

# Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

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[jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)



## Defiant Requiem – Community Film Screening and Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration

LENOX – On Sunday, April 27 at 2 p.m., join together for a community commemoration of Yom HaShoah-Holocaust Remembrance Day. The film *Defiant Requiem*, a documentary about the Terezín concentration camp, will be screened, followed by a performance by renowned violinist Yevgeny Kutik, a memorial candle lighting, prayers and a moment of silence in memory of those murdered in the Holocaust.

This free event will take place at Tanglewood Learning Institute, Studio E, Linde Center for Music and Learning on the Tanglewood campus. Tickets are limited – RSVP on the calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

Co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Tanglewood Learning Institute.

### About *Defiant Requiem*

Premiered at Yad Vashem in 2012, the award-winning documentary film, *Defiant Requiem*, tells the extraordinary, little-known story of conductor Rafael Schächter and his Theresienstadt (Terezín) concentration camp prisoner choir, which performed Verdi's Requiem Mass sixteen times as an act of defiance and resistance against their Nazi captors. The text of the Mass enabled them, as Schächter told the chorus, to "sing to the Nazis what they could not say to them."

With testimony from surviving members of Schächter's choir, soaring concert footage, cinematic dramatizations, and evocative animation, this unique film

**DEFIANT REQUIEM,**  
continued on page 5

## Connecting with Community Lunches

**This May, enjoy five weekly in-person holiday meals around our community table**

PITTSFIELD – On the Thursdays of May 1, May 8, May 15, May 22, and May 29 at noon, join us to celebrate the month's milestones with holiday-themed home-cooked kosher lunches.

All are welcome to enjoy delicious meals prepared in the Knesset Israel kitchen by Susan Levine, Federation's food service director, and her second in command, "Cake Lady" Natalia Monahan, who is quite possibly the best pastry chef in all of Berkshire County (if we must say so ourselves!)

Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day BEFORE the lunch (Wednesday). Lunch is free for adults over 60 years of age. A suggested donation of \$3 is welcomed. \$7 for all others. Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

### The Menus



**May 1 – Yom Ha'atzma'ut – Israeli Independence Day:** Celebrate Israel's 77th birthday with falafel, hummus, salads and other yummy tastes of Israeli and Middle Eastern foods.



**May 8 – Celebrating Mothers and Other Important Women:** Celebrate mothers and other important women in our lives. We invite you to bring a favorite recipe to swap, a photo, or a remembrance to share.



**May 15 – Lag B'Omer BBQ:** On the 33rd day between Passover and Shavuot, celebrate with delicious BBQ.



**May 22 – Memorial Day Picnic:** Join us for a summer kickoff kosher Memorial Day picnic lunch (indoors). Share stories or memories to honor and reflect on veterans in our lives.



**May 29 – Festive Shavuot Lunch:** Join us for a festive Festival of Weeks lunch featuring favorite dairy delights, including an ice cream sundae bar! We hope to see you there!

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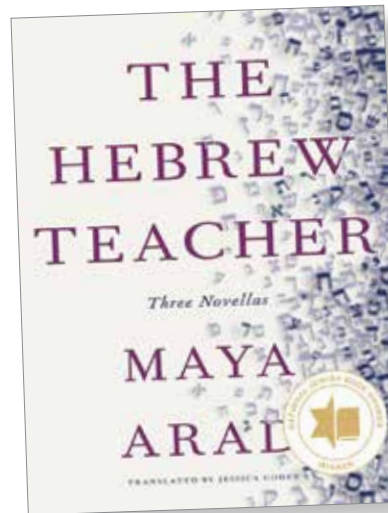
## Happy Passover 5785 Our Season of Liberation



Image: Courtesy of Mark Podwal via JNS

One explanation for placing festivals, Passover among them, on the full Moon is that it is "considered a time of joy and celebration, freedom, and abundance. And according to the Kabbalah, God's feminine face creates souls on the full Moon." So writes Carol Goodman Kaufman in this issue's 'Traveling With Jewish Taste' column (see page 24 for more). This "Matzah Moon," by Mark Podwal (z"l) was the cover image for the 2004 edition of Elie Wiesel's *A Passover Haggadah*.

## The Hebrew Teacher: Three Novellas, with Maya Arad



On Monday, April 28 at 7 p.m., join acclaimed Israeli author Maya Arad in conversation with Barbara Viniar, for a discussion of *The Hebrew Teacher: Three Novellas*.

In a review on The Arts Fuse website, novelist Roberta Silman wrote: "These disturbing and beautiful stories of Israelis living in America concern themselves mostly with the passage of time, questions about living a useful life, and the problems of generational differences. Arad's understanding of these themes attests to her reputation as one of Israel's most significant writers, and she has brought her characters and their stories to life in meaningful and unforgettable ways."

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

[jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org). Part of Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.

The novellas collected in this volume depict three Israeli women, their lives altered by immigration to the United States, seeking to overcome crises.

Ilana is a veteran Hebrew instructor at a Midwestern college who has built her life around her career. When a young Hebrew literature professor joins the faculty, she finds his post-Zionist politics pose a threat to her life's work.

Miriam, whose son left Israel to make his fortune in Silicon Valley, pays an unwanted visit to meet her new grandson and discovers cracks in the family's perfect facade.



PHOTO: MIRA MAMON

Author Maya Arad  
**THE HEBREW TEACHER,**  
continued on page 4

OP-ED

# RABBI REFLECTION In This Time Between the Suns

By Rabbi Jodie Gordon / Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

How many of us remember the story *Oh the Places You'll Go*, by Dr. Seuss? Lately, it feels like we're living in that storied "waiting place":

Waiting for a train to go  
 or a bus to come, or a plane to go  
 or the mail to come, or the rain to go  
 or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow  
 or the waiting around for a Yes or No  
 or waiting for their hair to grow.  
 Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite  
 or waiting for the wind to fly a kite  
 or waiting around for Friday night  
 or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake  
 or a pot to boil, or a Better Break  
 or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants  
 or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.  
 Everyone is just waiting.



Rabbi Jodie Gordon

Everyone is just waiting. But, I can't help but feel that the real thing that I am waiting for is a "day after," which has not yet come. Just one year ago, I had the opportunity to attend the annual convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the official body of the Reform rabbinate. The event took place in March 2024, just months after October 7, 2023. During the convention, I had the opportunity to hear Rabbi Oded Mazor speak. Rabbi Mazor serves as the senior rabbi of Kehillat Kol Haneshama, the largest Reform congregation in Jerusalem. He was invited to address his rabbinic peers, and to reflect upon the idea of the "day after" in Israel, and on life in Israel during the war.

In his powerful and emotional remarks, Rabbi Mazor shared vignettes of four individuals in his extended community, and what *hayom acharei* ("the day after") would look like for each of them. Two of them stand out to me still. First, Nati, whose home is on Kibbutz Or Haner, just a few kilometers from the Gaza border. For Nati, Rabbi Mazor reflected "What does *היום אחרי* (*hayom acharei*, the day after) mean, when you return to your kibbutz, just a few kilometers from Gaza, and the kids go to school, and some of their friends are not there anymore and will never be? And some of their friends will be there, but still are someplace else around Israel and not yet allowed to come back. What it meant for Nati: Returning home is to go pick the lemons from the lemon tree in their yard.

*היום אחרי* (*hayom acharei*, the day after) will be to know that this lemon tree will give lemons again next year, as well."

Perhaps the most powerful story Rabbi Mazor told was of Kol Haneshama's congregational manager, Anna, whose niece Karina Arieiev was one of the five *tatspitanoyot* (female observers) who had been kidnapped from the base at Nahal Oz and held hostage. He shared, "When Anna is thinking about *היום אחרי* (*hayom acharei*, the day after), there is no *יום אחרי* (*yom acharei*, day after) without Karina coming home. Karina's parents, Anna's aunt and uncle, told her that very explicitly: If she doesn't come home, there is no day after."

And now here we are, a year later, and as I get ready to travel to Chicago for this year's CCAR convention, I can't help but reflect on the meaning of a "day after." I don't know how Nati and his family are doing a year later on Kibbutz Or Haner, but Karina Arieiev has come home. Over the course of the past two months, I have been rapt with attention to the homecoming of the hostages released during the first phase of the ceasefire. I have been so moved by the symbols of strength and resilience: seeing Emily Damari raise her injured hand in strength, and the heart that Liri Albag made with her fingers. Each emotional family reunion felt redemptive. Still, all of it has been tempered by the excruciating heartbreak of seeing many other hostages return to learn of the deaths of their loved ones, forever physically and emotionally scarred by their cruel captivity. The initial joy of the return of the hostages took a decidedly darker emotional turn, as we finally learned the fate of Shiri Bibas and her two young children, Ariel and Kfir. The joyful family reunions turned to mournful funeral processions for not only Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir Bibas, but for Oded Lifshitz, Itzhak Elgarat, Tsachi Idan, Ohad Yahalomi, and Shlomo Mantzur.



"The day after will be to know that this lemon tree will give lemons again next year, as well"

At the time of writing this reflection, the fate of the remaining hostages remains unclear, and the ongoing suffering in Gaza and in Israel is only more deeply entrenched. I think back on the last 16 months, and my heart breaks when I consider the cumulative human suffering.

This cannot possibly be the "day after." The first phase of the ceasefire has brought much to be grateful for, and still leaves so much more to worry about, and to continue to fight for. There has to be more; something better for ourselves, for our children, and for humanity. My faith in humanity and my faith in *Am Yisrael* lead me to understand this moment we are living in as a "twilight time" – a time that is not still day, and is not yet night. Twilight is such a mystical time of day, one that entranced the ancients, and captured the curiosity of our sages. In Hebrew we call this time "*bein hashmashot*" – literally, the time "between the

RABBI REFLECTION,  
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**RABBI NOAM KATZ**  
 Artist Scholar in Residence Weekend  
 Friday May 9 - Sunday May 11

**Musical Kabbalat Shabbat**  
 Friday, May 9, 2025  
 5:15pm Pre-neg. 6:00pm Service  
 RSVP Required: [www.hevreh.org](http://www.hevreh.org)

**Shabbat Morning Service**  
 Saturday, May 10, 2025  
 10:00am Shabbat Morning Service and Kiddush Lunch Program  
 RSVP Required: [www.hevreh.org](http://www.hevreh.org)

Rabbi Noam Katz is one of the most exciting and influential voices in contemporary Jewish music. He has brought his high-flying energy and soulful melodies to Jewish and interfaith audiences across North America, Africa, and Israel.




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OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

UPDATE: MA Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism

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

As some of you may know, I was appointed by Governor Maura Healey to serve on the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism. Since our first meeting this past fall, the Commission has convened several times to hear testimonies from stakeholders, including policy experts, mental health professionals, community members, educators, and students. These conversations have provided crucial insights into the challenges Jewish communities face and the systemic nature of antisemitism in Massachusetts, particularly within K-12 schools.

Commission co-chairs Representative Simon Cataldo (D-14th Middlesex) and Senator John Velis (D-Hampden and Hampshire) have committed to gathering input from a diverse range of organizations, subject matter experts, and residents across the Commonwealth to better understand experiences and perspectives on antisemitism. All hearings are part of a broader process aimed at developing recommendations that positively impact the lived experiences of Jews in the Commonwealth,

enhance our sense of safety and belonging, and promote a broader understanding of best practices for all vulnerable communities.

A key focus of the Commission's work thus far has been to gain a deeper understanding of antisemitism within K-12 schools while examining the educational resources and tools available to educators. Education plays a vital role in shaping students' awareness of Jewish heritage and understanding of antisemitism, and is essential in preventing the spread of bias and hate in society.

At its January hearing, the Commission explored the status of antisemitism in schools, with a focus on Holocaust and antisemitism education. A troubling ADL Center on Antisemitism Research study identified that 71% of Jewish parents and 38% of non-Jewish parents surveyed were aware that their child or another child experienced antisemitism in their schools.

Dr. Miri Bar-Halpern, a psychologist who presented at the hearing, highlighted the severe emotional and psychological toll that antisemitism in schools can have on Jewish students. Her testimony emphasized that antisemitism is not merely a series of isolated incidents, but an issue that affects entire families and communities.

We also heard how organizations like Facing History and Ourselves are playing an important role in equipping educators with the tools and resources to confront antisemitism and teach about the Holocaust. Their teacher training programs and educational materials are key tools in fostering a deeper understanding of Jewish history and the dangers of hate. Only 29 states require Holocaust education, and few schools offer dedicated lessons on antisemitism.

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, through the leadership of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) and the Massachusetts Association of Jewish Federations, advocated for the Genocide Education Act, which was signed by Governor Charlie Baker in 2021. The act requires all MA middle and high schools to provide instruction on the history of genocide aligned with the state's history and social science curriculum framework. We continue to advocate for

*Antisemitism is real, it is dangerous, and it is rising. To be effective, our work must continue to be based on solid data and lived experiences, focusing on meaningful, actionable solutions...*

the annual funding needed to implement this education mandate effectively.

During the February hearing, serious concerns were raised about the educational materials distributed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) to its members regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict. The Commission co-chairs pointed out the lack of Jewish and Israeli perspectives, and that some of the material presented violent rhetoric against Israel and antisemitic imagery, all of which misrepresent historical and political realities and perpetuated harmful antisemitic stereotypes.

It was a tense and difficult meeting. While Commission co-chair Cataldo questioned the MTA president about disturbing materials on their site, he was heckled by an audience member who called out "Senator McCarthy!" In an Instagram post after the meeting, co-chair Cataldo shared that this is a real-time example of the type of gaslighting Jews and non-Jews are subjected to when they raise issues and concerns about antisemitism in today's environment.

Just one week later, after significant media attention, the MTA decided to review and remove some of these materials. However, the ongoing absence of nuanced perspectives on this complex issue remains concerning. There is a clear line between legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies and rhetoric that crosses into antisemitism. Failing to make this distinction harms thoughtful dialogue and fosters a hostile environment for Jewish students.

Educators need to be equipped with the proper resources to teach about this conflict in all its complexity. It is possible to discuss the Israel-Palestine issue and its dual narratives without resorting to antisemitism. Educational resources must ensure that no student feels marginalized or unsafe.

At our most recent meeting, which was held in March in Springfield, Rabbi Jodie Gordon of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire did an excellent job presenting the challenges we have been facing here in the Berkshires. She highlighted the importance of education and outreach and the building of relationships locally, especially in the interfaith community. She suggested teachers need the support and resources to engage in "difficult conversations" in the classroom, rather than simply taking a stance of being "pro- this or pro- that," and emphasized the need to teach students "to think critically, because we're presenting them a multinarrative view of history and current events."

COMMISSION UPDATE, continued on page 4


The Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism met to discuss antisemitism in K-12 schools, including educational resources from the Massachusetts Teachers Association

Representative Cataldo: "You would agree that this is antisemitic imagery, correct?"

MTA President: "I'm not going to evaluate that."

Representative Cataldo: "It's a dollar bill folded up as a Star of David, is it antisemitic?"

MTA President: "The central point is that we provide resources for our members to consider in their own intelligent way."



ADL NEW ENGLAND



SAVE THE DATE  
**Major Donors Celebration**  
**Sunday, July 20, 2025**  
**9:30-11:30 a.m.**

Berkshire Hills Country Club  
 500 Benedict Road, Pittsfield, MA

2025 Major Donor Chairs: Mark and Judy Usow

Couvert: \$45 per person

RSVP Required by July 11  
[jewishberkshires.org/celebration](http://jewishberkshires.org/celebration)

or call (413) 442-4360, ext. 16 or [ktodd@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:ktodd@jewishberkshires.org)

This event is open to leadership donors who make a gift of \$1,000 or more to Federation's 2025 annual campaign.



Jewish Federation OF THE BERKSHIRES

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Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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## OP-ED

## RABBI REFLECTION,

*continued from page 2*

suns." This "time between the suns" is equally dusky and mysterious as it also "neither here nor there." The sages were so perplexed and moved by the beauty and mystery of twilight – they didn't quite know what to do with it. They saw twilight as a period of uncertainty. Is it still day? Is it already night? A little bit of both? Therefore, the Sages taught, we were obligated to the expectations of both day and night in that twilight space of in-between.

It feels to me like *Am Yisrael* – the people of Israel, connected by bonds of history and relationship both in Israel and around the world, are now living "*bein hashmashot*." We are not yet in the "day after", and we are no longer exactly where we were just a few months ago. If we apply the wisdom of the sages to this moment, then we can see ourselves as doubly obligated. First, to continue to cultivate hope, to pray, and most important, to work and advocate tirelessly until every hostage has been brought home and we can begin to rebuild. Secondly, to offer gratitude for what has changed, and for the sake of those who have returned, to begin living in ways that reflect our commitment to healing, rehabilitation, and peace.

There is a song by Israeli artist Yagel Oshri that came out in August 2023, which took on particular significance after the start of the war. The song, called *Latzet M'dikaon* ("Getting Out of Depression") includes the refrain:

*Od yavo yamim tovim, ani mav'teach.  
Od yavo yamim tovim...*

*More good days will come, I promise  
More good days will come.*

Even as we sit *bein hashmashot*, this is my deepest hope and prayer: that we will see better days ahead, for *Am Yisrael* and for all humanity.

**Rabbi Jodie Gordon** is the spiritual leader of *Hevreh of Southern Berkshire* in Great Barrington.

## THE HEBREW TEACHER,

*continued from cover*

Efrat, another Israeli in California, is determined to help her daughter navigate the challenges of middle school, and crosses forbidden lines when she follows her into the minefield of social media.

In these three stirring novellas – comedies of manners with an ambitious blend of irony and sensitivity – celebrated Israeli author Maya Arad probes the demise of idealism and the generation gap that her heroines must confront.

**Maya Arad** is the author of eleven books of Hebrew fiction, as well as studies in literary criticism and linguistics, and is currently a writer-in-residence at Stanford University's Taube Center for Jewish Studies.

Moderator **Barbara Viniar**, founder and principal of RiseUp Leadership Coaching, is a nationally recognized leader with more than 35 years of experience in higher education. A teacher at heart, she has designed courses and taught at the undergraduate and doctoral levels. She is certified to teach on-line and loves creating learning communities at a distance.

## COMMISSION UPDATE,

*continued from page 3*

Rabbi Amy Walk of Temple Beth El in Springfield highlighted a growing toxic environment over the last few years that has gotten so bad that it has pushed Jewish teachers and students to leave schools in the Pioneer Valley. "I am mindful that not every moment is a crisis or a catastrophic moment," Walk shared, "but there is this consistent delegitimization and demonization, not only of Israel, but of Jewish feelings, Jewish pain, and Jewish fear."

Finally, the Commissioner of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Russell D. Johnston, reviewed the states standards as they relate to teaching about the Holocaust and antisemitism and presented the progress they have made concerning the 2021 Genocide Education Act, as well as providing resources relative to antisemitism and societal bias as mandated in the State's FY2025 budget, Section 106.

Johnston also presented a progress report on genocide education in all middle and high schools. In their most recent survey, 76% of schools surveyed reported having a required course on genocide, and of those, 89% are teaching about the Holocaust. The Commissioner took a strong and unequivocal stance on the need for Holocaust education and shared that his team is working on creating a rubric for teaching MA students about antisemitism. The Commission will have a chance to weigh in on that material once a draft is released to the public.

As we move forward, it's clear that there is much more work to do and many additional areas that the commission must delve into, including higher education, law enforcement, and antisemitism in the workplace. Antisemitism is real, it is dangerous, and it is rising. To be effective, our work must continue to be based on solid data and lived experiences, focusing on meaningful, actionable solutions and best practices that address the challenges Jewish communities are facing today.

I am deeply grateful to Representative Cataldo and Senator Velis for their exceptional vision and leadership as co-chairs of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism.

**It is vital that they hear your support and encouragement as they continue to lead the charge in combating antisemitism. They can be reached at:**

Senator John Velis, john.velis@masenate.gov, (617)-722-1415  
Representative Simon Cataldo, simon.cataldo@mahouse.gov,  
(617) 722-2000, x 8876

Thank you volunteers

Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team,  
Dave Halley, Colin Ovitsky,  
and Roman Rozenblyum.

## WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS?

KOSHER PASSOVER  
COMMUNITY SEDER

April 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

Celebrate in community! Enjoy a joyous and traditional kosher Passover experience with plenty of explanation, insight, and inspiration. Includes all traditional foods, ritual wine, and a delicious four-course meal. Bring your own kosher for Passover table wine. All ages welcome!

Adults \$45. Children ages 6-17 \$22. Kids 5 and under are free

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Jewish Federation  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

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# Your Federation Presents

## “The Shtetl Kitchen: Ashkenazi Foodways Past and Present,” with The Gefilteria’s Liz Alpern



On Thursday, April 3 at 7 p.m., foodies will want to join Federation online as we welcome Liz Alpern of The Gefilteria, a food venture launched in 2012 with a manifesto and a mission to reimagine eastern European Jewish cuisine. Her topic will be “The Shtetl Kitchen: Ashkenazi Foodways Past and Present.”

This free Federation program will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

The roots of the Jewish deli and bagels come from small town life in Eastern Europe, known as the shtetl. In this lecture, explore the roots of this beloved cuisine in the Old Country and the wisdom at the heart of it.

Join Liz Alpern (co-owner of The Gefilteria and co-author, with Jeffrey Yoskowitz, of *The Gefilte Manifesto: New Recipes for Old World Jewish Food*) for a dynamic discussion on Eastern European Jewish foodways, past and present. She’ll discuss exciting discoveries about seasonal Jewish eating, holiday cooking and culinary wisdom that may transform everything you thought about Ashkenazi gastronomy. Dive into goose, gefilte fish, cabbage, kugel and more.

of two mysterious men who help protect the author’s house from the approaching fire. Plus, many other stories and songs in what Broadway World calls “a bolt of hope and inspiration.”

Presented by The Braid - The Go-To Jewish Story Company. For nearly two decades, The Braid has created a unique artform at the intersection of story-telling and theatre that dramatizes and shares the diverse stories of a diverse Jewish people.

Please note this will be a 65-minute live theater production presented on Zoom performed by actors of The Braid, followed by a moderated Q&A session.

### DEFIANT REQUIEM,

*continued from cover*

explores how a rare form of courage sparked compelling determination to survive by answering the worst of mankind with the best of mankind. *Defiant Requiem* is the recipient of numerous accolades, including two News and Documentary Emmy® Award nominations, and has been broadcast on PBS, BBC4, France Télévisions, Globostat (Brazil), and in Hungary and Israel.

### About Yevgeny Kutik

Joining us to perform the Chaconne from Bach’s Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004, is internationally renowned violinist Yevgeny Kutik, who has been praised for his technical precision and virtuosity, and lauded for his poetic and

**DEFIANT REQUIEM,**  
*continued on page 16*

## Hold Me, Heal Me

Live theater from The Braid presented on Zoom



On Sunday, April 6 at 2 p.m., The Braid returns with a live virtual presentation of stories about kindness!

In a world full of brokenness, these true Jewish stories of kindness will make you laugh, cry, and want to do good. Brought to life by professional actors, the curated collection of stories and songs of *Hold Me, Heal Me* comes from the go-to Jewish story company.

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Register on our calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email two days before the program containing information about joining the meeting.

You will be deeply moved by the tale of a sickly young boy befriended by a grandfatherly train enthusiast. You’ll smile at an unexpected bonding between a Beverly Hills caller and a customer support worker who is worlds away. And you’ll be on the edge of your seat with a true story from the Los Angeles wildfires



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## 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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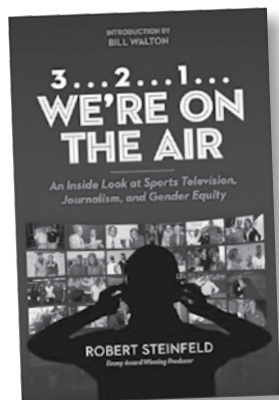


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# Your Federation Presents

## 3...2...1...We're On the Air: An Inside Look at Sports, Television, Journalism, and Gender Equity, with Robert Steinfeld



On Thursday, April 10 at 7 p.m., join Emmy Award-winning producer Robert Steinfeld in conversation with Tony Dobrowolski, retired Berkshire Eagle journalist, about how an eager, ambitious Jewish teenage journalist ultimately realized his dream to produce sports' biggest events on national network television. Steinfeld will be sharing stories from his book *3...2...1...We're On the Air: A Network Producer's Inside Look at Sports, Television, Journalism, and Gender Equity*.

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

Over his career in television sports journalism, Robert Steinfeld crossed paths with superstar athletes Cal Ripken, Alex Rodriguez, Nolan Ryan, Nancy Lieberman, Tim Duncan, David Robinson, and Bill Walton, plus announcers Bob Costas, Jim Nantz, Robin Roberts, and more. He earned 10 Sports Emmy Awards and an ACE Award nomination.

Go inside the world of sports television with stories about the Dream Team I at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics; challenges at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics; partnering with Hall of Fame pitchers Nolan Ryan and Randy Johnson; five decades in the NBA, MLB, and WNBA; and his championing of gender equity. Steinfeld takes you inside network sports television at ESPN, CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox, plus offers lessons for aspiring journalists.

If you love watching sports television or are intrigued about the business, this program will provide a behind-the-scenes look at a superstar journey. Let the countdown begin...

## Kosher Community Seder 5785

**Enjoy a traditional Passover experience on the second night of the holiday**

PITTSFIELD – The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will host a kosher community Passover Seder at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 13 at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road.

Participants will enjoy a traditional kosher Seder experience with plenty of explanation, insight, song, and inspiration. Enjoy all the ritual foods, ceremonial wine, and a delicious four-course Passover meal. Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available upon advance request. Attendees are invited to bring their own kosher for Passover table wine.

Rabbi David Weiner of Kneset Israel will serve as Seder leader. Children of all ages, extended family, and community friends are welcome.

The cost is \$45 for adults and \$22 for children ages 6 through 17. Children 5 years and under are free of charge, but need to be registered.

**Advance reservations and payment are required by April 6.**

Financial assistance is available to all who might need it – please contact Dara Kaufman at Federation at [dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org) or by calling (413) 442-4360, ext. 12.

Reservations can be made by calling Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 or online at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

The Seder is sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

**Chag Pesach Sameach!**

Wishing you a joyous and meaningful Passover filled with celebration and togetherness.

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# Your Federation Presents

## Security Town Hall in February Shared Vital Information

In February, community members joined Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and our partners from Secure Community Network (SCN) for a security town hall that outlined this community's LiveSecure initiative.

"I wish we weren't here, but we are," said Grant Mendenhall, SCN's Deputy Director of Operations, who stressed that Jewish communities cannot look away and hope that the problems arising from growing antisemitism will vanish. Mendenhall defined the role of SCN's professionals as being "Chief Anxiety Officers," paying attention to the security of communities they serve. He shared the function of the Chicago-based SCN Duty Desk staffed by "highly motivated analysts" who monitor antisemitic activity on the internet and reports from law enforcement 24/7.



Andrew Hoffman

Andrew Hoffman, SCN's Deputy Regional Security Advisor for both Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, stressed that while SCN works to ensure the safety of the community, "security alone is meaningless without resilience. If Jewish life is not being celebrated, then we are not succeeding. We want to make sure that Jewish life is not being interrupted."

Hoffman and Mendenhall both stressed the necessity of community members stepping up as "ambassadors" for the LiveSecure initiative, taking on leadership roles and educating and motivating fellow congregants and community members to participate.

Since the town hall took place, Hoffman has visited 21 Jewish facilities, with several more scheduled visits stretching from Longmeadow to the Vermont border. He also met with 7 local police chiefs, the Massachusetts State Police, and federal law enforcement, as well as with community members to hear their concerns and ideas. Enhanced security was implemented for local Purim celebrations, and will be for the community and congregational Seders upcoming this Passover. Collaborations have started with local congregations on conducting Threat Vulnerability Risk Assessments (TVRA), comprehensive facility assessments that can be used when applying for security grants. At press time, Knesset Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, and Congregation Ahavath Sholom had scheduled security training to increase situational awareness and response to active threats.

The first test of SCN's Everbridge Emergency Alert System covering all of Western MA took place in early March, with 83 percent participation from the Berkshires. Hoffman is also establishing a security committee for the Berkshires and is seeking lay leaders' participation.

Many thanks to Knesset Israel and Rabbi David Weiner for welcoming the community to its sanctuary for this important town hall. Also, a big thanks to Federation's lunch program food assistant Natalia Monahan (aka The Cake Lady - [bakesy.shop/b/cake-lady](http://bakesy.shop/b/cake-lady)) for her beautiful and delicious treats after the program.

### What to Do in an Emergency

At the February town hall, Hoffman stressed that "in an emergency, *always* call 911 first." Report all incidents directly to Hoffman or the SCN Duty Desk, as well as to the ADL.

**Andrew Hoffman / Deputy Regional Security Advisor**

Mobile: (872) 357-0959

Email: [ahoffman@securecommunitynetwork.org](mailto:ahoffman@securecommunitynetwork.org)

**SCN Duty Desk**

Tel.: 844.SCN.DESK (844.726.3375)

Email: [DutyDesk@securecommunitynetwork.org](mailto:DutyDesk@securecommunitynetwork.org)

[www.securecommunitynetwork.org](http://www.securecommunitynetwork.org)

**ADL Incident Report**

[www.adl.org/report-incident](http://www.adl.org/report-incident)

Reportable incidents include, but are not limited to, physical assaults, verbal harassment, flyering incidents, phishing emails, harassing emails or phone calls, proselytizing individuals, destruction of property (including banners and signs), vandalism, and graffiti.

### The Art of Tikkun Olam

On Thursday, April 17 at 7 p.m., enjoy a Jewish Art Education program led by Professor Joanna Homrighausen on "The Art of Tikkun Olam."

This free Federation program will be presented via Zoom. Register on the calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

Professor Homrighausen will identify the citation from *Pirke Avot*/Ethics of the Fathers that determines the role of Tikkun Olam/Fixing the World in the Jewish world and will survey the many customs developed to observe it. Through sculpture, prints and paintings, photographs, and objects of many different media, Jews are charged to give charity as the right thing to do in different times and places.

**Joanna Homrighausen** writes and teaches at the intersection of sacred text, lettering arts, and scribal crafts. Having earned her PhD in Religion (Hebrew Bible) at Duke University, she teaches Religious Studies at the College of William & Mary, where she has taught the biblical Hebrew sequence, the history of ancient Israel, and first-year writing seminars. She is the author of *Planting Letters* and *Weaving Lines: Calligraphy, the Song of Songs, and The Saint John's Bible* (Liturgical Press, 2022).

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# Your Federation Presents

## Federation Announces 2025 Allocations

In February, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Board of Directors approved \$600,254 in allocations to be distributed to worthy organizations across the Berkshires and beyond – an increase of roughly \$150,000 over 2024. Thank you to all of our generous donors! We're grateful for your engagement, your passion, and your belief in our work.

"As Jews, we recognize that the world is bigger than us," said Federation VP and Allocations Committee chair Judy Usow. "Bigger than just our congregation or favorite Jewish organization. Bigger than just our Berkshire Jewish community. The Talmud teaches us that 'kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh' – all of Israel is responsible for one another. Through our allocation process, we accept this notion of communal responsibility and commit to the larger efforts to care for those in need and sustain the Jewish community wherever Jews in the world need us."

The funding allocated is drawn from Federation's annual campaign, endowment funds, donor-directed gifts, and other sources. The Federation thanks the Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County for providing \$19,500 towards these allocations.

### BUILDING JEWISH IDENTITY: Jewish Education, Jewish Camp, and Israel Experience Scholarships (\$179,950)



Jewish summer camp

In 2022, a Federation education task force created a new grant application to promote innovation in Jewish education. This year, the schools are entering a new 2-year grant cycle. Federation increased funding for Jewish education grants for the four Jewish religious schools in Berkshire County – Congregation Beth Israel, Hevreh of Southern

Berkshire, Knesset Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim – to support approximately 121 enrolled students.

Federation also allocated funds for overnight Jewish camp scholarships to provide a joyous identity-building experience for Jewish youth. Federation received requests from 36 prospective campers. The committee recommended an allocation to fully fund overnight camp scholarships this year.

Additionally, Federation allocated funds for financial assistance for full-time Berkshire families sending children to URJ Camp Eisner day camp in Great Barrington – families can receive up to \$100 per week in assistance per child.

Funding was also approved for young adults aged 18 to 26 to participate in Birthright Israel, a 10-day immersive journey exploring their Jewish heritage alongside a diverse community of Jewish and Israeli peers.

### SUPPORTING CRITICAL NEEDS: Campus Engagement, Combating Antisemitism, and Security (\$64,300)

During this hostile and challenging time on college campuses, the Federation will support UMASS Amherst Hillel in their efforts to accommodate increased participation in their core programs, improve the climate on campus, and expand Shabbat activities. The Williams College Jewish Association also received an allocation to offer continued support of weekly Shabbat dinners and holiday meals, a community Havdalah concert, and support for Israel programming that will help Jewish students explore aspects of Israeli life, culture, and politics through programs they design.



Williams College Community Connections

Changemakers for Good LLC partners with school districts to provide professional development for educators and leadership training for students in grades 7-12, equipping participants with tools to recognize and address identity-based biases such as antisemitism, racism, and anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination. It is a program created by Phil Fogelman, formerly of the ADL, and will work in a similar format to the ADL's A World of Difference, which was discontinued in 2024. Three local schools will participate this year.

Federation also provided meaningful financial support so that Ahavath Sholem Cemetery can be maintained in a safe and dignified manner. The cemetery was started by a Pittsfield congregation that no longer exists.

Additional donor-directed gifts were allocated to Federation's Jewish Berkshires LiveSecure Initiative and to the Specific Assistance Fund, which provides emergency financial support and holiday food card assistance within the Berkshire Jewish community.

### SAVING LIVES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE: Strengthening Our Global Jewish Community (\$237,204)

As they do every year, our Israel and overseas partner agencies, **The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and World ORT** each received meaningful contributions to implement programs that save lives, build resiliency, and support Jewish life in Israel and in fragile Jewish communities around the world.

As part of this allocation, Federation directed a meaningful amount to support the Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Terror and their small business loan program to support the rebuilding of small business economy in Israel's Northern border and in the Gazan envelope.

The war in Israel, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and rising antisemitism across the globe have required a significant mobilization of resources by Jewish Federations. In an effort to provide the greatest flexibility in maintaining existing programs while allowing our partners to respond to the rapidly changing needs in Israel and across the globe, the committee allocated unrestricted funds to our partners to help them meet these needs.

Many of our partner's traditional programs are ongoing and have been re-structured to address the immediate needs of Israelis at this moment and the challenging impact the war is having on Jews across the globe. **We encourage you to visit their websites to learn more about their life-saving work: [jewishagency.org](http://jewishagency.org), [jdc.org](http://jdc.org), and [ort.org](http://ort.org).**



The Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Terror

### SUPPORTING RELIEF EFFORTS: LA Wildfire Crisis Relief (\$10,000)

Federation allocated additional funds to support the ongoing efforts in the wake of the tragic wildfires out west. This is in addition to contributions previously raised from the community.

### STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: iRep – The Israel Religious Expression Platform (\$11,500)

Federation provided funding for iRep, a program of Jewish Federations of North America, working to advance legitimacy and provide funding to

**ALLOCATIONS 2025,**  
continued on page 10

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## COMMUNITY COMMEMORATION YOM HASHOAH-HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE



**Free Film Screening, Performance, and Candle Lighting**  
**Sunday, April 27 at 2 pm**

Tanglewood, Studio E, Linde Center for Music and Learning  
3 W Hawthorne Street, Lenox

Join us for a community commemoration of Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day – featuring the film *Defiant Requiem*, a performance by renowned violinist Yevgeny Kutik, a memorial candle lighting, prayers, and a moment of reflection in memory of those murdered in the Holocaust.

Space is limited and advance ticket reservation is required.

Reserve your free tickets at

<https://tinyurl.com/JFB2025YomHashoah>

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# Jewish Federation of the Berkshires – Distribution of Resources in 2024

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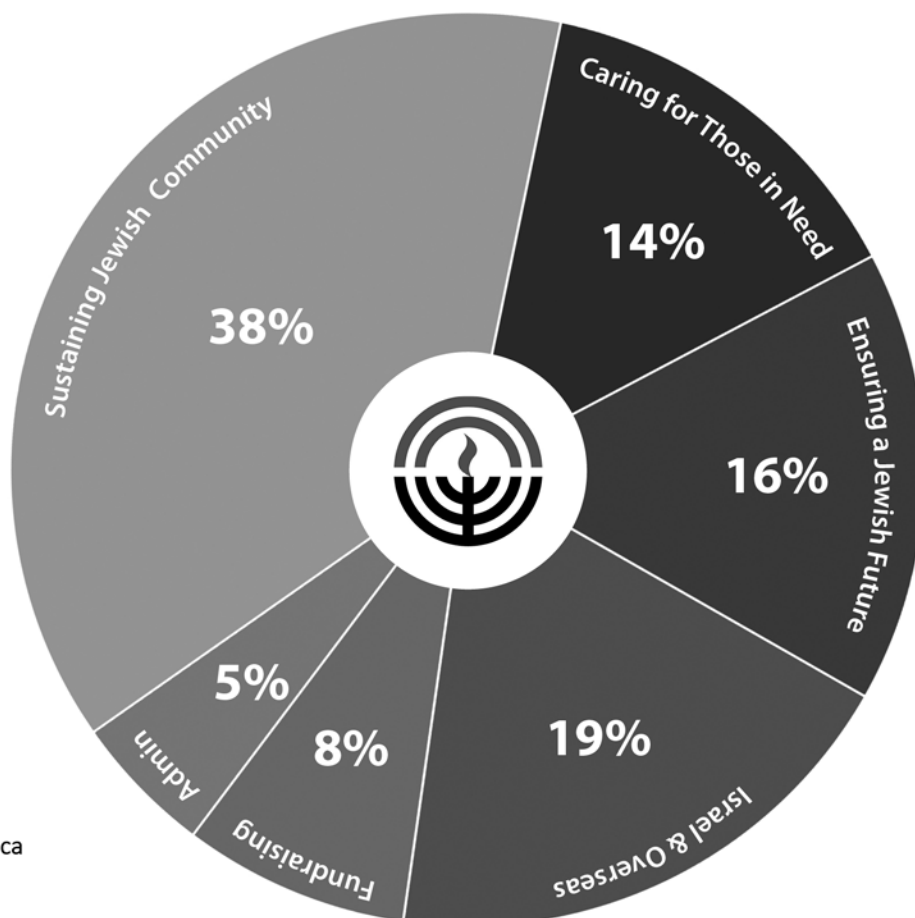
Includes distribution of annual campaign, earned income, Israel crisis funds, and endowments as of Dec. 31, 2024

### ■ Sustaining Jewish Community

- Hate Has No Home Here
- Jewish Berkshires LiveSecure
- Security Grants & Training
- Berkshire Jewish Voice
- General Programming
- Jewish Community Day
- Shabbat Across the Berkshires
- Chanukah at Hancock Shaker Village
- Community Havdalah
- Community Seder
- Middle East Update
- Connecting with Community programs
- Knosh & Knowledge programs
- Community Relations & Advocacy
- Holocaust Remembrance Event
- Program Grants for Local Congregations
- Jewish Federations of North America

### ■ Fundraising

- Annual Campaign Development
- Communications & Marketing
- Legacy Circle Program
- Major Donors Program



### ■ Israel & Overseas

- ISRAEL CRISIS FUND
- Jewish Agency for Israel
- Joint Distribution Committee
- World ORT
- Partnership2Gether- Afula Gilboa
- Mishkan Ein Harod Art Museum
- Ethiopian National Project
- Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter
- Israel Association for Child Protection (ELI)
- Meir Panim
- Neve Michael Children's Village
- Yad L'Kashish
- iRep Religious Pluralism Grants

### ■ Caring for Those in Need

- Food & Emergency Assistance
- Hebrew Free Loans
- Community Social Worker
- Meals on Wheels
- Older Adult Kosher Lunches
- Older Adult Holiday Care Packages
- Tikkun Olam Volunteer Opportunities
- Ahavath Sholem Cemetery
- Hurricane/Wildfire Crisis Relief

### ■ Ensuring a Jewish Future

- PJ Library Books & Resources
- Family Programming
- Family Volunteer Opportunities
- Jewish Education Grants to TAA, KI, CBI, and Hevreh.
- Israel Travel/Study Scholarships
- Jewish Camp Scholarships
- Public School Advocacy
- Taglit Birthright
- UMASS Hillel
- Williams Jewish Religious Center

## Building Community | Strengthening Identity | Caring for those in Need

### Across the Berkshires

**Kosher Hot Meals & Care Visits**  
Provided more than 3,300 nutritious meals, 520 holiday care packages, and visits for hundreds of older adults.

**Social Services**  
Provided case management and counseling, through a Jewish lens, by a licensed social worker to more than 115 community members.

**Emergency & Specific Assistance**  
Provided 87 holiday food cards, emergency grants, and interest-free loans to provide a safety net for community members.

**Jewish Education**  
Provided a high-quality Jewish education for 121 children and young adults through Jewish education grants to TAA, KI, CBI and Hevreh's religious schools.

**Family Programming**  
Supported programming for over 242 children, parents, and grandparents, strengthening their connections to the Jewish community and helping them build supportive relationships with Jewish peers.

**PJ Library & PJ Our Way**  
Distributed more than 1,774 Jewish children's books to 177 children, nurturing their Jewish identity and helping their families embrace Jewish values and traditions.

**Camp, Israel & Campus Life**  
Funded transformative Jewish camp and Israel experiences for 42 local youth and enhanced Jewish life for over 2,500 college students at UMASS Amherst and Williams College.

**Community Programming**  
Engaged more than 6,600 participants in celebrating Jewish life and connecting as a community through more than 126 cultural, educational, and holiday programs.

**Berkshire Jewish Voice**  
Primary resource for over 5,000 readers, engaging our community in Jewish life and broadening our spiritual, political, and cultural understanding.

**Community Relations & Advocacy**  
Provided proactive advocacy confronting anti-Semitism in our schools and community, supporting anti-bias training for students and professional development for educators in Berkshire County schools.

**Security & Resilience**  
Delivered security trainings, provided grants, and implemented an incident alert system, while fostering strong partnerships with local law enforcement to safeguard our community.

### In Israel & Overseas

**Our Israel Emergency Campaign has provided vital relief for millions of Israelis from every faith and background. Funding has focused on these critical areas:**

**Lifeline Services:** Federation funding has helped provide lifesaving services, including food assistance, clothing, housing for evacuees, financial aid, medical care, spiritual care, classes for evacuated children, and support to the healthcare system.

**Medical & Trauma Relief:** Federation funding has supported medical equipment, dedicated hotlines, training for thousands of caregivers and responders, and ongoing support to emergency teams. We help provide direct care to more than a million people, including first responders, lone soldiers, families, and caregivers coping with the loss, injury, or abduction of their relatives and friends.

**Economic Relief & Recovery:** Israelis are struggling financially. Federation is helping fund economic relief efforts, investing in frontline communities, and providing loans to businesses to help ensure a resilient and stable economy.

**In addition, through our annual campaign, we provided direct support in Israel** to after-school programs for at-risk students, a shelter for battered women, a supportive home for abandoned youth, counseling for sexually abused women, food security for low-income individuals and youth, and assistance for the frail and elderly.

*This is just a sampling of how, together, we made a difference in the lives of others this year.*

# Your Federation Presents

## ALLOCATIONS 2025,

*continued from page 8*

organizations supporting Jewish religious diversity in Israel. Priority areas include marriage freedom, pluralistic options for celebrating bar/bat mitzvahs, meaningful options to celebrate Jewish holidays for all Israelis, and working with decision-makers on promoting Jewish diversity.

### CREATING LIVING BRIDGES WITH ISRAEL: Afula-Gilboa Partnership, Arts Collaboration (\$47,000)

The Partnership2Gether program, a collaboration of 10 Federations in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, connects the Berkshires to the Afula-Gilboa region of Israel and fosters personal connections among our communities. This investment of Federation funds in the Afula-Gilboa region will benefit ten programs supporting the diverse needs of Holocaust survivors, victims of sexual abuse, bereaved families, at-risk youth, as well as NGOs working for coexistence and security needs.

Additionally, we will support three programs of the Mishkan Museum of Art in Ein Harod. The Artists Program will engage high school students in artistic activism and maintaining connections with peers in the Berkshires. The "Dreaming the Future" program of Gilboa Together Youth Leadership will support a year-long afterschool program fostering creative leadership skills among youth from diverse communities. The Shared Living Initiative will connect Arab and Jewish students through collaborative art projects to explore shared experiences and promote coexistence.

### SUPPORTING ISRAEL'S MOST VULNERABLE: Other Israel-directed allocations will benefit human services (\$50,300)

• **Yad L'Kashish** – A Jerusalem workshop supporting senior artisans, providing a sense of empowerment and essential services. Federation will support 1,200 hot lunches for 60 people five days a week.



*Bookbinding at Yad L'Kashish*

• **Israel Association for Child Protection (ELI)** – Provider of prevention and treatment services for children suffering emotional and sexual abuse, as well as support for their families. Federation's allocation will be used for trauma relief and ongoing therapeutic support for 200 severely affected survivors of the Oct. 7 2023 attack.

• **Haiifa Women's Crisis Shelter** – Federation will support enrichment activities, including sports workshops, art and craft sessions, nutrition and home budget management workshops, and group parental guidance. These initiatives aim to benefit 40-60 women and 40-80 children at the shelter.

• **Ethiopian National Project** – Federation funds (that will be matched by the Israeli government) will enable five students to participate in the SPACE Scholastic Assistance program in Afula.

• **Neve Michael Children's Village** – Federation will support therapy and counseling for youth arriving at this multi-disciplinary therapeutic facility for children/youth at risk and help them meet unplanned needs for emotional care for at-risk children affected by the ongoing war. Between 20 and 30 children will benefit

• **Meir Panim** – Its six restaurant-style soup kitchens serve Israel's poor and hungry of all backgrounds with dignity, as does its extensive meal delivery program – more than 1 million meals annually. Federation's allocation will provide 1,600 meals to Israel's most vulnerable.

### Thank You, Committee Members!

Many thanks to the members of our Allocations Committee for their thoughtful deliberation in ensuring our community donors will have a meaningful impact in the lives of others: Judy Usow (Chair), Arlene Schiff, Elisa Schindler Frankel, Gail Orenstein, Aviva Wichler, Stephanie Ilberg-Lamm, Ellen Masters, Stuart Masters, Tom Sawyer, Liz Miller, Scott Hochfelder, Ann Falchuk, Audrey Weiner, Ken Fishman, Deborah Gallant, Rabbi David Weiner, Alba Passerini, Kara Thornton, Judy Cook, and Executive Director Dara Kaufman.

## Campus and Community Connect: Shared Kabbalat Shabbat and Dinner at Williams College



*A scene from our last celebration at Williams College*

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Friday, April 25 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., The Williams College Jewish Association and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires invite you to share in a special Shabbat opportunity to connect students and community together!

This event will be held at the Jewish Religious Center at Williams College, located at 24 Stetson Court. Community members are invited to:

- Volunteer to cook with students (an hour between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.)
- Join in student-led, participatory Shabbat services together (6 p.m.)
- Eat a yummy kosher dinner with students (7:15 p.m.)

Community members are welcome for one or all of the above options.

If you would like to volunteer to help cook the Shabbat meal with students, please contact Rabbi Seth Wax, Williams College Jewish Chaplain, at [smw4@williams.edu](mailto:smw4@williams.edu)

Services are free; \$20 suggested donation for community members staying for dinner. Reservations required – visit the calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).



### TAA Invites You

Come join our old-new seder to relish and cherish the freedoms we hold dear.

1st Night, Saturday, 12 April, 6.30pm

TAA & KI Members	Non-Members
Adults \$36	Adults \$46
Under age 18, Free*	Ages 5-18, \$10
	Under age 5, Free*

Register by 1 April: [www.tinyurl.com/CommunitySeder2025](http://www.tinyurl.com/CommunitySeder2025)

*Hag same'ah, gut yuntif, pesah alegre,*

Rabbi Scott

\* Thanks to the generosity of the Dorothy & Henry Halperin Fund

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# Your Federation Presents Holiday Fun with PJ Library Families

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of PJ Library

### Tu B'Shevat

Snow couldn't stop us from celebrating Tu B'Shevat. Families gathered to make beautiful terrariums with the help of Emily Yawn from The Plant Connector. Then we learned about the holiday, read three books all about different ways to celebrate and talked about the amazing things that grow on trees!



### Purim

Before Purim, families came together to make art at Berkshire Art Center. We made masks and groggers to kick off our Purim celebrations, and ate hamantaschen too! We read a story about Esther becoming queen, and talked about why we wear costumes and masks on Purim. Everyone loved making art, and parents even got in on the action!



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# Your Federation Presents

## Warming Up with Berkshire Friends in Florida

Thank you to the many Federation supporters who came out to connect with Dara Kaufman, Arlene Schiff, and other Berkshire friends during our March get-togethers in the Sunshine State.

A special thank you to our hosts, Audrey Weiner and Jeffrey Solomon in Miami, Carol and Irv Smokler in Boca Raton, Hope and Gene Silverman and Mimi and Ken Heyman in Palm Beach Gardens, and Alice and Len Schiller in Sarasota for their hospitality at these events on behalf of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

See you again in the spring and summer!



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## LOCAL NEWS

## Congregation Ahavath Sholom Celebrates a Very Special Birthday

***This century-old synagogue will host a fundraising gala titled “The Catskills Come to the Berkshires”***

By Linda Josephs

GREAT BARRINGTON – Congregation Ahavath Sholom, which translates to “Love of Peace,” proudly stands in Great Barrington as the oldest continuously used synagogue building in Berkshire County.

Nestled next to Bike and Board and across from the Great Barrington Fire Department, this charming building is a cherished cornerstone for the congregation. It serves not only as a place for spiritual gatherings, but also as a hub for cultural and social activities, fostering strong unity among its members. Congregation Ahavath Sholom, which



“Congregation Ahavath Sholom,” painted by Ilene Spiewak

has withstood the test of time for over a century, now requires essential repairs to ensure its longevity.

The Jewish community in Great Barrington has its roots in the 1920s. By 1921, around 15 Jewish families had settled in the area and began holding religious services in the home of Aaron Pomerantz. As the community expanded, Pomerantz and Ike Broverman, among the first members, sought a dedicated space for their gatherings. Their search led them to a 20-by-40-foot building owned by Charlie Lee. Originally a one-room schoolhouse located near town, this structure became the ideal future synagogue for the growing community.

Although Pomerantz and Broverman secured a mortgage for the building, they faced financial challenges for renovations. Fortunately, a group of community members came together, led by the talented Isadore Seader. Their fundraising efforts were quite innovative for the time. Each Sunday, Isadore and his group of singers took to the road across the Northeast, performing home concerts featuring Yiddish and Hebrew songs. Known affectionately as the “Little Hazan,” Isadore helped draw in many grateful audiences. They successfully raised the money, and by the fall of 1922, the renovations were complete, paving the way for the local Jewish community to officially inaugurate their synagogue. The first wedding in the new space took place that December.

Over the next ten decades, the congregation’s membership continued to grow, leading to numerous improvements and additions to the building. These enhancements included the installation of separate bathrooms for women and men, as well as heating and plumbing systems, the addition of a second floor, and a small kitchen. All these projects were completed with care by dedicated volunteers who consistently respected the uniqueness and integrity of the synagogue.

Today, the preservation efforts are still managed by volunteers, with Dan Burkhard overseeing the complicated project. When asked if preserving a

building that is over 100 years old is challenging, he laughed and replied, “Every day is a new surprise! As water heaters, furnaces, and roofs age, they need to be replaced, which presents challenges not only due to the cost, but also because of the delicate process of retrofitting systems that could be 50 years old or more.”

With the same enthusiasm that inspired Isadore and his group a hundred years ago, the volunteers of Ahavath Sholom have once again come together to raise much-needed funds for their beloved synagogue. They are hosting a gala event titled “The Catskills Come to the Berkshires” on Monday, May 12 at 4 p.m. The evening will feature a captivating screening of the documentary *The Catskills* at the iconic Triplex Theater introduced by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin, along with a buffet of small bites lovingly crafted by GB Bagel. Guests will also enjoy live entertainment by the talented Michael Pizzi, Bob Sheperd, and Rabbi Barbara Cohen.


For more information about Congregation Ahavath Sholom or the “Catskills Come to the Berkshires Gala,” please visit [ahavathsholom.org](http://ahavathsholom.org) or call (413) 528-4197. Tickets for this fundraising event are \$118.

### About *The Catskills* by Lex Gillespie

For the ideal Jewish-American vacation in the 1950s, it was the place to be. The Catskill Mountains, or the “Borscht Belt” as they were often called, boomed with resort hotels and bungalows frequented by all strata of society, including the hottest comedians and entertainers of the day. The documentary relives the fascinating history of this vibrant scene.

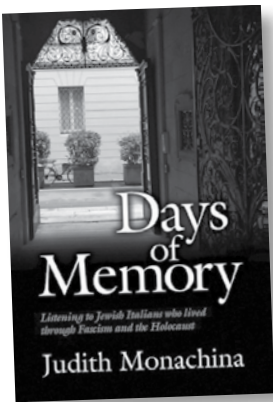
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### LOCAL NEWS

## KI Commemorates Yom HaShoah with Judith Monachina's Days of Memory



PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, April 27 starting at 10 a.m., Kneset Israel member Judith Monachina, author of *Days of Memory: Listening to Jewish Italians who lived through Fascism and the Holocaust*, will speak about her years of research and the people she met.

The individual accounts in the book bear witness to how people coped with the collapse of civil society, carried on with their lives

as best as they could, and made life-or-death decisions. Judith will lead a discussion of the themes of compassion and resilience in these individual accounts, the intersection of these two qualities, and how we can strengthen these traits in ourselves and our communities today.

Brunch will be served in the social hall at 10 a.m., and Judith will speak, take questions, and facilitate a conversation from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the library. Please pre-register at the KI website (knesetisrael.org). There is a \$5 suggested donation for brunch. Kneset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

## Poetry, The Omer, and Contemplative Shabbat Service

### Prepare for the spring holiday season with Rabbi Pam Wax

PITTSFIELD – This spring, Kneset Israel's director of adult education, Rabbi Pam Wax, will lead three special classes designed to get you into the spirit of the Jewish spring holidays

#### "Leaving Egypt: Poetry of the Exodus and Passover"

On Wednesday, April 9, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., join Rabbi Wax online for "Leaving Egypt: Poetry of the Exodus and Passover." Writes Rabbi Wax: "In reimagining Exodus or using the rich symbolism of the Seder to make meaning for contemporary times, poets have succeeded in fulfilling the Haggadah's

maxim that in every generation we are obligated to see ourselves as if we ourselves had left Egypt. We will look at several of these poems, many of which will be appropriate for our Seder tables."

Online only. Register at knesetisrael.org/RSVP to receive the Zoom link.

#### The Omer as Spiritual Practice

What is the Omer, and why do people count it between Passover and Shavuot? Rabbi Wax will impart the depth and beauty of this rich tradition after the kiddush following services at Kneset Israel on Saturday, April 5. Come learn about the many ways one might choose to observe the Omer, and why it might be spiritually enriching for you to do so. Please contact Rabbi Wax rabbipwax@knesetisrael.org if you would like to participate.

#### Contemplative Shabbat Service

Join Rabbi Wax from 9:15 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the KI library on Saturday, April 5, for contemplative prayer, meditation, and music before joining the larger community for the Torah service in the sanctuary. This service will be offered approximately every 4 to 6 weeks. To minimize disruptions, please plan to arrive early to settle in before this service begins. Please contact Rabbi Wax at rabbipwax@knesetisrael.org if you'd like to be informed of future contemplative services.

## Women Making Trouble: Honoring Our Biblical Mothers

In four sessions, Rabbi Pam Wax of Kneset Israel will guide participants through select texts about two or more Biblical women, alongside contemporary feminist *midrashim* (including music, visual art, and poetry) that respond to those texts. "Women Making Trouble: Honoring Our Biblical Mothers" will be offered online.

The class will pay particular attention to how these women navigated a patriarchal and oppressive social and political order, looking to these female forebears for guidance as to how to resist (or accommodate to) injustice in dark times and extreme situations.

**PERIOD. END OF SENTENCE. A CONVERSATION WITH**

Anita Diamant

Sunday, May 4th at 2:00 pm

Join us for a lively and engaging afternoon with renowned author, Anita Diamant, who will be in conversation with Ilana Steinhauer, FNP, Executive Director of Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires (VIM), on issues of period justice

Registration is required and is available at [www.hevreh.org](http://www.hevreh.org)  
Suggested donation \$36.

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LOCAL NEWS

Take-home prompts will be offered at each session for those who might wish to write their own creative *midrashim*.

The class will be offered on the Wednesday evenings of April 30, May 21 & 28, and June 11, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Please register at knesetisrael.org/RSVP to receive the Zoom link. There is a \$50 fee for those who are not members of Kneset Israel or Temple Anshe Amunim.

**Award-Winning Author Joan Leegant to Speak at Kneset Israel**



Joan Leegant

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, May 4 at 7 p.m., Kneset Israel hosts award-winning author Joan Leegant, about her collection of stories, *Displaced Persons*, which shines a light on American Jewish life and Israel.

*Displaced Persons* won the national 2024 New American Fiction Prize, chosen out of 500+ submissions. It was a Finalist for the 2025 National Jewish

Book Award for Fiction and a Finalist for the 2025 Association of Jewish Libraries Fiction Award. The book has been called “prophetic” (Times of Israel), “breathhtaking” (NY Journal of Books), “exquisitely written....gorgeous tales of wandering Jews” (Hadassah), and “deliciously complex stories that explore exile, belonging, parenthood and marriage with a sharp sense of humor and emotional wallop” (Chicago Review of Books).

Hadassah Magazine selected *Displaced Persons* for their One Book, One Hadassah program in 2024, one of six books each year that they highlight for their thousands of readers and book clubs across the country. And the Women’s League for Conservative Judaism chose the book for their Women’s League Reads program for January, 2025, one of only three books they select each year.

Leegant is a riveting speaker who loves engaging with audiences. Come for an eye-opening conversation about the creative process, writing about Israel,

and what it means to be coming out with a Jewish book today in this climate of anti-Israel sentiment.

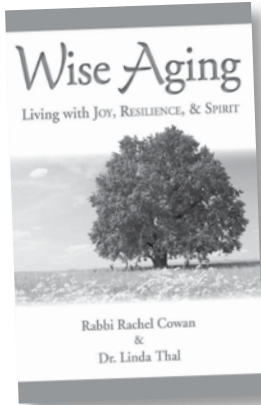
Leegant’s first book, *An Hour in Paradise*, won the PEN/New England Book Award, the Wallant Award for Jewish Fiction, and was a Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. Her second, *Wherever You Go*, was named a “Significant Jewish Book” by the Union for Reform Judaism.

Formerly a lawyer, Leegant taught creative writing for many years at Harvard and other colleges. For five years she was the Visiting Writer at Bar-Ilan University outside Tel Aviv, where she also lectured at schools across Israel on American literature and culture under the auspices of the U.S. State Department.

The event is free-of-charge, but please register at www.knesetisrael.org/RSVP.

Books will be available for purchase and signing. For more about Joan Leegant and her work, visit joanleegant.com.

**Age Wisely!**



PITTSFIELD – The Wise Aging course, developed under the auspices of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, offers social, emotional and Jewish spiritual insights to help individuals aged 60+ meet the challenges of “the third chapter” with a sustaining spirit.

Rabbi Pam Wax of Kneset Israel, a trained Wise Aging facilitator, will offer Part I of the course for six sessions on select Monday afternoons, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., from April 21 through June 16. The textbook, *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience, and Spirit*, co-written by Rabbi Rachel Cowan and Dr. Linda Thal, is grounded in Jewish mindfulness and spiritual practices such as meditation, journaling, and prayer. Please purchase a copy of the textbook before the first session.

The course will take place in the KI library, with an option to join by Zoom. Register at knesetisrael.org/RSVP. There is a \$75 fee for those who are not members of either Kneset Israel or Temple Anshe Amunim. Wise Aging Part II will be offered in the fall.

**Spring Service and Study at KI**

PITTSFIELD – This spring, Kneset Israel offers opportunities to learn and connect.

**Pirkei Avot Study between Passover and Shavuot**

Rabbi David Weiner and Rabbi Pam Wax will alternate teaching the six chapters of *Pirkei Avot* each week between Passover and Shavuot at Kneset Israel. Study this tractate of Mishna on six consecutive Tuesday afternoons from April 22 through May 27 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The custom of studying *Pirkei Avot* during the Omer, the seven-week period between Passover and Shavuot, prepares on spiritually for Shavuot and *kabbalat ha-Torah*/receiving the Torah.

**Shirei Shabbat Service and Community Shabbat Dinner**

On Friday, May 2, join friends at Kneset Israel for a musical Friday evening service at 5:45 p.m., then stay for a delicious kosher Shabbat dinner. Shirei Shabbat includes electric guitars and keyboard for a more energized and lively service. Registration is necessary for dinner. Adults \$25, free for those under 18. Register at www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp

**TAA to Host Seder on Passover’s First Night**

PITTSFIELD – On Saturday, April 12 at 6:30 p.m., Temple Anshe Amunim invites the community to its Seder on the first night of Passover.

“Come join our old-new Seder to relish and cherish the freedoms we hold dear.”

Members of Temple Anshe Amunim and Kneset Israel: Adults \$36. Under age 18 free.\*

Non-Members: Adults \$46. Ages 5-18. \$10. Under age 5, Free\*

\* Thanks to the generosity of the Dorothy and Henry Halperin Fund

Temple Anshe Amunim is at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield. Reserve at ansheamunim.org.

**HATE HAS NO HOME HERE**

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Monterey Church, UCC	Berkshire Minyan

**About the Campaign**

Jewish Federation is partnering with local chambers, businesses, cultural organizations, houses of worship, and schools to amplify the message that “Hate Has No Home Here” through posters and social media. In addition, billboards across the Berkshires featured the expanded message: “Antisemitism threatens us all – Hate Has No Home Here.”

Download Poster, Social Media, and Educational Resources at [Jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here](http://Jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here)

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE. THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

**JEWISH LITERARY VOICES**

A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

**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.

**Thursday, May 8 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)**  
*Opening Doors: The Unlikely Alliance Between the Irish and the Jews in America* with NYU Professor of American Jewish History and author Hasia Diner.

**Friday, June 6 at 10:45 a.m. (in-person)**  
 at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire  
*Green World: A Tragicomic Memoir of Love and Shakespeare* with WPI Professor of English and author Michelle Ephraim.

**REGISTER AT JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG**

## LOCAL NEWS

### Chabad of the Berkshires to Host Joyous and Inspirational Passover Seder Celebrations

PITTSFIELD – Chabad of the Berkshires is thrilled to announce that it will be hosting two magnificent Passover Seders on Saturday, April 12 and Sunday, April 13, inviting all members of the community to join in. Regardless of background or affiliation, everyone is warmly welcomed to partake in these special holiday celebrations, say Chabad's co-directors Sara and Rabbi Levi Volovik.

On both evenings, experience the exuberance of Passover while commemorating our liberation from Egyptian slavery. The Seders will take place at Chabad of the Berkshires, 450 South Street in Pittsfield, where guests will not only enjoy a delicious Seder dinner but also witness the rich Passover traditions.

The Passover Seders will feature a delectable four-course dinner feast that will include traditional Passover foods that will delight your taste buds, including the Seder plate which holds symbolic items representing different elements of the Passover story.

Retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, Rabbi Volovik will share beautiful insights and reflections to enhance your understanding and appreciation of this significant event. Prepare to be moved by the power of the narrative while coming together in unity and celebration in the company of family, friends and fellow community members.

"The Passover Seder is a time for us to connect with our roots, express gratitude, and rejoice in our freedom," said Rabbi Volovik. "We invite everyone, regardless of their background or affiliation, to be a part of this meaningful experience. We believe that by uniting as a diverse community, we can foster understanding and harmony. Together, let us embrace the spirit of Passover and cherish the memories we create."

Guests are encouraged to invite their friends, neighbors, and family to join in this momentous occasion.

Seder cost: \$49 per person. To reserve your spot for the Passover Seders, please contact Chabad of the Berkshires at (413) 499-9899, or jewishberkshires.com.

### Local Hadassah Chapter Inviting New Members to Join Book Group

By Lonnie Solomon / Co-Chair of the Berkshire Hills Hadassah chapter book group

The Berkshire Hills Hadassah chapter hosts a book group on the fourth Tuesday of the month at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield at 11 a.m. Please join us and reserve lunch by calling the Jewish Federation at (413) 442-2200 the day before the meeting.

We will discuss *Kantika* by Elizabeth Graver on April 29; *The Book of Separation* by Tova Mervis on May 27; and *The Hebrew Teacher* by Maya Arad on June 24. These titles are available on CWMars.

For more information, email berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com. We hope to see you.

### CBI to Host Second Night Community Passover Seder

NORTH ADAMS – On Sunday, April 13 at 6 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites all to its family-friendly Second Night Community Passover Seder!

Relive the Exodus through ritual, poetry, song, and story. Participants will savor familiar melodies, stirring poetry, an impromptu Exodus play put on by community kids, and more. A full kosher-for-Pesach meal will be provided (with vegetarian option); bring your own kosher for Passover table wine if you would like something other than Manischewitz.

Tickets are \$50/adult and \$8/child (ages 5-18); children under age 5 are free. Tickets must be paid for in full prior to the day of the event. If you would like to attend but the cost makes you hesitate, please email Rabbi Rachel Barenblat at rabbi@cbiberkshires.com. Please RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/passover-2025 by no later than Monday, April 7.

### Mitzvah Opportunity – Green Up Day and Eco-Jewish Action

BENNINGTON, VT – On Saturday, May 3 at 1 p.m., learn about caring for the earth and the impact of climate change.

Meet up with friends from Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires in downtown Bennington to participate in this Vermont initiative to clean up our neighborhoods. Please let CBI know you are coming by RSVPing via the website at cbiberkshires.com/event/green-up-2025. Contact Rabbi Jarah Greenfield at learning@cbiberkshires.com for more information.

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

### Springtime Shabbats at CBI

**With Yom HaShoah commemoration on April 25**

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

**Kabbalat Shabbat Services on the Fridays of April 18 & 25 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. At Kabbalat Shabbat services on April 25, CBI will commemorate Yom HaShoah with special memorial prayers.

**Regular Shabbat Morning Services** continue on Saturday, April 5 at 9:30 a.m.

**First Friday Shabbat Zoom Gathering** on Friday, April 4 at 7:30 p.m. around the Virtual Shabbat Table. Gather together to share community and

### DEFIANT REQUIEM,

continued from page 5

imaginative interpretations of standard works, as well as rarely heard and newly composed repertoire. A native of Minsk, Belarus, Kutik immigrated with his family to the Berkshires at the age of five. Passionate about his heritage and its influence on his artistry, Kutik is an advocate for the Jewish Federations of North America, the organization that assisted his family in coming to the United States, and regularly speaks and performs across the United States to both raise awareness and promote the assistance of refugees from around the world.

Yevgeny Kutik most recently performed for Jewish Federation of the Berkshires as part of their Community Gathering in Commemoration of October 7 last fall. He is the artistic director of The Birch Festival (thebirchfestival.org), which brings world-leading musicians to work in tandem with local business and cultural partnerships, integrating the Berkshire community into a twice-a-year classical music festival.



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**LOCAL NEWS**

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 joy 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](http://cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events)

**A Conversation with Anita Diamant**



GREAT BARRINGTON – Renowned author Anita Diamant will be at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire on Sunday, May 4 at 2 p.m. for a conversation focused around Period Justice. Diamant’s book, *Period. End of Sentence. A New Chapter in the Fight for Menstrual Justice* will provide the foundation for the conversation, but

you don’t need to have read the book to join.

Anita Diamant is the author of many books, including bestselling novels *The Red Tent* and *The Boston Girl*. This is a not-to-be missed opportunity to ask questions of this acclaimed author.

More information about Diamant can be found on her website: [anitadiamant.com](http://anitadiamant.com)

Suggested donation is \$36. Registration is required and is available at [www.hevreh.org](http://www.hevreh.org)

Books will be available for purchase. Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is at 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

*Note: Menstrual products are not covered by SNAP (Food Stamps) or WIC. The Social Justice in Action Committee of Hevreh encourages donations of menstrual products at the event and to consider making regular donations of these products to the People’s Pantry in Great Barrington or the food pantry in your community.*

**Hevreh Celebrates Passover**

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is holding two festive Passover celebrations this year: the Intergenerational Women’s Seder and the Second Night Seder

**Intergenerational Women’s Passover Seder**

On Sunday, April 6 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., join Hevreh for its 3rd Annual Intergenerational Women’s Seder, an incredible experience led by Rabbi Jodie Gordon and Hevreh’s artist-in-residence Peri Smilow. This Seder experience has something for everyone, from opportunities for personal connection to creative ritual and beautiful music. Through music, reflection, and storytelling, this Women’s Seder will be a memorable afternoon of connection across the generations.

All who identify as women are welcome to this unique space: mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends. All are invited to join for a meaningful experience with Seder rituals and a light Passover inspired nosh. We hope you’ll consider bringing your daughters, granddaughters, and young people ages 10+. Adult ticket: \$18

Hevreh is grateful to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for underwriting youth participation and enabling the congregation to include young people ages 10-18 at no additional cost.

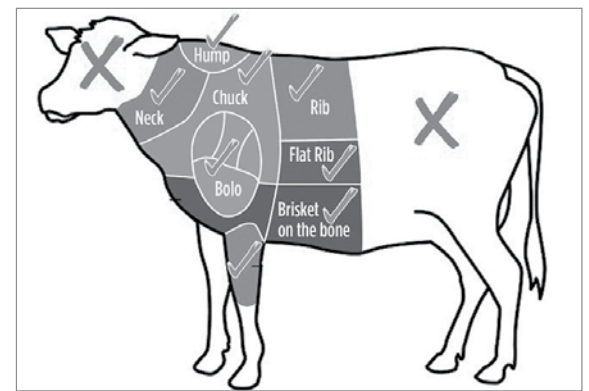
**Second Night Passover Seder**

On Sunday, April 13 at 5 p.m., celebrate the second night of Passover at Hevreh with a traditional Passover dinner. The Seder will be led by Rabbi Jodie Gordon. Dinner will be catered by The Marketplace. Pre-paid reservations are required. Friends and family are welcome.

Adult Ticket: \$55. Child Ticket: \$25. Go to [hevreh.org/holidays](http://hevreh.org/holidays) for details and links to the registration forms.

**Kosher Meat Deliveries to the Berkshires to Resume**

Community members in South County have been working on re-establishing the Berkshire Kosher Ko-op and have worked out an arrangement with the Crown Market in West Hartford to be the supplier.



*Kosher cuts of beef*

Once a month, Crown will deliver kosher meat orders for pickup to the parking lot of the Price Chopper (or a different location TBD) in Great Barrington at designated times to be announced. The arrangement will guarantee that Crown will receive orders totaling at least \$2,000 for each delivery. There is no minimum order necessary for one to participate.

The first delivery will be Monday, April 7 (time TBD) – one week before Passover. Please phone in your order to Crown Market [(860)-236-1965] by Monday, March 31 for the April delivery and indicate that you are a member of the Berkshire Kosher Ko-op. After you’ve called the order in, please email Sharon Strassfeld ([sharonstrassfeld@gmail.com](mailto:sharonstrassfeld@gmail.com)) to let her know you have put in an order so she can check with Crown to make sure the order minimum has been reached. Your name will be added to a Google group compiled by Kosher Ko-op coordinators.

Future dates to be determined, and the organizers of the Kosher Ko-op are working to ensure that deliveries will be made once a month from April through October. Contact Sharon Strassfeld at the email above if you have any questions, suggestions, or comments.

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Ari Isaacman-Beck violin  
Carlos Rubio viola  
Jesus Morales cello

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**ONGOING MINYANS**

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

**CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES**

Friday, April 4 ..... 7:04 p.m.  
Friday, April 11 ..... 7:11 p.m.  
(Passover) Saturday, April 12 ..... 8:27 p.m.  
(Passover) Sunday, April 13 ..... 8:14 p.m.  
(Passover) Friday, April 18 ..... 7:19 p.m.  
(Passover) Saturday, April 19 ..... 8:21 p.m.  
Friday, April 25 ..... 7:27 p.m.  
Friday, May 2 ..... 7:35 p.m.



**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 pick-up and to arrange delivery.

**What's for Lunch?**

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

**MARCH**

**MONDAY, MARCH 31**

**Noon, Lunch...**Meatloaf (GF)(DF), tater tots, peas and carrots, salad, white bread, and applesauce.

**APRIL**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 1**

**Noon, Lunch...**Filet of sole Florentine (GF), meadow blend vegetables, rice, salad, sourdough bread, and sugar cookie.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 3**

**Noon, Lunch...**Veggie burgers (DF), sweet potato fries, bean soup, lettuce and tomato, bun, and tiramisu.

**MONDAY, APRIL 7**

Closed for Passover cleaning and preparations

**TUESDAY, APRIL 8**

Closed for Passover cleaning and preparations

**THURSDAY, APRIL 10**

**Noon, Lunch...**Passover meal: Tzimmes chicken (GF) (DF), potato kugel, asparagus, matzo ball soup, charoset truffle, matzo, and Passover dessert.

**MONDAY, APRIL 14**

Closed for second day of Passover

**TUESDAY, APRIL 15**

**Noon, Lunch...**Beef and vegetable mina (matza pie) (GF) (DF), roasted potatoes, salad, matzo, Passover dessert.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 17**

**Noon, Lunch...**Vegetable frittata (GF)(DF), matzo kugel, salad, matzo, Passover dessert.

**MONDAY, APRIL 21**

**Noon, Lunch...**Spinach pie, balsamic glazed carrots, butter-nut squash soup, multi-grain bread, and rice pudding.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 22**

**Noon, Lunch...**Risotto primavera (GF), stewed tomatoes, salad, garlic bread, and tropical fruit salad.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 24**

**Noon, Lunch...**Chicken mulligatawny stew (GF)(DF), Brussels sprouts, white rice, salad, sourdough bread, and apricots.

**MONDAY, APRIL 28**

**Noon, Lunch...**Turkey chili (GF)(DF), California blend vegetables, egg noodles, salad, whole wheat bread, and pineapple.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 29**

**Noon, Lunch...**Salmon croquettes (GF)(DF), Italian green beans, pasta, corn bisque, roll, and chocolate pudding.

**MAY**

**THURSDAY, MAY 1**

**Noon, in-person lunch...**Mediterranean plate with falafel, hummus, baba ganoush, stuffed grape leaves, Israeli salad, pita bread, and baklava. **Please RSVP for in-person lunch by 9am on Wednesday, April 30.**

**Special theme:** Yom Ha'atzmaut - Israeli Independence Day to celebrate Israel's 77th birthday.

**MONDAY, MAY 5**

**Noon, Lunch...**Meatloaf (GF)(DF), sweet potato fries, peas and carrots, salad, white bread, and pear sauce.

**TUESDAY, MAY 6**

**Noon, Lunch...**Moroccan vegetable stew (GF)(DF), cous-cous, salad, naan bread, and fresh fruit.

**THURSDAY, MAY 8**

**Noon, in-person Mothers' Day brunch...**Spring vegetable quiche, salad greens, gazpacho, mock mimosas, brioche roll, and lemon cake. **Please RSVP for in-person lunch by 9am on Wednesday, May 7.**

**Special theme:** Celebrating Mothers and Important Women in Your Life. We invite you to bring a favorite recipe to swap, photo, or other remembrance to share.

**MONDAY, MAY 12**

**Noon, Lunch...**Sweet and sour fish (GF)(DF), green beans, brown rice, lentil soup, rye bread, and vanilla pudding.

**TUESDAY, MAY 13**

**Noon, Lunch...**Layered vegetable frittata (GF), hash brown potatoes, salad, pumpernickel bread, and snickerdoodle cookie.

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May 31–June 1  
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**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.

 **CREATE A JEWISH LEGACY**

## Call It Whatever You Want

### *Alyson and Richard Slutzky joined our Legacy Circle to perpetuate Jewish life and resiliency in the Berkshires*

“Call it payback. Call it whatever you want. Call it recognizing that one may have the resources that other people don’t, or just giving back to the community. However you frame it, I think it’s really important that people do something so that the Jewish community will be left better off.”

That’s the principle that Richard Slutzky says guided him and his wife, Alyson, to join our Legacy Circle, which ensures that Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and its good work will thrive long into the future.

Richard and Alyson’s Jewish journeys have taken them from upbringings in small Jewish communities to family lives and careers in a large metropolitan area with an extensive Jewish institutional presence to their current home in the rural Berkshires.

Alyson describes her childhood experiences in Fort Worth, Texas, where there was “one temple and one shul. You thought you knew everybody who was Jewish.” Many of those fellow community members, she remembers, would frequently gather in her family’s living room, where her father hosted meetings for the local Federation and other Jewish causes. “I grew up with that and that’s my legacy. Watching my parents being active taught me to be active.”

She adds that “It was a very tight, close Jewish community. I think small communities are more active, in a way, because there’s no place to hide.”

Richard grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, in the 1960s, where the “pretty tight” Jewish community was larger than in Fort Worth, supporting three synagogues, a Federation, and chapters of Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women. Still, he recalls, “we didn’t take things for granted because we were a small population amidst a larger community. When I was growing up, sending your kid to Jewish camp was important.” Richard attended Jewish camps in the Midwest, including Wisconsin’s Camp Herzl, which young Robert Zimmerman of Minnesota had attended and that expanded its Zionist focus to include lessons in blues guitar and harmonica in tribute to its most famous camper.

“That was the milieu I grew up in,” says Richard, “and that also, I think, colored our future when Alyson and I met at Washington University in St. Louis.” The couple moved to Atlanta while Richard attended law school at Emory University, and both became involved in Federation after they moved to Kansas City to begin their careers. Alyson, at the time working as a graphic designer (she became a licensed social worker, as well), took on a project for the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City. She found out that the organization was looking for a young attorney to be its first director – and that proved to be an opportunity that provided Richard entrée into the world of Jewish philanthropy.

At the time that Richard gained experience during his 3.5-year tenure in Kansas City, the



Richard and Alyson Slutzky with grand-dog Alfie

Federation system was recruiting new directors who could develop endowment funds in large and mid-sized cities. The idea is that if donors leave a legacy gift comprising an X-amount multiple of their annual gift, new gifts wouldn’t be necessary to replace those older gifts once their donors pass; rather, the new gifts would be added to a pool of reliable annual gifts that continue to be drawn from legacy endowments.

Richard was offered a position working for the Jewish Foundation of Greater MetroWest NJ, a community with “about 125,000 Jews, maybe 43 synagogues, an institution for Jewish family services, two JCCs, and multiple Hebrew day schools” – very different from the small communities that the Slutzkys grew up in and also Kansas City.

“One of the things that I enjoyed about my job as an endowment director that is very germane to this conversation about our local Legacy Circle,” says Richard, “is that it wasn’t necessarily about soliciting gifts. It was about acting as a resource for people who already were involved in the Jewish community and who wanted to leave a legacy to perpetuate all the good work that they had done during their lifetime well beyond their lifetime. Like an insurance policy for their family after they’re gone. And I would have conversations with individuals who would ask why they should set up an endowment. And I would say something like, ‘Well, this way the community can prepare for unanticipated emergencies.’ Then they would say, ‘Well, what’s an unanticipated emergency?’ I would say, ‘I don’t know. They’re unanticipated. It could be anything.’”

“And in fact, who would have thought 20 years ago, there would be rising antisemitism in the United States, on college campuses, and around the world. We never thought about that. I mean, the Holocaust was over. We were in America. We were gaining prominence in society, and we thought we were immortal and immune to any additional antisemitism. Yet, here we are in 2025 still confronting it. The issue of unanticipated emergencies – I think that’s still true.”

In New Jersey, Alyson’s involvement in the Jewish community centered around the family’s synagogue and the development of a Jewish

parenting center for the community. She was inspired by her father’s philanthropy – she recounts that he left gifts to his three children’s congregations specifying that those funds “not be used for bread and butter things. They had to be used for creative programming. I’m a social worker and was raising our kids, and I was interested in supporting families in doing Jewish activities in their homes – having Shabbat at home when things are hectic and crazy and how to, creatively and on the fly, make fun family experiences. I wasn’t as active in communal life, but I’ve always believed that it’s really important to support other Jews in one’s area. Who else is going to do it but Jews?”

Richard worked for the Federation for nearly a decade and then moved on to a long career as a fundraising consultant at Merrill Lynch. Nearing retirement, the Slutzkys became Berkshires second-homeowners and, in 2019, moved here full-time. They really had no concept of what the local Jewish community was like – but their eyes were opened when they found out that novelist Rachel Kadish would be speaking at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Richard recalls: “I said to Alyson, ‘We better go because no one’s going to be there. It’s going to be us and the rabbi and Rachel Kadish. And lo and behold, we get there. It was a Sunday brunch, standing room only, 250 people, people asking the most erudite questions I’ve ever heard. And I turned to Alyson, and said ‘Okay, these are my people. We’re here.’”

They became members of Hevreh (Alyson now serves on its board) and Richard joined the board of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, stepping down in 2024 to become board president of Barrington Stage Company (although he remains on our investment committee). Both say how impressed they are with the Federation’s outreach in local schools, the social services we provide in the absence of other Jewish groups, and the security initiatives we are implementing to ensure the safety of Jewish spaces and that Jewish communal life continues without interruption.

Alyson and Richard say their outlook on the importance of giving in a smaller Jewish community was inspired by their friends Ken and Mimi Heyman, who shared their belief that “tzedakah is not charity. Tzedakah is an obligation. Tzedakah doesn’t mean just give to one community, but to wherever you spend a significant amount of time,” says Richard, who adds that he would like to see more contributions to build up a reserve of funds that will help ensure that this Federation’s local services and contributions to national and international causes can be sustained in the future.

Summing up, Richard says: “I hope that people think about their legacy and what impact they’ve had on the world. We have that opportunity to reflect every High Holiday season, but I hope when they think reflectively, they will also recognize the importance of a living legacy – not only to their children, but also to their community.”

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## OBITUARIES

### Leonard Cohen, 89, well-known attorney, exceptional storyteller, infectious charm

PITTSFIELD – Leonard Cohen, 89, passed away on Wednesday, February 13.

Born in Pittsfield in 1935, where he lived almost his entire life, son of the late Sam and Esther Cohen, Lenny was proud to represent the Berkshires wherever he went. A founding partner of Cohen Kinne Valicenti & Cook LLP, Lenny spent decades ensuring thousands of Berkshire's defendants received a fair trial. In the process, he was recognized as one of the commonwealth's best attorneys.

He loved playing tennis, cheering on his beloved Red Sox and Celtics, and attending concerts at Tanglewood and South Mountain, where he also served as a board member.

Lenny was a devoted leader and two-time past president of Knesset Israel. Throughout his long involvement in the local community, Lenny played several important roles, including on Berkshire Medical Center's Institutional Review Board and Hospice Care of the Berkshires. He also taught at area law schools, and performed volunteer work for several Berkshire organizations.

An exceptional storyteller in the courtroom and at the dinner table, he kept his audience rapt right until the end. His stories and infectious charm will remain alive for generations through his family and friends.

Lenny is survived by his wife, Ileen Cohen; son, Joel Cohen (Karyn Zieve); son-in-law, Robert de Rothschild; brother, Alan Cohen; grandchildren, Harry Zieve (Lucy) Cohen, Samuel Zieve-Cohen, Jacob de Rothschild, and Mariana Zieve-Cohen; extended family, colleagues, and friends. He was pre-deceased by his daughter, Debra de Rothschild.

A funeral service was held on Friday, February 14 at Congregation Knesset Israel, Pittsfield. Interment followed at Knesset Israel Cemetery. Contributions may be made to Congregation Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

### Donna Drail Lefkowitz, 95, active in community, co-founder of Women's Services in Pittsfield

LENOX – Donna Drail Lefkowitz, 95, died peacefully in her sleep on the night of Wednesday, February 19, with family at her side.

Born Donna Jean Drail on December 4, 1929, in Lansing, MI, to John and Anna (Eichinger) Drail. Her father came here from Holland and her mother from Germany. She had a sister, Virginia, and a brother, Jim, both deceased. When she was 15, her family moved to Appleton, WI, where she graduated from high school.

Donna married Monroe Lefkowitz in 1950 in Austin, TX, where they were both students at the University of Texas. She was married for 59 years until Monroe's death in 2009. She held a bachelor's

degree in Math and a master's in Psychology.

In 1964, she moved with her family to Lenox and was quite active in civic duty and the women's political movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Donna served two terms on the Lenox School Committee (1972-78), was co-founder of Women's Services in Pittsfield (now The Elizabeth Freeman Center), and was very active in the League of Women Voters, encouraging people to vote.

She worked as a VISTA vocational counselor at Goodwill Industries and then as a vocational counselor at MA Rehabilitation Commission in Pittsfield, from which she retired in 1989. She volunteered at Tanglewood for 21 years answering the phone, and for 20 years at Knesset Israel running the library and sewing funeral shrouds.

Donna was a skilled embroiderer and quilter and took pleasure in making her pieces for friends and family. She especially took joy in the company of her family. Above all, she was a loving, kind soul and a person you could talk to about anything.

Donna is survived by sons Richard Lefkowitz (Catherine) of Lenox, and Ken Lefkowitz of Sofia, Bulgaria; daughter Jane Lefkowitz of Pittsfield; grandsons Jason Smith of Pittsfield, and Alex and Ray Lefkowitz of Sofia, Bulgaria; granddaughters Leyanna G. Lefkowitz of Redmond, OR and Allison Lefkowitz of Lenox; great-grandsons Levi and Brody Smith of Dalton; and numerous cousins,

nieces, nephews, and friends.

By her request, there will be no calling hours. Donations in her memory can be made to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires senior lunch program, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201; The Elizabeth Freeman Center, 66 Allen Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201; and Hospice of the Berkshires, 877 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

There will be a celebration of her life for all who wish to attend on or about the weekend of July 12. Check Donna's Facebook page or Roche Funeral Home for details.

### William J. Haims, 84, well-known, longtime jeweler in Pittsfield

MARBLEHEAD, MA - William J. Haims, 84, passed away on Wednesday, February 12.

Born July 28, 1940, to Louis and Dorothy Haims in Brighton, MA, Bill grew up in Sharon, attending Sharon High School and Huntington Prep in Brookline. He then served in the US Air Force.

When his parents moved to Pittsfield to become owners of the former Rogers Jewelers on North Street, Bill joined them in running the successful store as owner and operator for 36 years.

He met his wife, Hinda, of Newton, while she was visiting a friend in Pittsfield. They were married on September 18, 1961.

While raising their three children, they were active in the community and Knesset Israel.

In September, 1997, they moved to Marblehead. They loved the shore and traveled often to the ocean in Ogunquit, ME. Bill loved to ski and snowmobile in the Berkshires. Above all else, he loved his family and spending time with them.

In 2015, Bill was featured in The Berkshire Eagle for his newfound fame for playing a small part portraying Boston gangster Gennaro "Jerry" Angiulo in the true crime drama *Black Mass*.

In addition to his wife of 63 years, Bill leaves his son Russell and wife Rachel of Wayland; daughters Joy and Lori of South Egremont; and two grandsons, Jason and Jordan Haims of Wayland.

Funeral services and burial were private, held on Tuesday, February 18 at Sharon Memorial Park.

### Jane (Wolbarst) Braus, 99, sharp wit, supported philanthropic and political causes

LENOX – Jane (Wolbarst) Braus, 99, died peacefully at home on Thursday, February 6.

Born April 2, 1925 on Long Island, she was a graduate of Woodmere Academy and Penn State. She traveled solo to Europe after college, then worked at several true-crime pulp magazines in New York City in the 1940s, where she honed the keen writing skills that would serve her for the rest of her life.

Jane met the love of her life, Jay, married in 1952, and were inseparable for 63 years until his passing in 2015. Together, they traveled the world, often on cruises, where they would invariably meet new friends. Jay and Jane also loved to socialize with their many friends, go to restaurants, concerts, museums, antique shows, and generally enjoy themselves in and around her beloved Larchmont, where they brought up four children and several dogs.

They also enjoyed many years in Stockbridge, where attending Tanglewood was their greatest passion. They were voracious collectors of modern art and antiques, much of which was donated to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Boca Raton Museum of Art, and The Berkshire Museum.

She was a dynamo with a sharp wit and an elegant style, who loved her family, friends, supporting the arts and philanthropic and political causes. She loved reading books and poring over the New York Times every day and possessed a remarkable range of knowledge on many topics. She was a devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Jane was extremely active in Democratic politics and pro-choice causes, especially Planned Parenthood, for which she served as a top fundraiser in Westchester. She helped create the house tour which raised thousands of dollars annually.

She is survived by her children Nancy Braus (Bert Picard), Pat Braus (Ed Lopez), Paul Braus, and Peter Braus (Kaija Braus); seven grandchildren, Molly, Janie, Laura, Dan, Jay, Nate, and Henry; and two great-grandchildren, Ben and Allie.

Donations may be made to the Foodbank of Western Massachusetts and Planned Parenthood. The family will have a celebration of Jane's life at a future date.



## CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS! COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

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

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**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 22**

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



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**CULTURE & ARTS**

**Dr. Steve Recommends...**

**A column about Jewish books and authors**

By Dr. Steve Rubin / Special to the BJV

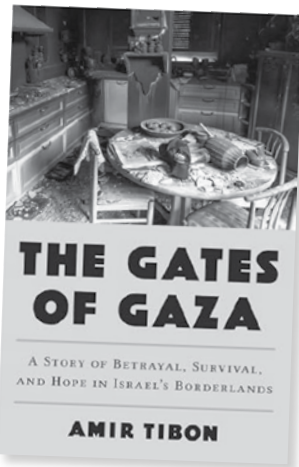
Dear Readers,

According to the calendar winter is over, but here in the Berkshires it's still chilly, and hence a good time to catch up on our reading. This month, with Gaza frequently in the news, I am recommending a book of poems by Israeli writers, as well as a powerful first-person account of the October 7th attacks. And on a happier note, with Passover around the corner, a beautifully illustrated Passover Haggadah.



*Shiva: Poems of October 7*, Korazim, Bohnen, Silverman, eds. (2024) is a moving collection of poems by Israeli authors (in Hebrew with English translations) collected during the first six months following the attacks of October 7th. Several are by well-known poets, others by newcomers. One is by Rachel Goldberg-Polin, mother of Hersh, who was captured and later found dead in Gaza. All are powerful, personal expressions of various and often-conflicting emotions: loss, grief, horror, anger, sadness, and continuing fear and anxiety.

*The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope in Israel's Borderlands* (2024), by the



award-winning Israeli journalist Amir Tibon, is a dramatic rescue story (he and his family were residents of Kibbutz Nahal Oz which was attacked on October 7th), as well as a perceptive and even-handed analysis of the situation in Israel and Gaza before and after the events of October 7th. It is not easy reading, but one that I highly recommend.

*A Night of Beginnings: A Passover Haggadah* (2022) is a relatively new Haggadah by the acclaimed poet and translator, Marcia Falk. Illustrated by the author, *A Night of Blessings* presents the traditional Exodus story in its entirety, but with an emphasis on the role of the female characters: Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter, and the midwives Shifrah and Puah. Falk's "poems as prayers" are seamlessly integrated throughout the narrative, and lend a lyrical and personal tone to the traditional Seder proceedings.



Please tell us what you have been reading. We may very well use your suggestions in a future column! I can be reached by email: [sjr@adelphi.edu](mailto:sjr@adelphi.edu)

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



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## CULTURE & ARTS

### Why I Read Dead Jews

By **Howie Stier** / Special to the BJV

The salient project taken upon by this paper to promote new works of contemporary Jewish writers won't at all be undermined by my case for the alternative; dead Jews need support, too.



Isaac Bashevis Singer

Isaac Bashevis Singer for one. His massive oeuvre now fills estate sale shelves, detritus of heirs to a previous generation. Forgotten by Hollywood (it's been a loong while since *Yentl*), that Nobel Prize of his and a token would get him on the subway today, if only the subway still took tokens. Yet he is supremely relevant to us now.

*The Penitent* is a richly enjoyable if unfortunately titled late novel of Singer's, which could only seem more custom-crafted for our point in history were the manuscript just found stashed in a print-clip cluttered desk drawer at the Jewish Daily Forward, where the work first ran in the 1970s.

The story of a Holocaust survivor returning to embrace Yiddishkeit (the very definition of *Baal Tshuvah* – and why the book doesn't flaunt

that title in lieu of a total *goyische* predication, evoking hooded robed marchers in the sage smoked alleys of Sevilla, I'll leave for some Yiddish Book Center sheep-skinned Yiddishist to run to ground) and making *aliyah* is a subject aligned with the resurgence of Jewish identification – notably among Jewish students targeted for harassment on American college campuses – In the post October 7, 2023 era. Singer's execution, all Hemingway-spare, producing a piece more ambitious than a short story but pared down enough to knock out over Shabbos, aligns with an age of a Department of Governmental Efficiency.

Middle aged business-type Joseph Shapiro's tale is one long crescendo, a literary Ravel's Bolero. The die is cast with an epiphany that his bourgeoisie life in the United States is pathological and with less consideration than you'd place in scoring Tanglewood summer season tickets, Shapiro dumps the wife and his lover, packs a bag, cabs it to the airport and dropping cash on the spot buys a seat to Israel. Surprisingly, these tasks played out in a pre-internet 1970s milieu appear on the page as more efficient, if anything a satisfying evocation how things used to be, whereas the realm of new fiction would demands characters glued to stupid phones. Bad enough I'm tethered to one, do I want that intrusion in my reading? Mundanities of divorce and finances and paperwork will be handled down the road, he is certain, and this confidence is his defining virtue. There's a parallel to the determination of Knut Hamsun's Isak, the forest dwelling protagonist in *Growth of the Soil*, which earned Hamsun, Singer's noted inspiration, the Nobel Prize in Literature. Like Isak, Shapiro is unwavering in his unconventional path, evades modernity, and secures a life of contentment.

Singer was a Warsaw rabbi's son and, like his Shapiro character, learned in *cheder* in pre-war Poland. He writes with authority on *halacha* and *minhagim*

and the text is enriched when that learning is flexed. For example, when Shapiro grabs a couple books for his trip, one is an arcane volume of the Kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital. Singer chooses the in-flight reading to inspire the reader, where a hack would drop the opportunity to do so.

Certainly a profound read for the college aged, one that likely will encourage further exploration of Singer. And know, that if you only read dead Jews all the rest of your days you'll be richly rewarded, and merit the blessing of keeping their memory.

*The son of a survivor of the Lvov Ghetto and Janowska concentration camp, Howie Stier is a longtime journalist who reported on crime and mayhem in the five boroughs for the New York Times, covered celebrity news from the red carpet and back alleys of Hollywood Boulevard for Entertainment Tonight, and has relocated to the Berkshires where he's focused on two considerations: literature and learning Torah – as havel havalim hakol havel (breath, breath, all is breath).*

## MAZEL TOV TO!

...the BJV's own food and travel columnist **Carol Goodman Kaufman**, author of *The First Murder*, who has been offered a two-book contract with Next Chapter Press. One book is a collection of cozy mysteries in which food writer Kiki Coben leads her mah jongg group in solving crimes, on land and at sea. The second is a chapter book that tells of the adventures and antics of a group of animal friends who live in a Florida park.

**Temple Anshe Amunim**, which announced in March that **Rabbi Valerie Lieber** will be the congregation's spiritual leader starting in the summer of 2025. Check upcoming issues of the Berkshire Jewish Voice for more on Rabbi Lieber.

**Ethan Dudley**, who celebrated his bar mitzvah at Temple Anshe Amunim on March 8. Proud parents are **Lauren and David Dudley**.

**Loretta and Joel Prives** on the birth of their grandson, **Gavin**.

**Marcia and Charles Mandel** on the birth of their granddaughter, **Cleo**.

**Fred Landes** on his special birthday.

**Molly Novick** on her special birthday.

**Elaine and Ben Silberstein** on the b'nai mitzvah of grandsons **Drew** and **Owen**.

**Goldy Fried** on the marriage of her grandchildren, **Martin & Nicole Fried** and **Abby & Dvir Yardin**.

**Elaine Shindler** on her special birthday.

**Eliot Stern** on being accepted to NYU's Schack Institute of Real Estate.

**Richard and Alyson Slutzky** on the birth of grandchild **Naomi River Slutzky-Merrill**. Proud parents are **Dane Slutzky and Sebastian Merrill**. See page 19 for more on the Slutzkys, who have joined Federation's Legacy Circle.

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## CULTURE &amp; ARTS

## Time Bent, Warped, and Vertical

## Karen Chase's poetry of the past and future

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

Best-selling author Michael Crichton once described a pervasive type of cognitive bias he labeled "Gell-Mann Amnesia," a phenomenon that even the most discerning consumers of news should bear in mind. "Briefly stated, the effect is as follows," he wrote. "You open the newspaper to an article on some subject you know well. You read the article and see the journalist has absolutely no understanding of either the facts or the issues...In any case, you read with exasperation or amusement the multiple errors in a story, and then turn the page to national or international affairs, and read as if the rest of the newspaper was somehow more accurate...than the baloney you just read. You turn the page, and forget what you know."

The Gell-Mann Amnesia effect is perhaps even more important to keep in mind when approaching the discipline of History. No matter how rigorous historians' approach might be to documenting the past, their perspectives are bound to be occluded by information gaps, present bias, past bias, inaccurate records, dogmas, agendas, politics, culture, wishful thinking, and out-and-out invention. Recording History is an ongoing process. Inevitable inaccuracies – that may or may never come to light – do not necessarily render a historian's work valueless or even 'untrue,' and only suggest that the closer you care to look at the nature of inquiry, the more you come to realize that, well, History is embarrassing.

Which was the title of Karen Chase's seventh book, a sparkling collection of personal essays published in 2023. In *History is Embarrassing*, the Lenox poet, author, and visual artist recounts her strange contribution to the story of Jamali (a Sufi court poet and saint) and Kamali, who lived in Mughal India in the 16th century. Chase first learned of their story while participating in a writing residency in Delhi in 2004, when she had the chance to visit the Jamali and Kamali Mosque and Tomb, said to hold the remains of the two men – or would it be accurate to write "the couple"? Because during Chase's visit to their tomb, the site curator told her that "It is believed, through our oral tradition in Delhi that Kamali was Jamali's homosexual lover."



In her essay "Jamali Kamali Airborne in History," Chase recounts how this notion captured her imagination; she commenced writing a narrative poem about Jamali and Kamali while still in Delhi. Chase writes that even in the earliest stages, a reader of her drafts shared that he thought she was "inhabited by Jamali, channeling him." She thought the man "misguided," but nevertheless spent the next year and a half possessed by her characters – writing of their torrid passion for each other in their voices, coloring the narrative with research and period details provided by an English scholar of Persian history.

When a book version of the poem was published in India in 2011, Chase was accused of "distorting history" by the moderator of a reading of her work in Delhi, sparking a lively debate among the audience. Chase, for her part, felt as if she had created a work of the imagination based on a snippet of fact, and that: "It's not as if my fiction would alter the historical record."

Somehow, however, it did. While searching the internet to see how the book was doing, Chase noticed that a line she had written was sourced as having come from Jamali's own poetic works. While that error was corrected, eleven years later, an article appeared in an Indian web publication titled "How the tomb of Jamali-Kamali enabled the Queer Community to claim their spaces." Moreover, it portrayed Karen Chase as having "cited" Jamali's poetry from the 16th century, lines that she had, in fact, written herself. Later, she found other examples of her "poem polluting history, cited as fact." This led her to conclude that, "History is not a factual record. Rather it is a messy conglomeration of fact, fiction, and truth." She determined to stop trying to correct the record and to allow whatever will happen to happen – an experience of the Gell-Mann Amnesia effect in the most firsthand way possible.

Chase's just-released eighth book, *Two Tales: Jamali Kamali and ZundelState*, republishes her Mughal-era love poem and pairs it with a new novella in verse set in a dystopic future society. The two works could not be more different in form – the poetry of the Jamali-Kamali poem is limpid and direct, while that of *ZundelState* is dreamlike and discursive. Both are animated by outsiders seeking experiences of love and meaning in societies not constructed to accommodate their desires or individuality.

Encountering *Jumali Kamali* without knowing its backstory, a reader might plausibly think that it is a work from the past. It is somewhat reminiscent in both theme and composition to *Song of Songs* – a frank poem about carnal desire in the voices of two ardent lovers whose passion is both overwhelming and forbidden. The way modern queer readers in India have co-opted *Jumali Kamali* as a genuine, centuries-old affirmation of same-sex identity reminded me of the way that the *pshtat* (literal) verses of *Song of Songs* have been transmogrified by *drash* (homiletic) interpreters into a religious allegory for the love between God and Israel. Whatever exegesis the poems may now be freighted with, it remains plainly true that *Song of Songs* is about the passion of a young woman and a young man, and *Jamali Kamali* was composed by someone who is not a male gay Indian Muslim, but rather, as Chase describes herself, "a straight, white, American, Jewish, 21st-century woman. And I'm not even young!" But if the *drash* allow both poems to endure and touch future readers, as we say in Yiddish, "zeyer gu't."

*ZundelState* is set in the year 3090, when "time is bent, warped, and vertical, as opposed to the horizontalness of a timeline," as Chase writes in her introduction. Human beings have lost their ability to dream or love after both were outlawed by the state, although the biological capacity to do so remains within them in a vestigial form. Unstuck in time, the protagonists Joe and Marianna set forth into the world searching for answers and connections.



Karen Chase

When I interviewed Chase in her Lenox studio in March, she said this about her writing process: "What was similar with Jamali Kamali is that it felt very given and very like there was no doubt I was going to stick with it till it was finished, whatever it was. I would come out here every day and I would write whatever I wanted; and it was all related, but there was no through line at all. There was no plot, there was no nothing. And I figured when it was finished I would know. It actually took almost the exact same amount of time as Jamali Kamali, a little over a year and a half. I ended up with a stack of paper and I knew I was finished. I took this big roll of white paper going all the way around the whole studio, and I started just tacking papers in place. And I did that for a couple of months, moving things around until there was the story. It was then that I read the whole thing for the first time. Then, I started weaving it together."

The best way to move through *ZundelState* is to just go with it, letting the imagery wash over you without bringing with you too many expectations of how stories are supposed to work. Rather than plot, what holds the verse novella together (both poetically and narratively) are Chase's explorations of dreaming: dreams in the sense of aspirations; dreams as phantasmagorical inner journeys in which familiar things might make no sense; and the type of dreaming where suddenly things do make sense, allowing you to apprehend an aspect of reality in a way you could not have while awake. "Dreams," writes Chase, "are the sap that runs through time."

Who knows? Maybe someone in the year 4090 will rediscover *ZundelState* and believe it to be an accurate testament of how humans lived a thousand years earlier. I enjoyed reading *Jamali Kamali* and *ZundelState* together, because while the former is set in an imagined 16th century India and the latter in a sci-fi landscape, Karen Chase finds the immutable human nature of her characters in these disparate worlds. And she has faith in their humanity, and that a good human story will always feel fresh and meaningful. As she puts it in *ZundelState*:

*You think, Reader, there is nothing new under the sun?*

*Well, you are mistaken.*

*We all are.*

**Karen Chase** will be talking about her work in the months ahead at the following venues: Congregation Ahavath Sholom – Sunday, April 27 at 2 p.m.; The Bookstore in Lenox – Sunday, May 4 at 4 p.m.; The Mount – Wednesday, June 18 at 5:30 p.m.; and Dream Away Lodge – June TBA.

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Enjoy a delicious kosher lunch marking Lag B'Omer with a delicious BBQ.

## Thursday, May 22 at Noon

## Memorial Day Picnic

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CULTURE & ARTS

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Eggspress Yourself a Little Differently than Usual this Pesach

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

The Hebrew calendar is lunisolar, combining the lunar cycle with the solar year. Our months begin on the new Moon, and many of our festivals fall on the full Moon. These include Passover, Sukkot, Purim, Tu B'Shevat, and Tu B'Av (The Tu stands for the number 15, and a full Moon reaches its peak on the 15th day of the month).



You make the call – a piece of gefilte fish or Saturn's moon Epimetheus as captured by NASA's Cassini spacecraft in 2015?

One explanation for placing festivals on that day is that the full Moon is considered a time of joy and celebration, freedom, and abundance. And according to the Kabbalah, God's feminine face creates souls on the full Moon.

Surveys indicate that the most celebrated Jewish holiday in the United States is Passover. As always, it begins on a full Moon, the 15th of Nisan. Now, Nisan usually falls in April when the Pink Moon, a Native American name for the silver disk, peaks. But there are plenty of other names that may speak more to our tradition – and they have to do with the traditional subject of this column: food.

For example, coastal tribes in North America coined the name Fish Moon to mark the start of fish spawning season. In my decidedly Jewish imagination, I like to think that when opening the front door for Elijah, one of our ancestors looked up to the night sky, and upon spying the big white circle, our forebear said, "Why, that looks like Bubbie's gefilte fish!"

The Anglo-Saxons claim credit for calling the full Moon of Spring the Egg Moon, but I like to think that much earlier in the world's history, it was one of our people who named it. While checking the sky to see if the Moon was full enough for the festival to begin, our ancestor saw the hero ingredient of Passover.

Now, any Jewish cook who has spent time in the kitchen knows just how many dozens of eggs we consume during the eight-day holiday. In our house, Joel threatens every year to check our cholesterol levels the day before the holiday and on the eighth day.

But this year presents a unique challenge to our culinary skills. Passover food is already expensive. How are we going to manage meal preparation with eggs going for a national average of over \$7.00 a dozen?

Would it be possible to go eggless as well as leavenless? Would kneidlach hold together without the eggs? Would matzah brei without the eggs even begin to satisfy?

I decided to give it a try.

My first experiment was an attempt at egg-free matzah balls. I potckied around with several recipes to find something that resembled the beloved traditional dumpling. I ended up with kneidlach that looked authentic, although

their core was gluey. Cooking much longer than the original recipes' instructions solved that problem. As for flavor, I was surprised that I couldn't detect the applesauce. However, the chicken broth was definitely necessary for the mix, even though I had cooked them in water flavored by chicken bouillon.

Finally, because hard matzah balls that require knife and fork are to me an abomination, one of my major goals was to achieve "floaters." Switching out some of the broth for seltzer did the trick. The kneidlach bobbed to the surface almost immediately.

The verdict: Joel liked them. I much prefer the real thing.

Next up was matzah brei. Again, I played around with some vegetarian and vegan recipes found online until I came up with a result that was surprisingly good and true to the original dish. At first, I thought that my judgment might have been influenced by the maple syrup I drizzled over the top of the scramble. Then Joel reminded me that we normally eat matzah brei with syrup or jam.

So, there you go. Two completely egg-free dishes for your Passover consideration. If you decide to try either or both of the recipes below, please let me know what you think! (Due to space consideration, matzah ball recipe will appear online.)

Eggless Matzah Brei

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 sheets of matzah, crumbled
1/2 cup ground quinoa\*
1 cup boiling water
Pinch of salt
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 apple, diced small
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
Maple syrup, jam, or cinnamon sugar for serving

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine the crumbled matzah, quinoa, apple, cinnamon, and the salt in a heatproof bowl.
Pour 1 cup boiling water over them and stir together. Let stand for 2 to 3 minutes.
While the matzah mixture is sitting, melt the butter in a large skillet.
Once it's sizzling, pour in the matzah mixture, cover and cook over a medium flame until it's golden brown and crisp, about 10 minutes, occasionally stirring it so that all pieces can brown.
Serve at once with your choice of topping.
\*Simply grind some quinoa in a food processor.



Carol Goodman Kaufman, author of the Berkshire-set novel The First Murder, is at work on two new books for Next Chapter Press – a collection of cozy mysteries featuring food writer Kiki Coben and a children's book about a group of animal friends who live in a Florida park.



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