

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

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jewishberkshires.org



Last year's Community Havdalah at Temple Anshe Amunim

Sharing the Light: Community-Wide Havdalah and Concert

PITTSFIELD – On Saturday, February 1 at 7 p.m., join our Berkshire rabbis, local musicians, and Laura Wetzler (singer, songwriter, guitarist, and recording artist) and percussionist Robin Burdulis for an inspirational evening of music, spirit, and schmoozing.

Our host for this special evening will be Temple Anshe Amunim, which is located at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield.

Enjoy the beautiful and rhythmic songs created by Jews living in such places as Spain, Turkey, Greece, Sarajevo, Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, Uganda, Morocco, Syria, and India. Laura Wetzler has devoted years of study and performance to diverse, multicultural World music, as well as to the history of American popular entertainment and European Art Music.

All ages welcome to this free celebration! Free Havdalah candle and spice sets (while supplies last).

This event is co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, the Berkshire Minyan, and Berkshire Hills Hadassah.

Funded in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.



Federation's New Community Security Program

Law enforcement veteran Andrew Hoffman joins Federation as the SCN's Deputy Regional Security Advisor

The Secure Community Network (SCN) and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires are pleased to announce the launch of a new community security program led by Deputy Regional Security Advisor Andrew Hoffman. The program is designed to significantly increase safety and security for all who participate in Jewish life in the Berkshires. SCN is the official safety and security organization for the Jewish community in North America.

In his new role, Hoffman will serve as Deputy Regional Security Advisor for both Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts. His duties include administering both Federations' community security programs, conducting consultations, performing building and organizational assessments, leading training and drills, mitigating threats, and coordinating responses to critical incidents. Hoffman joined SCN in October 2024, bringing over 26 years of law enforcement experience to his role.

"Andrew is an invaluable addition to SCN's expanding security shield across New England," said Michael Masters, National Director and CEO of the Secure Community Network. "He has helped bridge the expertise and capabilities of SCN with the unique needs of Jewish communities in the Berkshires and Western Massachusetts. Andrew's leadership in this role is already reinforcing a

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This winter, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires initiates our "Hate Has No Home Here" campaign, in which we are partnering with community groups, businesses, schools, and houses of worship to publicly and emphatically amplify this vital message. Every Berkshire resident has the right to live, work, love, and worship with freedom and dignity, and also without fear. As antisemitism escalates, we all share the responsibility to confront bigotry and hatred directly. Check out the stories and ad on page 10 about our "Hate Has No Home Here" campaign in this paper to find out what we are doing and what you can do to help.



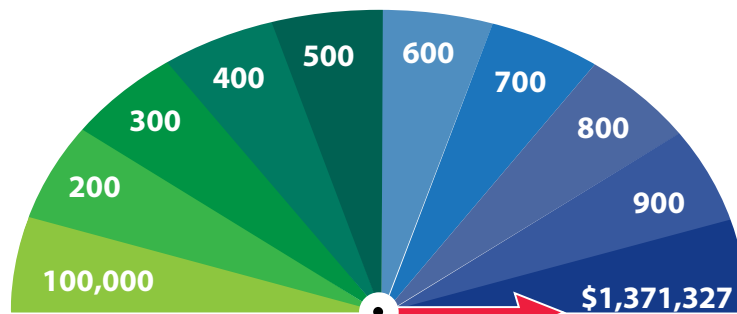
THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

OUR CUP RUNNETH OVER!

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' 2024 Annual Campaign exceeded goal!

Together we raised \$1,371,327!
Thank you to all who participated!

Check out the next edition of the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* for the honor roll of our generous and caring donors.



**DOING
EXTRAORDINARY
THINGS**

**YOUR
IMPACT
IS REAL**

**ANNUAL
CAMPAIGN
2024**

OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

Light and Hope for the Future

By Dara Kaufman / Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires



Dara Kaufman

At our home this past Chanukah, we chose to light every menorah we owned. The silver Tree of Life menorah we received as a wedding gift, the etched glass one from my mother-in-law, the blue-and-white stained-glass menorah crafted by my husband Ofer, and even the slightly dusty Noah's Ark menorah we used when our children were young. As I reflected on what has been an incredibly challenging year, I wanted to fill our home with as much light as possible – not just for my family, but for our community, for the people of Israel, and, above all, for the hostages and their families.

I saw that same collective light reflected in the public menorah lightings across the Berkshires – in Williamstown, North Adams, Lenox, and at

Federation's Chanukah celebration at Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield. Over 450 people, including many intergenerational families, gathered at the Village's round stone barn to celebrate, with uplifting music from the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective and words of solidarity from Pittsfield Mayor Peter Marchetti, MA Senator Paul Mark, and MA Representative Leigh Davis. The City of Pittsfield also issued a proclamation of support, as well.

The shadow of rising antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment on campuses – combined with the security concerns these bring – have, at times, felt overwhelming. But in those moments, the collective glow of so many candles and so many people – each one a symbol of our strength and resilience – was a powerful source of comfort. It filled my heart with warmth and hope for the future.

In that same spirit, I want to express our profound gratitude to all of you who supported our 2024 Annual Campaign. Thanks to your generosity, we raised over \$1.371 million – our highest campaign total ever. This remarkable achievement is a testament to the dedication of each of YOU – our generous donors, passionate volunteers, board and staff, and your unwavering commitment to building vibrant, caring Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.

A special thank you to Josh Cutler, our 2024 Super Tzedakah Week Chair (and his son, James), as well as to Claudio and Penny Pincus, the chairs of our Major Donor Celebration. Their leadership was instrumental in making these two signature events a resounding success, fostering a deeper sense of community and bringing many others into our fold.

This month, our Allocations Committee is hard at work reviewing grant and scholarship applications, beginning the thoughtful process of balancing support for our local Jewish organizations with the urgent needs of the Israeli people



and fragile Jewish communities around the world, including those still suffering from the war in Ukraine.

The committee will also be considering funding to support Jewish education for students at Hevreh, Knesset Israel, Congregation Beth Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim, as well as Jewish life on campus at Williams College and UMASS Amherst. Additionally, the committee will review scholarships for young people to attend Jewish summer camps. These programs are essential in nurturing a love of Judaism through learning, community engagement, *tikkun olam*, and countless moments of joy – each helping to build a strong and lasting Jewish identity and nurturing future Jewish leaders.

I am proud to share that Federation has launched its "Hate Has No Home Here" campaign. We believe every Berkshire resident has the right to live, work, love, and worship in freedom, dignity, and safety – without fear. As antisemitism escalates across our community, country, and world, we recognize that hatred toward Jews often signals broader discrimination against other marginalized groups, often spiraling into more dangerous forms of violence. Antisemitism is not just a Jewish issue – it is a societal one. It is our collective responsibility to confront bigotry and hate in all its forms.

Through this campaign, we are partnering with local chambers of commerce, businesses, cultural organizations, houses of worship, and schools to amplify the message that "Hate Has No Home Here" via posters, social media, and online resources. Throughout December, January, and February, you'll see Federation billboards in Great Barrington, Lenox, Pittsfield, and North Adams carrying an expanded message: "Antisemitism Threatens Us All. Hate Has No Home Here." Learn more about this important initiative at jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here.

We are filled with gratitude for the blessing of community and the meaningful work we do together – extending comfort and care, standing united against hate, fostering resilience, and nurturing joyful Jewish connections.

Federation is also deeply committed to the security of our Jewish community. We are proud to announce the launch of Jewish Berkshires LiveSecure, our new community security initiative in collaboration with the Secure Community Network (SCN), and the hiring of Andrew Hoffman as our Deputy Regional Security Advisor. Andrew has already begun his work, meeting with our local Jewish institutions, law enforcement, and FBI contacts. On Monday, February 10 at 7 p.m., we will host a crucial Communal Security Town Hall at Knesset Israel with Andrew and his colleagues Mike Butsch (SCN Regional Director Northeast) and Grant Mendenhall (SCN Deputy Director of Operations). I strongly encourage every Jewish resident to attend and learn how this new initiative will impact our community, share your concerns, and help shape a safer, stronger Berkshire Jewish community. Learn more about Jewish Berkshires LiveSecure at jewishberkshires.org/LiveSecure.

As we step into 2025, we are filled with gratitude for the blessing of community and the meaningful work we do together – extending comfort and care, standing united against hate, fostering resilience, and nurturing joyful Jewish connections across the Berkshires, in Israel, and around the world. Thank you for your continued support and for standing with us as we work to make our community stronger, more united, and filled with light.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



Deliver & Pack Purim Care Packages

Bring some Purim cheer to older adults in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, and at home.

Packing Volunteers: Thurs, March 6; Friday, March 7; and Mon, March 10

Delivery Volunteers: Tues, March 11—Thurs, March 13

SIGN UP TODAY!

Contact Heidi Katz at
(413) 442-4360, ext. 10

federation@jewishberkshires.org



The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network connects community members of all ages with Mitzvah opportunities to make a difference in our community.



OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

“These and These” – No Single Truth

By Rabbi Eric S. Gurvis



Rabbi Eric S. Gurvis

Just a few weeks ago, as we reckon our secular calendar, we entered the New Year 2025. For our Jewish community, our New Year of 5785 was welcomed at *Rosh Hashanah* in early October. If we look at *Mishnah Rosh Hashanah* 1:1, we learn that in our Jewish calendar we mark four different new years. Another arrives in just a few weeks as we celebrate *Tu B'shevat* – the New Year for trees.

Whatever the occasion, marking

the start of a New Year is an opportunity for reflection and the sense that we can embrace a fresh start. As Americans, in the coming days we are also marking a new start as we mark the transition between two Administrations and welcome a new session of Congress.

In our time, public discourse has been chaotic, and divisive. Depending on your perspective, it may be encouraging or concerning. Every day, every week seems to bring more fractious debate. As our Jewish tradition views it, debate can be a valuable commodity when it serves to inform, shed light and bring us closer to understanding one another. Alas, much of the discourse in our nation today is filled with vitriol and venom. In my ideal, our candidates (and we as a public) would argue and passionately debate the great issues of our day. However, my dream is that we could approach the challenges we face from a stance of humility, rather than bluster and arrogance.

As members of the Jewish community, Torah is core to our faith, and for each of us, in our way, how we live our lives. I am a firm believer that Torah is all around us. I do not confine my learning to the broader understanding of Torah as it has been refracted through the prism of Jewish teachings as they have been

In our contentious times, can we not demand of our leaders, as well as ourselves, that our discourse be predicated on more humility and far less humiliation?

passed down through the ages, with each generation seeking to understand its meaning for its age. When I say, “Torah is all around us,” I mean that we can learn from a wide diversity of sources. The core ideals and values of Torah are reflected in the world around us, if we but open our eyes, ears, and hearts to learning from sources beyond the literal confines of our faith community’s boundaries, or our chosen political perspective.

A case in point: Some years ago, I attended a leadership conference with a team from the congregation I was serving at the time. We were introduced to the work of John Dickson, musician, TV presenter, historian, and Anglican minister. His talk was based on his then-new book, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership*, in which he explores the origins of humility as a value, and the

many ways in which we understand and strive for humility in our lives. Dickson debunks the broadly held misconception that the value of humility originates with Jesus and in Christian Scriptures. He writes: “I just want to point out that the peculiar Western meaning of ‘humility’ derives [first] from the usage of the Hebrew-speaking Jews; [then] Latin-speaking Romans, and the Greeks . . . In all three languages the word used to describe humility means ‘low,’ as in ‘low to the ground. . . Used negatively [humility] means to be put low, that is, ‘to be humiliated.’ Positively, [it] means to lower yourself or ‘to be humble.’”

Let’s face it. In our time, humility and humiliation are huge issues. We know that disagreement is as old as humanity itself. A famous passage in the Babylonian *Talmud* records that the two leading Rabbinic schools of thought in first century Palestine had a running series of disputes for over three years: “There was a dispute between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. The former asserted, ‘The law is in agreement with our views,’ while the latter contended, ‘The law is in agreement with our views.’” As the two sides vigorously disputed their claims a *Bat Kol*, “a Divine voice,” came forth from heaven, announcing, “*These and these* are the words of the living God.”

I was both surprised and delighted to see this quote from the *Talmud*, “*These and these* are the words of the living God” rendered over the stage during the Berkshire’s Theatre Festival’s 2011 production of *My Name is Asher Lev*. I saw the production just days after returning from almost a month of study at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. The founder of that Institute, my late teacher, Rabbi David Hartman, taught that the force of ‘*these and these*’ interrupts the debate to proclaim, “no one owns the truth. No single idea ends the discussion.” In the words of Rabbi Hartman, “Dialogue creates possibility for more fruitful discussion.”

In our contentious times, can we not demand of our leaders, as well as ourselves, that our discourse be predicated on more humility and far less humiliation? Wouldn’t that be an ideal worth pursuing?

Rabbi Eric S. Gurvis was ordained as a rabbi from Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in New York and is a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. He also serves as Director of Community Programming and Public Engagement for The Mussar Institute and facilitates Mussar groups in the Greater Boston area and at Hevreh of South Berkshire, where he and his wife, Laura Kizner Gurvis, are members. He has served congregations in New York City; Jackson, MS; Teaneck, NJ; Newton, MA; and Ashland, MA.



We are looking for one person to make a splash!

Are you engaging, strategic, dynamic? Do you have some good fundraising and Jewish communal experience? Do you want to use your talent and experience towards making the world a better place?

We've got an awesome position for a **full-time Senior Development Officer** to work with our executive director and volunteer leadership to plan and implement our growing fundraising campaign effort.

For more details and information on how to apply visit jewishberkshires.org/news-announcements/development



Jewish Federation OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE. THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT. Published 9 times a year.

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To have the *BJV* mailed to your home, please send a minimum donation of \$18.

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OP-ED

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Heaviness and Hope Can Coexist

Takeaways from the JFNA 2024 General Assembly

By Arlene D. Schiff / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Today, a colleague posted a picture on Facebook of a cartoon elephant sitting under a black raincloud against a rainbow-colored background, with the caption: "Heaviness and Hope Can Coexist."

This captures the essence of my experience last November attending the 2024 General Assembly, the national meeting of the Federation system, this time in Washington, DC. Over 48 hours, I experienced a range of emotions: sadness, grief, pride, hope, gratitude, helplessness, camaraderie, fear, and optimism.

From the opening reception, where I connected with people I have met over the 20-plus years I have been engaged with Federation, to the closing ceremony, where tears flowed as a result of remarks by Bari Weiss and Sheryl Sandberg, I was grateful for the opportunity to represent the Berkshire Jewish community and join with 2,500 others who are determined to ensure flourishing Jewish communities and a bright Jewish future.

We heard from individuals who had been held hostage, as well as from those whose family members are still being held by Hamas, individuals whose loved ones were murdered on October 7, 2023, those who have experienced antisemitism, and those working to support members of our community dealing with all this trauma. Chants of "bring them home," Israeli music expressing sorrow and optimism, and examples of the power of the collective to provide support to our Israeli brethren were themes throughout.

The highlight of Monday's opening plenary was a panel discussion with Eric Fingerhut, president & CEO of Jewish Federations of North America, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, and political commentator George Will. Sen. Gillibrand expressed her outrage that so many college campuses are unsafe for Jewish students, stating, "I think any college president who cannot keep all her students or his students safe should be fired, and any professor that celebrates October 7 and lifts up the actions of Hamas as a good thing should be fired."

George Will said, "I am afraid that 30 years from now, historians are going to say the Israelis and the Ukrainians were fighting as the first defenders in a war, in the Third World War." He then went on to note that the Second World War was a cluster of crises that began in 1931, and that we must learn from the past and recognize that the Ukrainian fight and Israeli fight are identical. When asked about the current political environment, Will noted that the American people are not angry and that optimism is our duty. He shared a story: "Mark Twain and his good friend, the novelist William Dean Howells, were staying at a hotel one day when they decided to go out for a walk. They stepped out on the veranda, and it was pouring rain. Howell asked Twain, 'Do you think it'll stop?' Twain replied, 'You know, it always has.'"

The Monday afternoon plenary's highlight was a conversation among Rabbi David Wolpe (the Max Webb Rabbi Emeritus of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles), Rabbi Sharon Brous (senior rabbi of IKAR in Los Angeles), and Rabbi Ari Berman (president of Yeshiva University).

Rabbi Wolpe spoke about being at Harvard and seeing a place of higher education turn into one of vituperation and hatred. The most memorable part of his year, however, was traveling to Israel, meeting with hostage families, and hearing from a friend whose son was serving in Gaza that many of his friends



Arlene Schiff (right) with Ann Falchuk and Dara Kaufman at the 2024 General Assembly last November.

have a sign on their door that reads "Do Not Knock," because they know what a knock means. He acknowledged not only the pain that Israelis have endured, but also the pain they fear and anticipate each day by living in a land where their children are on the front lines. Rabbi Berman experienced that anxiety firsthand – on October 7, he was with his son, a reservist in a combat unit, when the call came summoning the young man to report for service. Rabbi Berman then described a moment of "tremendous partnership and hope." Last year, Yeshiva University's basketball team was ranked number one among Division III schools. On the road for a game in Pennsylvania four hours from New York, the team didn't expect anyone to be in the arena to support them. However, when the team showed up, the stands were packed with their fans. Rabbi Berman asked the fans where they were from. They responded that they were members of the local Reform synagogue out to cheer on "their team," Yeshiva University. "That is when our team realized we are not playing for a school, we are playing for a people," Rabbi Berman said. "That is the sense that I have felt across this country, across this world... that we are all playing for something larger than ourselves and we are not defined or cornered by hate – we are defined because we support each other by love with a shared mission and a shared purpose."

One of the six hostages executed by Hamas in Gaza in August was Almog Serosi. Rabbi Brous's brother in Israel went to Almog's funeral. There was not enough room in the mourners' tent and hundreds of people packed together in the surrounding streets. At some point, someone started reciting the Mourner's Kaddish, and people responded "amen." When Rabbi Brous's brother shared this story with her, they spoke about the incredible power of being part of a family and part of a people that shows up for one another – strangers who are like family. "I want to affirm the power of community and what it means for us to be with one another in the dark," Rabbi Brous said. "Not to fix each other, not to make it okay – because we can't – but just to grieve together."

Rabbi Brous shared a second story, about attending an event in Israel for non-profits operated by Israelis and Palestinians. The arena was packed with 6,000 people and, one after the next, speakers got up to speak about their pain, their broken hearts, and their sorrow. Rabbi Brous said she was so moved that the people closest to the pain could stand up and say there must be a different future and that together we can heal.

Isaac Herzog, president of the State of Israel, provided another highlight by asserting: "We fight for our hostages. We fight for our people. We fight for our Jewish values. We fight for our Jewish communities." He noted that failure to bring the hostages home would leave Israel hemorrhaging and scared for generations, tearing through the fabric of our people. He further emphasized that the Israeli people had two options following October 7 and they chose life. He stated: "The American Jewish community also made a choice. You chose to mobilize for Israel – like a family with no ifs, ands, or buts – instantaneously with no questions asked. You chose to show up for us when we needed you to. The warmth, affection, and love expressed by world Jewry gave the Israeli people a lifeline and the strength to persevere."

Tuesday's closing plenary was powerful. Anastasia Fursova, a Ukrainian refugee who chooses to remain in Ukraine despite not knowing if her home or the homes to which she delivers food packages to the elderly will be bombed at any moment. She begged us not to forget Ukrainians while we focused on supporting our Israeli brethren.

Sheryl Sandberg, the founder of "Lean In," shared how October 7 transformed her life, not only because it spurred her to document the sexual violence

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE,
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COMMUNITY SECURITY TOWN HALL

February 10 at 7 pm
Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

Learn about the Jewish Berkshires LiveSecure, a new partnership between the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Secure Community Network (SCN)

This is your opportunity to ask questions, share your concerns, and help shape a safer and stronger community.

With special guests from the Secure Community Network (SCN)



Andrew Hoffman
SCN Deputy Regional
Security Advisor - Berkshires



Mike Butsch
SCN Regional Director
Northeast



Grant Mendenhall
SCN Deputy Director
of Operations

Register at jewishberkshires.org

About the Secure Community Network (SCN):

Founded under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, SCN is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America., ensuring that Jewish organizations, communities, life, and culture can not only exist safely and securely, but flourish. Learn more at securecommunitynetwork.org.



CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS! COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires awards one or two annual scholarships to a graduating senior of Berkshire County high schools who has demonstrated high academic scholarship as well as leadership and participation in the Berkshire Jewish Community.

The Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and
Dr. Stanley and Faye Simkin Scholarship Fund

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 22

Download application at www.jewishberkshires.org
or pick one up at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA. Application will also available at the local school guidance offices in February.

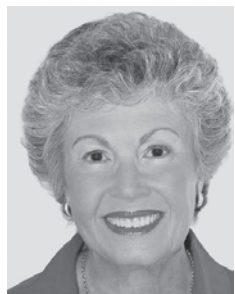


THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

Your Federation Presents

“Can I See the Horns: Roots of Antisemitism”

Program in observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day



On Thursday, January 23 at 7 p.m., Federation will mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day with a 65-minute virtual presentation by scholar and oral historian Marcia Jo Zerivitz titled “Can I See the Horns: Roots of Antisemitism.”

This virtual program will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Marcia Jo Zerivitz writes:

Jewish life since 10.7.23 is no longer the same. Antisemitism has enormously increased here in the US and globally and has become normalized, especially on college campuses, and mostly based on conspiracy theories. Florida hosts the nation's second largest number of hate groups: 89 of them. More than a quarter of the world thinks that everything Jews do is wrong and that all wrongs are done by Jews. Why have antisemitism and resulting hate crimes increased since the Covid pandemic and Israel-Hamas war? Antisemitism, a virus that mutates with every generation, has been the early warning signal of a society in danger over history. Why? Using degenerate artworks that demonstrate antisemitism's genesis and tropes, I will explore the current situation, the historical background of antisemitism, and the insidious power of imagery in communicating the agenda of hatred, including Christian roots, the Middle Ages, the modern world, and contemporary racist images since the Civil War covering eugenics, the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, restrictive covenants and white supremacy.

This PowerPoint presentation, created from 40 years of research, includes the challenges of social media and the internet in the spread of antisemitism and actions communities can take to help combat Jew-hatred that began 2,300 years ago.

Marcia Jo Zerivitz, founding executive director of the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU, has been a leader in the American and Floridian Jewish communities for more than 50 years with a specific focus on museums and Florida Jewish history for the past 26 years.

Bernardine's Shanghai Salon: The Story of the Doyenne of Old China, with Susan Blumberg-Kason



On Thursday, January 30 at 7 p.m., explore an unusual Jewish story set in the Far East with biographer Susan Blumberg-Kason, who will talk about her new book, *Bernardine's Shanghai Salon: The Story of the Doyenne of Old China*.

This virtual program will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of Jewish

Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.

Bernardine Szold Fritz arrived in Shanghai in 1929 to marry her fourth husband. Only 33 years old, she found herself in a time and place like no other. Yet from the night of their wedding, Bernardine's new husband did not live up to his promises. Instead of feeling sorry for herself or leaving Shanghai, Bernardine decided to make a place for herself.

Like other Jewish women before her, she started a salon in her home, introducing Emily Hahn, the charismatic writer for *The New Yorker*, to hotelier Sir Victor Sassoon and legendary poet Sinmay Zau. And when Hollywood stars Anna May Wong and Charlie Chaplin passed through Shanghai, Bernardine organized gatherings to introduce them to their Shanghai contemporaries.

When Bernardine's salon could not accommodate all who wished to attend, she founded the International Arts Theater to produce avant-garde plays, ballets, and lectures, often pushing audiences beyond their comfort zones. As World War II loomed, Bernardine's devotion to the arts and the people of Shanghai brought joy to the city just before it would change forever.

Susan Blumberg-Kason is a memoirist and biographer and co-editor of an anthology set in Hong Kong. She is a regular contributor to the *Asian Review of Books* and *World Literature Today*.

SECURITY PROGRAM,

continued from cover

strong culture of safety and resilience, ensuring that communities are not just prepared for potential threats but are equipped with the tools and confidence to face them.”

On Monday, February 10 at 7 p.m., the Berkshire Jewish community will be able to meet Andrew Hoffman at Federation's Community Security Town Hall. He will be joined by his colleagues Mike Butsch (SCN Regional Director Northeast and formerly Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the FBI New Haven Division Office) and Grant Mendenhall (SCN Deputy Director of Operations and formerly an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps and the Assistant Director of the FBI Counterterrorism Division, with responsibility for the FBI's global Counterterrorism Program and global Counterterrorism workforce). Learn about the Jewish Berkshires LiveSecure initiative, ask questions, share your concerns, and help shape a safer and stronger community. This event will be held at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. Please register on our website, jewishberkshires.org.

“We are excited to partner with SCN and welcome Andrew to the Berkshires,” said Federation Executive Director Dara Kaufman. “As our community and country face significant increases in antisemitic threats and incidents, Jewish communal security has never been more important. We are committed to supporting the security of our congregations and Jewish organizations. Andrew's extensive experience makes him an enormous asset for our community.”

“It is an honor to serve the communities of the Berkshires and Western Massachusetts, who have long demonstrated a deep commitment to Jewish life,” said Hoffman about his new role. “I look forward to continuing to work year-round with residents, local leaders, and law enforcement to strengthen the preparedness and response capabilities of the Jewish community. My goal is to ensure that everyone feels safe, supported, and empowered.”

Before joining SCN, Hoffman served as a special agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), where he led complex investigations targeting international drug trafficking organizations. His distinguished career included assignments with the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, the DEA Caribbean Division on the island of Curaçao, and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force in Bridgeport, CT. Hoffman holds a bachelor's degree in criminology from the University of South Florida.

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts join the growing network of Jewish Federations and communities that have partnered with SCN to launch or build upon existing community-wide security programs designed around an “all threats, all hazards” approach to preparedness, safety, security, and resiliency. Each program is connected to SCN's national operations, providing direct access to SCN's National Jewish Security Operations Command Center and Duty Desk, as well as best practice security resources and support related to policies, procedures, physical security, facility assessments, training, and incident response.

About Secure Community Network

The Secure Community Network (SCN), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America. Founded in 2004 under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, SCN serves as the central organization dedicated exclusively to the safety and security of the American Jewish community, working across 146 federations, 50 partner organizations, over 300 independent communities, and other partners in the public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors. SCN is dedicated to ensuring that Jewish organizations, communities, life, and culture can not only exist safely and securely, but flourish. Learn more at securecommunitynetwork.org.



Letters to the Editor

Fun and Influential

Dear Federation:

Camp Ramah was a fun and influential experience for me. I loved meeting new people, making new friends, and the chance to be in a big group of Jewish kids. I think Ramah was an amazing experience.

I also loved the activities, food, learning, and trip to Six Flags. I loved Ramah, and hope the Federation and the community continue to support the Jewish camp experience.

Sincerely,
Lorenzo Cook-Dubin
Pittsfield

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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Your Federation Presents

“An Introduction to Beer in Judaism,” with Rabbi Drew Kaplan

On Thursday, February 27 at 7 p.m., we are happy to host Rabbi Drew Kaplan, on tap for “An Introduction to Beer in Judaism.”

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presentation will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events pages at jewishberkshires.org.

Wine certainly gets the primary focus in Judaism when it comes to beverages, yet what about beer? Beer has been around in human existence longer than wine, so where does it fit in in Judaism? Join Rabbi Kaplan for an introductory overview of the most overlooked beverage in Jewish life. In this Zoom session, explore key texts on beer in the Bible, Talmud, and subsequent Jewish practice.

In addition to his trailblazing Jewish Drinking initiative (jewishdrinking.com), showcasing the wisdom, tradition, history, and more on drinking in Jewish life, Rabbi Kaplan also hosts The Jewish Drinking Show podcast (now at over 165 episodes). It is a well-organized, user-friendly trove of information for anyone interested in alcohol and Judaism, from biblical times to the present.

He currently serves as the campus rabbi for Cincinnati Hillel.

In December, we caught up with Rabbi Kaplan for a round of beer talk – starting, as Jews do, in the beginning, with a look at how beer is portrayed in the Tanakh. (For a list compiled by Rabbi Kaplan of all mentions of beer in the Bible, visit sefaria.org/sheets/483604?lang=bi.)

Beer in the Bible – you translate the word “shechar” or “she’khar” as beer, although it appears in other translations as strong wine or fortified wine.

Archeologically, we’ve had beer for a long time, maybe predating wine. If it’s been around for so long in the region of the Bible, how come the Bible never mentioned it? That should already start raising questions in people’s minds. In Israel, you have all these materials with which to make beer, whether it’s wheat or other fermentable items. How could they not have beer? Wouldn’t there be a word for it? All these other people – Egyptians, Muslims – they have a word, *k’kar*, very similar to *she’khar*. It would be very strange if there wasn’t a separate word for that in Hebrew. This is a word that appears over 20 times in the Bible, and it would be surprising if it’s somehow not beer.

Even the 1985 JPS translation of the Tanakh, which is a really good one, translates the word so many different ways. It’s one word, and they translate it anywhere between five to ten different ways. I don’t even know what “liquor” means for [these translators] because distilled beverages weren’t even created until the 15th or 16th century. They didn’t have whiskey. So, the only other strong drink would be beer. Of course, when I say beer, I also have to be careful to point out that, especially as Americans, we hear beer, we think of German beer, which is upheld to the standard of *Reinheitsgebot*, the German purity law or Bavarian purity law that limits ingredients to your barley, your hops, your yeast, your water. But in the Biblical era, there were no such limitations. They would throw in whatever that could be fermented – dates, barley, wheat, even honey – to boost the fermentable sugars there.

Also, most of the 20 plus appearances of the word “*she’khar*” occur in tandem with the word for wine, so it’s hard to say that it means some other type of wine. I don’t even know what a fortified wine would be without a distilled spirit being involved in that.



The offerings of Shmaltz Brewing Company – now going through an ownership transition. Rabbi Kaplan says that Jews are not as involved in the American craft brewing scene as they are in distilling spirits, particularly bourbon. While Israelis have a thriving winemaking sector that has gained worldwide prominence, brewing beer in Israel has been constrained by the fact that grains such as wheat and barley, as well as hops, have to be imported. So, says Rabbi Kaplan, craft beers have been a popular item for Israelis to bring back with them when they travel abroad.

“*She’khar*” has to be something that is also alcoholic and yet not wine. So, there’s beer.

I like what is says in Proverbs 31:6 - “Give beer to the hapless and wine to the embittered.”

You’re not going to give beer to the one who’s bitter in spirit because beer has bitterness, which I think is beautiful. You give wine, which has a sweetness to it, to the bitter person.

Women and brewing. Baking was historically a woman’s task, for the most part, in the household. What about brewing?

Archeologists see stuff and they make their interpretations. But a lot of archeologists have ignored beer production, even though they can tell you what things were used for wine production. Beer has exactly the type of ingredients used for making bread. Sure, it could be used for bread, but it’s probably being also made for beer. So, women actually may have turned out to be the major producers of beer during the Biblical era. It’s also something we see throughout time. Even in England, in the Middle Ages, women were the main people involved in beer brewing until basically the men chased them out because of the economic opportunities there.

I remember reading somewhere that the invention of writing may be tied to beer, that the Mesopotamians, they were interested in recording how much beer they had rather than grain. Do you think the archeological evidence supports that?

That makes sense to me. And I would say even further than that, there’s also a really strong argument to be made archeologically that the main driver of agriculturally settling down was driven by beer, not bread. I mean, it’s a pretty big motivator, I think we can all acknowledge. And I would say that beer is a bigger motivator than bread for a lot of us.



Habitat 67 in Montréal by Moshe Safdie

Jewish Roots of Modern American Star-architects

On Thursday, February 20 at 7 p.m., Richard Rivin highlights the background and work of nine Jewish architects who have designed well-known buildings within the United States and around the world. (Richard Neutra, Victor Gruen, Louis Kahn, Max Abramovitz, Eero Saarinen, Frank Gehry, Denise Scott Brown, Moshe Safdie, and Daniel Libeskind.) These architects have been recognized as having achieved celebrity (“Star”) status, both nationally and internationally, for their substantial impact on the entire architectural profession.

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presentation will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events pages at jewishberkshires.org.

Rick Rivin is a past president of the Jewish Museum and Cultural Center in Portsmouth, VA. He attended Harvard College and the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he obtained a master’s degree in Architecture. He will be presenting on behalf of Jewish Art Education.



The Braid Presents: Traveler’s Prayer

True Jewish stories of our journeys through the world ...and our lives

On Thursday, February 6 at 7 p.m., The Braid returns with live Jewish theater presented online.

This time, join us for *Traveler’s Prayer*, a heartfelt and powerful new theatre show full of true Jewish travel stories about more than Jewish people’s journeys through the world. Against the backdrop of rising antisemitism, this collection of authentic voices captures the journey through the world of the Jewish people itself.

Audiences will explore heartfelt reflections of a Jewish writer seeing Hiroshima after visiting the sites in Israel of the Oct. 7 attacks. They’ll laugh as a young author journeys to a Michigan farm only to encounter a very unexpected crop growing there. They’ll feel the thrill as an activist escapes persecution in South Africa. They’ll be captivated as an encounter with an ancient Roman mikvah leads a “wandering Jew” to feelings of pride and connection even in times of fearsome antisemitism. Plus, many more true stories of Jewish travel, brought to you by The Braid – The Go-To Jewish Story Company.

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Visit the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org to register.

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Your Federation Presents

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE,

continued from page 4

that took place, but because it led to her increased engagement in the Jewish community. She stated: "I sit on this stage a proud Zionist and a proud Jew in a way I wouldn't have a year and a half ago."

The most powerful address at the GA was delivered by Bari Weiss, founder and editor of The Free Press and host of the podcast "Honestly." She began by asking: "When did you know? Looking back now that we are on the far side, I wonder, when did you realize that things had changed? When did you know that the things we had taken for granted were suddenly out of reach? That the norms that felt as certain as gravity had disappeared. That the institutions that had launched our grandparents in this country had turned hostile to our children. When did you notice what had once been steady was now shaky ground?"

Weiss then went through a long list of milestones – starting with the September 11, 2001 attacks through to recent events in Amsterdam, where Jewish soccer fans were hunted in the streets by organized gangs. "Perhaps at the time, each one of these events felt like a nightmare or an illness," Weiss said. "Something terrible to be endured until, in due time, it passed. Until things would go back to 'normal,' as they surely would. But those whose parents fled Tehran and Moscow and Beirut and Baghdad – they knew better. The Persians. The Russians. The Cubans. They never didn't know. And that is because they came from a world where to be Jewish required knowing. They understood tyranny, because they have lived it. And so, they have been alive to the threats against us and against liberty that left too many comfortable American Jews asleep."

Weiss went on to say that "The task for the rest of us in this moment is to learn this state of mind: the resilience, the vigilance, the mental strength, the courage, and the pride not just to survive but to thrive in this new world... What this moment requires is the truth. The hard truth. The uncomfortable truth. It means not backing down from telling it – to yourselves and to others. It means holding your leaders to account when they fail to deliver – and not just following them blindly out of convenience or convention. It means realizing that good ideas and good people don't just win on their own – they need others to defend them and to promote them and elevate them... If this moment that we are in feels deeply uncomfortable, that is because it is...but we have choice...we have agency and we have power and we have the blessing to live in America...We can accept what this moment requires and figure out how to forge a world anew."

The most challenging session I attended was titled "From Pain to Purpose: Advocating for 10/7 Sexual Violence Victims." I chose this session from a list of other important discussions in order to bear witness to the brutal acts of sexual violence committed by Hamas as documented in Sheryl Sandberg's film, *Screams Before Silence*. I knew I didn't have the fortitude to watch the film alone at home and was grateful for the opportunity to view the abbreviated screening this session provided while surrounded by others who felt the same way. The session's panel – Julie Platt (Chair, Board of Trustees, JFNA), Sheila Katz (CEO of National Council for Jewish Women), Ayelet Razin Bet Or (co-founder, Dinah Project 7/10), and Lee Yaron (author of *10/7: 100 Human Stories*) – described how sharing survivors' experiences honors their legacy, strengthens community resilience and emphasizes the need to speak out against sexual violence as a



Dara Kaufman, Arlene Schiff, and Amy Blumkin at the 2024 General Assembly

tool of terrorism. The panelists shared their deep commitment to breaking the silence around the use of sexual violence as a form of terrorism. If this resonates with you, I urge you to check out these websites: ncjw.org and dinahproject.org.

Dr. Mijal Bitton, scholar-in-residence of the Maimonides Fund, closed the GA with the message that possessing courage is the one characteristic that Jewish tradition holds as critical to not only survive, but to thrive. She noted that we have forgotten how hard it has been throughout most of history to be a Jew. She ended with a blessing: "In the days ahead may we have the courage to stand up for truth even when we stand apart. May we have the courage to know our values and to stake everything to defend them. May we meet whatever obstacles come our way in this remarkable journey of Jewish peoplehood with faith, with courage, with love for our mishpocha here, in Israel, and around the world. As God told Abraham, 'be fearless.'"

Heaviness and hope can coexist. It did at the GA and it will continue to do so in the days ahead. Attending the GA has further inspired me to do my best to be fearless, optimistic, and courageous and to use my power to maintain the flourishing Berkshire Jewish community we are blessed to be a part of.

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Celebrate Tu B'Shevat

Join us online for Nosh: Plant-Forward Recipes Celebrating Modern Jewish Cuisine, with Chef Micah Siva



On Thursday, February 13 at 7 p.m., in celebration of Tu B'Shevat, the new year of the trees, join Chef Micah Siva in a conversation about plant-forward and

eco-friendly Jewish recipes. Chef Micah will interact with participants doing a virtual food demo of a delicious Israeli street food called Sabich Grain Bowl with Crispy Chickpeas (with a Tu B'shevat connection!) Recipe will be provided.

This virtual program will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.

Food is a central part of Jewish culture, and those who don't connect with the foods of yesterday may feel as though a part of their heritage is missing. *Nosh* is the vegetarian cookbook for the modern Jewish kitchen, drawing inspiration from history through a 21st-century lens. With the rise in plant-based eating across the globe, *Nosh* is a guide for those looking to connect with and share their Judaism in a way that feels authentic in today's landscape.

The cookbook features a comprehensive, plant-forward recipe collection spanning from breakfast and brunch right through to delectable desserts. 80+ vegetarian recipes including Savory Pulled Mushroom and Tofu "Brisket," Chickpea and Olive Shakshuka, and more. Stunning food photography, kitchen glimpses, and enlightening sidebars on the history of Jewish culinary traditions.

Micah Siva is a trained chef, registered dietitian, recipe writer, and food photographer, specializing in modern Jewish cuisine. After graduating from the Natural Gourmet Institute of Health & Culinary Arts, she pursued a career in nutrition and later worked for global brands, media outlets, and publications in food media.

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Your Federation Presents

Federation Supports Campus Community Connection with Pure Jewish Joy

Thank you to all who came out on December 7 to support our campus-community connection with the Williams College Jewish Association. We celebrated Havdalah together and enjoyed an amazing concert by Ezekiel's Wheels Klezmer Band.



Jewish Federation of the Berkshires Launches "Hate Has No Home Here"

Every Berkshire resident has the right to live, work, love, and worship with freedom and dignity and without fear.

Antisemitism has been escalating across our community, our country, and the world. Historically, surges in antisemitism have served as a harbinger for broader waves of discrimination against marginalized communities of all kinds, often fueling a dangerous escalation of hate and violence in society. Antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem. We all share the responsibility to confront bigotry and hate of all forms directly.

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is partnering with local chambers, businesses, cultural organizations, houses of worship, and schools to amplify the message that "Hate Has No Home Here" through posters, social media, and lawn signs (in the spring.) In addition, there will be billboards across the Berkshires in December, January, and February with the expanded message "Antisemitism threatens us all – Hate Has No Home Here."

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **Partner with us:** We will provide, at no cost, 17"x 11" color posters announcing "Hate Has No Home Here" to hang in your business, office, house of worship, or school. Organizational partners will be promoted through our PR and social media.
- **Amplify the message on your website, in your e-blasts, and on social media:** Download the social media graphic from our website and include it in your eblasts, on your website, and post it on your Facebook and Instagram pages. (Social media messaging will be added soon.)
- **Be an ally:** Speak out when you hear antisemitic slurs and tropes or derogatory comments towards any marginalized community. Silence sends the message that such remarks are acceptable and normalizes them. Show your support to those impacted.
- **Advocate against antisemitism and all forms of hate:** Check out the resources and links on jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here to find educational resources and workplace guides to help make sure the hate has no home in your place of work, school, or community.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS (More partners coming soon)



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Social Media Graphic



Billboards December-February
Pittsfield, Lenox, Great Barrington, and North Adams

More info at: Jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here



Your Federation Presents

PJ Library Chanukah and the Mitzvot We Can Do at This Time of Year

By Molly Meador / Director of PJ Library

Twenty children and their grownups gathered to celebrate Chanukah with PJ Library on December 15 at Lenox Community Center. We played rounds of dreidel, danced with glow sticks, and ate jelly donuts. We read the book *The Eight Knights of Hanukkah* by Leslie Kimmelman and talked about the mitzvot we each can do at this time of year. Then we made our own Chanukah lamps with lights inside as another way to bring light to the world. We had a number of new families join us, and two of them signed up for PJ Library, as well!



JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, January 16 at 10:45 a.m. (virtual)
The Jazzmen: How Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Count Basie Transformed America with journalist and author, Larry Tye.

Thursday, January 30 at 7 p.m. (virtual)
Bernardine's Shanghai Salon: The Story of the Doyenne of Old China with memoirist and biographer Susan Blumberg-Kason.

Thursday, February 13 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Nosh: Plant-Forward Recipes Celebrating Modern Jewish Cuisine with chef and registered dietitian Micah Siva.

Thursday, March 27 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
When Women Ran Fifth Avenue: Glamour and Power at the Dawn of American Fashion with journalist and author Julie Satow.

Thursday, April 10 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
3...2...1...We're On the Air: A Network Producer's Inside Look at Sports, Television, Journalism, and Gender Equity with TV sports producer Robert Steinfeld.

Monday, April 28 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
The Hebrew Teacher: Three Novellas with author Maya Arad.

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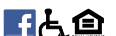
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Your Federation Presents

We Made a Radiant Night Shine That Much Brighter!

On December 29, we were so grateful to gather with more than 450 celebrants of all ages to enjoy the fifth night of Hanukkah at Hancock Shaker Village and share the light of our Berkshire Jewish community!

Thank you to Pittsfield's Mayor Peter Marchetti, State Senator Paul Mark, and State Representative Leigh Davis for standing in solidarity with our Jewish

community. Kudos, as always, to the members of the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective for providing a rousing selection of Hanukkah songs. And many thanks to visual artist Joe Wheaton, who created eye-popping Jewish-themed projection that filled the Shaker round barn with groovy visuals.



SHARE THE LIGHT

Community Havdalah and Concert

Featuring Jewish music from around the world with singer and musician **Laura Wetzler**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 7:00 P.M.
Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad St, Pittsfield

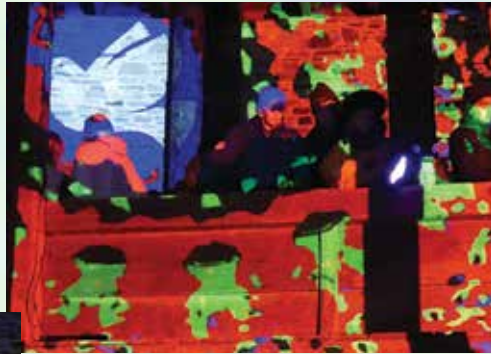
Join our Berkshire Rabbis and community members from across the county for an inspirational evening of light and song.

Co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation, Temple Anshe Amunim, Hevreh, Knesset Israel, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, the Berkshire Minyan and Berkshire Hills Hadassah

Funded in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation



Your Federation Presents



PHOTOS BY JULIA KAPLAN AND THE BJV STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

ISRAEL PARTNERS

One Story

Each year, a portion of the funds raised by your Federation is directed to The Jewish Agency for Israel, one of our overseas partners. Here is one story about your gift's impact on Jewish life.

A Gap Year Gaining Tech Experience in Israel

Daniel is taking part in the Aardvark Israel-Tech Track gap-year program, living like a local in Israel, learning new skills, and gaining meaningful life and professional experience



Daniel (left) in Israel with other Aardvark participants

When Daniel, 18, from the suburbs of Washington, D.C., arrived in Israel in the fall of 2024, it was only his second time visiting the Jewish State – and this time it would be for nearly a year. His first time in Israel was in the spring, and he loved it so much that when he decided to take a year off before starting at Case Western Reserve University, he opted to spend that time in Israel through Aardvark Israel's gap program.

Aardvark Israel operates in conjunction with Masa Israel Journey (which was jointly founded by The Jewish Agency and the Government of Israel). Aardvark's mission is to bring together a diverse group of students from all over the world for a meaningful, life-changing gap year or semester in Israel that strengthens participants' Jewish identity, deepens their commitment to Israel and fosters their personal growth.

"What appealed to me about Aardvark was its emphasis on community and getting to spend time in both Jerusalem, where I am for the fall, and Tel Aviv, where I'll live next semester," explained Daniel. "Plus, I had choices as far as what track I could be part of, and for me, I knew I wanted to do the Tech Track, as I already had a bit of a background in computers."

As a participant in the Tech Track, Daniel is learning to develop a strong foundation in technology alongside peers, learning website-building, and full-stack coding, and having the opportunity to network with leaders in the field and intern at an innovative startup.

"Every two weeks, we have a day off from the coding course to go to Tel Aviv or somewhere else to do a 'tech tour' at a company that could potentially be a place we could intern at next semester or also work at in the future, which is really cool," shared Daniel. "For me, it's great that I'll have a chance to get professional experience on my resume before going to college and I'm also getting more life experience through Aardvark."

Besides living like a local while being immersed in tech-related courses and completing an internship, Daniel is also taking part in Hebrew classes and going on field trips throughout the country while bonding with fellow participants.

"The people I've met through Aardvark are amazing and the staff here have been fantastic at helping us with whatever we need and offering support, especially during the week of October 7, 2024, on the first anniversary of the attacks, when we took a trip down to Gaza Envelope. It was a heavy but worthwhile experience, and there was lots of time for discussion and reflection," Daniel said. "For me, the October 7 attacks actually strengthened my desire to go to Israel for a gap year and I feel it's more meaningful to be here now when the country is recovering."

LOCAL NEWS

Báladi Brings a True Taste of Israel to the Berkshires

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

I was leaving Báladi, the weekend Israeli brunch spot at the Apple Tree Inn in Lenox, my belly full with just about the best sabich sandwich I've ever eaten, when I ran into a friend from the community in the parking lot. She told me she was the first of the Berkshire Hills Hadassah members to arrive for the group's luncheon.

"So, I guess the word is out," I said.

"Oh, yes," she answered with a smile.

And a good thing that is. Báladi is not only serving the first really good and authentic Israeli breakfast in the Berkshires, but it affords diners the opportunity to enjoy breathtaking views from one of the iconic dining spaces in the region, the Apple Tree's Round Room. Open since October, Báladi Handcrafted Mediterranean Specialties is the brainchild of married Israeli couple Hagai Avrahami, who helms the kitchen, and Adi Talby, hostess with the most-est.



"Báladi" is an Arabic work that translates, more or less, as "of my land." Hagai explains that it captures his approach to ingredients – "sustainable, local, connected to the earth." Everything on the brunch menu is homemade – including pickles, jams, and the delicious frena bread baked onsite. (Hagai also prepares a more conventional American menu for the Ostrich Room, the cozy lounge at the Apple Tree that has live music Wednesdays through Saturdays, onto which he has added Mediterranean touches like the Lebanese lamb-stuffed pita dish arayes.)



Adi Talby and Hagai Avrahami, owners of Báladi

Fresh vegetables and herbs are central to Israeli cuisine, and their preparation is what Hagai characterizes as his "comfort zone" – he grew up in a "religious vegetarian" settlement outside Jerusalem, where connection to nature and humane treatment of animals was part of the founders' ethos. He studied first at the now shuttered cooking school of Hadassah College in Jerusalem and with chef Yossi Bendayan, whose approach was to teach students techniques and then provide them with ingredients to see what they might come up with. That, remembers Hagai, was a way "to grow chefs."

As Hagai embarked on a culinary career, he was given the advice to "go first to a place you like least, otherwise you might get caught in a system and never leave." His entry-level position was as a baker at a patisserie, which he hadn't the patience for – "baking is chemistry, cooking is magic," he says. Adds Adi: "Hagai is not a measurement guy." But he absorbed the techniques and went on to cook at Rama's Kitchen in Nataf (a scenic spot in the hills outside Jerusalem), as head chef for a mini-chain of high-volume breakfast restaurants, and as a vegetarian caterer for large events, as well as operating his own cooking school for several years. As for the food scene in Israel, he calls it "a melting pot in a new country with old inspirations" that is still evolving. Israeli chefs, he says, are big on novelty and fusion that doesn't follow the rules – think "sushi with falafel" – but are moving toward a cuisine that is more "mature, refined, and elegant."

Adi was raised in Kfar Masaryk, a kibbutz located between Haifa and Acre. She describes a decade living what sounds like an adventurous bohemian life that led to stops in San Francisco and New York City. She and Hagai met when she returned to Israel, and they lived together in the town of Abu Gosh, one of the oldest habited sites in Israel that has been one of the most successful municipalities inhabited by both Jews and Muslims. Adi and Hagai describe their life there as a happy one, but their desire to work together led them to explore opportunities outside of Israel. "Israel is a melting pot," Hagai says,

"but it can also be a pressure cooker."

They first explored the idea of opening a restaurant in Greece, but were alerted to opportunities in the Berkshires by their friend Ronni Monsky of Hillsdale. Moving here in 2023, they connected with Rafi Bildner of Hilltown Hot Pies (which has operated as a pop-up in Egremont, with a brick and mortar site scheduled to open in summer 2025), son of Rob Bildner and Elisa Spungen-Bildner, co-authors of *The Berkshire Farm Table Cookbook* and stalwarts for this Federation. They took over the kitchen for the Apple Tree Inn, which was purchased by Claire Collyer in the spring of 2024, and at Báladi introduced a brunch menu that includes Israeli favorites like shakshuka, burekas, sabich, and schnitzel, as well as an array of sides and salads.

Though Adi and Hagai have been in the Berkshires for less than a year, they have made good friends – and they are making more of them each weekend. Adi makes everyone feel welcome and attended to, and Hagai makes sure to step out into the dining room "to communicate with the people who are our guests, who may have taken three hours out of their day to get here and eat here." Summer plans are still evolving, but the space should be glorious in the warmer weather when the patio opens – not to mention busier.

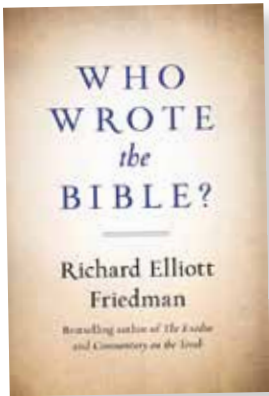
So, yes, the word is out, but now is still a time to enjoy Báladi while it is still primarily a destination for us local Chaim ben Yankels. Adi and Hagai are considering what they want to do going forward – perhaps cooking classes and Jewish holiday meals (they have already made sufganiyot for Chanukah and have a cholent on the menu on Saturdays) – but for right now, says Adi, they are content "doing one thing at a time."

Báladi Handcrafted Mediterranean Specialties operates on Saturdays and Sundays at the Apple Tree Inn (appletreeinnlenox.com), 10 Richmond Mountain Road in Lenox.



LOCAL NEWS

Congregation Ahavath Sholom Hosts Virtual Book Group on Richard Elliott Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?*



Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington is excited to announce a virtual book group centered on the contemporary classic, *Who Wrote the Bible?* by Richard Elliott Friedman. The book group, facilitated by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin, will offer an intellectual yet accessible exploration into the authorship of the Old Testament.

The book, described by the New York Times Book Review as "thought-provoking" and "perceptive," delves deeply into the history of the Bible with the keen investigative spirit of a detective novel. *Who Wrote the Bible?* is an illuminating analysis by Richard Elliott Friedman, author of *Commentary on the Torah*, that explores how the Old Testament came to be, drawing on historical and scholarly perspectives that continue to shape religious discourse today.

Rabbi Jennifer Rudin, the interim part-time rabbi at Congregation Ahavath Sholom, will guide the group through the text, providing insightful context and fostering rich discussion on the implications of Friedman's work. The book group is open to all, regardless of background or familiarity with the text.

"We're excited to offer this opportunity for learning and reflection," said Rabbi Rudin. "*Who Wrote the Bible?* challenges our assumptions and provides a deeper understanding of the Bible, its origins, and its lasting impact on religious thought. Whether you're a long-time reader of the Bible or just beginning to explore its complexities, this group will be a stimulating and enlightening experience."

Participants can expect a thoughtful, interactive environment, where everyone's perspective is valued, and learning is enhanced through group discussion.

To learn more or to sign up for the group, please contact Rabbi Jennifer Rudin at rabbirudin@ahavathsholom@gmail.com.

Paid advertisements do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires or its members.

Honoring Tu B'Shevat at KI: "Beyond Plastics," with Jenny Gitlitz



Jenny Gitlitz

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, February 9 beginning at 10 a.m., Knesset Israel member Jenny Gitlitz will discuss where we are as a nation in regard to environmentalism, recycling, and green building today. This presentation in honor of Tu B'Shevat will include a bagel brunch.

Jenny Gitlitz is the director of Solutions to Plastic Pollution at Beyond Plastics. Beyond Plastics is a nationwide project based at Bennington College with a mission to end plastic pollution. Jenny helps activists and policymakers draft and advance legislation to reduce plastic production, consumption, and pollution; to eliminate toxic chemicals from plastic packaging; and to expose the false solution of "chemical recycling."

An alumna of University of California-Berkeley's Energy and Resources Group and a recipient of the Switzer environmental fellowship, Jenny has spent more than 30 years developing programs and conducting research, analysis, and legislative advocacy around recycling and green building.

Please pre-register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp

Displaced Persons Book Discussion Sessions via Zoom



On Sunday, May 4, Knesset Israel in Pittsfield will host award-winning author, Joan Leegant, whose stunningly timely short story collection, *Displaced Persons*, shines a light on American Jewish life and Israel, especially relevant in these times. *Displaced Persons* has won the national New American Fiction Prize. The Chicago Review of Books described the collection as: "Deliciously complex

character-driven stories that explore exile, diaspora, parenthood, and marriage, often with a sharp sense of humor and an emotional wallop."

In advance of the author's visit, Rabbi Pam Wax will host two Zoom-only sessions to discuss stories in the collection:

On Wednesday, February 5, from 7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m., discuss the stories "Displaced Persons," "Remittances," and "The Book of Splendor."

On Wednesday, April 2, from 7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m., discuss the stories "The Baghdadi," "The Innocent," and "Roots."

To register and get the Zoom link for either or both sessions, go to knesetisrael.org/rsvp

This American Jewish Life A 4-session mini-course at KI with Dr. Hal M. Lewis

On the Wednesdays of February 26 and March 5, 19, & 26 from 10:45 a.m. to noon, Dr. Hal Lewis will teach a four-part mini-course entitled "This American Jewish Life."



Key trends and patterns that have informed American Jewish life since the late 19th century will be explored. Particular focus will be given to developments affecting American Jews since the turn of the 21st century, including changes in affiliation, philanthropy, gender issues, relationship with Israel and related matters.

Dr. Hal Lewis is the Principal Consultant at Leadership for Impact LLC, a leadership-consulting firm serving the needs of nonprofit organizations. He served for a decade as the president and CEO of Spertus Institute in Chicago, where he continues as professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies. He has been visiting professor at universities around the world and has served as a member of the on-call faculty of the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, NC. Free for members of Knesset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim; \$50 course fee for others.

Please pre-register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp

Winter Happenings at KI

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel invites community members to its winter programs.

Knesset Israel Community Shabbatot

Join KI for their community Shabbat service and dinner on Friday, January 24. The musical, family-friendly "Shirei Shabbat" service begins at 5:45 p.m. and is followed by a kosher dinner at 6:45 p.m. Snow date is January 31.

Adults \$25, Under 18 free. Registration necessary for dinner at knesetisrael.org/rsvp.

Yiddish, Anyone?

Do you know a *bissel* Yiddish? If you'd like to meet up with others to hone your Yiddish skills, or to share some Yiddish songs and jokes, contact Rabbi Pam Wax at Knesset Israel, rabbipwax@knesetisrael.org. They will start a group if there is enough interest.

Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.



As my parents planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who come after me. – Talmud

Thank you to these individuals who through their gift to the Legacy Circle will ensure that the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thrives long into the future. May your name be a Blessing, and may the example you set inspire others to create their own Jewish Legacy.

- Anonymous (10)
- Ed Abrahams
- Norman Avnet*
- Barbara Bashevkin*
- Robert Bashevkin*
- Linda J. L. Becker
- Robert Berend*
- Shelley Berend
- Helene Berke
- Lawrence Berke*
- Lee & Sydelle Blatt
- Betty Braun*
- Cipora Brown
- Barbara Cohen
- Mark Cohen*
- Mimi Cohen
- C. Jeffrey & Judith Cook
- Gerry & Lynn Denmark

- Jonathan & Lara Denmark
- Sheila K. Donath
- Melva Eidelberg
- Monroe England,* in memory of Monroe B. & Isabel England
- Dr. Armand V. Feigenbaum*
- Dr. Donald S. Feigenbaum*
- Steven Feiner
- Diana & Stanley* Feld
- Lynn & William* Foggle
- Larry Frankel & Elisa Schindler Frankel
- Elaine Friedman
- Eiran Gazit

- Jeffrey Goldwasser & Jonquil Wolfson
- Jordan & Laura Green
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- Howard* & Nancy* Kaufman
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- Sarah Klein
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- Andrew S. Levine*
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- Amy Lindner-Lesser
- Allan and Nan Lipton
- Helen Maislen*
- Ellen Masters
- Stuart Masters
- Roger & Natalie Matus
- Jeffrey May* & Kara Thornton
- Bob & Harriett Miller
- Estelle Miller
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- Wendy Robbins
- Ken* & Fran* Rubenstein
- Stella Schecter*
- Arlene D. Schiff

- Gary Schiff
- Stephen & Deborah Schreier
- Ellen Schwartzberg*
- Martin Silver*
- Sylvia Silverberg, in memory of Jerome Silverberg
- Richard A. Simons & Marcie Greenfield Simons
- Mark & Elisa Snowise
- Harold Sparr*
- Richard & Alyson Slutzky
- Laurie Sukel
- Rita & Sol Toscher Memorial Fund
- Lisa Fletcher-Udel

- Edward Udel
- Michael & Joan Ury
- Mark & Judy Usow
- Henry* & Beate* Voremberg
- Alexandra Warshaw
- Florence Wineberg*
- Rabbi Deborah Zecher & Rabbi Dennis Ross
- *Of blessed memory



LOCAL NEWS

Seder – Celebrate the Seasons on Tu BiShvat

NORTH ADAMS – On Sunday, February 9 at 2 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites all to come celebrate the natural world with a musical journey through the four seasons, following the progression of the Tu BiShvat Seder from winter to spring to summer to fall.

The CBI choir and instrumentalists will perform music spanning from the medieval period to the 21st century, expressing the beauty of nature and the human emotions that we experience during each season. Composers who will be featured include Clément Janequin, Antonio Vivaldi, Paul Hindemith, Samuel Barber, and Naomi Shemer. All are welcome to this free concert!

RSVP at <https://cbiberkshires.com/event/tu-bishvat-concert-2025/>

CBI is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

Mitzvah Opportunity – Make a Meal for the Hungry

BENNINGTON, VT – On Sunday, February 2 at 2 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites families to join together at the Second Congregational Church, 115 Hillside Street in Bennington. Prepare a meal for the many who rely on Bennington’s weekly community dinner and learn about the mitzvah of providing for those in need.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact learning@cbiberkshires.com.

Special Shabbats this Winter at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – This winter, Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires continues to offer ways to connect through Shabbat celebrations. CBI is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services on Friday, February 14 at 7 p.m.

All are welcome to celebrate Shabbat together with prayer, song, poetry, and heart. The CBI band and choir bring beautiful harmonies to Kabbalat Shabbat.

Regular Shabbat Morning Services continue on the Saturdays of January 25, February 8, and February 22 at 9:30 a.m.

First Friday Shabbat Zoom Gathering on Friday, February 7 at 7:30 p.m. around the Virtual Shabbat Table. Gather together to share community and conversation online and celebrate the Jewish traditions of Shabbat, light the candles, and bless the wine and challah. Stay connected with CBI friends and neighbors, or meet new ones, as you enjoy the joys of fellowship and comfort of camaraderie. Zoom link will be sent after you RSVP.

RSVP for all services and programs at cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events

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Communities of Meaning: Part 2 – A Lunchtime Series Continues

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Wednesdays at noon through February 12 (except January 29), Hevreh of Southern Berkshires continues its exploration of *Communities of Meaning: Conversations on Modern Jewish Life Inspired by Rabbi Larry Hoffman*.

At each Lunch & Learn taught by Rabbi Jodie Gordon, participants read 1-2 essays that give food for thought as big questions are addressed:

- How, where, and why people pray
 - What Jewish life looks like today, and what lies ahead
 - How Jews engage with people of other faiths
 - How faith can shape action and commitment
- For more info, visit hevreh.org.

Much to Do at Hevreh This Winter

Movies, classes, Shabbat celebrations, and more

GREAT BARRINGTON – Temperatures may be low in the Berkshires, but Hevreh of Southern Berkshire extends a warm welcome to all who would like to join them for a rich lineup of events.

Learner’s Minyan: Shabbat Mornings in Winter 2025 - Saturdays at 10 a.m. on January 25, February 8, and March 22. Want to learn more about the Shabbat service? What the different parts of the service and key prayers are? When to stand and when to sit, and more? Join Rabbi Gordon for a journey through the morning prayers with explanations along the way, and lots of opportunity for questions.

Community Shabbat Dinners – Friday, January 31 and February 28 at 6 p.m. Join Hevreh for a Community Shabbat dinner, partially sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. The service will be led by Rabbi Gordon and the Religious School students.

Movie Night: Keeping the Faith – Thursday, February 13 at 7 p.m. A grown-up movie night at Hevreh screening the romantic comedy *Keeping the Faith* (PG-13). This event is adults only.

Tisch Shabbat at Hevreh: “Memories from Around Our Family Tables”

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, February 14 at 6 p.m., join Hevreh of Southern Berkshire around the table for an extra special Shabbat of storytelling and song. “Tisch” means table in Yiddish, and this Shabbat will focus on the unique joy of sharing a table with friends and family. The service will look a little different, focusing on stories and songs that elevate the love that emerges from around the dinner table.

Can you tell Hevreh a story? They are looking for people of all ages to share their memories about food and family for this Tisch Shabbat. All submissions (original, or if you have a favorite piece on this theme to suggest) are welcome. Theme: “Memories from Around Our Family Table.” Entries should be no more than a page; a paragraph or two is also fine!

Please email it to Rabbi Gordon (rgordon@hevreh.org) by February 8.

*When you send in your story, please indicate if you would like to read it aloud at the Tisch Shabbat, or if you prefer for someone else to read it.

Create a Jewish Legacy Campaign
Please remember the Jewish Community in your will.

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Spreading the Light



Kimball Farms residents in Lenox enjoyed a special Kabbalat Shabbat on December 20 thanks to dedicated Federation volunteers, Stuart and Ellen Masters. Yasher koach and thank you for the light you bring to this community, Stu and Ellen!

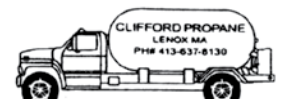
Another Pajama Drive Success!



In time for the holidays, our PJ Library and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires collected more than 300 new pairs of pajama sets and bottoms to help Berkshire kids keep warm this winter! We thank everyone for their generous donations to this vital community program for the Berkshire Office of the Massachusetts Department of Children & Families.

We’d also like to give a special shout-out to Carr Hardware in Lenox and Great Barrington and Where’d You Get That in Williamstown for providing donation bins at their locations.





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Fax (413) 637-4557

Jeff Clifford



Kosher Meals to Go—Meals on Wheels

ALL ARE WELCOME: Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60; \$7 for all others.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED: Call the Federation's kitchen at (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of lunch to reserve a meal for pickup and to arrange delivery.

What's for Lunch?

(GF) Gluten-Free entree • (DF) Dairy-Free entree

JANUARY

MONDAY, JANUARY 20

Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

Noon, Lunch...Mushroom, pepper, and onion frittata (GF), potatoes au gratin, cauliflower, salad, whole wheat bread, and tapioca pudding.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

Noon, Lunch...Shanghai salmon (GF)(DF), Asian blend vegetables, brown rice, miso soup, Chinese noodles, and Mandarin oranges.

MONDAY, JANUARY 27

Noon, Lunch...Ratatouille (GF)(DF), rice pilaf, salad, sour-dough bread, and tropical fruit salad.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

Noon, Lunch...Pierogis with mushrooms and onions. stewed tomatoes, vegetable bean soup, hearty white bread, and carrot cake.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

Noon, Lunch...Portuguese chicken with peppers and olives (GF)(DF), egg noodles, California blend vegetables, salad, multi-grain bread, and apricots.

FEBRUARY

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), hash browns, peas and carrots, salad, white bread, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable tofu stir-fry (GF)(DF), brown rice noodles, consommé soup, Naan bread, and almond cookies.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Noon, Lunch...Pasta primavera, broccoli, salad, garlic bread, and brownie.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Noon, Lunch...Turkey chili (GF)(DF), meadow blend vegetables, white rice, whole wheat bread, and peaches.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Noon, Lunch...Butternut squash risotto, roasted Brussels sprouts, borscht soup, pumpernickel bread, and bread pudding.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Noon, Lunch...Pomegranate glazed chicken (GF)(DF), green beans, couscous with apricots and almonds, salad, challah, and date and nut truffle.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Closed for Presidents' Day

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Noon, Lunch...Cheese pizza, zucchini and yellow squash, minestrone soup, and fudge brownie.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Turkey and wild rice stew (GF)(DF), asparagus, salad, roll, and parve cookie.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Baked chicken (GF)(DF), corn, quinoa, tomato cabbage soup, whole wheat bread, and Mandarin oranges.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Noon, Lunch...Ground beef tacos (DF), sautéed peppers and onions, Spanish rice, salsa, salad, flour tortillas, and pineapple.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Noon, Lunch...Roasted cod with tomato relish (GF)(DF), meadow blend vegetables, basmati rice, salad, sour-dough bread, and ambrosia.

MARCH

MONDAY, MARCH 3

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), mashed potatoes, broccoli, salad, white bread, and apricots.

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

Noon, Lunch...Macaroni and cheese, Italian green beans, vegetable soup, corn bread, and baklava.

Knesset Israel – 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield



ONGOING MINYANS

Saturday, 9:30 a.m.
 Sunday, 8:45 a.m.
 Tuesday, 7 p.m. Zoom only
 Thursday, 7 p.m., Zoom only
 Friday, 5:45 p.m.

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Friday, January 24 4:38 p.m.
 Friday, January 31 4:47 p.m.
 Friday, February 7 4:52 p.m.
 Friday, February 14 5:05 p.m.
 Friday, February 21 5:14 p.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Larry Frankel on his 80th birthday

Jacob Lezberg on receiving his Master of Science Degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering with a concentration in Microelectronics and Advanced Semiconductors from Purdue University Graduate School. Jacob is a senior software engineer at General Dynamics. He is the son of **Jenny Greenfeld and Bob Lezberg** and the grandson of **Barbara Greenfeld**

Rabbi Eric and Laura Gurvis on the birth of their grandson, **Adam Gurvis Weinberg**

Deborah and Steve Schreier on the birth of the grandson, **Dylan Lawrence Messinger**

Susan and Judd Shoal on their 50th wedding anniversary

Dan Blitzler on the birth of his granddaughter, **Sophie**

Beth Robbins on her son **Ari's** engagement to **Jordan Cormier**

Jeannie Altshuler on the engagement of her daughter, **Rebecca**

Bette and Phil Gladstone on their 60th wedding anniversary

Allison Wucher and Ari Goldstien on the birth of their daughter, **Leonora Goldstein**

Alexa and Bill Bunnell on the birth of their daughter, **Sadie Bunnell**

Joanna Barlow and Ben Strassfeld on the birth of their son, **Elijah Strassfeld**

Barry and Robin Kriesberg on the birth of their granddaughter, **Cleo**

Dave Halley and Heidi Katz on their recent marriage

Diane Pearlman on her special birthday

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



KOSHER MEALS ON WHEELS:

Meals are available for delivery to qualified individuals to help extend their home independence and health. There is no income requirement, just a simple assessment through Elder Services will get your meal deliveries started, if you qualify.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Jill Goldstein at (413) 442-4360, Ext 17, j.goldstein@jfswm.org.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Meals-on-wheels drivers are always appreciated. Contact Heidi Katz, (413) 442-4360, ext. 10, federation@jewishberkshires.org to inquire.

Meals and programs are made possible by the generous support of our community. The kosher lunch and meals on wheels program is in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire county.

OBITUARIES

Norman Michaels, 86, family patriarch, leader in the Jewish community

BOCA RATON, FL – Norman Michaels, 86, of Boca Raton and formerly Stockbridge, passed away on Tuesday, December 17, 2024.

Born May 20, 1938, Norman earned his accounting degree from The City College of New York. He was a member of Federal Lodge #6, a former chair of the Berkshire Opera Company, and a leader within Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. As the patriarch, he was the center of his family's world. His legacy will live on through his family and a lifetime of memories.

Norman is survived by his loving wife of 64 years, Wilma; children, Sheri Michaels, Stephanie and James Heatter; grandchildren, Amy Schneiderman, Jacqueline and Cody Yersin, and Eric Heatter; and extended family members.

Funeral services were held on Sunday, December 22 at Gutterman and Musicant Jewish Funeral Directors, Hackensack, NJ. A committal service followed at Beth David Cemetery, Elmont, NY.

Suzanne Gordon Bach, engaged in civic life, active in arts, volunteer

LENOX – Suzanne Gordon Bach passed away on Thursday, November 21, 2024. A long-time resident of Hancock and Williamstown, she was born in 1929 in Antwerp, Belgium, to Jacob and Eveline (Hamber) Gordon, where she lived until age eleven. After the outbreak of WWII, she fled with her immediate family in 1941, first to Paris, then Spain, crossing the Atlantic aboard the *Magallenes* to Havana, Cuba, finally arriving in New York City on December 25, 1941. After settling in NY, she graduated from Queens College

in 1951 with a BA in French Literature, and attended graduate school at University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Suzanne married her adoring husband Robert G. Bach in NYC in 1952. After receiving her teaching certificate, they moved to Fresh Meadows, Queens, where their first two children were born, Claudia and Raymond. Their third child, Jonathan, was born after they moved to Old Bethpage, and they later lived in Garden City and Great Neck, NY. She taught French, Spanish, and German at the grade school level and was active in the Women's Strike for Peace against the Vietnam War. She subsequently went to work for Tribal Arts Gallery, started by her brother, Albert Gordon, and directed its uptown Manhattan gallery on 53rd Street.

The family purchased a farm in Hancock in the early 1960s where they spent summer and winter vacations, moving there full-time in 1980, and subsequently to Williamstown in the 1990s. The Bachs were engaged in civic life, and Suzanne was active in the arts, including serving as the Hancock and later Williamstown representative to the Berkshire Arts Council, as a museum associate and guest curator of an exhibit on African masks at the Williams College Museum of Art, and as a long-time docent and volunteer at the Clark Art Institute.

She was also a longtime member of the Berkshire International Club, serving a term as president and for many years as editor of the newsletter. She moved with her husband to Kimball Farms in 2009, where she led and expanded the Art in the Halls program and returned to her hobby of making jewelry.

An avid and adventurous traveler and a collector

of African art, her collection of books on African art and culture is now held by Williams College. She enjoyed the cultural offerings of the Berkshires to their fullest. She was an ardent follower of international and national news.

Suzanne was a keenly curious and intelligent woman with a deep appreciation for the creative arts. Her family and many close friends will fondly remember her compassion and generosity.

Suzanne was predeceased by her husband Robert, who died in 2015. She leaves a daughter, Claudia Bach of Seattle; two sons, Raymond Bach and wife, Sylvie, of Strasbourg, France, and Jonathan Bach and wife, Yukiko Koga, of NYC; five grandchildren, Amanda and Gregory Smart, and Julian, Matthew, and Claire Bach; five great-grandchildren, Robert, Louis, Michael, Noah, and Alida, and many devoted friends. Memorial contributions may be made to the National Public Radio station of your choice.

Shlomo Silman, Ph.D., 91, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather

DALTON – Shlomo Silman, Ph.D., 91, passed away peacefully overnight on Sunday, November 24, 2024.

Dr. Silman was the Presidential Professor at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (CUNY). At the Graduate Center of CUNY, he was a faculty member within the AuD Program and within the Ph.D. Program in Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences.

He received his BA in History and Basic Sciences from Hebrew University, Jerusalem, MS in Audiology from Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, and Ph.D. from New York University.

With others, Dr. Silman developed the EarPopper, a patented device for treating middle ear air pressure issues.

He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

He is survived by his wife Carol A. Silverman, PhD, MPH; children Avi Yossi, Benny, and Menashe; grandchildren Adi Buskila, Sara Salman Levi, Efraim, Hananael, Izik, Lilah Amit, Nahoom, Raveed, Yael, and Yahav Silman and their children.

A private funeral and burial was held on Wednesday, November 27, in NJ.

Contributions in Shlomo's memory may be made to Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Barbara Leah Liebert, 94, known for her love of and devotion to family and friends

LENOX – Barbara Leah Liebert, 94, known as Bobbie to her many friends, passed away on Friday, December 27, 2024.

Born Barbara Marin on November 7, 1930, to Gertrude and Al Marin, she was the older sister of Jill (Marin) Fiering and Jon Marin. Bobbie was raised in Cedarhurst, NY. She attended Elizabeth Irwin High School in Manhattan and Syracuse University, where she met her future husband, Gerald Liebert. They married on October 8, 1950. Gerald passed away in 2006. Barbara and Gerald raised their three children in Woodmere, NY. She was the office manager for a medical practice in Hewlett, NY for more than 10 years and an active member of the PTA. Bobbie grew up spending summers at her family's home in Ocean Beach, Fire Island, NY, and later spent much time with her husband and children at their cabin in the Catskills.

In 1975, Barbara and Gerald began their second careers as innkeepers.

They spent 5 years in Chittenden, VT at the Tulip Tree Inn, and more than 30 years at the Windflower Inn in Great Barrington, which they ran with their daughter Claudia Ryan and son-in-law John Ryan.

Barbara was known for her love of and devotion to family and friends. She brought her cooking skills and the joy of meeting new friends into her life as an innkeeper. She loved to travel with her family, friends, and later with her grandchildren. She was interested in history as well as current events and committed to numerous social justice causes. She continued to take current events classes into her nineties. She loved the performing arts and regularly attended Tanglewood and Jacob's Pillow. Bobbie was devoted to her Jewish heritage and culture, becoming a member of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire and celebrating her bat mitzvah at age 73.

Barbara spent many winters in Delray Beach, FL, living there full time for several years, later residing at Kimball Farms to be closer to her family.

Barbara is survived by her three children, William Scott Liebert, Claudia Ryan, and Daniel Liebert; four grandchildren, Jessica, Michael, Rachael, and Sam; great-grandson, Noah; son-in-law John Ryan; and daughter-in-law Pamela Heacock.

A memorial service will be scheduled at a future date. Donations may be made to your local food bank or other charity of your choice.

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CULTURE & ARTS

Hill of Secrets: A Novel of Dilemmas and Deceptions Set in Los Alamos



Hill of Secrets is Galina Vromen's first novel, set in Los Alamos, New Mexico, during the Manhattan Project that led to the development of the first two atomic bombs. Nevertheless, says Vromen, "the book is not really about the development of atomic weapons. It's about relationships and secrecy and how those get amplified in a place that is also itself secret. Los Alamos is, in a way, a metaphor – a place that echoes what is going on with the people there."

The plot of *Hill of Secrets* unfolds downstream of the historical events portrayed in the hugely popular 2023 film *Oppenheimer*, which focused on the life and work of the enigmatic physicist tapped as director of the Los Alamos Laboratory. The story is told through the points of view of four characters: Christine Sharp,

the wife of a chemist who suspended her own ambitions – first, the pursuit of a science degree, and then a position as an art dealer in New York – to support her husband's career; Sarah and Gertie Koppel, the wife and teenaged daughter of Kurt, another scientist, who have all escaped Germany while family members who could not leave face an uncertain fate; and Jimmy Campbell, a young corporal with scientific skills involved in a budding romance with Gertie.

All find themselves in the makeshift desert town of Los Alamos – in the middle of nowhere but also the epicenter of scientific inquiry and military ambition that will change the arc of human history. In Vromen's novel, the human element is brought to the fore. "The book is more about the dilemmas of the people who are the unsung heroes of the families that just had to endure and deal with the situation," says the author.

The magnitude of the project, conducted behind a veil of secrecy, overhangs the personal entanglements of these characters. Vromen said she became interested in the dramatic possibilities of the scenario after a friend of hers, a teacher at her alma mater of Hampshire College in Amherst, introduced her to a student who had "done a really good paper on the wives of scientists at Los Alamos and what they knew and what they didn't know during the war. I asked him what he concluded. His conclusion was that they knew and didn't know. It was like they knew, but without knowing the specifics. They sensed what was going on. I thought that that was an amazing analogy for a lot of what happens in families. I thought that it would be intriguing to do something around that topic of secrecy, which I find really interesting, but to put it in Los Alamos. The novel is about what it was like to deal with the issue of secrecy in families in the most secret place in the United States in the 20th century."

Vromen adds that her interest was further whetted by her own experiences in her teens and twenties "reading about what was going on in the Middle East concerning Iran and Israel and their nuclear capabilities and all that." Ultimately, however, the essence of the book is "the issue of secrets. It really fascinates me because I think that our attitude towards divulging things has changed in my lifetime from a time when people referred to cancer as 'the Big C' and people who were gay were in the closet. So, to my mind, a little bit has gone to the other extreme, where sometimes there's just too much information. I'm fascinated by the current belief that letting it all out is always a good thing. I think I wanted to challenge that."

Los Alamos proved to be a rich backdrop for the story to unfold. "It was such a mixture of the elite of America in terms of the best of the best of physics departments around the country," says Vromen. "There were a lot of refugees there, Jewish refugees from Europe. There were the military folks, the engineering detachment, and the WACs, the Women's Army Corps. They were all there, the elite scientists and the people who did the grunt work. I wanted to give a taste of the variety of types of people that were there. It was natural for me to have one of the families be a Jewish refugee family."

Vromen had a distinguished career as a journalist for Reuters, after which she went to work for the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. She started as the foundation's director of special projects, and after her son graduated from high school in 2008, she decided she wanted to move back to Israel, where she had previously lived. She stayed with the Grinspoon Foundation to bring PJ Library to Israel, working with the Ministry of Education to introduce books through the classroom that students would be able to take home. She also led a parallel program that provided books to Israeli Arab schoolchildren in Arabic.

Those impressive accomplishments didn't leave her much time to work on her novel, which she says has been germinating for the better part of 20 years. When she retired, she worked to finish *Hill of Secrets*, wrapping up at around the same time the movie *Oppenheimer* was released. "I thought, 'is this going to help or is this going to harm the book's potential,'" she says. "When I saw the movie, I relaxed because the book really does not cover the same things, it compliments them. *Oppenheimer* did not focus on the domestic or what women were up to. It began providing a little bit of romance about Oppenheimer himself, but it really did not get into what daily life was really like there. I provided a side that really is not in the movie." Vromen says she visited Los Alamos, now a historic site, and her evocations of the vast New Mexico desert convey a palpable feeling of how remote and lonely a place it was.



Galina Vromen

"But at the same time," says Vromen, "I stopped having to explain what Los Alamos was, because until then, when I would say I was writing a book about Los Alamos, most people thought I was talking about someplace in Texas. The Oppenheimer movie raised an interest and consciousness about that period. I wanted people to think about the issues of dropping the bomb, but I wanted to do it in a way that didn't provide a lot of answers to the moral issues and also do it in a user-friendly way. I think the book provides a gateway to a discussion. And I think as the 80th anniversary of the bombing comes up in the next year, I think there will be a lot of reevaluation of the why and wherefores of that whole action. And I think this contributes to that discussion in a quiet way."

Jewish Books

Galina also offered some ideas about books by Jewish authors: "I recently enjoyed *The Ice Cream Queen of Orchard Street* by Susan Jane Gilman (2014), a well written, light, fun read about a colorful character who starts a successful ice cream business. Another good fiction read is *Adam Unrehearsed* by Don Futterman (2023), a touching and funny coming of age story of a New York City teen in the 1970s that is very insightful on relations between Blacks and Jews."

Dr. Steve Recommends...

A new BJV column about Jewish books and authors

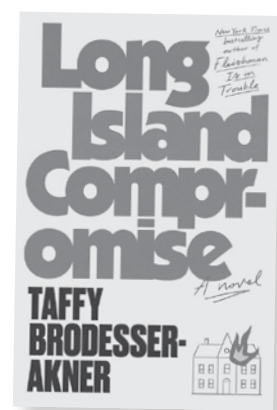
By Dr. Steve Rubin / Special to the BJV

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of "Dr. Steve Recommends." Each month I will list three (or four) books dealing with issues of interest to the Jewish community. I hope you will find these recommendations useful, and I encourage you to share your comments and suggestions.

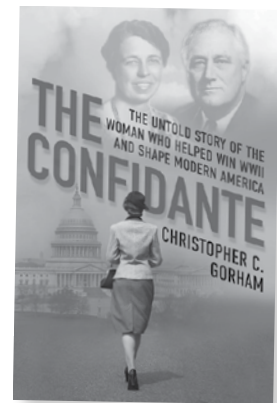
This month I am recommending two works of fiction: one published this year, one more than twenty years ago but very relevant to contemporary America; and a work of nonfiction that I think you will find most interesting.

Long Island Compromise (2024) is the second novel by Taffy Brodesser-Akner, the author of *Fleishman is in Trouble* and one that goes far beyond her first attempt both in scope and depth. It is the fictionalized account of the real story of the kidnapping of a wealthy Long Island businessman and how the different generations of the Fletcher family deal with the trauma of that incident. It is a big, sprawling novel – by turns funny, sexy, touching, exciting, and sad. And beyond that: it's a terrific read!



Although Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004) was published twenty years ago, now seems like a good time to revisit Roth's alternate history of America in the 1940s where Charles Lindbergh defeats Franklin D. Roosevelt for president in the 1940 election. Once in office, Lindbergh negotiates an agreement with Hitler, and anti-Semitism becomes a de-facto government policy. It's a frighteningly prescient imagining of history and a stern warning to those who believe in the dictum "it can't happen here."

The Confidante: The Untold Story of the Woman Who Helped Win WW II and Shape Modern America (2023) by Christopher C. Gorham. Anna Maria Rosenberg, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant, was one of FDR's closest advisors, an Assistant Secretary of the Defense, and the force behind many of Roosevelt's (and Truman's) important initiatives including the integration of the armed forces and the passing of the GI Bill. Little known today, she was dubbed by Life Magazine in 1952 "far and away the most important woman in American government." I think you'll appreciate Gorham's account of this mostly forgotten but consequential figure.



I hope you enjoy these suggestions and please, tell us what you're reading.



Steven J. Rubin, Ph.D. has written and lectured extensively both here and abroad on issues relating to Jewish culture and literature. He is the editor of, among other volumes, *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poetry and Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays*. He is professor emeritus and former dean at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. He can be reached at sjr@adelphi.edu

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CULTURE & ARTS

Review: *Salinger's Soul: His Personal & Religious Odyssey*, by Stephen B. Shepard

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



Perhaps the most shopworn advice a creative writer receives is "write about what you know." That saw came to mind as I read *Salinger's Soul: His Personal & Religious Odyssey*, Stephen B. Shepard's insightful biography of the enigmatic author of *The Catcher in the Rye*. As Shepard shows in his concise and fast-moving overview of J.D. Salinger's life and career (and subsequent lack of career), the author's experiences provided him with an abundance of compelling material – witnessing pivotal battles of World War II in Europe, being present at the liberation of a concentration camp, relationships with famous friends and lovers, rising to star status at *The New Yorker* under the editorships of both Harold Ross and William Shawn, and struggling with success and celebrity – none of which he wrote about.

As Shepard relates, these experiences may have informed his fiction, but his failure to take on these meaty subjects head on led him to be dismissed by Norman Mailer (as a literary figure, Salinger's polar opposite) as "no more than the greatest mind ever to stay in prep school."

Moreover, as Shepard points out, there are "scant references to anything Jewish in a lifetime of writing." Jerome David Salinger's father was Jewish, but he didn't find out that his mother was only pretending to be Jewish until after his bar mitzvah, after which, writes Shepard, "he was quick to abandon his own Jewishness." During a year abroad in Austria, he lived with a Jewish family in Vienna; after the war, he learned that they had all been murdered. He fictionalized that experience in the short story "A Girl I Knew" and alluded to antisemitism in another, "Down at the Dinghy." The fictional Glass family, around which so many of his stories revolved were, like him, half-Jewish, although Shepard points out that they are "even less Jewish" than were the Salingers.

Even if Salinger avoided Jewish themes because of what his daughter called his "touchiness" about his heritage or as a method of suppressing the trauma of his wartime experiences, one can't help but wondering, as did the literary critic Ihab Hassan (quoted by Shepard) as early as 1957: "Is this all that so gifted an author can do with the deep-down complexity of a Jew's fate in our culture?"

As Shepard's book about Salinger's career shows, that question can be redacted to: "Is this all that so gifted an author can do?" Salinger famously stopped publishing in 1965, choosing to live outside the limelight in rural New Hampshire, although he kept on writing until his death in 2010 – he produced works that his son asserts will all someday be published, though the timetable is still uncertain. Shepard is harsh (although not uniquely or unfairly

so) in his assessment that after *Catcher*, the collection *9 Stories*, and the long story "Franny," the quality of Salinger's writing dropped precipitously. More and more, the "religiously obsessed" Salinger wove in ideas relating to his own odyssey through Eastern religious thought, particularly the Vedanta branch of Hinduism, and his storytelling and character development suffered. Shepard himself finds it "improbable" that any of the unpublished work from Salinger's later output will possess the merit of his early work.

I enjoyed Shepard's clearheaded overview of Salinger's life and career – the book's brevity was, for me, a real virtue. I would have stopped reading a longer biography in the middle because Salinger proves to be someone I did not want to spend any more time with. Even if Salinger's personality was warped by the staggering trauma of his wartime experiences, his unpleasant traits seemed less rooted in those experiences than exacerbated by them. Shepard also points out that Salinger's fiction is marked by both an absence of humor and mature sexu-

Salinger's father was Jewish, but he didn't find out that his mother was only pretending to be Jewish until after his bar mitzvah, after which "he was quick to abandon his own Jewishness."

ality – "there is love, but it's usually in a relationship in which sex is ruled out," he writes. These insights made me consciousness of an aridity I always felt in Salinger's work, but never put my finger on.

The question I found myself asking as I finished *Salinger's Soul* was whether I wanted to re-read the Salinger works I remembered as having loved. I read *Catcher* twice – I loved it as a teenager because it moved me and then again when I was thirty, when its craft blew me away. And I remember the experience of being transported by reading "Franny" hunkered down in a lounge chair in my college library during finals week, when it distracted me from the studying I should have been doing.

But my answer is no – I don't want to read them again. Stephen Shepard's biography conveyed something about J.D. Salinger and the outlook of his fiction that I find off-putting as I enter my dotage. Would labeling that something a "phoniness" be too glib? Maybe. All I know is that I loved the books when I read them, and would not want to remember them any other way.



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CULTURE & ARTS

What I Learned from My Father's Strange Journey from Poland to Algeria, Kazakhstan, and the California Desert

In researching her father's biography, a writer uncovers little-known stories of Jewish dispersal under the shadow of Nazism

By Dvora Treisman

(JTA) By the time I was 76, I thought I knew my father well. He had been an open person who had spoken about his life and hadn't avoided (as many of my friends' parents did) talking about the difficult years of the war.

I also knew that he loved the desert near his California home – that was where he would go when he and my mother had a weekend away. But I never appreciated what the desert meant to him.

My father had an unusual life, so one day I decided to sit down and write a short essay about him. I started to write that he was born in Warsaw, but suddenly I wasn't sure. What about that story he told countless times of coming from Russia to Warsaw as a small child, in a wagon with his family, traveling through woods full of scary wolves? Maybe he was actually born in Russia and grew up in Warsaw.

He had written a memoir late in his life that I had read and then stuck on a shelf and forgotten about. Reading it again I found the answer to my question as well as all sorts of wonderful stories. Instead of writing an article, I set out to write a book – *Stories My Father Told Me: From Warsaw, Moscow, Algeria, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Dominican Republic*.

My father, Rafał Feliks Buszejkin, was indeed born in Warsaw in 1912. His adventures began when he was 3 years old and his family left Warsaw to escape the Germans and went to live in Moscow. When he was 5 they moved back to Warsaw to escape the Russian Revolution.

He was hardly a stereotypical Eastern European Jew of the early 20th century: His family was bourgeois and not observant; he spoke Polish with his parents rather than Yiddish; the only Hebrew he knew was what he memorized for his bar mitzvah. He boxed, raced bicycles and got into fights; rather than attend his last year of high school, he played poker, made mischief with a group of youths, and failed the year; he never liked working indoors and was happy doing physical labor.

Successfully repeating the last year of school, in fall 1931 he went off to university to study medicine at the University of Montpellier in France. It went well until they had to cut up a frog in the biology lab, and he decided medicine was not for him. The next fall, he announced to his parents that he would be going instead to the Institut Agricole d'Algérie in Algiers.

Happily studying agronomy, he explored Algiers and Algeria, and spent time with two new friends, one from Belgium and the other from Laos. One day in late spring he came down with an inflammation of the joints that left him immobilized. He was advised to go to Biskra, a posh oasis town known for its curative facilities, 250 miles away, on the northern edge of the Sahara.

His two friends hoisted him onto an old, overloaded bus where, once seated, he couldn't move and thus couldn't relieve himself. Dozing off, he suddenly recognized the familiar scent of gefilte fish! He looked around and saw an Arab who was eating what seemed like this Jewish specialty. He asked the man (in French) where he had bought his lunch. The man said that his wife made it and offered Dad some.

He and the man started to talk. The man asked him the usual: Where are you going? What do you do? Dad explained. The man then told him that he was a Sephardic Jew and he worked as a tour guide in a big oasis at the foot of the Atlas Mountains – Bou Saâda, 100 miles west of Biskra.

His new friend invited him to come there and be cured; it would be far cheaper than the fancy spa. Dad accepted and spent 45 minutes a day buried in a shallow grave in the hot sand with his head shaded by an umbrella. After five days of this torture, he was cured.



The author's father Rafał Feliks Buszejkin, in long pants, poses with members of Maccabi, the sports club he founded in Algeria in the early 1930s. (Courtesy Dvora Treisman via JTA)

Soon after, he commented to his friends that they spent a lot of time sitting around sipping tea, eating exquisite pastries and getting fat. Would they like to start a sports club and get in shape? Not only his friends, but more than half

the village, both Arabs and Jews, liked the idea. In three days they raised over 300,000 francs and set out to buy equipment and have uniforms made. The uniforms were white shorts and blue sleeveless shirts with a Magen David on the front. A local lawyer drew up the bylaws and they named the club Maccabi.

Besides coaching the boxing team, during his time in Bou Saâda, Dad rode beautiful Arabian horses, was invited to feast with a sheik, and learned to drive a car when it was time to return from a banquet and all his friends were too drunk to drive. My father left Algeria suddenly in May 1933, called back home when his father went bankrupt.

After his return to Warsaw, Dad worked as a cattle and pig buyer for a big meat packing company. After marrying my mother in 1938, they left Warsaw a few days after the Germans invaded in September 1939. They spent part of the war in Siberia and the rest in Dzhambul, Kazakhstan, where he supervised the agricultural production of five kolkhozes, or collective farms, until they were repatriated after the war ended. When they arrived back in Warsaw they found that everyone in their two families had been murdered by the Nazis.

They lived in Nice while awaiting visas to immigrate to the Dominican Republic where he farmed at a Jewish collective settlement in Sosua. That is where I was born. After two years, we left the Dominican Republic to go live in the United States where more adventures of a different nature awaited.

As I was finishing my book, I remembered a small, faded red notebook that I had tucked away years ago in a drawer and went to find it. It was nothing special, old, faded, and there wasn't much in it, just some drawings and some writing that I couldn't read. There was a shopping list and the lyrics to a popular song. The drawings were done in colored pencil; three were by my mother and three by my father. Each drawing was signed, titled and dated "Dzhambul, February 1943."



A drawing by the author's father, dated "Dzhambul, February 1943," depicts a scene from his time a decade earlier in Algiers. The Polish inscription translates as "calf years," or "salad days." (Courtesy Dvora Treisman via JTA)

One drawing was of a woman, nicely dressed in European clothes, holding the handlebars of a motorcycle with a sidecar, and talking to a man at the side of a desert road with two palm trees behind them. It was by my father. At the bottom he had written "Cielęce lata" and "Alger." Alger is Algiers in French, but what did the Polish say?

I found out that "Cielęce lata" means "calf years" and has the same meaning as "salad days" in English. In the middle of the war, in far off Kazakhstan, he was remembering the halcyon days of his youth in Algeria. That is when I realized that through most of his life, his favorite stories tended to be from his time in Algeria, even the embarrassing one when the javelin he threw pierced his friend's leg. It also explained why he always wanted to go to the desert for weekends, and why it was to the desert that he went to spend his last years.

Parents have stories to tell, but we don't always pay attention; sometimes we don't listen at all. Sometimes we listen, but we don't get the meaning. Eventually it becomes too late. No more stories, no more opportunities to ask questions. I was lucky that my father wrote some of his life stories down so that someday I might pay attention. And yet it was that small pencil drawing that explained what words didn't.

Stories My Father Told Me: From Warsaw, Moscow, Algeria, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Dominican Republic by Dvora Treisman can be purchased through Amazon.

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CULTURE & ARTS

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Et Tu, B'Shvat?

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

Most American Jews are familiar with the Passover seder. After all, it's been reported that it is the single most observed ritual in the Jewish calendar. But there's another festive and ritually meaningful meal that's coming just around the corner: the Tu B'Shvat seder. Our then-rabbi introduced this twist on the holiday to our congregation about thirty years ago, but it was actually developed by the Kabbalists back in the 16th century as a mystical practice to repair the world. The Tu B'Shvat seder has evolved since then to be both a celebration of the beginning of spring in Israel, and an occasion to reflect on our relationship with God in healing and cultivating the natural world. And of course, because it's a Jewish holiday, there's food, so it's traditional to eat fruits from Israel.

When it comes to ritual meals, we Jews do love the number four. At Passover, we've got the four questions, the four sons, and the four cups of wine, each representing different aspects of our history and traditions. Likewise, the Tu B'Shvat seder typically features four sections, but these represent aspects of the four seasons, both in the natural world and in our own persons.

The first section is called The World of *Asiyah* (Actualization) and features a glass of white wine that, with its lack of color, symbolizes winter and bleakness. The fruits and nuts, with their hard outsides and edible insides (e.g., almonds), also imply winter, in which everything is dormant. They do, however, have the potential to grow into something. Some sages interpret the hard shells to represent our human tendency to judge others by their appearance, while others interpret them as the walls we build around our hearts.



On the Tu B'Shvat seder table

The World of *Yetzirah* (Formation) is the basis of the second section of the seder. This cup of wine has a few drops of red mixed in with the white. The resulting light pink symbolizes the beginning of spring and rebirth. Here in New England, we look forward to the return of color to our lives after a long, gray winter. Another interpretation is that we may embark on a new chapter in our own lives. As for fruits, we eat those with pits at their centers (e.g. apricots). These are said to symbolize both the source of new life and the potential within each of us to grow.

The third section of the seder is called The World of *Beriah* (Creation), and it calls wine that is half red, half white, and fruits that are entirely edible (e.g. carob bean, aka *bokser**). This section reminds us of summer. Although trees come into their full green glory and flowers blossom, vegetable gardens may still be forming their produce. Both the wine and the fruits remind us that we should not waste resources and that we, and all of nature, depend on everything around us and on each other.

Finally, the fourth section of the seder is called The World of *Atzilut* (Presence, Emanation, Birth.) In this section, our wine is almost entirely red, but with a few drops of white added. This reminds us of the first cup and the cyclical nature of the seasons. But instead of eating fruit, we use a different bodily organ to inhale aromas herbs and spices – much like the spices we sniff at Havdalah. These scents can heighten our senses and enrich our spirits. By doing this we celebrate what may be invisible to the eye but still part of the natural world.

We Jews don't just love food. We live for questioning and debating (arguing, maybe?), so the seder will often include discussions, readings, stories, and other activities incorporated into the eating and drinking ritual.



Carob pods – in Yiddish called 'bokser,' derived from the Middle High German bokshornboun "ram's horn tree" (in reference to the shape of the carob).

**Dentists among us may cringe at the thought of their patients chewing on carob beans, but I am told that the fresh pod is easier on the teeth. So, snowbird readers: scope out your neighborhoods in Boca or Scottsdale!*



Under the name Carolinda Goodman, **Carol Goodman Kaufman** has just published her third picture book for young children. *Detective Bears and Friends* introduces readers to the whimsical names that various animal groups are called. In addition to her work for children, Kaufman also writes under her "real" name about food history (including for the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*). Her first novel, *The First Murder*, is set in the Berkshires.

Fudgy Carob Brownies



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 3/4 cup flour
- 1/2 cup carob powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 5 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon peppermint extract

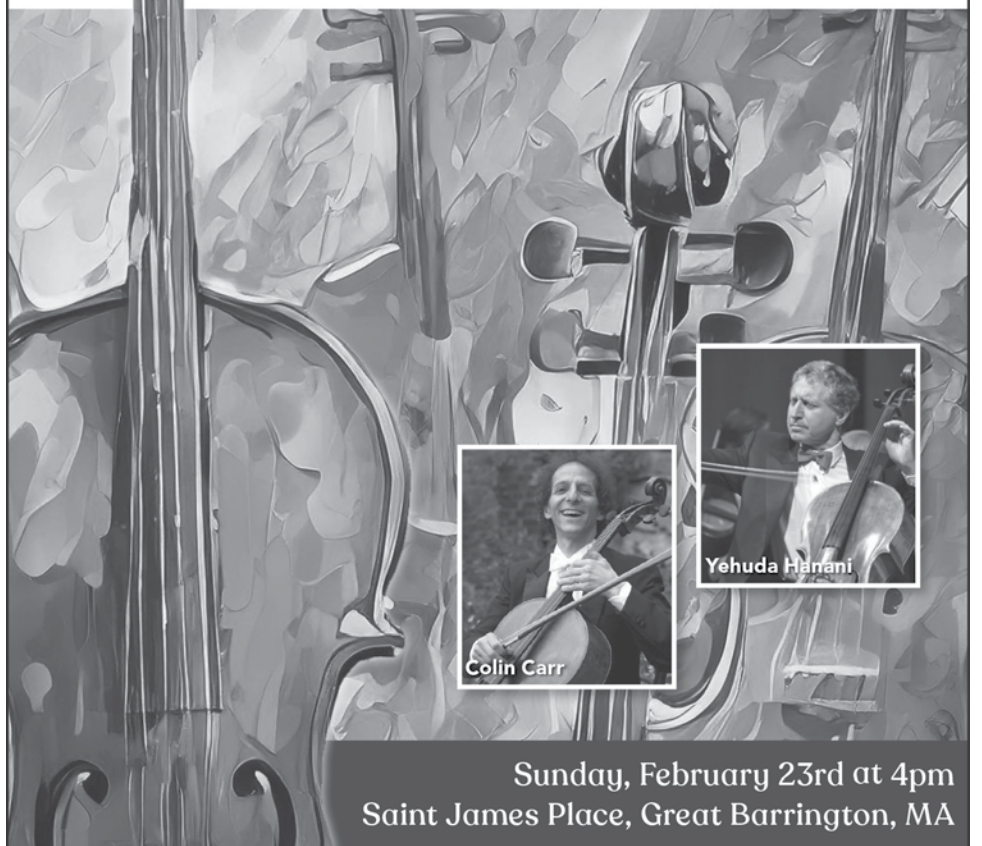
DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Grease or spray 9"x13" pan.
- Combine wet ingredients by stirring with a spoon.
- Stir dry ingredients together and add to wet ingredients until well blended.
- Place in pan and bake for 25-30 minutes.
- Cool completely before cutting.

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CULTURE & ARTS

Reeling from the anguish of Oct. 7, he's drawn more than 300 images of beauty and hope

With his "Daily Postcard" project, Zeev Engelmayer confronts his own grief and confusion

By Cathryn J. Prince / The Forward

This story originally appeared in The Forward. To get The Forward's free email newsletters delivered to your inbox, go to forward.com/newsletter-signup.

Roughly translated, the Hebrew word for postcard means revealed or uncovered. It's a fitting definition for the Israeli artist Zeev Engelmayer's "Daily Postcard" project, which lays bare his emotional response to the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas terrorist attack.

Since then, Engelmayer has drawn more than 300 images – hostages learning yoga deep inside the airless tunnels of Gaza; a portrait of the American-Israeli hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin; Kfir Bibas blowing out candles on his first birthday cake; a flower seller near Tel Aviv's Hostage Square. While the images evoke despair and isolation, longing and grief, the vibrant colors and childlike figures spark a measure of joy and beauty.

Now nearly 30 reproductions of Engelmayer's illustrations are on display in "Postcards of Hope," at the Westchester Jewish Center's Koslowe Gallery in Mamaroneck, NY through January 21.



"Grandma Yaffa return from captivity," by Zeev Engelmayer (via The Forward)

"I decided to center on hope at the beginning of the war. In the first two weeks, the drawings were more pessimistic. I didn't even call them postcards and I painted only in black and white. Then I understood I had to find a different way of looking at it. I felt we needed comfort and hope," Engelmayer said in a video conversation with the gallery's curator Amy Levine-Kennedy, from his studio in Tel Aviv.

That sense of hope, or the possibility that something beautiful could be born of something so brutal, is palpable in "Nova's flowers." On display inside the gallery, the illustration shows eight Nova music festival attendees underground with Israel's national flower, the anemone, in bloom above their heads.

The celebrated Israeli artist, illustrator, and cartoonist began his project two weeks after Hamas terrorists breached Israel's southern border and slaughtered 1,200 men, women, and children and took 251 people hostage.



"Eden will return to Tel Aviv," by Zeev Engelmayer (via The Forward)



"Nova's flowers," by Zeev Engelmayer (via The Forward)

One of Engelmayer's first illustrations was "Nova Music festival," a black-and-white illustration of entwined young people that evokes Pablo Picasso's "Guernica."

Two weeks later, he unboxed his magic markers and returned to the world of color with "Pastoral kibbutz," a folk art-like illustration that depicts a kibbutz with red roofed houses, tangles of flowers, and a water tower. The caption for that image "Something horrible is about to happen," infuses the otherwise happy picture with dread.

"We know what is going to happen, but the people don't," said Engelmayer, who frequently referred to photos of Kibbutz Be'eri and Kibbutz Kfar Aza while drawing the piece.

Known for his irreverent, subversive political commentary before the war, particularly for his court jester like alter ego Shoshke, who often appears at political protests, Engelmayer said the project has allowed him to confront the grief and confusion he's felt since the attack, as well as connect with scores of Israelis.

As part of the show, Levine-Kennedy, who was the first American gallerist to contact Engelmayer, displayed the many requests Engelmayer has received from people asking for illustrations of their loved ones.

It takes Engelmayer between three and four hours to draw the postcards, using a combination of magic marker and acrylic. The end result is a piece that resides somewhere between traditional folk art and an illustration that could be found in a children's book.

For example, visitors to the gallery will see Engelmayer's drawing of the three close friends Or, Nadav and Tal. Killed while fishing at Zikum beach, Engelmayer pictured them sitting on a crescent moon, fishing for stars.

In "Eden will return to Tel Aviv," he depicted a smiling Eden Yerushalmi zipping alongside the beach on her cherry-red moped, her curly brown hair flowing behind like a pennant. It's an especially poignant drawing Yerushalmi was one of six hostages Hamas executed on September 1, 2024.

"He draws the things they wanted to do and wanted to be," Levine-Kennedy said.

In "Midnight kiss on New Year's Eve," Engelmayer imagines a woman embracing her partner who is being held hostage. It is believed Hamas is still holding about 96 people hostage.

"It's very important to remind everyone they are still there," he said. "They don't have food; they are locked in very small places underground. We have to remember it all the time."



Zeev Engelmayer

PHOTO: LU OSTRINSKI VIA FOODISH.ORG