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Vayakhel

CANDLELIGHTING, HAVDALAH TIMES

Halifax	5:48 p.m.	6:52 p.m.
Montreal	5:28 p.m.	6:32 p.m.
Ottawa	5:36 p.m.	6:40 p.m.
Toronto	5:52 p.m.	6:55 p.m.
Winnipeg	5:58 p.m.	7:07 p.m.
Calgary	6:05 p.m.	7:15 p.m.
Vancouver	5:43 p.m.	6:51 p.m.



The cost of keeping kosher

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Oberlander fights for citizenship, and an El Al passenger gives film two fists down

Death squad member wins reprieve

Ottawa will review the case of Nazi-era war-crimes suspect Helmut Oberlander, 92, who's been fighting to retain his citizenship since 1995. The Federal Court of Appeal sent the case back to the federal cabinet after it filed its third motion since 2001 to revoke his citizenship. The government alleges the Ukraine-born Oberlander failed to disclose his wartime service in a death squad that killed 23,000 people when he became a Canadian in 1960. In 2000, a judge agreed, and the cabinet revoked his citizenship three times. Twice it was restored by court rulings. The third revocation is being reviewed. Oberlander, of Waterloo, Ont., claims he was a low-level interpreter and would have been shot if he tried to escape.

Haredi El Al freakout

A haredi man on an El Al flight to Israel from Poland went on a rampage last week



An 'immodest' film caused an uproar on El Al

after complaining the in-flight movie was "immodest." The passenger, 36, from Beit Shemesh, damaged two viewing screens and attacked the cabin crew during his Feb. 24 freakout, the Hebrew-language news website *Walla* reported. Police, who were waiting for the man when the plane landed, took him into custody to question

him. El Al told *Walla* that the company "is not prepared to accept violent behaviour of any kind during flights."

Jude Law reads Shoah-era letter

British actor Jude Law read aloud a German-Jewish author's Holocaust-era letter at a Feb. 21 event to promote awareness of the challenges facing refugees in Europe. He read Lion Feuchtwanger's 1935 open letter to the Nazis occupying his Berlin home. Law, along with other British celebrities, was taking part in a live performance for 200 migrants at a 4,000-person refugee camp in Calais, France, that featured readings of letters about the plight of the refugees. Feuchtwanger, a prominent writer, was a vocal critic of the Nazis before they came to power in 1933. He moved to France after Hitler's election, and was jailed after the Nazi invasion. After escaping, he was granted asylum in the United States, where he died in 1958. ■

Gematria

3,400

The age in years of a statuette found by a seven-year-old boy on a hike with his father and friends in the Tel Rehov archeological park in Israel's Beit She'an Valley last week.

5

The number of buildings owned by pre-Shoah Jewish communities that will be returned to Jewish groups under new legislation in Latvia.

Quotable

“

We see support from the embassy and the consulate as strong messages that there is room for diversity both within Israel and within our community.

— Stephen Gaerber, chair of the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, on the decision by the Israeli Embassy and Consulate in Toronto to sponsor a concert by a left-wing Israeli singer. Full story on p. 20.

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Letters to the Editor

How to fight BDS

Like other university graduates, I get many emails asking for donations. A few weeks ago, I was beginning to think it was about time to give something, but put everything on hold when I learned that the students at McMaster University had voted in one of those ill-informed boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns that have been sweeping university campuses. I was even more upset when I read that the president did little more than suggest to the press that the students' union did not represent the university. Is he really unaware that students are the *raison d'être* for a university?

Not only do I consider a McMaster BDS campaign to be an insult to the credibility of the university, I consider it to be an attack upon my heritage and upon me personally.

Although I consider it *chutzpah* to want to boycott me and ask for my money at the same time, I did decide to go ahead with a donation, but instead of sending it to the university, I sent it to McMaster Hillel.

Until some semblance of sanity returns to academia, I would encourage other Jewish university alumni to do as I did.

Marvin Silbert
Toronto

I am extremely disappointed in NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair's decision to vote against condemning the BDS movement. Doing so and encouraging the caucus to do so is an affront to Canadian values ("Anti-BDS motion supported by Liberal, Tory MPs," Feb. 25).

Mulcair is smart enough to know who the foreign funders of BDS are and about their desire to undermine Canadian values and laws. He should be smart enough to know what fate holds if this anti-democratic, anti-tolerance and anti-human rights movement grows anywhere in Canada or elsewhere.

David Nitkin
Toronto

For the third time in less than a year and a half, a BDS motion was presented at McGill University. However, this time students voted to pass the resolution (cjnews.com).

As students at McGill, we will not take this minor setback as a loss, but as a time

to unite against discrimination.

We call on all McGill students and the wider community to voice their concerns and push for a campus-wide referendum. While we respect the decision made at the Students' Society of McGill University, of the 39,000-plus students who attend this institution, only 883 voted, representing a total of 2.2 per cent of the overall student body. In the middle of midterms, this is far too large of a decision to be made by so few students. The brothers of Alpha Epsilon Pi at McGill condemn such a divisive and anti-democratic vote.

Alex Sirois, president of Alpha Epsilon Pi, Epsilon Chi Chapter
Montreal

In support of Nini

We, a group of Israeli-Canadians, urge the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver to honour the invitation to Achinoam Nini to perform in Vancouver for Yom Ha'atzmaut, despite pressure from JNF and a few, but loud, protesters from the community (cjnews.com).

Nini is a remarkable artist with an exceptional musical career. However, we suspect that the resistance to inviting her may not be her musical achievements, but rather her personal views on peace

and human rights.

The fact that she is known in Israel for her progressive humanistic views and has been attacked as an "Israel hater" is not relevant to the decision whether to invite her to perform. Such views that value all human beings should not be considered extreme. Unfortunately, the current political climate in Israel condemns every person who advocates for peace and human rights, and campaigns, such as the recent one by Im Tirzu, and other similar extremist groups, single out progressive artists.

By cancelling the invitation, we will not only be missing the opportunity to experience a great musician, it will also mean taking a stand against everything Vancouver and Canada is proudly known for – our belief in tolerance, pluralism and human rights, the same values that are reflected in our Jewish heritage.

Tal Jarus-Hakak and 32 others
Vancouver

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Mazel tov to retired pharmacist Gerry Aronson who celebrates his 102nd birthday this week, from Lynne, Jerome and families, plus your friends at Castel Royal.

Email your digital photos along with a description of 25 words or less to **cblackman@thecjn.ca** or go online to **www.CJNews.com** and click on “Family Moments”

Mazel Tov!

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RABBI-2-RABBI

Two rabbis walk into a synagogue...

There's a misconception that Jewish scholars who use humour are seeking to entertain rather than educate, but it's a tradition that dates back to talmudic times

RABBI AVI FINEGOLD

FOUNDER, THE JEWISH LEARNING LAB, MONTREAL

RABBI PHILIP SCHEIM

BETH DAVID B'NAI ISRAEL BETH AM CONGREGATION, TORONTO

Rabbi Finegold: The inclusion of jokes in our previous column (“You know what happens when a ‘yekke’ marries a chassid? You have a wedding that starts exactly two hours late”) is something I have been thinking about lately.

I was teaching a class on midrash recently and I found myself comparing the use of mashal (parables) in midrash to how rabbis will often use humour in their sermons. It is a trope, a common feature of the genre that people now understand and appreciate as a method of connecting the material to the listener.

I suppose that bringing up this topic is quite appropriate for Adar, and so I was wondering, do you use humour in sermons? In everyday life? To what purpose?

I find myself trying to be funny in my classes, partly because I think it is central to my persona and partly because I recognize the performative aspect of teaching. So in the hope of creating a new way of thinking about rabbinic humour I ask, brother, can you paradigm?

Rabbi Scheim: Funny you should ask. I am in the process of teaching a course on Jewish humour from rabbinic times to the present, focusing on humour as a survival tool, and as a means of making sense of an increasingly crazy and troubled world.

Many recent books have brought new light to this subject, especially Ruth Wisse's *No Joke: Making Jewish Humor*. This being the 100th yearzeit year of Sholem Aleichem, I have used the opportunity to examine his writings and deepen my appreciation of his role in setting the stage (literally and figuratively) for today's Jewish comics. I do attempt, where appropriate, to use humour as a tool in sermons and teaching, but try to avoid the formulaic “opening joke” preferred by many rabbis, which can lead to the joke, more than the sermon itself, being remembered.

Many of my teachers in my seminary years hailed from the old world and were funny, though not always intentionally. Their unique sense of English syntax

didn't always correspond to their impeccable grasp of talmudic text, which allowed for memorable classroom experiences, something today's students sadly are far less likely to experience. I frequently share stories about my teachers, because both their profound learning and their humour taught me a great deal about the nature of Jewish survival.

Rabbi Finegold: There seems to be a misconception that rabbis who use humour are seeking to entertain rather than educate, and that they see their role as that of a showman, someone who is irreverent, quite literally. But we have a long history of scholars and rabbis employing humour going all the way back to the Talmud. Rabbis were quite cutting in pointing out the shortcomings of their colleague's arguments, and sometimes even the colleagues themselves.

My favourite commentator, the medieval Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, never misses an opportunity to take a jab at the other commentators, sometimes gratuitously. There is value in humour and wit in and of itself though, even beyond the classic joke during a sermon.

The Vilna Gaon points out that the name of our most solemn day – Yom Kippur – contains a play on words. Yom Hakippurim (its name in the Bible) is akin to Yom Ke'Purim, a day that is like Purim. He sees the day with the most levity as potentially greater than a day filled with prayer and repentance. Wit and joy are greater tools than fasting and chest beating when it comes to achieving closeness with God.

Rabbi Scheim: The vast Jewish over-representation in modern comedy seems to reflect a DNA-level Jewish instinct to find humour in even the darkest of circumstances.

We have used humour to mock our adversaries, to find laughter in our day-to-day struggles in times of poverty and persecution, and to find perspective in an ever-challenging and dangerous world. Humour has taught us humility in casting light on our foibles, idiosyncrasies, and quirks that can drive even those who love us to distraction.

Using humour appropriately and effectively offers a rabbi the opportunity to lift spirits in the context of meaningful Torah learning. Indeed laughter amid life's challenges may be one of our secrets to survival. ■

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From the Archives | In Be'er Sheva



Canadian lawyer and politician Leon Crestohl visits Be'er Sheva in 1948. Born in Poland, the son of a rabbi, Crestohl immigrated to Canada with his family in 1911.

ALEX DWORKIN CANADIAN JEWISH ARCHIVES (FORMERLY CJCCC NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

SeeJN | Tel Aviv Marathon



FLASH90 PHOTO

Some 40,000 took part Sunday in the annual Tel Aviv Marathon. The full race began at 7 a.m. in northern Tel Aviv with 2,500 runners, among them hundreds of foreigners who came to Israel to take part in the event. In addition to the 42-kilometre race, half marathons, 10-kilometre and five-kilometre runs also took place, as well as a hand bike race.

From Yoni's Desk

Is the BDS movement losing steam?

There was palpable sense of relief within the greater Canadian Jewish community late last week when the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) voted to nullify a motion that would have seen the Montreal university's undergraduate association join the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. As reporter Janice Arnold explains in this week's *CJN*, the motion passed its first test earlier in the week at the SSMU's general assembly, but ultimately failed when it was put to a ratification vote among the entire undergraduate population (for more on this story, see page 12).

Adding salt to the wounds of the defeated pro-BDS camp at McGill, after the final tally was made public, the university's principal and vice-chancellor, Suzanne Fortier, issued a public statement asserting that BDS "flies in the face of the tolerance and respect we cherish as values fundamental to a university. It proposes actions that are contrary to the principles of academic freedom, equity, inclusiveness and the exchange of views and ideas in responsible, open discourse."

The latest defeat of BDS at McGill, the third in a year and a half, and the fifth since 2010, follows two other major recent victories for the anti-BDS movement in Canada. In late January, University of Waterloo students voted against a BDS motion, and less than two weeks ago, a Conservative-sponsored motion rejecting BDS passed in the House of Commons by a margin of 229 to 51. (The governing Liberal party and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau overwhelmingly supported the motion, though some Liberal members of Parliament voted against it, while others were not present for the vote. The New Democratic Party, meanwhile, voted against the motion, arguing it would infringe on Canadians' freedom of speech, a move that left many wondering what exactly NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair meant when he told *The CJN* during last year's election campaign, "I think [the BDS movement is] absurd, and I disagree with it.")

It appears BDS has been losing some steam of late, and not only in Canada. A number of American states have passed anti-BDS measures in recent months, while the British Parliament has made public plans to outlaw the boycott movement, and Paris' City Council recently adopted a pair of anti-BDS resolutions. True, BDS remains a concern on many university campuses, including York University in Toronto, where the York Federation of Students passed a resolution endorsing BDS three years ago this month. But even at York, pro-BDS students have recently taken to couching their movement within the effort to force the university to divest from arms manufacturers, perhaps indicating that BDSers are being forced to resort to even sneakier efforts to target Israel. Or maybe it's a tacit admission that the greater student body is simply not buying the anti-Israel message they are selling.

Even so, it seems unlikely that BDS will go away any time soon. Hardworking pro-Israel organizations and indefatigable student groups can still expect to battle for the hearts and minds of students at McGill and York, among other Canadian universities. It's a fight they would surely rather not have to wage. But if they must, recent trends – on campus, in Ottawa and beyond – should at the very least buoy their spirits. ■ — YONI

ESSAY

A memorable season for England's 'Yid Army'

Michael Coren

The English soccer team Tottenham Hotspur, also known as Spurs, is currently experiencing its best season since 1961. The team may well win the Premiership – the top English soccer league and arguably the best in the world – and are considered by experts to be one of the most exciting sides currently playing. They've always been a big, wealthy, North London club, but this year's run to the top of the table is something exceptional. As such, they are on live television almost every week, watched by hundreds of millions of people in every continent.

But what most people don't realize is that Tottenham is known as "The Jewish team," and if you listen carefully, you will hear their fans chanting, "Yids, Yids" or "Yid Army, Yid Army" during their team's matches.

Offensive? Anti-Semitic? Outrageous? Well, just hold on one moment.

I've been a fan of the team for 50 years, largely because my Jewish father was born nearby. Tottenham always had a large number of Jewish supporters, because the catchment area for the club has a sizeable Jewish community. Yet until relatively recently, there were no Jewish owners of the team, and over the years, there has been only one Jewish manager (or coach) and perhaps three or four Jewish players. The latter isn't surprising, in that there are very Jewish managers anyway, and until Israelis started joining European leagues, not many Jews played first-class soccer. But Spurs was always considered Jewish, and from the 1970s, the identification became rigid, for friends as well as enemies.

The point of transition is layered in irony and centres around a television show called *Till Death Us Do Part*, the inspiration for the American comedy *All In The Family*. The anti-hero was the character Alf



A Tottenham Hotspur fan poses with an unofficial club banner. FACEBOOK PHOTO

Garnett, a racist and a bigot who followed east London's West Ham United team and disliked almost everyone, including Tottenham and "the Jews up at Spurs." So popular was the show that the Spurs as a Jewish club idea became glued to the wider culture. Garnett, of course, was the symbol of all that was wrong, stupid and undesirable, but nevertheless, his opinions had a certain appeal to some. The irony was that Alf Garnett was played, superbly, by the Jewish actor and lifelong Tottenham fan Warren Mitchell.

Suddenly what was beneath the surface became more visible, even acceptable. Tottenham's main local rival has always been Arsenal, which is the other London team followed by the Jewish community (in fact, there could very well be more Jewish Arsenal fans than Spurs fans). But Arsenal supporters took up the "Jewish Tottenham" theme as well, and soon Spurs were known as "The Yids." With Arsenal, it was often mere banter and provocation – some of the Arsenal fans using the epithet were themselves Jewish. But with two other London teams, the motivation was more sinister.

In the 1970s, the far right in Britain made

a concerted attempt to recruit among soccer hooligans. Groups such as the National Front and British Movement, always small and never a genuine political threat, nevertheless caused trouble and were vocal and visible. At Chelsea and West Ham, they had some success. At Chelsea, in particular, there was an organized fascist minority, and when they shouted, "Yids, Yids," they meant it. Worse, they also sang, "We've never felt more like gassing the Jews," and even during a Spurs game against Chelsea made hissing sounds that were supposed to indicate the noise of Nazi gas chambers.

Such obscenities have been illegal for some years, and, anyway, the far right dribbled away and such a hateful culture, always the preserve of a fringe extreme, simply doesn't exist anymore in English soccer. So now it's almost unheard of for anybody else in a stadium other than Tottenham supporters to chant "Yids." Spurs fans have owned the word, taken possession of it and refused to give it up. They have even occasionally waved Israeli flags. (This phenomenon is not, by the way, confined to England, and it's particularly common in the Netherlands, where the

famous Ajax of Amsterdam in considered a Jewish team.)

It's all rather contrived and artificial, and nothing like as visceral and political as the Glasgow division between overwhelmingly Protestant Rangers and Catholic Celtic, but it still divides opinion. There are many people, including the Premiership officials, who would prefer if the word "Yid" was never heard again, and there have even been moves to arrest people who use it. But it would be impossible to stop 10,000 or 20,000 people from chanting a word, and the greater the attempt to expunge it, the louder the fans will sing.

I'm sure that many Canadians reading this will be incredulous, but as someone who is deeply sensitive to anti-Semitism, I can say with confidence that I haven't considered the Tottenham chants to be linked to anything racist in almost 30 years. Remember, sport – and certainly soccer in Europe – is far more tribal than in North America and also more working-class. It can't be too regulated and probably shouldn't be too regulated.

The problem now is not England but the Continent. Small groups of ultra-rightist thugs have attacked Tottenham fans in Italy, for example, because they assume that the people they are fighting are Jewish. In actual fact, in all of these incidents, that hasn't been the case.

The next couple of years will be fascinating. The seating capacity of Tottenham's stadium is to be almost doubled, the England national team will be one-third composed of Spurs players, and we can only hope that the team lives up to expectations and becomes truly great. At that point, the pressure to change what is said and sung might be insurmountable. But I wouldn't count on that happening. I really wouldn't. ■

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ROMSPEN

As food prices rise, kosher consumers are struggling

Shoppers are being more cautious at the supermarket, while high costs are forcing some to compromise on their adherence to kashrut

PAUL LUNGEN

plungen@thecjn.ca

Economic data can sometimes be impenetrable to the average person, especially when it refers to items like consumer surplus or foreign exchange rates. But consumer surplus and the value of the Canadian dollar can have a real-world impact on the daily lives of people when they roll their shopping carts down the kosher aisle and are confronted with prices that never seem to go down.

If you do any shopping, you'll notice that food prices have taken a jump in recent months, beyond what veteran shoppers might have noticed in the last five years.

It's not just kosher consumers who are affected. Everyone is paying more, as recent data compiled by Statistics Canada reveal.

Looking at the year that ended in January, the federal agency reported that food prices were up by four per cent, but that certain items, such as fresh vegetables, jumped by 18.2 per cent.

In a more detailed report that looked

at average retail prices for a variety of consumer products, including meat, vegetables, fruit and household items, Statistics Canada reported that from December 2014 to December 2015, the cost of a kilogram of sirloin steak, not a kosher cut, rose by 14.3 per cent. Prime rib, which can be a kosher cut, rose by 12 per cent. Ground beef went up by six per cent and stewing beef by 6.8 per cent.

Even lowly macaroni, a staple for families, rose by 12.5 per cent in the year.

Vegans and vegetarians are feeling the pinch even more. The price of carrots rose by 13.8 per cent in the last year. Onions were up by 16.6 per cent; potatoes by 13.7 per cent; mushrooms by 7.2 per cent; and celery rose in price by a whopping 46.3 per cent in just one year.

So what can kosher consumers do?

Avi Moyal is a price-conscious shopper who picks up the groceries for his family of six every week or so. He makes a point of shopping at stores that price-match the competition and he uses a handy smartphone app, called Flipp, to get the best prices.



Jewish families are finding it hard to deal with increased food costs. PAUL LUNGEN PHOTO

With Flipp, he said, you can download grocers' weekly flyers and present the best price to supermarkets such as Walmart, No Frills and Superstore, which match prices. He figures he saves about \$30 on a weekly grocery bill of \$250, and it helps avoid the need to drive from store to store to get the best price.

Moyal, a Toronto real estate agent, enjoys purchasing groceries and has been doing it ever since he was a kid accompanying his mom on shopping expeditions. He's noticed a big jump in price in recent months.

A couple of years ago, you could find kosher feta cheese for around \$6 a pound. A few months ago the price was around \$7, and now it's in the \$10 range. "We can do without it," he said, substituting shredded cheese instead.

A couple of weeks ago, he spotted a particular kosher cheese on sale for \$3.50, down from its regular price of \$5, so he bought three packages.

"You're not eliminating anything," he said. "You just have to be more cautious."

The family still eats beef and a lot of fish, though chicken is no longer a big part of their menu.

"From what I've seen, it's not just kosher where the price has gone up," he said. "Beef and chicken have always been expensive. If you've been buying it for years, you're used to it."

Alison Finkelstein does the shopping for her family of seven. "I'm on a tight budget, so I should be price conscious. I try my best to only buy things that are on sale or less

expensive," the Toronto-area resident said.

You'll find a couple of packages of chopped meat and two chickens in her shopping cart every week. Red meat has gone up substantially. She's paying \$13 for the same package of beef that cost \$10 only a few months ago. "I couldn't believe it – \$13 for one package of chopped meat," she said.

Finkelstein was in Florida recently and noticed that groceries are a lot cheaper there and the selection is better.

A big box of Fruit Loops cereal – a special treat for her kids – cost \$10 in Toronto, but only \$5 in Florida.

"Things are generally more in Canada," she said, but she was "shocked" by the jump in price in only the last few months.

"I haven't changed my shopping habits, with five growing kids. You can't cut back too much," she added.

Institutional shoppers are feeling the pinch as well.

Gina Carvalho, director of food and nutrition services at Baycrest, which operates the Toronto Jewish community's largest seniors residence, said that "Baycrest's annual nutritional budget review process from fiscal year 2014-15 to 2015-16 saw an average increase of 18 per cent on the price of kosher meat. "Kosher produce also increased significantly that year. As such, we built our 2016-17 food budget around these predictors. However, so far we are not seeing the same increase in the cost of kosher meat for 2016-17.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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Why we need a legal response to BDS



Aidan Fishman

On Feb. 22, McGill University's undergraduate student union endorsed the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel at its annual general meeting, before failing to ratify it online by a 60 to 40 per cent margin. About a month ago, a similar initiative was rejected in a student referendum at the University of Waterloo by 55 to 45 per cent.

Waterloo is widely considered one of Canada's most apolitical universities, hardly conducive to the sort of far-left activism that typically drives BDS offensives. And yet, almost half of student voters supported an initiative to sever exchange and research ties between Waterloo and Israeli tech giants such as the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, which would have directly harmed Waterloo students.

Meanwhile, last week's events at McGill

marked the third time in 18 months that anti-Israel fanatics tried to pass a BDS motion. All these efforts failed by narrow margins, due to the heroic efforts of Jewish student organizers. But in such an atmosphere, it seemed inevitable that BDS devotees would eke out a victory. Most worryingly, the McGill branch of the NDP joined other so-called progressive student groups in backing BDS. (Last week, the NDP caucus in the House of Commons voted against a motion to condemn BDS.)

Of course, there are other problematic Canadian universities, including York, Concordia and McMaster, where the fight over Israel has already been lost, triggering a struggle to safeguard Jewish campus life in any form. At York, in particular, the situation has deteriorated to the point where at least one Jewish donor felt compelled to withdraw his support, and blatantly anti-Semitic claims of a "Jewish conspiracy" are part and parcel of student politics.

So in the face of these threats, what can we do as a Jewish community?

We should take a hint from Britain, where the government recently announced its intention to ban public bodies such as stu-

dent unions, labour unions and municipalities from boycotting Israel. After all, similar legislation is already on the books here in Canada. Ontario and Manitoba both have a *Discriminatory Business Practices Act*, which makes it illegal for any person or corporation to refuse to do business with a second person or corporation on account of race, creed, nationality or even geographical location. In fact, this legislation was enacted in Ontario in 1971 specifically to combat the Arab League boycott of Israel, the spiritual predecessor of the modern BDS movement. The act applies both to wholesale boycotts of Israel as well as more limited efforts aimed at Israelis living in the West Bank, and describes fines of up to \$25,000 against individual violators and \$100,000 against offending corporations.

Further, most Canadian student and labour unions incorporate broad anti-discrimination clauses into their by-laws or constitutions. Often, these clauses include prohibitions against discrimination by nationality, which is practically the definition of BDS. They serve both to illustrate the hypocrisy of these Israel-boycotting groups and expose them to legal liability stemming

from their own governing documents. Indeed, the constitution of McGill's undergraduate student union contains just such an anti-discrimination clause.

It's puzzling that no Canadian Jewish organization has chosen to sue labour unions and student groups engaging in anti-Israel discrimination. While opponents will claim legal action undermines democratic endorsements of BDS, it should be noted that neither labour nor student unions are typically shining examples of democracy in action, as their members will tell you.

But more importantly, litigation by minority groups is not in principle anti-democratic – on the contrary, it is the hallmark of a properly calibrated liberal democracy. Just as other minorities such as African-Canadians, the LGBTQ community and First Nations have used the courts to make their voices heard, Canadian Jews must take full advantage of legal opportunities to rescue our youth from the deteriorating atmosphere of harassment and discrimination on campus. ■

Aidan Fishman is a first-year law student at the University of Toronto.

If the price were lower, would they come?



Daniel Held

We are blessed with remarkable Jewish day schools. Schools that offer Jewish studies that empower youth with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and aptitudes to lead active Jewish lives. Schools with stellar general studies that prepare students for entrance into the toughest university programs. Schools that offer athletics and arts, extracurriculars and guidance, special education and enrichment, cutting-edge technology and competitive facilities.

As the people of the Book, a people that has been sustained by a commitment to education, these are the schools that we should build and sustain. But it is expensive. Precisely because it is remarkable, it is expensive.

The question that dogs me day in and day out is how do we create remarkable

schools – schools to which we want to send our children – that are less expensive?

The starting point to answering this question is an examination of the cost structure of schools.

Across Jewish day schools – and, in truth, across most schools – 80 per cent of costs are devoted to human resources: the teachers, support workers, principals and curriculum designers who we charge with educating our children. Any sea change in the cost of schooling will be the result of changes to human resources.

Two types of new lower-cost schools have emerged, but each raises questions.

The first is a school that returns to basics. Today's schools offer a significantly lower staff to student ratio than schools of the past. Not only are classes smaller, but more administrators, specialists, teaching aids and other adults serve students. The result is that each of today's students is carrying a higher proportion of a full-time salary. New back-to-basics schools maximize the staff to student ratio, often foregoing what is perceived as non-core areas of schooling such as co-curricular activities, guidance, etc.

The second type of school offers disruptive new models of teaching and learning.

For generations, the model of school has not changed significantly. It takes one teacher 10 months to teach a year's curriculum to a group of 18 to 30 students. While we have progressed from the one-room schoolhouse to multi-classroom schools, modified methodologies and integrated technology, the core cost structure of schools has not changed.

Increasingly, schools that look and feel different are being developed. Blended learning schools that mix online learning with traditional brick-and-mortar classes, work-experience-based schools that structure curriculum around internships to prepare students for the "real" world, and schools designed around team teaching and team learning that turn the 30-student classroom on its head are all models of innovative education that offer both 21st-century models of teaching and learning while significantly changing the cost structure of education.

So what's the problem? What do we have to weigh for our schools to transition to these newer models?

While the theory behind each of these innovations is compelling, quality educational research is longitudinal, requiring a multi-year evaluation of the impact on students' knowledge and skill development. It is because of this long view that education is inherently conservative, shirking change in favour of tried and tested models.

While I might buy into the theory, am I willing to risk my child's education to a school that's experimental, where the methodologies have not been tested and proven over long periods of time?

We can create Jewish day schools at a significantly lower price. Doing so, however, will create schools that look and feel different than today's offerings, and may in fact not offer as many services, and so I ask: if we lower the price, will they come? How do we create remarkable schools, schools to which we want to send our children and which are less expensive? ■

Daniel Held is executive director of the Julia and Henry Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Education at UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

A sense of wonder at the Kotel



Jean M. Gerber

Following years of violence against mixed-gender and all-female prayer groups at the Western Wall – experienced by some of my Vancouver friends – it seems that an agreement has been reached. Egalitarian prayer groups will be accorded a significant prayer place at the Kotel.

Women who wanted to pray in all-female or mixed minyanim, even separated from the main area, were often spat on, had trash thrown on them.

The main plaza became less and less accessible, even to those of us who would use the Orthodox women's section. We were admonished, not gently, if we appeared without “modest” dress. Once, I inadvertently stood with my foot up against the stone to brace me, and in a flash, I was hit on the shoulder and

warned. The spot was sacred.

Come on. Herod's dying slaves built that spot, for goodness sake. Their sad deaths may make it holy, but in itself it is stone and dust.

Holiness: we attach it to many things, despite being told that our actions make us and those around us holy, not the stone and wood of our physical world.

But I digress. Today we celebrate.

Since the day I saw the Kotel from a dirty little alleyway between houses and the Wall (1964), and then saw it years later from the Israeli side (1971), not yet cleared of rubble but already opening its arms to welcome its children back, that spot has been for me a place of wonder.

When confronted with, when drawn inexorably toward the Kotel, I felt – what? Awe that it still stood, after 2,000 years, as testimony to the time when all Israel turned towards it in awe? A deep sense of historical connection to this spot? The place where 2,000 years ago the People of Israel felt touched by the sacred?

Wonder: both atheist Oliver Sachs and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel agreed that the sense of wonder should pervade us.

“

We can, I know, find in everyday prayer a sense of touching something outside ourselves.

For Sachs, wonder was to be found within the human brain. There, he found sublime content. While in a moving essay written just before his death, he recalled his family home (a bitter-sweet memory) and the meaning he felt in celebrating Shabbat with his Orthodox family in Israel, still, the Creator was not a source of wonder for him, but the creation.

For Rabbi Heschel, Judaism is a religion of time, time in which we can experience wonder. He differed with Sachs. “The sense of wonder for His creation,” he writes in *The Prophets*, “is common to all men.” For Jews, however, it derives from the reaching out of God to us, and from us to God.

If we can stand in a place so fraught with life and death as the walls around the Temple Mount, then in whatever space we stand, we stand in a place of wonder.

It has been many years since I felt those emotions that gripped me the first times I davened at the Kotel. So when I next get to stand there, mindful of the ordinary 2,000-year-old street on which a platform will be raised, ready for prayer, I hope to achieve what Rabbi Heschel advises: “Prayer takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest and enables us to see the world in the mirror of the holy... Prayer teaches us what to aspire for... Prayer implants in us the ideals we ought to cherish.”

We can, I know, find in everyday prayer a sense of touching something outside ourselves. Maybe only occasionally, but when it happens we know it. How much more so at this Wall.

So – at the Kotel is it because we stand in wonder where ordinary people walked so long ago or plied their trade? Or is it because we can almost touch in wonder the place where Israel celebrated its festivals? Because it is a fraught moment of prayer?

It's all of these – sheer wonder. ■

Israel blamed as Hamas' tunnel vision hurts Gazans



Paul Michaels

Last month, Hamas bragged about how much progress it was making digging tunnels from Gaza into Israel.

Senior Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar claimed “the tunnels reach deep into the territory occupied in 1948,” his way of referring to all of Israel as “occupied” Palestinian land.

In the 2014 Gaza war, Israel uncovered 32 tunnels, many reaching as far as Israeli kibbutzim and villages near the Gaza border. All of them posed a grave threat to Israeli security – not only to IDF soldiers, but also to Israeli civilians who are vulnerable to kidnapping or murder.

While it was reported that the IDF destroyed the tunnels discovered during the war, in fact, they were not entirely demolished, with just major parts, like entry and exit points and some elements in between, destroyed. Hamas has been

busy since then both reconstructing these tunnels and building new ones.

The prospect of yet more Hamas tunnels intruding into Israel to be used in the next round of fighting is unnerving to Israelis, hence the recent stern Israeli government warnings to Hamas.

With the Iron Dome anti-missile defence system, the IDF was able during the last war to intercept almost all missiles fired from Gaza that posed a threat to civilian centres, but Israel had no such high-tech system for discovering tunnels.

And it appears, almost two years later, that it still lacks such a system. In the first week of February, Israel's State Comptroller criticized the IDF for “gaps and failures, some severe, in the readiness for the tunnel threat.”

IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot responded to the criticism by explaining that the army was indeed working on the problem – mostly in secret – and was in possession of what he termed “advanced capabilities.”

Israel's Channel 2 TV recently reported that, for over a decade, the IDF has invested \$250 million (US) in tunnel-detection technology. Other reports have

pointed to joint Israel-U.S. research projects aimed at tunnel detection.

Some analysts believe Hamas has been racing ahead with tunnel construction in order to beat these detection efforts, assuming that once completed and thus “silent,” the tunnels won't be detectable. If, however, the underground defence system Israel is developing proves capable of sensing even completed tunnels, Hamas will have lost its advantage – foremost, its reliance on the element of surprise.

Amid heated rhetoric between Israel and Hamas, and speculation about the possibility of renewed conflict – including calls from highly respected Israeli military analysts like Amos Yadlin for a pre-emptive strike on the tunnels – western media have started to pay more attention to this story.

What has not been noted, however, is the cost borne by Gaza's 1.8 million residents, many of whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the 2014 war – a conflict started by Hamas. These homes were supposed to have been repaired or rebuilt, ironically using cement Israel shipped into Gaza under “strict international supervision” to avoid diversion of

the cement to tunnels.

As it turns out, virtually no civilian structures have been rebuilt. The owners sold their allotted cement on the “black market,” which means to Hamas for tunnel construction.

It has been calculated that Hamas used 1.5 million tons of cement for the military tunnels and bunkers in existence during the 2014 war, enough cement to have built an above-ground city for Gaza's people.

Meanwhile, Israel receives no credit for its humanitarian measures, including daily supplies to Gaza of tons of food, medicine, fuel and other necessities. Instead, Israel's efforts to keep rockets and other weapons out of the hands of Hamas and other terrorist organizations are typically depicted in the West as the Jewish state's punitive, grossly unfair blockade.

Hamas was elected to look after the needs of Gaza's civilians. Instead, Hamas callously ignores them in pursuit of its obsessive, self-destructive anti-Israel campaign.

Gaza's economy suffers because of Hamas' policy. Israel is blamed. It's an old story. ■

News

McGill BDS motion defeated in student-wide vote

JANICE ARNOLD

jarnold@thecjn.ca

McGill University undergraduates have rejected a boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) motion that was approved last week at a general assembly of their student association, and the university administration issued an unequivocal repudiation of the anti-Israel campaign.

Members of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU), members voted 2,819-2,119, with 68 abstentions, online over three days last week, nullifying the motion put forward by the McGill BDS Action Network at the SSMU winter general assembly on Feb. 22. At that time, the motion passed 512-357, with 14 abstentions, in secret balloting.

SSMU rules require that all motions carried at general assemblies must be ratified by the membership at large, with a quorum of 10 per cent.

The SSMU represents the approximately 22,000 undergraduates at McGill's main downtown campus.

Immediately after the results were released Feb. 27, McGill principal and vice-chancellor Suzanne Fortier issued a statement that the university administration "steadfastly oppose[s]" the BDS campaign.

It was the third time in less than 1-1/2 years that pro-BDS students have failed to have a motion adopted. The latest was a general endorsement of the aims of the worldwide campaign launched in 2005 and included a specific demand that McGill divest its holdings in three companies the Network claims are "profiting from violations of Palestinians' human rights" due to their alleged complicity in Israel's occupation.

This was actually the fifth attempt to get BDS support on the student record since 2010.

With 57 per cent of SSMU voters refusing to ratify the motion, Fortier stated: "The university as an institution has not commented publicly until now out of respect for the student governance process. Students respect our governance process. We do not interfere with theirs, or their right to put such motions within the context of their affairs..."

"[W]hile we respect the freedom of expression of all members of our community, the administration of the university will have no part of the BDS movement."



She said the campaign's call for universities to cut ties with Israeli universities "flies in the face of the tolerance and respect we cherish as values fundamental to a university. It proposes actions that are contrary to the principles of academic freedom, equity, inclusiveness and the exchange of views and ideas in responsible, open discourse."

McGill has extensive academic relations with Israeli institutions going back many years.

The ratification failure and the university administration's strong position on the issue of BDS were hailed by Jewish groups.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) termed it "the victory of reason over hate."

CIJA Quebec co-chair Rabbi Reuben Poupko said the defeat of the motion "demonstrates that McGill students reject BDS and value intellectual freedom and the right to healthy and constructive debate. McGill students have clearly indicated, for the third time in 18 months, that BDS is unwelcome on their campus because it stigmatizes people for holding a different point of view."

Some pro-Israel students reported experiencing insulting and hostile remarks, particularly on social media, since the motion was first proposed at the beginning of February.

B'nai Brith Canada said pro-Israel students at McGill have felt "targeted and

“

The administration of the university will have no part of the BDS movement



The No side worked actively to get students to vote against the BDS motion.

unsafe" and "fear reprisals for speaking out," in the words of Toronto-based CEO Michael Mostyn.

"The boycott organizers have bullied students over the course of three years, continuously raising the issue and intimidating dissenters until the motion was passed," he said.

"BDS is an incessant and relentless attack against the national liberation movement of the Jewish People in its promotion of the belief that Jews are the only people in the world who do not deserve their own homeland," said Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"While it is to the credit of the undergraduate body that they have once again rejected this discriminatory campaign, the level of hate directed at Jewish students, including comments referencing 'little Zionist Jewboys' on social media following the original student motion in favour of BDS, demonstrates how entrenched anti-Semitism on our university campuses has become."

President Evan Feldman and CEO Deborah Corber of Montreal's Federation CJA congratulated the "around-the-clock" effort, "often in a hostile environment," of pro-Israel students to mobilize their peers to vote down the motion.

They conceded that the battle is not over, however. "[T]he fight against BDS will require a sustained effort on the part of the community," including "com-

bat[ing] any instance of harassment and anti-Semitism" students may encounter in defending Israel.

In a Feb. 25 statement, the pro-BDS Network, which claims the endorsement of 19 student clubs and campus organizations, "acknowledge[d] the concerns that have been raised about anti-Semitism on campus, and recognize[d] that this is a reality for many Jewish students."

The following day, it "strongly condemned the active campaigning efforts and tactics used by various students, professors and student groups" opposed to the motion, which it said violated SSMU rules against campaigning during the ratification process.

The violations it said it documented consist of "intimidation" and the use of "external organizations... to disseminate misinformation," including professional public relations firms.

Specifically, the Network said "fraudulent" Reddit and Instagram accounts were created with its name and logo, and it dissociated itself from their content.

The original motion was passed by the SSMU general assembly the same day the House of Commons passed a motion formally condemning BDS. The parliamentary motion passed by a vote of 229-51. It calls on the Canadian government to "condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups, or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home, and abroad." ■

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elevy@thecjn.ca

Le 10 avril prochain, la ville de Côte Saint-Luc élit-elle pour la première fois de son histoire un conseiller municipal Sépharade francophone?

C'est tout du moins l'ardent souhait exprimé par Sidney Benizri, l'un des trois candidats ayant annoncé officiellement leur intention de briguer le siège de conseiller municipal du District 7 de Côte Saint-Luc. Cette fonction a été assumée par Mitchell Brownstein depuis 1990.

Ce dernier est candidat à l'élection du nouveau Maire de Côte Saint-Luc, qui aura lieu aussi le 10 avril. Seul candidat déclaré jusqu'ici, Mitchell Brownstein succéderait à Anthony Housefather, qui a été élu député libéral du comté Mont-Royal lors des dernières élections fédérales.

"Il est grand temps qu'une voix sépharade francophone se fasse entendre au conseil municipal de Côte Saint-Luc. Cette instance décisionnelle municipale ne reflète pas la diversité culturelle qui prévaut aujourd'hui à Côte Saint-Luc. Les Sépharades représentent une proportion importante de la population de Côte Saint-Luc. Élire un conseiller municipal Sépharade sera certainement un grand atout pour cette ville", estime Sidney Benizri.

Actuel directeur exécutif de *Magen David Adom Canada* et ancien directeur des programmes de la *Communauté sépharade unifiée du Québec (CSUQ)*, Sidney Benizri, 48 ans, qui réside à Côte Saint-Luc depuis l'an 2000, fait valoir dans cette joute électorale son leadership éprouvé, son esprit de collégialité et sa capacité à travailler étroitement avec toutes les catégories d'âge -enfants, jeunes adultes, personnes du troisième âge-.

"Si je suis élu, je m'engage à défendre les intérêts de tous les résidents du District 7 de Côte Saint-Luc. Je suis une personne rassembleuse et très inclusive."

Un dossier prioritaire auquel il compte

s'atteler s'il est élu conseiller municipal du District 7: l'amélioration des infrastructures de la ville de Côte Saint-Luc.

Sidney Benizri regrette qu'un autre candidat Sépharade, David Tordjman, lorgne aussi le siège de conseiller municipal du District 7.

"Deux candidats Sépharades dans la course, ça divisera certainement le vote et favorisera l'élection du candidat anglophone concourant dans cette élection, Mitchell Kujavsky."

David Tordjman estime pour sa part qu'"ethniciser" cette élection municipale aura un effet délétère: diviser les communautés ashkénaze anglophone et sépharade francophone de Côte Saint-Luc.

"Je tiens à rappeler que le 10 avril se tiendra à Côte Saint-Luc une élection municipale et non une élection ethnique. Je suis très fier de mes racines et de mon héritage sépharades. Mais, d'entrée de jeu, je souhaite que les choses soient très claires: si je remporte cette élection, je représenterai tous les résidents du District 7, peu importe leurs origines culturelles. Le clivage Sépharades-Ashkénazes, qui à mes yeux est depuis longtemps révolu, n'a absolument pas sa place dans une élection démocratique. C'est un non-sens. Je veux être un élu municipal au service de tous les citoyens de Côte Saint-Luc."

Ingénieur civil de profession, David Tordjman, 44 ans, résident de Côte Saint-Luc depuis 35 ans, a assumé de 2005 à 2010 la fonction de directeur des travaux publics, des services techniques et de l'aménagement urbain de la ville de Côte Saint-Luc.

Après avoir travaillé pour l'*ONU* à Haïti pendant deux ans comme gérant de projets auprès du directeur des travaux publics de la ville de Port-au-Prince, David Tordjman est actuellement l'ingénieur responsable des projets d'infrastructures du gouvernement national des Cris du Québec.

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Des Programmes en français au Centre Cummings



Annie Bénibgui, Présidente du comité francophone du Centre Cummings pour les Aînés.

ELIAS LEVY
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Convaincre les Sépharades francophones âgés de 50 ans et plus d'adhérer au *Centre Cummings pour les aînés* et de participer assidûment aux nombreux programmes et activités offerts par cette institution communautaire, c'est un grand défi, reconnaît en entrevue Annie Bénibgui, présidente du Comité consultatif francophone du *Centre Cummings*.

“C'est “Le Défi”, avec un grand “L” et un grand “D”! En dépit des nombreux efforts faits ces dernières années pour attirer une clientèle francophone, beaucoup d'aînés Sépharades sont toujours réticents à participer aux excellents programmes et activités proposés par le *Centre Cummings*, qu'ils perçoivent, à tort, comme une “institution anglophone à 100%”, dit-elle. Changer cette image monolithique anglophone du *Centre Cummings* auprès des aînés Sépharades, ce n'est pas quelque chose d'aisé, mais nous sommes résolus à redoubler nos efforts pour atteindre progressivement cet objectif ambitieux et ardu.”

La cotisation annuelle d'adhésion au *Centre Cummings* est de 45\$. Les membres adhérents ont accès à plus de 200 cours et services des plus variés: conditionnement physique; cours de gymnastique aquatique; cours de yoga; cours de peinture et d'art; cours d'informatique; cours de cuisine; événements socio-récréatifs; activités en plein air; des programmes spécialement adaptés pour des aînés atteints d'une maladie chronique -le parkinson, l'alzheimer, l'arthrose, la sclérose en plaques...

Desservir convenablement les aînés Sépharades de 50 ans et plus, c'est une “grande priorité” pour le *Centre Cummings*, rappelle en entrevue Pauline Grunberg, directrice générale de cette institution.

“Le *Centre Cummings* a changé au fil des années. Aujourd'hui, il y a un grand décalage entre la réalité, un Centre pour les aînés de plus en plus multiethnique, et la perception tenace qui prédomine encore dans certains segments de notre communauté, un Centre socio-récréatif anglophone où tous les programmes et activités sont offerts en anglais. Nous devons absolument changer cette perception erronée.”

D'après Pauline Grunberg, bien que le nombre de membres Sépharades francophones a sensiblement augmenté au cours des deux dernières années, celui-ci se situe toujours en dessous des attentes des dirigeants du *Centre Cummings*.

La direction du *Centre Cummings* est arrivée à la conclusion qu'on ne peut pas se limiter à adapter en français des programmes déjà offerts en anglais. C'est pourquoi de nouveaux programmes, cours et activités en français et des services spécialement conçus pour les aînés Sépharades francophones en fonction de leurs besoins sont désormais offerts, souligne Nadine Azoulay, gestionnaire de programmes au *Centre Cummings*.

“Entre 20 et 25 aînés Sépharades francophones participent régulièrement aux diverses activités proposées les lundis et les mardis dans le cadre de nos Clubs sociaux: célébration des fêtes juives, excursions, conférences sur des thèmes portant sur la santé, le bien-être, l'actualité politique en Israël... À l'automne 2015, nous avons offert pour la première fois, avec succès, six nouveaux cours entièrement dispensés en français: cours de bridge, cours de yoga, cours de danse israélienne, cours de dessin pour débutants, cours d'ordinateur, cours d'iPad”, précise Nadine Azoulay.

SUITE À LA PAGE 17



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Fines dropped on Purim minibuses – for now

JANICE ARNOLD

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The chassidic community of Outremont has won a legal round in its dispute with the borough over the use of minibuses on Purim, but that victory does not guarantee tickets will not be issued again this holiday.

On Feb. 22 in Montreal municipal court, the prosecution withdrew the fines levied against a bus rental company and its drivers last year and in 2014.

The judge approved the decision saying that there is insufficient signage on the streets of Outremont to inform the public about the ban on this type of vehicle.

Two tickets, carrying an average fine of \$245, were issued in each of the two years.

Two chassidic parties, the Belz School and the Yam Hatalmud Foundation, had intervenor status in the case. Both are among the chassidic groups that rented from the company.

The defendants were represented by lawyers associated with the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations (CRARR), who argued that the Outremont bylaw has a discriminatory effect on Chassidim

and therefore contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as Quebec's rights charter.

The case was to have been heard Dec. 3, but was postponed to Feb. 22.

CRARR director Fo Niemi said, "The question is what happens now? Will the police stop issuing the fines this Purim, or will the borough put up signs before then? This is not over yet. The bylaw is still on the books."

Purim takes place March 23 and 24 this year. Niemi said CRARR will try to get answers well before then.

The Purim custom among Chassidim is for costumed children to go from house to house around the neighbourhoods spreading cheer and collecting charitable donations.

They are transported by minibuses.

In 2003, Outremont adopted Bylaw 1171, which prohibits the circulation of buses on residential streets, except during "special events." Purim has never fallen under that designation, despite the community's request.

Nevertheless, the first ticketing of the vehicles it used only occurred in 2013, and it was not contested.



Fo Niemi

“

*This is not over yet.
The bylaw is still on
the books.*

Buses are defined in the bylaw as vehicles with more than two back wheels, but the defendants' lawyers pointed out that such vehicles are no longer manufactured and all minibuses now have four back wheels.

The borough has suggested vans be used instead, but the community says the larger minibuses are more economical and safer.

Niemi said CRARR is prepared to go back to court if Outremont "does not take any kind of positive action to review this unfair bylaw."

"Ultimately, we don't want the chassidic community to continuously be penalized to the point of feeling harassed by city authorities for an activity that is so fundamental to the community." ■



MERCI *x*

MARIANNA ET VALERIYA : SURVIVRE EN UKRAINE

La petite Valeriya, 6 ans, partage un logement délabré à Odessa avec sa mère et sa grand-mère. Les bottes, le charbon pour le chauffage ainsi que la nourriture, les médicaments et les articles scolaires fournis par les partenaires internationaux de la Fédération CJA sont indispensables à la survie de cette famille, et ce, particulièrement pendant les durs mois d'hiver.

« Nous n'avons pas eu la vie facile. Et la situation actuelle en Ukraine la rend encore plus difficile, déclare Marianna. Heureusement que la communauté juive s'assure que je ne suis pas seule, surtout dans de pareilles circonstances. »

En raison de la dégradation de la situation politique, l'aide dispensée par la Fédération CJA prend une énorme importance pour des dizaines de milliers de Juifs ukrainiens vulnérables, dont plusieurs ont été déplacés en raison de la crise.

QUAND UNE CRISE ÉCLATE DANS LE MONDE, LA FÉDÉRATION CJA FOURNIT UNE AIDE DIRECTE À CEUX QUI EN ONT LE PLUS BESOIN. GRÂCE À SES PARTENAIRES INTERNATIONAUX, PLUS DE **65 000** JUIFS UKRAINIENS À RISQUE ONT REÇU UNE ASSISTANCE D'URGENCE, L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE.

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Trois candidats se disputent le siège du District 7

SUITE DE LA PAGE 14

Ses principaux atouts qui, selon lui, vont lui permettre de remplir avec compétence la fonction de conseiller municipal: sa connaissance du milieu municipal et des relations avec les différents paliers de gouvernements; sa large expérience dans le domaine de la gestion des infrastructures municipales de Côte Saint-Luc -“je connais biens les besoins de Côte Saint-Luc en matière d’infrastructures. Durant mes années professionnelles au service de la ville de Côte Saint-Luc, j’étais en charge de la gestion de 50% du budget municipal”, rappelle David Tordjman en entrevue-; ses capacités à travailler en équipe.

S’il est élu, ses principales priorités seront: baisser le niveau de taxation des résidents de Côte Saint-Luc -“en l’espace de dix ans, Côte Saint-Luc est devenue l’une villes du Québec ayant le plus haut taux de taxation. Il faut absolument stopper cette hausse des taxes récurrente en gérant d’une manière plus rigoureuse les budgets des infrastructures et des services offerts aux résidents de la ville”, dit-il; régler les problèmes de trafic dans le District 7; l’entretien des parcs.

Dans le District 7, 50% des résidents sont Ashkénazes et 50% sont Sépharades, rappelle en entrevue Mitchell Kujavsky.

S’il est élu le 10 avril, ce comptable et administrateur d’entreprises de profession, âgé de 37 ans, qui réside à Côte Saint-Luc

depuis 34 ans, est résolu à desservir très équitablement tous les résidents du District 7, Sépharades et Ashkénazes.

“Ces dernières années, le nombre de familles sépharades francophones ayant choisi de vivre à Côte Saint-Luc a considérablement augmenté. La ville doit offrir plus de services en français à ces familles. Par exemple, j’ai proposé dernièrement que le très populaire programme de création théâtrale *Dramatic Society* offre aussi des activités et des ateliers en français”, nous a dit Mitchell Kujavsky en entrevue.

Ses principaux atouts dans cette élection: ses qualités reconnues d’organisateur politique -il a été cet automne l’un des principaux organisateurs de la très réussie campagne électorale d’Anthony Housefather; sa motivation inébranlable quand il s’implique dans des projets politiques ou communautaires d’envergure; sa capacité à travailler en équipe.

Les dossiers prioritaires qui seront défendus par Mitchell Kujavsky s’il est élu: améliorer le site web et les réseaux de communication de la ville de Côte Saint-Luc; mettre en œuvre des mesures incitatives pour encourager des jeunes familles à s’établir à Côte Saint-Luc.

Le District 7 de Côte Saint-Luc, dont le périmètre s’étend du boulevard Cavendish jusqu’à la rue Parkhaven et de la rue Kildare jusqu’au chemin Holland, compte environ 3 300 résidents. ■

Desservir les Aînés Sépharades de 50 ans et plus

SUITE DE LA PAGE 15

Une nouvelle activité littéraire mensuelle, “Parfum de livres”, animée par Raymonde Abénaim, Maurice Chalom et l’auteur de cet article, a été lancée dernièrement.

Les membres du Comité consultatif francophone du *Centre Cummings* sont à l’écoute des aînés de la communauté sépharade et très ouverts aux propositions de nouveaux programmes formulées par ces derniers.

“Le *Centre Cummings* mène actuellement une campagne auprès de la communauté sépharade et francophone afin de lui faire découvrir toute une gamme d’activités récréatives, culturelles, sociales et éducatives adaptées aux besoins des 50 ans et plus. Le *Centre Cummings*, qui collabore étroitement avec la *Communauté sépharade unifiée du Québec (CSUQ)*, encourage les aînés Sépharades francophones à bénéficier des divers programmes spécifiquement conçus pour eux et offerts en français. Desservir les aînés Sépharades francophones, c’est un objectif important de la mission remplie par le *Centre Cummings*. Nous invitons les aînés

Sépharades à se joindre à nous. Ces derniers découvriront une institution communautaire dynamique, créative et chaleureuse qui leur procurera des heures de loisirs très agréables”, dit Annie Bénibgui.

Le *Centre Cummings* permet à beaucoup d’aînés de rompre avec leur solitude quotidienne, dit Anne Abécassis, adjointe des programmes au *Centre Cummings*.

“Bon nombre de Sépharades du troisième âge vivent aussi cette dure solitude. Nous faisons tout au *Centre Cummings* pour que ces derniers se retrouvent dans un cadre chaleureux qui rendra leur quotidien moins long et moins ennuyant.”

Environ 8 000 aînés de 50 ans et plus participent régulièrement aux nombreux programmes, cours et activités offerts par le *Centre Cummings* tout au long de l’année.

Pour plus d’informations sur les programmes en français du *Centre Cummings*, contacter Nadine Azoulay au 514-342-1234, poste#7221. E-mail: nadine.azoulay@cummingscentre.org ou visiter le Site web : www.cummingscentre.org/francais ■

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Higher prices lead to more demand for community help

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

"Our suppliers have also been very supportive of our needs, helping us mitigate kosher food costs, some through volume discounts due to our size and because of who we are and the care we give to members of the community."

Fran Chodak, co-ordinator of Jewish Family & Child Services' STEP (Striving to End Poverty) project in Toronto, has seen the impact of rising food prices on some of the more vulnerable members of the Jewish community.

"From our experience, observations and conversations with clients and colleagues, families are struggling with the increase of food costs," Chodak said.

"Food is the prerequisite to health, and it is well documented that poverty is linked to higher rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and some forms of cancers.

"When food costs are high, people are less likely to invite friends and family to dinner, and this exacerbates social exclusion – an unfortunate impact of poverty," she said.

"The high cost of kosher food, in some cases, means people are having to compromise their adherence to the laws of kashrut, and this may be a very difficult ethical, moral and spiritual decision,

causing feelings of guilt and shame. Some clients have told me that, due to the cost, they only buy kosher meat for Shabbat. Some only buy kosher meat for holidays. Some are forgoing kosher altogether.

"With Passover around the corner, I suspect it is going to be especially hard this year due to the low Canadian dollar and packaged kosher for Passover foods coming from the United States," she said.

Susan Karpman shares the same concerns in Montreal. As chief program officer for Agence Ometz, which provides social services to the Jewish community, she's seen the number of people served by the agency increase. She's also noticed that more lower middle class, middle class and even some well-to-do people who are "struggling with food costs," are seeking the agency's help.

The agency has experience in helping people plan their budget to prioritize their spending, she said.

There is also an increased demand for community resources, such as food baskets and assistance, and clients are seeking the agency's assistance to help plan their holiday shopping.

The agency is seeing "more dramatic cultural changes in what people are eating," she said. As an example, she pointed



PAUL LUNGEN PHOTO

to some Sephardi families' Shabbat meals, which can be extensive, with lots of courses and dishes. "People are having to pare that down," she said.

Dave Wilkes of the Retail Council of Canada confirms the impact of the currency on prices of all U.S. imports.

"The primary driver of the increasing cost is the Canadian dollar," he said. "As the dollar has depreciated, you are seeing the purchasing power of Canadian grocers affected."

About 80 per cent of the produce in supermarkets is imported "and those contracts are in U.S. dollars. Because they're fresh, the fluctuating dollar will have an almost immediate effect on our prices. It affects kosher and non-kosher [imports]."

As for the rising cost of beef, Wilkes said "a lot relates to the feed and the costs associated with that." Shortages in feed, thanks in part to strong demand for it internationally, made it more expensive, thus driving up the cost of producing beef, he said.

Joseph Bitton, president of Gatton's Foods, a kosher distribution company in Toronto, said that on some products – such as grape juice – the price of kosher brands has been held in check because of the growth in the number of Canadian distributors. Other consumer items, like kosher beef, will be more expensive than non-kosher equivalents because of the added costs associated with kashrut.

Bitton said that 10 years ago, there were only three or four companies that "controlled kosher, and they worked on very large profit margins. Now there is a lot more competition, and the profit margins went down." Today there are nine kosher product distributors, "and that does not include manufacturers who sell directly."

He pointed to two brands of grape juice – Kedem and Nature's Own – as an example. Because they're brought in by

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When food costs are high, people are less likely to invite friends and family to dinner, and this exacerbates social exclusion.

competitors, their prices closely match the non-kosher brands, he said.

Some kosher products, however, will be more expensive because of the added costs associated with making sure they meet kosher standards. One is canned tuna, a product Bitton distributes in Toronto.

There are added costs of flying a mashgiach (kashrut supervisor) from New York to fishing vessels in the Far East. They remain there for weeks, supervising the cooking of the tuna on board.

Other products, such as beef and chicken, also require "more intensive supervision" so it would be unfair to compare them to non-kosher equivalents. "You're not comparing the same process," he said.

Richard Rabkin, spokesperson for the Toronto-based Kashruth Council of Canada, which administers the COR hechsher, said "much of the increased cost of food is a result of weaker Canadian dollar, which effectively adds approximately 30 per cent to the cost of food imported from the United States. This is likely the chief reason for the increased costs, as many of the specialty kosher brands and items are manufactured in the United States, such as cheese, chalav yisrael dairy products, prepared/frozen foods and the like."

As for the cost of meat, Rabkin stated that the Kashruth Council does not prohibit outside kosher meat from entering the city, but that "many of these sources originate from the United States, which are subject to fluctuations in the Canadian dollar."

MK, Montreal's kosher certification agency, agreed that, "There have been various increases in the price of cattle, which have resulted in the increased cost of meat, in general... Non-Kosher meat prices have also increased substantially."

Asked if MK was concerned that this may lead some people to avoid kosher food, the agency responded: "We are always concerned about consumers not purchasing kosher food products and are therefore always encouraging the reduction of prices across the board and meeting with producers to see how this can be achieved.

"Consumers should contact the local suppliers on a constant basis, urging them to be competitive and reduce prices, wherever possible," the agency added. ■



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Canadian Jews, Multiculturalism, and the Difficult Challenge of Dual Loyalties

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