is not about pretending challenges do not exist. It is about acknowledging them honestly while refusing to let them define us, particularly during times when Jewish communities face uncertainty and division.

At the same time, we can look to the example of Jewish communities around the world and see resilience in action. We see it in families who continue to celebrate Shabbat and holidays together. We see it in volunteers who dedicate their time to strengthening community organizations. We see it in educators who teach Jewish history and culture with passion and pride. We see it in young people who choose to engage rather than withdraw.



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

The encouraging news is that resilience is not simply something we either have or do not have. Like any skill, it can be strengthened over time. Resilience grows when we stay connected to community, maintain meaningful traditions, support one another and focus on what we can control rather than what we cannot. It develops through small, everyday actions: showing up when it would be easier to withdraw, engaging in difficult conversations, volunteering, learning and continuing to participate in Jewish life. Each of these choices helps build the confidence and adaptability that allow us to navigate challenges with greater strength.

Psychologists suggest that one of the most effective ways to build resilience is to challenge our initial reactions to adversity. By asking questions such as, "Is this thought accurate?" or "What actions can I take?", we move from feeling powerless to feeling empowered. In many ways, this mirrors a deeply Jewish approach to life's challenges. We have long understood that questioning is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it is often the first step toward understanding, growth and renewal.

> "Resilience grows when we maintain meaningful traditions, support one another and focus on what we can control rather than what we cannot."
>
> **MARION ZELLER**
> CEO
> Hamilton Jewish Federation

As this article reaches you during Chanukah, the message of resilience feels especially timely. Each year we gather to light the menorah and retell the story of a small group of Jews who refused to let their identity, faith and traditions be extinguished. The miracle of Chanukah reminds us that even a single flame can push back darkness. Generation after generation, our people have carried that light forward. In many ways, resilience is our collective menorah, passed from one generation to the next, illuminating a path of hope, courage and renewal.

During my first few months with the Hamilton Jewish Federation, I have had the privilege of getting to know many members of our community and hearing their stories. Time and again, I have been struck by their resilience. Not because they are untouched by challenges, but because they continue to meet them with determination, pride and hope. The resilience I have witnessed in Israel, across Canada, and here in Hamilton has been nothing short of inspiring.

Now is the time to rebuild confidence, strengthen Jewish identity and celebrate who we are. It is time to engage, learn, and support one another. By continuing to ask questions, learn from one another and stand together, we will ensure that the spirit of our community remains strong.

Chag Chanukah Sameach.

HAMILTON JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES



Elaine Levine reflects on 24 years of community service

Levine reflects on the people, projects and moments that made the work so meaningful

BY **JEN GILBERT**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

ELAINE LEVINE expected to spend five years at the Hamilton Jewish Federation when she was first hired back in 2002, but stayed for 24. At a recent event, the organization celebrated her retirement and a career that touched countless lives. For Levine, the work became more than a job. It was a calling.

Levine's decision to stay came around the five-year mark. Taking part in staff missions to Cuba and Israel deepened her connection to the work, which had become so meaningful that she couldn't imagine working anywhere else. What began as a job had become a labour of love, rooted in relationships with the hundreds of people she encountered along the way: donors, volunteers, colleagues, Holocaust survivors, educators, clergy, agency partners, community members and allies.

Levine wore many hats at the Federation. She started working part-time in 2002 in an administrative capacity. One part-time job turned into two, followed by a full-time program development role. Her latest and most fulfilling role was serving as campaign director, which she held for nine years, helping raise more than $19 million.

Levine touched the lives of countless community members, often in ways they may not even have realized. Her impact ranged from managing major programs and campaigns to making personal calls during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure community members had groceries.

She feels blessed to have been trusted by so many individuals in the community. As a constant presence over the years, she was someone people called when they didn't have anyone else.



Elaine Levine (right) with Nadia Rosa, with whom she collaborated for years in planning Holocaust education programs.

"I felt truly fortunate that I was able to help steer them in the direction to make their life a little bit easier at that moment," she said.

All these impacts had a ripple effect throughout the community, and show that working at a non-profit is not for the faint of heart. Staff need to jump into action when needed, even if it's not part of the job description; they need to be resilient, persevere, and have a deep desire to give back.

One of her most meaningful projects was staffing the Holocaust Education Committee, which developed educational programs, commemorations, survivor visits to schools, and outreach opportunities for students and adults. For nearly 20 years, her work on this committee impacted thousands of people.

Levine said she's most comfortable when she takes a step back and helps others shine. Through the Asper Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program, leadership development programs, and relaunching the Young Adult Division, she found purpose by providing leadership opportunities for people, setting our community up for success.

"The future strength [of our community] relies on our younger generation being involved, committed, and stepping up to leadership roles, and to helping write the next chapter of our community's history," she said.

Levine recalls with great pride the year the student seminar on Holocaust education brought out every secondary school in the public and Catholic board.

Other highlights include the launch of PJ library in Hamilton, the walks for Israel, and the many campaign openings she helped plan. Among her favourites were UJA Idol, UJA Cabaret, and the summer BBQ/flash mob — a full circle moment, connecting with her previous experience as a dance studio manager and instructor.

> "The future strength [of our community] relies on our younger generation being involved, committed, and stepping up to leadership roles…"
>
> **ELAINE LEVINE**



PHOTOS: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Elaine Levine and her successor, interim Campaign director Maggie Norris, at an evening held in her honour at JHamilton.

Teamwork and collaboration were at the heart of these accomplishments, none of which would have been possible without the assistance of colleagues, committees, donors, and sponsors.

When asked what she's learned in her time at the Federation, she said, "That we are so much stronger when we can be a united Jewish community and work together."

As this chapter of her life closes, Levine is grateful for her meaningful career. She's saying goodbye with one final plea to you: If you haven't already, please consider donating to the Federation's annual community and security campaigns.

In her newfound free time, Levine is hoping to put her tap shoes back on, spend time with her grandchildren, and travel; however, just because she's retired doesn't mean her passion, love, and care for the Hamilton Jewish community will stop. She's not going anywhere: "This community is part of who I am and always will be."



FEDERATION STAFF UPDATE

Meet our new marketing and social media manager, Oded Levy



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Oded Levy, Hamilton Jewish Federation's new marketing, brand and social media manager, brings a background in design, branding and communications, along with a personal understanding of the importance of Jewish connection. He hopes to strengthen Federation's storytelling and help more people find their place in the community.

FIND THE FULL ODED LEVY PROFILE ONLINE: **HAMILTONJEWISHNEWS.COM**

“I came to Shalom not because I needed care, but because I needed community.” **SHALOM VILLAGE RESIDENT**

Where care is a work of the heart

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Marianne Klein is leading Shalom into an exciting new chapter of innovation, care and support for seniors



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

SHALOM VILLAGE has strengthened its compliance and quality-of-care practices, developed more rigorous policies and renewed its focus on residents and families. It is also attracting attention beyond Hamilton as a partner in innovation and a potential model for seniors’ services across Ontario.

“We’re beginning to be looked at as leaders in this industry,” Klein says. “These are partners that believe in us, that trust us, and that know that we’ll accomplish what we say we’re going to accomplish as an organization.”

More than just a care home

For Klein, the most meaningful measure of success is what happens every day inside Shalom Village. One resident captured the distinction in a way Klein has never forgotten: “I came to Shalom not because I needed the care, I came to Shalom because I needed the community.”

“That said everything,” Klein says.

As a campus of care, Shalom Village offers services across the continuum. People might begin with a fitness class, a visit to Bubby’s Café or the adult day program before eventually needing a different level of support. The goal is to meet people where they are, rather than waiting for a crisis. That includes helping caregivers find support before their own health suffers.

A psychoeducational caregiver support program developed with the Ontario Caregiver Organization brought caregivers together to learn and support one another. When the formal sessions ended, participants continued meeting independently.

For Klein, that was particularly heartening: the program had created a community of people who could lean on one another.

A nursing home without walls

Klein wants Shalom Village’s expertise and programming to benefit more Hamilton seniors, including those living alone or struggling with isolation.

That vision has led to an exciting opportunity: Shalom Village has been invited to participate in an Ontario pilot of Nursing Home Without Walls, inspired by a program developed in New Brunswick by researcher Suzanne Dupuis.

Klein discovered the model more than three years ago and contacted Healthcare Excellence Canada. Shalom Village’s initial application to be an Ontario pilot site was unsuccessful, but the organization was later approached when additional funding became available.

Rather than treating long-term care as the destination for seniors whose needs have become unmanageable, the initiative aims to help people remain healthy and independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

Still in the planning stages, the program may include clinical and personal-care outreach, wellness activities, caregiver support, social connections and help navigating community services.

Klein says she speaks with three or four family members in a typical week who ask where to turn and which services might suit a loved one. A navigation service could help seniors and families assess their needs and connect with appropriate resources, whether at Shalom Village or elsewhere in Hamilton.

The pilot has limited funding from Healthcare Excellence Canada, making careful planning essential. But Klein sees potential well beyond the initial project.

We are at the very edge of something really exciting for Ontario,” she says, “and that will happen right here at Shalom Village.”

Seniors helping seniors

When Klein asked her team what would help seniors remain active, mobile and independent at home, the answers were exercise, balance, social connection and access to health information.

With a $25,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, the team developed Senior Spark, a free program co-designed by seniors for seniors. Volunteers lead activities alongside a staff member, combining physical movement, social interaction and health education.

In approximately nine months, more than 100 seniors from the greater Hamilton community had participated. Activities include Walker-size, falls-prevention and sit-to-stand exercise classes, nutrition, social activities and intellectual stimulation.

Recognizing that transportation difficulties and isolation can prevent some seniors from participating, Shalom Village partnered with Cable 14 to bring programming into people’s homes. Five episodes were recorded for a seniors’ series on topics that included fitness, an exploration of local birds and nature, and preserving family stories and keepsakes.

These initiatives reflect Klein’s belief that caring for seniors means removing barriers rather than expecting them to overcome every obstacle alone and it is one way that incredible donors support Shalom Village.

Above all, a Jewish home

Shalom Village’s commitment to inclusion is inseparable from its identity as a Jewish home. When Klein first assumed her role, she sought advice from former executive directors Pat Morden and the late Sheila Burman. During one conversation, Burman pointed a finger at her and declared firmly, “Marianne Klein, this is a Jewish home.”

“Indeed it is,” Klein replied, “and it will continue to be.”

Bubby’s Cafe is a favourite social spot for Shalom Village’s residents, volunteers, and visitors to enjoy kosher meals.



“We teach about the Jewish traditions, but we also try to include others and, you know, make sure that everybody feels like they belong.”

MARIANNE KLEIN
CEO, Shalom Village

That commitment is expressed through kosher food, Jewish holiday celebrations, monthly Shabbat services and community Kiddush luncheons. At the home’s popular Chanukah latke bake, members of the leadership team don aprons and hairnets to prepare fresh latkes for residents.

Klein remembers standing at the entrance on Rosh Hashanah as Andrea Levy, Shalom Village’s balabusta, welcomed everyone with freshly baked challah, honey and apples, offering wishes for a sweet new year. Jewish and non-Jewish residents alike were invited to share in the moment.

For Klein, that is what a living Jewish environment looks like: traditions that are respected, celebrated and generously shared.

Levy’s work, supported by the Hamilton Jewish Federation, helps maintain Jewish life alongside the Jewish Life Committee. Bubby’s Café, open daily from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., welcomes the wider community for kosher meals, coffee and refreshments.

With most employees not Jewish, Klein also sees a responsibility to educate staff about Jewish traditions and antisemitism. Annual antisemitism training and opportunities to learn about Margaret’s Legacy Holocaust Learning and Jewish Advocacy Centre are among the ways the organization approaches that responsibility.

Klein also wants every resident’s background to be respected. During a recent National Day for Truth and Reconciliation observance, Indigenous residents and employees helped shape the event. One Indigenous resident suggested wearing orange ribbons, drawing a connection with the black ribbons worn in Jewish mourning. She went on to make orange ribbons for everyone.

For Klein, the gesture demonstrated that people were not merely coexisting in the same building.

“We teach about the Jewish traditions,” she said, “but we also try to include others and, you know, make sure that everybody feels like they belong.”

Partnerships and team work

Shalom Village’s renewed standing is reflected in its partnership with McMaster University. As a founding partner of OnSPARK, a research initiative led by Dr. Andrew Costa, the organization contributes securely managed resident data to analytics and quality improvement. The work could help advance care practices across Ontario and Canada.

Klein credits the organization’s nearly 300 employees, board of directors and community partners for its progress. Rebuilding after COVID has required strengthening policies, procedures and accountability while making room for new ideas and collaboration.

Her decision to move from Milton to Hamilton has deepened her connection to the community. She and her family had come to love the Jewish community and wanted to become more involved.

Now she can attend events and contribute beyond Shalom Village’s walls. She wants others to experience that same sense of belonging by attending Shabbat services or a Kiddush luncheon, stopping at Bubby’s Café, or volunteering.

Klein is proud of how far Shalom Village has come, but she doesn’t consider the work finished. She sees an organization that has rebuilt its foundations and earned renewed trust — and is ready to take on a broader role in shaping seniors’ care.

“It’s the work of the heart,” she says.

For Klein, that heart is evident in the resident who came seeking community, the caregiver who finds support, the senior who discovers a new friendship, and the staff member who learns to appreciate a new tradition.

After a difficult chapter, Shalom Village is looking outward with confidence.

Its ambition is not simply to be a better place to receive care, but to help redefine care itself: rooted in compassion, strengthened by community and responsive to people long before they reach a crisis.

At Shalom Village, the village is the promise that no one should have to navigate aging, illness or caregiving alone.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Life lessons to pass on

A new series exploring the questions, reflections and life lessons that bring us closer and connect us to a community

SHARE YOUR STORY
EMAIL: **jgilbert@jewishhamilton.org**

BY **JEN GILBERT**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

WHEN WAS the last time you had a meaningful dinner table conversation? One that stayed with you long after the meal was over? I began thinking about this after listening to a recent episode of The Shpiel on Hamilton, featuring former Hamiltonian Lesley Simpson, creator of L'Chaim: The Jewish Letters Project. Hearing how Simpson collects and shares meaningful Jewish letters and words of wisdom from around the world, I wondered whether the Hamilton Jewish News could create something similar within our own community, as if we're together at a communal table, diving into conversations we don't want to leave until it's too late. This issue features honest reflections, life lessons and advice for the next generation. In our next issue, we'll explore freedom and resilience, and what they mean to us individually and as a Jewish community, here and in Israel.



Gratefulness changes everything

ROBIN ZEE
PERFORMANCE ARTIST

What I've learned the last 69 years. It's not about what you can get, but what you can give–that's where the magical sparks live. The way it should be, isn't necessarily related to the way it is. There is always more to the story than what meets the eye. We all have opinions; try not to ram yours down anyone's throat. Be mindful that people show their true colours by how they behave and what comes out of their mouth, even how they look at you–the eyes are the windows to the soul. Take personal responsibility for your part; that's where growth lies, it's an inside job. The more distant you are from your essence, the more misery there seems to be. Being grateful changes everything and carries a lot of weight especially when we are struggling; it's a process. Don't give up: you're worth it, and the world needs you.



Dreams do come true

ALEX GILBERT
ENTREPRENEUR

"Dreams do come true". The thing is YOU make them come true. When things get tough, and they will, don't give up–just persevere and "keep up the good fight."
I started selling things as a teen; by the time I was 22 my brother and I started a business together. We grew our business to become a recognized household name in the community and across the country. At the same time, we bought (and sold) unrelated businesses right up to our early retirement. After retirement, I went back to school for approximately four years to pursue an aviation career. I became a commercial pilot, flying for a small commercial operation. I grinned every time I took flight (and still do). I wear my captain's epaulettes proudly. Never say never, never say can't or won't. You can achieve anything you set your mind to, and the only obstacle to achieving your goal, is you!



Make time for what truly matters

SOL BUCK
IMMIGRANT FROM SOUTH AFRICA

When I left South Africa and immigrated to Canada, I left behind familiar surroundings, lifelong friends, family, and a way of life I had always known. Starting over in a new country was both exciting and challenging. Like many immigrants, I arrived with hopes, uncertainties, and the determination to build a better future for myself. Over the years, I learned that success is not measured by wealth or status, but by the relationships we build, the values we pass on, and the kindness we show others. If I could offer one piece of advice to the next generation, it would be don't be afraid of change. Some of life's greatest opportunities come disguised as challenges. Stay curious, work hard, treat people with respect, and never lose sight of where you came from. Your roots give you strength, but your willingness to adapt helps you grow. Life moves quickly, so cherish family, treasure friendships, and make time for what truly matters. These are the things that bring lasting meaning and fulfillment.



Treat others with kindness

ANOMITRA BHATTACHARYA
JEWISH COMMUNITY ALLY

Einstein described his religion as a humble admiration for the illimitable superior spirit revealed in the universe, beyond the grasp of our limited minds. For him, concern for humanity and its fate should guide all scientific endeavours; we must never lose sight of this larger purpose amid diagrams and equations. This echoes Tikkun Olam, the Jewish ideal of repairing the world. Purpose matters. Rabindranath Tagore warned that the moral, complete man was increasingly giving way to the commercial man of limited purpose. Vivekananda taught that religion's essence lies not in rituals, scriptures, or holy places, but in living its highest ideals: goodness, reasoning, compassion, and selflessness. Whatever our beliefs, we can treat others with respect and kindness. Peace abides when we live religion's highest ideals rather than use it to divide humanity.

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BUILDING A FUTURE IN CANADA

Israeli families in limbo

For Israelis who came to Canada on work visas after October 7, permanent residency remains a challenge

BY **DEVORA LISS**
SPECIAL TO HJN

BETWEEN December 2023 and July 2025, Canada's Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Office (IRCC) offered three-year open work permits to people from Israel and Gaza wishing to escape the war. The deal was far from cushy: applicants had to be physically present in Canada and could neither work nor leave the country until being approved—a process that could take anywhere between two to 10 months. Israelis were offered nothing beyond the permit itself and even OHIP was job-dependent.

No official number exists, but the best estimate is that 10,000 Israelis arrived under these federal special measures. This coming year, the first wave of open work permits will begin to expire and the IRCC has yet to offer a path forward.

Settling in Hamilton

During 2023–2025, a handful of Israeli families settled in Hamilton. My family opted for affordable, small-town community over a megalopolis. Hamutal Niv was also drawn by Israelis she'd met through Facebook. "They were helpful and welcoming, making Hamilton the obvious choice for my family."

The organized Jewish community generously supported the newly arrived Israelis. The Hamilton Jewish Family Services' Giving Room offered donated household items, free of charge, as well as some financial support and scholarships. Many of the school-aged children enrolled in Kehila Heschel, which welcomed them mid-year and made enrollment financially feasible. Lastly, the Hamilton Jewish Federation offered welcome baskets, networking and community events, and support for summer camp and extra-curricular activities.

Despite such support, two major challenges threaten to upend the lives we have built in Canada.

Employment challenges

Securing local employment can be instrumental toward gaining permanent residency in Canada. The IRCC rewards applicants for every year of Canadian work experience. For Israelis here on three-year work permits, quickly finding appropriate work became imperative. But this was easier said than done.

"I was willing to do anything," recalls Hamutal Niv, "cleaning, the supermarket, the dollar store—anything. But employers want Canadian experience. How can I get Canadian experience if nobody will hire me?" A year after receiving her permit, she found employment through contacts in the Jewish community.

Her partner, concert pianist Nadav Greenhut had a similar experience. "The Jewish Federation opened doors for me. I was invited to produce musical arrangements and perform at events, including the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival. Today, most of my private piano students are through the Jewish and Israeli communities."

Other Israelis, typically those employed in Israel's lucrative high-tech sector, continued to work remotely. They enjoyed continuous income even before receiving their work permits, but for some this temporary solution has extended for two years—and beyond. Others were fortunate to find local jobs in their fields.

My partner, Netanel Freiman, worked as a systems engineer in Israel for 12 years and continued working part-time after moving to Canada. His employer downsized in May 2026, and he lost his job. Luckily, by September Netanel had secured employment in a physics lab at McMaster University.

My own journey included 13 months of intensive networking. JIAS Toronto provided me with a wonderful mentor who supported my job search, helped me prepare for interviews, and cheered me up when things were looking down. Nevertheless, it took me a full year to secure a job and, even then, I had to overcome a number of bureaucratic obstacles stemming from the visa. That said, employment is only half the story. The other challenge is Canada's immigration policies.



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Devora Liss at the Back Alley Gallery in Hamilton, where she attends the Open Studio and has exhibited art dealing with the post-October 7 experience.

The Immigration landscape

Canada has a point-based immigration system, awarding applicants for their age, education, language skills, profession, and work experience. Since the pandemic, federal pathways towards immigration have been increasingly restricted, leading hopeful immigrants to seek entry through provincial programs. Shifts in Ontario's policies over the last two years have also closed many doors, making it nearly impossible to obtain permanent residency.

I-CAN, an advocacy group founded to help these Israelis, has found that many of our strengths are also obstacles. "On average, we bring 10+ years of professional experience," says Anna Bronshtein, founder of I-CAN. "We have largely integrated into the Canadian economy ... yet the immigration system is strongly biased towards applicants under 40."

Another bias is the effort to increase Canada's Francophone population. "I have integrated into Hamilton's cultural and music scene," says Nadav Greenhut, "but learning French is currently the only realistic way to keep my family in Canada."

For Bronshtein, this is a gross misappropriation of resources.

Lara G. and her family arrived in 2024 and settled in Vaughan. They were equipped with a multi-pronged plan for immigration. But over the course of two years, every single possible provincial pathway has closed. "I have resorted to studying French, but by the time I gain points for language, I will have lost points for age. It feels like I can't get a break."

A Canadian immigration consultant interviewed for this article sees this as a provincial failure. "Canada welcomed people escaping armed conflict," she says. "But the provinces haven't given the people who have settled here any long-term options."

A local immigration lawyer agrees. "Historically, Canada has offered special measures to individuals affected by conflict ... The Middle East is still a volatile conflict zone, and it seems unreasonable to deny Israelis the option of extending their work permits."

Running out of time

For the first wave of Israelis who received work permits, the 2027 deadline looms large. Beyond the uncertainty of the future, they must contend with the possibility of returning to Israel—a country that teeters on the brink of war and has fought two wars with Iran in the past 18 months.

My family was still living in Israel during the first of these wars, which lasted for 12 days. Without a safe room in our home, we moved into a nearby school where the underground shelter offered the glorious possibility of sleeping through the night. We practiced the 90-second dash, reassuring ourselves how far we could run during a siren. I saw Iron Dome interceptions overhead as I ran down the street pushing a stroller. My children can still vividly recall details from October 7 and the stay in the shelter.

Thus it should come as no surprise that for many families, their children's well-being was a major factor in deciding to come to Canada.

Hamutal Niv values the stability in Canada. "My kids know there will always be school. In Israel, schools shut down with a moment's notice due to war, or because in times of tension they lack proper shelters."

Parents, too, report a positive experience, despite the aforementioned challenges.

"If we hadn't come, I'd have wondered 'what if' for the rest of my life," says Lara G. Yet she recognizes the toll it has taken on her. "My partner and I gave up stable jobs in Israel and have been in survival mode for two years," she says.

"Was it worth it?" Niv ponders. "Yes. Unequivocally yes. Despite the challenges, I have made friends and immersed myself in a new community. If we are forced to return to Israel, we will continue trying to obtain permanent residency and return to Hamilton."

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THE DOCTOR IN THE PHOTOGRAPH

A family history uncovered

A family photograph prompted a search that uncovered the remarkable life and tragic fate of Dr. Lazar Petrushkin, a beloved Odessa pediatrician who perished in the Holocaust



BY **BEN SHRAGGE**
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS



PHOTO: COURTESY BEN SHRAGGE

Dr. Lazar Petrushkin in his Russian Imperial Army uniform, Odessa, March 1916. The photograph was sent to his sister and brother-in-law, the author's great-grandparents, who had emigrated to Canada before the outbreak of the First World War.

IN THE OLD photograph, mounted on a decorative card, a mustachioed man sits astride a horse in a farmyard. He wears a tall fur cap and the uniform of the Russian Imperial Army, with a strap across his chest that holds a sword. On the back of the card, written in pre-revolutionary Russian script, reads the following inscription:

To dear Abram and Manya,
from their loving brother,
Dr. Petrushkin.
18 March 1916.
Odessa.

Abram was my late father's maternal grandfather, and Manya (the Russian diminutive for Mary, or Merka in Yiddish) was his maternal grandmother and Dr. Lazar Petrushkin's sister.

My father, a cardiac surgeon, cherished this photograph of his great-uncle and fellow physician. He would recall how difficult it was for Jews in Tsarist Russia to attend medical school. Born in 1888, Dr. Petrushkin would've felt the full impact of antisemitic legislation limiting the number of Jews who could pursue higher education.

At the turn of the 20th century, more than two million Jews fled the pogrom-riven Russian Empire. Among them were Abram and Mary, who arrived in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1910. Dr. Petrushkin, however, stayed in Odessa and served as an army doctor in World War I.

According to the Russian State Military Historical Archive, he was posted to the 449th Kharkov Infantry Regiment and recommended for the Order of St. Anne, 3rd Class with Swords and Bow, in 1917.

Unfortunately, I know little about Dr. Petrushkin's life in the Soviet Union, though the historical record tragically continues when Odessa fell to the Axis in 1941.

Odessa was conquered and governed mainly by Romania, an ally of Nazi Germany, though German forces were present and Nazi policy helped shape the fate of its Jews. During and after World War II, the Jewish writers Vasily Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg compiled *The Black Book of Soviet Jewry*, a documentary record of the Holocaust in the USSR—though the Soviet authorities ultimately blocked its publication amid increasing state antisemitism. The authors describe the Slobodka ghetto, where Odessa Jews were condemned to live in squalor before being deported to their deaths. They also relate the following account of one of the ghetto's more famous inhabitants:

a tall, thin man with a white beard and bright, intelligent eyes. Why are women accompanying him with looks of gratitude and furtively wiping away tears? This is Dr. Petrushkin, an old pediatrician, who had not managed to get out of Odessa in time.

> "They're taking Petrushkin away!"
>
> **ANATOLY NASTASYUK**
> Eyewitness to the deportation of the Jewish population of Odessa from the Slobodka ghetto.

In an email he once shared with me, my father noted that "I have forced myself to read the entire piece several times and shudder." However, to my knowledge, my father was unaware of even more startling details about Dr. Petrushkin's life and fate that I've uncovered via further research.

Adding more colour to the account in the *Black Book*, Anatoly Nastasyuk, then a schoolboy in Odessa, recounts seeing Dr. Petrushkin in a column of Jews marched under guard toward the ghetto. Nastasyuk shouted, "They're taking Petrushkin away!" and ran after the column with food to give him, but couldn't find the pediatrician he had recognized by his black bowler hat, pince-nez, and distinctive doctor's bag.

Survivors Yakov Verhovsky and Valentina Tyrmos write of a hospital in the ghetto led by the same man. Its chief physician was Dr. Petrushkin, beloved by all of us, the children of Odessa.

We remember this kind, mustachioed man well, his enormous gold watch on a chain and his leather briefcase, from which, like a magician, he would produce a straw, a spoon, or a small round mirror with a hole in the middle. And even today, when our grandchildren drink cough syrup, we reminisce about childhood and call it "Grandfather Petrushkin's Drops."

Yet as the Romanians liquidated Slobodka and demanded that the hospital prepare patients for deportation, doctors had to choose between sending their own patients to their deaths and seeing the hospital destroyed. Survivor Joseph S. Vergilis writes that "Some doctors could not bring themselves to make such a dreadful decision and they went together with their patients. Among the doctors who acted in such a manner were the famous doctor Petrushkin..."

Dr. Petrushkin was deported to Mostovoye, an execution and transit site in southern Ukraine. I was stunned to find the testimony of Ilya Marmerstein, another survivor who met him there in early 1942:

It was he... pediatrician Petrushkin ...Now this unfortunate man stood here, in the courtyard of the Mostovoye transit point–he stood there, thin and pale, tall, narrow-shouldered, in a summer coat and hat, and his eyes expressed great sadness. He stared intently at one spot–the very spot from which countless people were sent every day to certain death. He looked with the gaze of someone compassionate and also doomed...

On a fated day in March, Marmerstein recalls Dr. Petrushkin gazing at the sky, with fine weather approaching, and remarking, "We must endure and wait, without losing hope!" They then heard gunshots from the street. German policemen had burst into Mostovoye. The Jews were driven into a column through the gates, with Dr. Petrushkin "in one of the first ranks." As Marmerstein recounts, "The column moved silently—people didn't speak, only the occasional cry of a child could be heard. 'How far are you going to drive us?' I heard someone ask a policeman. He replied: about five kilometers. And that meant they had only a few hours left to live."

Miraculously, Marmerstein managed to save himself by slipping unnoticed into a crowd of peasants watching with sympathy. But Dr. Petrushkin and the other Jews—men, women, and children—were taken to an anti-tank ditch near the village of Vesyolyi Khutor and executed.

In the Romanian-run Transnistria Governorate, of which Odessa was the capital, an estimated 300,000 Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. Each one of them had a story, like Dr. Petrushkin's, that deserves to be remembered. I know his legacy as a physician inspired my father's professional calling, and when I look at his photograph and reflect on the noble life he lived, I, too, am moved. In the face of unspeakable evil, he acted with moral courage and unshakable dignity. I will not forget Dr. Lazar Petrushkin.

FIND THE FULL DR. PETRUSHKIN STORY ONLINE:
HAMILTONJEWISHNEWS.COM

Living life on our own terms

Inspired by my cousin, I'm on my own path to stay forever young



Helaine Ortmann

A REEL POPPED up on my Instagram feed. It was a 25-second video of my 84-year-old cousin at his Pilates class in Toronto.

I watched Fred grip two parallel high bars and power himself upside down until his legs extended straight up in the air. Holding himself in this position, he pumped his legs back and forth in scissor format, then lowered himself to touch the mat with his feet. With a snappy bounce, he propelled himself back up in reverse, then finished off upright on his mat with a controlled touch down, reminiscent of Nadia Comineci back in the day. It was a feat of determination, will and strength; and nine years of working out three times a week. I DM'd him (emails are so yesterday) to kvell about his achievement (k'naina hora) and he replied: "I fight to stay young."

Here in Hamilton (Dundas to be precise), on most Friday mornings, I attend a somatic movement class. Our teacher Wendy leads our small group in slow, intentional and highly nuanced physical exercises that call on us to pay attention to how the movement feels inside our bodies, how we uniquely experience any sensation, and if there is a difference when we stop, and restore ourselves. Wendy models some of her practices on the somatic education method developed by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais.

The 75-minute-session is designed to protect us against osteoporosis or better manage it, strengthen our muscles, enhance our level of functionality, improve our balance, and support our overall daily mobility. It's a tall order.

We usually start with slow quiet micro-movements on the mat to "bring us into the room" and warm ourselves up. Then we take our pelvis on a ride around the four cardinal directions of the compass. We graduate to stretching our body parts, in a sequence of moves that encourages us to explore how flexible we are, but always within the parameters of what we feel is reasonable and right for us to try. As we do these things, Wendy advises us to listen to what the "floor" is telling us about our bodies and how we are experiencing the movements.

Then, we learn how to propel ourselves from back lying, to side rolling, to standing upright where we practise the art of Tai Chi walking across the length of the studio.

This requires painstaking concentration and control to deploy our feet, principally our heels and toes, to support our body weight to shift, slide, root, balance, lift, step, then repeat, repeat, repeat. Not only does Wendy expect us to breathe through these manoeuvres, she throws us a huge curve ball when she announces we are going to reverse our direction and walk backwards! All the while, our intrepid instructor intones, "This is walking, people. This is life."

We often conclude our sessions using kettle bells, free weights and resistance bands. The Romanian deadlift resonates most strongly with me. Is it because it promotes muscle growth in my hamstrings and glutes? Is it because it forces me to do a proper hip hinge? Is it because it prepares me to pick up a heavy bag of dirt to schlep into my garden without injuring my back? In a word, no; not really. Full disclosure: it is one of the only things that connects me, every time I do it, to my paternal grandfather, Uziel, who immigrated to Canada in 1909 from Romania; and who passed away when I was two years old.

> "Despite our aches, pains and issues, we persevere in our determination to live life on our own terms."

Despite our aches, pains and life-earned "issues," and I submit they are many and diverse given we are a group of women in our 70s and 80s, we persevere; resolute in our determination and courage to live life on our own terms, maintain our health and well-being bis hundertzwanzig, and learn new skills and strategies to be safe and more secure as we grow older; just like my cousin Fred.

All I know is this: when it comes time for our group of noble warriors to post a reel on Instagram, it's going to be Bob Dylan's nasal plaintive voice singing "Forever Young" that I want to hear playing in the background.

The best laid plans …

Life has a way of throwing us a curveball when we least expect it



Phyllis Shragge

"MAN PLANS and God laughs." We all know that old Yiddish adage. And we know it's so true.

It's interesting how our perspective on planning for the future changes depending on our stage in life. When we're young, optimism prevails as we picture the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. But when we're on the other side of middle age, and we're trying to picture a bright future, reality subdues our positivity. We are very much aware of what can happen when illness, mishap or general wear and tear on the body takes its toll.

Of course, bad things can happen to the young too, no matter how optimistic they are, but when you reach a certain age, the odds are against you.

The unexpected is to be expected. Planning a trip abroad, arranging the details of a birthday celebration months down the road, or even buying season tickets to a theatre series, are acts of faith. We want to picture ourselves fulfilling our plans, but the nagging question is always in the back of our minds: What if?

> "Planning a trip abroad, planning a celebration months down the road, or even buying season tickets, are acts of faith."

What if I fall and break my hip just before my trip to Europe? What if I become seriously ill and I can't use those theatre tickets? Of course, the theatre tickets would be the least of my worries if I get sick, but still … What a waste of money!

When we invest in the future, there's always a risk. Uncertainty is certain. However, human nature being what it is, we desperately want a positive outcome.

We do what we can to avoid calamity. We wear seatbelts every time we're in a car. Those of us who ride bikes (hopefully) wear helmets. We wear sunscreen. We eat well. We try to stay physically fit.

But accidents happen. Disease is unpredictable. And the future lies ahead like a deep dark hole or a bright rainbow in the sky? Who knows?

The unexpected happens daily. From serious calamities like wildfires and floods, to strained relations between our country and that country sharing our border.

And then there are those unexpected occurrences that are almost laughable. Not funny for the people enduring them, but still …

A couple of years ago, my friend's daughter was dining on a restaurant patio on a lovely summer evening when out of the blue, a bat that had been lurking inside a patio umbrella swooped down and bit her. Dinner had to be cut short, replaced by 12 hours at an ER and eventually a series of painful rabies shots.

And of course there was my trip to Portugal. On the first day of the trip, I walked out of the hotel and immediately lost my footing on the cobblestone street. I fell. I was in pain. I went to the ER. My ankle was broken. Somehow, I had not prepared to tour Lisbon in a wheelchair, but there you go.

We plan. We hope. And we struggle to have faith that everything will turn out well.

Our planning begins early on. When I was a young girl, I dreamed about magically becoming a princess. When I realized I wasn't born into royalty, I thought I could marry into it. However, eventually I realized my options were limited. Did I really want to marry Prince Charles? Maybe I didn't want to be a princess after all.

Also, when I was a girl, I planned to be exactly like my vivacious older sister when I reached her age. However, as the years passed, it became obvious this was not to be. My sister's outgoing personality was unique to her. I was much more reserved. I wouldn't magically morph into my sister no matter how much I had planned on it.

We plan. We hope.

We know everything can change in a flash.

And as we get on in years, we learn two magic words: cancellation insurance.

We proceed down the road of life. We expect the unexpected, even a bat swooping down. You just never know what's lurking in a patio umbrella.





The power of poetry to tell Israel's story

Two new anthologies bring Israeli poetry to English-speaking readers, exploring the country's history, moral dilemmas, grief and resilience

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

WHAT CAN POETRY reveal about a country that headlines cannot? For Israeli educator Rachel Korazim, poetry offers a window into the experiences, emotions and moral questions that have shaped Israel across generations. Through two new bilingual anthologies, she brings this writing to English-speaking readers for the first time. The Mirror of the Times is devoted to the work of Natan Alterman, one of Israel's most influential poets, and Shiva is a collection of poems written in the aftermath of October 7. Though separated by decades and very different circumstances, the collections offer a compelling portrait of Israeli society, capturing its aspirations, contradictions, grief and resilience.

My connection with Korazim began during the COVID pandemic, when I discovered her online classes in Hebrew, poetry and literature while searching for something to help me through those isolating days. What began as a way to stay connected became a lasting appreciation for her teaching and her ability to bring Hebrew poetry to life. Her classes offered not only insight into Israeli literature but a deeper understanding of the country's history, culture and ongoing debates. In 2022, I had the opportunity to meet Korazim in person at her home in Jaffa and interview her for the Hamilton Jewish News. I recently reconnected with her to discuss her two anthologies, Alterman's work and the relevance of his poetry today.



PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Rachel Korazim, an Israeli educator and poetry scholar, brings the work of Hebrew poets to life, illuminating Israel's history, culture and moral complexities through their words.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KFAR SABA MUNICIPAL MUSEUM

Natan Alterman, right, (1910–1970) is an Israeli poet and playwright. The photo is circa 1952.



Mirror of the Times, a selection of Natan Alterman's Editorial Poetry by Rachel Korazim, Michael Bohnen, Hirsh Cashdan, and Heather Silverman.



Shiva: Poems of October 7, a poetry anthology by Israeli poets. Edited by Rachel Korazim, Michael Bohnen, and Heather Silverman.

Why Alterman, why now?

Born in Poland in 1910, Natan Alterman immigrated to British Mandate Palestine as a teenager and became one of Israel's most influential poets and journalists. For nearly four decades, his weekly column, The Seventh Column, in the daily Davar, used poetry to respond to defining moments in Jewish and Israeli life, from the Holocaust and the founding of Israel to the Six-Day War.

Alterman celebrated the sacrifices made to establish a Jewish state, but he also challenged Israel when its actions fell short of its moral responsibilities. He wrote about the mistreatment of immigrants from North Africa, the condescension directed at Holocaust survivors and the conduct of Israeli soldiers.

For Korazim, this ability to combine deep commitment with honest criticism is what makes Alterman so relevant today.

"The ability to hold more than one thing to be true at the same time," she said, "the ability to claim total loyalty to the cause and at the same time criticize it, is something we have lost."

That tension is evident in two poems Alterman deliberately placed side by side in an earlier collection.

The Silver Platter, written in December 1947, honours the young people whose sacrifices would make the establishment of Israel possible. *Al Zot*, written in response to a November 1948 incident in which Israeli troops killed civilians in an Arab village where they had encountered no armed resistance, condemns the soldiers' actions.

Alterman addressed the incident in his newspaper column. Two days later, David Ben-Gurion, then prime minister and defence minister, praised the column as a moral defence of the Israel Defense Forces and ordered 100,000 copies distributed to soldiers.

For Korazim, the episode represents a striking moment in Israel's history: the country's leading poet publicly criticized the military, and the prime minister endorsed that criticism.

"Could you even imagine anything remotely resembling what I am talking to you about?" she asked, reflecting on today's political climate.

The Alterman anthology grew out of a conversation between Korazim and her longtime student and collaborator, Michael Bohnen of Newton, Massachusetts. After one class, he said he was struck by the fact that many well-read North American Jews had never encountered this substantial body of Israeli literature in translation. Together, they began collecting poems Korazim had taught.

Korazim worked with a team of translators by preparing rough translations, which the team refined to stay true to Alterman's Hebrew while making the poems work as poetry in English. They chose meaning over rhyme, while striving to preserve the original's rhythm and musicality.

Finding words after October 7

Korazim's commitment to bringing Israeli voices to English-speaking readers took on new urgency after October 7. The result was Shiva, a bilingual anthology of poems written during the first six months following the attacks.

Korazim was in Budapest with her husband for the High Holidays when the attacks occurred. Unable to secure flights home, they remained in Hungary as news of the atrocities unfolded. During the first Shabbat after October 7, she listened online as Rabbi Angela Buchdahl of New York's Central Synagogue began her remarks with the Hebrew words ein milim—no words. Korazim shared that sense of anguish, but believed words would eventually emerge.

She began searching online for poems written in response to the attacks, collecting them as they appeared. The anthology captures a raw period of grief and anger, religious doubt, questions about military failures and longing for the hostages' return.

The contributors include social workers, therapists, rabbis, teachers, and military personnel, many of whom had never considered themselves poets. Their work gives voice to a range of responses, rather than attempting to offer a single account of what Israelis were feeling.

Intended primarily for Diaspora Jews seeking a deeper understanding of Israeli experiences beyond the news, Shiva has found a particularly strong audience outside Israel. More than 7,000 copies have been sold, raising more than $40,000 for the Israel Trauma Coalition.

Making room for nuance

Asked what she hopes Canadian Jewish readers will take from the two anthologies, Korazim emphasized the importance of recognizing that Israelis, like Canadians, do not speak with one voice.

"More than one thing can be true… You can be heartbroken, yet see that they are human beings across the border. You can be totally against Bibi and yet lament the fall of a soldier…. So I think nuance is the most important thing," she said.

That idea connects the two collections. Alterman's poetry demonstrates that deep commitment to Israel can coexist with moral criticism. The poets in Shiva bring readers closer to the grief, uncertainty and difficult questions Israelis continue to confront after October 7.

Together, the anthologies offer a way to understand Israel beyond headlines and political arguments, through the words of people trying to make sense of their country and their times. They remind us that sometimes the best way to understand a place is to listen to its poets.

LISTEN TO THE INTERVIEW WITH **RACHEL KORAZIM** AT **THE SHPIEL ON HAMILTON**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS.COM/THE-SHPIEL-ON-HAMILTON-PODCAST



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Cindy Richter, (front row centre) with members of her volunteer team who helped provide weekly meals to those in need for more than 20 years.

PHOTO: WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

OUT OF THE COLD COMMITTEE

FOR MORE than 20 years, Cindy Richter has been at the heart of our Jewish community's participation at Hamilton's Out of the Cold program (OOTC) as the tireless and joyful coordinator behind weekly meals served to hungry and marginalized residents of Hamilton. This year, Cindy has stepped away from OOTC into well-earned retirement.

Cindy's leadership, generosity, and kindness have shaped this program and touched lives well beyond our congregation. Indeed, she is the embodiment of Tikkun Olam. Her dedication, commitment and care for those she served set a standard that will guide us for years to come.

No one can replace Cindy, but she leaves the program on a strong foundation and in capable hands. A committee of four co-co-ordinators, Carolyn Molot, Norma Jack, Debbie Strub and Sarah Goodman, has been established to support the program and fill Cindy's shoes.

Thank you, Cindy, for everything you have given to our community and to Out of the Cold. Your efforts continue to warm us all.

Each winter, Out of the Cold works to warm as many people as it can through a nourishing weekly meal during the coldest months. The program runs on the generosity of volunteers and donors, with every hour given and every dollar contributed making a difference to neighbours who need it most.

How you can help

- Monetary donations to OOTC can be made through Beth Jacob Synagogue by calling 905-522-1351.
- Non-perishable food items and toiletries, warm gloves, hats and scarves can be dropped at Erskine Presbyterian Church as well.
- If you have questions, please email Norma at: norma.jack.mail@gmail.com or Sarah at: sagoodman@gmail.com

TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

Growth and connection

DORA-ANN COHEN ELLISON

THE AUTUMN months have brought a remarkable wave of energy, curiosity, and growth to our Jewish Learning Program, with 84 students participating in the learning programs at Anshe Sholom.

A highlight of the fall festivals was our Sukkot morning of learning, where families rotated through stations, building edible sukkot, learning about the lulav and etrog with Rabbi Weiss and creating winter hats for individuals experiencing housing insecurity. Our high school students will continue to help address food insecurity with their annual food collection at the end of November.

Mark your calendars for Dec. 4, when we join together with families of Kehila Heschel JDS for a collaborative Consecration Shabbat and dessert oneg.

This joyful evening will welcome new students across both schools into the warm embrace of our community with blessings and opportunities for meaningful connections between our school families.

The celebrations continue on the evening of Dec. 6 at the annual Temple Chanukah dinner. Students will showcase their hard work with a festive performance of songs, followed by a Chanukah sing-along with Cantor Paula, candle lighting with Rabbi Weiss, and a delicious dinner.

Come celebrate with us this winter by contacting Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison about our Jewish Learning Program and Family programming at Anshe Sholom.
Email: dacellison@anshesholom.ca

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ZIONISM UNFILTERED

Conversations about Zionism

BEV MILLER

ZIONISM UNFILTERED, a community group committed to championing and elevating Zionist voices, invites you to join us for a series of upcoming programs offered in partnership with the Hamilton Jewish Federation. Through engaging speakers, thoughtful discussion and opportunities to learn, these programs will explore Zionism, Israel and the challenges facing Jews and Zionists today.

We believe that open discussion, the exchange of ideas and meaningful connections will strengthen our community, deepen understanding and empower us to respond to the issues of our time.

We hope you will join us. Please find a list of upcoming programs and details inside this issue on page 2.

TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

Honouring our broken pieces

RABBI MICHAEL WEISS

AS WE APPROACH our festival of lights in the darkest time of the year, I wanted to share wisdom from an unexpected place. In traditional Japanese art, kintsugi is a technique in which broken ceramic ware is repaired using lacquer mixed with gold dust. The result is something new and beautiful, accentuating the object's unique history. The cracks are not hidden, but glint gold in the light.

In recent years, our community has felt so much brokenness, pain, and fear. Our response to brokenness, in the world and ourselves, is often to attempt to repair the harm. We rebuild, fill gaps, and plaster over our sadness. But our tradition warns us about this.

During Chanukkah we tell the story of the Maccabees, who fought for religious freedom. 'Chanukkah' means dedication, emphasizing how the Maccabees rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem after Antiochus' army desecrated it. They relit the menorah and rebuilt the altar, but as leaders of Judea, they forgot their purpose. They remade the Temple too well, forgetting they had fought for Jews' rights to their uniqueness and sacred practices. The Maccabees became corrupt and self-indulgent conquerors, losing the hope that had led them to fight.

Our tradition offers a different model. The ark in that same Temple contained the Ten Commandments along with the broken pieces of the first set, shattered by Moses when he saw the Israelites had made the Golden Calf. There was no attempt to repair them. The broken tablets were kept in our people's holiest place as a reminder of our regret, the fear that led us to idolatry, and the brokenness we feel in ourselves and the world.

We need to see cracks. Our mistakes and pain are essential to who we are, reminding us where we've been and guiding us towards healing others. Kintsugi is not the only answer, as some things cannot be made beautiful with gold, but we need to remember the cracks, even as the trauma dulls. Let this season be one of healing and rededication to healing others' wounds, never forgetting the scars, lest we return to the ways that caused us harm.

KEHILA HESCHEL

Our commitment to excellence

LISHAI PEEL

AS ANOTHER school year gets underway, we're thinking not only about what our students will learn, but about the relationships, traditions and sense of belonging they will carry with them.

This year marks a special milestone at Kehila Heschel School: we have a Grade 5 graduating class whose students are embarking on a year-long project designed to strengthen connections among Jewish young people in Hamilton. Through this initiative, we hope to create pathways to new friendships and help our students recognize that they are part of a larger, vibrant Jewish community.

At Kehila, we are committed to Jewish excellence in education. Our trilingual program and Platinum EcoSchool certification reflect our belief that academic growth, Jewish identity and care for the world around us belong together. Just as importantly, we strive to ensure that every Jewish child feels welcomed, valued and celebrated.

These values feel especially meaningful as we approach Chanukah. This year, we look forward to gathering with the broader Jewish community for communal candle lighting, food, arts and crafts, activities for all ages and a dreidel tournament!

We hope the celebration will be an opportunity to share in the simcha of Chanukah and celebrate our students' work. Whether or not you have a connection to Kehila Heschel, you are warmly invited to celebrate with us.

Chag Chanukah Sameach!

McMASTER HILLEL

The power of Jewish joy

REBECCA KLOOSTERMAN

HILLEL MCMASTER students had a great start to the school year and proudly celebrated being Jewish on campus by handing out apples and honey for Rosh Hashanah. A few weeks later, students of all backgrounds were excited to learn more about Judaism in hands-on experiences like waving the lulav and etrog in the McMaster Sukkah. As always, Jewish students remain centred on Jewish pride, community, and joy.

On Oct. 7, Hillel students held a vigil called "Remembering, Reflecting, and Rebuilding" at the McMaster's Bridges Cafe. The students hand-crafted various artistic displays and invited attendees to move through the exhibits at their own pace, while experiencing a range of emotions. Many non-Jewish students joined in solidarity and curiosity, and one shared that the experience left him feeling incredibly humbled and changed.

Despite the ongoing challenges they face, including being confronted by historical inversions and antisemitism, Jewish students at Hillel McMaster are hopeful. Shabbat is celebrated amongst friends and community, and Jewish programming continues to grow in popularity.

Students show up everyday celebrating their community and showcase the power of Jewish joy by connecting positively with others.





HAMILTON HEBREW ACADEMY

A place in the Jewish story



HHA students also have the opportunity to learn kitchen skills and teamwork.

PHOTO: COURTESY HHA

OLIVER BORR

WHAT HAPPENS when a Jewish child enters day school in middle school without years of prior Hebrew reading and Judaic text study? To bridge this gap, HHA developed a cultural track, which emphasizes Jewish history, identity, values, and traditions. It provides an engaging pathway for students who entered Jewish education later or who thrive in a less text-intensive environment.

At its heart are two complementary courses: The Jewish Story: A journey through 4,000 years of history, from Abraham and Sinai to the Holocaust, the State of Israel, and the response to Oct. 7. Students examine how a small nation maintained its identity across millennia, ultimately answering a deeply personal question: What is my place in the Jewish story?

Jewish Life and Literacy is an exploration of the values animating Jewish living. Students examine the "why" behind Shabbat, prayer, community, holidays, and mitzvot.

While traditional text study remains a central pillar of HHA's curriculum, our cultural track delivers content-rich Jewish education without making Hebrew decoding a strict prerequisite, recognizing that meaningful Jewish learning can take multiple forms.

Instead of feeling defined by missing foundational skills, late-entering students are empowered by what they can understand and contribute. Jewish identity is nurtured through knowledge, curiosity, and pride, ensuring every Jewish child discovers they are a vital part of the story. This reflects HHA's broader philosophy that academic excellence and individualization go hand-in-hand.

HAMILTON HEBREW ACADEMY HIGH

Pathways beyond the classroom

OLIVER BORR

WHAT DOES it take to turn a simple idea into a successful business? This is just one of the exciting questions being explored through Pathways, a new educational initiative by HHA High that is opening doors for Jewish teenagers throughout the greater Hamilton community.

Currently, 23 students from various schools and backgrounds are enrolled in this unique program, which blends academic excellence, practical life skills, Jewish values, and real-world discovery. Pathways offers two Ontario high school credit courses: Food and Nutrition, taught by Romy Friedman, which helps students develop practical skills while exploring the cultural influences of our diet; and Entrepreneurship: The Venture, taught by Darrell Kennedy, which introduces them to the realities of business development, marketing, and finance.

What truly sets Pathways apart is its commitment to taking education beyond the classroom. Students participate in a series of excursions to learn directly from local entrepreneurs. Planned destinations include Premier Kosher Meat Plant, Summit Station Dairy, Jakeman's Maple Products, Tzafona Wineries, and Chocolate Tales.

Pathways reflects HHA High's broader educational philosophy.

By connecting academics with practical experiences, Pathways helps students recognize opportunities and develop their talents.

Crucially, the program provides a welcoming, engaging environment where Jewish teens can build friendships and strengthen their community connection. Pathways isn't just teaching students how businesses work; it is inspiring Hamilton's youth to think creatively, dream ambitiously, and discover their own potential to build something extraordinary.

HAMILTON JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

The legacy of survival

NATALIE SOBEL

CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN of Holocaust survivors occupy a distinctive place in Jewish life. While every family's story is different, many descendants share experiences that are not always visible or easily understood by others: silence around the past, heightened vigilance, a powerful sense of responsibility, complex family dynamics, and a deep connection to both loss and resilience.

For second-generation survivors (2G)—those born to Holocaust survivors—and third-generation survivors (3G), the Holocaust can remain present even when it was not directly experienced. Through our Mental Health and Wellbeing program HJFS hosts monthly gatherings that create a welcoming space where descendants of survivors can connect, reflect and build community. In August, Dr. Grace Feuerverger, professor emerita of education and ethnography at the University of Toronto gave a presentation about her memoir, Winter Light, which opened thoughtful conversation about growing up in the shadow of parental trauma and the ways people make meaning of inherited histories.

The group's next gathering will take place on Monday, Dec. 7, from 6 to 7 p.m. with special guest, Marsha Lederman, an award-winning journalist, Globe and Mail columnist and the author of the best-selling memoir Kiss the Red Stairs: The Holocaust, Once Removed, which explores her family's history and the enduring effects of trauma across generations. Following the 2G/3G session, HJFS welcomes the broader community from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. for a presentation by Lederman about her book and her journey of research, memory and discovery.

The broader community presentation offers an opportunity to listen, learn and better understand how the legacy of the Holocaust continues to shape lives today.

BBYO

Western Europe Discovery trip

TEDDY NORRIS

THIS SUMMER, I had the amazing opportunity to go on an international travel trip with other Jewish teens my age through BBYO. Our Western Europe tour took us through England, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. We explored iconic landmarks, from the bustling streets of London and the artistic avenues of Paris to the historic places of Brussels and Amsterdam.

However, the trip was far deeper than standard sightseeing. Navigating these countries together offered a profound exploration of identity.

In Amsterdam, we visited the Anne Frank House, and it was a powerful emotional anchor, connecting us directly to the resilience of the Jewish spirit. We shared moments of reflection, Shabbat celebrations in unfamiliar cities, and group discussions to process our experiences in a meaningful way.

Traveling with new friends who share similar cultural backgrounds completely changed the experience! We weren't just tourists; we were connecting our personal stories to the broader history of Europe. The journey left a sense of belonging and unity among our group. Confronting both the triumphs and the tragedies of European Jewish history created a strong, supportive network transforming my newly made buddies and acquaintances into lifelong friends.



PHOTO: COURTESY TEDDY NORRIS

Teddy Norris (far left, front row) and fellow BBYO participants pose at the Eiffel Tower.

We returned with a renewed pride in our Jewish identity, a global Jewish perspective, and many more friends across the world. My trip reminded me of how proud I am for being Jewish. I recommend this trip to any Jewish teen who wants a spectacular summer experience. Visit bbyo.org/summer for more information.

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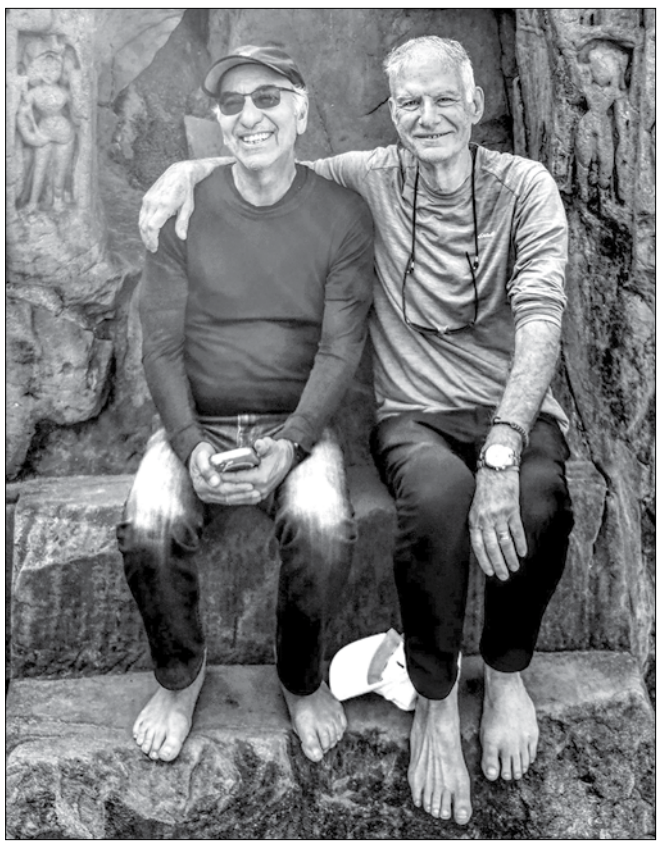
On behalf of KMB Law, we wish you a **Shana Tova**

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Back to India, to where it all began

More than 50 years after meeting in the Himalayas, two old friends return to India to the places that changed their lives

BY **MARK EISENBERG**
SPECIAL TO HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS



PHOTOS: COURTESY MARK EISENBERG

Above: Mark Eisenberg (right) with his friend David in January 2026, at Masroor, an eighth-century Hindu temple in northwest India. **Left**: Mark (left) and David (right) sharing a laugh in 1973.

IN 1972, after my first year of university in Toronto, the spirit of adventure took hold of this child of the '60s. A university friend and I headed to Greece, hoping to buy a boat and take people on cruises through the Aegean. The sea had other plans, and we spent a wonderful month in a small fishing village on Crete instead.

From there, we travelled to Israel, where we spent four months volunteering on kibbutzim. We lived among the Sinai sand dunes, snorkelled in the Red Sea, worked on an archaeological dig and explored the streets and alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City.

Our paths soon diverged. I headed to Istanbul, determined to travel overland to India in search of spiritual inspiration. Over the next eight weeks, I journeyed through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, in a world vastly different from today's. A three-day train ride from Istanbul to Tehran in a plush red-velvet sleeper cost just $18. In the holy city of Mashhad, I played my flute in the markets to earn enough for my next meal.

I travelled through the horse-drawn-buggy streets of Herat, immersed myself in Kabul's culture and crossed the magnificent Khyber Pass into Pakistan. India was a feast of history, architecture, religion, art and music. In Kashmir, I spent eight days travelling by dugout log boat, roasting freshly caught fish over a small fire and sleeping on the riverbank.

Eventually, I arrived in McLeod Ganj, a colourful Himalayan town that had become home to Tibetans in exile, including the Dalai Lama. Its temples, chanting monks and classes in Buddhist philosophy and meditation offered a haven for a young spiritual seeker.



As I often did in those days, I found a quiet spot to play my flute. Several people suggested I seek out a man who played the violin and lived high on the mountain. After a steep, 40-minute climb, I reached a small cabin and knocked on the door. A friendly, long-haired, bearded man welcomed me inside.

Within minutes, I discovered he was a Jewish guy from Toronto.

What were the odds?

We played music together and instantly recognized a kindred spirit. Sharing a love of wilderness canoe trips and adventure, we promised to stay in touch when we returned to Canada. David later returned from doctoral studies in Britain to serve as best man at my wedding to Shelli in 1978.

Over the decades, we stayed in touch, reconnecting every few years to share the milestones and challenges of family life.

Then, in June 2025, David, who now teaches philosophy in California, called me.

"Baba," he said, using the term of affection and respect we had adopted in India and still use with each other, "do you realize it's been more than 50 years since we met in India?"

It was a remarkable realization. David had been invited to India to deliver a series of lectures and suggested I join him for an adventure in the country where our friendship had begun.

With Shelli's blessing, we arranged to meet in December for a five-week journey to rediscover India—and the enduring friendship that had begun there more than half a century earlier.

We visited spiritual communities representing several traditions across South India, including the beautiful Paradesi Synagogue in Kochi's Jew Town, with its hand-painted porcelain tiles, Belgian glass chandeliers and ornate Torah Ark dating to 1568. We also walked barefoot to the cave where a renowned meditation teacher, whose writings we had devoured years earlier, had spent 15 years in solitude.

We returned to McLeod Ganj for a week amid the chanting of monks and cool mountain air. The tiny enclave we remembered had grown into a busy destination, with a cable car replacing the mountain paths we had once climbed, yet it retained much of its distinctive Tibetan character.

In Benares, the spiritual heart of India, we watched Hindus gather along the Ganges to pray and bathe in its sacred waters, then witnessed cremation rites along the river. I also paraglided from a launch point 8,500 feet above sea level, soaring over the mountains for an exhilarating 20 minutes.

There was so much to take in: extraordinary food, the contrasts between wealth and poverty, towering mountains and green valleys, ever-present cows and monkeys, and the warmth of the people we encountered.

But the greatest treasure was our friendship. Reunited in the place where our lives had unexpectedly intersected more than 50 years earlier, we celebrated the wonders of India and the blessings and challenges of a life well lived.

Venturing beyond our comfort zone can lead to discoveries we never anticipated. And sometimes, if we are very lucky, the journey brings us back to an old friend.

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