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SHABBAT SHALOM!

THE WIDE WORLD OF JEWISH EXPERIENCE: NEW YORK TO KARACHI, TORONTO TO BUDAPEST, ENTEBBE TO ALBERTA

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Second World War Survivor Amazed to See Her Picture on Canada Post Stamp Honouring Swedish Diplomat Who Saved Her Life: Joe O'Connor, *National Post*, Jan 25, 2013—Ann Weizmann has a fascination for Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat credited with saving tens of thousands of Jewish lives in Nazi-occupied Hungary by issuing them bogus Swedish identity papers, or “shutz-passes.”

A Native and a Zionist: Ryan Bellerose *Metropolitain*, Jan. 24, 2013—I am a Métis from Northern Alberta. My father, Mervin Bellerose, co-authored the Métis Settlements Act of 1989, which was passed by the Alberta legislature in 1990 and cemented our land rights. I founded Canadians For Accountability, a native rights advocacy group, and I am an organizer and participant in the Idle No More movement in Calgary. And I am a Zionist.

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HOW ED KOCH HONORED MY SON

Judea Pearl

Tablet, February 4, 2013

Most Jews have simple epitaphs on their headstones—perhaps a quote from Psalms or a passage from the Torah, or maybe a phrase proclaimed by one of the prophets. Ed Koch, the former mayor of New York, who died at 88 last Friday and is being buried today in his city, has the last

words spoken by our son Daniel Pearl before he was murdered by terrorists in 2002: “My father is Jewish, my mother is Jewish, I am Jewish.”

The fact that Koch has now died on the same day as our son seems to be *yad hahashgacha*, the hand of providence, at work. If I were a believer, I would say: How could anyone doubt God’s existence? Instead, I am struck by what a strange, surreal coincidence this is.

I never met Koch in person, but we first corresponded in 2004, when my wife and I were working on a book of essays inspired by the last words of our son. When I first heard what Danny said in that dungeon, I knew it would strike a chord with every Jewish soul—and, in fact, that every decent human being would be moved by this expression of identity. That he declared those words—words connecting him to his people with a shared, ancient history—makes me feel he wasn’t alone, that he had many millions of hearts with him in Karachi. “Back in the town of B’nai Brak there is a street named after my great-grandfather, Chaim Pearl, who was one of the founders of the town,” Danny said, and he had the pulse of the entire Jewish history with him, from the Talmudic scholars who founded the ancient town to the city-builders of modern Israel.

The echo of Danny’s words has not subsided. Koch took the dramatic act of putting it on his tombstone, but many others carry Danny’s words and are nurtured by them, quietly. For the book, we commissioned many prominent Jews to reflect on what the phrase “I am Jewish” meant to them, and Koch was one of the 300 people we asked. Koch sent in an essay mainly expressing anger about the terrorists—how they act against civilized society, and how they should be dealt with. It was about our world and how we got into this war, and we felt it didn’t fit the theme. The theme was what does being Jewish mean to you, a very personal question, and we asked Koch if he’d be open to revising it. Koch’s answer was definitive: That’s how I feel, he said, and I can’t change it.

Maybe his Jewishness was genuinely defined by who his enemies were. Or maybe it was defined primarily by being part of a certain generation of New Yorkers who lived through the Depression—after all, he refused to leave Manhattan, even in death. “I’m proud of being Jewish,” he would always proclaim, and his tombstone will never allow us to forget that fact: “He was fiercely proud of his Jewish faith,” it reads....

Some will surely comment on the fact that Koch included how our son was murdered, and who his killers were: “Muslim terrorists.” Koch, as I said, was very angry about Islamist terror, and I think using these words was very purposeful on his part: a way of reminding us that our enemy is not 19 misguided lunatics, but a whole ideology that fosters anti-Western fanaticism and elevates itself above the norms of civilized society. In a time when political correctness was at its peak, perhaps it was productive for Ed Koch to remind New Yorkers that our real enemy is not Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, but the ideology on which he grew and that is being passed on to his children, emboldened and intensified by the hour. That is our real enemy.

When the *New York Times* reported that Koch had chosen Danny’s words for his headstone a few years ago, I was extremely moved, and I called to thank him. “This is how I feel,” he told me, “and this is how I want to be remembered.”

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**SECOND WORLD WAR SURVIVOR AMAZED TO SEE HER PICTURE
ON CANADA POST STAMP HONOURING SWEDISH DIPLOMAT WHO
SAVED HER LIFE**

Joe O'Connor

National Post, Jan 25, 2013

Ann Weismann has a fascination for Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat credited with saving tens of thousands of Jewish lives in Nazi-occupied Hungary by issuing them bogus Swedish identity papers, or “shutz-passes.” Ms. Weismann’s interest in the man is understandable: Without Mr. Wallenberg there would be no Ann Weismann. She is the daughter of Wallenberg Jews and a consumer of all things — academic talks, articles, books and movies — related to the Holocaust hero.

And so it was on a recent evening in Toronto that she attended the screening of a film dedicated to the great man, at the conclusion of which event organizers informed the audience that Canada Post had issued a Raoul Wallenberg commemorative stamp on Jan. 17.

Ms. Weismann rushed out to buy a couple booklets, tossed them in her purse, pulled them out later to take a closer look and practically fainted. The stamp features Mr. Wallenberg and a shutz pass, and not just any shutz pass, but one belonging to Judith Kopstein — age 14 in 1944 and age 83 now — and, more importantly, Ann Weismann’s mother. “I couldn’t believe it,” she says.

Neither could her mother, Judith, a retired structural engineer, Winnipeg resident and transplanted Hungarian Jew whose shutz pass — with picture included — is now immortalized on a stamp honouring a man she regards as the “greatest man” of the 20th century. “It is just incredible that something like this would happen,” Judith Weismann says. “Wallenberg was fearless. He saved people’s lives by risking his own and having a stamp of him — that is very natural — but having my picture on it, that is something completely unexpected.”

It is also something of a mystery. Canada Post bought the rights to the image from an image bank. How Ms. Weismann’s shutz pass came to be in that bank, however, is a happy subject of speculation among her family members that has produced a second startling philatelic revelation. Sweden issued a commemorative stamp honouring Mr. Wallenberg in May 2012 featuring an image of the hero and a copy of you-know-who’s shutz pass. “My son, Paul, found the Swedish stamp on the Internet,” Ms. Weismann says.

Behind both stamps is the story of a teenaged girl living in Nazi Occupied Budapest, the final redoubt of the Hungarian Jews in 1944 — the majority of whom had already been deported and murdered in places like Auschwitz. Ms. Weismann’s father, a lumberman, had business ties in Sweden predating the war and when Mr. Wallenberg came to town and began issuing his life-saving documents the Weismanns’ rushed to the consulate door. “I remember the lineup outside,” Ms. Weismann says. “I remember everything about those days as though it were yesterday.”

She remembers getting her picture taken, the picture that has come back to her after all these years — the original of which is locked in a bank vault in Winnipeg — and leaving the consulate with a phony document and taking up residence in one of the scores of properties Mr. Wallenberg rented to house the phony Swedes. “He arranged dozens of these houses,” Ms. Weismann says.

He operated soup kitchens, ran a hospital and intervened when the Hungarian Gestapo seized Ms. Weismann and her mother. “Those papers saved our lives,” she says. She met Mr. Wallenberg once. “He shook hands with me. I was only 14, and I was so very honoured because

we all knew that what he was doing was something remarkable. He would go and talk to the German officers without fear, even though they attempted to assassinate him numerous times.”

Judith Kopstein met her husband, Erwin, another Wallenberg Jew, after the war. They became engineers, married and fled to Canada in 1956 after the Russians crushed the Hungarian Revolution...“Our second miracle was coming to Canada as refugees after the Hungarian Revolution,” Ms. Weiszmann says. “We were able to make a good life here. I cherish being Canadian.”

The couple had a son and a daughter, and now, grandchildren. Erwin passed away 16 months ago. He was 88. His widow remains in good health. Judith Weiszmann (nee Kopstein) is a “voracious emailer” with friends all over the world, she says, but she also enjoys posting letters the old-fashioned way and plans on mailing a handful of dispatches — with a Canadian-Wallenberg stamp attached. “Some of my friends would be interested,” she says. “It is incredible, something like this happening.”

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A NATIVE AND A ZIONIST

Ryan Bellerose

[Metropolitain](#), January 24, 2013

I am a Métis from Northern Alberta. My father, Mervin Bellerose, co-authored the *Métis Settlements Act* of 1989, which was passed by the Alberta legislature in 1990 and cemented our land rights. I founded Canadians For Accountability, a native rights advocacy group, and I am an organizer and participant in the Idle No More movement in Calgary. And I am a Zionist. Let me tell you why.

I grew up on a Métis colony in what many would say are rough conditions: we had no electricity, running water or telephone. When it rained, the dirt roads that linked us to the highways flooded and we were stranded. I lived in a bunkhouse with my two stepbrothers, while my father and stepmother lived in a small cabin nearby. We raised a garden, hunted and fished, picked berries and made the odd trip to town to buy supplies. My father worked construction and lived in camps for long stretches and I would often stay at relatives’ to escape my stepmother’s abuse. Still, I considered my childhood normal.

My interest in Israel started at a young age. My father gave me a set of Encyclopaedia Britannica for my 5th birthday and, from there, a passion for history was born. I would sit and read whenever the weather was bad. In fact, it was a family joke that taking away my books for a few hours was a better way to discipline me than a spanking. One entry that caught my eye was that of Israel’s birth in 1948. It struck me as the ultimate David and Goliath story: Israel, a tiny country that had fought for independence from the British Empire, was forced from its first moments to defend its existence against the combined armies of the Arab world. Israel survived against all odds, and did so in a truly epic story of will and heroism. This story inspired me.

Growing up, I was a very small child. (I am called "Tiny Ryney" to this day, though I play defensive tackle for the Calgary Wolfpack). I was called a "half-breed" and other slurs by white kids while the children in my colony made fun of my paler skin. I didn’t belong anywhere. And I had to be resourceful to protect myself, since I was weaker than the others. Being the victim of bullying shaped who I am and my sense of right and wrong. It is one reason that I support Israel, a country that has faced bullying and manipulation since its birth. Israel too has had to be resourceful to defend itself against enemies that dwarf it. And, like me, it overcame.

Noticing my curiosity about Israel, my father bought me as a birthday gift a book about the 1976 Raid on Entebbe, a brilliant rescue by Israeli commandos of hostages taken by Palestinian terrorists to Uganda. Again, this impressed me. Israel was willing to do the impossible to rescue its people, regardless of the political fallout. This pushed me to read more about the Arab-Israeli conflict. In so doing, I learned about the '72 Munich Olympic Games, where Palestinian terrorists massacred 11 Israeli athletes during an event meant to be a celebration of brotherhood and peace. I wondered why more people weren't as upset as I was.

It was during this time, while visiting relatives working oil rigs, that I learned while watching a hotel TV of the horrific 1972 Lod Airport massacre where terrorists shot dead 26 civilians waiting for their flights, including 17 Christian pilgrims. I also remember the 1985 attack by Yasser Arafat's forces on the Achille Lauro cruise ship, where an old disabled man was thrown overboard in his wheelchair for the crime of being a Jew. The more I saw, the more I needed to understand why such things were happening. The more I learned, the more I grew to appreciate Israel's moral integrity in the face of brutal hatred. And I came to believe that the Jewish people and Israel should serve as an example to indigenous people everywhere. It is with the Jews – and their stubborn survival after being decimated and dispersed by powerful empires -- that we have the most in common.

My people, the Métis, came to Alberta after the American Revolution, at the government's request, to prevent the settling of the Americans in western Canada. We settled the land and followed the white man's rules. But we were eventually evicted, our homes given to white pioneers. No one wanted us. We were forced to live in hiding, on road allowances, in the bush. We had no rights, and we were killed out of hand, as "nuisances". Exile fractured our nation. Our people wandered with no hope and no home. Then, in the mid 1900's, our leaders managed to secure land for us, not the land we had wanted but land that would nonetheless allow us to build a better future. We took it, built our settlements and formed a government to improve the lives of our people. We still have many problems to solve, of course, but we also have more educated people than ever and are slowly becoming self-sufficient, as our leaders envisioned. In this, the Jewish people and the Métis have walked the same road.

The Jews also suffered genocide and were expelled from their homeland. They were also rejected by everyone and forced to wander. Like us, they rebelled against imperial injustice when necessary and, despite their grievances, strived for peace whenever possible. Like us they were given a tiny sliver of their land back after centuries of suffering and persecution, land that nobody else had wanted to call home until then. Like us, they took that land despite their misgivings and forged a nation from a fractured and wounded people. And like us, they consistently show a willingness to compromise for the good of their people.

I hope the Metis keep walking the same road as the Jewish people. Through their efforts, the Jews were able to preserve their identity despite terrible persecution and to revive their culture and language once back in their homeland. They never lost their sense of who they were, but neither did they lose sight of the importance of looking forward. Given their history, it would have been natural for them to become insular and reactionary. But instead, they work hard to be productive and are friendly even to countries that have caused them tremendous suffering. I want us to similarly make education and the preservation of our ancient culture a priority. I want us to continue to strive for peace and productivity.

Many claim that we Natives have more in common with the Palestinians, that their struggle is our struggle. Beyond superficial similarities, nothing could be farther from the truth. Beyond the facile co-opting of our cause, the comparison with the Palestinians is absolutely untenable. It

trivializes our suffering.

Co-opting today's native struggle to the Palestinian propaganda war is a fallacy. Though the Palestinians have undeniable ties to the land, first hand accounts by Mark Twain and countless other travelers to the Holy Land through the ages suggest that a large percentage of the Palestinian people immigrated to Palestine in recent decades. And for 65 years, the Palestinians have convinced the world that they are worse off than many other stateless nations, despite all evidence to the contrary. The Palestinians claim to have been colonized but it was their own leaders who refused to negotiate and who lost the land that they want by waging a needless war on Israel. They claim to have faced genocide but they suffered no such thing: their population has exploded from a few hundred thousand in 1948 to over 4 million today. They claim deprivation but their elites live in luxury while their people live in ramshackle poverty.

What's more, the Palestinian leaders have never been interested in a peaceful solution for their people. They were given several opportunities to have their own state – for the first time in history -- and refused each time, choosing war over peace because the offers were never deemed sufficient. They have persistently used terrorism to bring attention to their cause and their leaders have celebrated the killing of civilians by naming parks and schools after murderers. And any Palestinian that questions the maximalist rhetoric or who suggests real compromise is immediately ostracized, branded a traitor, or killed.

The Palestinians are not like us. Their fight is not our fight. We natives believe in bringing about change peacefully, and we refuse to be affiliated with anyone who engages in violence targeting civilians. I cannot remain silent and allow the Palestinians to gain credibility at our expense by claiming commonality with us. I cannot stand by while they trivialize our plight by tying it to theirs, which is largely self-inflicted. Our population of over 65 million was violently reduced to a mere 10 million, a slaughter unprecedented in human history. To compare that in whatever way to the Palestinians' story is deeply offensive to me. The Palestinians did lose the land they claim is theirs, but they were repeatedly given the opportunity to build their state on it and to partner with the Jews -- and they persistently refused peace overtures and chose war. We were never given that chance. We never made that choice

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ON TOPIC

[Ed Koch's Tombstone](#): [Rabbi Benjamin Blech, AISH, Feb. 8, 2013](#)—With the words he chose to be inscribed on his tombstone, Ed Koch, the iconic New York Mayor who passed away last Friday [Feb. 1], made it very clear how he wanted most to be remembered.

[The Jew Who Would Be God](#) : [Peter Schäfer, The New Republic, June 7, 2012](#)—Book Review: *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*. By Daniel Boyarin, (New Press, 200 pp., \$21.95) That the historical Jesus was a Jew, that his followers were Jews, and that the Gospels as well as the letters written by the apostle Paul are Jewish writings, firmly embedded in first century C.E. Judaism—all this has become almost commonplace. After long and bitter battles, this fact now has a foothold not only among historians of ancient Judaism but even among the most dedicated Christian theologians. Indeed, the pendulum has swung far in the opposite direction, with scholars outdoing each other in proving the Jewishness of Jesus and the New Testament.

[An Evolving Historian](#): [Robert Slater, Jerusalem Report, Dec. 26, 2012](#)—Historian Benny Morris has been reviled for exposing Israeli expulsions of Arabs in 1948, but he believes the expulsions were justified and the Palestinians' end game is Israel's destruction.

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