

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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Super Tzedakah Week 2025

Rise to the moment with courage, generosity, and heart



Super Tzedakah Week Co-Chairs Roy and Leslie Kozupsky

With the arrival of Super Tzedakah Week on June 1, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is proud to launch its 2025 Community Campaign. This annual fundraising campaign fuels the vital programs, services, and community-building initiatives that sustain and strengthen Jewish life across the Berkshires and around the world.

“Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is being called upon like never before – to lead, respond, and act,” says Federation President Arlene D. Schiff. “Your support is critical to helping us

care for the most vulnerable, defend against hate, and keep our Jewish values and traditions alive for the next generation.”

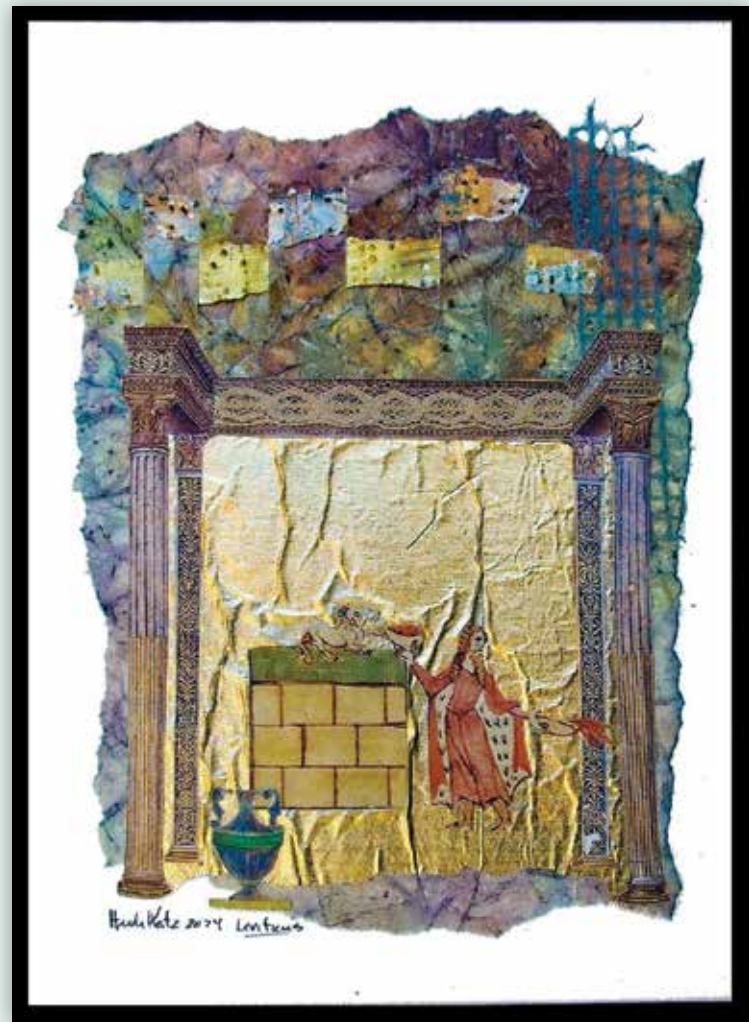
As part of the campaign kickoff, Federation will host Jewish Community Day on Sunday, June 1, at High Lawn Farm in Lee starting at 1 p.m. Last year’s event drew nearly 500 attendees for an afternoon of fun, food, and celebration. Bring your family, bring your friends, and bring your *ruach* (spirit)! This is an afternoon not to be missed, and a beautiful expression of what makes our community strong – connection, celebration, and shared purpose. See the article below with all the details.

As part of the campaign launch, Federation is working to address the growing food crisis in the Berkshires through a **Pasta and Rice Collection**, running throughout the month of May. Donated packages of pasta and rice will be distributed to local food pantries – a simple yet powerful act of tzedakah that reflects our collective commitment to justice and care for all.

Drop off packaged pasta and rice for distribution to local food pantries at: The Berkshire Food Co-op, Great Barrington; Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Great Barrington; Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Pittsfield; and Congregation Beth Israel, North Adams.

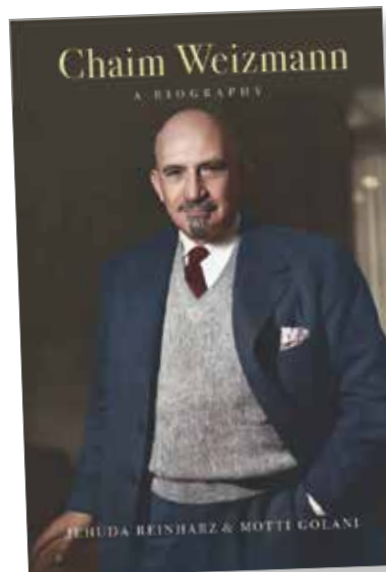
SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK,
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Spring in the Jewish Berkshires...



...means we are *still* schlepping through the Book of Leviticus, imagined here by Federation’s Coordinator of Volunteers Heidi Katz in one in a series of five collages, each depicting a book of the Torah, made in the context of Hevreh’s Saturday morning Creative Beit Midrash. See them all at our office in Pittsfield!

“Chaim Weizmann and The Two State Solution,” with Jehuda Reinharz, PhD



LENOX – On Friday, May 30 at 2 p.m., Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Shakespeare & Company are honored to present Jehuda Reinharz, PhD, President Emeritus of Brandeis University and recipient of the President of Israel Prize (1990 and 2024) for a discussion of the life of Chaim Weizmann.

This free event will take place at the Tina Packer Playhouse on the Shakespeare & Company campus, 70 Kemble Street in Lenox. Co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Shakespeare & Company.

In *Chaim Weizmann: A Biography*, Jehuda Reinharz and Motti Golani show how Weizmann, a leader of the World Zionist Organization who became the first president of Israel, advocated for a Jewish state.

Born in 1874, Weizmann grew up in Russian-controlled Poland. Within his family, Weizmann noted how the return to a Jewish homeland in Palestine “was at the

center of ritual, a longing for it implicit in our life.” Weizmann’s initial career was as a biochemist and his research offered significant aid to Britain’s military efforts during World War I; this work later provided him with the opportunity to meet with major British political figures on Zionism’s behalf. A fierce advocate for education and research, Weizmann founded what would become the multidisciplinary Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot in 1934.

Jehuda Reinharz earned his doctorate in modern Jewish history from Brandeis University in 1972. In 1994, Professor Reinharz became the seventh

JEHUDA REINHARZ,
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Jewish Community Day 2025... Jewish Joy!

Celebrate vibrant, secure, and caring Jewish life in the Berkshires

LEE – On Sunday, June 1 at 1 p.m., Jewish Federation of the Berkshires invites one and all to High Lawn Farm as we come together in celebration of our Jewish heritage, culture, and faith at Jewish Community Day.

Federation kicks off its 2025 community campaign (and Shavuot) with a fun-filled day of ice cream, cows, baby animals, crafts, community tables, raffles, Israeli dancing, music, vegetarian treats from Naji’s Mediterranean Cuisine in Great Barrington, and so much more!

Fun for ages 0-99! Meet old friends, make new friends, learn more about our Berkshire Jewish community and enjoy free ice cream made on the farm (while supplies last), tours behind the scenes, cows, eco-crafts, raffles, mitzvah opportunities, and Israeli dancing.

Help Federation respond to the urgent food insecurity crisis by bringing packages of pasta and rice to donate for distribution to food pantries across the Berkshires.

ALL ARE WELCOME and there is something for everyone! Register at jewishberkshires.org. High Lawn Farm is located at 535 Summer Street in Lee. Rain date is Sunday, June 8.

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OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION Boundaries That Create Purposeful Space

By Rabbi Jennifer Rudin / Congregation Ahavath Shalom



Rabbi Jennifer Rudin

Three months to the day after fleeing Egypt, we arrived in the wilderness of Sinai on the first day of the month of Sivan. God instructed Moses to remind us of all that we witnessed God doing for us in Egypt, how God carried us out of slavery on eagle's wings. Our very presence in Sinai, the fact that we successfully journeyed to this place, indicates our unique and powerful connection to God.

God's instruction to Moses to remind us of God's pivotal role in our journey seems intended to strengthen our commitment and draw us closer to God. Yet in the Torah, we read, at a critical moment in our collective history,

when we affirm our covenant, God instructs Moses to set a boundary. God says: Though you will wish to scale the mountain to come as close to Me as possible, do not do so, for your love must be constrained. It may be as intense as you wish, but you may never lose sight of Whom you love and why you love. For on the day that you do, your heart will wander elsewhere, and you will abandon Me altogether.

Remarkable. At the same time that God draws us close to experience God's presence, God also sets a boundary that we may not cross, a physical and spiritual boundary that creates purposeful space between us and God.

The Kabbalists speak of the act of contracting oneself to make space for spiritual or physical creation. They call this act *tzimtzum*. Isaac Luria explains that "God began the process of creation by 'contracting' God's infinite light to allow for a 'conceptual space' in which a finite and seemingly independent world could exist. This contraction, forming an 'empty space' in which creation could begin, is known as the *tzimtzum*." The act of creating a boundary line that we could not cross at the moment of revelation is, in fact, another act of *tzimtzum*.

The experience at Sinai is immensely powerful. It includes hearing the blast of the shofar, experiencing intense thunder and lightning, and seeing a cloud of smoke enveloping the mountain. How could this compelling scene do anything other than draw us closer to God's presence? Even today, when we hear loud noises, when we see smoke rising, and great flashes of light, we stop if only to look. Oftentimes, it is more than a quick glance. Curiosity gets the best of us and we feel compelled to fully investigate the source of these events. Without God's deliberate act of creating a space between us and Sinai, we can only imagine that we would have been drawn to the mountain, we would naturally desire to find the source of the events and we would have drawn closer to God's presence.

So, what would have been wrong with each of us intimately experiencing God's presence? We heard God's voice with our own ears. We experienced God's presence through the sights and sounds of the scene. Why was it so important that a boundary be drawn to prevent us from personally encountering God?

I would suggest that this space served not to distance us from God but to allow a personal relationship between each of us and God to form. At the moment of

creation, Isaac Luria suggests, through the act of *tzimtzum*, contraction, and the creation of seemingly empty space, God enabled us to expand. Because of that expansion, we were able to develop free will, and to exist in relation to God and to one another. The scene at Sinai is the same. Here, God is not creating the world but rather is creating our peoplehood. Through the giving and receiving of the Ten Commandments, our relationship to God is recreated in a covenantal context, and we obtain the structure necessary for building successful relationships with one another. The boundary that Moses drew at God's request was not meant to keep us from God, it was meant to create a space where we could develop in relation to God and to one another.

So what is the lesson of the boundary line set around Mount Sinai? Why is the space created by this boundary declared holy? What does it mean that those who enter into the space will die? Rashi suggests that the boundary was created not to separate us from the Divine but to encourage all of us assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai to remain together in our formation. Rashi's commentary implies that God's intent in having the boundary created was to ensure that at a moment when we would have naturally felt compelled to focus all of our attention towards the Divine, that we instead were encouraged to engage relationally with others. The words that were revealed to us at Sinai are only relevant if we are in relationship with God and with humanity. If we are focused only on our relationship with God, the power of the Ten Commandments is diminished. Likewise, if we ignore our relationship with the Divine and focus only on our relationship with humanity, the power of the Ten Commandments is also diminished. Boundaries are meant to create space and time that will allow us to engage more fully with God and with each other.

In our current moment, when political and social tensions often drive individuals into isolation or ideological camps, the lesson of the boundary at Sinai remains deeply relevant. The sacred space created there was not meant to separate, but to unite – a communal pause that allowed us to become a people, rooted not only in Divine connection but in mutual responsibility. Today, we too must resist the pull to retreat inward or to seek only private revelation. The holiness of that ancient boundary reminds us that transformation happens not in solitary closeness to the Divine alone, but in the shared space between us – in community, in dialogue, and in holding fast to one another even when the world tempts us to divide. To live fully in covenant, we must remain in relationship, not just with God, but with each other.

Rabbi Jennifer Rudin began serving as the interim rabbi of Congregation Ahavath Shalom in 2024. She is the founding rabbi of Simcha-Services, Congregation Derech HaShalom, a Progressive Jewish community without walls in Metro West Boston. She believes in a Judaism that is authentic and meaningful, one that honors each person's unique religious practices, and is supportive of each individual's personal Jewish journey.



A diagram of the worlds created after the first *tzimtzum*, found in a 1610 manuscript written by Menahem Lonzano, a version of a diagram found in the writings of Hayyim ben Joseph Vital



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Your Federation Presents

SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK,

continued from cover

PLEASE DONATE TO THE 2025 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN!

This year's campaign comes at a time of heightened urgency. As antisemitism rises both globally and locally, and Israel faces ongoing threats, the need to invest in a secure, resilient, and joyful Jewish future has never been more pressing. This year the Federation's annual campaign calls on every member of the community to stretch beyond the usual and invest in a Jewish future filled with joy, hope, and resilience:

Federation's 2025 campaign goal is \$1.3 million. Through your gift to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

- **YOU combat antisemitism through advocacy and response**, victim support, awareness campaigns, and anti-bias education for local students and faculty to help them address and respond to antisemitic events and bias in their schools.
- **YOU empower Jewish identity for young people** through PJ Library books, family programming, Jewish education grants, volunteer opportunities, and Jewish camp and Israel scholarships.
- **YOU bring hope and dignity to the elderly** with warm meals, holiday care packages, companionship, and the support of our community social worker.
- **YOU create a safer community** through community security grants, training, and engagement with local and regional law enforcement.
- **YOU care for the fragile and vulnerable** by providing much-needed food, medicine, medical care, and social services.
- **YOU unite community in Jewish learning and celebration** through educational, holiday, and cultural programs.
- **YOU strengthen our relationship with Israel** through our partnership with the Afula-Gilboa region.
- **And in this time of crises in Israel and Ukraine**, YOU save lives through Federation's immediate SOS response, including emergency fundraising and ongoing Israel education and advocacy.

Your support of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires ensures all this – and so much more

"This Federation has always stood at the forefront in guiding our community through every challenge – and there have been many in recent years," says Executive Director Dara Kaufman. "To ensure a secure, compassionate, and vibrant Jewish future for the Berkshires, we must all rise to the moment and show up with courage, generosity, and heart."

Every program. Every life touched. Every step forward – it all begins with you. To learn more about how you can make a difference and support the 2025 Community Campaign, please see the campaign flyer inside this issue of the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

A Time to Stretch – Super Tzedakah Week Co-Chairs Leslie and Roy Kozupsky

Leslie and Roy Kozupsky of Stockbridge have stepped up as co-chairs for the Super Tzedakah Week annual campaign kickoff in part to share a message about how Federation and this Jewish community might prepare institutionally and financially for the future, but also to share their deep concern for the challenges facing us in this time of crisis.

"This is not the time to be complacent," says Roy, emphasizing the urgency of the moment. "It's a time we all need to stretch ourselves however we can – whether financially or through volunteering. Whatever it is, do something more, because this is not an ordinary time in history."

After October 7, 2023, Roy volunteered with the IDF through Sar-El, a program that places volunteers in service roles across Israel. His experience on a remote military base left him reflecting on the impact of seemingly small contributions, like his volunteering on the base. One day, he shared his doubts with an older soldier who turned out to be a high-ranking officer. He assured Roy that volunteers and their amazing work was valuable to the country. That every action, no matter how small, is of great value. "Small efforts matter in life," Roy reflects. "They become cumulative, somewhat contagious, and have a wider impact."

Leslie worked as Federation's development director after she and Roy moved full-time to the Berkshires from New York City. She has stayed deeply involved with Federation, serving on the board and development committee and now as Super Tzedakah Week co-chair with Roy.

This is not a time to be complacent.

It's a time to stretch ourselves however we can... whatever it is, do more.

Leslie sees this as a crucial time to prepare both institutionally and financially for the future. She believes that now more than ever, we must invest in the Jewish community's growth and resilience. "After moving here full-time and working at Federation, I became immersed in all the incredible programs it offers. Starting with PJ Library for children and families to scholarships for camps and Israel trips all the way through to programs and services for older adults, this Federation is 'the Little Engine That Could.' Federation is very proactive, it responds quickly, and there aren't a lot of layers. With the leadership Federation has, it can quickly ascertain what has to be done, whether there are needs within the community or abroad – things happen quickly and methodically and solutions always make the most of the resources we have available, despite the small size and budget of the community."

For Leslie, philanthropy was inherited through her family's history and the activism of her parents in Jewish community affairs both here in America and in Israel. Leslie's parents were Henry and Beate Voremberg, of blessed memory – long-time members of our community will remember their passionate support for local Jewish youth and education, as well as their involvement with Jewish Theological Seminary, the New Israel Fund, JCC, and many other worthy Jewish initiatives here in America and in Israel.

"I think the biggest influence in my life was my parents and their history," she says. "And it was a very sad history in the sense that they were both survivors, German Jews. My father watched Kristallnacht from his family's balcony in Frankfurt and spent many years of his life speaking about the dangers of antisemitism to students. When he arrived in this country, alone as a young man leaving his parents behind, he had little money. My mom was thrown out of school when she was 13 years old, left a little German town when she was roughly 15 by herself, went to England where she worked as a maid chopping wood, and then finally came to America." She was never to see her parents again – they perished in the Shoah.

What the Vorembergs accomplished locally in the Berkshires was merely a continuation of the substantial contributions they made wherever they lived. Leslie characterizes her parents as self-effacing, and that it was only after their passing that she and her brother found out about the full impact of their philanthropic initiatives.

When the Vorembergs arrived in the Berkshires, they didn't know anyone, Leslie recalls, adding that "through getting involved with the Federation they became active in the Jewish community here."

Roy's commitment to his Jewish identity and to his awareness of the importance of Jewish philanthropy came from a chance to live and work in Israel for two years beginning in 1978. He worked at the Israel Tennis Center as a coach in one of the most successful non-profit organizations in Israel focusing on children. It was there that he learned the importance of philanthropic initiatives and how they could be carried out sometimes against large obstacles. And of course, living in Israel, "changed my life and made me think about what it meant to be a Jew."

A key part of his experience was seeing how spending money to establish a quality sports program for young people in Israel was another way of building a Jewish future – not as vital, perhaps, as building a school or hospital, but as a way of creating a richer Jewish community through non-traditional means.

Ultimately, that tennis program was Roy's entrée into working in the non-profit sector. After law school, his legal practice ultimately focused on family

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Community Celebration and 85th Annual Meeting

Celebrate a Year of Impact!
85th Annual Meeting
Monday, June 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Elayne P Bernstein Theatre
Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble Street, Lenox

All are welcome to join our annual celebration and meeting to learn more about Federation's work in the Berkshire Jewish community and beyond. Enjoy schmoozing, meeting, refreshments, and a special guest speaker.



Guest Speaker
Yuval Seri
Northeast Regional Director
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Your Federation Presents

JEHUDA REINHARZ,

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president of Brandeis University and, in January 2011, was named president of the Mandel Foundation. Professor Reinharz is the author of or co-author of 31 books, among them *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Zionist Leader* (1985) and *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Statesman* (1993). He is the recipient of seven honorary doctorates. In addition, he is an elected member of both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Council on Foreign Relations.

In May, Professor Reinharz spoke with the BJV about the themes of his upcoming talk. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity



Jehuda Reinharz

The BJV Interview: Jehuda Reinharz

You characterize Weizmann as a moderate nationalist, but a total Zionist. You also state his great achievement was sustaining British commitment to partition over many decades, starting with the Balfour Declaration and right through Independence. So, what was Weizmann's singular and enduring contribution to the Zionist idea?

Well, if I had to say it in one sentence, I would say without any qualification whatsoever that without Weizmann, there would not have been a Jewish state in 1948. Simple. And what I tried to show in this book is Weizmann's role – first of all, because he had been

neglected. If you look at the traditional Zionist literature, Weizmann often is not there, or he is mentioned as an in-between figure between Herzl and Ben Gurion. But it could not have been predicted, in the period before World War I, that Zionism would become a force. My contention is that Weizmann was the force. There was a Zionist movement, obviously, but it was a tiny movement not of any great import in the world at large. It became much larger only in the late 1920s and 1930s, when National Socialism began to harass and then kill the Jews, and people tried to find an ideology to hold on to. His is a one-man show that may be one of the few instances in history where an individual without any power, or any power behind him, is able to do what Weizmann did.

It's perhaps also a singly unusual instance of the power of personality. There was no power behind him whatsoever, no Zionist movement behind him even – [the Zionists] were totally split, always fighting with each other. So how does one individual do it? Yes, Weizmann had a halo behind him because he had come up with this important invention during World War I. That's how he got to where he got in the British higher society. But after the war, people forgot about it. So, what about the rest?

The British reneged on most of their promises to lots of other groups. It was common during the war – by Germany, by France, by Russia, by the Vatican, by the British – to make promises to lots of nationalities. You have to ask yourself, so what happened to the Armenians? What happened to the Kurds? What happened to the Arabs? They didn't have a Weizmann. He was not a person to show up and say, 'Hey, guys, let's create a state.' It took a lot of persuasion, both inside the Zionist movement and outside. People ask me, 'How is it possible that

anybody he wanted to see in Europe – any king, president, the Vatican – just accepted him?' Because he and others had created around himself this halo [that he was] of the leader of the Jewish people – which he was not.

So, is that what Isaiah Berlin was getting at when he spoke of Weizmann as being the 'first totally free Jew of the modern world'?

No, I think he meant a lot of things. Weizmann was lots of different things. He was a Jew, he was a Zionist, he was British. He was all of these things. And at the same time, this is a man who never bothered to hide who he was. He spoke with a very heavy Eastern European accent. He told jokes about Jews to the British. They had never met a Jew like this. The Jews around them in England were trying to be proper Englishmen. Weizmann couldn't care less. He spoke clearly and openly and didn't try to hide who he was. Again, if somebody were to ask me, how did he do it? All I can tell you is *what* he did. He had friends in all the parties in England, and that was part of the power.

Is his relative absence in the Zionist narrative a case of history being written by the winners – in Weizmann's case not so much historically, but rather politically? The way you put it in the book that Weizmann was a Zionist leader, but not a Yishuv leader.

Look, Weizmann was a one-person show. He had some friends, some supporters, some people who adhered to his philosophy – and by the way, if they didn't, he kicked them out. Now, he could do that because he became a very rich man after World War I. He never asked for a salary from anybody. He lived like an English baron.

He treated David Ben Gurion, who was in England in the period between the wars, poorly. He did not think that Ben Gurion was sufficiently sophisticated to deal with the British – and I'm putting that nicely. Once in a while, Weizmann gave him a crumb [to participate in] some important meeting, but then Ben Gurion would not say a word. And Ben Gurion felt dissed. He felt that Weizmann was treating him poorly, which he did. Ben Gurion and Weizmann had only one thing in common – they both admired Weizmann.

However, Weizmann, as I mentioned before, did not have a party and he was not a member of the government, of the Knesset. Eventually, Ben Gurion paid him back. Later on, when Weizmann was already president of Israel, he wanted to add his signature to the declaration of independence of Israel. Ben Gurion wouldn't let him. Ben Gurion paid him back and treated him poorly and the fact that Weizmann didn't have a party meant that he had no real recourse. Ben Gurion thought that the presidency was really a non-job and didn't really consult with him. And Weizmann died an embittered and poorly-treated person in his house in Rehoboth.

As for the two-state idea, you stress in the book that Weizmann was adamant that Israel had to be a national home for the Jews, and that wouldn't happen if the homeland of the Jews was part of a canton system that included the Arab population and that was overseen by the British or other foreign powers. So Weizmann became a firm supporter of the binational approach – one for the Jews, one for the Palestinian Arabs. A second fundamental principle you identify is that it was important for Weizmann to show that Jews didn't want to dominate, but

JEHUDA REINHARZ,
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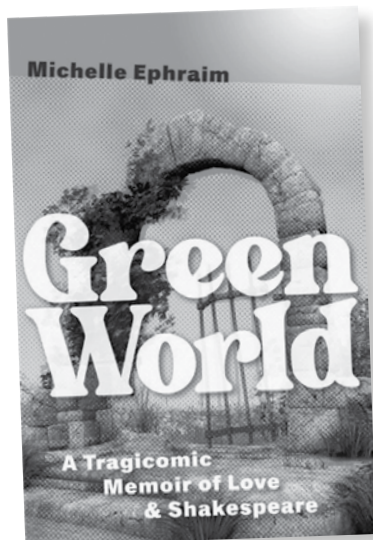

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Your Federation Presents

Green World: A Tragicomic Memoir of Love & Shakespeare, with Michelle Ephraim

Knosh & Knowledge returns for a 2025 summer season



GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, June 6 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge welcomes author Michelle Ephraim, whose *Green World: A Tragicomic Memoir of Love and Shakespeare* received the 2023 Juniper Prize for Creative Nonfiction from the University of Massachusetts Press, a national book award.

This free Federation program will take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshires, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Register on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.

At twenty-three, Michelle Ephraim was failing at everything. The only child of reclusive Holocaust-survivor parents who were dismayed by her literary studies, she found herself dumped by her boyfriend and bombing out of graduate school. Then, one night, she crashed

a Shakespeare recitation party. Loopy from vodka and never having read a single line of Shakespeare, she was transfixed. Shakespeare, she decided, was the life-line she needed.

Green World: A Tragicomic Memoir of Love & Shakespeare is the hilarious and heartbreaking story of Ephraim's quest to become a Shakespeare scholar and to find community and home. As she studies Shakespeare, Ephraim's world uncannily begins to mirror the story of the Jewish daughter in *The Merchant of Venice*, and she finds herself in a Green World, an idyllic place where Shakespeare's heroines escape their family trauma. *Green World* reckons with global, historical, and personal tragedy and shows how literature – comic and tragic – can help us brave every kind of anguish.

Michelle Ephraim is a Professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. She's the author of *Reading the Jewish Woman* on the Elizabethan Stage and co-author of *Shakespeare, Not Stirred: Cocktails for Your Everyday Dramas*.

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

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Current Events Seminar, with Dr. Steven Rubin

In person and followed by kosher community lunch

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 12 at 10:45 a.m., Federation presents the first of Dr. Steven Rubin's summer-long current events seminars focusing on the latest world happenings. Participants will have an opportunity to examine and discuss topical and newsworthy national and international issues and problems, as well as possible solutions.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation's Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome! Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day BEFORE the program. A suggested donation of \$3 for adults over 60 years of age is welcomed. \$7 for all others.

For each session, Dr. Steve Rubin will suggest readings, introduce relevant topics, and offer discussion questions. The seminar will be conducted throughout in a collaborative and collegial manner, with all participants encouraged to voice their opinions. Additional seminars will be presented on the Thursdays of July 10 and August 7.



Steve Rubin, Ph.D. (moderator) is professor emeritus and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. His op-eds and opinion essays have appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Berkshire Eagle*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *The South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, *Palm Beach Post*, and *The Hartford Courant*, among others. He also contributes a book column to the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, "Dr. Steve Recommends..." (see page 12).

He is the editor of several anthologies, including *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays* (Brandeis University Press), *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poets* (Beacon Press), and *Writing Our Lives: Autobiographies of American Jews* (Jewish Publication Society). He lives in Tyringham and can be reached at sjr@adelphi.edu.

Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community.

Check out our website!

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For calendar listings and events

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JEHUDA REINHARZ,

continued from page 4

rather only wanted to rule their own country. Historically, how did that affect the development of the two-state solution?

I would say that Weizmann did more for the Palestinians than they ever did for themselves, beginning with his meetings with [Hashemite tribal leaders in 1918 that resulted in the Faisal-Weizmann agreement that outlined cooperation between the region's Jews and Arabs] in January of 1919. Weizmann, from 1918 on, met with Arab leaders in Palestine, in Syria, in Egypt. He even met with some of the leaders in what became Iraq, trying to persuade them that there was room enough for both countries. He was even ready for a federation system.

He pleaded with all of these people, including after the Arab riots of 1929 and 1936. When the Peel Commission came to Palestine in 1936-1937, he said he was willing to have a country the size of a handkerchief. He wanted to save European Jewry. Even that was not given to him because by 1938, the British had changed their tune and walked away from Zionism, because they were worrying more about what the Arabs would do. Later, there were compromises he was able to make even before the United Nations Special Commission of Palestine, which finally decided what the borders would be. Look on a map at how tiny that piece of land was. Eventually, because five Arab nations attacked Israel at the time of independence, Israel was able to conquer [more territory] that was not the piece of land that they were given. The Arabs were absolutely unwilling to talk about a division of the land of both living here.

You have to go back to Ottoman history because this idea that the Arabs owned the land is nonsense. I mean, the Ottoman Empire ruled Palestine for 400 years, from 1517 to 1917. There was no such thing as an Arab nation. The Arabs who lived in Palestine were for the most part fellahin [agricultural workers] who tilled land that was not owned by them. It was an absentee ownership of people who lived in Lebanon, Syria, etc. When Zionists came to Palestine, they either bought land or they were given land by the Ottomans or later on the British. This was not Arab land. It didn't belong to anybody except the controlling power. Weizmann said, 'Look, we could live together. We do not want to rule, but we don't want to be ruled.' That was one maxim. The other maxim, which he kept on repeating throughout the '20s and '30s and '40s, was that Zionism will be redeemed in justice. We have to deal with everybody with justice.

Weizmann was the initiator of a two-state solution. And that is something that is totally unknown today. On the other hand, already in 1920, Weizmann supported the Haganah, which was the first Jewish defense force in Palestine. In fact, he contributed from his own money to the Haganah because he realized that Jews were going to be attacked.

The way the partition was originally envisioned was that the Jews would have the plains – the flesh of the country, as you call it – and the Arabs would have the hill country – the spine. Was the productivity of the land assigned to the two sides a cause of later dissent, or was it that the Arabs were obstinate in not wanting any partition?

The Arabs did not want any compromise. When you talk about the productivity of the land, if you look at the area that was assigned to the Jews, it's tiny – from Tel Aviv to Acre. And even within that, there was a section that the British kept for themselves because they saw Palestine as a staging ground for potential war and for a way to control the region. I mean, none of this [happened] because of good wishes for the Zionists. Yes, eventually that land became productive, but that's because the Zionists were willing to work it. The quality of the land was nonexistent, either in the east or the west.

One of Weizmann's shortcomings you point to is that his thinking was very much shaped by the British elites, who didn't necessarily take the Arabs into consideration when making decisions. Can you explain that dynamic and its results?

The British, until the end of World War I, controlled 58 countries and ruled them all the same way. They sent somebody from England to control those particular areas, India being the largest. It was the largest empire in the world, six times the size of the Roman Empire. They tried to indoctrinate these places in British culture, created schools, created infrastructure, etc., and saw this as an advantage to the British Empire in case of war. Weizmann had to live with the British. He did not control the British – the British controlled Palestine with a sizable army and police force.



Emir Faisal I and Chaim Weizmann (left, wearing Arab headdress as a sign of friendship) in 1918 in Transjordan

And I would also say that without the British, the Zionists would not have been ready to have a state. In other words, the British created the court system, the schools, the infrastructure, the roads, and on and on and on. And Weizmann, as I say in the book, often, was *British*, as well as a Jew and a Zionist. All of those three elements were in this one person.

What I'm getting at was whether that blind spot towards the psychology of the Arab nations was something that Israel took on. Did Israel feel that it could become a state and also maintain that British lack of connection to their Arab neighbors?

First of all, the Jews who immigrated to Palestine did not come from England. They came from the East. They came from Russia. They came from Poland. They didn't come with any British tradition whatsoever. They did not come originally with any enmity toward the Arabs. In fact, even going back to Herzl, the idea was that Jews and Arabs could live in peace. Weizmann was willing to give up part of the land. When the Balfour Declaration was made, the original idea was that [a Jewish state] would include what is today Israel, as well as land on the other side of the Jordan River.

[But the Jewish settlers in the Yishuv] did not do what the British did. How did the British control the Arabs? Bribes. They gave bribes to the sheiks. That was the way the British dealt with these kinds of populations in India, in Palestine, in Egypt, etc. You bribe the people who were in control of a particular tribe, just like Sharif Hussein, who made all kinds of promises and got tons of money from the British. Eventually, he did not deliver, but that's another matter...Weizmann and the Zionists, generally, did not engage in bribery. That was out of the question. By the way, it's also because they didn't have any money, but that's another matter.

Beginning in 1918, when Weizmann first came with the Zionist Commission to Palestine, he met with the Mufti of Jerusalem, and with all the major figures in Palestine. Now, it is true that originally this was set up by the British, who also wanted to figure out how Jews and Arabs could live in peace. Remember, the custom of the time was to bribe people. The [important] Palestinian families lived very well in Palestine, even at that time. They couldn't care less about the fellahin, the people who worked the land, they cared about power. That's how everybody lived in those areas under Turkish rule for 400 years. It was not something that, overnight, was going to change. The Zionists were never involved in bribery. What they were involved in is an attempt to buy land from those who were willing to sell. The problem with that was that the fellahin were not in control of anything. They eked out their living from very little. They had no help from the grandees who lived God-knows-where and owned the land and required that most of the money be given to them. That also caused problems because the land, very often, did not belong to the people who tilled it. Or sometimes it was fallow land that [Jewish settlers] bought from the British or got from the British. It's a very complicated history.

For the Love of Animals

Live theater from The Braid presented on Zoom



On Thursday, June 12 at 7 p.m., The Braid returns with a live virtual presentation of stories about friends in the animal world!

Enjoy funny and thrilling Jewish tales about brief encounters or long relationships with animals, domestic or wild, and how

they change us. Brought to life by professional actors, this curated collection of stories 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. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email two days before the program containing information about joining the meeting.



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 storytelling 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.

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SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK,

continued from page 3

legacy planning and Jewish philanthropy. "I've been involved from small to major projects and witnessed how people think about their family's personal legacy and giving away their (usually) hard earned capital," he says. "What is the value of money? What is its purpose? And what type of legacy can families envision if they plan carefully with their philanthropic bucket of capital? I have deep respect for dreaming about ideas that, with a little work, can be actualized."

Roy adds: "I believe there is a great opportunity now, nothing more important, then for us all to contribute to making this a stronger Jewish community with even more resources."

Both Roy and Leslie feel that the future will not simply be to get Jewish people to come to the Berkshires, but to get Jewish people to think about coming to the Berkshires to become more active in Jewish life. Leslie stresses the importance of supporting the existing Jewish infrastructure as much as possible not only by participating in familiar Federation programs like Knosh & Knowledge, but also stretching oneself by perhaps attending an event like Newish & Jewish, which brings together full-time and seasonal residents who have just arrived in the Berkshires.

Roy noted: "This Federation punches above its weight. It does so much with what it has and provides so much of what Jews in the Berkshires need and want from a Jewish community. But I remain convinced we can do even more and have an even wider impact. But that requires that Federation receive even greater support, whether you live here full-time or only part of the year."

Summing up, Roy adds: "Like all exceptional organizations, Federation has a long history of outstanding board members and leadership. If we empower these leaders to do greater things, then there is little doubt in my mind that these dreams will come to fruition."

Shabbat Across the Berkshires 2025



*Shabbat Across the Berkshires at
Knesset Israel*

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, June 20, at 6 p.m., join with friends from across the Berkshire Jewish community as we come together for a musical, family-friendly Shabbat service led by rabbis from across Berkshire County.

Hosting this year will be Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. All are welcome!

This service will also be available via livestream.

This event is co-sponsored by

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, the Berkshire Minyan, Williams College Jewish Association, and Berkshire Hills Hadassah.

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Your Federation Presents

All About the Seder Plate – A Pre-Passover-PJ Family-Palooza

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of PJ Library

A great group of kiddos and their grownups gathered together in Lenox on April 5 to learn all about Passover and the Seder plate. We discussed what was different about the special Passover Seder meal and talked about some of the special things we eat and why we eat them. We made faces guessing how the bitter maror or sweet charoset might taste. We read stories and then everyone got to decorate their own beautiful wooden Seder plate. A wonderful time was had by all!



Israel's Consul General to New England Visits the Berkshires

On March 25, rabbis and presidents of local Berkshire congregations broke bread with the current Consul General of the State of Israel to New England Benjamin (Benny) Sharoni, who has been heading Israel's mission in Boston since August 2024. CG Sharoni, a career diplomat with over 20 years of experience working for the Government of Israel, has spent much of his career focusing on strategic issues and Middle East diplomacy. Thanks to Knesset Israel for hosting this event.



Federation's president Arlene D. Schiff (left) with CG Benny Sharoni and his wife, Dalit Parsser, director of Strategy and Partnerships for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel in Boston

CG Sharoni met with Berkshire Jewish leaders in late March at Knesset Israel





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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](https://jewishberkshires.org/hate-has-no-home-here)



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Your Federation Presents

“Uncovering Jewish Pasts, Reimagining Jewish Futures: Generation(s) Unexpected in Contemporary Poland,” with Katka Reszke



PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 5 at 10:45 a.m., Federation resumes in-person programming at Connecting With Community, welcoming author, filmmaker, and historian Katka Reszke for a talk about Jewish life, culture, and memory in contemporary Poland.

This free in-person program will take place at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. Kosher lunch will follow (see details below).

In the wake of communism's collapse, an “unexpected” generation of Jews emerged in Poland – descendants of those who had lived through silence, secrecy, and erasure. Once home to the largest Jewish community in the world and later the site of its greatest tragedy, Poland began experiencing what has been called a “Jewish

renaissance.” Yet beneath the surface of this revival lie deeply personal and often fraught journeys of rediscovery.

Drawing from personal experience and research, Katka Reszke explores the complexities of memory and identity in uncovering Jewish roots in post-communist Poland. “There is nothing straightforward about navigating the tensions between history, belonging, and self-definition in the aftermath of rupture and silence,” she writes. “But Jewishness is being reclaimed, redefined, and reimagined in Poland, offering intriguing and exciting contributions to contemporary identity debate.”

Reszke will also be talking about her upcoming memoir, *The Meshugene Effect: A Memoir of Loss, Remembering, and Hunches*, is an irreverent exploration of grief, Jewish identity, and the uncanny hunches that lead people to rediscover their heritage.

Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome! Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 on Wednesday (*the day before the program*) before 9 a.m. Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60. \$7 for all others.

Katka Reszke is a Polish-born, U.S.-based author, documentary filmmaker, photographer, and researcher in Jewish history, culture, and identity. She is the author of *Return Of The Jew: Identity Narratives of the Third Post-Holocaust Generation of Jews in Poland (2013)* and the chief screenwriter of the acclaimed partially animated documentary film *Karski & The Lords of Humanity (2015)*.

A Few Questions for Katka Reszke

You write that: “Jewish culture in contemporary Poland is not a returning phenomenon. It is a new construct, which very much relies on its past renderings and aspires to be rooted, to be a continuation. [But] what we are witnessing in post-transition Poland is no Jewish cultural comeback but rather an ongoing struggle to construct an utterly new contemporary Polish Jewish culture.” Explain what you mean.

For probably more than 35 years, people have been talking about how there is a “new trend” to now be Jewish in Poland. I don’t think that it makes much sense to be calling something a trend if it has been happening for 35 years. I don’t think it’s a renaissance of Jewish culture. I don’t think it’s possible to revive what there once was in Poland following the destruction of Polish Jewry. What happened following the fall of the Communist regime and the democratic changes that came with it is that many non-Jewish Poles became interested in “reviving” Jewish culture, became interested in looking at what was silenced for decades in Poland. And suddenly people were realizing, ‘Wait, what happened to Jewish culture? Are there no more Jews?’ These people started discovering that there actually is a Jewish culture still in Poland, and looked to see if there’s something they could do. This is how the Jewish Cultural Festival in Krakow came about – it was an initiative of a bunch of non-Jewish people. Decades later, it is now something that is being co-created by non-Jews with Jews.

You were raised as a Catholic. What was your experience like connecting to a Jewish identity?

I thought for some years that my story was very unique. It turned out that it really wasn’t, which was a big revelation and really a redemptive revelation. When I was little, my great-grandmother used to call me “meshuggana.” I knew it meant a crazy person. I also understood that it was her term of endearment, and I was pleased that I held this exclusive title in our family. Of course, I had no idea at the time that it was Yiddish or that Yiddish was a language spoken by Jews. To us, it was this quirky nickname that was simply part of the family vernacular that we never questioned.

As a teenager, I developed this irrational conviction, a hunch, really, that I was Jewish. My family thought it was completely absurd. I started asking everybody in the family if there was something there; however, my investigation was closed within a matter of weeks. But for the next two decades, I pursued a Jewish life based solely on that instinct. In the meantime, I got these crumbs of information that hinted at something, stories that were interpreted one way or another, but that suggested that maybe I was onto something. It wasn’t until

the secret came out in a completely shocking, desperate confession that had been made by my great-grandmother some 20 years earlier, one that I had no idea about, that the secret was finally revealed to me. And it turned out that my hunch had been a good one all along.

You coined a phrase ‘Generation Unexpected’ to describe Poles with some Jewish ancestry who are trying to connect with their roots, as well as non-Jews who are interested in Poland’s Jewish past. How did you come upon that characterization?

In the mid-1990s, people like me started appearing in Polish Jewish community centers and synagogues, and caused quite a bit of bewilderment, especially among the older generation, so many of them Holocaust survivors or born right after the war. They couldn’t understand why we would insist on wanting to connect to our Jewish roots. What for? All we had was maybe a Jewish grandparent or a single Jewish parent, and we could absolutely pass for both Polish or Jewish. Most of those grandparents or parents didn’t ask us to be Jewish. The reason I referred to us as Generation Unexpected is because we were doing this against everyone’s wildest expectations. Nobody in Poland or outside of Poland expected that there would still be Jews after the Holocaust and after the subsequent waves of emigration from Poland.

Suddenly, there we were insisting to be Jewish, and we were the first generation that wanted to be Jewish. Nowhere between 1945 and the 1990s was there a good time to deliberately come out as a Jew. Then suddenly, we were coming out of the woodwork, and Jewishness for us was something positive for the most part. We wanted it.

Conversion to Judaism is a big issue for Generation Unexpected that you identify. You quote a scholar who posits that while “a born Jew may choose to identify through peoplehood or culture, the proselyte may only enter through the door of religion.” How do you think about conversion in the context of your own scholarship and personal experiences?

I was back then, and still am, an advocate for there being a secular conversion to Judaism. And that’s based on my personal experience – I essentially felt that I didn’t need to convert. I didn’t know at a time that I did. However, I met so many people on my journey who struggled with the idea of conversion and religion, because if you’re not a religious person, or agnostic, why should religion be the only entryway into a peoplehood that you feel strongly connected to? You may have reasons to believe that you are connected to it that you may not be able to prove on paper, which is something that is very common in a place like Poland, specifically, where we may have three generations preceding us who have done their absolute best to destroy all proof of us ever being Jewish. That’s just my two cents about conversion, and of course, it’s a radical idea. I find it curious, especially in a place like America, where Jews continue to have the numbers issue, that if you have people who are dying to join, why are we making it so difficult to join?

Jewish Women’s Foundation of the Berkshires Request for Proposals to Address the Needs of Berkshire Residents



The Jewish Women’s Foundation of the Berkshires (JWF) is soliciting grant proposals from nonprofit organizations for specific projects or programs that further its mission of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). JWF is dedicated to addressing critical needs in the Berkshire community and supporting social action to create a more just and equitable society. JWF fulfills its mission by providing local organizations with funds to help them:

- Address clients’ basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter;
- Promote client self-sufficiency through the provision of such services as literacy training and legal aid; and,
- Empower youth and young adults.

Jewish as well as non-Jewish organizations are invited to apply for grants up to \$5,000. Only organizations with registered 501(C)3 status may apply. The application will be available online at Grant Application beginning May 1, 2025. The deadline for submission is May 31, 2025. Final decisions will be announced in September.

In 2024, the Foundation awarded \$100,055 for 24 local organizations. Further information about JWF can be found at JWFB.org.

For information about the grants program please contact the Grants Committee at: jwfberkshires@gmail.com.

JWF is an organization that is welcoming to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, identity, age, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities, and nationality.



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Your Federation Presents

Opening Doors: The Unlikely Alliance Between the Irish and the Jews in America, with Hasia Diner



Hasia Diner

On Thursday, May 15 at 7 p.m., Federation welcomes Hasia R. Diner, a preeminent scholar of American Jewish history and immigration, whose book *Opening Doors: The Unlikely Alliance Between the Irish and the Jews in America* sheds light on the mutually beneficial, although sometimes fraught, relationship between two immigrant groups with an outsized impact on the United States.

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

In *Opening Doors*, Hasia Diner details how Jewish and Irish immigrants worked together to secure legitimacy in America at the turn of the 20th century. The book draws from historical sources to dispel the popular belief that these groups regarded one another with open hostility, fiercely competing for limited resources and even coming to blows in the crowded neighborhoods of major cities. Diner shows the prevailing relationships between Jewish and Irish Americans were overwhelmingly cooperative, and the two groups were dependent upon one another to secure stable and upwardly mobile lives in their new home.

Hasia Diner is a professor of American Jewish History and former chair of the Irish Studies program at New York University. She is the author of numerous books on Jewish and Irish histories in the U.S., including the National Jewish Book Award-winning *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, which also earned the Saul Veiner Prize for most outstanding book in American Jewish history.

The BJV Interview: Hasia R. Diner

When Professor Diner spoke to the Berkshire Jewish Voice in April, she shared some background about the relationship between Irish and Jewish immigrants to set up some of the themes of her May 15 program. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

The book starts by detailing how the Irish started to immigrate to the United States in the 1840s, and Jews from Eastern Europe started coming in earnest in the 1880s. Please describe a bit of the dynamic that occurred when the two groups started to interact.

When the large-scale Jewish migration begins to crest on the shores of the United States, most Jews went to large cities. In every one of those large cities, they saw on the ground another group [the Irish] that had built very dense, active communities that were politically and culturally engaged – a group that offered a model of how to be an immigrant group in an American society. That was interesting in and of itself, but more central to the book is that those Irish immigrants and their children had come to occupy some key institutions in American life. They came to not only occupy them, but to dominate them. These were specifically the kinds of places that were important for the new Jewish arrivals, all of whom were permanent immigrants to the United States. These are key institutions that they needed in order to foster – I'm not going to call it assimilation because I don't even know what that word means – but integration and economic mobility.

After the English migrations of earlier centuries, do the Irish represent the first ethnic group to make a large-scale immigration to America? Did they create the roadmap of how an immigrant population can thrive in the United States?

Germans come at the same time as the Irish and are actually the single largest ethnic group or immigrant group to come to United States. But Germans were totally divided. They were Catholic, they were Lutheran, they were evangelical, they were socialist, atheist. And so, while they founded very large and thriving communities in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and so on, they did not have the same coherence as the Irish communities. And yes, the Irish come to create the roadmap that all other immigrants were going to follow in one way or another, or as best as they could, because obviously, others come under different circumstances and have other issues. But the Irish set the standard of what it meant to be a white European ethnic group in the United States.

Was the potato famine the primary driver of migration from Ireland or was there a pipeline from Ireland to the US?

The famine was obviously very important, but not the explanatory factor. The Irish migration continues for decades after the famine [because of] the continued poverty [in Ireland] and the lack of opportunities for young people – particularly, although not exclusively, young women. Ireland was a place that experienced no industrial development in the latter part of the 19th century. It was a place [that experienced] a massive population loss. It was a pretty inauspicious place for a young person who wanted to 'make it' – they couldn't stay home. They had to leave. They don't go just to the United States, although that was the most attractive destination. Vast numbers go to other parts of the British Isles, to England, Scotland. They have a huge flow to Australia. But it was the United States that became the center of Irish global politics and, let's call it, diaspora life.

You point out both the Irish and the Jews who came here – and most immigrants at the time – had no real thought of going back.

The Italians go back – a huge number, more than a third of all Italian immigrants who came to the United States go back. [But the Irish and Jews] basically never do. So, they are the two most permanent groups to settle in the United States.

Many of the Irish people who came over were laborers or domestic servants, but they also found their way to very influential positions of political power in the urban areas. How were those opportunities recognized? Was it simply that there were enough Irish immigrants becoming citizens who could vote them in, or was there another strategy to installing themselves in these positions?

They had numbers on their side. Places like New York and Boston were majority Irish, and they took advantage of the fact that they were staying – they became naturalized, they became citizens, and their numbers worked for them. They came knowing English, unlike essentially any other immigrant group, so that

their ability to learn what it took was pretty breathtaking. They also arrived in a context where they were despised, and they used the fact of their being despised as a rallying cry for both communal solidarity and asserting themselves politically.

And a lot of these Irish were also, I imagine, from rural areas, so that their success in the urban environment is that much more impressive.

Definitely impressive, given that these were not people who had lived in cities before. Again, it's just a really interesting matter of timing. They came as American cities began to expand geographically, annexing new areas on the periphery as cities were beginning to lay electric lines and gas lines and paved roads and create urban transportation systems. In the cities and beyond, other industrial sectors were really important and all those things need people to do the work. And the Irish were there to provide the manpower to make American cities.

A question about what proved to be a barrier to both Irish upward mobility is the white Anglo-Saxon protestants who may have considered themselves as the founders and the keepers of the true flame of America. I thought it was very interesting how you write about how after the Irish gained political influence in the cities, they were still scorned by the WASPs, but all of a sudden they had a lot of power over them, as well as on how business was done, how life was lived. Can you tell me a little bit about that relationship?

I generally don't use the word 'WASPs,' but the white Protestants hated the Irish and despised Catholicism. They thought Catholicism was completely incompatible with American values. The [reaction to the] Irish caused the creation of a powerful xenophobic third political party, the Know Nothings, a party bent on diminishing Irish political power. This white native-born Protestant group – some of them very elite, some not – saw the Irish as degraded: they were drunken, they were stupid, they were happy-go-lucky and non-industrious. Everything about them was wrong. So, where they could, [white Protestants] kept them out. I think it's ironic that as the Irish arrived in many of these cities, many of the white Protestants left. They didn't want to live in the same city with [the newcomers] and they began to suburbanize, which only encouraged and stimulated even greater Irish migration.

There was an earlier wave of Jewish immigration, mostly from Germany. It was more established in the cities, and they did try to help their fellow Jews as they came here. But as you put it, the Irish "made up the difference" between what the Eastern European Jews needed and what the German Jews were not able to provide. What do you mean by that?

Those Jews who were in the United States a generation, who are already Americans, were very generous and very active in trying to create helping institutions for the new immigrants. They created a whole range of programs, projects, and so on, to help. But what they could do was so little compared to what the Jewish immigrants needed. What they gave was not at all focused on empowering the new Jewish immigrants. They just didn't see that as the route to take and did nothing, essentially, to address the inequities of the class system. In large part, that was because many of those [established] Jews were actually the employers of the new Jewish immigrants. They certainly didn't want to improve the inequities of the class system because it was to their advantage to employ the new immigrants at the lowest wages in the most abject conditions.

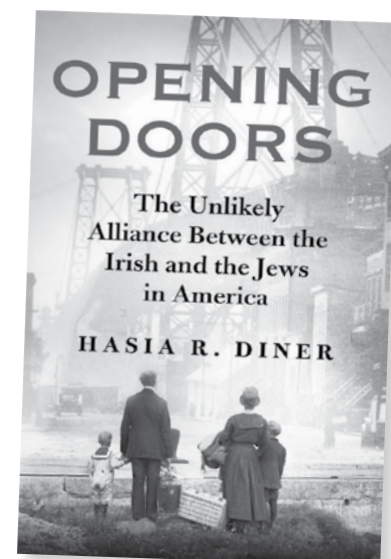
How did these Jews and the Irish encounter each other in the cities?

Well, the first encounters are on the street corners and in apartment buildings and in the ordinary ways in which people meet each other and interact and come in contact with strangers. A lot of literature and memoirs make a great deal about how Irish bully boys beat up Jews. Certainly, that happened, but for the most part, they got along in the spaces where they interacted. It was a shared understanding of what it meant to be poor. And one group was Catholic, one group was Jewish – they had no interest in changing each other's religion, but they managed to muddle along in an unselfconscious way as neighbors might. They didn't become best friends, although there were actually quite a few marriages between Irish and Jews. But it was mostly, 'they're here, we're here, we have some common needs.'

Education was even more formative – by the time the Jews come, Irish women, the daughters of Irish immigrants, were the majority of the school teaching force in every big city. So, they're the ones who teach Jewish immigrant kids.

Was there any resentment between the two ethnic groups as one might be perceived to be doing better than the other or the other having more power than the other?

Well, certainly individuals articulate that. But the Jews and the Irish enter into this alliance, but not with the goal of becoming best friends. They perceived all sorts of differences, but they needed each other. Yes, there's all sorts of resentment in one way or another, but the level of that resentment was no barrier to the Jews asking for favors and the Irish granting them.



COMMUNITY DAY,

continued from cover

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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,

It's Spring! Although probably not beach weather just yet, so we're still suggesting indoor reading, at least for the time being. This month I am recommending *When We Flew Away*, a fictional account of the early life of Anne Frank by the well-known author, Alice Hoffman. And as long as we are on the subject, I am also recommending that we read (or re-read) the original: *The Diary of a Young Girl*, by Anne Frank, published in English in 1952 and translated into more than 70 languages.



Designated as a "young adult" novel, the recently published *When We Flew Away* (2025), is nevertheless a worthwhile and interesting read for all ages. Hoffman imagines Anne and her sister Margo as they go about their daily life in Amsterdam, confide in each other, and share their growing anxieties about the pending war and Nazi occupation. Anne is "nearly eleven" and Margo fourteen. Margo is pretty, a good student, and "diligent." Anne is imaginative, impulsive, and somewhat of a free spirit – in short, a budding writer. Hoffman aims to normalize the life of Anne, to de-mythicize the young girl whose name has become synonymous with the Holocaust. By allowing us to imagine Anne and Margo as normal young girls, with all the hopes, dreams, and worries typical of their age, Hoffman makes their tragic end all

the more human – and all the more devastating.

Although *The Diary of a Young Girl*, originally published in 1947 in Dutch as *Het Achterhuis* ("The Annex" or literally "the back house") never mentions the death camps, it is perhaps the most recognized book dealing with the Shoah, one that tugs at the heart, not so much due to its content, but because of our knowledge of what comes after. The *Diary* is required reading in many middle schools (I know it was in mine). But I venture to say few of us have returned to the story in adulthood: not the play or any of the several films derived from the original diary (all

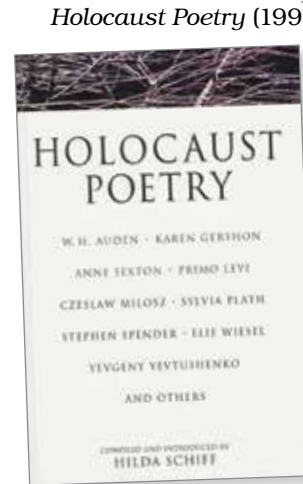


Anne Frank

of which romanticize and/or mute the tragedy of Anne's situation), but the diary itself. Please do – it will be worth your time and will, once again, remind you that one must never forget the murder of the six million at the hands of the Nazis.

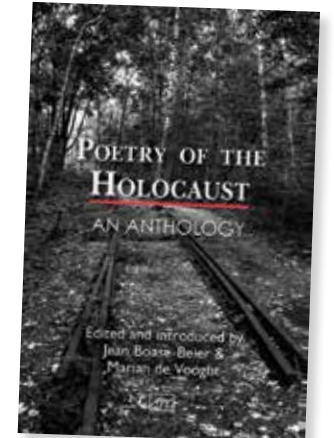
Jewish Poetry

April was National Poetry Month as established by the Academy of American Poets. Accordingly, I recommend three noteworthy anthologies of Jewish Poetry: two of Holocaust-related poems, and my own collection of Jewish American poetry.



Holocaust Poetry (1996), edited with an introduction by poet and translator Hilda Schiff, contains more than a hundred poems by a wide range of poets – Jews, several of whom were survivors of the camps (Eli Wiesel, Primo Levi, Paul Celan); non-Jews (Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Anne Sexton); as well as several by those who perished in the camps whose work, preserved after their deaths, gives testimony not only to the horror they endured, but to their will to survive as well.

Poetry of the Holocaust: An Anthology (2019), Jean Boase-Beir and Marian de Vooght, eds. is a more recent, multi-lingual collection of poems from throughout Europe published here in both their original language and English translations. Like the Schiff



volume, *Poetry of the Holocaust* contains work by those European Jews most affected by the events of the Shoah. But it also includes poetry from members of other communities targeted by the Third Reich: the Roma, homosexuals, and those deemed disabled. It's a unique and moving collection.

Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poetry (1998), edited by Steven J. Rubin, is a comprehensive collection of poems by more than fifty poets of the past century. Beginning with the immigrant generation and continuing with a number of well-known mid-century writers (Stanley Kunitz, Karl Shapiro, Alan Ginsberg, Muriel Rukeyser), and concluding with more contemporary poets (Robert Pinsky, Marcia Falk, Louise Gluck), this volume is a reminder of the rich tradition of Jewish poetry in a century that was nevertheless dominated by the work of such fiction writers as Bellow, Malamud, Roth.

DR. STEVE RECOMMENDS, continued on page 16

ENTERTAINMENT

berkshire international film festival
 may 29-june 1, 2025

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THURSDAY, MAY 29
OPENING NIGHT
A MAN WITH SOLE: THE IMPACT OF KENNETH COLE
 7:00PM Opening Night Presentation Screening of A MAN WITH SOLE: THE IMPACT OF KENNETH COLE at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center. **Designer and activist Kenneth Cole and Emmy and Tony Award-winning director Dori Berinstein in attendance for a Q&A following the film with BIFF Board Member Mary Mott.**
 (Open to Sponsors, Filmmakers, All-Inclusive and Opening Night passholders)
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SATURDAY, MAY 31
TRIBUTE EVENT TO BRIAN COX
 7:00PM SPECIAL TRIBUTE EVENT featuring an intimate conversation between multi award-winning actor Brian Cox (SUCCESSION, THE ESCAPIST, L.I.E., THE BOURNE TRILOGIES, E TRUSCAN SMILE) and his wife – actress, director, and producer Nicole Ansari-Cox, at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center.
 (Open to ALL passholders and ticket holders.)

SUNDAY, JUNE 1
CLOSING NIGHT
 7:00PM BIFF presents the closing night film and Sundance hit MARLEE MATLIN: NOT ALONE ANYMORE.
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 Closing Night Party at Number Ten following the screening.

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CULTURE & ARTS

The Birch Festival returns with "The Power of Shostakovich"



STOCKBRIDGE – The Birch Festival returns for its fourth season with "The Power of Shostakovich," on Friday, May 16 and Saturday, May 17. Artistic director and violinist Yevgeny Kutik will perform as part of a string quartet in a program titled "Echoes of Defiance: Shostakovich Quartets 8 and 9" that honors the music of one of the most important composers of the 20th century in this 50th year since his passing.

Dimitri Shostakovich's music has long been a source of inspiration for many, and his work continues to offer profound reflections on the strength and resilience of the human spirit. Shostakovich's work will be interspersed with several selections from J.S. Bach's timeless "The Art of the Fugue."

The main concert will take place on Saturday, May 17 at 3 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Stockbridge. Kutik, who performed at Federation's Yom HaShoah commemoration in April, will be joined

by violinist Francesca DePasquale, violist Margaret Dyer, and cellist Julian Schwarz. The performance will be preceded by a pre-concert talk at 2:15 p.m. with Shostakovich scholar Matthew Heck. An informal reception will follow the performance. \$20 tickets or free for any Berkshire K-12 student and their guardian. An open rehearsal at the venue will be held on Saturday at 10 a.m.

On Friday, May 16 at 6 p.m., celebrate at the Doctor Sax House in Lenox this time in their charming Carriage House, for an evening of celebration! Enjoy a short performance, small bites, drinks (including a signature Birch Festival Cocktail & Mocktail), and the opportunity to meet the artists and fellow community members in a festive setting. Admission is free, but advance reservations are requested.

For tickets and more on The Birch Festival, visit thebirchfestival.org.



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ENTERTAINMENT



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ROMEO AND JULIET
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JULY 12 – AUGUST 10
Outdoors at the Arthur S. Waldstein Amphitheatre

AUGUST WILSON'S
THE PIANO LESSON
Directed by Christopher V. Edwards

JULY 25 – AUGUST 24
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
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Directed by Nicole Ricciardi

AUGUST 14 – 24
Tina Packer Playhouse

CIRCUS & THE BARD

AUGUST 14 – 24
Tina Packer Playhouse

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by Paula Vogel
Directed by Ariel Bock

AUGUST 29 – OCTOBER 5
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

CELEBRATING JEWISH PLAYS
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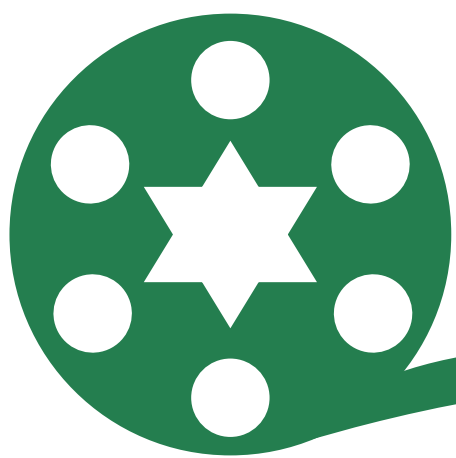
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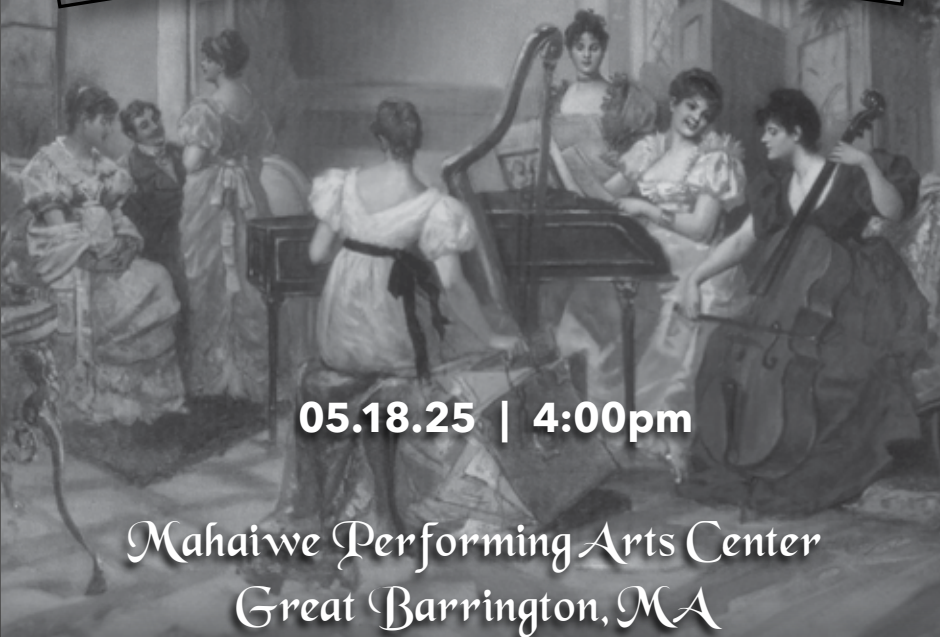


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OBITUARIES

Martin Ian Green, 86, local store owner, entrepreneur, and publisher

CONCORD, MA – Martin Ian Green, 86, a retired book producer and entrepreneur, died of natural causes on Sunday, March 9.

Born in 1938, son of the late Benjamin and Anne Green, Martin grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. His cherished memories of a childhood spent in the bustling Jewish neighborhood during wartime informed the vivid stories he would tell for a lifetime.

Martin received a B.A. in Psychology from Hofstra University and briefly attended graduate school at George Washington University in hospital administration, before deciding to wander pathways of his own unique

design. While still in NYC, he started a food distribution business, then worked for a stint on Wall Street before launching a modeling agency, through which he met his future wife, Mary Sipp, a student in fashion design at FIT at the time.

After their marriage, the couple founded Xanadu boutique in New York's Greenwich Village, then moved to upstate NY for the birth of their son, Jared. Martin and Mary next started Bumpkins clothing company but eventually left the fashion industry to open up an award-winning artisanal toy shop, Ask Your Father, in 1972 in Pittsfield. After moving to Stockbridge, Martin's next venture was his first foray into publishing, the best-selling handbook for childhood emergencies, *A Sigh of Relief* (1977), which earned

international praise and translation into numerous languages. He followed up this success with two well-regarded medical handbooks for cats and dogs in 1980 and one for families, *Lifesavers* (1981). During this time, he founded Berkshire Studio, an independent book production company that would go on to produce the acclaimed graphic novel *Voodoo Child: The Legend of Jimi Hendrix* (1995) and the children's novella, *Santa, My Life and Times* (1998), as well as the novel *Been Here and Gone: A Memoir of the Blues* (2000).

Martin retired in the early 2000s and eventually relocated to Concord to live near his son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughters, who knew him as Miggy.

He will be remembered by all who were touched by him as a true force of

nature, a wild spirit, and a born storyteller. His family will forever carry the sound of his voice within our memories and the timbre of his laughter within our hearts.

Toby Meyers, 94, teacher, positive attitude, lifelong athlete

RICHMOND – Toby Meyers, 94, died on Saturday, March 15. As she frequently said, "I have had a wonderful life."

Born March 29, 1930, to a traditional and loving Jewish family in Bronx, NY, Toby, at 20 years old, married her love, Fred, and they enjoyed life together for 67 years until Fred died at 90, with Toby by his side.

Toby broke the expected mold of being a stay-at-home mother, by going to college and receiving a master's degree in Education. She took great pride in her career as a teacher in the first pre-kindergarten program in New Rochelle, NY. Following her retirement, Toby was recruited by Teachers College of Columbia University to supervise student teachers, another position that brought her great joy.

An avid swimmer and champion tennis player, Toby was a lifelong athlete. The best times she had with Fred and her children, were spent sailing on Long Island Sound. This love of sailing was passed on to her grandchildren. Toby and Fred also enjoyed the arts in NYC and were fortunate to travel the world together. Among their best vacations was spent with their nephews David and Russ, at the beautiful home they built in San Miguel, Mexico.

At 90, Toby moved from her city life in Mt. Vernon, NY, where she had shared her home with her granddaughter and side-kick in adventure, Shayna, to live in Richmond with her daughter, Lynn. Toby appreciated the quiet beauty of country life, reading, writing poetry, making new neighborhood friends, and especially enjoying the companionship of the COA exercise program at Richmond Town Hall where she was warmly welcomed.

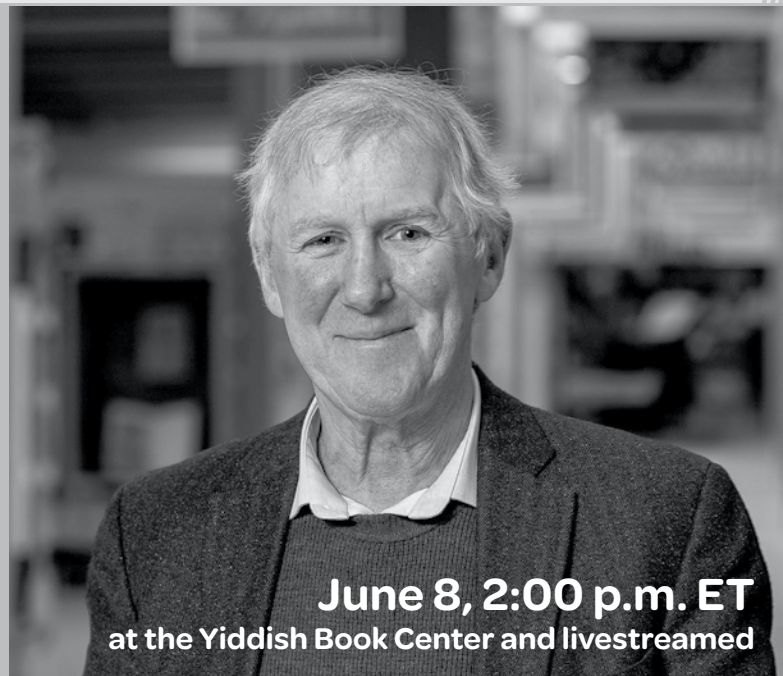
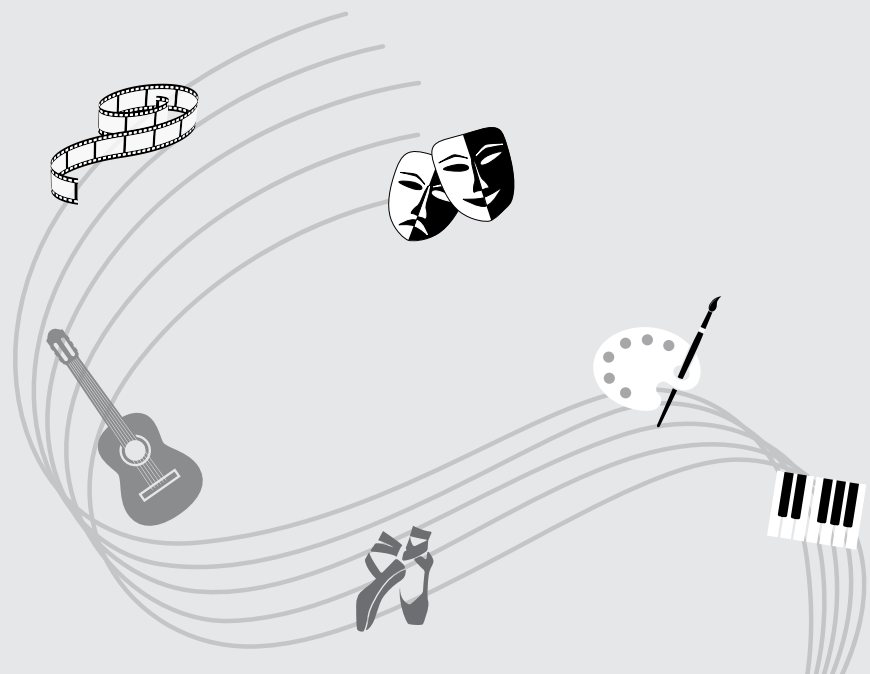
Toby was predeceased by her husband Fred and son, Ron. She leaves her cherished family including daughter Lynn, daughter-in-law Pattie, and grandchildren Shayna, Nate, and Jake.

Toby will be remembered for her positive attitude, grace, and model of how to live life well.

A memorial service was held on Friday, March 21 at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Great Barrington.

Donations may be made to the Community Chevreh Kadisha of Southern Berkshire or the Caring Committee of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire at hevreh.org/donate or mailed to Dery Funeral Home, 54 Bradford Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

ENTERTAINMENT



June 8, 2:00 p.m. ET
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The Yiddish Book Center at 45, with Aaron Lansky

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DR. STEVE RECOMMENDS,
continued from page 12

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

Steve Rubin, Ph.D. has written and lectured extensively both here and abroad on issues relating to Jewish culture and literature. He also moderates Federation's popular Current Events seminar, which resumes on Thursday, June 12 – see page 5 for details.

LOCAL NEWS

A New Spiritual Leader at Temple Anshe Amunim

Rabbi Valerie Lieber to take over the Reform congregation this summer



Rabbi Valerie Lieber

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim has announced that it has hired Rabbi Valerie Lieber as its new spiritual leader. Rabbi Lieber, who in 2015 was chosen by The Forward as one of its 'Most Inspiring Rabbis,' will take over for interim Rabbi Scott Saulson in July.

Rabbi Lieber is currently the Director of Education & Family

Programs at Kane Street Synagogue in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn where she has worked for 17 years. For six years prior, she served as the rabbi of Temple Israel of Jamaica in Queens, NY. Following her ordination from Hebrew Union College in 1995, she served as the rabbi and the religious school director of Temple Beth Ahavath Sholom of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn for seven years.

Rabbi Lieber was raised in Indianapolis, where she grew up as an active member of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. She attended Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania and graduated with honors in English Literature and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

She has written several interpretations of weekly Torah and Haftarah portions published in a number of books. Among them are an interpretation of the weekly Torah portion Emor, "Elitism in the Levitical Priesthood," in *The Women's Torah Commentary* edited by Rabbi Elyse Goldstein; a chapter on the Haftarah portion in which Elijah plays a major role in *The Women's Haftarah Commentary* also edited by Goldstein; and an essay on Parashat Toldot in *The Torah, A Women's Commentary* published by the Women of Reform Judaism.

Over the years since she has been at Kane Street Synagogue, Rabbi Lieber launched the L'Tzedek Service Learning Program with the support of the Jewish Education Project's Express Innovation year-long training. She led the synagogue in greening initiatives while participating in the yearlong Jewish Greening Fellowship. In 2016-2017 she participated in the yearlong Qushiyot Fellowship for Revitalizing Israel Education. Rabbi Lieber has been an environmentalist since high school and has recently ridden on 4 Hazon New York Bike Rides and co-chaired the steering committee for the 2012 ride. For five years, she bicycled from Sturbridge to Provincetown in the Pan Mass Challenge to raise money for Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

She and her wife, Leah Kopperman, bought a home in Pittsfield in 2020. Though she has only been here for long school breaks, she has already discovered some great rides. In spring and summer, she says you will find her cycling around in the area.

In addition to cycling, she has enjoyed planting and tending a pollinator garden in her Pittsfield yard (much more rewarding than her 2x8 plot in Brooklyn!). She enjoys doing the NY Times crossword and connections puzzles. She loves spending time with her 7 nieces and nephews and 1 great niece – and their parents her 3 siblings.

Check out the next Berkshire Jewish Voice for an interview with Rabbi Lieber.

Holiday of Shavuot Gaining Popularity in the Berkshires

Reading of the Ten Commandments, plus a delicious dairy luncheon and ice cream party at Chabad

PITTSFIELD – On Monday, June 2, celebrate the beautiful holiday of Shavuot with Chabad of the Berkshires by hearing the Ten Commandments and enjoying a festive luncheon and epic ice cream party. Services begin at 10 a.m.; the Ten Commandments will be read at noon followed by festivities.

At a unique crossroads between religion and cuisine, the Holiday of Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai some 3325 years ago and has become a celebration of fine dairy cuisine, as well.

"As the Torah was given and the laws of kosher dining were first received," writes Chabad co-director Rabbi Levi Volovik, "the Jewish People were not yet capable of properly preparing beef and poultry and as such ate dairy. The rest is history."

Exquisite cheesecakes, pastas, lasagna, and, of course, cheese blintzes all take center stage during this ancient celebration. A variety of salads and healthful food choices will be part of the Shavuot menu as well.

"When thinking of Jewish holidays, Passover, Chanukah, and Yom Kippur come to mind," writes Chabad co-director Sara Volovik. "Nevertheless, Shavuot is considered one of Judaism's major holidays and was in fact a 'pilgrimage' when all of Israel would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate in the Temple."

"No, it isn't all about the food," she adds. "What is important is that the community is joining together, hearing the Ten Commandments, and celebrating the Torah. But good food certainly helps!"

All are invited regardless of background or affiliation. Chabad of the Berkshires is at 450 South Street in Pittsfield.

For more information visit jewishberkshires.com or call (413) 499-9899.

Ramblin' with the Rav Hikes Resume in May



Ramblers with Rav Weiner (third from left) and the azaleas in Pittsfield State Forest

Ramblin' with the Rav hikes feature a morning of enjoying the Berkshires – exercise, a beautiful view, good company, a bit of Torah, and fantastic conversation on the trail. This is a wonderful opportunity to build relationships and community while enjoying the outdoors. Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader of Knesset Israel in Pittsfield, leads the hikes, which typically take place on weekday and Sunday mornings in the warmer months of the year.

Prospective participants must register in advance for each hike at knessetisrael.org/rsvp. Registrants will receive information about the demands of the route, what to wear, what to bring, where to meet,

etc., and be added to an email list for communication before the hike. Poor weather may lead to a postponement to the rain date, usually communicated the day before, and low RSVP numbers may cause a cancellation a day or two in advance. Occasionally, there may be itinerary changes because of trail conditions.

Each route is unique, with its own difficulty, distance, total elevation gain and approximate duration. Driving time is not included in the time estimate. Participants must be responsible and realistic regarding their fitness and stamina.

All hikes are potentially family-friendly; most welcome leashed dogs as well. In the summer, some excursions include an opportunity for wading or swimming, at participants' risk. Members and non-members of Knesset Israel are welcome, and there is no charge for the program.

Questions? Please contact Rabbi Weiner by email at rabiweiner@outlook.com.

Harvey Mountain and Pinnacle Point

On Sunday, May 4, the group will climb Harvey Mountain and Pinnacle Point just over the New York border in Austerlitz. This moderate 4.3 mile hike climbs about 925' in 2-2.5 hours. Harvey Mountain State Forest abuts the state line, in the hills just south of I-90. This trail begins with a quick 600' climb to the summit and its spectacular views, a walk along the ridge, and a gradual descent back to the trailhead. Leashed dogs are welcome. This is an especially enjoyable hike before the leaves come in. Participants should register in advance at knessetisrael.org/rsvp and plan to meet at KI at 10 a.m. to carpool to the trailhead.

Mt. Greylock

On Sunday, May 18, Rabbi Weiner will lead a climb of Mt. Greylock's western flank – the Hopper and Stony Ledge. This is a strenuous, 5.7 mile hike, with a total climb of about 1500' and duration of 3+ hours. Arguably the best view from Mt. Greylock isn't from the summit but from Stony Ledge. Climb up to Stony Ledge, enjoy the panoramic view of Vermont, then descend Sperry Road and the Hopper Trail back to the parking lot. This hike is only suitable for people with strong hips, knees, and hearts. Leashed dogs are welcome. Participants should register in advance at knessetisrael.org/rsvp and plan to meet at KI at 10 a.m. to carpool or at the trailhead around 10:30 a.m.

Jacob's Torah: A Dramatic Reading

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at BCC will present a staged reading on Sunday, June 8 at 2 p.m. (at KI) of the late Jesse Waldinger's play *Jacob's Torah*.

The play presents the odyssey of a mystical Torah and the people who loved and protected it and was inspired by a family story of Berkshire County resident (and KI member), Phil Halpern.

Refreshments will be served. Suggested donation: \$18 members of KI, TAA and OLLI if you register online. Children under 15 free. \$20 suggested donation at the door. Register at knessetisrael.org/RSVP.

Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.



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LOCAL NEWS

Late Spring at KI

Shavuot, Shirei Shabbat, and Hebrew for Beginners

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel invites all to celebrate and study this spring.

Standing at Sinai with Study and Cheesecake at KI/TAA's Joint Tikkun Leil Shavuot

On Sunday, June 1 at 7 p.m., Knesset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim welcome Shavuot with a *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* consisting of study, a panel discussion, and an interactive exercise, followed by a short Maariv service and cheesecake. Please pre-register at knessetisrael.org/RSVP to ensure enough study materials and cheesecake!

Community Dinner

On Friday, May 30 at 5:45 p.m., join friends or make new friends at Knesset Israel for an energizing, musical Shirei Shabbat Friday evening service, then stay for a delicious kosher Shabbat dinner at 6:45 p.m. Registration necessary for dinner. Adults \$25, under 18 free. Register at knessetisrael.org/rsvp

A New Beginners' Hebrew Class for Adults

Would you like to learn to read Hebrew? A 6-session class for motivated adults will take place on Thursdays, 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., May 22 & 29, June 5, 12, & 19, and July 3 at Knesset Israel. A follow-up class will start up in the fall. \$50 registration includes the textbook.

Please register at knessetisrael.org/rsvp. Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

End-of-Spring Shabbats at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – 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 May 30 and June 13 at 7 p.m.

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

Regular Shabbat Morning Services continue on the Saturdays of May 17 & 24 and June 7. at 9:30 a.m.

On Saturday, May 10 at 10 a.m., join CBI for a special Jewish Journeys Shabbat service!

Celebrate Shabbat in community in a morning service interwoven with opportunities for CBI's Jewish Journeys students to share what they have learned. Please consider bringing a vegetarian dish to share following the conclusion of services. All are welcome; please RSVP via the website at cbiberkshires.com/event/jj-shabbat-may-2025 if your family plans to attend. (Please note that this service will be held **onsite only**.)

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

Making Art About Torah

NORTH ADAMS – On Sunday, June 22 at 2 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites you to join Rabbi Rachel Barenblat to creatively "respond" to Torah through art!

Writes Rabbi Barenblat: "The Jewish Studio Project's four-step process of inquiry, intention, creative exploration, and reflection is based on the idea that anyone can make art as a way of engaging with Torah, and that when we do, our understanding of Torah (and also of ourselves) can deepen. We will gather, read part of a Torah portion together in English (and those who want can also delve into the Hebrew), and then go through the Jewish Studio Project's four step process for making collage art in relationship with the Torah portion."

Tea and light refreshments will be provided. Participants do not need to self-identify as an artist (or a Torah scholar) to take part – all are welcome! "

This is a low-pressure, high-reward experience," Rabbi Barenblat adds, "an opportunity to engage

with Torah, awaken our innate creativity, and spend time connecting with members of our community."

To attend this or any of our upcoming sessions, please RSVP via the website at cbiberkshires.com/series/maat.

Also at CBI – The CBI Book Club

On Thursday, May 8 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom, join CBI for its next book club meet-in, facilitated by Dr. Suzanne Levy Graver, Professor Emerita at Williams College. Participants will discuss *The Color of Water*, an autobiography and memoir by James McBride (author of *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*) and a tribute to his mother, the daughter of an Orthodox Jew who married a black man. To receive the Zoom link, please RSVP via the website at cbiberkshires.com/event/cbi-book-club-may-2025.

We Were Strangers: A Shavuot Concert at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – On Sunday, May 25 at 3 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires will celebrate Shavuot in song.

At Shavuot, we read the story of Ruth, a Biblical refugee. Join CBI for music both old and new, uplifting the needs and stories of immigrants and refugees. Works draw from sources including the Book of Ruth and the poetry of Emma Lazarus, featuring music by Ysaÿe M. Barnwell, Laura Copel, Irving Berlin, and more.

This event is free and open to the public. Donations are welcome – all proceeds will benefit the Berkshire Immigrant Center, a local nonprofit that is dedicated to supporting immigrants and refugees in the Berkshire community.

Please RSVP via the website at cbiberkshires.com/event/we-were-strangers if you plan to attend. CBI is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.



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

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

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LOCAL NEWS

Noam Katz – Artist Scholar-in-Residence Weekend at Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – From Friday, May 9 to Sunday, May 11, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire welcomes contemporary Jewish musician Rabbi Noam Katz for an Artist Scholar-in-residence weekend featuring three days of song, story, and spiritual connection.

Friday, May 9, Hevreh will hold a musical Kabbalat Shabbat service featuring Rabbi Katz, who will be joined by Rabbi Jodie Gordon, and Artist-in-residence Peri Smilow. The evening will begin at 5:15 p.m. with a pre-neg and the service will begin at 6 p.m. Rabbi Katz will give a sermon on the topic of "Spiritual Inheritance and Legacy."

On Saturday, May 10 at 10 a.m. Rabbi Gordon and Rabbi Katz will lead Shabbat morning service. Following the service will be a Kiddush Lunch n' Learn program with Rabbi Katz on "Writing the Songs of Our Jewish Lives." This will be an interactive, musical presentation.



Rabbi Noam Katz

On Sunday, May 11, Rabbi Katz will be making music with the Hevreh Religious School children and their families.

All are welcome to the Friday and Saturday Shabbat Services, but registration is required. Go to Hevreh.org/events for the registration forms.

For the past two decades, Rabbi Katz's music has provided spiritual uplift to congregations, summer camps and communities from North America to Israel, England to Africa.

He is also well known locally as songleader at URJ Eisner and Kutz summer camps in the Berkshires.



Kol B'Seder, then and now

Welcome Home – A Concert Celebration of Jewish Life in the Berkshires!

LENOX – On Sunday, June 29 at 3 p.m., Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will present "Welcome Home. A Concert Celebration of Jewish Life in the Berkshires," to commemorate its 50th anniversary as a congregation. The event will feature the musical duo of Jeff Klepper and Dan Frelander, also celebrating their 50th anniversary as Kol B'Seder, and a host of talented friends on stage at The Duffin Theater at Lenox Memorial High School, .

The congregation writes that "Welcome Home is an invitation to experience Hevreh's brand of Jewish community, identity and joy together, to look back with gratitude and forward with faith, purpose and resilience." Proceeds from the event will benefit the "Our Hevreh, Our Home" capital campaign, "the next 50 years."

As leaders and composers of new Jewish songs, informed and amplified through their individual careers as cantor and rabbi respectively, Klepper and Frelander have helped create a unique canon of American Jewish music as Kol B'Seder. Once considered too radical for the bimah, their songs today are recognized as standards in many synagogue services.

For tickets and information about sponsorships and advertising, visit hevreh.org/welcomehome.

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

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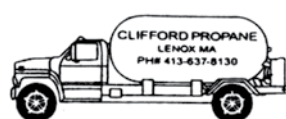
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Pasta & Rice Collection, May 1- 31

With funding cuts to food programs and other agencies, Berkshire County is experiencing a rising food crisis. In consultation with our local pantries, Federation will collect packaged pasta and rice as part of our Super Tzedakah Campaign Kickoff. Please help feed our neighbors by participating in this important mitzvah.

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- Berkshire Food Co-op, Great Barrington
- Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Great Barrington
- Concepts of Art, Lenox, MA
- Temple Anshe Amunin, Pittsfield
- Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Pittsfield
- Congregation Beth Israel, North Adams

A monetary donation directly to the pantry of your choice is also encouraged.

Visit jewishberkshires.org/food-resources for a full listing of local food pantries.

Thank you to our collection partners for their support!



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Join with the Berkshire Jewish Community as we come together to celebrate a joyous Kabbalat Shabbat with a musical family-friendly service led by our local Rabbis, followed by a festive oneg.

Friday, June 20 at 6:00 p.m.

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Jewish Federation OF THE BERKSHIRES

ENJOY LUNCH AND CONVERSATION AROUND OUR COMMUNITY TABLE

As the weather warms, we are returning to in-person lunches at Federation's kosher lunch program. All are welcome. Reservations are required. See ad in this paper for daily menus.

Thursday, May 8 at Noon
Celebrating Mothers & Other Important Women
Enjoy a delicious kosher brunch for lunch to celebrate mothers and other important women in our lives. We invite you to bring a favorite recipe to swap, photo or other remembrance to share.

Thursday, May 15 at Noon
Lag B'Omer BBQ
Enjoy a delicious kosher lunch marking Lag B'Omer with a delicious BBQ.

Thursday, May 22 at Noon
Memorial Day Picnic
Enjoy a summer-time kosher Memorial Day picnic lunch (indoors). We welcome stories or memories to honor and reflect on veterans in our lives.

Thursday, May 29 at Noon
Festive Shavuot Lunch
Enjoy a festive Shavuot lunch celebrating favorite dairy delights including an ice cream sundae bar!

Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the Wednesday BEFORE the lunch. Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over 60 years of age. \$7 for all others. This program is made possible through the generous support of our community.

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Knesset Israel – 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield



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Saturday, 9:30 a.m.
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Friday, May 23..... 7:57 p.m.
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Shavuot

Sunday, June 1 8:05 p.m.
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Friday, June 6..... 8:08 p.m.
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Matt Tannenbaum, the long-time owner of The Bookstore & Get Lit Wine Bar in Lenox, who is celebrating the store's 50th year in business.

Paula K. Almgren, founder of Berkshire Law Group in Lenox, who has been named to the Massachusetts Super Lawyers list, an honor given to less than five percent of attorneys in the Commonwealth. This marks the fifth year that Almgren has earned this recognition.

Troy Middleton on his bar mitzvah at Temple Anshe Amunim in April. Proud family are **Miriam, Joan, and Paul Gluck**.

Annette Miller, who will be honored by Shakespeare & Company at its 2025 gala in June. An award-winning, actor of stage and screen, Miller has appeared on Shakespeare & Company's stages for more than 25 seasons.

Kosher Meat Deliveries to the Berkshires Continuing

GREAT BARRINGTON – The Berkshire Kosher Ko-op has worked out an arrangement with the Crown Market in West Hartford to supply monthly deliveries of kosher meat to South County.

Once a month, Crown will deliver kosher meat orders for pickup 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 next delivery will be in mid-May (time and date TBD). Please email Sharon Strassfeld (sharon-strassfeld@gmail.com) for more information. Your name will be added to a Google group compiled by Kosher Ko-op coordinators.



Kosher Meals to Go—Meals on Wheels

ALL ARE WELCOME: Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays through the end of May. Starting in June and through the summer months, lunches will only be prepared on Mondays and Thursdays. In-person Thursday lunches at noon begin in May, and Thursday morning Connecting With Community programs resume in June.

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

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED BY 9 A.M. THE DAY BEFORE THE LUNCH: Call Federation's kitchen at (413) 442-2200 the day before to reserve a meal for pick-up or to arrange delivery.

What's for Lunch?

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

MAY

THURSDAY, MAY 1

Noon, in-person lunch...Mediterranean plate with falafel, hummus, baba ganoush, stuffed grape leaves, Israeli salad, pita bread, and baklava.

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.

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, pumpkin bread, and snickerdoodle cookie.

THURSDAY, MAY 15

Noon, in-person Lag B'Omer Barbecue...BBQ Chicken (GF)(DF), potato salad, three bean soup, corn soup, corn bread, and fruit crisp.

Special theme: Join us for a delicious kosher lunch marking Lag B'Omer (the 33rd day between Passover and Shavuot) with this spring BBQ.

MONDAY, MAY 19

Noon, Lunch...Monterey spaghetti, meadow blend vegetables, salad, garlic bread, and raspberry bar.

TUESDAY, MAY 20

Noon, Lunch...Spinach, mushroom, and cheese enchilada, Mexican corn, Spanish rice, salad, tortilla chips, and chocolate pudding.

THURSDAY, MAY 22

Noon, in-person Memorial Day Picnic...Hot dogs (GF) (DF), baked beans, coleslaw, vegetable soup, hot dog bun, and brownie.

Special theme: Join us for a summertime kosher Memorial Day picnic lunch (indoors). We welcome stories or memories to honor and reflect on veterans in our lives.

MONDAY, MAY 26 – Closed for Memorial Day

TUESDAY, MAY 27

Noon, Lunch...Fish and chips (DF), French fries, peas and carrots, salad, roll, and butterscotch pudding.

NOTE: This is the last Tuesday lunch of the season. Tuesday lunches resume in the autumn.

THURSDAY, MAY 29

Noon, in-person Festive Shavuot Lunch...Blintze soufle, creamed spinach, roasted carrots, salad, Challah, cheesecake for take-out meals, and ice cream sundae bar for in-person meals.

Special theme: Join us for a festive Shavuot lunch celebrating favorite dairy delights.

JUNE

MONDAY, JUNE 2 – Closed for Shavuot

TUESDAY, JUNE 3 – Closed for Shavuot

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

10:45 a.m. program: Uncovering Jewish Past, Reimagining Jewish Futures: Generation(s) Unexpected in Contemporary Poland with Katka Reszke.

Noon, Lunch...Spinach pie, California blend vegetables, minestrone soup, whole wheat bread, and rice pudding.

MONDAY, JUNE 9

Noon, Lunch...Tuna pasta casserole, broccoli, tomato soup, multi-grain bread, and peaches.

THURSDAY, JUNE 12

10:45 a.m. program: Current Events Seminar with Professor Steve Rubin.

Noon, Lunch...Potato knish, roasted Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cream of mushroom soup, pumpkin bread, and sugar cookie.

MONDAY, JUNE 16

Noon, Lunch...Greek turkey meatballs (GF)(DF), lemon potatoes, garlic spinach, salad, pita bread, and apricots.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19 – Closed for Juneteenth

MONDAY, JUNE 23

Noon, Lunch...Chicken fajitas (GF)(DF), corn, rice, black bean soup, tortillas, and tropical fruit salad.

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



KOSHER MEALS ON WHEELS:

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

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

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

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Go Wild this Spring!

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

We hardy denizens of the Berkshires can proudly boast that we've soldiered through another winter of cold, sometimes frigid, temperatures. But spring is now springing up all over. One of the bonuses of the season is that we don't have to wait for our backyard gardens to produce their bounty. We can forage for a host of wonderful wild foods to be found in the greening countryside.

Now, the term "wild" may have you thinking of the Black Forest or the Australian outback. But no, many delicious edible items can be found growing all over our country. And if the thrill of providing for oneself as our long-ago ancestors isn't enough, foraging can be a fun activity to do with the family.

In our house we love dolmades, and one of our favorite things to do on a bright, sunny day is to head out into the countryside to pick our own wild grape leaves. (Not from a vineyard, as those are far too tough.) The best time to harvest the leaves is from late spring to midsummer, before the fruit ripens and the leaves start to show signs of insect penetration. The grapes themselves are tiny and tart. They can be used to make a nice juice or jelly, but good luck getting to them before the birds do.

Because grapes are woody plants that will cling on anything that will hold them, you can find the vines climbing on fences and trees along country roads, fields, riverbanks, and by the side of forest trails. Look for leaves about the size of your palm so that you can stuff them easily and be sure to take only those leaves that you are sure have not been sprayed with pesticides.

Next up on the spring foraging trek is fiddlehead ferns. The furled fronds of young ostrich ferns got their name for their uncanny resemblance to the scrolled head of the violin. These delicate greens are typically available for only a very short time in early spring. Of course, you can always find them at a farmers market or your local greengrocer – again, during a very short season. But hiking out into damp meadows, riverbanks, or hardwood forests to harvest them is a terrific way to channel your progenitors (and save some money). Of course, if your *groys bubbeh* didn't teach you how to scavenge for the morsels, here is a simple step-by-step guideline.

Before picking a fiddlehead, it is important make sure that you are choosing the right type of fern, as all ferns have a fiddlehead stage. Picking the wrong one can give you a big tummy ache. Fiddleheads have a few characteristics that distinguish them from their cousins. The bright green ferns grow in a woody cluster, and you can spot them by searching out the old, brown, past-season dead shoots. The stem is not round; rather, it has a U-shaped groove running down its length. The stem is smooth, not fuzzy, and has a light brown parchment-like paper covering around the fiddlehead that should be shucked before cooking.

Cut them close to the ground, or simply snap them off, but if you want to find the stand next year, it is extremely important not to over-harvest. Always leave enough for the plants to ensure sustainable harvest; repeated over-picking will eventually kill the plant.

Although you may immediately think of afternoon tea on the lawn at Downton Abbey when you hear the word "watercress," it is actually a delicious, wild edible plant that you may find on your country tour. This green not only has many uses but also boasts loads of vitamins and minerals.

And it grows here in the Berkshires. You can find this crunchy and peppery green wherever cold, alkaline water flows, such as in streams and ponds. It even grows at the edge of marshes and on muddy riverbanks. Watercress grows year-round, but you will harvest the best mild and tender leaves in springtime.

Tea, tiny sandwiches, and scones with clotted cream are optional.



Flowering Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)

As you continue your wanderings through the countryside, you may well admire the masses of purple flowers that line the edges of roads. And while they make for a lovely display in a vase, those lavender blossoms sit atop the chicory plant. What you may not know is that the chicory's flowers, leaves, and roots are all edible. The baby leaves in early spring are great in salads, while leaves harvested in late summer and early fall, called chicory hearts, are also good. (If picked at the latter time, take care to pull off the tough outer leaves of the plant, using only the tender inner ones.)

And if you've ever been to New Orleans, you may have enjoyed coffee with chicory (and a beignet or two) at the city's iconic Café du Monde. That chicory comes from the root of the very same plant that provides your salad greens.

I wouldn't advise picking the chicory plants along well-traveled roads, as they will have absorbed rock salt, to say nothing of the noxious fumes spewed by passing cars. Look for an unsprayed field to harvest your chicory.

To add to your salad bowl, ramps should definitely be on your foraging list. Also known as wild leeks, these cousins of onion and garlic have a peppery and pungent flavor. Ramps grow in rich, well-drained soil in hardwood forests, particularly near water sources such as along vernal ponds, swamps, and stream banks.

It's important when picking ramps to do so ethically and not to over-harvest one spot. According to the USDA, the way to harvest ramps sustainably is to cut only one leaf and leave the bulb and second leaf to continue growing. If you leave some of the bottom of the bulb and the roots in the ground, then the ramps have a better chance of growing back. And you will have a crop next spring.

If a rural trek isn't to your liking, you may find that your own backyard offers treasure. Around the end of May, the spruce trees in your yard can provide a surprising gift of lemony, herby tang to your menu. The new, young spruce tips on the tree's branches are easy to spot, as they are softer and lighter in color than older needles, and they have brown, paper-like casings. Spruce tips can either be cooked or eaten raw as snacks, such as in trail mix. They can also be steeped for use as a tea, or used in salads, soups, or casseroles.

If your backyard is anything like mine, then there's a bevy of purple beauties popping up come springtime: violets. And while many of my friends consider these plants to be weeds, and they yank them out of the ground at first sight,

let's take a moment to learn about other uses for this plant whose leaves and flowers are edible from early to mid-spring. Those pretty blooms aren't just suitable for candied violets for decorating cupcakes. The freshly picked flowers have a sweet, floral flavor that are lovely in a salad. Violet leaves can also be used in salads, sandwiches, and even as an ingredient in pesto. They are best in early spring, when they are young and tender.

Violet blooms are also the star ingredient in a syrup that is wonderful when added to everything from buttercream frosting to homemade ice cream. And, of course, the deep purple liquid is a valuable addition to beverages from cocktails to lemonade.

And then there's the dandelion. While considered an irritation for many, if not most, homeowners with a lawn, I prefer to think of this weed as simply a flower growing in the wrong place. Dandelions could, after all, be growing in your garden bed, providing greens for your salad. (I actually planted some indoors a few years ago.) Pick them early – and again, in a pesticide-free zone – when they are young and tender. You can use both the leaves and the flowers in numerous recipes. They're great in salads, battered and fried in fritters, as an infusion for oil, and for tea.

There's even a dandelion syrup. If you recall my review of Darra Goldstein's *Beyond the North Wind: Russia in Recipes*, cooks north of the Arctic Circle prepare a recipe that requires 300 dandelion heads along with lots of sugar. While some describe it as having pleasantly sweet flavor to use over ice cream, waffles, and pancakes, daughter Elana believes that it tastes more like Ricola cough drops.

Foraging is a fun outdoor activity, but if you don't feel comfortable hunting and gathering on your own, you can always sign up for an organized experience. A regular leader of foraging walks in Berkshire County is Russ Cohen. A now-retired environmental lawyer, Russ has been leading "Edible Wild Plant/Mushroom Walks and Talks" for 50 years and has earned multiple awards for his work both in river stewardship and wild edibles instruction. He leads participants through rural areas throughout the state, searching for plants to eat while educating his audience about them. He also provides snacks made from his finds. I enjoyed several, including a scrumptious baklava-like pastry made from black walnuts, and a fruit leather made from the berries of the invasive autumn olive.

Russ Cohen's 2025 schedule can be accessed at users.rcn.com/eatwild/sched.htm, but check back frequently for updates. He may be coming to a place near you. The website also provides a link to recorded tours for 2024.

From city backyards to country fields and streams, Berkshire County is a treasure trove of wonderful and delicious edible plants to try and enjoy, so pull on your wellies and get out there!



Fiddleheads



Wild Rice-Stuffed Grape Leaves

These are *not* the sticky, gluey, gloppy dolmades that are ubiquitous at delis.

INGREDIENTS:

6 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, chopped
2/3 cup long grain and wild rice mixture
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1 1/2 cups water
1/4 cup dried currants

1/4 cup pine nuts
50 fresh wild grape leaves (or use store-bought)
1 cup water
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
Fresh lemon wedges
Chopped fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS:

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Add rice and allspice and stir 30 seconds. Add 1 1/2 cups water and currants and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until water is absorbed and rice is tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in heavy small skillet over medium-low heat. Add pine nuts and sauté until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Mix nut mixture into rice. Season with salt and pepper. Bring large pot of water to boil. Add grape leaves and stir to separate. Turn off heat; let stand 1 minute. Drain. Rinse with cold water to cool; drain well.

Cover bottom of heavy large skillet or Dutch oven with about 10 grape leaves, pressing about 2 inches up sides of pot. Arrange 1 leaf, vein side up, on work surface. Place 1 rounded tablespoon rice filling near stem. Fold in sides, then roll into little cigars. Repeat with remaining filling and leaves. Arrange stuffed leaves, seam side down, close together in leaf-lined pot. Drizzle 3 tablespoons oil over all. Add 1 cup water and lemon juice. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook 50 minutes. Cool completely. (These can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.) Arrange stuffed grape leaves on platter. Garnish with lemon and parsley.



Carol Goodman Kaufman, has just published her second mystery book, *Crak, Bam, Dead: Mah Jong Mayhem* (Next Chapter Press). The collection of cozy mystery short stories features food writer/aspiring investigative reporter Kiki Coben and her Mah Jong group as they follow clues from a "Black Widow" murder at sea to a suspicious death at a senior home charity event. Armed with a curious mind and her formidable group of friends, Kiki is ready to prove that the only thing you need to catch a killer is persistence – and maybe just a little bit of luck.

Crak, Bam, Dead is available in stores and online.



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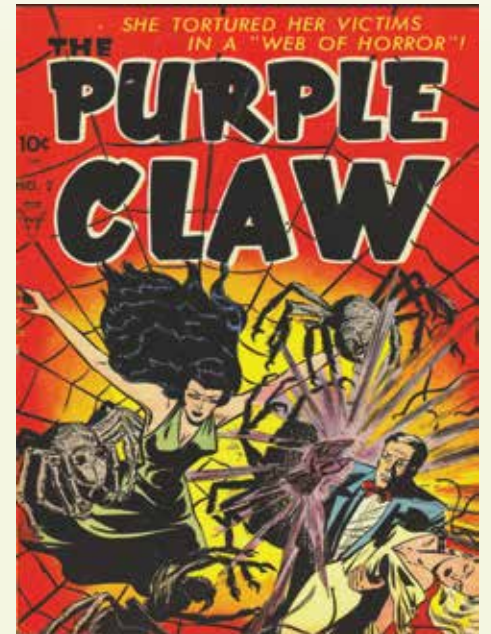
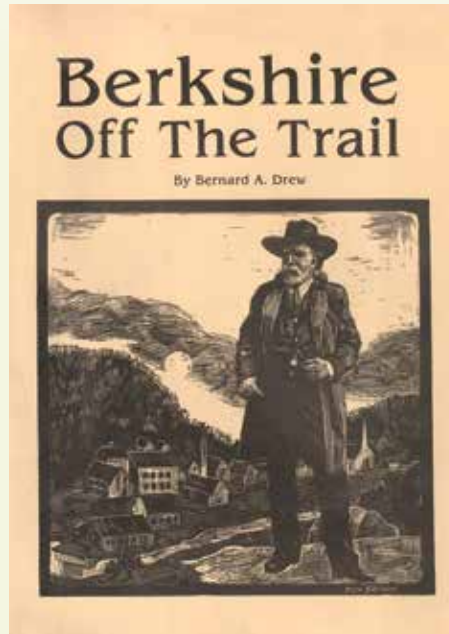
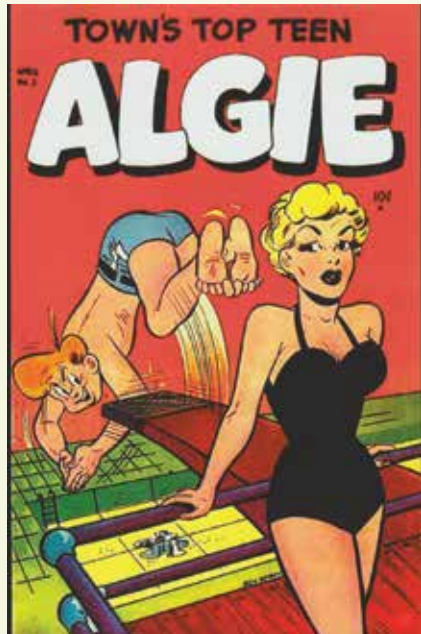
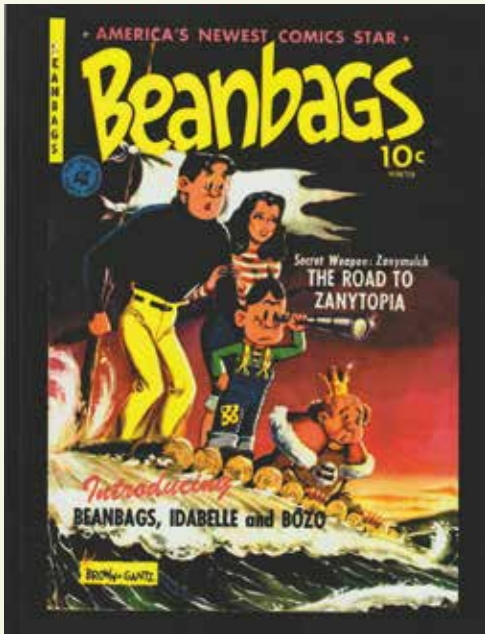
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CULTURE & ARTS

Jewish Artist from the Golden Age of Comics Made His Home in the Berkshires

By Bernard A. Drew / Special to the BJV

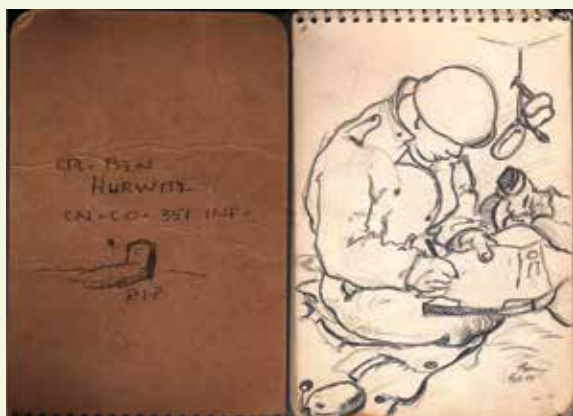


"I always wanted to be a cartoonist as a lad," Great Barrington resident Ben Brown admitted to this then Berkshire Courier assistant editor in 1980, "though I got into other things."

Brown's other talents included painting, photography, commercial art, book illustration, television advertising and educational film direction and production.

But comic book art was an off-and-on steady throughout his career.

Born in 1921, Bernard M. Hurwitz was the son of Julius Hurwitz, a Lithuanian immigrant, and his wife, Lillie Brown, a New Yorker. Ben, as he was called, grew up in the Bronx and graduated from the High School of Music and Art with its first class in 1938. He continued his studies at the National Academy of Design and the University of Iowa.



He joined the U.S. Army's 88th Division of the 351st Infantry during World War II and received a Bronze Star for action in Italy and North Africa. Some 190 sketchbook drawings he made while overseas are in the New-York Historical Society Library.

In the mainstream art world, Ben won awards for photography and painting. Over the years he produced educa-

tional filmstrips for Popular Science. He directed animated parts of ABC's "Wonderful World of Golf" and provided illustrations for the Bicentennial Guide to the American Revolution. He supplied artwork to Fortune and The New Yorker.

For his steady work drawing comic book art, he changed his name to Ben Brown, using his mother's maiden name. Fellow cartoonists Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Al Capp had similar assumed new names.

Brown and school chum, David Gantz partnered to rent an art studio near Greenwich Village.

"We did a lot of catalog work," Brown recalled. "I did the photography, he did the layout, someone else did the retouching."

Brown produced interior artwork for at least 199 individual comic issues published in some 87 individual titles for 20 publishers – including Lev Gleason Publications, Toby Press, St. John, Pines, Atlas, Ace, Harvey and Marvel. Comics historians credit Brown as artist on 16 covers.

Brown worked in all genres: horror (*Purple Claw*), teenage (*Algie*), wartime (*Fighting Leathernecks*), crime (*Crime Does Not Pay*), children's (*Casper and Spooky*), Westerns (*John Wayne Adventure*) and romance (*Sorority Secrets*).

Brown and Gantz furnished the artwork for the three issues of *The Purple Claw* in 1953. The main character, Dr. Jonathan Weir, uses a magical glove given him by an African witch doctor to subdue a giant spider, a rampant cobra and the like.

Brown couldn't find a home for a prospective newspaper comic strip, "Matt Moody and his Split-Personality," about a young man who loses his memory as the result of an automobile accident, aligns with a Texas oilman named Earlwell Weems and drifts in and out of fantasy escapades. There were no syndicate takers.

"I was walking down the street," he said, "looking for something to do, when I ran into a friend who told me Harvey was looking for an artist." That was in 1972. He began drawing Richie Rich and Casper the Friendly Ghost comics. He left Harvey to work on Marvel's Star Comics children's line, limning *Foofur*, *Count Duckula* and *Heathcliff*.



Ben and his wife, Eleanor Rotman (1923-1999), had two children. Joshua Brown (author, historian, graphic artist and former executive director of the American Social History Project) and Jenny Hurwitz, both of New York. Grandson Gideon Brown lives in Great Barrington doing video post-production.

Having enjoyed the Berkshires since housesitting for friends here, Ben and Eleanor purchased land on North Plain Road in Housatonic in 1968 and a few years later built a house. Brown could do cartooning just as easily by mail, and moved his studio here. Eleanor left her law career when she came to the Berkshires and opened a clothing store in Great Barrington, Chifforobe.

"He primarily thought of himself as a painter," said his grandson Gideon, "which was something that he did after the war until his death. In fact, he had just finished a painting before he died. This was part of his motivation to move to Great Barrington full time, it gave him a tremendous amount of inspiration from the rolling hills, to the mills of Housatonic, he found inspiration everywhere...."

"Ben painted throughout his life – by far his favored medium," according to his son Josh Brown. "His paintings brilliantly colored expressionist portraits, still lifes and landscapes – many Berkshire subjects."

Gideon's father Joshua said: "I've always thought that my father's career and 'oeuvre' captures some of the ways popular art and fine art inform and nurture one another. Too often artists who work in commercial art, comic

books being a prominent example, are viewed as frustrated creators, hankering to abandon the popular for the purported individual expression inherent in painting, sculpture, etc. To some extent Ben "did" feel that way – but like many of his peers, the skill, sensibility, observations and representations in their commercial work were more complementary than competitive or contradictory – elements emerging out of the same fount of knowledge and craft. Museum exhibitions rarely offer that aspect of creative work, preferring to separate mediums in a hierarchy. Ben's work embodied both."

Ben was a Berkshire County deputy sheriff and an active Rotarian.

Locally, examples of Brown's work include editorial cartoons for *The Berkshire Courier* (publisher Alan Copland offered ideas) 1978-1986. Brown initially signed his name to the cartoons; then, hearing some comment or other, he began to sign them "Blameless Ben." The artist last provided cartoons to *The Berkshire Record*.

Brown also cartooned for *Freedom Writer*. Skipp Porteous of Institute for First Amendment Studies, then based in Great Barrington, provided ideas.

In 1982, he created a scratchboard cover for a collection of local history stories by this writer, *Berkshire Off the Trail*. He provided an image of the Lanesboro humorist Josh Billings (above).

Brown's last comic book work was three stories in *Richie Rich No. 19*, published in 1994.

He died in 1997 and is buried in Ahavath Shalom Cemetery in Great Barrington.



Ben Brown

