



AJL-CANADA NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025

AJL-CANADA EXECUTIVE

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR



Since AJL-Canada's revival several years ago, I'm delighted to say that our membership has grown to forty members. You live in various places in Canada and are involved in different literary pursuits. You are authors, librarians, archivists, teachers, Holocaust educators, and/or more. Why do I think this revival of AJL-Canada is so important? In our troubled world, I feel passionate about the importance of staying committed to our Canadian values and perspectives. Through AJL-Canada, we can feel connected to other like-minded colleagues and friends, no matter where they live in this beautiful land of ours. As Canada Day will soon approach, let us celebrate our great country with love and pride, and may we go from strength to strength!

Anne Dublin



- 1) We're still looking for someone to fill the position of president of AJL-Canada. If you think you can offer some time and energy to this not-too-onerous position, please contact me: adublin54@gmail.com.
- 2) Your AJL-Canada executive needs a Program chair or co-chair. It's interesting work, as it brings the organizer in touch with people around the world. If you can help, please contact Marjorie: marjoriegann5@gmail.com.

ON THE HUNT FOR BIBLIOGRAPHIES

If you have a bibliography that you would like to share with our members (only), please send it to me as a Word document. Thanks in advance!



MEMBERSHIP

Renewal notices for 2025–26 will be sent to you in August. Our fiscal year is October 1 to September 30.



Welcome to new member, **Merom Toledano**, whose historical novel is featured in the “New Publications” section.

Merom was born and raised in Israel, where he lived for 35 years and proudly served his country. In 2018, he made Winnipeg his home. An engineer by profession and devoted father, Merom brings to his writing a deep connection to his Jewish and Andalusian heritage. His dual identity as both Israeli and Canadian informs a perspective that is at once deeply personal and expansive, infused with the historical consciousness of a people shaped by diaspora.

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining AJL-Canada, please give them my contact information: adublin54@gmail.com. It's never too late (or early) to join!

AJL-CANADA WEBSITE

If you haven't checked out our new AJL-Canada website, I hope you'll do so soon! You might want to dig into the "Members Only" section for more content: Bibliographies, Current Newsletter, Past Programs, and Members Directory. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me: adublin54@gmail.com.

Here's the link: <https://ajlcanada.org>

NOTE: You'll have to log in and create a password to access the Members Only section.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS

Brigitte Ruel

The Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJCS)



The Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJCS) is a small, inclusive school in Ottawa, Ontario that prioritizes the well-being of every child. I've had the privilege of working here for nine years as the director of the OJCS library. I attended the University of Windsor and the focus of my degree was media literacy in the study of Communications, so my official title here is *Media Specialist*—a role that goes beyond traditional librarianship and allows me to engage students in critical conversations about today's digital landscape.

This specialization has enabled me to work closely with students on topics such as online safety, digital citizenship, and algorithmic literacy. One of the most meaningful workshops I run is on identifying and responding to online hate speech, particularly antisemitism. These sessions can be difficult but are crucial as our middle school students prepare to enter secular high school environments. Learning to be an upstander in the face of hate, and encouraging them to get involved in high school student-led



Aubrey Davis shares a story.

initiatives to combat antisemitism, empowers them to face these challenges with resilience and confidence.

My love of libraries started early. As a child, weekly visits to our local public library with my mother and sister were the highlight of our week. Both my sister and I became avid—sometimes competitive—readers, and it’s no surprise we both ended up in the library field. (She’s now a librarian in Alberta!)

I began my professional library journey as a page at the public library while attending university, and also worked at the University of Windsor bookstore. After graduation, I moved to Ottawa and accepted a contract at the JAG Law Library at the Department of National Defence. Surrounded by military lawyers, I assisted with legal research and learned a great deal about military law. I later spent four years at the Bank of Canada library, where I supported economists and produced a daily news report for then-Governor Mark Carney—a job that required a 6 a.m. start. Now I can say I’ve met our new Prime Minister and even got to watch him perform a hilarious rap about the economy with a giant dollar sign chain around his neck at our staff holiday party.

I joined OJCS in September 2016 because I was looking to find a career that felt more meaningful to me than mostly dry government work, and where I could make more of an impact on the well-being of others. Working with kids proved to be a perfect fit.

In my first year, I had the honour of hosting the late Aubrey Davis, author of beloved Jewish children's books such as *Bagels from Benny*, *Bone Button Borscht*, and *A Hen for Izzy Pippik*. Other Jewish author visits include; Karen Rostoker-Gruber, Emil Sher, and Sheila Baslaw. Each year, I strive to organize at least one or two author visits to enrich our students’ experience.

During the pandemic, I launched a YouTube storytime channel under my own name to stay connected with students. It’s become a valued resource for teachers, students, and families seeking meaningful, holiday-themed, and educational content—and I’ve continued the channel ever since.



[Editor’s note: Here’s the link to Brigitte’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@brigitteruel6573>]

Looking ahead, my next professional goal is to connect with fellow Jewish school librarians, library technicians, and media specialists to exchange ideas and draw inspiration. Being a part of the AJL is one way I hope to build those connections and I am grateful for this opportunity to share about my work at the OJCS.

FUTURE PROGRAM



L'CHAIM: THE JEWISH LETTERS PROJECT

LESLEY SIMPSON will give a talk in autumn 2025 (date TBD) about what she calls her “little flashlight during a dark time”—*L'Chaim: The Jewish Letters Project*. The project is a newsletter on the substack platform that features Jewish wisdom letters from around the world. These are letters most often but not always from parents to children about

how to create a purposeful life. The letters are sometimes called ethical wills but they are not legal documents and have no legal authority. Their power resides in the voices of the people who have taken the time to write them.

In these letters, Jews share what has made their lives meaningful, how they navigated catastrophe, and what has sustained them with joy. The letters are as varied as the people who write them.

Launched in 2024, *L'Chaim: The Jewish Letters Project* highlights examples from the 12th century to the present day, across multiple platforms ranging from videos to comics and handwritten letters.

Lesley Simpson is a former journalist and published children’s book author. She did her PhD about this tradition because she developed what she calls a serious case of “radical Jewish curiosity”.

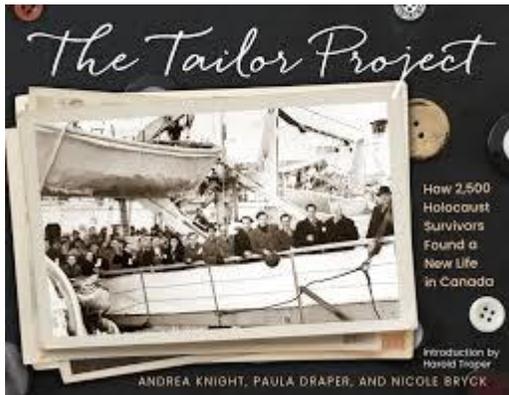
Lesley Simpson



To subscribe, click on: jewishlettersproject.substack.com

The link to this program will be sent to all AJL-Canada members closer to the date.

PAST PROGRAM



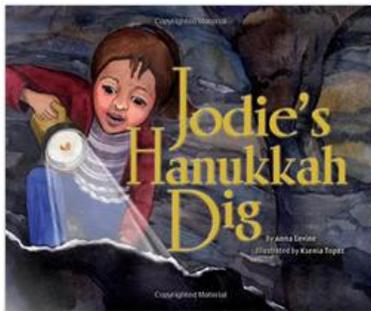
On April 23, 2025, **ANNE DUBLIN** gave an online talk about The Tailor Project / Garment Workers' Scheme. This was a scheme approved by the Canadian government in 1947 that brought approximately 2,000 tailors and their families to Canada.

Drawing on interviews and archival material, Anne spoke about the history and impact of this program to the Tailor Project families and to Canada as a whole.

AJL-Canada was delighted to partner with Classi Learning for this program. Here's the recording: [2025 04 23 v2 Anne Dublin on The Tailor Project](#)

YASHER KOACH TO OUR MEMBERS!

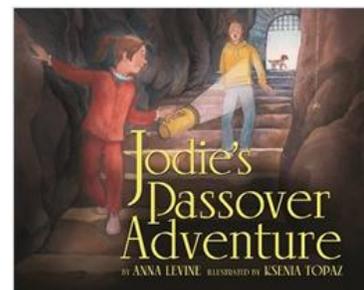
AJL-Canada member, **ANNA LEVINE**, will participate in a panel with Tammar Stein at the upcoming AJL Conference on Thursday June 26, 9:00–10:15 a.m. The topic is: *Biblical Archeology to Spark Curiosity: Introducing Young Readers to History and Archeology Through Literature*. Here's a description of the session (submitted by Anna):



We will show how to utilize archaeological-themed picture books and middle grade novels as a gateway to developing students' interest in learning about their family histories and as a way of bringing history to life. From the hypothesis to the final concept, we will show how your readers can become archaeologists-in-training, learning to use intuition, imagination, evidence, and hands-on activities to reconstruct the past and to think boldly about how the past shapes our future.

We will end our program with an interactive activity as archeologists-in-training, looking at mysterious artifacts and brainstorming: What is it? When did they use it? And what was it for?

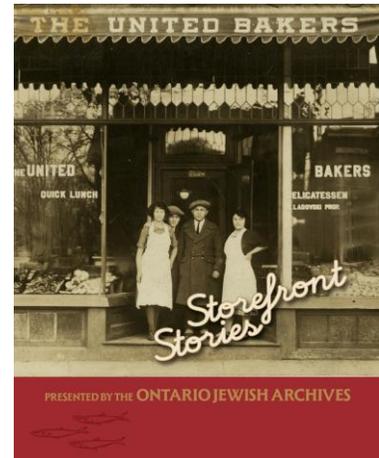
The committee which approved the proposal mentioned "...the difficulty of finding books and other access points for talking about Israel. It seems that archeology is a great way for educators to start that kind of conversation with children."



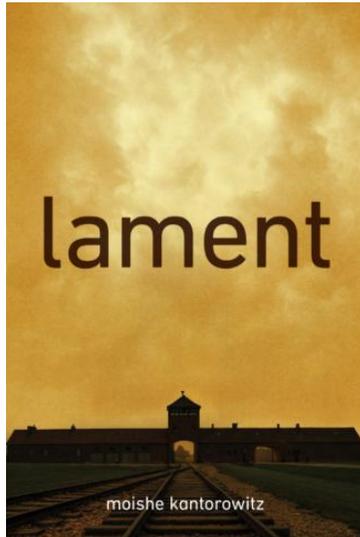
CAROL MATAS' novel, *Zevi Takes the Spotlight*, was nominated for the Western Canada Jewish Book Awards. *Zevi* has also been chosen by PJ Library as a PJ Our Way Selection, and Carol has been awarded the PJ Our Way Grinspoon Jewish Story Award. Bravo Carol!

The **ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES** is excited to present its latest exhibition, “Storefront Stories.” This fascinating exhibit (May 2025–April 2026) explores the history of Jewish entrepreneurs in Ontario, the businesses they built, and their role in shaping Ontario’s streets and our community. The exhibit is on view now at the Sheff Family Building, Sherman Campus, Toronto:

<https://ontariojewisharchives.org/Exhibitions/Storefront-Stories>



CARSON PHILLIPS (The Azrieli Foundation) shares the following news items:

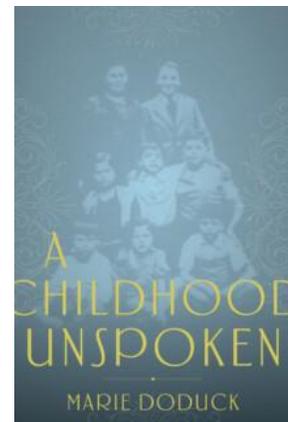


On May 4, 2025 the Azrieli Foundation Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program launched *Lament* by Moïshe Kantorowitz. As the German army invades his shtetl in Poland, young Moïshe Kantorowitz decides to mentally record everything he sees. In this movingly descriptive and devastating portrayal of prewar Jewish life and its destruction during the Holocaust, he bears witness to incomprehensible cruelties and to the lives and communities that are rapidly being wiped out all around him. Kantorowitz survives massacres, a ghetto, several concentration camps and a death march. As the only remaining member of his family, he is determined to rebuild his life and to follow his mother’s last instruction to him: to tell the story of how they lived and how they perished.

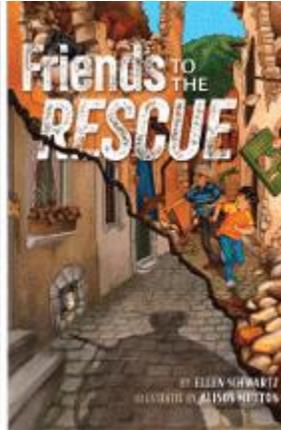
On May 5, The Azrieli Foundation Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program held its academic conference on the topic of “The Role of Auschwitz in Holocaust Narratives’. The panel presentations were recorded and can be viewed online at

<https://memoirs.azrielifoundation.org/conferences/the-role-of-auschwitz-in-holocaust-narratives/>

In May, 2025, [*A Childhood Unspoken*, written by Marie Doduck](#) and published by the Azrieli Foundation, received the Kahn Family Foundation Prize for Holocaust literature from the Western Canada Jewish Book Awards. Her memoir is also available in French under the title *L’Enfant du silence*.



PROF. IRA ROBINSON has signed a book contract with Palgrave Macmillan for the 2026 publication of a book entitled *Chaim Kruger and the Jews of Early Twentieth Century Montreal-- Educating a Community*. This book will speak of the development of the Yiddish-speaking immigrant Jewish community in North America in general, while focusing on the community of Montreal. It will do so through an exposition and analysis of the educational and journalistic activities of Chaim Kruger (1877-1933).



ELLEN SCHWARTZ received the Diamond Foundation Prize for Children & Youth (2025 Western Canada Jewish Book Award) for *Friends to the Rescue* (Apples & Honey Press, 2024).

Inspired by a true story, and told in two different time periods, *Friends to the Rescue* takes place in Fossa, Italy, a small mountain village that offered refuge to Jews during WW II. When the village suffers a

devastating earthquake 65 years later, the Jewish refugees whom the town had helped travel to Fossa to return the favour.

Jewish-Muslim Interactions in Books: The Medieval and Early Modern Periods

This fascinating exhibit is on until August 8, 2025 at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, U of Toronto, curated by **NADAV SHARON** and Blair Kuntz.



In recent generations, there is a tendency to view and define relations between Jews and Muslims through the lens of 20th-21st century political conflicts. Yet, the peoples that adhere to these two monotheistic religions

have interacted in multifaceted – often much more positive – ways through the ages. The purpose of this exhibition is to highlight these relations, some of which had profound impacts on modern-Western culture more generally, through the holdings of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library.

For more information, see: [Current Exhibition | Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library](#).

In May 2025, the **VHEC (Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre)** was pleased to host two practicum students from the Library & Information Technology program at Langara College. Owen and Brenda made amazing progress adding materials to the catalogue (<https://collections.vhec.org/Browse/library>). They also received hands-on experience with the Rare Books & Special Collections (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/collections/567>) with a storage rearrangement and preservation audit.

VHEC Archivist, Ada Alster, will be speaking on panel about AI and Holocaust memory at the Connective Holocaust Commemoration Expo at the University of Sussex (<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/connective-holocaust-commemoration-expo-i/>) in June. Her research has focused on the use of AI in Holocaust education, authenticity of archival records and implications on Holocaust testimony.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

A Storm Unleashed

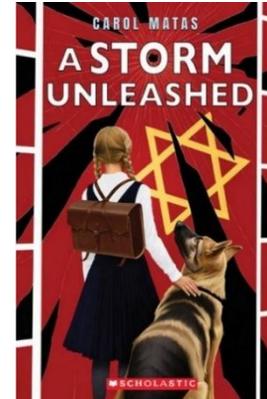
by CAROL MATAS

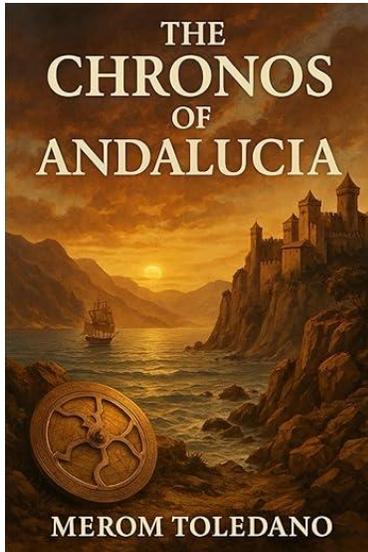
(Scholastic Canada, Fall 2025)

Middle-grade novel

Set in 1933-35 Berlin, this middle-grade novel is the story of Mia and her beloved dog Max. It chronicles Germany's rapid descent into fascism from democracy and the unleashing of a rising storm of hatred against the Jews and Hitler's "enemies". Mia, Max, her family, and her friends find themselves in a terrifying reality.

The novel also explores the little-known story of Hitler's dog army, which he created as part of his preparation for war and in order to subdue the groups he was rounding up and sending to concentration camps.





The Chronos of Andaluçia
by MEROM TOLEDANO
(Self-published, April 2025)

This historical novel follows a young Jewish woman's journey of self-discovery in 15th-century Iberia and North Africa. Blending historical reality with a touch of magical realism, the novel explores themes of exile, identity, and resilience through the eyes of descendants of Sephardic Jews, including members of the Toledano family.

This debut novel is the first in an epic historical fantasy series that reimagines the late 15th century through a cast of characters caught between fate and rebellion. Drawing on rich cultural histories and a passion for forgotten voices, Merom seeks to illuminate the struggles and resilience of those too often left out of the historical record. *The Chronos of Andaluçia* is Merom's tribute to identity, memory, and the timeless power of story.

The book is available on Amazon via the following link:

[THE CHRONOS OF ANDALUCIA : TOLEDANO, MEROM: Amazon.ca: Books](#)

AJL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Our member, **Anna Levine**, will receive an AJL-Canada bursary to attend the AJL National Conference. We look forward to hearing about Anna's participation in the panel, "Biblical Archeology to Spark Curiosity: Introducing Young Readers to History and Archeology Through Literature" on Thursday June 26, 9:00–10:15 a.m., as well as her feedback of programs she attended.

I wish you and your loved ones a peaceful, healthy, and joyful summer. May peace blossom in our time.

Anne Dublin

Membership Chair & Newsletter Editor

