

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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November 2 to December 6, 2024

jewishberkshires.org

Middle East Update with Ambassador Dennis Ross

“Israel at War” on November 14



Ambassador Ross

On Thursday, November 14 at 7 p.m., Federation’s Middle East Update returns with Ambassador Dennis Ross presenting. This free program will be streamed online – please visit our calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org to register and receive a link via email.

Following the US elections, join top Middle East expert and diplomat Ambassador Dennis Ross, who will provide an inside assessment of Israel’s current war and the changing strategies and geopolitics of the region.

Dennis Ross is an American diplomat and author. He has served as the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department under President George H.W. Bush, the special Middle East coordinator under President Bill Clinton, and was a special adviser for the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia to the former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Ambassador Ross,

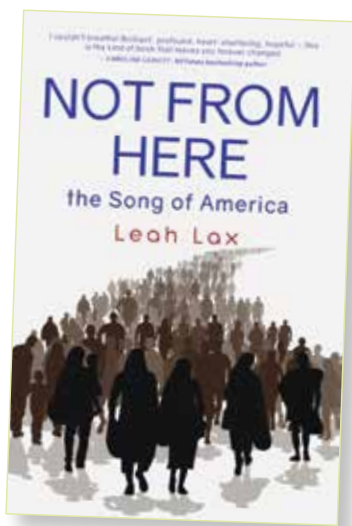
has published extensively on the former Soviet Union, arms control, and the greater Middle East, including *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, October 2015). He has authored many op-eds in the New York Times, Washington Post, and other papers and magazines. In addition, he writes monthly columns for US News and World Report and the New York Daily News. He lives in Washington, D.C.

Not From Here: The Song of America, with Leah Lax

On Thursday, November 21 at 7 p.m., Federation welcomes Leah Lax, author and librettist whose new book, *Not From Here*, follows her journey back into society through listening to new immigrants tell their stories.

This free program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org to register. Part of Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.

When Leah Lax was asked by the Houston Grand Opera to create a piece celebrating local immigrants, she began by spending a year listening to accounts of upheaval, migration, and arrival told to her in confidence by people new to this country from around the globe. Material she gathered for the opera project became the basis of *Not From Here*.



BJV Interview: Leah Lax

Leah Lax’s first book, the memoir *Uncovered: How I Left Hasidic Life and Finally Came Home*, is an inward-looking account of her experience within the Chabad Hasidic community, which she joined in the mid-1970s at age sixteen as a way to escape a dysfunctional home and in which she remained for three decades. Trapped in an unsatisfying marriage and the mother of seven children, Lax was temperamentally unsuited for that life – to carry on, she had to not only suppress her artistic and questioning nature, but also her attraction to women rather than men. While much of the narrative centers on Lax’s frustrations living within the strictures of the Hasidic world – and she can be scathing and specific – the latter sections chronicle her emergence from it and her establishment of a new secular and sexual identity.

Her experience of leaving one life to begin another informs her latest book, *Not From Here*, which is an outward-looking work of journalism/oral history in which she tells the stories of immigrants to the United States who settled in the Houston area, where she lives. Although some of the stories begin with how her subjects escaped perilous conditions in their native lands, Lax is particularly sensitive in capturing their experience of becoming American while retaining a consciousness shaped by the cultures they left behind. As an American who lived within a subculture apart from the mainstream, Lax relates these immigrants’ stories with a distinct empathy. In doing so, Lax

LEAH LAX,

continued on page 16

Inside

It Hit Home.....	2
Your Federation Presents	4, 9-11
Local News.....	5-6
South African Sojourn.....	14
Culture & Arts	15-20

חי וקיים Alive and Well



PHOTO CREDIT ON PAGE 19

The Tel Dan Stele is a 9th century BCE stone monument fragment containing the earliest mention of the royal House of David outside of the Hebrew Bible (highlighted in white). It will be on view at The Jewish Museum in New York City from December 5, 2024 through January 5, 2025 as part of *Engaging with History: Works from the Collection*, a sampling of the museum’s largescale reimagination of its permanent collection that will open later next year. For more on the stele and other treasures on view, see page 19.



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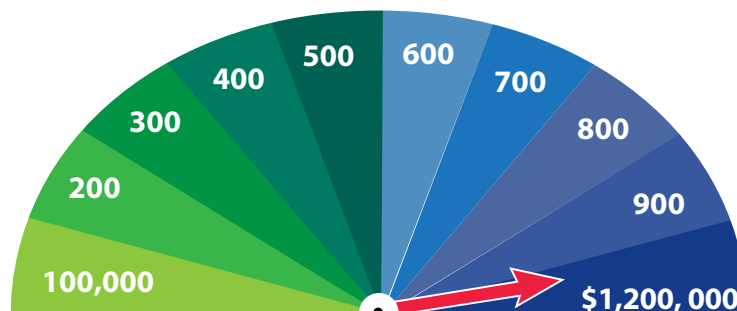
If you have not yet made your gift to the 2024 Annual Campaign there is still time to do so.

Your gift will help us engage the next generation, support the elderly and vulnerable, and sustain Jewish life all year round.

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OP-ED

It Hit Home...

On October 7, 2024, **Shimon Rotches** of Great Barrington shared his family's story with the Berkshire Jewish community at the commemoration of the Oct. 7 attack in Israel held at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.

"Mila is dead. I'm severely injured, please get the military here ... help! "

This was the last text message from Ohad Cohen's Apple Watch on October 7th at 11 a.m.

Ohad is my brother-in-law. Mila is my niece. She was 9 months old. They were both brutally murdered by Hamas terrorists that day. Ohad's mother, Yona, was also murdered.

My name is Shimon Rotches. I've lived in Great Barrington for the past 21 years with my wife Natali and my kids, Ethan and Aria.

My wife Natali could not be here today because she is in Israel, spending these very sad days with her sister Sandra and our two nephews.

It hit home

October 7 – Saturday morning at 7 a.m. will forever be in my mind. In effect, it is every Saturday and, unfortunately, even every day that I and so many others relive what happened. Life after October 7th will never be the same.



The night before, on Friday, October 6th, I was watching an Israeli documentary about the Yom Kippur War and fell asleep to the Israeli version of "Let It Be" [Lu Yehi] by Chava Albertstein. Who would know that a few hours later, Israel would find herself in another horrible surprise attack 50 years later?

My niece Mila came to this world after the family wanted to have a princess after having 2 boys, Liam and Dillan.

Unfortunately, we never got a

chance to meet Mila in person before she got murdered. But she was sweet and beautiful and brought light and love to the family.

My brother-in-law Ohad was 43 years old. He was the third child out of four. Ohad grew up in the city and moved with his family to Kibbutz Be'eri in his early childhood.

Ohad was an amazing dad. He was a master of handstands, a super smart computer troubleshooter, a great DJ, and a person who could hold a conversation with you so well. He was a great uncle to my kids. He never missed sending recorded birthday wishes to them.

Ohad was murdered after saving his wife, Sandra, and his 2 boys with his last breath. He was executed by Hamas terrorists in front of his wife and his two boys after they had jumped out of their safe room window in order to get out of

the smoky apartment, which had been set on fire. He had been severely injured from multiple gunshots through the safe room door.

I have great memories with Ohad of the times we spent together with our families, many of them from our visits to Kibbutz Be'eri.

Yona Cohen was Ohad's mother and Mila's grandmother. She was 72 years old. She, too, was murdered by Hamas terrorists. She was found dead with her hands tied up behind her back with a zip tie.

Yona was the best grandma a family could have asked for. She also lived in the kibbutz and was always there for Ohad, Sandra, and the kids. She was there for them all the time, whenever they needed her. She made the boys their favorite food and took them for fun rides around the kibbutz on her personal golf cart.

Three generations murdered, erased from our family on one Saturday holiday morning.

My sister-in-law Sandra was severely injured, and, after she watched her husband executed in front of her and her sons, the terrorists told the boys to put her clothes on because they were ready to take them to Gaza as hostages.

Sandra and the boys were taken to another house where the terrorists kept all the females and the kids. Hours went by, but eventually, Israeli special forces closed in, and a shooting battle started. Sandra grabbed the two boys and ran outside to save themselves. On the way out, Sandra fell and fainted from a gunshot wound, and she and the boys got separated.

Shortly after, Israeli soldiers rescued the boys, and then Sandra too was rescued. They did not know if she would survive her injuries. She was quickly moved to a hospital in the south. The boys were taken to a hospital in the center of Israel without knowing what had happened to their mom and if she even survived.

When all this was happening, Natali and I were sitting with no information other than that first text. I remember the minutes...the hours waiting with fear in our hearts. The agony of watching the terror attack unfold on the news, our friends, Dara and Ofer Kaufman, by our sides while we tried to get any information we could. Not knowing if our family is dead or alive. Or even worse, taken hostage.

Around 2 p.m. we finally got the news. Liam suffered ricochet wounds to his head. With a minor surgery or two, he would be ok.

Dylan, only 3 years old, was suffering from smoke inhalation.

Sandra had an open fracture from a bullet that had gone through her arm and into baby Mila's head, killing Mila on the spot. Another bullet got stuck in her lungs, and she was suffering from other gunshot wounds.

They have since recovered from the physical wounds, but they will never fully recover from the sheer brutality and trauma they have experienced. Neither will the hundreds of thousands of people whose lives have been shattered because of this savage and unprovoked assault on Israel.

From a song by Yehuda Poliker:

There, in the dust and the sky's blue

A bundle of peace is asleep.

Sleep flower, sleep

Sleep, little girl.

Keep on Showing Up

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

In the weeks before our community's commemoration of the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel, my colleagues at Federation were focused on preparing for what we knew would be a meaningful and well-attended event.

At the time, I was immersed in Israeli journalist Lee Yaron's important new book, *10/7: 100 Human Stories* in order to prepare some questions I'd be sending her in advance of the online program she would present for us in October. (You can read the interview on page 18.) In this accomplished work of non-fiction, Yaron evokes the horrors of that day and, in doing so, also captures the polyglot character of Israeli society – Jewish but multicultural, and now united in trauma, grief, and defiance.

It is not an easy read. Yaron's descriptions of Oct. 7 are vivid, graphic, and often jarringly blunt – you may be following the efforts of an individual to survive the massacre over the course of many pages, when suddenly his or her life is ended abruptly and the narrative shifts without ceremony to another harrowing storyline. *10/7* is more than "journalism as a first draft of history" – it is a work of literature that contains multitudes.

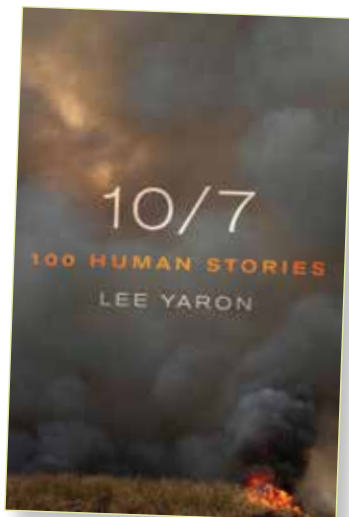
I was in the middle of Yaron's description of the massacre at Kibbutz Be'eri when our executive director handed me a printout of the remarks community member Shimi Rotches would be reading at our Oct. 7 commemoration. She asked me to give it an editorial once-over and see if I had any suggestions about flow, language, etc.

The Rotches's extended family, who lived in Kibbutz Be'eri, lost members of three generations on the morning of Oct. 7 – brother-in-law Ohad, Ohad's mother Yona, and the baby of the family, Mila. Sandra Cohen, the sister of Shimi's wife Natali, was shot several times, but managed (along with her two sons) to escape death.

Those of you who heard Shimi's testimony at our community commemoration will not soon forget it. Those of you yet to experience what he had to share (you can read the transcript above) will no doubt find his story as shattering as I did when I first read it. I gave the draft back to our executive director with my editorial judgement: "Don't change a word."

When I returned to my office and continued reading Lee Yaron's *10/7*, the first paragraph I read – *the first* – was this one:

Nirit's phone buzzed incessantly with calls from wounded friends unable to get medical attention. Among them was Sandra Cohen, a nurse herself, who reported the murder of her baby, Mila, not yet a year old. Her husband was severely injured, as was she; the terrorists had also tied up her mother-in-law, Yona, and murdered her. Three generations of the Cohen family were erased. [p. 170]



This unsettling coincidence reaffirmed what I believe has been the overarching lesson of Oct. 7 and its aftermath: We live in a small Jewish world and we are all connected by fewer degrees of separation than we ordinarily comprehend. After Oct. 7 and the worldwide mobilization of antisemitic forces, we have to look beyond the squabbles and apathies that mask our ability to recognize the smallness of our world and our interconnectedness within it.

But how to sustain that post-Oct. 7 awareness and continue to act upon it? It's a problem. I lived in New York City on 9/11/2001, where 2,753 people were murdered in one morning by terrorists espousing the same worldview that impelled the Oct. 7 terrorists from Gaza to cross into Israel and perpetrate their abominable crimes. In the aftermath, we New Yorkers wept for our dead, raged at the murderers, participated in innumerable memorials, and constructed monuments to commemorate that day and its victims and heroes. Each year on September 11, we gather at the World Trade Center in the mornings to hear church bells tolling at the times both planes crashed and to read aloud the names of dead. After sunset, dramatic shafts of light beam into the night sky. Ground Zero, we asserted, would always be sacred ground!

Yet these days, thousands of protestors in the grip of the same violent, hateful, and anti-human ideology as the men who flew airplanes into our buildings regularly march with impunity blocks away from the sacred ground of Ground Zero.

SHOWING UP,
continued on page 3



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Letters to the Editor

Demonstrating for a More Responsible Government in Israel

To the Editor:

I applaud my friend Josh Yurfest's deep commitment and emotional attachment to Israel, expressed in his volunteer work in Israel ("Mission to Base 559" – BJV July 27-Sept. 20 issue), but strongly object to his statement: "I think [anti-Netanyahu] demonstrations are putting soldiers and hostages at risk."

The hundreds of thousands of demonstrators calling for new elections and the prioritization of a hostage-ceasefire deal reflect the sentiments of a majority of Israelis and the defense establishment, past and present – as consistently expressed in opinion polls and public statements. On a personal note, my sons have served many months in the IDF reserves since Oct. 7 and the last thing I'd want to do is to put them at risk. In fact, I think the best thing I can do to help protect them is to demonstrate for "Elections Now" – which hopefully will bring a more responsible government to power.

So, I've devoted hundreds of hours to demonstrating in the past months and take offense at the suggestion that by doing so I've caused harm to Israeli soldiers and hostages.

Ira Moskowitz
Modi'in, Israel

Federation Did Our Part

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you for your support which funded my camp scholarship. I am so grateful for your generosity.

Some of my most memorable experiences I had this year at Eisner Camp are playing on the blow-up obstacle on the lake, playing volleyball with my friend Naomi and a range of other ages, and going to services after Shabbat. These are the most memorable experiences.

In the Constitution, it states to form a more perfect union and after going to Eisner, I realized that you did your part and I'm so glad to be a part of it.

Raquel Levin (age 10)
Bonim 2, Eisner Camp



Raquel Levin

SHOWING UP,

continued from page 2

The marchers could not be clearer about who they are, what they want, and the historical events that have pleased them. And I wonder – where are my notoriously plucky and outspoken New Yorkers? Where are those people I grieved with? Where has the clarity and righteous anger gone? Just over 23 years past – not so long ago. How and why, after 9/11, did things get worse for us?

Things can always get worse, I suppose, and things often do. So, the question again – how to sustain the present awareness of the interconnectedness our small Jewish world and continue acting upon it?

A thought: Keep on showing up. According to a national survey of 6,000 people earlier this year by Jewish Federations of North America, some 43% of American Jews say they are more engaged in Jewish life than before the Oct. 7 attacks.

So keep on showing up, and not only when it's time to grieve. Do Jewish as you do Jewish – do American as you do American – but keep on showing up, understanding that Jewish now is not the same as Jewish was on October 6, 2023. Show up for your community, at a synagogue, for your kids inside your home, for online study, at your college alumni association, at a meeting of local government, and maybe even with a pro-Israel banner across the street from an antisemitic protest. Know that we are not as grasshoppers in the eyes our enemies – they recognize our formidability and the counterweight it poses to their achieving the world they desire.

Whatever else you might have to say about them, they show up. We are in the midst of a fight and we have to keep the pressure on them – and on ourselves, as well.



Thank you!

You Made it Happen!

Thank you to the many community members who donated to our 2024 Annual Campaign and helped us receive a \$50,000 Tzedakah Challenge grant to support the vital needs of our Jewish community!

We still have a ways to go to meet the full needs of our community in the coming year. If you have not yet made a gift, please donate today at jewishberkshires.org

With deep gratitude to the generous donors who provided this Tzedakah Challenge Grant in support of our work.



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



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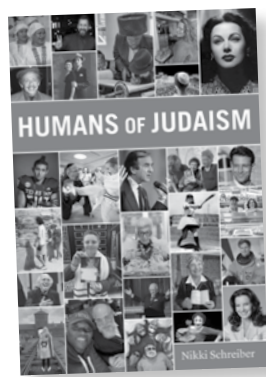
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Your Federation Presents

“Humans of Judaism: Everyone Has A Story. What’s Yours?” with Nikki Schreiber



On Thursday, December 5 at 7 p.m., join Nikki Schreiber, the editor and founder of the popular social media brand @humansofjudaism, an inspirational, visual collection of 300 Jewish stories. She'll talk about her new book, *Humans of Judaism*.

This free Federation program will be presented via Zoom. Register via the calendar of events at

jewishberkshires.org. Part of “Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.”

@humansofjudaism is a hugely popular handle, with over 300,000 followers on Instagram; and more than 500,000 followers across all platforms. When her father passed away in 2013, Nikki Schreiber found comfort in her mourning by creating a social media space for sharing positive and uplifting Jewish stories. It is a space for sharing everything – personal stories, Jewish history, Holocaust education, support for Israel, and so much more. Especially against the backdrop of rising antisemitism online, *Humans of Judaism* is a true source of pride and strength in these challenging times.

The engagement is substantial, posts are viewed and shared by millions worldwide, and viral stories have been re-posted by public figures and government pages. *Humans of Judaism* is a celebration of Jewish life and community.

Kristallnacht and the Remarkable Rescue of 10,000 Children in the Holocaust

On Monday, November 11 at 7 p.m., commemorate the 87th anniversary of Kristallnacht by joining an immersive and personal discussion of the connection between the Night of Broken Glass and the creation of the Kindertransport with Dr. Linda Burghardt, Scholar-in-Residence at the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center in New York.

This free Federation program will be presented via Zoom. Register via the calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Few people have ever been told that something positive came out of Kristallnacht. Because Jewish children were targeted for annihilation by the Nazis just like their parents, an emergency rescue operation was set up as a direct result of Kristallnacht in 1938 to send them to England, where foster homes throughout Britain promised to shelter them throughout the war. Often, they were the only members of their families to survive the Holocaust.

How this program came to be founded, how it managed to operate, and the way the 10,000 children whose lives were saved experienced it form the miraculous story of the world-renowned Kindertransport.



Dr. Linda Burghardt is the Scholar-in-Residence at the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center in New York and has been a summer resident of the Berkshires for many years. She worked as a reporter for *The New York Times* for 20 years and has contributed arti-

cles and essays to the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, the *Berkshire Eagle*, *USA Today*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Times of Israel* and the *Jerusalem Post*, among other major newspapers. She is the author of three non-fiction books and has lectured to both national and international audiences. She holds a Ph.D. from Long Island University and is the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Vienna.

The Life and Magic of Stephen Sondheim



PHOTO: MARTHA SWOPE/NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS, 1961

Stephen Sondheim

On Thursday, December 12 at 7 p.m. Diane Steinbrink will discuss the life and amazing work of the late Stephen Sondheim (March 22, 1930-November 26, 2021).

She will talk about his growing up, his family life and its impact on the person he became. She will discuss his collaborators and those who helped him in his career and those whom he helped in their careers. You will hear about his many awards and his unique human qualities in relation to others. She will tell about some of his most famous plays and the characters in them. His death was mourned not only by the theatre community but also by many others whose lives he touched.

This free Federation program will be presented via Zoom. Register via the calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Diane Steinbrink served as the Coordinator of *Philadelphia Plays for Living* for 17 years. She was the Producer of the *Anne Frank Theater Project* for Jewish Family and Children's Service of Philadelphia. Ms. Steinbrink has acted and directed in local theater, in *Plays for Living*, and has appeared as an extra in movies and industrial films. She has presented her one-person programs to many groups in the Philadelphia area, Southern New Jersey, Florida, Harrisburg, and the Berkshires.

PJ Library Brings Warmth and Comfort to At-Risk Children

Jewish Community Pajama Drive

As chilly weather returns to the Berkshires, the PJ Library Pajama drive conducted by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires also returns to help the many children in our community who may lack the comfort of warm sleepwear.

This year we team up with Carr Hardware and Where'd You Get That to offer drop-off of brand-new pajamas (sizes newborn to teen) at these convenient locations across Berkshire County:

- Carr Hardware, 256 Main Street in Great Barrington
- Carr Hardware, 489 Pittsfield Road in Lenox
- Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, 196 South Street in Pittsfield
- Where'd You Get That, 100 Spring Street in Williamstown

The Pajama Drive runs from November 3 through December 1.

Monetary donations towards the purchase of pajamas are also welcome. Questions? Contact Molly Meador at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 or email: mmeador@jewishberkshires.org.

Donations will be received by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families in Pittsfield and will be distributed to local families during the holiday season.

PJ Library, in collaboration with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, is made possible in the Berkshires through the generous support of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, the Spitz Tuchman Family Fund, and the Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County.

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LOCAL NEWS

Congregation Ahavath Sholom Welcomes Rabbi Jennifer Rudin to its Pulpit

GREAT BARRINGTON – Congregation Ahavath Sholom, a Reconstructionist synagogue, will welcome Rabbi Jennifer Rudin as its interim rabbi on November 1. She takes over for Rabbi Barbara Cohen, who is retiring after 20 years as the congregation's spiritual leader.

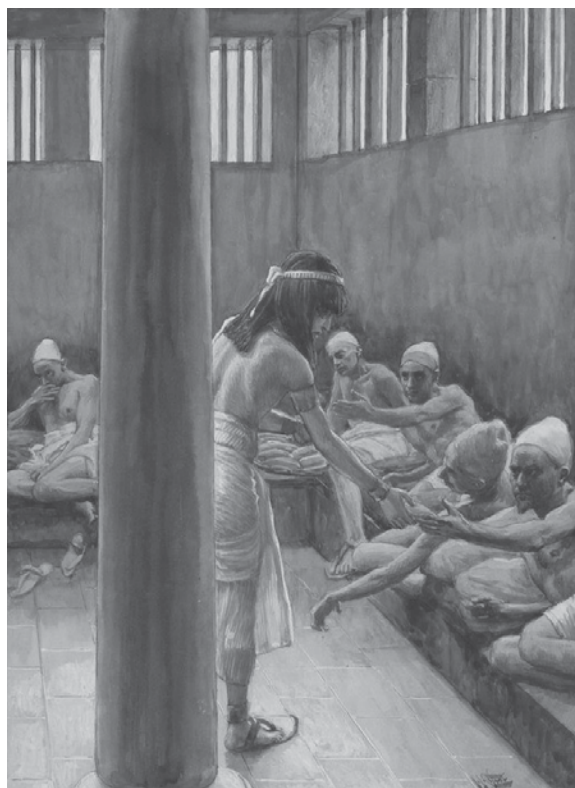


Rabbi Jennifer Rudin

Rabbi Rudin is the founding rabbi of Simcha Services and Congregation Derech HaShalom, a progressive Jewish community without walls in metro-West Boston. She is also the former director of Jewish life at Camp YJ in Amherst, New Hampshire.

Rabbi Rudin graduated from Wheaton College as a Wheaton Scholar with a bachelor's degree in Urban Bilingual Education and received a master's degree in Jewish Education with a focus on special needs, as well as a certificate in Jewish Family Education, from Hebrew College. She was ordained as a rabbi in 2016.

From the congregation: "Rabbi Rudin is a passionate educator who has taught children and adults for over 30 years in Eastern Massachusetts. She believes in a Judaism that is authentic and meaningful, one that honors each person's unique Jewish journey and practice."



"Joseph Distributes Bread In Prison,"
by James Tissot

A Virtual Tour from the New York Jewish Museum – "Tissot and the Hebrew Bible"

On Sunday, November 10 at 4 p.m., Congregation Ahavath Sholom is excited to host another virtual tour of The Jewish Museum, led by renowned lecturer Rena Tobey. This latest tour, titled "Tissot and the Hebrew Bible," showcases original designs by the French painter James Tissot (1836-1902) from a collection of over 350 paintings depicting stories from the Hebrew Bible. Tissot's watercolor illustrations cover all the books from Genesis to the Prophets and are highly cherished in The Jewish Museum's collection. These illustrations, presented as cinematic vignettes, have had a significant influence on popular culture for many years.

After receiving great praise for his illustrations of the Christian Bible, Tissot embarked on a project to illustrate the Hebrew Bible. In 1896, he visited Palestine multiple times to seek inspiration, immersing himself in the landscapes relevant to the biblical stories to ensure historical accuracy in his illustrations.

Tragically, Tissot passed away suddenly in 1902 while working on the project. His studio artists continued the series, either completing his unfinished works or creating new pieces in his style. This tour delves into the captivating story of how these illustrations found their way into the Jewish Museum's collection.

Cost for CAS members \$25; Guests \$30. Register at ahavathsholom.com.

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"In the Beginning: The Book of Genesis" and "Recognizing the Good"

Autumn classes at Kneset Israel

PITTSFIELD – Join Rabbi Pamela Wax, Director of Adult Education and Programming at Kneset Israel, for an exploration of the weekly Torah portion through a multidisciplinary lens. The 90-minute classes began on Monday, October 21 and will continue most Mondays at 10 a.m. through January 6, 2025.

Study will include a combination of traditional, Mussar, and contemporary feminist commentary, as well as midrash, art, cartoons, and poetry to bring biblical stories to life in new and meaningful ways. This will be a hybrid class – join in person at Kneset Israel or via Zoom. Come once or come every week, but please register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp

Recognizing the Good

On Monday, November 18 at 7 p.m., join Rabbi Wax for a pre-Thanksgiving exploration of gratitude in Jewish text and practice. This will be a hybrid class – join in person at Kneset Israel or via Zoom. Register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp

Friendship and the Interpersonal in Jewish Mystical Tradition

PITTSFIELD – On Saturday, November 2, Kneset Israel will welcome Dr. Larry Fine to speak on "Friendship and the Interpersonal in Jewish Mystical Tradition" following services and a kiddush lunch.

Drawing upon examples from Kabbalistic and Hasidic traditions, this talk will explore notions and practices of friendship between two people, as well as friendship in the context of the collective, such as in the case of intentional fellowships and communities.

Dr. Fine is the Irene Kaplan Leiwant Chair and Professor of Religion, emeritus, at Mount Holyoke College.

"On What Day is it a Jewish Tradition to Eat Chinese Food?"

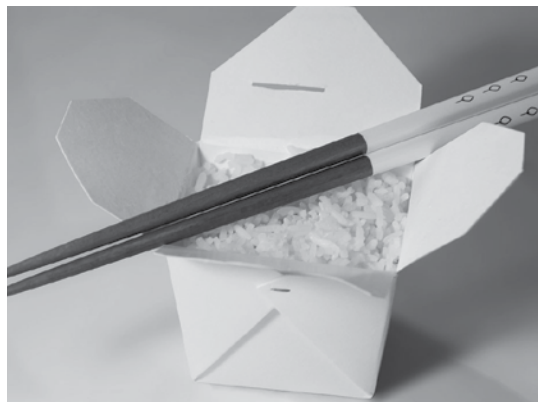
You may find out at TAA's Jewish Trivia Night

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim will be hosting a Jewish Trivia Night on Saturday, November 16 at 6:30 p.m.

Join TAA for Havdalah, followed by vegetarian Chinese food and Jewish themed trivia! Host for the evening is Richard Senzel. Come for this delicious and fun night at TAA!

The event is free to attend but registration is necessary. Register at: tinyurl.com/TriviaNightTAA

If you need more information, please call (413) 442-5910.



Bonus trivia question: What is the proper name for Chinese takeout containers?

(413) 528-9700

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

Everyone is welcome to attend services and events at any of the organizations listed here.

Please call the organizations directly to confirm service times or to inquire about membership.

Learn more about our Jewish community and find great events on the community calendar at:

JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

Berkshire Minyan
Lay-led, Traditional, Egalitarian Minyan
South County
berkshirereminyan.org

Berkshire Hills Hadassah
P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA
(413) 443-4386,
Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com

B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326

Chabad of the Berkshires
450 South St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 499-9899,
jewishberkshires.com

Congregation Ahavath Sholom
Reconstructionist
North St., Great Barrington, MA
(413) 528-4197, ahavathsholom.com

Congregation Beth Israel
Reform
53 Lois St., North Adams, MA
(413) 663-5830, cbiberkshires.com

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
Reform
270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-6378, hevreh.org

Israel Philatelist Society
c/o Dr. Ed Helitzer,
(413) 447-7622

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
196 South St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 442-4360, jewishberkshires.org

Jewish War Veterans
Commander Robert Waldheim
(413) 822-4546, sellit4@aol.com

Kneset Israel
Conservative
16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 445-4872, knesetisrael.org

Temple Anshe Amunim
Reform
26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 442-5910, ansheamunim.org

LOCAL NEWS

Celebrate Rabbi Rachel Barenblat's 13 Years of Service at Congregation Beth Israel

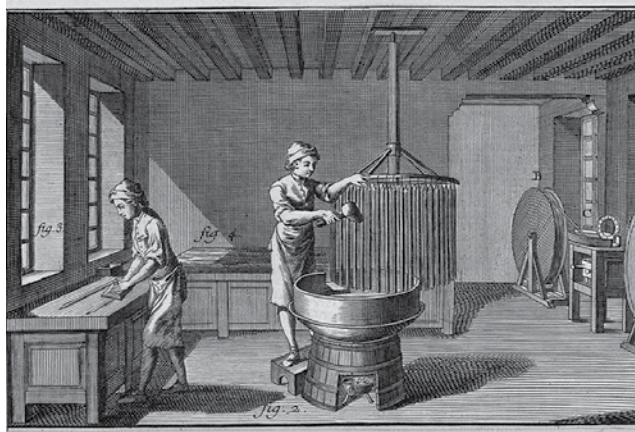


Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

NORTH ADAMS – Join Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires on Saturday, November 16 at 9:30 a.m. as the community celebrates Rabbi Rachel Barenblat's 13 years of service! During Shabbat morning services, Rabbi Rachel will be called to the Torah for an aliyah honoring her spiritual leadership.

A kiddush luncheon will follow, with a Middle Eastern feast, music, dancing, and celebration. All are welcome – kindly RSVP by Saturday, November 2. For Shabbat service schedule and to RSVP for all services, visit cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events.

Family Program: Candle-Making with CBI



BENNINGTON, VT – On Saturday, December 7 at 1 p.m., join Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires families to make your own beautiful, hand-dipped Hanukkah candles out of locally-sourced, Earth-friendly beeswax.

This popular family event is open to all and is a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires and Nefesh, with major financial support from Sally Gottesman, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and funding from participating families. There is a suggested donation of \$10 per participant.

For more information on location in Bennington and to RSVP, please contact learning@cbiberkshires.com.

New Israeli Consul General to New England Appointed

BOSTON – Benjamin (Benny) Sharoni is the incoming Consul General of the State of Israel to New England, heading its mission in Boston.

CG Sharoni, a career diplomat with over 25 years of experience working for the Government of Israel, has spent much of his career focusing on strategic issues and Middle East diplomacy.

Most recently (2021-2024), CG Sharoni served as the Director of the Arms Control Department at the Strategic Affairs Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, where he led Israel's inter-agency policy process on various Arms Control issues, including responsible military behavior in outer space and the responsible military usage of Artificial Intelligence.

Beforehand, CG Sharoni served as the Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in Washington DC (2016-2021), where he led Israel-US policy engagements on arms control, non-proliferation and counterterrorism issues.

Prior to serving in DC, CG Sharoni was a Policy Advisor to the Israeli Foreign Minister, focusing on Middle East issues. He also served, in parallel, as Israel's delegate to UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee in New York from 2013 to 2015.

Previously, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Budapest, Hungary, as well as Political Counselor at the Embassy of Israel in Cairo, Egypt.

CG Sharoni served as an officer in the Israeli Defense Force's Medical Corps, with the rank of a Major, prior to him joining the Foreign Service.

CG Sharoni, a graduate of the Tel Aviv University, received his Master's degree (magna cum laude) in Political Science from the "Abba Eban Program of Studies in Diplomacy" and holds a Bachelor's degree from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

CG Sharoni is fluent in Hebrew, English, and Arabic and conversational in Spanish and Hungarian.

He is married to Dalit, a strategic development consultant, and they are parents to twin girls, Anna and Mai.



Benjamin Sharoni

Pro Bono Legal Helpline Launched for Reporting Incidents of Antisemitism at K-12 Schools

BOSTON (JNS) – The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, the Anti-Defamation League and StandWithUs announced a helpline to provide free legal guidance for families of Jewish students experiencing hatred at K-12 schools in Massachusetts and New York.

"The barrage of antisemitic harassment, intimidation and attacks against Jewish students is unfortunately not contained within the campus gates," said Rachel Lerman, Brandeis Center vice chair and general counsel. "Administrations cannot be allowed to turn a blind eye to the intimidation, bullying and antisemitic rhetoric their students endure within their schools."

Lerman said that the group's lawyers "stand ready to use the law to hold schools accountable to enforce their own rules as Jewish students are subjected to a virulently hostile environment. This must stop."

Peggy Shukur, ADL vice president for the East Division, said: "Particularly in situations where responses to antisemitism are inadequate or worse, access to high-quality legal assistance is a crucial tool to ensure a safe learning environment. By providing these legal efforts, this helpline will empower Jewish students, teachers, and parents to take action to fight against antisemitic harassment and bigotry."

To report an incident at a K-12 school, visit: legal-protection.org/k-12

To report an incident at a college or university: legal-protection.org/

Create a
Jewish Legacy
Campaign

Please remember
the Jewish Community
in your will.



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* Fogle
Larry Frankel & Elisa Schindler Frankel
Elaine Friedman
Eiran Gazit

Jeffrey Goldwasser & Jonquil Wolfson
Jordan & Laura Green
Harold Grinspoon
Ellen Heffan
Ed Jaffe*
Phil* and Rhoda* Kaminstein
Elihu Katzman
Marilyn Katzman
Dara Kaufman
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Amy Lindner-Lesser
Allan and Nan Lipton
Helen Maislen*
Ellen Masters
Stuart Masters
Roger and Natalie Matus
Jeffrey May* & Kara Thornton
Bob & Harriett Miller
Estelle Miller
Robert Newman*
Wendy Robbins
Ken* & Fran* Rubenstein
Stella Schechter*

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

Edward Udel
Michael & Joan Ury
Mark & Judy Usow
Henry* & Beate* Voremborg
Alexandra Warshaw
Florence Wineberg*
Rabbi Deborah Zecher & Rabbi Dennis Ross

*Of blessed memory



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES



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

NOVEMBER

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF) (DF), garlic mashed potatoes, baked beans, salad, white bread, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Noon, Lunch...Pierogies with mushrooms and onions, broccoli, tomato soup, multigrain bread, and tapioca pudding.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Noon, Lunch...Turkey piccata (GF) (DF), herbed couscous, spinach, salad, whole wheat bread, and parve cookie.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Noon, Lunch...Vegetarian chili (GF) (DF), white rice, baby carrots, salad, roll, and bread pudding.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Noon, Lunch...Honey mustard salmon (GF) (DF), roasted potatoes, asparagus, celery rice soup, pumpernickel bread, and butterscotch pudding.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Noon, Lunch...Baked ravioli with spinach and mushrooms, baby carrots, mixed bean soup, rye bread, and sugar cookie.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable curry (GF) (DF), couscous, salad, whole wheat bread, and pear crisp.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Noon, Lunch...Picadillo (ground beef with fruit and almonds) (GF) (DF), white rice, zucchini and yellow squash, salad, roll, and pineapple.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Noon, Lunch...Roasted turkey with stuffing (GF) (DF), sweet potato casserole, green beans, cranberry sauce, soup, roll, and pumpkin loaf.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Noon, Lunch...Lemon basil pasta, broccoli, tomato soup, baguette, and brownie.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Noon, Lunch...Vegetarian jambalaya (GF) (DF), brown rice, salad, pita bread, and chocolate pudding.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Closed for Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF) (DF), hash brown potatoes, peas and carrots, salad, hearty white bread, and tropical fruit salad.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

Noon, Lunch...Potato knish, roasted cauliflower, minestrone soup, whole wheat bread, and rice pudding.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

Noon, Lunch...Sweet and sour chicken (GF) (DF), California blend vegetables, seasoned rice, multi-grain bread, and Mandarin oranges.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

Noon, Lunch...Tuna pasta casserole, roasted Brussels sprouts, cream of mushroom soup, roll, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

Noon, Lunch...Beef stew (GF) (DF), egg noodles, salad, rye bread, and pears.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

Noon, Lunch...Moroccan chicken stew (GF) (DF), couscous, spinach, salad, pita bread, and peaches.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable quiche, hash browns, corn chowder, pumpernickel bread, and tapioca pudding.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

Noon, Lunch...Turkey meatball grinder (GF) (DF), Italian green beans, salad, grinder roll, and apricots.

**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, November 84:18 p.m.
Friday, November 154:12 p.m.
Friday, November 22 4:06 p.m.
Friday, November 29 4:03 p.m.
Friday, December 6 4:02 p.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Noa Honig-Briggs on her bat mitzvah at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire. Proud parents are **Joshua Briggs** and **Rebecca Honig**, and siblings are **Sadie** and **Miles**.

Roberta Silman on the publication of her second volume of short stories, *Heart-work*.

Mollye Goldstein on her bat mitzvah at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire. Proud parents are **Sherri Greenbach** and **David Goldstein**.

You can now read
and share
Berkshire Jewish Voice
feature stories online!

Visit
jewishberkshires.org

and select
**Community &
Events>Berkshire
Jewish Voice**
for links
to highlights of current
and past issues.

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 Molly Meador at (413) 442-4360, Ext. 14, mmeador@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.



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Jewish Federation
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Be remembered forever with a gift to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

To learn more about leaving a legacy, contact Dara Kaufman at dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org, (413) 442-4360 ext. 12

Graphics provided by HGF's Life & Legacy Program

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Save the Date

**Friday
December 13
6:30 p.m.**

Shabbat Together

Adults in their 20's, 30's and 40's

Join hosts Sarah and Nathan Singer at their home in Becket, MA for a casual Shabbat experience with schmoozing, music, and Shabbat dinner. Bring a friend!

Vegetarian entree provided.

Sign up to bring a potluck salad, side, dessert, or seltzer.

Optional BYOB.



Registration opening soon!



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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- Lawrence and Sarah Klein

- Ivy and Alan Leibowitz
- Maud Mandel and Steve Simon
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SAVE THE DATE
Chanukah at Radiant Nights
 Sunday, December 29 at 6 p.m.
 Hancock Shaker Village

Tour Radiant Nights' sparkling lights, music, farm animals, and dazzling art and light illuminations, and then join the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in the Round Stone Barn to celebrate the Festival of Lights with a menorah lighting, live music, hot drinks, and fun for the whole family. \$15 for adults, children 12 and under are free.

Stay tuned for more details!



Jewish Federation
 OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE
 THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

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

Your Federation Presents

Oct. 7 Marked at Berkshire Community Commemoration



On Monday, October 7, more than 400 members of our community came together to mark the one-year anniversary of the horrific terrorist attack and massacre of October 7. We gathered to remember those we lost, honor those who inspired us, pray for the hostages still in our hearts, and express our gratitude for the remarkable response from our community during Israel's time of need. Thank you to our community rabbis and partners – Knesset Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, and Berkshire Minyan – who helped create a deeply meaningful and moving program that held us all as a community during this difficult time.

PJ Library
PAJAMA DRIVE
 November 3 – December 1

During the cold winter months, many children in the Berkshires go to sleep cold, without the comfort of warm pajamas.

To meet this critical need we are running a community-wide pajama drive.





Pajamas will be distributed to families across the Berkshires by the MA Dept of Children and Families.

Drop off of **brand-new pajamas** (sizes newborn to teen) at these locations:

- Carr Hardware, Gt. Barrington
- Carr Hardware, Lenox
- Jewish Federation, Pittsfield
- **Where'd You Get That!?, Williamstown**

Monetary donations towards the purchase of PJs are also welcome. Molly Meador (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 mmeador@jewishberkshires.org

Thank you for your Support!

PJ Library, in collaboration with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, is made possible in the Berkshires through the generous support of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, the Spitz Tuchman Family Fund, and the Jewish Women's Foundation

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Your Federation Presents

Rosh Hashanah Gift Bags Reached 250 Recipients in Berkshire County!

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

This year 35 volunteers joined together to pack and deliver Rosh Hashanah care packages, featuring a local apple, small jar of honey, and freshly-baked Challah roll. Thank you Susan Gordon and her team of talented volunteers as well! Over 250 recipients across Berkshire County received these bags. What a Mitzvah it is to be able to bring a smile to the faces of our neighbors and friends!



Life Can Present Challenges Sometimes, a little help along the way can make things easier

Our community social worker, Jill Goldstein, LICSW, offers case management, information/referral and consultation to help Jewish community members find support and access to services to help with such needs as:

- ♥ Coping with life's transitions
- ♥ Aging and caregiving issues
- ♥ Relationship difficulties
- ♥ Adjustment to new living situation
- ♥ Living with illness
- ♥ Grief and loss
- ♥ Depression or anxiety

If you are struggling with one of these or other issues, Jill can help you find community resources to assist you. Jill has a Master's degree in social work (MSW) and is licensed as an independent clinical social worker (LICSW).



If you or someone you know needs a little help, give us a call:

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

All services are free and completely confidential



Your Federation Presents

Federation Families Gave 'Em Pumpkin to Talk About on Sukkot

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

Under a bright blue sky, PJ Library kids along with their parents, grandparents, and cousins joined together to learn about the holiday of Sukkot and enjoy Pumpkin Fest at Whitney's Farm on October 20. We shook the lulav, and then made our own out of herbs. We also decorated etrog boxes! A fun time was had by all.



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OBITUARIES

Elaine (Goodman) Loveman, 98, wife, mother, grandmother, sister

PITTSFIELD - Elaine (Goodman) Loveman, 98, died on Monday, September 23, at her home.

Born in Yonkers, NY on October 25, 1925, a daughter of the late Sidney Goodman and Margaret (Fried) Goodman, Elaine worked with her late husband as a bookkeeper in his accounting practice.

She was a member of Congregation Knesset Israel since 1962.

Elaine was the widow of Kenneth Jay Loveman, who died in December, 2003. She leaves her daughter, Barbara J. Babij of Canada; son, Michael B. Loveman of Rensselaer, NY; two grandchildren, Daniel S. Loveman and Kayla M. Prager. She was predeceased by a brother, Robert Goodman.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, September 25, at Knesset Israel, with Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader, officiating. Burial followed in Knesset Israel Cemetery, Pittsfield.

Donations may be made to the Kenneth J. And Elaine G. Loveman Endowment Fund at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201 or the charity of your choice.

Alan Glackman, loved every minute of life in the Berkshires

GREAT BARRINGTON - Alan Glackman passed away peacefully on Monday, September 9 at Berkshire Medical Center.

Alan was born in Miami Beach, FL and moved to the Berkshires in 2006. A certified public accountant with a practice in Great Barrington, he was the treasurer of the Great Barrington Rotary and Berkshire Pulse. He loved every minute of his life in the Berkshires and the people who lived here.

Alan is survived by his wife of 51 years, Benes; sister Elaine of NC; brother Arnie of Las Vegas, NV; and nieces and nephews.

Harry Weinstein, beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, physician
SCARSDALE, NY - Harry Weinstein, beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and physician died peacefully at home on Tuesday, April 16.

Donations may be made to Scarsdale Synagogue, 2 Ogden Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583, or the National Parkinson's Foundation. Donations in his memory can be made to either Great Barrington Rotary Student Assistance Fund at gb-rotary.org or Berkshire Pulse at berkshirerpulse.org.

Jeffrey S. Cohen, 62, soft-spoken, passion for sports, loved his family
GUILDERLAND, NY - Jeffrey S. Cohen, 62, loving husband of 31 years to Jacqueline (Jackie) and beloved father of Hannah Grace and Sarah Elizabeth, died peacefully at home on Sunday, September 29, after a courageous battle with chromophobe kidney cancer.

Born November 21, 1961, in Pittsfield, the beloved son of Robert and Iris (Sidman) Cohen. Jeff's greatest joys in life were his three girls and his treasured "granddogs," Winnie and Benson. Jeff was a graduate of Pittsfield High School and UMASS Amherst. Growing up, Jeff found a passion for sports, which he loved to watch and play. He was the go-to friend or family member to call for any trivia or crossword clues on sports, the 1960s and 1970s TV and movies, and classic rock. Though soft-spoken, Jeff had an intuition for when his loved ones needed him and was always there with a listening ear, a helping hand, and a joke that never failed

to bring a smile to your face even during hard times. Jeff retired from the mortgage industry after over 30 years in 2022. He spent his final years caring for his beloved parents, volunteering with Community Caregivers, traveling, and spending time with the people he loved the most.

Jeff is survived by his wife, Jackie; daughters Hannah and Sarah; uncles Alan Sidman (Sharman) and Steven Cohen; aunt Jan Lysy (Dusan); brother Andrew (Laurie); sister Ruth (Bob Thistle); brothers and sisters-in-law David Thomas, Daniel Gaffney, George Gaffney, Patricia Lanotte (Michael), Katherine Gaffney (Erik Smith), and Margaret Gaffney-Smith (Chip); nieces and nephews Devan Cohen, Jack Thistle (Mariah), Quinn Cohen, Carolyn Cohen, Patricia Thistle, Mackenzi Miller (Rob), Anthony Lanotte, Jack Smith (Natalie), Patrick Gaffney, Lauren Lanotte, Aidan Smith, Sean Smith, Heather Broeckx and Leyla Kiosse (Levi); cousins David Lysy (Meg), Kara Lysy, Erin Johnstone (Eric), Sherri Lysy, David Cohen (Kathleen), Michael Cohen (Shana), Mark Woolsey Paige (Sonya), Stasha Cohen (Mark), Derek Cohen, Cheryl Cohen Owens and Joseph Ritter (Nancy); and many cherished friends, particularly the Pittsfield and O'Toole's boys. Jeff was predeceased by his beloved parents, Robert and Iris Cohen, and Jack and Anne Gaffney.

Services to celebrate Jeff's life were held at the Levine Memorial Chapel, Albany, NY on Sunday, October 6.

Donations may be made to the Denise A. Kaley Fund for Berkshire County Women with Cancer, c/o Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, 800 North Main Street, Sheffield, MA 01257, or the Wildwood Foundation, 1190 Troy Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110.

Joseph Harden Reich, 89, devoted life to opening doors to education, culture, and healthcare where it was needed most
SHEFFIELD - Joseph Harden Reich, 89, died peacefully on Sunday, September 29, at his beloved family home.

Born December 16, 1934 in Pittsburgh, PA, he lived there and in Charleston, WV as a child. He entered Cornell University at age 16, where he met his wife, Carol Friedman. They married November 11, 1955 on a weekend between his Navy OCS graduation and entering active duty in the Western Pacific. Joe then completed an MBA at Stanford University, during which time the couple's eldest child, Deborah, was born in 1960. He began his professional life at Continental Oil in Houston, TX, where their second daughter, Marcia, joined the family in 1961. He moved from there to the firm of Donaldson, Lufkin, & Jenrette in NYC, embarking on a long and successful career in finance and a lifelong commitment to that city. Their third daughter, Janet, was born there in 1967.

With a partner he launched his own market-based money management firm, Reich & Tang, in 1968, and they moved quickly to a focus on the relatively new area of money market funds. "At the time we started ours, there were only two other money market funds in existence. It was too new a field to have any traditionally male job descriptions associated with it. The women at Reich & Tang were able to rise because of that, advancing so quickly that by the time this segment of the market really exploded, women were the natural experts."

After leaving Reich & Tang, Joe remained active in the investment business at Centennial Associates, where he co-managed a group of investment partnerships,

while turning the real muscle of his attention to philanthropy, primarily education. In 1988, Joe and Carol created a project in the New York City Schools through Gene Lang's I Have A Dream program. Appalled at the conditions for their students in the local public elementary schools, Joe and Carol combined his entrepreneurial spirit with her education background to pioneer the first public-private partnership in the system, changing the face of the charter-school movement, in which they remained powerfully involved, for future generations. Together with Carol, Joe founded the Beginning with Children Foundation in 1990. The Foundation opened the first charter-like school, Beginning with Children, in Williamsburg in 1992, six years before New York State passed its first charter law. Joe was a co-founder of the New York Charter School Center and served as its Chairman until December, 2007. Joe and Carol served as Founding Directors of the Hunt Institute in Chapel Hill NC, which trains governors and aspiring governors in education reform. He also served as adjunct faculty in the business school at Columbia University, teaching a course of his own design on entrepreneurship.

Joe was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, as his father had been before him, at age 70. Parkinson's was not the first illness he'd been asked to fight, and he set himself a goal of managing it more actively than his father had, to both outlive and out-live him, and it was an immense source of pride for him to have crushed that goal. The innovative and excellent care he received from Dr. Susan Bressman, her team and her colleagues played a huge role in his staying as healthy as he could and he considered Parkinson's to be a minor element of his life story. "My drive was a much more



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OBITUARIES

powerful factor in shaping me than Parkinson's disease has been," he said recently. He was a proud investor in the future of Parkinson's research and treatment, another example of the spirit of *tikkun olam* that guided him and Carol in leveling the playing field for children and creating access and opportunities for all. Together they were involved philanthropists, focused on creating real programs to substantively serve those who needed them the most in communities around the world.

In business, philanthropy, and his health he pursued improvement toward excellence and attracted and retained loyal partners. He remained curious and opinionated about the world to the very end. Joe was a loving family man and took great pride and enjoyment in his children and grandchildren. His family acknowledges an incredible group of loving friends and companions, committed co-workers and gentle caregivers for their active role in making his later years comfortable, enjoyable, and richly engaging.

Joe was preceded in death by his wife of 63 years, Carol Reich. He is survived by two daughters, Marcia Reich Walsh and Janet Reich Elsbach, and their families. His eldest daughter Deborah Reich died in 2013.

Joe devoted his life to opening doors to education, culture, and healthcare where it was needed most. The family asks that donations in his honor be made to improve access in your chosen

community, and love the idea of extending the ripples of Joe's life to new areas. If you don't have a favorite organization in mind, please consider a donation to the Beginning with Children Foundation, 185 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11211 or beginningwithchildren.org.

Steffi Loewenstein Fletcher, 96, warmth, curiosity, capacity for growth, and irreverence
STOCKBRIDGE – Steffi Loewenstein Fletcher, 96, passed away on Saturday, September 28

"She mostly played the neutral scene, not very good, not very mean. Was an okay mother/wife, had a very lucky life. Now she's dead. 'Nuff said."

Steffi hoped the obituary above, which she wrote in recent weeks, would suffice. But the family adds context.

Born December 21, 1927, her life, which she considered one of good fortune, was informed by her childhood in the close-knit pre-WWII Jewish community of Osnabruck, Germany. Her teenage years were in Binghamton, NY, and she graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College, majoring in Philosophy.

She authored children's books and for many years taught English at Berkshire Country Day School and Miss Hall's School. Steffi loved her Stockbridge Bowl home, built by her adored husband Robert. She also loved literature, Tanglewood, tennis, and swimming. She inspired with her warmth, curiosity,

capacity for growth, and irreverence. She cherished every visit with her extended family and her many friends. In her nineties, she still began each morning with an hour of floor exercises. Her greatest fear was that the improbable King Kone in Pittsfield would close.

After a brief cardiac illness, Steffi died serenely at Fairview Hospital, where loving and excellent care brightened her last days. Several hours before the final moment, she was exclaiming about the joys of the Fairview omelet station. (All those choices – what a delight!). The list of her heroes and confidants is long, but the family particularly thanks her advisors in poetry matters, who visited, phoned, and emailed devotedly in recent years. Her appreciation of your wisdom and encouragement was immense.

A memorial will be held in April/May 2025. Donations may be made to the Lenox Library Association, 18 Main Street, Lenox, MA 01240.

Becca Arielle Pava, 35, imaginative, caring, multi-talented, strong-willed, lover of animals, eternally optimistic

PITTSFIELD - Becca Arielle Pava, 35, passed away peacefully in her home on Tuesday, October 8, due to complications from an infection.

A graduate of Holyoke Community College and Elms College of Chicopee, Becca was a gifted writer, author of two published books and creator of several blogs (her most recent was entitled *Chronically Alive*).

Becca struggled with physical and mental health issues for most of her life. Through her writing, Becca tried to help others find ways to manage their chronic illnesses. She sought to break down the stigma of sexual abuse and mental illness and to reveal the dysfunctionality of the United States mental health system for children and young adults. She was imaginative, caring, multi-talented, strong-willed, a lover of animals, and eternally optimistic.

Becca is survived by her parents, Vivian Newman and Dr. Moses Pava; grandparents, Beverly and Sam Pava; loving brothers, Jonah and Micah; and dozens of admiring aunts, uncles, and cousins. Her beloved boyfriend, Jeffrey Harford, predeceased her.

A funeral was held on Thursday, October 10 at Ascher Zimmerman Funeral Home, Springfield.

Memorial contributions can be made to Magen David Adom, Daiken Animal Shelter, Berkshire Humane Society, or Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.

Susan Lechtman, 82, generosity of spirit, warmth, compassion for others

RICHMOND - Susan Lechtman (née Pressman), 82, beloved wife, mother, and grandmother passed away peacefully on Thursday, October 17, surrounded by her loving children.

Born in Newark, NJ, Susan later called Short Hills and Morristown home, but her

heart truly belonged to the Berkshires, where she spent nearly 40 cherished years. She enjoyed attending theater performances, listening to concerts at Tanglewood, and playing tennis and bridge.

Susan's generosity of spirit extended beyond her family. She served her community as a dedicated volunteer with the Millburn-Short Hills First Aid Squad for decades, embodying her compassion for others and selflessness. But above all, her greatest joy came from her grandchildren; Sasha and AJ Chriss, and Zoe and Max Lechtman, whom she adored. Susan was married to Duke Lechtman for 60 years.

In addition to her grandchildren and devoted husband Duke, Susan leaves behind her four children; Lisa and Stephen Chriss, and Claudia and Rick Lechtman, who were by her side and cared for her with unwavering love during her final years. Susan will be remembered for her warmth, generosity, and the deep love for her family and friends. Her radiant smile and gentle kindness touched everyone who knew her.

A graveside funeral was held on Sunday, October 20 at B'nai Abraham Memorial Park, Union, NJ. Donations may be made to Planned Parenthood and the Millburn-Short Hills Volunteer First Aid Squad.

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South Africa: Country of Great Contrasts

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

It took a week to get over the jet lag, but our journey to South Africa was well worth the exhaustion, and definitely merits the term "trip of a lifetime." A country of gorgeous landscapes, magnificent flora, and majestic fauna, South Africa is also a nation of many contrasts, even some surprising ones.

Although the country suffered the horrors of apartheid for 46 long years, we saw numerous examples of blacks and whites doing business together, dining together, and walking hand-in-hand on the streets.

There's great wealth, with mansions lining tree-shaded avenues. But still, about 85% of property remains in the hands of whites. There's also devastating poverty, with a 30% unemployment rate (closer to 50% for Blacks). Thousands upon thousands of tin shacks line the roads, and the homeless population is overwhelming the country's meager resources.

Johannesburg is so dangerous a city that virtually every home is surrounded by a barbed wired-topped wall. We were instructed not to leave our hotel at night unescorted – even though it was across the street from a police station. Because we had chosen to dine at one of the kosher Israeli restaurants, we had to take a hotel-owned van in both directions to the Jewish neighborhood.

Despite all the problems, people flow into South Africa for better opportunities than they can find in their home countries. Virtually every booth in Cape Town's city's open-air market is populated by vendors from across the continent. We met people from Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique, just to name a few. The most compelling story we heard was from Michael, the man who drove us to the airport. A native of Rwanda, he lost his entire family in the genocide during that country's civil war. At the age of eleven, with nothing holding him there, he walked 2,800 miles to Cape Town in pursuit of a better life. Now an adult, he has his own business driving a cab and has a family.

Our visit was planned as a sandwich. The first and last days of our 19-day trip were devoted to South Africa's turbulent social history. We visited the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, where we were randomly classified as "White" or "Non-White." Those categories determined the first experience we would have. For example, the entrance for White visitors is brightly lit, while that for Non-Whites is narrow, steep, and dark. This experience was chilling.

We then paid our respects at the Hector Pieteron Memorial and Museum in Soweto, where in 2002, 12-year-old Hector was shot to death at a peaceful protest against the forced of teaching in the Afrikaans language. Hector's now elderly sister described the horrific scene for us at the memorial. We ended the tour on Robben Island where, surrounded by shark-infested waters, Nelson Mandela was held for 18 of his 27 years of imprisonment. Former inmates led the tours, and their stories were both bone-chilling and inspiring. Finally, we dined at a private home with a family whose lives were upended when they were forcibly removed from their homes in a mixed-race neighborhood and driven into Soweto, the Black township.

A cultural highlight of the trip was a visit to an authentic Zulu village. Although we didn't get to meet the king, we did meet one of his two wives and their combined brood of 25 children. I was surprised to learn that a large part of the village's revenue comes not from agriculture, but from entertainment. The villagers performed ceremonial bridal dances and sold CDs of their songs, many of which will be performed on their European tour.

Aside from these (and more) cultural and historical visits, it was all nature. South African President Paul Kruger was a visionary in 1898 when he set aside enormous swaths of land for nature preservation. Kruger National Park alone is the size of Portugal, and it's not the only national park.



Cango Caves

Even away from the parks, we saw wildlife. Warthogs meandered in front of our lunch table, and impalas accompanied Joel on a walk from the dining room.

Because we had a late-night return flight, our very last day in the country was free, so we headed to Cape Town's Jewish Museum, situated on a campus that also includes a Holocaust center, library, synagogue, and kosher café. Many of the exhibits focus on the Lithuanian community, given that 80% of South Africa's first Jews immigrated from that country. A highlight of the displays is a reconstructed shtetl.

A significant portion of the museum is dedicated to the Jewish community's support of anti-apartheid activity. Among the video displays is testimony by Nelson Mandela himself.

We're still sorting through the hundreds of photos we took over the three weeks of our journey, and will probably savor the memories forever.



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.



South African Malva Pudding

Malva pudding, best described as an apricot based sticky toffee pudding, is considered the iconic dessert of South Africa. It's obviously popular since we were served at least a dozen different versions of it during our visit. Some places serve it with a custard sauce, while others add a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a dollop of whipped cream.

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons butter

1 cup sugar

2 tablespoons smooth apricot jam/
apricot preserves

2 teaspoons white vinegar

2 cups flour

2 cups milk

2 eggs

pinch of salt

2 teaspoons bicarbonate of soda
baking soda

For the syrup:

1½ cups sugar

½ cup boiling water

4 tablespoons honey

1 cup unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS:

To make the pudding, pre-heat the oven to 350°F and grease a 10-inch square baking dish.

In a saucepan set over medium-high heat melt together the butter, sugar, apricot jam and vinegar until the sugar has dissolved and the mixture is smooth. Remove from the heat and allow to cool for 5 minutes before pouring it into a large mixing bowl.

Sift the dry ingredients together, then add to the butter mixture, alternating with the milk, mixing well after each addition.

Stir in the beaten eggs.

Pour the batter into the prepared dish and place in the oven.

Bake for 30 minutes until the pudding is dark brown and baked through (a skewer inserted should come out clean).

While the pudding is baking, prepare the syrup.

Bring all the syrup ingredients to a boil and reduce the heat. Allow to simmer for 5 minutes.

Pour the syrup over the pudding as it comes out of the oven.

Allow to stand for 20 minutes then serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

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CULTURE & ARTS

Seth Rogovoy Captures the Musical Voice of “The Quiet Beatle” in His Acclaimed New Biography of George Harrison

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

I say in speeches that a plausible mission of artists is to make people appreciate being alive at least a little bit. I am then asked if I know of any artists who pulled that off. I reply, ‘The Beatles did.’

– Kurt Vonnegut

Fifty-plus years after the band’s break-up, is there really anything new to write about The Beatles? The best a reader might hope for in yet another book about the band is that the author put the story together in a way that moves you back to the music with fresh ears. But that’s not how most books about the band proceed – since it is so easy to get tangled in the weeds of Beatle lore and Beatle love, Beatles history has become the playground of the obsessive and the nudnick, both of whom root in the minutia. Inevitably, the answer of how The Beatles make you appreciate being alive exists within the songs and each individual listening to them. If you’ve never read one word about The Beatles, you’re still doing just fine.

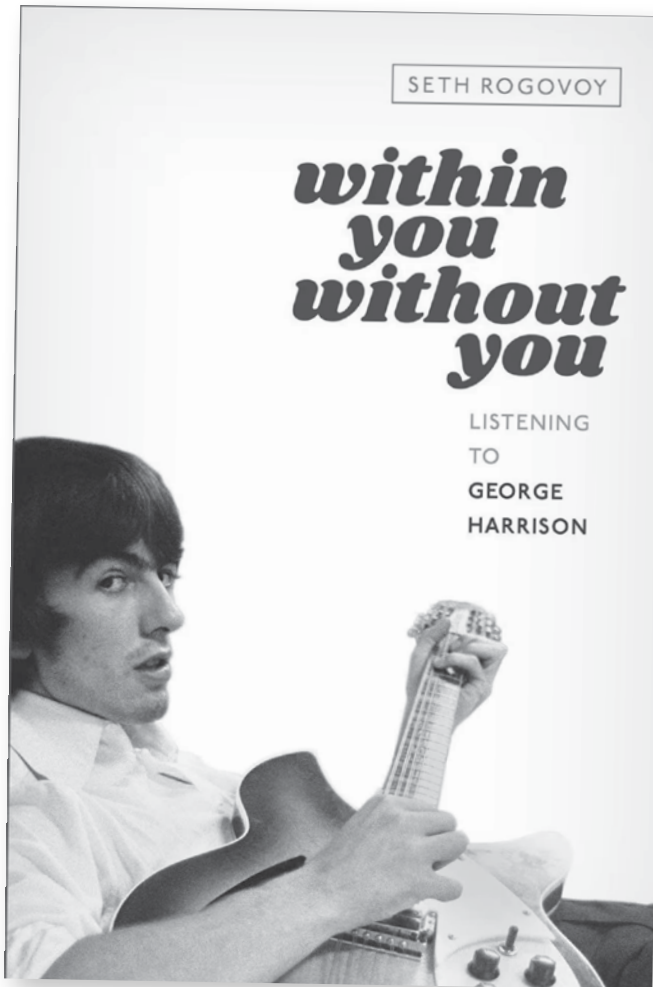
In his new book, *Within You Without You: Listening to George Harrison*, Seth Rogovoy – long the best cultural writer working in our region – defies all odds and succeeds in providing something fresh about The Beatles. He not only understands what George Harrison contributed to the band’s sound and spirit, he explains it in a way that when you relisten to the recordings, you hear ‘the George’ in songs in ways you probably would not have noticed before.

John Lennon and Paul McCartney were towering figures who wrote the majority of The Beatles’ hits, but as Rogovoy shows, music and lyrics cannot define the sound and feel of a song. While there have been enough truly awful covers of Beatles tunes that should make that point apparent, it’s easy to assume that the songs came out as they did because the songwriters wanted them to sound that way. Given that Harrison and Ringo Starr’s contributions were sometimes undervalued by critics, it’s possible to overlook that what The Beatles created was the product of a true collaboration among four creative musicians, abetted by visionary producer George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick.

Rogovoy chronicles how, in addition to his distinctive guitar breaks and solos, Harrison came up with many of the intros to Lennon and McCartney compositions that make the songs so instantly arresting and the outros that made their wind-ups so satisfying and enduringly perfect. Best is his chapter on “The Chord” that opens and closes “A Hard Day’s Night” – “Rather than a hook or a riff,” Rogovoy writes, “Harrison devised a single chord, an unusual combination of notes that were not easily identifiable and that, as finally recorded by the group, was fleshed out by George Martin on piano and Paul McCartney on bass.” Apparently, despite much study, “efforts to deconstruct the chord defy analysis.” One may have listened to the song a million times without considering the chord’s uncanniness – after reading Rogovoy, you won’t hear it the same way again.

Rogovoy also demonstrates Harrison’s influence as a visionary who infused Indian classical music, the sonic capabilities of the Moog synthesizer, and the jangle of the 12-string guitar into The Beatles’ musical vocabulary, and then into pop music more widely. He’s also very insightful about the strategies Harrison employed as a songwriter, although Rogovoy’s analysis did not make me appreciate his contributions to The Beatles’ records any more than I had previously. As a matter of personal taste, I’m put off by message songs and, anyway you cut it, George’s songs for at least the first three-quarters of The Beatles’ output are preachy as all get out, not to mention kind of prickly (which Rogovoy acknowledges). I always greeted their slots on the albums the way I might an opinionated relative who always has to be invited to a family gathering, but whose harangues I endure only to be polite. After having George’s early songs *hocking mier keyn chaynik* for 50 years, I am in no rush to be preached to again.

But by the end of The Beatles’ run, George found his way as an exemplary songwriter, culminating in his masterwork for the band, “Something,” which appears on *Abbey Road*, the band’s next to last album. (A bit surprisingly, in 2021, Harrison’s “Here Comes the Sun,” also from that album, was the most streamed Beatles song on Spotify.) Rogovoy tells you what you need to understand about The Beatles break-up as it related to Harrison – stories covered well and exhaustively by other writers – and then writes beautifully about the eruption of pent-up creativity that led to the greatest of all the post-Beatles recordings by any of its members, *All Things Must Pass*. If the Phil Spector-produced 3-LP recording



once seemed overstuffed to me, now it just seems magical from start to finish – I don’t want it to end.

Rogovoy captures the essence of that album’s pinnacle, “What Is Life”:

There is catchy, there is memorable, and there is transcendent. The opening riff of “What Is Life” is transcendent in its shape and its urgency, and that perhaps is what accounts for the feeling I get when I hear it, the feeling that it has been around forever. It is as if George had tapped into some universal wavelength...

When I listened to the song again for the first time after reading Rogovoy’s appraisal, the joy of the music washed over me in a way it hadn’t in years. Because of the sclerotic nature of radio programming since the “Classic Rock” era of the 1970s, great songs have been overplayed to the point where it’s a challenge to hear what makes them so arresting. Again and again in *Within You Without You*, Rogovoy’s insights push a Reset button that allows a song you’ve heard a million times – like “What Is Life” – to once again make you appreciate being alive, at least a little bit.

As Rogovoy acknowledges, after *All Things Must Pass*, “Lightning was not going to strike again, at least not in the same place or even in the same neighborhood and it was time to listen to Harrison with new ears and, if not with lowered expectations, at least on his own terms.” The remaining albums he recorded were uneven, but Harrison made contributions to other artists’ work as a producer and sideman (although Rogovoy doesn’t single out my favorite, his scorching slide guitar on Badfinger’s “Day After Day”). Rogovoy is also good at showing how Harrison extended his cultural impact by

producing some excellent movies, including Monty Python’s classic comedy, *The Life of Brian*.

Within You, Without You is an entertaining read that is marred by lax editing as it draws to a close. Information is repeated, bogging the narrative down in redundancy. One lapse is particularly baffling – Rogovoy’s account of Harrison’s last recording, *Brainwashed*, wraps up before the part in which he tells the story of The Traveling Wilburys, the supergroup comprising Harrison, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne, and Bob Dylan. That collaboration produced some of Harrison’s most appealing work since *All Things Must Pass*, songs in which the charm and cheek Harrison conveyed in interviews was perhaps most fully on display. Rogovoy’s writing remains strong throughout – a more thoughtful editorial effort would have made the book even better.

But that’s a quibble. The Berkshires’ own Seth Rogovoy has done a great job in capturing the musical voice of ‘the quiet Beatle.’

Editor’s Note: A brief personal aside – my mother’s cousin, David Braun, was George Harrison’s lawyer in the 1970s, handling litigation against his former manager, Allen Klein, which Rogovoy discusses in his chapter on “My Sweet Lord” and also the lawsuit brought because of that song’s similarity to the Chiffons’ “He’s So Fine.” Per *The ABA Journal* 2019 article “Lawyers, Songs & Money”: “During litigation, Harrison admitted he had known of the Chiffons’ song, but denied that it had influenced him. Harrison turned to his lawyer, famed music attorney David Braun of Hardee, Barovick, Konecky & Braun, for help. ‘He impressed me as a very down-to-earth guy,’ says Joe Santora, head of litigation at Braun’s firm who ended up trying the case...Harrison testified on his own behalf and even brought his guitar to court to show how he had composed “My Sweet Lord.” Santora recalls the New York courtroom being packed to the rafters as if it were Yankee Stadium. “George’s testimony was perfect,” Santora says. “It saved him. It kept the judge from calling him guilty on intentional infringement.” Instead, Harrison was found liable for subconsciously infringing the Chiffons, which lowered his damages considerably.”

David Brownstein was an only child whose family lived in the same apartment for a time with my mother’s family, the Denenbergs, in the Bronx in the 1940s. He was considered “one of the most powerful lawyers in the music industry during its heyday” by *Variety*. He represented Bob Dylan, Neil Diamond, George Harrison, The Band, and Michael Jackson, was co-producer of the film *The Last Waltz*, and served as president of Polygram Records. The family was proud of Cousin David.

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CULTURE & ARTS

LEAH LAX,

continued from cover

shows how an experience that might strike most of us as mundane – resettling in a Texas suburb – can be, for a non-American coming to it, a complex and transcendent life journey.

In October, the BJV caught up with Leah for a wide-ranging conversation about her immigration project and the life and career experiences that inform her latest works. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

In Uncovered, you write about what it was like to be a ba'al teshuva in the Chabad movement of the 1970s and 1980s. What was that experience like?

It was absolutely at the early beginnings of their ba'al teshuva outreach and they didn't have any organizations specifically for them or their education. The system of *shluchim*, or emissaries, was really raw. I mean, these guys were basically given not enough money to get bus tickets and schnorrer the few kosher meals they could find across the country. And they would find those lonely old Jews that had landed in little towns who could speak Yiddish. Those young men were often really, really raw in the world, too.

When I joined them, I found a lot of ex-hippies. I'd been enamored with the hippie movement. I loved its disdain of materialism and its secular spiritual side. I mean, the make love, not war, and all that. Those were my formative years, and I found lots of ex-hippies that transferred really naturally right into Chabad. I knew lots of guys that showed up with long hair, and they already had the beard because of the hippie look. They were counterculture people – because that was a sector that they would be successful with.

I was 17 years old when I first joined them, and damaged and insecure, and I wanted to please people, and I wanted to feel safe. I had stars in my eyes about the idealism. I felt this was going to be a safe place for me and for my children. It's like,

here, men are never bad to women because there are rules. Here, women never get hurt because everybody adheres to the laws, and the law is kind, and good, and loving. How sad to think about it now, but I believed it. That's why I came up to that conclusion that you never get to grow up in an ultra-Orthodox world. I mean, what is adolescence? It's rebellion. It's saying, let me experiment with breaking rules. Let me reject the ideas of my parents because I have to muck around and figure out what I believe. Nobody gets to do that. It's a whole world of arrested adolescence.

When I read your book, I realized that you were being told, as a husband and a wife, and as a Jewish man and a Jewish woman, you were being fixed into some cosmic order, just like you said, where things work out. But what you come to understand is that that life is a human construct in which human beings have to live. And as a human construct, it's inherently imperfect.

There's something drug-like about being told God will love you. You can envelop yourself in that sense of being loved. Most people are love starved. I wasn't the only one. And it's not only drug-like, but there's also this very persistent social pressure that is unspoken. We had all kinds of people in our community, but there is this very strong social pressure to conform. Once you have children, you're way more vulnerable to conform. Sometimes you think it's for their sake. Anyway, very often, until people feel a personal and direct conflict, they don't care about the flaws the system.

I did the same until I came to terms with two things that would never fly within the system, two things that were earth-shattering, life-changing, immutable forces – and I realized that I was the only one that was going to acknowledge them. For the first time in my life, I was going to have to overrule that overarching authority and make my own decision, because if I put my life in the hands of rabbis, then I could die, either physically or spiritually. So the first was having an abortion. [Note: After her seventh child was born prematurely, upon becoming

pregnant again, Lax determined that trying to have another child could damage her health or end her life.] I was arguing with myself, saying, 'You're a monster, and this is terrible. How could you even think of such a thing?' And yet I kept putting that foot in front of the other. It was like, you know you're going to die. You have to turn and run. It's very deeply instinctual. [Note: A rabbi determined that an abortion could be permitted given her circumstances.]

The second thing was that once I took control of my being...once I took control of my body and said 'no, I woke up. I'd been having insomnia for years and suppressing the dreams or having these erotic lesbian dreams. I would wake up and go, 'That's weird,' and just go in the kitchen, go to work.

Once I became that more conscious because of the abortion, I was flooded with a clear sense of where my desires belong and what desire is and who I am. This became something completely irrefutable, immutable part of me. Because I grew up in Chabad, with this very deep belief that I have a precious soul from God, I thought that God doesn't make mistakes. This part of me is essential to my joy, to my ability to be creative as a creative person, to my functioning in the world. Sexuality – again, straight out of Judaism, is not peripheral. It's key. There's a quote from Talmud that says, If it wasn't for that urge, a man would never build a house or plant a vineyard. In other words, this sexual drive is foundational to society, to our being communal, civilized people. It is who we are. It wasn't something to suppress and say, 'Oh, trivial.' It was me. I got that from my upbringing in Chabad.

And then the conclusion – if that system doesn't recognize me, then they're wrong, not me. And my faith came falling down. I knew I was going to have to leave, but I looked at my kids and went, Oh, I can't do this. I just went through the motions. But I very intently potentially allowed myself to fall in love. I had to live. I had to have that experience before I died.

It takes an incredible amount of courage, even if you're leaving behind something that's not satisfying



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CULTURE & ARTS

to you, to leave the thing you know and embark on a new journey where nothing is written, nothing is ordained. How did your experience leaving Chabad and orthodoxy bring you into the subject of immigration?

[Lax went to university and obtained a degree in creative writing. She says her first important creative work was as co-creator of *The Mikvah Project*, a touring exhibit of photographs and interviews documenting the resurgence of the Jewish rite of immersion in a ritual bath. The exhibit toured 26 cities in the US. In 2005, she received a call from the Houston Grand Opera asking if she would like to write an opera about immigration. Knowing nothing about opera, she at first demurred, although she bonded personally with the company's director and eventually agreed. To research the project, Lax started interviewing immigrants to Houston – a process that took on a life of its own and became not only an opera, but the book *Not From Here*.]

A really big part of why I caved and said yes was that I deeply felt that I was an immigrant, too, in my own society. I was out of step culturally. It took me years to catch up. And the truth is I will never catch up. I missed 30 years of American culture. Can you imagine? I didn't know how to figure tax on a tip in a restaurant. I didn't know how to pay my insurance or take a mortgage. I didn't know how – my husband did everything. But I also, I found new friends. We could meet for lunch and there'd be a reference to a movie or to something from the immediate past that everyone knew. I would just go, huh? I had a girlfriend at the time who used to call it 'a Rip thing' – like I was Rip Van Winkle.

I started that project two years out of Chabad. I was still this stranger, an immigrant in my own country. How must they feel? I would sit down to interview them and say: 'Please – start with "I was born..."' *Not From Here* has something like 80,000 words in it. The libretto for a 90-minute opera has about 3,000 words. And I collected just a small portion of the material. I had over a thousand pages of transcripts. So why was I so driven? It's because I needed to understand. It's because I felt such an affinity, because I wasn't going to leave until I got the whole story.

I had this feeling that not only was I finding my community, but that it was everywhere. I saw all this overlap with what we call Jewish and is really immigrant. I'll just give you one example. In Houston,

you can find a Swahili school, a Chinese school, an Urdu school, et cetera. They're all connected, except for the Chinese one, to a house of worship. Because this is how you stay ethnically connected. This is who you are. They stay connected, regardless of belief, to their form of a religion that they practice in their area of their home country, with services in their language. I have five sons. I had to take them through learning to chant an entire Torah portion, no cuts, like in the conservative world and after. And it's intense. And they had to learn the *maamler* (discourse) that the boys recited, which is just an unbelievable institution. They were 12-year-old boys. It's just an ancient rite of passage that is imprinted on them right at the cusp of adulthood.

Assimilation in general has been problematic in the United States since air travel became more common. People are not necessarily leaving behind the old country – they have a way of getting back to it. The Internet has made it easier for people to stay connected with the culture in another country where they came from, as well. Is an immigrant to the US going to be as successful if they are keeping a foot in both worlds?

Now, you're talking about being a hyphenated-American. What I saw was that everybody was struggling with assimilation and with the sense of their culture waning, but they also had a great need to hold on. The people that figured out that balance and were able to successfully pass it on to their children and that were the most balanced, were the people who are allowed to go back home to their original country to reinforce that connection, even though they were devotedly American. It's like this who we were, is part of who we are, and this is who we are now. It's a balancing act.

With all the trauma that Jewish people brought to this country, we were people who could never go back home. It is universal that people bring loss when they migrate, and in many cases, trauma, even in the best of circumstances. Otherwise, why would they leave everything and come here? It's rarely just for money. Even if they come for a positive reason, there's such a sense of nostalgia and loss. So they have to adjust to that, and they do that by reformulating that balance. Nobody can erase it. It's the same thing we're talking about. Nobody can erase who they were or who they are. So they have

to understand that being a what I call a hyphenated-American is part of being an American.

This idea reformulated my entire sense of myself as a Jew, as an American, my sense of this country, because the constant influx of immigrants is why we are who we are. It's not coincidental. When you have the people around the table, hypothetically, looking at a problem, if everybody's coming from the same place with the same mindset, you get a two-dimensional view of the problem, period. But when you have people around the table and everybody's from a different place. They just have different viewpoints. You put them all together and you get surprising new ideas, and then they feed off each other.

I intuited, because of where I'm coming from, all this incredible, incredible overlap and this understanding of the struggle with assimilation and waning identity and how deeply we all need to hold on to it. It's not either/or. We have to dance on the hyphen and find the balance.



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CULTURE & ARTS

More Than Just a First Draft of History

Journalist Lee Yaron's 10/7: 100 Human Stories is an instant classic



Lee Yaron

On October 31, Israeli journalist Lee Yaron presented an online program for our Federation in which she discussed her remarkable new book, *10/7: 100 Human Stories*.

Yaron interviewed survivors from all the massacre sites and from all walks of life, including foreign guest workers, Bedouins, and Israeli Arabs whose experiences have not received the same coverage as those of the Jewish victims. In addition to her incisive reportage of the events and immediate aftermath of Oct. 7, Yaron also works in her subjects' personal and historical backstories, relating the circumstances of what brought them and families to resettle in Israel (both recently and generations ago) from far-flung corners of the world.

It is a remarkable achievement that seems destined to be a key document in how Oct. 7, 2023 will be understood in the future. In October, Lee Yaron answered our questions via email.

The BJV Interview: Lee Yaron

One thing that surprised me as I worked my way through 10/7 was the way you incorporated backstories – not only personal and family histories, but Jewish history, as well – into the narrative. I had expected it to be more of a journalistic “first draft of history,” and you delivered something much richer. After I finished the book, my research led me to something your husband, Joshua Cohen, observed in his Atlantic interview with Gal Beckerman that made me think about your book: “It is difficult to write a novel about an event. Because nothing ever starts that morning. Nothing ever ends that night. An event is not a subject.” Were your choices as a writer informed by this kind of approach to make the story you tell about a subject rather than an event?

This book tells the untold stories of 100 civilians – mothers, fathers, children – people who lived and died on the Gaza border. But I don't define them merely as victims. Instead, I investigate their lives, beliefs, communities, and family histories. I conducted hundreds of interviews, going back 2-3 generations to where the conflict started. The personal stories are woven together with the bigger political and historical narrative. Some chapters start in the '40s and '50s, allowing us to understand how past wars and failed peace attempts shaped these families' lives long before October 7th.

By weaving in personal histories, family stories, and the larger context of Jewish history, the book transcends being merely a “first draft of history” about a single event. Instead, I hope it will become a key for a real understanding of Israel's history and the history of the conflict – through these personal stories. They are a window into the complex tapestry of Israeli society and its historical roots.

But there's another layer beyond the immediate suffering: 10/7 represents the shattering of a dream that Jews have held for generations. As the news was unfolding, I knew I needed to do the deeper work of connecting 10/7 to this wider context.

When that fence was broken on October 7th, it wasn't just a physical barrier that crashed. It was this dream, carried through generations, that was shattered. A wound of generations of persecution, re-opened.

This was what I heard from so many of the survivors I interviewed. People whose families had come to Israel escaping persecution from Arab countries, from the former Soviet Union, from Africa, from Europe. Their stories reveal how October 7th isn't just part of Israeli history – it's part of Jewish history.

You write that “the consensus in the government and in the press seemed to be that technology such as the Iron Dome defense system would protect Israel, as would the large sums of money–cash, passed in suitcases–that were being paid to Hamas, essentially bribes to ensure their acquiescence.” As a journalist, you have covered stories from across Israel's subcultures – prior to 10/7, did Israelis more generally share that consensus? And how, in the year of war since the attack, has Israelis' regard of technology and economic incentivizing changed, particularly as regards internal security and foreign relations with their neighbors?

Prior to 10/7, there seemed to be a general consensus among Israelis that technological solutions like the Iron Dome, combined with economic incentives to Hamas, would be sufficient to protect Israelis and bolster the economy. This belief was largely supported by the government and media narratives.

Much has changed in this year, yet it feels like it was all one long day. Israel is in many ways frozen on October 8th, still mourning their dead, still waiting for the hostages. Many of the bereaved families I spoke with, say they stopped believing – in everything: technology, the IDF, the government – they feel like Israel abandoned them all alone in their darkest hour.

One thing we can notice is that Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben Gvir, is Americanizing Israel – transforming us from a country with virtually no mass shootings into one where civilians can easily obtain guns. Until 10/7, in Israel, weapons were primarily in the hands of soldiers and security personnel, not average citizens. Now, Ben Gvir is dramatically changing this landscape – unrecognizably. Admit it without words – the government and IDF and Iron Dome are not enough anymore – and civilians could protect themselves by themselves. Since October, he's distributed tens of thousands of weapons to civilians on demand.

Support for a two-state solution is also at an all-time low. A decade ago, 60% of the Israeli public believed in a two-state solution, 50% before the war, and just 35%-25% now. We see the same trend among Palestinians. In 2010, 57% of Palestinians supported the two-state solution. By 2021, this dropped to 40%. Just months before October 7, 2023, it hit a historic low of 28%.

Friends who have visited Israel in the past year have reported how interested Israelis have been in the particulars of the antisemitism that has emerged in the United States – not only the anti-Zionist marches, but even more so the Jew hatred that has been exposed in our consequential institutions. My personal experience of Israeli attitudes about the Israel/Diaspora divide had often been something akin to “we're on the front lines, you guys keep writing checks.” How have Israeli attitudes toward the position and role of American Jews changed in light of the mounting challenges we are facing in the Diaspora?

Many Israelis are shocked by the world's response. As Israel is a country with a Jewish majority, we Israelis do not experience antisemitism back home. Before 10/7, it was regarded as a struggle of the past by many Israelis. Now, there's a growing recognition in Israel of the complex challenges American Jews face – an evolving perspective that might lead to more reciprocal support. Israelis may now see American Jews as fighting their own “front line” against antisemitism. This could result in increased engagement from Israel in supporting Diaspora communities, not financially, but in terms of cultural and educational exchanges.

The shared experiences of facing hostility might strengthen the bonds between Israeli and American Jewish communities, leading to a more nuanced relationship – as the two parties understand more than ever.

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CULTURE & ARTS

Engaging With History

The Jewish Museum shares a selection of its treasures in advance of the 2025 reinstatement of its permanent collection



Bracelet made in Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia, by Greta Perlman.

Engaging with History: Works from the Collection is a selection of painting, sculpture, photography, and ceremonial art from the Jewish Museum's collection that will be on view in New York City through January 15, 2025. The exhibit is a sampling of the museum's largescale reimagining of its permanent collection, which will open on the third and fourth floors in late 2025 and will feature some of the Jewish Museum's great treasures, as well as new acquisitions on view for the first time.

The charm bracelet that appears on this page was fashioned by Greta Perlman in Theresienstadt (Terezín), the concentration camp established in Czechoslovakia by the Nazis for propaganda purposes. It will be on display through November 25.

The Jewish Museum's Elisabeth Rivard wrote about the bracelet in 2019. The following is excerpted from her article.

Holocaust survivor Greta Perlman's charm bracelet was created during her internment in the camp-ghetto of Theresienstadt from 1941 to 1944. Like an inmate subjected to Nazi camp-ghettos, the bracelet is near miraculous for its survival. Prisoners were sometimes able to make and keep artworks in camp workshops, often clandestinely and under special circumstances. Perlman was assigned to work in the camp kitchens, where she could have received the charms in exchange for food. Most aesthetic objects from the Holocaust only exist today because they were stored in walls or buried underground for later retrieval. Perlman may have assembled the complete set of charms much later, after her emigration to the United States.

Each piece held meaning for Perlman, like a traditional charm bracelet. The items range from mournful to grimly humorous, from reminders of camp life to memories of home. The horrific conditions in Theresienstadt magnify their significance. When death through starvation, disease, or murder was ever-present, personal trinkets like these charms were all the more precious. They also help us to understand some of what Perlman experienced in the camp. Numerous pieces allude to her work as a cook, including tiny pots and a ladle, and a silhouette of a woman stirring a pot. A bullet, a lice comb, and a latrine indicate the routine indignities and constant peril of the camp.

Others reveal a potential romance between Perlman and a man named Theo, of whom we have no record. A pair of companion charms are made of ceramic shards in brass settings. They are inscribed with "Greta" and "Theo," a date, and Terezín, or the Czech spelling of Theresienstadt. The pottery pieces must have been discarded by a camp workshop, yet as part of the bracelet they could represent the symbolic part of a Jewish wedding in which the couple breaks a plate.

Several charms bear Perlman's name, that of the camp, and how she came to be interned there. A monogram piece contains her full initials, and others include the letter M and the number 433. This letter and number combination seem meaningless, though they encode Perlman's transport designation when she was deported from Prague on December 14, 1941. For the Nazis, Theresienstadt served as a way station to death camps such as Auschwitz. The camp also existed to convince the outside world that Jews from Germany and Austria were being deported to the East for productive labor, propagated through false accounts and staged visits from

the Red Cross. The reality was that the camp was designed to annihilate inmates through work, or transfer to extermination camps.

For Jews and others deemed undesirable by the Nazi party, imprisonment in camps meant erasure of their identity and agency. Each of Greta Perlman's keepsakes tell a story, presenting aspects of her life and her struggle for survival. They track her movements from Prague to Theresienstadt, and detail her role as a cook. They tell us about her personal life and those she encountered in the camp. They represent the hopes and fears of a real person, rather than an anonymous victim. Taken together, the charms constitute a small yet profound means of resistance.

About the Tel Dan Stele

On loan from The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, the stone slab's inscription lends archaeological evidence to the existence of the Biblical King David as a historical figure, in parallel with the narrative of the Bible. Said James S. Snyder, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director: "The Tel Dan Stele can be seen as a touchstone for understanding the history of the three monotheistic faiths in the Holy Land, connecting the creation of this inscription to the evolving narrative of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam over the succeeding 1,000 and more years. Presenting the Stele within the context of the Museum's unique holdings underscores our mission to celebrate Jewish world culture through a broader historical lens that demonstrates its global interconnectedness."

Discovered in northern Israel in the early 1990s, the Stele was once part of an inscription on a basalt victory Stele commemorating the military victories of King Hazael of Aram (a region in present-day Syria) between c. 842 and 806 BCE.

Photo Credits

COVER: "House of David" inscribed on a victory stele. Dan. Iron Age II, 9th century BCE. Basalt. H: 34; W: 32 cm. Collection the Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996-125, 1993-3162. Photo © The Israel Museum, by Meidad Suchowolski

THIS PAGE LEFT: Bracelet made in Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), 1941-44. Brass: cut-out; porcelain; cord. 7 x 4 5/8 in. (17.8 x 11.7 cm). The Jewish Museum, NY. Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman.

THIS PAGE RIGHT: Deborah Kass. Double Red Yentl. Split (My Elvis), 1993. Screenprint and acrylic on canvas. 72 1/4 x 72 in. (183.5 x 182.9 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York. Purchase: Gift of Joan and Laurence Kleinman, 1993-120a-b.



Double Red Yentl, Split (My Elvis), by Deborah Kass

JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, November 21 at 7 p.m. (virtual)

Not From Here: The Song of America with author and librettist Leah Lax.

Thursday, December 5 at 7 p.m. (virtual)

Humans of Judaism: Everyone Has A Story: What's Yours? with author and founder of @humansofjudaism, Nikki Schreiber.

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.



CULTURE & ARTS

From Snout to Tail, a 3,000-year History of Jews and the Pig

A professor of religious studies explores how the pig became the ultimate Jewish taboo – and an inadvertent marker of Jewish identity

By Andrew Silow-Carroll / JTA

In 2021, the Orthodox Union declined to put its kosher certification on Impossible Pork, even though similarly vegan “Impossible” foods – its burger, its chicken nuggets – carried the OU seal of approval.

“The Impossible Pork, we didn’t give an ‘OU’ to it, not because it wasn’t kosher per se,” said Rabbi Menachem Genack, the CEO of the Orthodox Union’s kosher division, told JTA at the time. “It may indeed be completely [kosher] in terms of its ingredients: If it’s completely plant-derived, it’s kosher. Just in terms of sensitivities to the consumer ... it didn’t get it.”

It’s a delicate phrase, “sensitivities to the consumer,” that hints at a long and fraught history explored in Jordan D. Rosenblum’s new book, *Forbidden: A 3,000-Year History of Jews and the Pig*. The “consumer” of course is the Jew, and those “sensitivities” are the result of a history that turned the pig not just into the ne plus ultra of the taboo, or *treyf*, in Judaism, but, as the symbol of what Jews do and don’t do, an inadvertent marker of Judaism itself.

Rosenblum, a professor of religious studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who has written three other books on Jews and food, has spent 20 years pondering the question, “Why the pig?” After all, in the Torah the pig is



A Yiddish poster promotes the Soviet pork industry circa 1930. For Jews in the USSR, “Breeding pigs was an effective means to communicate their complete participation in Communism,” writes Rosenblum. (Central Publishing House for the USSR Peoples via Blavatnik Archive)

no less kosher than other animals Jews were forbidden to eat: shellfish, rabbits, raptors, camels.

“That’s a central part of the argument, that the pig is something so different,” Rosenblum told me. “I love the quote from David Rakoff, the humorist, where he says, ‘Shrimp is *treyf*, but pork is antisemitic.’ If you go back to the Hebrew Bible, it would make no sense.”

The pig’s exceptionalism is undeniable: There are plenty of good jokes about rabbis and ham sandwiches, but hardly any about rabbis and oysters. When formerly Orthodox Jews sit down to write their memoirs, nearly all include the pivotal moment when they first tasted bacon – the ultimate symbol of their exodus. And

when the Reform movement’s Hebrew Union College celebrated its break with tradition and its first graduating class in 1883 – at the so-called Trefa Banquet – they served clams, crabs, shrimp and frogs, but drew the line at pork.

Rosenblum traces the unique symbolic power of the pig to the Second Temple period, roughly 515 BCE to 70 CE, through the ways that Jews and their Greek and Roman neighbors wrote about Jewish identity. “It was Jews saying that’s weird that you eat it, and Greeks and Romans saying it’s weird that you don’t,” said Rosenblum, pithily summing up a surprisingly vast ancient literature about Jews and pigs whose authors range from the Roman poet Juvenal to the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo.

In the apocryphal Book of Maccabees, there is the story of Eleazar, a Jewish elder who opts to die rather than eat the pork forced on him by his tormentors – an early version of stories in rabbinic literature in which the pig is not only taboo but the embodiment of the foreign oppressor.

“One of my favorite ones is they say the pig is like Rome, because they’re both deceptive,” said Rosenblum. In an elaborate metaphor, the rabbis note that while pigs have split hooves – a requirement for a kosher mammal – they do not chew their cud, another requirement. Rome, they say, similarly boasts about its courts of law, but they are notoriously corrupt. (Echoes of the metaphor are heard in the Yiddish expression “*chazer fissel*,” or pig’s foot, referring to people who present themselves as something they are not.)

By the Talmudic period, the pig has become so basted with symbolism that rabbis refer to it only via euphemism – “*dvar acher*,” or “the other thing” (a weird foreshadowing of the late 20th century marketing of pork as “the other white meat”).

In the millennia to come, Jews and gentiles would deploy the pig in their attacks on each other. The medieval sage Maimonides, writing in Muslim Spain where pigs were also considered unclean, derided Christian Europeans for raising and eating the animals. Christians turned this around on Jews, saying Jews were averse to eating pigs because they reminded them of themselves.

Starting in the 13th century, German church and folk art often depicted the Judensau, or Jews’ pig, a grotesque image of Jews suckling from, having sex with and eating the excrement of a sow. The term for a Jewish convert during the Spanish Inquisition, “Marrano,” means “swine,” while conversos were charged with avoiding pork.

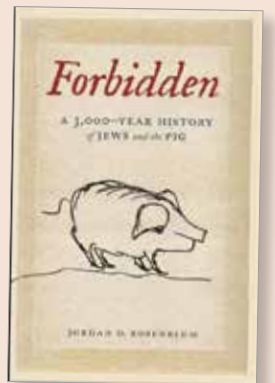
“One of the hardest moments of researching this book was when I got to the medieval and early modern chapters, because it’s just antisemitic reference after antisemitic reference,” said Rosenblum. “Take all of the antisemitic stereotypes of Jews as money grubbers and usurers, and stick it into the pig. Throw in some vulgar references. And then it leads to metaphorical and real violence.”

While such anti-Jewish feeling hardly disappeared, the emancipation of Jews in Europe created a new stage in the relationship between Jews and pigs: temptation. Allowed into gentile society or at least its perimeter, Jews were literally served a difficult choice: to eat or not eat the pig.

The last chapters in Rosenblum’s lean but meaty book are a survey of the many ways Jews navigated, and occasionally regurgitated, this dilemma. While some were happy to indulge in the forbidden, others had to decide between transgression and survival, like the Jewish Civil War soldiers whose meager rations were heavy on pork. Rosenblum shares the famous scholarship of Gaye Tuchman and Harry G. Levine, who in 1992 described why American Jewish immigrants fell in love with Chinese food. In “Safe Treyf,” they explain that the pork is almost unidentifiable in one-pan noodle and rice dishes and, what with names like chow mein and moo goo gai pan, who knew what was in them anyway? Chinese cuisine also tended not to mix dairy and meat, avoiding another emblematic kosher prohibition.

And at some point, eating Chinese food itself became an American Jewish tradition, no less than lavish bar mitzvah ceremonies or serving pizza and sushi at an Orthodox simcha.

Rosenblum is as interested in Jewish identity as he is in Jewish gastronomy, and reinforces repeatedly that eating habits are statements of who Jews are, even when the diet is strictly unkosher. Two years after the Trefa Banquet, Reform Judaism produced the “Pittsburgh Platform,” which rejected “all such Mosaic and rabbinic laws as regulate diet,” including the prohibition on pork. But like a militantly secular kibbutz that would serve ham on Yom Kippur, or communist Soviet Jews who promoted pig-breeding, the terms of these various rebellions were still expressed in relation to the rebels’ Jewishness.



‘Shrimp is treyf, but pork is antisemitic.’

– David Rakoff (z”l)

Borrowing a term from psychology, Rosenblum calls this “ironic process theory” – what you and I might call “don’t think of elephants.” Or, as Rakoff wrote in his essay “Dark Meat”: “I almost never feel more Jewish than in that moment just before I am about to eat pork.”

“And it’s a wonderful thing,” said Rosenblum, “because the paradox is, how do you show that you’re rejecting your Judaism, but at the very moment, everything you do is pointing back to your Jewish identity?”

As for his own identity, Rosenblum – who earned his Ph.D. at Brown and his bachelor’s degrees at Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary – declined to describe his own relationship, culinary or otherwise, with pork. “Because I found that whatever I say, people will then read everything through the lens of it,” he said. “And my response is, why does it matter? How does that change the story?”

Because, he insists, no matter what they eat, every Jew is in a relationship, metaphorical and historical if not gastronomic, with the pig. Rosenblum sees a through line between Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the 19th-century Reform leader who would not eat pork but kept a pair of pigs named “Kosher” and “Treyf” (to eat his compost) and Rabbi Genack, the OU kosher supervisor who said no to Impossible Pork.

“Probably one of the few things that Isaac Mayer Wise and Menachem Genack can agree on,” he said, “is that there’s just something different about the pig.”

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