

NEWSLETTER

newsletter@djctoronto.com

FEBRUARY 2006

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The DJC's Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 28, 2006 at 7:30 pm at Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 662 Pape Avenue, Toronto. Watch your snail mail for more details. And while the meeting is to approve financial statements, appoint auditors, and elect a Board of Directors, it is also a chance to meet and greet fellow DJCers, voice concerns and share ideas.



Going... going... but not gone

Siobhan Devine, who came to work at the DJC Jewish Studies program just recently, has decided – for personal reasons – to move on. We're sorry to see her go, and wish her all the best.

However, we're thrilled to announce that DJC administrator Kathy Miller will be staying on after all – and enhancing her responsibilities, including taking on the formidable task of school registrar. In our last edition, we announced with great sadness that Kathy had decided to depart to pursue other opportunities. Kathy's agreed to continue providing the grease that keeps the wheels of the DJC turning. Her decision has delighted untold thousands (ok, lots) of people right across the DJC. Her depth of knowledge of what we do, and how we do it, and her sense of commitment and professionalism have long been a source of strength and inspiration. We're delighted that she's decided to stay. Welcome back, Kathy!

What a tangled web we weave



Ok, really? Not so much. The DJC web site – one of your best friends when it comes to finding out what makes us tick – is about to get even better.

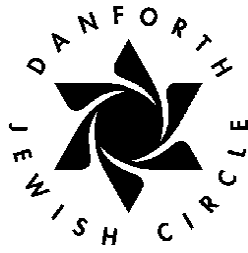
On Wednesday, March 1, we will be officially relaunching the site (www.djctoronto.com).

A host of brand new features – with the promise of more to come – will help make this site your single window on what's coming up, what's gone on and what we're really all about.

Work has been going on quietly, behind the scenes, for many months. When you log on March 1, you can expect to see:

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- A new, expanded (and downloadable!) calendar, including information about Jewish holidays – and their dates – plus family-friendly activities to help mark them
- An updated look and feel, with a better, easier navigation structure to help you find what you're looking for more easily and quickly
- Our brand new Rabbi's Study, with details of Eliza's upcoming visits, what she's said and done in previous visits and helpful hints about Jewish life cycle events
- A list of links to sites of interest
- For the technically minded, an RSS feed (if you know what that is, you'll be really, really excited – basically, it's a way of being notified automatically any time the site is updated)
- And, just down the road, additional opportunities for you – as a business owner or someone who patronizes local establishments – to support your community

Perhaps the biggest change is that, starting with the March edition, the newsletter will be published exclusively on the web site. We're aiming to help you reduce your in-box clutter. No more will you find a large, unwieldy attachment awaiting you if you want to read the newsletter. You'll be just a single click away from a new, more vibrant and interactive newsletter – one that can still be printed from your own computer, if you choose.

As a first step, we have a new e-mail address you can use to submit ideas, questions, comments, criticism (*although we don't really expect much of that!* – Ed.): it's newsletter@djctoronto.com. Feel free to drop us a line, let us know what you think of the changes, and – by all means – share your thoughts about what should be in future issues.

Coming together

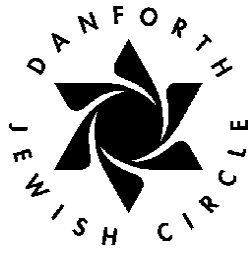
A DJC member has come up with a creative idea for a discussion group. The first gathering will take place in March, and organizers are looking for members that will come on a regular basis and be willing to take their turn hosting the group in their home.

The discussion group will discuss one issue per meeting, with the topic to be chosen by the evening's host. Members will be informed of the topic in advance by e-mail, confirming the location and topic for the meeting.

The group will meet on the same day every month, such as the third Wednesday of the month or the third Friday, depending on what is determined at the first meeting to be the most favorable time for the most members.

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Topics can be anything that will generate a lively engaging discussion and can be political, economic, sociological, religious, artistic themes.

Examples of possible topics might be:

- When if ever should one state be allowed to interfere in the domestic affairs of another state?
- Should energy conservation be voluntary or mandatory?
- How serious should one take religion?
- Are we doing too much for our children nowadays?
- What will be the State of Israel in 2050?
- If health care resources are limited, should individuals be responsible for maintaining their health as much as possible, i.e. not smoking, avoiding obesity, not drinking excessively etc.
- Have the arts become a business, just like all others?

No prior reading is required. There will be no expert speakers and no fees. The first discussion group will take place at the home of Susan Bellan.

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|------------|--|
| Location: | 11 Cedar Avenue (in the Beach, just north of Queen Street, south of Kingston Road between Beech and Willow Avenue) |
| Telephone: | 416 691 5327 |
| Date: | Friday, March 17, 2006 |
| Time: | 8 PM |
| Topic: | How far must a person go to make the world a better place? To what extent must you give your time, your money, and your influence to help people close to you and people you don't know who need help? |
| Contact: | Susan Bellan (susanbellan@hotmail.com) by March 10 to confirm your attendance |

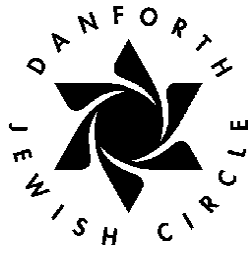
The cutoff for membership will be the first 25 people who join the group, since that's the number that will fit into most peoples living rooms at a stretch.

Coffee klatsch cash

The final tally is in. The November 19 coffee house at the Victory Café raised an impressive \$650. Proceeds were donated to Blake Boulton Youth Outreach Services (www.bbyos.org). Well done, everyone! Who says caffeine is a bad habit?

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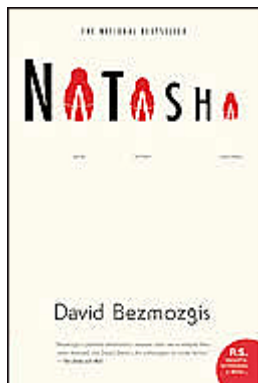
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We came... we saw... we read – and noshed – a little...

Submitted by Sheila Goldgrab



Local writer David Bezmozgis's *Natasha and Other Stories* was the book selection for the DJC's book club meeting on January 26. This darkly comical book is a taught and restrained account of a Latvian family that immigrates to Toronto in the Finch and Bathurst neighbourhood in the 1880s. From the particular to the universal: its metathemes are immigration and displacement. Because of, or perhaps despite its minimalist style, there is lots to discuss.

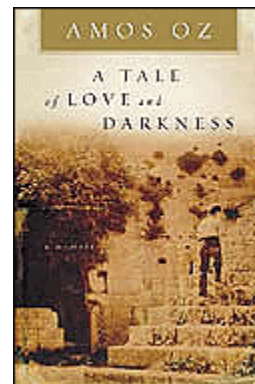
Guest expert book facilitator Heather Kassels guided us through each of the seven stories, where we follow the book's character Mark Berman from ages 6 to 16.

Heather offered her own view that there is fiction in the memoir and there is always memoir in fiction. Bezmozgis himself calls the stories "autobiographical fiction."

The discussion covered several topics and themes and raised many questions including: are the short stories to be read alone or together; is the interview with the author – included in one edition – fiction; the totemic meaning of the dog Tapka; the shift from Mark the Hebrew Day School tough kid to the Mark in the story about the minyan; and the meaning of one of the story's powerful final lines: "Now, Berman . . . now maybe you understand what it is to be a Jew." Even those who initially thought that the book hype wasn't deserved were given reason to change their minds.

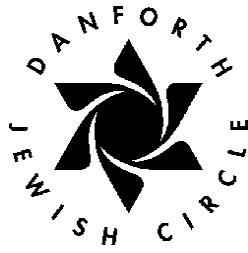
Heartfelt thank you goes to house hosts Niki Weiss and Michael Fox for the use of their lovely Riverdale home and the provision of the nosh. Blintzes anyone?

The next book club meeting takes place Thursday, March 2, 2006. Facilitator Derek J. Penslar will lead a discussion of *A Tale Of Love and Darkness*, by Amos Oz.



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This is a beautiful memoir of Oz's childhood in Palestine on the eve of Israeli independence. The story is a priceless historical document of pre 1948 Palestine, and a wrenchingly personal account of his mother's suicide.

Derek J. Penslar is the Samuel Zacks professor of Jewish history and director of the Jewish Study Program at the University of Toronto. His publications focus on Jewish political, economic, and cultural life in modern Europe, particularly Germany, and on the history of the Zionist movement and state of Israel. In 2006 Penslar will be the Nachson Visiting Professor of Israel Studies at Harvard.

If you're interested in attending the next meeting, or any future meetings of the book club, contact info@djctoronto.com for all the information you'll need.

ELIZA'S NEXT VISIT:

FEBRUARY 17-19 (Stay tuned for more details)

Next newsletter deadline: Friday, February 24, 2006

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