

## Festival Begins

From Nov. 5-12, Fifth Avenue will be home to film lovers / 4

## Laugh, Think

With humor, *Bad Jews* raises identity and other issues / 6

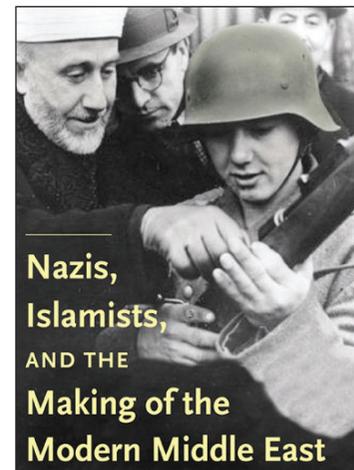
## Ideological History

Authors' analysis is useful but suffers from flaws / 15

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## Winning equal rights

Anat Hoffman will speak in Vancouver.

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

For more than 30 years, Anat Hoffman has been fighting for individuals' rights. Notably, her work with Women of the Wall, which won legal recognition in 2013 for women's right to pray at the Kotel wearing prayer shawls and using a Torah. And her more than 10 years with the Israel Religious Action Centre, which has achieved government funding for non-Orthodox rabbis, earned multiple Supreme Court decisions recognizing Reform and Conservative conversions, and won a 2011 Supreme Court ruling making gender segregation on public buses illegal.



COURTESY OF ANAT HOFFMAN

Anat Hoffman

The self-described troublemaker will be in Vancouver Nov. 15-18, speaking to several community groups, as well as addressing the Jewish community as a whole on Nov. 16, 7:30 p.m., at Temple Sholom. Her topic – From the Back of the Bus to the Top of the Agenda.

"I'm talking about the achievements of a family of organizations – Women of the Wall, the Religious Action Centre, the Jerusalem Open House, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, all sorts, we're a cluster of organizations for social change, and I am such an admirer of my colleagues," said Hoffman. "And we're all looking at the same issues: how the monolithic interpretation of Judaism in the Jewish state is limiting and stunting our ability to enjoy Judaism and celebrate it.

"In this respect, more than any other, including security, economics ... we must dialogue with the Diaspora Jews. You have a stake in it, and you have an opinion. Israel is way too important to be left to the Israelis."

She doesn't want Diaspora Jews to be silent, she said, because there are things that Israelis can learn from them. "I'm tired of Israeli arrogance, and the feeling that we know everything," she said. "If we know everything, how come we are in the situation we are in today on our 67th anniversary? That's number one: I am humbled by reality and I think we could use all the help we could get.

"The second thing is, I think it's a joint project. I think it's the most important project of the Jewish people.... The state of Israel, the fact

that we have a sovereign Jewish state, is so exciting and so wonderful, and I think we're involved in the most important dialogue in our lives – you and I. What are the values of the Jewish state? What are Jewish values anyway? Are they the values of the Book of Joshua – smite them, kill them, annihilate them? Or the values of Isaiah? Who do we listen to, and who do we act like? I'm an Isaiah person, he's my steering committee. I read him for inspiration and I think if he were alive in Israel today, he'd be under administrative detention – the man had no mouth control.

"So, I am driven to speak to Diaspora Jews, involve them in this dialogue and tell them to stop being quiet. If you are quiet, don't be surprised if Jerusalem turns into Tehran, don't be surprised if you wake up one day and you're ashamed to even be called Jewish because of what the Jewish state is doing. You have to make your statement known today – and, it turns out, the Israeli government is very sensitive to what Canadian Jews think.... You're not using your fantastic nuisance value. You have so much of it and you don't use it."

Acknowledging that Canadians are "extremely harmony-seeking and somewhat conservative," Hoffman said people should speak up "in whatever style fits you. If Israel arrests women wearing a tallis, praying out loud and trying to have

Please see **HOFFMAN** on page 6

## Mosaics depict Judith story

CYNTHIA RAMSAY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LILIAN BROCA



Lilian Broca with the diptych "Judith Meeting Holofernes," part of the Heroine of a Thousand Pieces: The Judith Mosaics of Lilian Broca exhibit that opens at Il Museo on Nov. 12. For visitors who want to take a piece of the exhibit home with them, Broca has created a series of mosaic silk scarves that will be available for purchase (inset).

Artist Lilian Broca calls her most recent subject – the apocryphal Judith, who slew the general Holofernes and saved her village – "a woman's woman," because "she was able to do what she wanted to do." Granted, times have changed, and that's not such an unusual phenomenon, but equality is still an issue for many, there are still oppressors, the world is still in need of repair, *tikkuun olam*. Broca's work reminds us of the power we each have, woman or man, to save, heal or improve at least a part of the world in which we live. And it does so in the most beautiful way.

Heroine of a Thousand Pieces: The Judith Mosaics of Lilian Broca opens at the Italian Cultural Centre's Il Museo on Nov. 12, 7 p.m., with a reception. It is the artist's second major mosaic series. Her first – seven years in the making – told the

story of Queen Esther, the heroine of Purim.

"Throughout my career," writes Broca in the Judith exhibit catalogue, "I have deliberately used powerful women figures from mythology as symbolic figures and role models whose experiences, I contend, shed light on today's concerns, thereby becoming relevant to our contemporary society. In my last three series of artworks, I have profiled three exceptionally wise and fearless legendary figures: Lilith, Esther and now Judith."

Over the years, she has worked with a variety of media, but the Queen Esther series called for a new medium: "In the Book of Esther, it is written that King Xerxes' palace was magnificently adorned with a floor encrusted with rubies and porphyry in pleasing designs – in other words, mosaics."

As with the Esther series, the nine

panels depicting seven scenes from the story of Judith are created in Italian smalto glass. The panels range from 72 to 78 inches tall and 48 inches wide.

As a widow with no children or family, Judith was able "to act on her own without getting permission from the alpha male of her family," Broca told the *Independent*. That allowed her to do what she did, "because women, as you know, in biblical times belonged to a male, either a husband, father, brother, son. She had none of those, and she was wealthy because her

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Please see **BROCA** on page 13

## Nominate a young light

**D**o you, or does someone you know, qualify for the Centre for Judaism Young Lamplighter Award? Has anyone you know between the ages of 5 and 18 made a unique effort to illuminate their world by performing extra special deeds of goodness and kindness?

Last Chanukah, on Dec. 21, Yosef Nider, 7, received the Centre for Judaism Young Lamplighter Award at the annual public menorah lighting in the Semiahmoo Shopping Centre. White

Rock Mayor Wayne Baldwin, Surrey Mayor Linda Hepner and Rabbi Falik and Rebbetzin Simie Schtroks, co-directors of the Centre for Judaism of the Fraser Valley, presented Yosef with an engraved trophy, as well as a cash prize.

"Chanukah celebrates the victory of light over darkness and goodness over evil. This is a most appropriate opportunity to motivate and inspire young people ... with a little light, they can dispel all sorts of darkness," said Simie Schtroks.

"We were delighted to bestow this honor upon young Yosef because he turned the painful experience of dealing with his grandfather's terminal cancer into an opportunity to do good for others. With his parents' support, he organized an event – highlighted by his own violin performance – A Concert for a Cure, which raised \$10,000 for cancer research," she added.

Jeff Nider, Yosef's father, described the experience. "We were blown away by the events of the evening, and it was such an honor for my wife and I to be the parents of a child who won the Lamplighter Award," he said. "Yosef started out simply wanting to do something to help his grandfather, but what he eventually accomplished resulted in such a ripple effect. We truly are amazed and feel both humbled and proud of Yosef."

When Yosef heard that he would be passing the light forward to the next recipient, he said, "I felt really happy to get this award. I hope that other kids will also do something good for the world after hearing about this award. The award is on my dresser in my room. I also got to buy a really cool Lego set."

The deadline to submit a nominee for this year's Lamplighter Award is Nov. 22, 2015. Include with the nomination at least one letter of recommendation written by a rabbi, teacher, principal, mentor, doctor or other verifiable source. Send all the material and direct any questions to Simie Schtroks, [c4j@shaw.ca](mailto:c4j@shaw.ca).

The award ceremony takes place on Dec. 13, 5:30 p.m., at the Semiahmoo Mall menorah lighting. Everyone is welcome. ❖

– Courtesy of Centre for Judaism



Yosef Nider, centre, receives the inaugural Lamplighter Award last year.

## Health experts at forum

**T**his year's Jewish Seniors Alliance of Greater Vancouver fall symposium – Living Up to the Promise: Now What? – on Nov. 15, 2 p.m., at the Peretz Centre, is co-presented with B.C. Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support, and B.C. Health Coalition.

Speakers include BCCEAS staff lawyer Kevin Smith on Living Safely – Know Your Law, and policy analyst Marcy Cohen on Living Up to the Promise that "Home is Best."

Smith worked as a legal aid lawyer for more than 30 years in Ontario and has done so here for the last five. He also serves as the review counsel at the Access Pro Bono Wills Clinic at the downtown courthouse, and is pursuing a master's of laws degree from the Centre for Excellence in Elder Law at Stetson University in Florida.

Cohen is an adjunct faculty member at Simon Fraser University and a research associate and board member of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Over the last 20 years, she has co-authored more than 35 academic studies and reports focusing on how to build a more community-based, accessible and cost-effective public health system. She recently co-authored a study that was critical of the B.C. home support system, called *Living up to the Promise*, which was published jointly by the Integrated Care Advocacy Group and the BCHC.

Moderator of the forum is Gloria Levi, a social services consultant in the field of aging. She has a master's degree in public policy and is the author of *Dealing with Memory Changes as You Grow Older* and a series of booklets entitled *Challenges of Later Life*.

The event is co-chaired by JSA vice-president Ken Levitt and JSA board member Larry Shapiro. For more information, visit [jsalliance.org](http://jsalliance.org).

– Courtesy of Jewish Seniors Alliance of Greater Vancouver

**BROCA** from page 1

husband had left her quite wealthy. So, she was a woman's woman, she was able to do what she wanted to do."

In short, Judith wanted to save her village of Bethulia from the Assyrian army, which was under the command of General Holofernes, who answered to the ruler Nebuchadnezzar. A beautiful woman, she seduces her way into Holofernes' camp and, eventually, into his tent, where she manages to get him so drunk that he passes out. She then cuts off his head with a sword, smuggling it out of the camp with the help of her servant. She presents it to the people of her village, while Holofernes' army flees in disarray.

"We meet her at the point where she calls the town officials, and tells them that she's going to be victorious," and that she's going to be successful with the help of God, explained Broca of the exhibit's first panel. Judith doesn't, however, tell them what she's going to do.

In the second panel, Judith is praying, asking God to help her deceive Holofernes and his men. Not knowing how women prayed at the time, Broca contacted Dr. Adolfo Roitman, curator of the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum (where the Dead Sea Scrolls are housed), but, despite his and other biblical specialists' efforts, they weren't able to answer that question. "So, I was left with my artistic licence," said Broca. "I figured that light is always associated with the divine, and so I had a lot of photos of oil lamps dating from that century ... and I decided to have her praying in front of that lit oil lamp, with that light, and her hands ... she is begging God, she is arguing with God, she is having a dialogue, so I put her hands in a kind of gesticulating [position], up in the air."

The third scene – one of the exhibit's two diptychs – depicts Holofernes first meeting Judith in all her finery and beauty. "Judith, just like Esther, was articulate, spoke very well, and perhaps also God helped her," said Broca. "She told the general a cockamamie story about God coming to her in her dreams and saying to her, you have to go down [to see him] because he will be the winner of the war, he's a great leader, and I'm going to punish the people of Bethulia ... because they broke the dietary laws. Well, that was true: they were starving, they had no water. The general knew that the Israelites had a very powerful God" who would protect them if they were faithful to Him and kept His laws. Judith continued, said Broca, "saying that God will tell her in three days' time when is a good time to attack. During those three days, she will stay with him in the camp but, every night, she will go with her maid ... to pray, and then come back to the camp. And then, on the third night, God will tell her. In the meantime, the general wanted to seduce her, that's all he had on his brain."

In this way, the sentry was used to seeing Judith coming and going, said Broca, which is why she was ultimately able to steal the severed head, hidden in a sack, out of the camp. The fourth scene of the exhibit is a diptych of Judith plying Holofernes with wine, the fifth panel shows Judith about to bring down the sword onto his neck, while the sixth has Judith and her maid running to Bethulia, sack and sword in hand. The final panel shows Judith raising the head for her people to see.

Broca started this work about four years ago. Roitman was in Vancouver giving a talk on the Dead Sea Scrolls and visited her studio. "When he saw Esther, he said, oh, now you have to do Judith." He told her that Judith was likely written as a response to Esther, that Judith is the flip-side of Esther. "And it is absolutely true," said Broca. "When I read the story, I knew right then and there that my greatest dream in life is to have

both Esther and Judith exhibited in one very large museum."

Because they are completely different personalities, Broca used different methods in creating the two mosaic series. "Esther was executed in a Byzantine style, and that was because Esther was a quiet, loyal little girl who manipulated men to do a dirty job, basically. ... Judith, on the other hand, was a warrior from the get go." Judith acted independently and "in a manly manner," while Esther "acted within the accepted nature of women's role in life," said Broca. This is why the artist couldn't create Judith using "that very quiet, icon-like Byzantine style. ... I had to use a more Baroque style to show her personality." Judith's depictions needed to have more action and movement, as well as more emotional facial expression.

Broca said that what attracted her to the stories of Judith and Esther, true or not, was that "these heroines illuminate the fundamental truth ... and that is that one single individual, not just a group, male or female, can – and will – make a difference in a threatened community. Today, we have Malala [Yousafzai] – she is an example of such a heroine. And both Esther and Judith save their communities from being exterminated, or taken into slavery, as was the case with Judith, I believe."

Both Esther and Judith are examples of women's empowerment, and can serve as role models, said Broca. As well, the medium of mosaics bears its own message, not only connecting an ancient art with contemporary times, the past with the present, but also in that "our world is becoming more and more fragmented, and it's essential that all these fractured elements should be put together in order to heal, to make the world whole once again."

In the Esther series, the unifying motif that ran through the panels was a wrought-iron lattice that appeared in each one. Broca said she agonized for weeks over what would be the unifying motif in the Judith series. "Finally, I came up with this idea of a torn sketchbook page. The reason for that is because I thought, well, what am I doing? I'm revivifying or reenacting an ancient story, and I'm starting from scratch, and it's from my personal vision." Since she started with sketches that became the mosaics, she thought, "Why don't I show the whole process?" The sketchbook also becomes a "21st-century prop," something that brings the work, and the ancient story it tells, into the present. Included in the exhibit are Broca's sketches and painted sketches (which are called cartoons). "In total," she said, "there will be 14 pieces under glass accompanying the mosaics."

The catalogue accompanying the Judith exhibit is comprehensive. It is a full-color, 94-page publication with essays by Broca and Roitman, as well as by Dr. Sheila Campbell, archeologist, art historian, curator and professor emerita of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies; Dr. Angela Clarke, museum curator at the Italian Cultural Centre in Vancouver; and Rabbi Dr. Yosef Wosk, adjunct professor and Shadbolt Fellow in the humanities department at Simon Fraser University. The book's foreword is written by Rosa Graci, curator at Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery in Toronto, where the Judith series will be displayed from May 5-July 4, 2016.

The exhibit will be in Vancouver at Il Museo, 3075 Slocan St., until March 31, 2016. For hours and other information, visit [italianculturalcentre.ca/events/museum](http://italianculturalcentre.ca/events/museum). For more on Broca, visit [lilianbroca.com](http://lilianbroca.com). As well, if you visit [jewishindependent.ca/oldsite/archives](http://jewishindependent.ca/oldsite/archives), you will find three relevant stories: "Contemporary ancient art," Nov. 18, 2011; "Piecing together a heroine," March 21, 2008; and "Mosaics honor heroine," April 30, 2004. ❖