

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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PHOTO COURTESY OF HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE



Chanukah at Radiant Nights 2024

Community Celebration this year at Hancock Shaker Village

HANCOCK – On the evening of Sunday, December 29, join Federation for a joyous celebration of the Festival of Lights at Radiant Nights, a unique and sensational experience that brings together New England charm, dazzling video projections, enchanting music, and a sense of wonderment.

Celebrate with a special Chanukah art illumination created by Becket sculptor and visual artist Joe Wheaton. Experience the beauty of Hancock Shaker Village through a multimedia installation of light, sound, and color. Encounter many surprises as you enjoy a stroll through the Village – the grounds will be open for self-guided tours between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

At 6 p.m., find your way to the Round Stone Barn for our Community Chanukah Celebration. Visit with the animals, relax by the fire pit, and savor a warm drink. We will kindle the menorah lights and celebrate with live music provided by the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective, Chanukah songs, glow fun, chocolate *gelt*, and hot drinks! Our event will be in an unheated indoor area but outside there are fire pits to keep you warm.

Advance Purchase of Tickets Required

Federation tickets are priced at \$15 for adults and teens. Children 12 and under free.

Register through the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org – a link will take you to the Hancock Shaker Village registration page, where you can sign up and pay for your tickets. *You must use Coupon Code: JFB2024 in the check-out process to receive the discounted rate.*

This discounted rate is for the Chanukah celebration and is available for 12/29 only.

This Event is Outdoors. Dress Warmly!

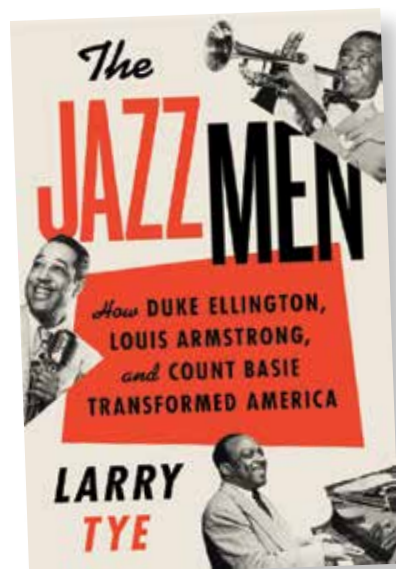
Trails can be uneven and require secure footing. The self-guided route includes both paved and unpaved pathways.



Happy Chanukah 5785!

Celebrate the Festival of Alternative Spellings

This year's USPS holiday stamp is a simple menorah with a warm backstory – the mother of Antonio Alcalá, art director at the United States Postal Service who designed it, escaped Nazi Germany on the Kindertransport. Fleeing Hamburg in 1941, Alcalá's German grandparents traveled to the United States on the same ship from Portugal as Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement. "I'm very excited," says Alcalá. "It's a piece of my family history that I get to see distributed across the country." (JTA)



The Jazzmen: How Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Count Basie Transformed America, with Larry Tye

Celebrate Black History Month

On Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 7 p.m., we welcome journalist and author Larry Tye, who will talk about his new book, *The Jazzmen: How Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Count Basie Transformed America*.

This Zoom presentation is part of "Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council." Register via the calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Honoring the life and accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights changemakers, join reporter Larry Tye for a discussion of

JAZZMEN,
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OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

Sensing God's Presence Midst the Tumultuous Affairs of State

By Rabbi Scott Saulson / Temple Anshe Amunim



Rabbi Scott Saulson

Mai Hanukah?

So ask our Talmudic sages – What is Hanukah all about?

Though more than a half millennium had passed since the Hasmonean victory over the Assyrian forces, those sages must have had an inkling about the true nature of the conflict leading to the Hasmonean dynasty and what followed their ascendancy to power. Its nature was an ugly amalgam of civil strife, family vendettas, forced conversion, and administrative corruption, which sorrowfully led to the Roman hegemony over our people.

Ironically, the Hasmonean revolt against the Assyrian juggernaut succeeded, in no small part, because of the internal conflicts afflicting that empire.

Nonetheless, the sages deliberately chose to focus on the re-purification of the central shrine and the restoration of the festival observances, the closest one to the re-purification of the central shrine being Sukkot + Sh'mini Atseret, totaling 8 days celebrated with torch parades. For them, sensing God's presence amidst the tumultuous and sordid affairs of state was their way of seeing the history of human affairs as but a wave in the mighty ocean of Divine Providence.

But, for us, who have reason to worry that our ships of state might succumb to rot, shining a light on the tumultuous and sordid affairs of state must go hand in hand with our celebrations lest our victories be for naught.

Rabbi Dr. Scott B. Saulson is spiritual leader of Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield.

Letters to the Editor

Through Your Kindness, Israeli Families Find Moments of Peace and Hope

Dear Friends,

On behalf of American Friends of Meir Panim, we want to express our deepest gratitude to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and your community for your unwavering support during these trying times in Israel.

Since the outbreak of war on October 7th, the demand for our services has surged. Thanks to your generosity, Meir Panim has been able to provide 2 million meals to displaced families, elderly Holocaust survivors, and vulnerable populations across Israel. We've also delivered 6,000 meals daily to soldiers on the front lines and distributed essential items such as care packages, night vision goggles, and tactical gear to IDF soldiers.

Rina, a mother of three, shared her story with us:

"When we finally escaped, all we had left were the clothes on our backs. The support we received from Meir Panim has kept us going. Now, we need help to celebrate the holidays with our children – to remind them of the beauty of life, despite everything."

It is through your kindness that families like Rina's can find moments of peace and hope, even in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we are making a real difference in the lives of Israel's most vulnerable, ensuring that no one is left behind.

With deepest appreciation,
The Meir Panim Team



The Meir Panim kitchen in Israel

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dara Kaufman Appointed by Governor Healey to Serve on the Massachusetts Special Commission to Combat Antisemitism

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

On behalf of the Federation board, I am proud to share that our executive director, Dara Kaufman, has been appointed by Governor Maura Healey to serve on the Massachusetts Special Commission to Combat Antisemitism. This commission is the first of its kind established by a state legislature in the United States to specifically address and counter antisemitism. Dara was one of two appointees selected by the Governor, alongside David Friedman.

As the commission convened for its inaugural meeting in November, Governor Healey expressed her support for the Massachusetts Jewish community, stating:

"The rise in antisemitism across our state, the nation and the world has been alarming, heartbreaking, and unacceptable. We recognize the pain and trauma this has caused for our Jewish community, and we are committed to combatting it. I'm grateful to the Legislature for creating this important Commission and look forward to the important work that Chairs Velis and Cataldo, Dave, Dara and the entire membership will do to advise us on how we can combat antisemitism and hate in our communities and make sure everyone in Massachusetts is safe and respected."

As the central address for the Berkshire Jewish Community, Federation looks forward to working with our partners in government and in the community to ensure that our voices and concerns are represented on the commission and to help shape this critical effort.

In a statement issued by co-chairs of the commission, Representative Simon Cataldo and Senator John Velis point out:

"Antisemitism is a fraught and complicated topic in today's society. Our work will not, however, be compromised by those who believe the problem of antisemitism is being exaggerated – it is not – or who feel that a singular focus on antisemitism for a commission is inappropriate. Antisemitic fearmongering, conspiracy peddling, and hate have for millennia been a harbinger of wider threats to democracy and peace throughout the world. This commission will work towards stamping it out in Massachusetts."

With antisemitic incidents in Massachusetts surging to 440 reported cases last year alone, representing a staggering 189 percent increase, this commission marks a crucial step in fostering dialogue, raising awareness, ensuring safety, establishing best practices, and implementing evidence-based strategies to combat hate. The commission will also review and recommend actions for implementing the White House's U.S. National Strategy to counter antisemitism.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dara for her dedication to confronting antisemitism, which has now been recognized at the state level. We also express our gratitude to Governor Healey, the commission's co-chairs, and its members for their commitment to addressing the needs of the Jewish community in Massachusetts.

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is dedicated to supporting the commission's vital work, as we collectively strive to build a safer and more inclusive Commonwealth.



Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Executive Director Dara Kaufman (left) with Governor Maura Healey of Massachusetts



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
berkshireminyan.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

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

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

OP-ED

Celebrate Jewish Books. Support Jewish Authors.

Jewish books make great Chanukah gifts

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

In October, two distinguished presenters for our ongoing program, "Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in Collaboration with The Jewish Book Council," identified a concerning issue facing Jewish authors in the year following Oct. 7 2023 – books by Jewish writers are not being carried by many booksellers and their work is not being reviewed outside the Jewish press.

Journalist Lee Yaron, whose *10/7: 100 Human Stories* is a shattering account about the massacre and its survivors, shared that her book is not selling as might be expected because it is not being reviewed by major publications. As I write in early November, neither the New York Times nor the Washington Post has reviewed it – in fact, the top review of the book that came up in a Google search was from the socialist journal Jacobin, which used it as an opportunity to publish another of its screeds about "Israel's genocidal war on Gaza" and to downplay the sexual violence that occurred in the attacks. This is despite the fact Yaron writes from a left-wing perspective and is critical of the Netanyahu government.

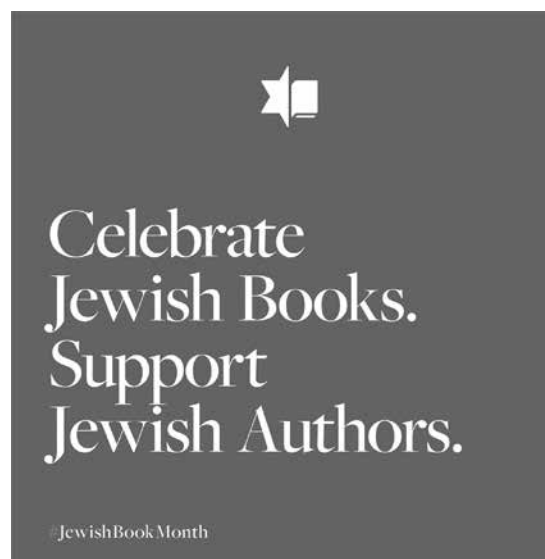
Leah Lax's *Not From Here: The Song of America* is a sympathetic portrait of immigrants to this country that touches on her own personal and family history of leaving one life for another. It is not, strictly speaking, a "Jewish" book, though it touches on themes relating to the Jewish experience. Lax told me that when her publisher started marketing her book to the major outlets in the spring of 2023, there was a good deal of interest in reviewing the book, author interviews, etc. The popular website The Daily Beast even asked Lax to write an essay about her work. "And then came October 7," said Lax. "Every place that had asked for reading materials would not even respond to emails. We were completely ghosted." She added that her first book, the leaving-the-Hasidic-community memoir *Uncovered*, accrued thousands of customer reviews on Amazon, while *Not From Here*, five months after its publication, had but eleven.

Starting in our next issue, we introduce a roundup of Jewish-themed books you might wish to explore. Can you share the titles of books you liked with the BJV?

In May, the New York Times acknowledged the problem in James Kirchick's essay, "A Chill Has Fallen Over Jews in Publishing." Last October, more than 1,000 writers and book industry professionals signed an open letter pledging to boycott Israeli cultural institutions that "are complicit or have remained silent observers of the overwhelming oppression of Palestinians" – never clearly defined.

All this is happening now and it is happening to us. The question is: What can be done? Both Yaron and Lax expressed deep gratitude for all that the Jewish press and Jewish communities are doing to promote their work, stressing how important it is for all Jewish publications to champion the work of Jewish authors – even in small markets like the Berkshires.

The Berkshire Jewish Voice has always given prominent space to Jewish



books and writers – all the more so since Jewish Federation of the Berkshires forged a relationship with The Jewish Book Council and established the Jewish Literary Voices series of author talks over the last three years. As we did with Yaron and Lax, we will continue to feature our presenters in BJV Interview articles, and highlight the work of local Jewish authors like Seth Rogovoy, whose George Harrison bio *Within You Without You* I reviewed in our previous issue. Check out the story on page 17 about what you can do to support Jewish authors and how you can connect with The Jewish Book Council.

This time, we've written about Jozsef Debreczeni's rediscovered Holocaust memoir, *Cold Crematorium*, a major contribution to Shoah literature that was translated into English right here in the Berkshires by the late Paul Olchvary. I predict this survivor's story will be as historically important as any by Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, or Victor Frankl – its testimony cannot be neglected due to a post-Oct. 7 2023 backlash against Jewish stories.

So, starting in our next issue, we introduce a roundup of Jewish-themed books that readers might wish to explore. This new column will be penned by Dr. Steve Rubin, professor emeritus and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University and the moderator of Federation's popular Current Events Seminar each summer. It will feature recommendations and short descriptions/reviews of two to four books that might interest our community.

But there is more to do – and we can do it as a community. Consider this an open call for submissions – if you've ever wanted to try your hand at publishing a book review, contact me at astern@jewishberkshires.org and we can begin a conversation about what you might like to write about. I'll do all I can to help you through the process.

It would also be great if you could write in with tips about Jewish books you have recently enjoyed. Have a book club? Send in your group's impressions of what you've read and share some thoughts. Maybe just a few sentences – something as simple as "Joan from Lenox just read Leah Lax's *Not From Here* and liked it because... She thinks others might like it because..." *Anything* to put new work by Jewish authors on our community members' radar.

And with Chanukah around corner, consider giving Jewish books as presents.

We know you are readers. You support our programs with Jewish authors and you support this newspaper as voluntary subscribers (see page 5). Here is a chance to make a difference at a time when our thinkers and our culture are being canceled due to antisemitic animus. As the Jewish authors I am privileged to talk to as part of my job all assert – everything we do will help them.

And at the same time, help ourselves.

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



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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Dara Kaufman: Publisher and Managing Editor

Albert Stern: Editor

Jenny Greenfeld: Advertising Sales Representative and Copy Editor

RB Design Co: Graphic Design and Layout

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

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Berkshire Jewish Voice e-mail: astern@jewishberkshires.org

Phone: (413) 442-4360, ext. 11 Fax (413) 443-6070

Your Federation Presents

100 Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World



Barbara Vinick

On Thursday, January 9 at 7 p.m., join Dr. Barbara Vinick for an interactive discussion of her book, *100 Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World*, co-edited with Dr. Shulamit Reinharz.

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

The book explores the experiences of diverse Jewish brides and their families around the world. With stories from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, this collection of personal testimonies will surprise and inspire. A Jewish wedding after conversion in Madagascar, a reunion of Holocaust survivors in Sweden, a shipboard romance initiated by a celebrity – these stories from 83 countries describe Jewish

wedding traditions, some familiar and others eye-opening, in a multitude of cultures and settings, past and present.

Barbara Vinick co-edited *Esther's Legacy: Celebrating Purim Around the World* and *Today I Am a Woman: Stories of Bat Mitzvah Around the World* at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute of Brandeis University. She is secretary of Kulanu, an organization that supports isolated and emerging Jewish communities worldwide.

The Life and Magic of 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.



Stephen Sondheim

PHOTO: MARTHA SWOPEN/NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS, 1981

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Jack Ruby: The Many Faces of Oswald's Assassin, with Danny Fingerth

A Jewish American Tragedy



On Thursday, December 19 at 7 p.m., we welcome Danny Fingerth, who will discuss his new book, *Jack Ruby: The Many Faces of Oswald's Assassin*.

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

Who was Jack Ruby and why did he shoot Lee Harvey Oswald?

With the recent 60th anniversaries of the murders of President John F. Kennedy and Oswald, Jack Ruby's motives are as maddeningly ambiguous today as they were the day that he pulled the trigger.

Cultural historian **Danny Fingerth's** newest biography, *Jack Ruby: The Many Faces of Oswald's Assassin* includes a new, in-depth interview with Rabbi Hillel Silverman, the legendary Dallas clergyman who visited Ruby regularly in prison and who was witness to Ruby's descent into madness and who shared with Fingerth notes taken during his frequent visits with Ruby in prison. Fingerth also conducted interviews with little-known Ruby family members and associates. The book's findings will catapult you into a trip through a house of historical mirrors.

For better or worse, Ruby's is a very Jewish and very American saga, a Greatest Generation story gone horribly wrong. At its end, perhaps Jack Ruby's assault on history will begin to make sense. And perhaps we will understand how Ruby's actions reverberate to the present day.

Danny Fingerth is an accomplished biographer and cultural historian/commentator, specializing in history at the intersection of Jewish and American cultures. Fingerth made his mark as a cultural observer with books including *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* and *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero*. His acclaimed 2019 biography of Stan Lee, *A Marvelous Life*, looks at this innovative Jewish-American figure – the co-creator of Marvel Comics – in the context of the overall culture.

In addition to his writing, Fingerth has served as an executive editor at Marvel and other media companies and has spoken and taught about the intersection of popular culture and history at venues including the Smithsonian Institution, Columbia University, the New York Historical Society, and the Bob Dylan/Switchyard Conference, as well as on NBC's *Today Show* and NPR's *All Things Considered*.

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Winter Jewish Film Series

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Sundays @ 2pm: Jan 12, Feb 2, Mar 9 & Mar 30 - \$10/ticket

Temple Anshe Amunim [accessible building]
 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield

For titles and descriptions, see www.ansheamunim.org.

LOCAL NEWS

Giant Menorah of Freedom to Light Up Downtown Lenox on Chanukah's First Night

LENOX – In an act of solidarity for the victims and hostages in Israel, Chabad of the Berkshires invites the community together on the first night of Chanukah for a joyous outdoor menorah lighting and celebration to take place Wednesday, December 25 at 4:30 p.m. at Lilac Park in downtown Lenox.

The menorah lighting event will be filled with music, singing and a vibrant atmosphere, promises Rabbi Levi Volovik, co-director of Chabad of the Berkshires. He adds: "As darkness descends in this world, the giant menorah will be an illuminating symbol of the light over darkness and the enduring spirit of the Jewish people. Together we will ignite the first candle and kindle the spirit of unity and hope."

The giant menorah of freedom will be kindled by friends and families who personally experienced profound loss during the Oct. 7 2023 massacre in Israel.

In addition to the menorah lighting all will be treated to hot latkes and donuts, adding to the festive atmosphere.

"Recent events in the Middle East have underscored the need for peace and healing of the spirit by all nations. By coming together and lighting the menorah, which has eight branches out of one shaft, we want to emphasize the fundamental unity and goodness inherent in the world," said Rabbi Volovik. "Many people light the menorah in their home. We assemble in Lilac Park to light a public menorah to tell all people that the lesson of Chanukah is universal."

In its Chanukah outreach campaign, Chabad of the Berkshires joins thousands of Chabad centers across the globe that are staging similar public displays of the menorah and its symbolic lights. From Australia to Africa, Columbia to Hong Kong, New York City's Ground Zero to the White House lawn, hundreds of thousands will experience the joy of Chanukah with Chabad.

The event is co-sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, and auto dealership Haddad of the Berkshires.

Yom Torah: Hevreh Celebrates the Restoration of its Torah Scrolls



Sofer Neil Yerman and Rabbi Jodie Gordon hold up a restored Torah scroll

GREAT BARRINGTON – During the autumn months, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire was deeply engaged in the restoration of its two Torah scrolls. This effort included the meticulous weeks-long work of the congregation's sofer (scribe) Neil Yerman, the adorning of letters by congregants of all ages, the creation of new curtains for the ark, and generous contributions from across its community. These efforts culminated in the Yom Torah celebration on November 17.

In conjunction with Yom Torah, over 25 congregants gathered with Judaica textile artist Nancy Katz to create new curtains for the Ark (*parochet*). These curtains symbolize the holiness of the Torah to the congregation, while also offering the opportunity to add to the beauty of the sanctuary with congregants' own hands and hearts.

Rabbi Jodie Gordon and Neil Yerman led the event. "From generation to generation," more than 100 members, both young and old, participated in the mitzvah of writing Torah. Religious School families, as well as adult congregants, learned about the traditions of Torah writing, and the spiritual significance of the letters and the words contained in the scrolls. Then, each person, with the sofer's guidance, had the thrilling opportunity to write a letter in a Torah scroll.

In the afternoon, attendees also enjoyed hands-on learning opportunities, including Hebrew calligraphy practice and clips from *The Messenger*, a film by Berkshire filmmaker Michael Shocket that tells the story of Hevreh's Holocaust scroll.

Hevreh's first Torah was acquired in 1980. A second Torah, the Holocaust Memorial Trust Scroll,

is approximately 250 years old and was rescued from Czechoslovakia after World War II. Since 1986, every Hevreh b'nai mitzvah student has read from this Torah. This scroll has been passed down through generations of Hevreh's clergy, families, and leaders. Both Torahs were proudly carried through the streets of Great Barrington in 1999 when the congregation moved to its present home at 270 State Road.

A generous participation challenge match, led by Shira Nichaman, Arnie Angerman, and Lisa Sloane, encouraged donations large and small to help fund the Torah restoration.

Rabbi Jodie Gordon shared, "This project not only restored our Torahs but also deepened our sense of connection as a community. It's a powerful reminder that the Torah is not just a sacred object, but a living part of our congregation's story."

Communities of Meaning: Part 2 – A Lunchtime Series

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Wednesdays at noon through February 12 (except December 11 & 25, 2024 and January 1 & 29, 2025), Hevreh of Southern Berkshires continues its exploration of *Communities of Meaning: Conversations on Modern Jewish Life Inspired by Rabbi Larry Hoffman*.

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

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

For more info, visit hevreh.org.

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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Robert and Teddy Rubin

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I wish to remain anonymous

The Real Story of Chanukah

PITTSFIELD – What is the real history of Chanukah? This program will address the historical and political background of the first Jewish revolt. Was there, in fact, a miracle? Why do we actually celebrate for eight days? Using PowerPoint and video, Knesset Israel member Phil Halpern will answer these questions and more.

Halpern is a popular teacher who has taught courses at synagogues and through OLLI. He has extensive knowledge of Jewish history and the Bible.

This 90-minute hybrid program will take place in person at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield and on Zoom, Sunday, December 22, at 10 a.m. For those who attend in person, coffee and bagels will be served. Please pre-register at knessetisrael.org/rsvp. If you prefer to attend via Zoom, a Zoom link will be sent with your registration confirmation.

Knesset Israel Celebrates Shabbat and Hannuka

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel celebrates Shabbat and Hannuka early this year, on Friday, December 20, with a festive gathering.

That evening at 5:45 p.m., the KI Band will lead a Shirei Shabbat musical service featuring special melodies for Hannuka. Immediately afterwards, at 6:45 p.m., volunteers will serve a homemade kosher brisket dinner, with a vegetarian option available. Members and non-members are welcome, and space is limited.

The dinner costs \$25/adult and is free for everyone under 18. RSVP is mandatory for dinner: knessetisrael.org/rsvp. The program is supported by a generous Rekindle Shabbat Grant from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

JAZZMEN,

continued from cover

his book, *The Jazzmen*, which looks mainly at these three maestros' lives off the bandstand, and how they wrote the soundtrack for the civil rights revolution. It also explores the Black-Jewish alliance of old – one where each of these African-American bandleaders had a Jewish manager and bandmates – and how that might offer a model for today.

Larry Tye is a former reporter at *The Boston Globe*, off now writing books and running a Boston-based fellowship program for health journalists. The *Jazzmen* is his ninth book, with others including *Home Lands*, the upbeat tale of a thriving Jewish diaspora; *Superman*, the biography of America's longest-lasting (Jewish) hero; and *Bobby Kennedy*, which looks at RFK's transformation from Joe McCarthy's protege to a liberal icon.

LOCAL NEWS

Grinspoon Amber Awards Will Honor Outstanding Professionals in the Jewish Communal Field



AGAWAM – In November, The Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF) proudly announced the launch of the Grinspoon Amber Awards at the Jewish Federations of North

America (JFNA) 2024 General Assembly gathering in Washington, DC. These annual awards will honor five exceptional professionals in the Jewish communal field, celebrating their impact, leadership, and commitment to a vibrant Jewish future.

The Grinspoon Amber Awards were conceived by Harold Grinspoon, the foundation's founder and a passionate advocate for Jewish communal life.

"The Jewish world benefits tremendously from the most amazing, creative people who work to enhance Judaism around the world," said Grinspoon, who added: "This is a small way to show our appreciation, my appreciation and the foundation's appreciation."

Since founding HGF in 1991, Grinspoon has championed initiatives that enrich Jewish life and learning, with a firm belief that strong Jewish communities are essential to a vibrant future. The Grinspoon Amber Awards reflect this vision by honoring professionals who have made exceptional contributions to the Jewish communal field. Whether through remarkable achievements, deep dedication to Jewish values, effective bridge-building across diverse groups, or courage in overcoming challenges, the awards will celebrate professionals for their lasting impact on the Jewish community.

"Outstanding professionals in our community dedicate themselves to the hard work of nurturing Jewish life, often behind the scenes, and they do it with passion, resilience, and a deep commitment to others," said Winnie Sandler Grinspoon, president of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. "When we considered who could be the right partner for this, project, JFNA was the obvious choice. They are deeply committed to supporting Jewish professionals in countless ways, and we are thrilled to partner with them on this one."

The first winners will be announced a year from now at the Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly in 2025. In addition to a \$10,000 prize, each winner will have the chance to "pay it forward" by selecting two other professionals to receive Peer Recognition Grants of \$2,500 each. This reflects Harold Grinspoon's belief that true leadership is about lifting others, fostering a cycle of growth, inspiration, and excellence within the Jewish community.

"Partnering with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation on this initiative perfectly aligns with our mission to support and uplift the dedicated professionals who sustain and enrich Jewish life," said Eric Fingerhut, President and CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America. "At a time when our communities face unprecedented challenges, these awards not only honor individual excellence but also reinforce a culture of appreciation and shared commitment that strengthens our community as a whole."

For more information about the Grinspoon Amber Awards, visit www.amberawards.org, or email amberawards@hgf.org.

Special Shabbats this Winter at CBI

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

Special Shabbat Jewish Journeys Morning Service on Saturday, December 14 at 10 a.m.

All are welcome for a special family service to celebrate Shabbat in community, interweaving the morning service with opportunities for CBI's Jewish Journeys students to share what they have learned. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share following the conclusion of services. Note that this service will be held onsite only. This event is a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel and NEFESH, with major financial support from Sally Gottesman and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, as well as funding from other private donors.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services on the Fridays of December 20, 2024 and January 10 & 17, 2025 at 7 p.m.

All are welcome to celebrate Shabbat together with prayer, song, poetry, and heart. The CBI band and choir bring beautiful harmonies to Kabbalat Shabbat. On Friday, January 17 (MLK weekend), the Kabbalat Shabbat service will have some special elements honoring Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Regular Shabbat Morning Services continue on Saturday, December 7, 2024 and January 4, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.

First Friday Shabbat Zoom Gathering on Friday, January 3, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. around the Virtual Shabbat Table. Gather together to share community and conversation online and celebrate the Jewish traditions of Shabbat, light the candles, and bless the wine and challah. Stay connected with CBI friends and neighbors, or meet new ones, as you enjoy the joys of fellowship and comfort of camaraderie. Zoom link will be sent after you RSVP.

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

Chanukah Fun Starts Early at Congregation Beth Israel!

NORTH ADAMS – Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites all to its pre-Chanukah Bonfire and Songfest, on Monday, December 16 at 4 p.m.!

Gather around the bonfire in the backyard of CBI to sing Chanukah songs, play with dreidels, drink hot apple cider, and enjoy homemade donuts and latkes.

This event will be both indoor and outdoor — please dress warmly and bring a camp chair if you have one. Please RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/chanukah-bonfire-2024 if you plan to attend so the congregation can prepare enough food. This event is a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel & NEFESH, with major financial support from Sally Gottesman and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, as well as funding from other private donors.

CBI is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

Mitzvah Opportunity – Make Care Packages for Hospitalized Children

NORTH ADAMS – On Saturday, January 18 at 3 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites families to learn about the mitzvah of caring for the sick. Bring items to contribute to care packages for children at Berkshire Medical Center.

Families with kids of all ages are welcome; please RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/care-packages-2025.

Location of this mitzvah project was not announced at press time – for more information, please contact learning@cbiberkshires.com.

This event is a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel & NEFESH, with major financial support from Sally Gottesman and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, as well as funding from other private donors.

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LOCAL NEWS

Rabbi Jodie Gordon Takes Over as Hevreh's Senior Rabbi



Rabbi Jodie Gordon (center, holding mic) at her installation as senior rabbi of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

In September, Rabbi Jodie Gordon was installed as senior rabbi at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington, a Reform congregation with the largest membership of any synagogue in the Berkshires.

Arriving as a rabbinic intern in 2012 and assuming a full-time position two years later, Rabbi Gordon has helped define Hevreh's identity over the past decade, both as a rabbi and director of education of the congregation's religious school. She has led four trips to Israel for b'nai mitzvah students, and shares her often irreverent takes on Jewish life and practice on the OMfG Podcast (co-hosted by Rabbi Jen Gubitz), now in its fifth season. Her contributions to this paper's Rabbi Reflections always display insight, and her account of her family's sojourn in Tel Aviv during a 2022 sabbatical charmingly conveyed her love of Israel and the satisfactions of living Jewishly in the Jewish state.

She succeeds Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch, who assumed the role of Senior Rabbi Successor at the Isaac M. Wise Temple in Cincinnati last summer. Without question, now is a challenging time to be a rabbi, given the post-pandemic reimagining of worship and community and a post-Oct. 7 2023 landscape of heightened tensions both within Jewish institutions and from without.

In November, the BJV caught up with Rabbi Gordon to talk about her experience at Hevreh and her goals for the future. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

The BJV Interview: Rabbi Jodie Gordon

How do you see the congregation growing and evolving in the next few years under your rabbinate?

Hevreh is at a really interesting place in its history – we just marked 50 years of existence as a congregation. We marked 25 years in our building here on State Road, and it's my 10th year full-time at the congregation. To me, it's a time for really leaning into who we are. We came out of COVID and, in a post-pandemic reality, our community grew. We opened an early childhood center in 2020. Our religious school grew. This is a chance to harvest seeds that we've been tending to for many years and to point our way forward for the next 25 to 50 years.

Something that was really important to me in thinking about all of the things that needed to be put into place as we move into this next chapter was helping to start a new interfaith clergy association here in South County, which hasn't existed in any formal sense in eight years or so. I've been working

This is an opportunity to have a 'next phase' at someplace that I love. Most people don't get a gift like that.

really hard on that with some colleagues and it is getting ready to launch soon. The Berkshire is our home and Hevreh is an important point on that map not just for members of our community, but for the larger community. How do we continue to be a place that can feel like home, that can be a place of sanctuary, of spiritual recharging? It's not because we want people to come here and hide out from the world, but we want people to come here and feel like Hevreh better equips them for living in the world and for being a part of the larger Berkshire community.

This effort has been driven by a communal desire to be a part of the community that we live in, even as

we've struggled with the specter of antisemitism in the Berkshires, or even just our fears around it. If you want to move beyond that and really lift up Jewish joy – an important phrase in this community for the last number of years – I think a part of it is weaving ourselves into Great Barrington and into South County. We want it to be a good place to live. We want it to be a safe place to live for everyone who's here. We want it to be a meaningful place to live where we take care of our neighbors and do good work for the world. How am I going to do that as a leader of this community? For me, the answer is in partnership with other people doing similar work.

How has the post-October 7 world changed your perspective as a rabbi and how did it change the congregation and its perception of itself?

A point of pride for me is that we didn't just start talking about Israel on October 7. In a lot of communities, broadly speaking, Israel can be, and has been for a long time, a topic that is hard to talk about.



Rabbi Jodie Gordon with husband Joshua Bloom and daughters Goldie and Lola

Or maybe you're not quite sure how to talk about it – you're worried that you're going to alienate this population or that. That has not been my experience at Hevreh, where we've built up, not just 'trust,' but on-the-ground experience. I've taken four groups of students and parents to Israel together over the last six years. I think that's an important piece of the culture – having people in the community who have lived experiences of having been to Israel together with their rabbi, with their classmates, with the other parents who have helped each other setting up

RABBI GORDON,
continued on page 8

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LOCAL NEWS

RABBI GORDON,

continued from page 7

an *oneg* during their kids' *bnai mitzvahs*. And now – they're traveling together.

In terms of how October 7 impacted my rabbinate: I think back to that first Shabbat, which was October 13 of last year, that first Friday night. There was something about the experience of needing to lead in that moment that I know I will never forget. It was a packed house. The first Friday after Simchat Torah is usually people when are all 'shuled out.' But people felt called to be here. And I think we've seen that throughout the year, that it wasn't a one-off. I think we've continued on this trajectory of togetherness.

And the other piece of it is that October 7 changed the way we pray, and I think it changed the way we talk. Not just the way we talk about Israel, but the way that we speak to one another.

How has the way we speak to one another changed in your estimation?

What I've been able to witness [at Hevreh] is that there is a commitment to being able to stay in community with one another that has pushed a lot of people to really think about how they speak to one another in order to make space for everyone. It's not that everyone here is of a unified mind on Israel, on the war, on what should happen next and how we should understand it here as American Jews. There's actually a broader range of opinion than you might otherwise guess. We've been able to drill down and distill [communal discussions to] the question about being a human being and being a mensch, to be a real human concerned with the well-being of humanity. What does that require me to say right now? What does that require me to acknowledge? When I pray, how do I make my prayers feel specific, as well as universal and inclusive? Those are the things that I've wrestled with at various points throughout the last year.

The two worst things that I can imagine happening is one, that people cede their seat at the table of Jewish life because they can't get their heads around the Israel question one way or the other. One day this war will end. It might not be as soon as we hope, but one day this war will end. And at the end of that war, if people have the sense that, in their own Jewish communities, they no longer have a place at the table, what have we done? The other is that for me – as somebody who does consider themselves a loving and proud and critical and thinking Zionist – is to ask why *would* someone want to cede a seat at this metaphorical table? I think it's my job to create a space where, regardless of whether or not we share a vision for what Israel becomes and how it gets there, that your Jewish life here as an American Jew living in Great Barrington who wants to have a place to go for Shabbat shouldn't go away. So, it's a great balancing act.

You asked at the beginning about my rabbinate. This is an opportunity to have a 'next phase' at someplace that I love. Most people don't get a gift like that. Most people, if they want to continue to grow and change and do new things, they usually have to go somewhere else. I've been here a long time and I've done a lot of different things here. Now, with all of those different experiences behind me, it's an opportunity to chart the next course forward. We have an incredible board, an amazing staff, and a really kind and enthusiastic and engaged community. When you start with those as your raw ingredients, it's exciting. Like, what can we do next?

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy Pays Tribute to Diane Troderman and Harold Grinspoon



Harold Grinspoon and Diane Troderman (left) with Israel's President Isaac Herzog and First Lady Michal Herzog at the Washington Institute Gala

WASHINGTON, DC

– On November 10, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy honored community leaders Diane Troderman and Harold Grinspoon at an event in New York City in which it presented its prestigious Scholar-Statesman Award to Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

The couple are devoted Trustees

who actively participate in all aspects of the Institute, including conferences, trips, and briefings. Diane is a member of the Institute's Board of Directors.

"We are absolutely delighted to be able to honor the president of Israel the same evening we pay tribute to Harold and Diane," said Institute Segal Executive Director Robert Satloff, the Howard P. Berkowitz Chair in U.S. Middle East Policy. "It is a privilege for The Institute to have an evening in which we say 'Thank you,' not just for everything you do, but for who you are."

In presenting the award, Institute President Moses Libitzky called the couple "visionary philanthropists who have enriched the lives of millions

all over the world," adding, "Grounded in their deep commitment to enhancing their local community and perpetuating the Jewish people, they have supported and created nonprofits in Massachusetts, across the United States, and around the globe."

President Herzog praised the honorees' PJ Library initiative which provides over seven million children's books a year to families in forty countries. "My wife and I have been involved in Israeli civic society for many years," he said. "What moved us to our core was that in Israel the books are distributed in Hebrew and in Arabic for the Arab children of Israel. This is something that shows that people can live together and share life together in the democratic Jewish state of Israel. Thank you!"

In her acceptance remarks, Diane thanked President Herzog, adding, "We take great comfort in the fact that there is a homeland for the Jewish people in Israel. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the Israelis."

Diane confided that the Institute had captured the couple's love and respect. "The Institute has opened our eyes and expanded our understanding of complex situations in the Middle East that is so important at times like these," she said.

Harold Grinspoon recently donated to the Institute to support the work of Dr. Anna Borshchevskaya as the Harold Grinspoon Senior Fellow. Dr. Borshchevskaya is one of America's leading experts on Russian Middle East policy.

The Scholar-Statesman Award, now in its seventeenth year, celebrates outstanding leaders who, through their public service and professional achievements, exemplify the idea that sound scholarship and a discerning knowledge of history are essential to wise and effective policy and the advancement of peace and security in the Middle East. Previous recipients include U.S. President Bill Clinton, United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair, UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed, and King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan, among others.

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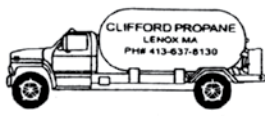
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ISRAEL PARTNERS



Your Campaign Dollars at Work – Israel’s At-Risk Youth Post-Oct. 7 2023

On Oct. 7 2023, thousands of Israeli youth joined the ranks of those already defined as at-risk. Thousands more became vulnerable in the days and weeks that followed when they became refugees in their own country: youth make up 30% of evacuated Israelis.

According to ELEM – Youth in Distress in Israel, 60% of teens in evacuation centers reported feeling loneliness and isolation; 46% reported feeling anxiety and depression; 47% reported using mind-altering substances, mostly alcohol. Eating disorders have been observed in 10% of evacuated teens, and that number is rising.

Evacuated youth are acting out because of their trauma and subsequent removal from home environments: 1 out of every 5 teens ELEM met reported involvement in vandalism or violence in public spaces, and 1 out of every 8 reported was connected to at least one incident involving police.

Jewish Federations recognized the need to help these teens and young adults through effective and immediate interventions in the hope of avoiding a significant slide into risky behavior and potential long-term harm. Here is one story of how your gift to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires impacts young Jewish lives in Israel.

A Boy Catching the Waves

Rotem can still feel the hard floor pressed against his cheek. It’s been months since he hid under a bed in total silence, unable to cry out loud for his father whom he believed had been killed, but thankfully whose life was later saved at hospital. And yet Rotem recalls that terrifying firmness every time he paddles through the soft waves on his surfboard.

After being evacuated from his kibbutz, Rotem joined HaGal Sheli’s trauma therapy surf program. The waves became a lifeline for the young boy, offering a chance to momentarily free himself from the relentless cycle of haunting memories. A very different shelter than the one he hid in on October 7.

In the sea, Rotem is surrounded by friends and instructors and the calm of the water. Here he finds his resilience and here is able to redefine himself – not as one marked by trauma, but as a boy catching the waves. The program gives Rotem a sense of normalcy and hope for the future.

He knows he has a long road of healing ahead of him, but Rotem is thankful for this weekly reprieve: “For a moment, you forget about the whole situation, that your house was burned down, that we managed to escape by a miracle. Just forget about all this and surf with friends.”



Youth participating in HaGal Sheli therapeutic surfing program

• To date Jewish Federations have allocated to 15 organizations for support of at-risk youth affected by the war.

• \$4,930,241 has been allocated in Federation’s collective funds to support youth through the system’s emergency response.

JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, January 16 at 10:45 a.m. (virtual)

The Jazzmen: How Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Count Basie Transformed America with journalist and author, Larry Tye.

Thursday, January 30 at 7 p.m. (virtual)

Bernardine’s Shanghai Salon: The Story of the Doyenne of Old China with memoirist and biographer Susan Blumberg-Kason.

Thursday, February 13 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

Nosh: Plant-Forward Recipes Celebrating Modern Jewish Cuisine with chef and registered dietitian Micah Siva.

Thursday, March 27 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

When Women Ran Fifth Avenue: Glamour and Power at the Dawn of American Fashion with journalist and author Julie Satow.

Thursday, April 10 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

3...2...1...We’re On the Air: A Network Producer’s Inside Look at Sports, Television, Journalism, and Gender Equity with TV sports producer Robert Steinfeld.

Monday, April 28 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

The Hebrew Teacher: Three Novellas with author Maya Arad.

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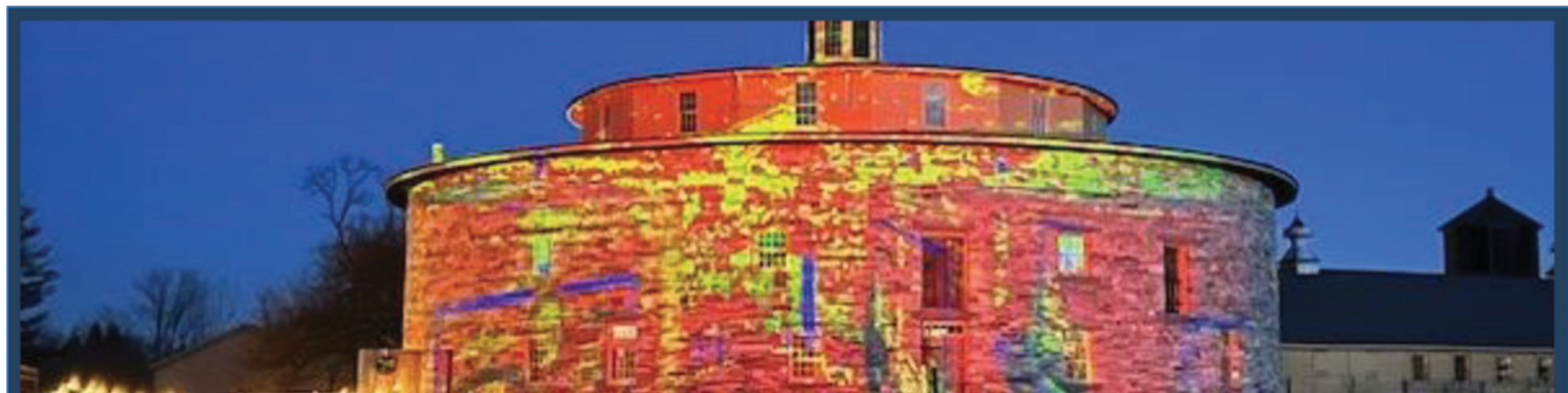
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Your Federation Presents

A Day of Holocaust Education and Remembrance for Berkshire B'nai Mitzvah Students

On Sunday, November 17, twenty-one local students, family members, and educators visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan. After touring the exhibits, the group met via Zoom with Holocaust survivor Norbert Strauss who, as a child of 11-years-old, was an eyewitness to the destruction of his family's kosher restaurant in Frankfurt during Kristallnacht on November 9, 1938.

These biannual visits to the museum are sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, in association with the Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County.



Celebrate Chanukah at Radiant Nights Sunday, December 29



Tour the Village anytime from 5-8 p.m., Chanukah Celebration at 6 p.m.
Hancock Shaker Village, 34 Lebanon Mountain Rd., Hancock, MA

Immerse Yourself in Radiant Nights

Walk through the Village and explore the Radiant Nights' sparkling lights, music, farm animals, and dazzling art video projections at your leisure between 5-8 p.m. Then join the Berkshire Jewish community in celebrating the Festival of Lights.

6:00 p.m. Menorah Lighting & Holiday Fun

Join us upstairs inside the Round Stone Barn as we kindle the menorah lights and celebrate with live music, Chanukah songs, tasty treats, and special Chanukah-themed light illuminations courtesy of local artist Joe Wheaton.

Online Ticket Purchase Required for Discounted Tickets:

Use Coupon Code JFB2024 at Checkout

Federation discounted tickets: Adults \$15, Kids 12 and under are free.

Pre-purchase is required online with a coupon code entered at checkout.

REGISTER: <https://tinyurl.com/JFBChanukah>

This Event is Mostly Outdoors. Dress Warmly!

Trails can be uneven and require secure footing. The self-guided route through the Village includes both paved and unpaved pathways. A firepit area and some indoor spaces are provided for your comfort.



Your Federation Presents

Welcoming the Week Ahead with Havdalah Yoga

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of PJ Library

In November, 23 people gathered to celebrate the end of Shabbat at the Lenox Community Center. We used all our senses during the Havdalah ceremony, read the book *Havdalah Sky*, and then got to move our bodies with Yoga by Melanie Poppins. We made ourselves into stars and moons, hooted like owls, and danced with scarves.

Fun was had by adults and kids alike!



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 an inclusive and casual Shabbat experience with schmoozing, music, and Shabbat dinner. Bring a friend or two! All are welcome

Vegetarian entree provided. Sign up to bring a potluck salad, side, dessert, or seltzer. Optional BYOB.

RSVP by December 9th at tinyurl.com/ShabbatDec13

Address will be provided to registered guests



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3⁹⁹

Kedem Sparkling Juice
25.4 oz, All Varieties



9⁹⁹

Vita Wild Herring in Wine Sauce or Sour Cream or Homestyle, Fresh, 30 to 32 oz



12⁹⁹

Warm Wishes Bouquet
A soft, charming floral bouquet which exudes warmth and light in celebration of the season.



7⁹⁹

Norm's Naked Scottish Style Smoked Salmon or Acme Smoked Salmon, 4 oz, Previously Frozen



3⁹⁹

Temp Tee Whipped Cream Cheese 8 oz or Food Club Honey Bear 12 oz



2⁹⁹

Manischewitz Egg Noodles 12 oz or Broth, 17 oz, All Varieties



1⁹⁹

Gold's Horse Radish 6 oz

2 \$1
FOR

Manischewitz Chocolate Coins .53 oz, All Varieties



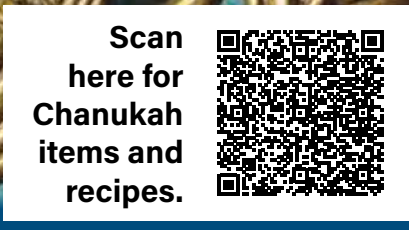
1²⁹

Rokeach or Promised Land Chanukah Candles 44 Count



1⁴⁹
lb

Washington State Royal Gala Apples



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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

DECEMBER

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.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

Noon, In-person Lunch...Roasted chicken (GF) (DF), potato pancakes, honey roasted carrots, applesauce, gefilte fish, challah, and apple cake. RSVP by 9 a.m. on Wednesday, December 18.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23

Noon, Lunch...Oriental vegetable stir-fry (GF) (DF), brown rice, consommé soup, Chinese noodles, and almond cookies.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24

Noon, Lunch...Salmon croquettes (GF) (DF), spaghetti with sauce, Italian green beans, salad, roll, and chocolate chip cookie.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26

Noon, Lunch...Stuffed pepper casserole with beef (GF) (DF), roasted potatoes, carrots, salad, sourdough bread, and fruit compote.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 30

Noon, Lunch...Roasted vegetable pizza, white bean soup, salad, and vanilla pudding.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable souffle, Persian rice, zucchini soup, sourdough bread, and tiramisu.

JANUARY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2

Noon, Lunch...Chicken with roasted red peppers and artichokes (GF) (DF), couscous, salad, multi-grain bread, and pears.

MONDAY, JANUARY 6

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

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

Noon, Lunch...Stuffed portobello mushroom (GF), quinoa, butternut squash soup, pumpernickel bread, and brownies.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9

Noon, Lunch...Filet of sole almandine (GF) (DF), rice pilaf, spinach, salad, roll, and snickerdoodle cookie.

MONDAY, JANUARY 13

Noon, Lunch...Spinach pie, meadow blend vegetables, corn chowder, rye bread, and sugar cookie.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

Noon, Lunch...Grilled cheese sandwich, French fries, peas and carrots, tomato soup, and peaches.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16

Noon, Lunch...Beef chili (GF) (DF), white rice, broccoli, salad, corn bread, and pineapple.

MONDAY, JANUARY 20

Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

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

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

2024

Friday, December 13 4:02 p.m.
Friday, December 20 4:05 p.m.
Friday, December 27 4:09 p.m.
(Light Chanukah candles before Shabbat candles)

2025

Friday, January 3 4:14 p.m.
Friday, January 10 4:21 p.m.
Friday, January 17 4:29 p.m.

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

MAZEL TOV!

Mendel and Tzivia Volovik on their November 6 wedding in Montreal. Proud parents are Chabad of the Berkshires co-directors **Rabbi Levi and Sara Volovik** and **Rabbi Itchy and Zeldie Treitel** of The Torah Center in Montreal.

Zach Cutler on his acceptance into Emerson College's digital communications master's program.

Susan Zuckerman on her 80th birthday.

Emma Lezberg, appointed as a new trustee at Berkshire Country Day School. A 2013 graduate of BCD, 2016 from Pittsfield High, and 2020 from Williams College, Emma is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she researches how schools can best support undocumented and liminal-status students and prepare them for life after graduation. She previously served as a case worker at the Berkshire Immigrant Center. She is the daughter of **Jenny Greenfeld and Bob Lezberg** and granddaughter of **Barbara Greenfeld**.

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



KOSHER MEALS ON WHEELS:

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

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

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

OBITUARIES

Dr. Floyd R. Tuler, 85, distinguished scientist, intrepid adventurer, beloved gabbai of Chabad of the Berkshires

LENOX – Dr. Floyd R. Tuler died peacefully at his home in Lenox on November 4.

Born May 24, 1939, Floyd was raised in Chicago, the son of Jack and Alice Tuler. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Marcia (nee Herbstman); his sister, Gail Friedman, and her husband Gene; his children, Seth and Debbie, and her husband, Aaron Feldman; and his grandchildren, Kobi and Tzvia Feldman. Floyd was very devoted to his extended family, adored his grandkids, and was known for his very long good-byes. He was adamant that his children and grandchildren learn their multiplication tables, and despite some initial resistance, he ultimately succeeded. He enjoyed offering financial advice to his children, who wish they listened more.

The Tulers moved to the Berkshires upon Floyd's retirement in 2005 and into their home in Lenox in 2007. After a weekend visit to the Berkshires in 1991 they purchased a second home in East Otis, where they loved to spend time and which they somehow consented to share with their son Seth for a year while he was working on his dissertation. He was an avid hiker with the Monday Mountain Boys, an officer and member of the Laurel Lake Association, delivered food for Meals on Wheels to bring to churches and the Salvation Army, and delivered Kosher meals to the homebound in the Berkshires. He volunteered at Tanglewood and enjoyed the many cultural opportunities the Berkshires offer. At their home in Lenox, Floyd loved planting and harvesting the garlic but left the tending of tomatoes and basil to Marcia. He loved his fruit trees and was increasingly frustrated with the bears that feasted on their fruit.

A graduate of the University of Illinois (B.S. and M.S.) and Cornell University (Ph.D.), Floyd was a material scientist by training. He was the first in his family to receive a graduate degree. He worked in both the public and private sector, including Sandia National Lab in Albuquerque, NM; Effects Technology, Inc. in Santa Barbara, CA; and Cambridge Technology Center (a Division of Alcan), Cambridge, MA. Weaved into his time at these jobs he was a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1974 – 1982) and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA (1981 – 1990). He ended his professional career as the executive director of the Center for Automotive Materials and Manufacturing, Queen's University Kingston, Ontario, from 2000 - 2005.

His work spanned many topics involving the strength and integrity of metals exposed to different kinds of stress. With his colleague Barry Butcher at Sandia National Laboratory, he formulated the Tuler-Butcher model, which no one in his family understands. ChatGPT tells us that this work was foundational in the study of how materials respond to repeated or sustained stresses, an important issue in fields of aerospace, civil engineering, and materials science. Ever curious with his sharp intellect to tackle new problems, his work evolved to consider challenging technology policy, risk, and research and development questions in offshore oil drilling, automobiles, and fuel cells, among others. Floyd loved being a teacher and mentor to many. He always considered the big picture, was comfortable with complexity, and avoided simplifications.

While he had a strong analytic mind, he was also deeply spiritual. Floyd was a

pioneer of the Chabad in the Berkshires Shabbat morning minyan, serving as the gabbai for many years. He drove the Rabbi's children to school in Albany for a year while saying kaddish for his mother. His bookshelves are lined with Jewish books spanning history, Talmud, kabbalah, ethics, and more.

Floyd had a strong spirit of adventure and shared his joy of adventure and travel with his family. Trips included rafting in the Grand Canyon, hiking and camping throughout Israel, hiking hut to hut in the White Mountains, and exploring Costa Rica, many countries in Europe, the British Virgin Islands, and more. He and Marcia took each grandchild on a special trip.

Floyd had a deep curiosity, and he loved talking with people. He made friends wherever he went, and he loved to talk over meals. At the end of a gathering, saying goodbye often meant the start of a new conversation. He loved to laugh and laughed easily. Floyd had an infectious smile and sparkling eyes. He loved to bake bread. A man of much generosity he was also humble and discrete about the support he offered.

A graveside funeral was held on Wednesday, November 6 at Beit Hachaim Cemetery in Great Barrington. In keeping with his spirit of generosity, donations in his honor may be given to Chabad of the Berkshires.

Dr. Eli Newberger, 83, founded the child protection team at Boston Children's Hospital, well-known jazz tuba player, active with Kids 4 Harmony

LENOX – Dr. Eli Newberger, 83, who founded the child protection team and family development program at Boston Children's Hospital, died on Thursday, October 24. He lived in Lenox, after

having spent much of his life in Brookline.

In 1997, he was a key witness in the trial of British au pair Louise Woodward, who initially was found guilty of second-degree murder in the death of Matthew Eappon of Newton. A judge subsequently reduced Woodward's conviction to involuntary manslaughter. By then Dr. Newberger was considered an expert in the field. In his late 20s, he was already well-respected for his ability to identify which young patients had been mistreated when Children's Hospital asked him to launch a child abuse unit.

The team of doctors, nurses, and social workers he assembled in the early 1970s became an interdisciplinary inspiration for similar programs in hospitals across the country.

"Eli's impact on children's welfare is significant," said Randal Rucker, former chief executive of Family Service of Greater Boston. "Eli always emphasized the need to weave our expertise together to benefit the children who are harmed, to help prevent harm in the first place, and, when horrible things happen, to support that child, to help that child heal, and to work with the families as well."

While pioneering medical approaches to identifying and preventing child abuse, Dr. Newberger was also establishing himself internationally as an improvisational jazz tuba player.

He performed locally, across Europe, and recorded numerous albums, primarily with the New Black Eagle Jazz Band, which he co-founded in the early 1970s. Dr. Newberger also performed with many other musicians, and gigged in later years with his New Orleans-style ensemble Eli & the Hot Six.

Jazz and his medical work were tightly bound in Dr. Newberger, each helping

to make the other pursuit possible.

"The joy and release of this musical life has enabled me to deal with the rigors of child abuse and family violence," he told the Boston Globe in 2015, when his 75th birthday celebration included performing with Eli & the Hot Six at Scullers Jazz Club in Cambridge. "My medical life connects to the sense of shared struggle and social protest that runs deep in the history and practice of jazz."

Born in Brooklyn, NY on December 26, 1940, Dr. Newberger grew up in Mount Vernon, NY. The empathy and compassion he later brought to abused children "began with this enormous sense of being a teen and taking care of his younger siblings," his wife said. His father, Joseph Newberger, was an accountant who divorced their mother, Helen Farber Newberger, whose care Dr. Newberger and his wife attended to for years.

Dr. Newberger studied piano and organ at The Juilliard School, and he majored in music theory and composition at Yale University, taking pre-med courses on the side. On a blind date he met Carolyn Moore, a Sarah Lawrence College student. They married in 1962, a week before he graduated. She became a child psychologist with a career at Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, where he taught in addition to his work at Children's. "We were really partners in our life together because we were 19 when we met," she said. "We grew up together."

After graduating, he joined the Peace Corps during the Vietnam War. His Peace Corps service brought them to Africa and Upper Volta, which is now Burkina Faso, where he found that pediatrics was his calling. Dr. Newberger was "a person of enormous moral and intellectual curiosity and



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OBITUARIES

interest," Carolyn said. When presented with a challenge or problem at work, at home, or with music, "Eli's first response was always, 'I'm going to fix that,' and he did."

In addition to his wife, daughter Mary-Helen Nsangou, and brother Henry, Dr. Newberger leaves two grandchildren.

During their years living part-time in the Berkshires, and then full-time in retirement, Dr. Newberger and his wife increasingly focused their attention on the Kids 4 Harmony program run by 18 Degrees, Family Services for Western MA, which honored the couple in July. From personal experience, Dr. Newberger knew music could help people survive difficulties and challenges. "Music keeps me in touch with the emotional underpinnings of life," said Dr. Newberger. "It enables me to care."

A gathering to celebrate his life and work will be announced.

Harold M. Rudin, 86, well known among synagogue families, passionate volunteers

BECKET, MA and HARTFORD, CT – Harold M. Rudin, 86, aka Mr. Jai Alai, left for the big fronton in the sky on Tuesday, November 12.

Born May 28, 1938, in Hartford to Dorothy K. and Meyer J. Rudin, Harold attended Weaver High School and coordinated every reunion for the Class of 1956. He was a UCONN graduate and a proud

member of Phi Epsilon Pi.

Harold married Roberta Mae DuBrow on June 25, 1961, and they remained married for 53 years until her death in 2014. Harold and Roberta were well known among their synagogue families at Teferes Israel and later Beth David, where they helped run BINGO, served on the board, and served many meals as kitchen volunteers.

When they moved to Becket, they became passionate volunteers at Jacob's Pillow, where they made many new friends and mentored young dancers from around the world. They also became active members of Congregation Ahavath Sholom of Great Barrington.

Harold was a principal at Rudin & Kalin Insurance and owned the Dairy Queen in Wilson, CT, for many years. During ice cream season, you could find him entertaining family, friends, and Jai Alai players in the back of the DQ and listening to Barbara Streisand, whom he loved second only to Roberta.

Harold is survived by his children, Danylle Rudin of Newburgh, NY, Rabbi Jennifer Rudin and her fiancé, Dr. Jeffrey Bornstein of Milford, MA, and Robert Rudin of Revere, MA; grandchildren, Elana, Mariel Sable and her fiancé Kyle Kaneb, Gabrielle Sable, Matthew and Sam Coleman; sister Cynthia and husband Ron Naiman; many loving nieces, nephews, and their children; and friends too numerous to count. In

addition to his wife, he is predeceased by his brother, Laurence Rudin.

Funeral services were held on Thursday, November 14 at Weinstein Mortuary, Hartford, officiated by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin. Interment followed at Teferes Israel Memorial Park, East Granby, CT. Donations be made to Congregation Ahavath Sholom, 15 North Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230; Jacob's Pillow Dance, 358 George Carter Road, Becket, MA, 01223; or Jewish Family Service of Metrowest, 475 Franklin Street, Suite 101, Framingham, MA 01702.

Gloria Klein Rubin, 79, proficient business owner, loved spending time with family

CANTON, GA – Gloria Klein Rubin, 79, of Pittsfield passed away on Sunday, November 10, while at her home in Canton, GA.

Born August 8, 1945, in Bronx, NY, she was the daughter of Jack and Lillian Klein. Along with her husband, Allen, Gloria was a proficient business owner for many decades. Their business ventures included Berkshire Products, Inc., Wigwam Center, Inc., and Rubin Mill in Housatonic.

Gloria and her husband were strong supporters of Berkshire Pulse: A Center for the Creative Arts. Gloria loved spending time with her family and caring for her beloved dog, Molly.

Gloria is survived by her sons Jeffrey and Eric Rubin;

daughter-in-law Lauren; grandchildren David, Brian, Zachary, Corey, Jessica, and Rebecca; great-grandchildren Allisan, Joshua, Holton, Madelyn, Skyler, Harper, and Elisabeth; brother Nelson Klein and wife Sherrie; sister-in-law Susan; and nieces and nephews Brian, Amy, James, Evan, and Liora Klein.

Gloria was predeceased by her husband of 52 years, Allen; brother Cliff Klein; and brother-in-law Harvey C. Rubin.

A service celebrating Gloria was held on Friday, November 22 at Finnerty and Stevens Funeral Home, Great Barrington. Burial will be held at a later date at Ahavath Sholom Cemetery, Great Barrington.

Donations may be made to the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc. in honor of her grandchild Corey Rubin, through Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Florence Browner, 94, member of many local organizations, loved the Berkshires

SOUTH EGREMONT – Florence Browner, nee Rosenblatt, 94, passed away at home, surrounded by family and friends, on Friday, November 1.

She was a long time resident of New York and then transplanted to South Egremont for the last 40 years. She loved the Berkshires! She was proud

to be the town assessor, a real estate broker, a beloved caregiver, and a member of many local organizations. She loved nature, feeding her birds, admiring her beautiful gardens, and being a parent to many rescued pets.

Florence is survived by her son and his partner, Andrew Stone and Sheila Lasker; daughter and spouse, Ilene Browner and Marc Goldstein; daughter, Mika Zacharia; "daughter", Dorothy Rickus; grandchildren, Caryn Gordon, Katherine Zacharia, and Phillip Zacharia; and favorite feline, Charlie Lee. She was predeceased by her beloved parents, Charles and Lena Rosenblatt; husband, Murray Browner; sister, Harriet Rosenblatt; daughter Cathie Browner; and son, Stone Stone.

Memorial donations can be made to the Berkshire Humane Society.

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Frozen

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Frozen

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Streit's Egg Noodles
12 oz. • Select Varieties or Bows 8 oz.

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10⁹⁹
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12⁹⁹
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6⁹⁹
PICS Cold Smoked Atlantic Salmon
4 oz. • All Varieties

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4/\$3
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2/\$6
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4.5-5 oz. • Select Varieties

3⁹⁹
Bosco Chocolate Syrup
22 oz.

2/\$5
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8.5 oz.

5/\$2
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42 oz. • Milk or Dark Chocolate

3⁴⁹
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89¢
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3⁹⁹
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Golden Pancakes
10.6 oz. • Select Varieties

2/\$3
with AdvantEdge Card
Streit's Potato Pancake Mix
6 oz. • All Varieties

3²⁹
with AdvantEdge Card
PICS Apple Sauce
23-24 oz. Jar • All Varieties



Offers effective Sunday, November 24, 2024 thru Saturday, January 4, 2025 in all Market 32, Price Chopper and Market Bistro stores located in CT, MA, NH, NY, PA & VT. Not all items are available in all stores.



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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



CULTURE & ARTS – BOOKS

Jewish Book Council Celebrates the 99th Annual Jewish Book Month



This year, as we're honoring Jewish Book Month in the month before Hanukkah (November 24-December 24, 2024), let's come together to celebrate Jewish books and support Jewish authors!

In this difficult year – when we're experiencing worry and grief, looking for joy and connection, and maybe diving a little deeper into ideas and history – books and the authors who write them are an invaluable resource. They provide comfort and meaning, challenge us and spark debate and dialogue. They bring us together as the people of the book. And as we're turning to the books we love and the stories we haven't yet discovered, authors are putting pen to paper and fighting to have their voices heard.

In 1925, Fanny Goldstein, a librarian at the Boston Public Library, decided that Jewish books and Jewish pride were worth celebrating, so she set up a display of Jewish books and initiated the first Jewish Book Week. Ninety-nine years later, we still think Jewish books are worth celebrating!

Visit jewishbookcouncil.org/events/celebrate to find out more.

Ways to Celebrate

- Read a Jewish book.
- Buy a book by a Jewish author.
- Organize a community read.
- Join or start a book club.
- Read a Jewish book to children in your home or community.
- Create a bulletin board dedicated to Jewish Book Month in a public community space.
- Invite an author to speak in your community.
- Attend an author event at a local synagogue, JCC or Jewish Federation.
- Display a table of Jewish books in your library, synagogue, JCC.
- Send out a bookmark template to your community, and have members create a Jewish Book Month bookmark.
- Sign up to get weekly book reviews and news from Jewish Book Council.
- Ask your local library to stock Jewish books that you love.
- Ask your local book store to stock Jewish books that you love.
- Recommend a book to friends or your social media network.
- Find a new book to love on Jewish Book Council's website.
- Organize a school read-a-thon.
- Invite your local school to join one of JBC's school author events.
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Einstein in Kafkaland: How Albert Fell Down the Rabbit Hole and Came Up with the Universe

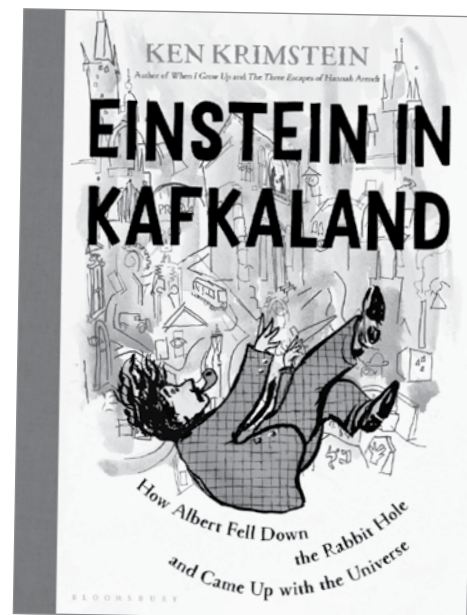
By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

I'm a science ignoramus who appreciates any writer who can frame complex concepts of physics in layman's terms. Ken Krimstein manages to do that by centering his story on Albert Einstein's angst at a point in his career where he knows that his early work and intuition about how the universe works must be correct, but is oppressed by his sense that proving it will overthrow the received order of Newtonian physics. Moreover, Einstein is nervously aware that he may not have the chops as a mathematician to work everything out in order to finish the job – what's a genius to do?

Krimstein plays with the synchrony of Einstein being in Prague during the same years that Franz Kafka is working towards a similar breakthrough as a literary artist, imagining a dialogue in which the writer asserts that he and the physicist are working toward the same thing: "The **True** Truth." Krimstein's intricate and witty drawings of Prague as an incarnation of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland gives the story a phantasmagoric setting wholly fitting to the cosmically outrageous ideas that both Einstein and Kafka were birthing.

My favorite moment in the book is when Einstein is asked by a university grandee to cut to the chase and explain, in layman's terms, the ultimate goal of his work. "I want to know," Einstein replies, "what God was thinking when he made the world." The next panel captures the grandee's reflexive mercenary question – "Do you think that might have a military application?" – and a sheepish Einstein's response – "Gulp." For surely Einstein always understood the horror that the true truth he was working towards might unleash into the world. Kafka, as Krimstein portrays him, also had a prescient sense of how the menacing world alive in his imagination might become manifest in the 20th century – unlike Einstein, Kafka didn't live long enough to see what would unfold, but his three sisters (Elli, Valli, and Ottla) lived long enough to be murdered in German death camps during the Holocaust. It is wholly appropriate that Krimstein's narrator is the skeletal figure of Death from the astronomical clock of 1410 attached to Prague's Old Town Hall.

Einstein in Kafkaland is a magical book, a sophisticated (and deeply researched) entertainment that relates big ideas in an accessible way. Consider this as a Chanukah gift to anyone who enjoys science, literature, 20th century history, or comic books.



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

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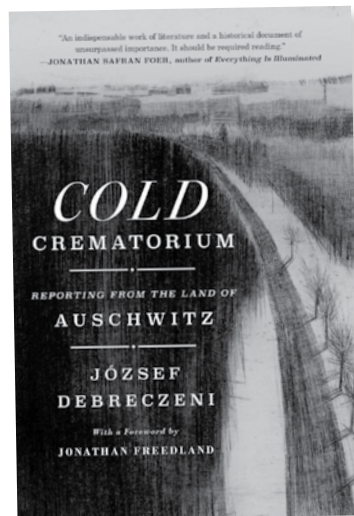


Jewish Federation OF THE BERKSHIRES

CULTURE & ARTS – BOOKS

Cold Crematorium: Reporting From the Land of Auschwitz**A rediscovered masterpiece assumes a place in the canon of Holocaust literature**

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



As he recounts:

Right or left. To a life of slavery or to death in the gas chamber. Those who've made it home know what it meant if someone went left. But, then, we didn't know yet. The decisive moment slunk away, unnoticed, amid others. [p. 35]

Permitted to live in order to be worked to death, Debreczeni was moved among three subcamps, where slave labor was employed for the benefit of large German corporations. At one level, the system operated as perversion of a modern industrial state – in one withering observation at being forced to work in a mine with “not a trace of safety precautions,” Debreczeni writes: “Tunneling is hard work... All over the world, laborers battling underground with homicidal rocks are well paid and provided with special care. Here the guiding principle is the opposite of that. [p. 120]” He recognizes that the purpose of the system is ultimately not to exploit cheap labor – it is “the result of experimentation through scientific barbarism. Hundreds of thousands made to stand on all fours will no longer strive to vanquish the beast within themselves. [p. 127]”

Almost all of *Cold Crematorium* is a chronicle of decisive moments slinking away into a further morass of horrors, all told with pitiless clarity. Debreczeni describes his body being wrecked from within by malnutrition and disease and assailed from without by violence, the elements, and what he terms a “primeval forest of filth and lice. [p. 202]” He observes: “In the Land of Auschwitz, the first thing to wither away is the instinct of disgust. [p. 71]”

His interpersonal struggles are among his fellow prisoners also fighting to survive – his German overlords seem to appear periodically only to brutally enforce, “with systematic resourcefulness...a subtle hierarchy of the pariahs” [p. 40] created in the death camps. Toward the end of the book, Debreczeni, wracked by typhus and in the grip of veritable death throes, thinks:

It's not bad, lying there like this. To see nothing with open eyes, to feel my immaterial lightness, to lazily vanish behind the canopy of immortal indifference. And—oh, bliss!—to need nothing, not even cigarettes, to need nothing... [p.204]

But Debreczeni lives. It is not until you get to page 234 of this 237-page book that he is liberated by the Red Army. And until page 234, things have been getting progressively worse for him in ways that even those of us steeped in Holocaust stories will find unimaginable. You keep hoping it will stop, but it doesn't. You keep wondering *how* it can continue, but it does. And the effect is shattering.

Over the past summer, I was driving with an older friend who shared that she was in the midst of reading *Cold Crematorium*. “Oh, my God,” I said, and she exclaimed: “I know!” I told her that I had tried to explain the power of this book to people who had not read it, but ended up sputtering and inarticulate. My friend is originally from Eastern Europe and grew up among Holocaust survivors. She'd heard many, many stories and read many, many books – “but never anything like this!”

We spent several minutes discussing the profound affect *Cold Crematorium* had on us, and I asserted that this book is going to stand as one of the most important testimonies of a Holocaust survivor, worthy of a place on the same

shelf as Elie Weisel's *Night* and Viktor Frankel's *Man's Search for Meaning* and Primo Levi's *If This is a Man* (aka *Survival in Auschwitz*). But *Cold Crematorium* is different, she insisted. There is no philosophy, no psychology, no quarrels with God or the

Universe, no trying to fit this catastrophe into some larger theoretical framework – nothing like that at all. Just the process of a human beings ground down toward oblivion.

Indeed, Debreczeni's only speculation that could be called remotely esoteric occurs toward the end of the book, where he considers his desire for retribution against his oppressors and says to his friend, Dr. Farkas, who has helped keep him alive:

“Maybe it's all just curiosity,” I continue, musingly. “What would they be like in this situation, after all? Would they like the taste of beets and potato skins? Would they be slurping down bunker soup so greedily? I'd like to see that smug, narrow-minded police constable here as he is picking lice off himself—that addlebrained, puffed-up cretin who added a lame pun to every name he read aloud from the list before departure in Topola. Like I say, curiosity, that's all.”

Farkas responds to my outburst with just an indulgent wave.

He presses a little package into my hand.

“Multivitamins. Three times a day.”

It's an amazing exchange – muse all you like, but the pills are all that will (possibly) help you in this world.

Cold Crematorium was only published in English in 2023, and translated into 15 other languages, as well. How did this vital work of literature remain virtually unknown for so long? Reviewers speculate that the West might have been unreceptive to it because Debreczeni explicitly names the German companies that exploited slave labor, substantial industrial firms that remained players in the postwar German *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle). Others suggest that Western publishers in the Cold War era might have chafed at the author's full-throated praise of his Red Army liberators, as well as his status as a journalist working in a Communist country. Behind the Iron Curtain, the commissars may have objected to Debreczeni's portrayal of the Holocaust as a crime that specifically targeted the Jews – postwar Communist authorities tried to fix Jews into a more general category of “Victims of Fascism.” Certainly, neither the Western or Communist governments and cultures seeking to assimilate Germans into their spheres of control would wish to be reminded of the grotesque behavior of the German populace during the war, which Debreczeni describes unforgivingly.

But an additional, more unsettling, possibility is that Jewish historians and audiences may not have wanted to confront the reality Debreczeni portrayed. Nazi oppressors hover in the background over the ghastly crimes the author describes, but the cruelties were, as the Nazis intended, in large part inflicted by Jewish kapos and prisoners trying to survive.

Uniquely, such towering figures of the Auschwitz hierarchy were recruited from among those who, back home, had stood on the bottom rungs of Jewish society. Those who'd made nothing of themselves—schnorrers, nebbishes, schlemiels, freeloaders, rogues, swindlers, idlers, slackers—all blossomed in this swamp... If that biblical saying “The last shall be first and the first last” was realized anywhere, it certainly was here...[p.90]

Schnorrers, nebbishes, and schlemiels – that cast of comic shtetl rogues sentimentalized in the pages of Sholem Aleichem stories or *The Joys of Yiddish*, here fighting each other for a morsel of food or to see who might extract a gold tooth from a corpse to please their superiors. Hapless as they are merciless, they are human archetypes who would probably lived normal kinds of lives in normal kinds of times. In the Land of Auschwitz, their distinct, immutable human characteristics found different, otherwise unimaginable, expressions.

The book is hard going. I hope the brief excerpts I've shared convey something of the masterful job the late Paul Olchvary did with the translation. I knew Paul a little and, when you read his friend Jenny Gitlitz's sidebar about him on the next page, you'll understand why my experience of *Cold Crematorium* was overcast with an even greater sadness. His translation will be definitive for as long as this book is read in English – Debreczeni's writing, and the voice and humanity Paul found in it, will be, for the world, an expression of the experience of being an enslaved person that transcends cultures and history – the numberless people stripped of hope and humanity, people who had no chance of expressing their pain or the injustices done to them.

But perhaps the most difficult thing about reading this book was trying to jibe this historical account with current events. Debreczeni's ordeal transpired over 14 months or so, his suffering and physical decline over that time period described in unsparing detail. I first read *Cold Crematorium* in June 2024, when Israeli hostages in Gaza had already been held in captivity for 8 months. As I read, I couldn't help mapping Debreczeni's time as a slave of the Nazis against the time our hostages have been imprisoned in tunnels by Hamas, knowing that our kinsmen are today being abused by the same kind of vile people to whom their humanity means nothing – and for the same reasons. They are Jews.

As I write this in late November, about 14 months after Oct. 7 2023, our hostages remain in captivity. As much as it is a history book, *Cold Crematorium* is also a window into what these cherished people may be living through, the kinds of things they may be thinking, at this moment.

As William Faulkner put it: “The past is never dead. It's not even past.” *Cold Crematorium*, then, may be a read you will want to save for the future. It will endure.

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CULTURE & ARTS – BOOKS

Paul Olchvary, (1966-2024)

Translator of Cold Crematorium

By Jenny Gitlitz



Paul Olchvary

Paul Olchvary grew up in Buffalo, the son of gentile Hungarian emigrés. Enchanted by both the language and the culture, Paul lived in Hungary for ten years – spanning his late 20s and early 30s – after getting a writing degree from Indiana University. When I met Paul in 2010, he had just left a comfortable full-time editing job at a publishing house in Connecticut and had moved to the Berkshires to pursue his dream of founding his own publishing company.

Living and working on a shoestring budget in North Adams and later Williamstown, Paul gave birth to New Europe Books, an imprint specializing in works by Eastern European authors or in subject matter about those countries.

In the 14 years he ran the company, he published about two dozen books on subjects ranging from Hungarian cultural identity to Middle East war reporting, from the emergence of Transylvanian vampire legends to the invention of the ballpoint pen. My favorite was *Voyage to Kazohinia*, a satirical, dystopian Hungarian cult classic that has been called *Brave New World* meets *Gulliver's Travels*. I loved going with Paul to sparsely-attended readings by his authors at Water Street Books in Williamstown – usually they crashed at his apartment afterwards and stayed up late into the night drinking plum brandy.

Because this venture was more a labor of love than a reliable income generator, Paul translated on the side for other publishing houses. Over the years, he developed a well-deserved international reputation for his translations, which were artful as well as literal. It was this reputation that led Alex Bruner – Jozsef Debreczeni's nephew – to find Paul, and – after interviewing three other candidates – to commission Paul with translating *Cold Crematorium* into English for the first time. Paul talked to me often during the year he was translating the book, captivated by the elegant, deeply human writing on the horrific subject matter. Sometimes he'd ask me about the nuances of Hebrew or Yiddish words in the text. I was so excited that he was translating a Holocaust book – an intersection of our worlds that didn't come often. I told him he had to get on the Jewish Federation touring circuit, and come speak at my synagogue. Little did I know, Alex Bruner was already on the case!

Right after the book came out, Paul's first reading was scheduled for February 21 at the Williams Bookstore on Spring Street. He'd called me and emailed me with all of the glowing critical reviews for months – so of course I planned to be there with bells on. I never imagined I would be giving the reading in his stead, because he died suddenly on February 14 – Valentine's Day – when his heart gave out. My own is still broken, as are the hearts of his family, his girlfriend Gloria, and his many close friends in the Berkshires, in Buffalo, and all over the world.

Paul was a devoted son, brother, father, and friend. He had a gentle manner, a quick wit, and a knack for making friends wherever he went. He loved swimming, canoeing and hiking; he loved smoking his pipe and tossing back some schnapps; and he loved meeting friends at the Tunnel City café or inviting them over for a campfire in his backyard. He made a mean potato-leek soup using wild ramps (he was an expert forager), and his chicken paprikash was a delicious homage to his ancestral home. Paul lived his too-short life with gusto, and those of us who knew him are blessed. It is a tragedy that he didn't live to fully enjoy the success of *Cold Crematorium*. When I read its pages, I imagine him lingering carefully over every word, and I feel closer to him.

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Jewish Gelt

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

According to the great Maimonides, "...it is forbidden to lament or to fast (on Hanukkah), just as it is on the days of Purim." Given the tense times in which we currently are living, this commandment is a difficult one to obey. However, let's remember the twin messages of the holiday: to defend our right to live freely as Jews and to bring increasing light into the world.

Aside from lighting the hanukkiyah to publicize the miracle of the oil in the Temple, we celebrate the holiday with games of chance and, of course, food. The tradition of eating fried foods is based on the legend of the one flask of oil lasting not one but eight days in the rededicated Temple's menorah.

The custom of eating cheese-based dishes commemorates different a biblical event. Judith saved her people from the Assyrian onslaught by feeding salty cheese to the general Holofernes, getting him drunk, and lopping off his head. Even though Judith's story took place hundreds of years before the Maccabean revolt, the tradition commemorates the ability of the weak to overcome the strong.

And finally, we have chocolate gelt.

Some scholars trace the giving of actual gelt, the Yiddish word for money, all the way back to the time of the rededication of the Temple. Victorious over the Syrian Greeks and celebrating the very first Hanukkah, the Maccabees reportedly distributed to widows, soldiers, and orphans the booty seized from their enemies.

The tradition of giving gelt to children during Hanukkah has roots in the tradition of giving actual coins to children, and it relates to the root meaning of the word "Hanukkah," education. In the 17th century, Polish Jews demonstrated their regard for education by giving money to their children to present to their teachers. In the 18th century, Eastern Europeans bypassed the children to give directly to the teachers. By the 19th, parents began to give money to the children.

In 20th century United States, Hanukkah gelt morphed into chocolate coins. In the 1920s, the New York-based Loft's Candies began making chocolate coins and wrapping them in gold foil. I'm sure I'm not the only one to recall with great fondness getting a little mesh bag of the candies and using its contents as chips when playing dreidel with my cousins.

The modern gelt we see today usually features an embossed image of the Temple menorah. To be accurate, however, the first Jewish coins produced with that image were not minted until decades after the 164 BCE rededication. It wasn't until King John Hyrcanus I of Judea that the first coins with the menorah were minted, around 135 BCE.

The simple chocolate coins many of us grew up with have now evolved. While still wrapped in foil embossed with images of the menorah, stars of David, and

even messages, today's gelt may feature upscale, fair-trade certified chocolate. And they are no longer simply the gold-covered milk chocolate variety. Silver foil signifies a dark chocolate coin.

A shuttered Loft's store on Nassau Street in downtown New York City. Founded in the 1860s, Loft's was finally out of business by the 1990s.



PHOTO CREDIT: Peter Burka



Peanut Butter Gelt Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

- ¾ cup peanut butter
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar, plus more for rolling
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt

- 1 large egg, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour, fluffy not packed
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 36 chocolate gelt, unwrapped & frozen

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
- In a large mixing bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat until combined the peanut butter, butter, sugars and salt.
- Add the egg and vanilla and beat until well combined.
- Scrape down the bowl.
- Add the flour and baking soda and beat on low speed just until combined.

- Scoop the dough and form into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in the sugar.
- Place on a prepared baking sheet 2 inches apart.
- Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until the bottoms just start to turn brown.
- Remove from oven and immediately press a chocolate coin into the center of each cookie.
- Allow the cookies to cool completely on the pan.



A coin embossed with a menorah minted during the reign of King John Hyrcanus I of Judea (circa 130 BCE)

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.

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