



AJL-CANADA NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024

AJL-CANADA EXECUTIVE

Anna Skorupsky, President

Caroline Ingvaldsen, Secretary/Treasurer

Anne Dublin, Membership & Newsletter Editor

Hannah Srour-Zackon, Online Host & Webmaster

Email: ajlcanada18@gmail.com

Website: [AJL - Canada | Association of Jewish Libraries - Canada Chapter](https://www.ajlcanada.com)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My dear friends and colleagues,

It is my great pleasure and honour to greet you in 2024 and to wish you, your families, and loved ones peace in the world and in our souls, health and happiness for each and every one of you, love and a lot of light everywhere in our long-suffering planet.

We are strong enough to overcome all the trials that befall us.

And, as a proof of our human and creative capabilities, we—AJL-Canada—continue our activities with even greater enthusiasm. We are all here together to continue our mission.

Peaceful and happy 2024 year!

Anna Skorupsky

MEMBERSHIP

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining AJL-Canada, please give them my contact information: adublin54@gmail.com. Our fiscal year is September 1 to August 31. Our membership keeps growing, with people joining even in the middle of the year!

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS: KALMAN WEISER



Last semester was impossibly intense in the wake of the 7 October attack on Israel. As director of York University's Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, I found myself working closely with colleagues and Jewish communal organizations to meet the needs of Jewish students and faculty at York. Needless to say, we at the Centre had little time for research or our usual schedule of academic

and cultural programming. Teaching a course about antisemitism, sadly, never felt more relevant. Fortunately, I have had some time to catch up on my own work (and sleep) during the winter break.

About me: I am a native New Yorker who completed a doctorate at Columbia in 2001. Since 2002, I have been teaching Jewish Studies at York University. My first monograph, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation. Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* won a Canadian Jewish Book Award in 2012.

My areas of academic specialization include modern and eastern European Jewry, antisemitism, and Yiddish language and culture. I teach courses in all of these areas, as well as general eastern European history. This semester, I will be teaching a reading course to a small group of graduate and undergraduate students about Jewish languages and Jews' relationship to language through the ages.

Currently, I am revising a manuscript for publication about Max Weinreich, YIVO's co-founder and long-time research director, and Solomon Birnbaum, a pioneering scholar of Jewish languages who also dated the Dead Sea Scrolls. The book is not only about the competing visions for Yiddish and the Jewish future of these two scholars, one a secular nationalist and the other haredi. It also about the instrumentalization of Yiddish to serve diverse practical goals, including by German linguists who both served the Third Reich and founded the field of Yiddish Studies in post-Holocaust Germany.

In anticipation of YIVO's 100th anniversary, I am also writing a book about its evolution from an eastern European to American Jewish institute in the years 1940-1970.

Finally, I'd like to share with you that the Koschitzky Centre has an exciting lineup of programs for the spring semester - including a concert series and talks about the market for biblical antiquities, early modern Yiddish books, and Sephardic Jews in search of Spanish and Portuguese citizenship. Please visit our website or contact cjs@yorku.ca for more information.

PAST PROGRAM

In commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Week, AJL-Canada presented a session on the many educational and historical projects of the Azrieli Foundation on November 19, 2023.



Arielle Berger, the Managing Editor of Azrieli's Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Program, presented their process of collecting, editing, publishing and distributing Holocaust memoirs. She also demonstrated, through Azrieli's website, its multiple educational resources on themes as diverse as: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, rescue and the righteous, and childhood and identity. These resources include videos and a "Guide for Educators Preparing to Teach about the Holocaust".

Arielle also introduced us to the dramatic life of Holocaust survivor David Azrieli, who fled Poland for the USSR at the beginning of World War II and lost most of his family to the Holocaust. As a highly successful real estate developer, this Canadian-Israeli and his family have been committed to many philanthropic enterprises, including Holocaust education.

Marjorie Gann, member of the AJL-Canada executive, participated in a fascinating, passionate Book of Life panel called "We Need Israel Books" on October 22, 2023. Other panelists were: Yael Levy, Chava Pinchuk, and Heidi Rabinowitz. The panelists discussed the need for children's literature related to Israel and the challenges that make it hard to get that literature published. Here's the link: [We Need Israel Books \(jewishbooks.blogspot.com\)](http://WeNeedIsraelBooks.jewishbooks.blogspot.com)



[Editor's Note: See Marjorie's passionate and enlightening article, "Book Banning in Ontario: The Saga Continues", on page 6 of this Newsletter.]

FUTURE PROGRAM

Canadian Jewish Authors Showcase



AJL-Canada will present A Canadian Jewish Authors Showcase on **Sunday May 7 at 1 p.m. EDT**. We will feature AJL-Canada members who write for young people: Braydon Bernstein, Nancy Cohen, Tziporah Cohen, Anne Dublin, Gila Green, Kathy Kacer, and Joanne Levy. More to come!

We hope that all AJL members will attend as we highlight the new and varied books that our talented AJL-Canada members have created.

OUR MEMBERS ARE BUSY!

In case you needed more reasons to attend the upcoming 2024 OLA Super Conference, taking place from January 24 – 27 in Toronto, please add **Before, During, and Beyond The Holocaust – Curating and Balancing Historical and Modern Jewish Books** to your conference calendar (Friday, January 26, 2:15 PM - 3:30 PM). Join Kathy Kacer, Anne Dublin, Tziporah Cohen, and Joanne Levy as they discuss Jewish books: important historicals that cover events like the Holocaust, biographies about influential people, entertaining books that explore modern life and holidays through a Jewish lens, and works that educate and inform on antisemitism and hate. It is our aim in this session to discuss and highlight Jewish books and where they fit into libraries, from displays to honour Jewish Heritage Month and holidays, to providing supporting resources for in-class curriculum and everyday reading.

**Before, During, and Beyond
The Holocaust –
Curating and Balancing Historical and
Modern Jewish Books**

2024 OLA Super Conference
Friday, January 26, 2:15 PM - 3:30 PM

**Kathy Kacer, Anne Dublin, Tziporah Cohen,
Joanne Levy**

Four small square headshots of the speakers are arranged in a row at the bottom of the graphic. From left to right: Kathy Kacer (dark hair, black top), Anne Dublin (grey hair, patterned top), Tziporah Cohen (dark hair, red top), and Joanne Levy (light hair, dark top).

Three of the above authors will also be doing book signings at the OLA SUPER CONFERENCE:

Kathy Kacer, Second Story Press, Friday January 26, 1:00 p.m. (*Hidden on the High Wire*)

Joanne Levy, Orca Publishers, Friday January 26, 11.30 a.m. (*The Book of Elsie*)

Anne Dublin, Second Story Press, Friday January 26, 1 p.m. (*She's a Mensch!*)

Our member, **Kaye Prince-Hollenberg**, works as an archivist at the Hamilton Public Library. She was recently elected to the Board of Directors for the Association of Professional Genealogists. She started her two-year term at the beginning of January. Congratulations, Kaye!

FREE Holocaust-themed Books for Grade 6 Ontario Students

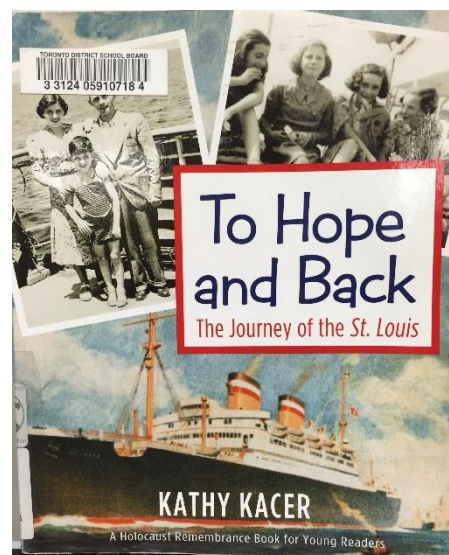
Featured for 2023/2024: *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis* by award-winning Canadian author, Kathy Kacer. This is the true story of the *St. Louis*, an ocean liner carrying over 900 Jews fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe that was turned away at every port – including Canada's.

Free age-appropriate books for your Grade 6 classroom (limited quantities). We encourage all **Ontario** teachers to apply: [Liberation75](#). However, schools outside of the GTA will be prioritized in 2023/2024.

Ernie's Books are made possible by generous donors and in partnership with Second Story Press.

Ernie's Books supports mandatory Holocaust education in grade 6 Ontario public and Catholic classrooms.

*Only English language books are available.



POSTED ON HASAFRAN, SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

“Book Banning in Ontario: The Saga Continues”

by Marjorie Gann

The Ontario book banning story happened in Peel District (English), just outside Toronto, a week ago, and, a few years ago, in one French district. There's a parents' group called [Libraries, not Landfills](#) that is fighting this:

In [Peel](#), the word was given to librarians to weed out all books dated before 2008.

The board is now denying this and saying that Anne Frank's diary is still on the shelves, but diligent reporters (not from the right-leaning *Toronto Sun*!) have actually dug up the 51-page booklet of guidelines to weeding put out by the board. It is all done in the name of "inclusion," but of course it is really done in the name of Philistinism. Here's how the Sun article opens (though the story was broken by the left-leaning CBC):

The *Very Hungry Caterpillar* is now banned from the libraries belonging to one Ontario school board. It joins Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, the *Hunger Games* and Harry Potter books on the banned list.

Back in 2019, a French-language board did the same thing, but they brought the kids to burn (yes, burn!) the books in a "flame-purification ceremony". I guess they never heard of Heine's famous statement, "Those who burn books will soon burn human beings."

In 2019, the Conseil scolaire catholique Providence, a French language school board covering Southwestern Ontario, held a “flame purification” ceremony to dispose of books as an act of reconciliation with the Indigenous community. If you can't tell by the name, they purified themselves by burning 30 books and then took the ashes to use as fertilizer for planting a tree.

NEW PUBLICATIONS (alphabetical, by author)

The Great Mensch by Brayden Bernstein

Self-published, November 2023*

Amazon link -> <https://www.amazon.ca/Great-Mensch-Brayden-Bernstein/dp/B0CPCFB2MC>



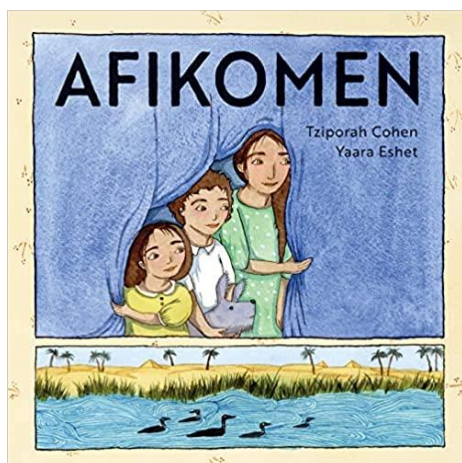
Meet Benny, the eight-year-old mensch with a heart as vast as the sky. In a charming village, Benny's kindness extends to everyone, turning a stormy day into a celebration of togetherness. Join Benny as he builds the bonds that make their village special. *The Great Mensch* is a heartwarming tale of love, laughter, and the enduring spirit of kindness. This enchanting children's book invites young readers to embrace empathy, celebrate differences, and discover the joy that comes from being a mensch. The best thing to do is care for family, friends, and neighbours, just like Benny!

*A percentage of book sales will be donated to reputable organizations such as Magen David Adom, ZAKA, and JDC.

Afikomen by Tziporah Cohen

Published by Groundwood Books

In this wordless time-travel adventure, three children at a Passover seder visit ancient Egypt to help baby Moses find his way safely to Pharaoh's daughter.

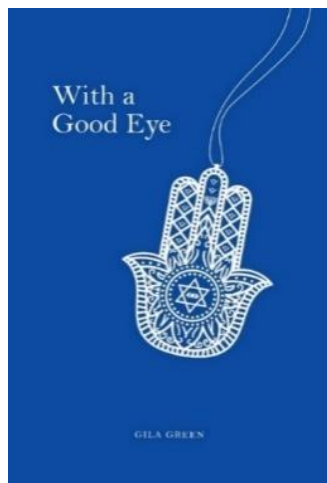


When a family settles at the table for Passover, their dog nabs the afikomen bag (containing matzah used for the seder) and dives under the tablecloth. The children follow him and find themselves transported to ancient Egypt. There, they see baby Moses' mother and sister Miriam placing him in a reed basket. The baby's journey down the Nile is hazardous — he encounters several obstacles along the way, including a wily crocodile. Thanks to the three children, he reaches his destination unharmed, with a piece of afikomen tucked into his basket. The children return to the seder table and, exhausted, fall asleep. But what are their parents to make of the grains of sand in the afikomen bag?

Includes an author's note about the meaning of the Passover holiday and about different afikomen traditions.

With a Good Eye by Gila Green

Published by AOS Press, August 2024



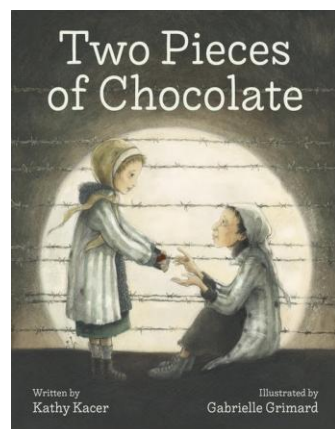
Luna Levi is an ordinary 19-year-old with extraordinary problems. Her mother's acting career is more important to her than the stage of real life. Her father struggles with PTSD as an ex-combat soldier and is equally MIA when it comes to his daughter. The Levis jump from financial crisis to financial crisis until, in one split second, someone enters their lives and throws them into the biggest disaster of all. This novel includes the theme of antisemitism as well as PTSD and is more relevant than ever.

Gila's website is: <https://gilagreenwrites.com/>

She interviews a different Jewish author monthly.

Two Pieces of Chocolate by Kathy Kacer

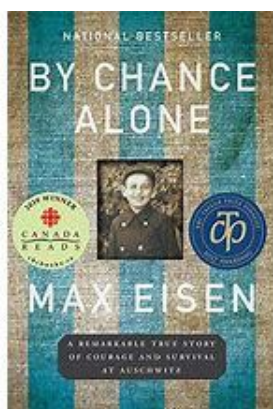
Published by Second Story Press, Spring 2024



Near the end of the Second World war Francine Christophe and her Maman were sent to the Bergen Belsen concentration camp where life was gray and hopeless. Determined to lift Francine's spirits, Maman shared a secret: hidden inside her bag were two pieces of chocolate. They were the first sweets Francine has seen in years, but Maman told her not to eat them.

This picture book is inspired by the true story of Francine Christophe and the life of a fellow prisoner whom she helped save.

By Chance Alone, by Max Eisen, adapted for Young Readers by Kathy Kacer



Published by Harper Collins, Spring 2024

Holocaust survivor, Max Eisen endured the hardships of Auschwitz and the death march, along with the loss of all his family members. His acclaimed memoir was published in 2016 and won numerous awards including Canada Reads. It is now being adapted for a younger audience by Kathy Kacer.

Every Hostage Has a Story:

A New Exhibit at the National Library of Israel

(Posted Nov. 16/23, *Times of Israel*)

We at the NLI felt we needed to help people around the world realize that the hostages held in Gaza are human beings, not just numbers and faces on a poster. We wanted to illustrate how there is an entire life behind each of these faces, each of these men, women and children. To do this, we decided to make use of the books that fill our library...

Since October 7, we have all been overwhelmed with sadness and perhaps a sense of helplessness in the face of the unimaginable tragedy that has befallen so many families....

Like everyone else, we felt the need to do something. Something that could help people realize that these are human beings, not just numbers and faces on a poster. These are real people, with their own loves, hobbies, and hopes for the future.

We wanted to illustrate how there is an entire life behind each of these faces, each of these men, women, and children. To do this, we decided to make use of the books that fill our library.

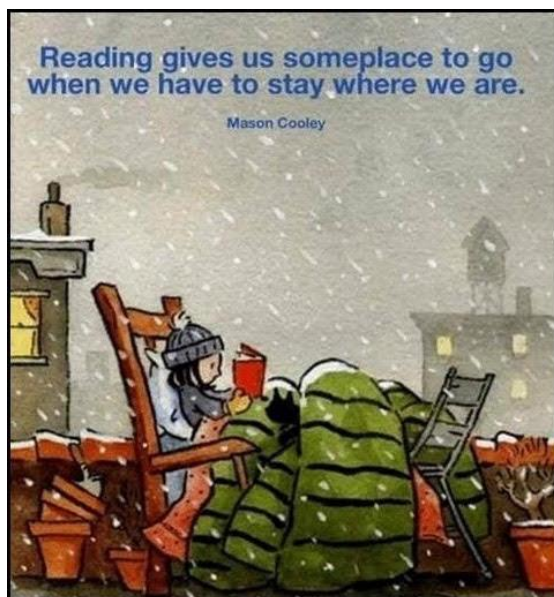
This exhibit is called “Each Hostage Has a Story”. Many dozens of black chairs, far too many, have been placed in the middle of our new reading hall. Each chair has a picture of one of the hostages placed on it. Beside these black chairs are a number of smaller, colorful chairs for kindergarteners and young schoolchildren. There is also one baby chair, as difficult as this is to imagine.



Each chair also has a book placed on it that we have chosen specifically for each hostage. The books await their return.

Each book contains a personal library card that we've prepared, each one marked with a return date – NOW.

We wanted to illustrate the unimaginable number of people who have been abducted from their homes, while at the same time allowing for a personal look at each and every one of them, to remind us that they all have an unfinished story.



I wish you and your loved ones a safe, healthy, and productive winter.

Anne Dublin

Membership Chair & Newsletter Editor