

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 2026

Living in a moment, rising to the challenge

On Sunday, June 7 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., celebrate Jewish heritage, culture, and identity at Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' annual Community Day at High Lawn Farm.



Super Tzedakah Week chairs Chris, Theo, Benny, and Molly Meador

We are living in a moment when the needs of our Jewish community are growing and changing faster than ever before. What has not changed is the essential role of donors like you in ensuring that our community remains safe, supported, and strong. Together we are building meaningful and joyful Jewish journeys at every stage of life through education, community programming, and shared celebration.

In these challenging times,

your support has allowed us to expand our investment in helping young people find connection, pride, and resilience in their Jewish identity.

Our support of Jewish education at local religious schools has increased by 41 percent and demand for Jewish camp scholarships continues to grow.

Because of you, we are helping students on campus navigate complex environments and build resilience in being proudly Jewish. We have expanded and strengthened young adult and young family engagement here in the Berkshires.

The needs of our community have grown in other urgent ways, too.

Your generosity allows us to take essential steps to protect our community. Security at events, training for staff at congregations and camps, professional assessments, and facility upgrades are all possible because of donors like you. These are not extras. They are the foundation that allows our community to gather with confidence and peace of mind.

SUPER TZEDAKAH,
continued on page 6

What Would You Risk?



Through May 31, The Guild of Berkshire Artists presents "Form + Substance," a new exhibition featuring the work of husband-and-wife artists David Goldstein and Sherri Greenbach. Greenbach's featured series, "Be Miep," occupies the intersection of color, narrative, and texture, reflecting contemporary conversations around immigration and calls viewers to take action. The title draws inspiration from Miep Gies, who helped hide Anne Frank and others during World War II. Shown above is "Be Miep (Teal 2)." For more information on the show at the Art on Main Gallery, located at 38 Main Street in West Stockbridge, please see page 28.



Jewish Community Day 2026

We ♥ Jewish Berkshires!
Love and Kindness in Action

LEE – On Sunday, June 7 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., celebrate our Jewish heritage, culture, and identity at Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' annual Jewish Community Day at High Lawn Farm.

This special gathering also marks the official launch of Federation's 2026 community campaign, bringing our community together in a meaningful and joyful way to kick off the year ahead.

Federation invites the community to enjoy a fun-filled afternoon featuring free ice cream (while supplies last), cows, baby animals, crafts, music, raffles, a food truck, and community tables. It is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, and celebrate the vibrancy of Jewish life in the Berkshires.

COMMUNITY DAY,
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SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK

DONATE

2026 Annual Campaign Kicks Off June 7th
Make Your Gift or Pledge!

Your gift to the 2026 Community Campaign supports the most vulnerable, strengthens Jewish identity in our youth, fights antisemitism, and builds vibrant, joyful Jewish life for people of all ages across the Berkshires and beyond.

CONNECT

Jewish Community Day... We ♥ Jewish Berkshires
Sunday, June 7 at 2 p.m.

Celebrate all we love about our Jewish community with a fun-filled day of free ice cream, cows, crafts, community tables, music, food, and more.

DO A MITZVAH

Support Our Neighbors in Need
Gift Card Collection May 4 - June 7

We're collecting gift cards for groceries, gas, and basic necessities to be distributed by local nonprofits supporting immigrants and other marginalized communities.



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

Living in an In-Between Space

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



I recently read an article, "Naming the Psychological Crisis of Israelis Living Abroad," published in e-Jewish Philanthropy, which deeply resonated with me. When I shared it with my husband Ofer, whose entire family is spread across Israel, his response was immediate: "That is exactly how I feel."

Since October 7, I cannot count how many times Ofer has woken in the middle of the night and instinctively reached for his phone, checking for news of missile strikes near the areas where his family lives. Throughout the day, Israeli news plays in Hebrew on his phone, and we are both caught in a constant cycle of messages, calls, and WhatsApp check-ins: "Everyone OK?" "Did you need to go to the shelter?" These exchanges have become part of our daily routine, bringing with them an ever-growing feeling of anxiety and helplessness. We know, of course, that we are not the ones under fire, that our family and friends in Israel are carrying so much more, but the worry is real, the stress is real, and as the war continues, its cumulative toll on our mental health has become very real too.

It is so important to recognize unseen burdens and to remind the people we care about that they do not have to carry them alone.

In speaking with Israeli friends here, it has become clear that this experience is far from ours alone. Most Israelis living abroad, like my husband, exist in an in-between space: physically safe, yet holding the weight of profound emotional ties to family, friends, and a country under constant threat.

According to the article, this emerging reality reflects a broader, often unrecognized psychological challenge facing Israelis abroad today. It is a complex mix of anxiety, guilt, and dislocation. Israelis living outside Israel are following the news obsessively, worrying about loved ones, and grappling with a sense that they are not where they are "supposed" to be during a moment of national crisis. At the same time, many feel that those around them, friends, colleagues, and even extended family, do not fully grasp the depth of that connection. The result is a quiet but profound sense of isolation.

Small gestures can make a meaningful difference. Taking the time to check in, to listen without judgment, and to acknowledge what Israelis abroad and anyone with family or friends in Israel are carrying can help ease that isolation. Ask about their loved ones. Make space for conversation that goes beyond the war and the politics. Simple expressions of care and compassion can go a long way.

In moments like these, it is so important to recognize these unseen burdens and to remind the people we care about that they do not have to carry them alone.

To better understand what our loved ones are experiencing on the ground, my colleague Rob Kovach, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York, recently shared reflections from a visit to Israel, where he was celebrating his son's wedding surrounded by children and grandchildren. With his permission, I share his words:

"The first alarm is startling. It wakes you in the middle of the night, interrupts meals, and disrupts travel – exactly as it's designed to. This is the early warning from Home Front Command: missiles have been fired from Iran, but their exact trajectory isn't yet known. The warning gives you roughly ten minutes to prepare for a possible second alarm – the one that triggers the siren and gives you just ninety seconds to reach a shelter once the system knows where the missiles are headed.

To give a sense of what those ten minutes feel like, here are a few personal observations, moving from the least to the most frightening.

Surprisingly, the middle of the night alerts were the least scary for me. Everything I needed was already beside my bed. I'd jump up, put on my glasses, shoes, and jacket (with pockets preloaded), grab the baby's backpack – my assigned job – unlock the front door, and wait for the second alert before running to the shelter.

On one midday outing, I stopped into a neighbor's lobby during the warning period, and an elderly Romanian woman invited me to walk with her to the shelter. She couldn't make it there in ninety seconds, so she used the ten-minute window each time to get herself safely inside. We never received the second alert, but we shared a warm, unexpected visit while we waited.

A similar plan unfolded on a Shabbat morning in synagogue. With the government-mandated limit of fifty people, the gabbai announced that if an early warning came, we would use the ten-minute window to move calmly and orderly to the shelter rather than scramble during the ninety-second rush. Fortunately, no alarms sounded.

On another midday outing, I was sitting at an outdoor café when we received the ten-minute warning. During that time, we learned that the nearest shelter was in the basement of the supermarket across the street. When the ninety-second alert came, the sudden flurry of movement – in the café, on the sidewalk, in the street, in the market – sent a jolt of adrenaline through me. One moment people were sipping coffee; the next, chairs scraped back, conversations cut off mid-sentence, and everyone surged toward safety.

Once, I was driving six minutes from the mall when the alert came. I made it safely, parked quickly, and ran straight into the mall's shelter.

But the scariest moment came on a drive to Jerusalem, traveling in two cars. My car happened to be inside a tunnel when the early warning sounded, so we waited there with dozens of other vehicles. The second car had already exited; they pulled onto a sidewalk in front of a yeshiva and ran into its shelter. Being caught on the open road, exposed, with nowhere obvious to go, is a feeling that stays with you.

What these ten-minute intervals ultimately reveal is that the real target isn't only infrastructure or military sites – it's the civilian mind. The missiles may or may not land, but the uncertainty always does. The early warning forces you to stop whatever you're doing, gather your family, and brace for the possibility of a sprint to safety. It's a deliberate strategy: to disrupt daily life, to inject fear into ordinary routines, and to keep people in a constant state of vigilance.

And somehow, despite it all, it's Israeli resilience that keeps life moving forward."

Rob's words offer a vivid window into the reality so many of our loved ones navigate every single day, and they help explain why those of us far from home feel such a persistent pull of worry, helplessness, and connection. That last sentence is the one that stayed with me most.

Having lived with an Israeli for more than 35 years and also having lived in Israel for many of those years, I would say that Israeli resilience is not simply a coping mechanism. It is more like an act of defiance. It is the choice to go back to the café, to host that Shabbat dinner, to celebrate a wedding. And for those of us watching from afar, honoring that resilience means staying present: checking in, showing up, and refusing to let distance become indifference.

COMMUNITY DAY,

continued from page 1

We will also join together in acts of love and kindness as we respond to urgent needs of our neighbors in need. We are collecting gift cards for groceries, gas, and basic necessities to be distributed by local nonprofits supporting immigrants and other marginalized communities.

Bring a Walmart, Target, local grocery or gas gift card to Jewish Community Day (or make a monetary donation and we'll purchase one for you). Gift cards may also be mailed or dropped off at the Federation office at 196 South Street in Pittsfield.

ALL ARE WELCOME, and there is something for everyone.

Register on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. High Lawn Farm is located at 535 Summer Street in Lee.

About High Lawn Farm

High Lawn Farm is an historic landmark farm with some of the most idyllic views in all of the Berkshires. Enjoy a tour to see how their Jersey cows sleep on waterbeds and are milked on demand by a high tech personal robotic milking machines. Visit the renovated museum and check out their on-site farm store, the Farmstead Creamery, which offers homemade ice cream, artisanal cheese and dairy products as well as a variety of other locally produced goods. Open 7 days a week from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.



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OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

The Slow Work of Growing, Inspired by the Insight We Were Blessed to Experience

By Rabbi Seth Wax / Williams College



I don't think I ever really appreciated the month of May until my family and I moved to the Berkshires nearly ten years ago. When I lived in Boston and New York, April was the month in which flowers blossomed and trees sprouted leaves. May was just a continuation of that process. Beautiful, but not novel. By contrast, here in the Berkshires, snow often falls throughout April, and it's in May that spring seems to hit all at once: flowers, leaves, increasing heat, long days, and the possibility of planting outdoors all converge to let us know that we are emerging into something beautiful and stunning.

May is also the time of year during which we are fully in the practice of *sefirat ha-omer*, or counting the omer. The ritual itself is rather short. After sundown, we recite a blessing and then a formula that corresponds to the specific day and week we find ourselves in. It is deceptively simple, such that it can be too easy to lose a sense of why we say it, and even to forget to say it at all.

Yet according to the teachings of teachers of Kabbalah, especially Isaac Luria (1534-1572) and one of his later interpreters, Shalom Sharabi (1720-1777), there is a powerful opportunity, and even need, for attention and intention not only when engaging this ritual, but throughout this time of year.

That is because the period of counting the omer is a process of slow rebuilding. The process begins on the second night of Passover, following the Seder on the first night of the holiday. The first day of Passover – both the Seder and the following day – marks the time when the Israelites actually left Egypt. Given how deeply the Israelites were entrapped in Egypt and the power of negative spiritual forces called *klippot*, it took an overwhelming exertion of force by God to pull them out. It also required a deep spiritual transformation on the part of the Israelites: according to Luria and Sharabi, on the first day of Passover, the Israelites were gifted an illumination that helped them to witness how divine presence utterly suffuses the world, breaking through everything that stands in the way of that. This combination of paradigm-shifting transformations in physical reality and in consciousness is what enabled the Israelites to break free from the bonds of slavery.

And yet, as soon as the Israelites were free, that burst of energy dissipated. Like a flash of lightning that sparks and then fades, it was over. While something fundamental about their experience had shifted – they had left slavery, after all – the world was still as it was, as they were, as well. They may have been free, but the flash of insight they experienced on the first day of Passover faded away. The *klippot* that were overwhelmed the day before had regrouped and continued to wreak havoc and discord on the world, albeit in a somewhat weakened state. The

world was still filled with brokenness and oppression, and the Israelites found themselves to be the selfsame people they were prior to leaving servitude.

Each of us likely has experience with something similar: we have a powerful experience of falling in love, reach a spiritual peak, achieve a long-sought accomplishment at work, or any other number of attainments. We bask in its glow, but we find that we are still the same person that we were before the peak. We find ourselves still easily irritated, focusing excessive attention on unimportant tasks or gossip, becoming angry and bitter, and generally lose whatever insights we may have experienced. That can be incredibly disappointing, in light of what we have experienced. If we have had such an amazing experience, why are we still the same?

The experience does not fade entirely. It leaves a residue behind: a memory of what took place, an insight into how we might live our lives differently.

That is because after every peak experience, such as leaving Egypt or having a spiritual insight, the moment ends. It does not continue. We are still the same person as we were the day before. However, the experience does not fade entirely. It leaves a residue behind: a memory of what took place, an insight into how we might live our lives differently. To access that again, we must embark on a gradual process of inner and outer work. To bring attention to the infinite number of choice points in our lives, making a concerted effort to integrate the insight and experience in our day to day. To do the slow work of growing, inspired by the insight that we were blessed to experience.

That is what Israelites needed to do as they moved through the wilderness, walking towards the revelation of Mount Sinai which we commemorate on Shavuot. And it is what the counting of the omer offers us today. Each week, and each day of that week, through the practice of counting, we are invited to examine and make change to qualities of ourselves: our capacity for love, our ability to set boundaries and use judgment wisely, to connect, to practice commitment and endurance, to feel grateful, among other qualities. Counting each night is a jumping off point for doing the focused, sometimes painful, work of growing as individuals. It is not easy, but the practice of counting the omer provides a structure for embarking on that path.

As we enjoy the onward march of spring in this month of blossoming, may we find inspiration from the intentional counting of days and weeks to enhance our capacity to expand our hearts and stabilize in our minds insights we have received in the past.

Rabbi Seth Wax is College Chaplain and Director of Jewish Life at Williams College.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



Helping hands needed for
Jewish Community Day
Sunday, June 7, 2026, 2-4pm

Our Jewish Community Day at High Lawn Farm will be a fun-filled day with ice cream, crafts, cows, music and more!

We need lots of extra hands to help with set up, check in, activities, clean-up, etc. Shifts are available to ensure Volunteers also have free time to enjoy the event.

Sign Up to Volunteer!

<https://tinyurl.com/volunteerjcd2026>

Questions? Contact Heidi Katz,

Coordinator of Volunteers

federation@jewishberkshires.org



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

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

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

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Letters to the Editor

Training Students to Feel Confident, Purposeful, and Ready to Step Into Leadership Roles



Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

I am extremely grateful to Federation for its 2026 grant of \$21,000 in support of Changemakers for Good© programs to empower students and educators in Berkshire County schools to recognize and address antisemitism and other forms of identity-based bias and hate, support individuals and groups who are targeted, and actively promote a culture of belonging.

Federation's support is significantly impacting hundreds of elementary, middle, and high school students, as well as their teachers. Following activities and discussions that trained student Changemakers at Wahconah Regional High School facilitated for 5th graders at Craneville Elementary, the high school's program director wrote: "It was clear how much the Changemakers for Good training mattered. Our students felt confident, purposeful, and ready to step into leadership roles. Many of them commented afterward on how much they learned – not just about working with younger students, but about themselves as leaders. They left the experience proud of what they were able to do and newly aware of the impact they can have."

In a recent post-training survey at Mount Everett Regional School, a student participant wrote that the most important thing they learned is "how to identify harsh behaviors that could not be seen without looking deep, such as stereotypes and -isms." Similarly, a student at Lee High School wrote, "The most important thing I learned was that there are a lot of things that go around our school and we as change makers can help prevent some of the things being said around the school and ignored."

Federation's continued support will benefit not only students who are being trained as Changemakers, but also students who participate in the student Changemaker-led activities and discussions, including participants who have witnessed and experience antisemitic and other identity-based stereotypes, name calling, and bullying.

Thank you!

Phil Fogelman
Founder, Changemakers for Good© LLC

For a related story about Federation's advocacy in local schools, please turn to page 12.



86th ANNUAL MEETING



Celebrate a Year of Impact! 86th Annual Meeting Monday, June 22 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, refreshments, board election, and guest speakers.

Community Partnerships: Combating Bias and Hate Together

Guest Speakers:

Bill Ballen, Berk12 and Berkshires Standing Together Alliance
and Phil Fogelman, Changemakers for Good



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

Your Federation Presents

The Return of Connecting With Community In-Person Lunches!

Celebrate the rites of spring in community with special holiday menus

PITTSFIELD – This May and into June, Federation's Connecting With Community returns with Thursday in-person lunches celebrating the milestones of the spring season. Reconnect with old friends and make new ones around our festive community table and delicious meals and desserts prepared in the Knesset Israel kitchen by our terrific food services director Natalya Monahan.

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 lunch (Wed). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60. \$7 for all others.

Please turn to page 24 for the planned menus and the Federation programs that will resume at 10:45 a.m. on Thursdays starting June 11 – not to mention the other delicious meals available through Federation's kosher meals program.

Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community. Thank you for your support.



Thursday, May 7 – Lag B'Omer BBQ

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



Thursday, May 14 – Celebrating Mothers and Other Important Women

Join us for 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 21 – Festive Shavuot Lunch

Join us for a festive Shavuot lunch celebrating favorite dairy delights including an ice cream sundae bar!



Thursday, May 28 – Memorial Day Picnic

Join us for a summer-time kosher Memorial Day picnic lunch (indoors). We welcome stories or memories to honor and reflect on veterans in our lives.



Thursday, June 4 – National Cheese Day Lunch

Join us for a celebration of National Cheese Day. Cheesy jokes are welcome!

The Explosive Impact of Eminent Jews, with David Denby

Join us for a special program celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council, invites the community to a captivating virtual evening exploring the lives of four titans who redefined the American soul.

On Thursday, May 7 at 7 p.m., join us on Zoom as we welcome bestselling author and acclaimed critic David Denby, who will discuss his new book, *Eminent Jews: Bernstein, Brooks, Friedan, and Mailer*. He will be joined in conversation by Albert Stern, editor of the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

Leonard Bernstein, Mel Brooks, Betty Friedan, and Norman Mailer were more than just famous names – they were brilliant, brash, and soulful individuals who were 100 percent Jewish and 100 percent American. Though they worked in different fields – from the concert hall to the comedy stage, from feminist manifesto to the Great American Novel – they shared a common temperament and a historical moment.

As antisemitism began to fade following World War II, these four creative giants used their newly won freedom to upend the restrained culture of their forebears. Denby will explore how these figures – at times egotistical, generous, and heartbreakingly vulnerable – altered the way the world listens to music, defines humor, and understands the relations between men and women.

This celebratory yet candid discussion promises to be a fearless look at four turbulent intellectuals who wielded their heritage and ambition to forever charge up American culture.

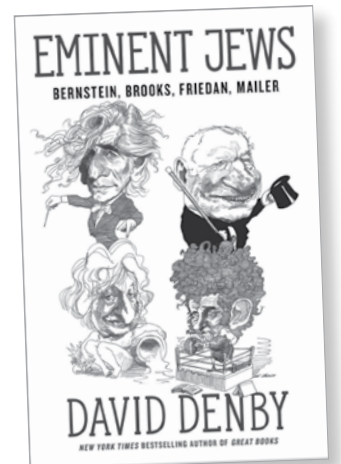
This program celebrates Jewish American Heritage Month. Each May, hundreds of organizations and Americans of all backgrounds join together to discover, explore, and celebrate the vibrant and varied American Jewish experience from the dawn of our nation to the present day. Find out more at jewishamericanheritage.org, a rich source of information and resources.

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.

Each May, hundreds of organizations and Americans of all backgrounds join together to discover, explore, and celebrate the vibrant and varied American Jewish experience from the dawn of our nation to the present day.

David Denby is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Great Books*. His other books include *American Sucker* and *Lit Up*. He was a film critic for *New York Magazine* and *The New Yorker*, where he is now a staff writer. His essays have appeared in *The New Republic* and *The Atlantic*. He lives in New York City with his wife, novelist Susan Rieger.

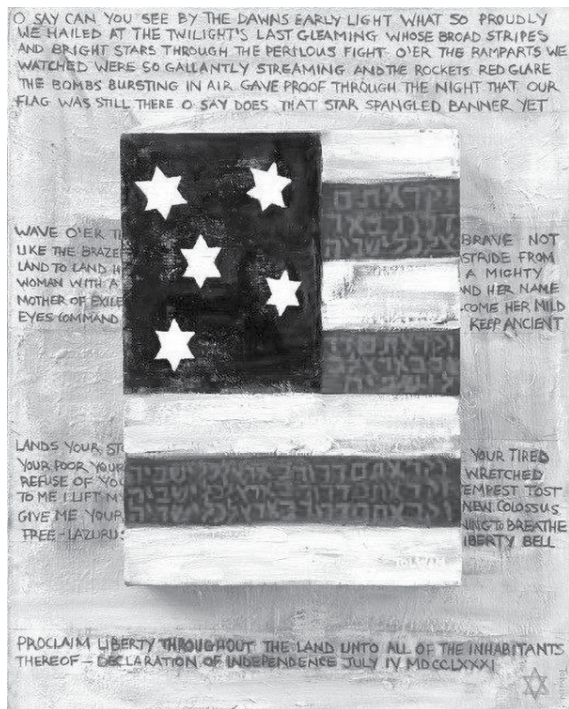


Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Dave Halley, Colin Ovitsky, Megan Dopson and Roman Rozenblyum.

Your Federation Presents



A Toast to 250: The Braid Brings “L’Chaim America!” to You Wherever You Are in the USA



As the United States prepares to blow out 250 candles on its birthday cake, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is inviting the community to a virtual front-row seat for a celebration of the American Jewish spirit.

On Thursday, June 4, at 7 p.m., the acclaimed theater company The Braid will debut *L’Chaim America!*, a live performance broadcast directly to your home via Zoom.

For nearly twenty years, The Braid has served as the “Go-To Jewish Story Company,” mastering a unique hybrid of storytelling and professional theater. Their mission is simple yet profound: to dramatize the diverse, lived experiences of the Jewish people. In this special production, they turn their lens toward the “America

we know in our hearts,” offering a collection of poignant and humorous contemporary stories that reflect the beauty of our shared identity.

The evening features a 65-minute live performance by professional actors, followed by an engaging moderated Q&A session. It is an opportunity to look back at two and a half centuries of history through a distinctly Jewish lens, finding inspiration in the struggles and triumphs that have shaped the diaspora in America.

Registration is required to receive the private Zoom link. Sign up online on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Once registered, keep an eye on your inbox – a confirmation email with all the necessary information to join will be sent to you two days before the show.

Don't miss this chance to raise a glass to the stories that bind us together. L’Chaim, America!

Current Events Seminar, with Dr. Steven Rubin Returns for the Summer

In person and followed by kosher community lunch

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 11 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.

For each session, Dr. 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.

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 (Wednesday). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60, \$7 for all others.

Additional seminars will be held on July 16 and August 20.



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...”.

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.



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Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

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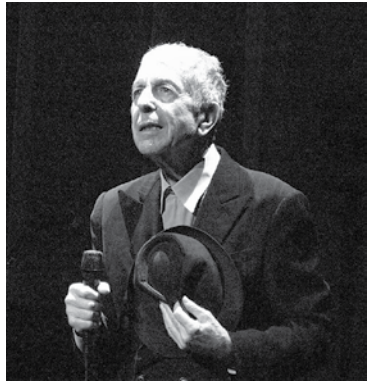
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Your Federation Presents

Halleluyah! Laura Wetzler Explores the Soul of Leonard Cohen



Hallelu-oo-oo-oooo-oooyah

his deep Jewish roots and his later Buddhist branches. Attendees can expect a soulful blend of performance and storytelling that illuminates how Cohen's spiritual identity shaped the "musical cultural heritage" of America.

Following the program, the spirit of connection continues with a home-cooked lunch served around our community table. It is a wonderful opportunity to discuss the morning's music and share a meal with friends old and new.

To join us for lunch, advance reservations are required. Please call the Federation at (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. on Wednesday, June 17 (the day before the program). A suggested donation of \$3 is requested for adults over age 60, and \$7 for all others.

This program is made possible through the generous support of our community donors. We look forward to seeing you there for a morning of music, poetry, and community.

PITTSFIELD – Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is proud to welcome back acclaimed singer, songwriter, and guitarist Laura Wetzler for a profound musical journey through the life of a legend. On Thursday, June 18 at 10:30 a.m., Wetzler will present "Halleluyah: The Music and Poetry of Leonard Cohen" at Kneset Israel.

Please note the early start time of 10:30 a.m. for this special multimedia event.

Wetzler, a celebrated recording artist and lecturer known for her deep dives into multicultural world music, has spent years studying the intersections of faith and art. In this presentation, she explores how Leonard Cohen's hauntingly beautiful body of work was fed by

Federation's Dara Kaufman Selected to Participate in JFNA's Strategic Leadership in Fundraising

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is proud to announce that Executive Director Dara Kaufman was selected for the 2026 cohort of Jewish Federations' Strategic Leadership in Fundraising Program.

The program, which is made possible through a grant from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, and is an initiative of Jewish Federations' Fundraising Institute in partnership with the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University. Thirty senior level Fundraising professionals are selected each year to participate.

Attendees are nominated by their local Federation's CEO, CDO, or Board Chair, and are recognized for being visionary fundraising leaders who can think outside the box to achieve ambitious results.

"We could not be prouder that Dara has been accepted to represent our community at the Strategic Leadership in Fundraising Program," said Federation Board President Arlene Schiff, who nominated Kaufman for the program. "She has shown the innovative spirit and passion to take our Federation's fundraising efforts to new heights. This program is an excellent opportunity to hone those skills in new ways, to ensure that our Federation can continue to grow and meet the needs of our community."

Over three days of immersive, in-person learning at the Jewish United Fund of Chicago in April, these Federation professionals learned from The Fundraising School faculty and senior Jewish Federations of North America professionals. The sessions aimed to deepen their management of fundraising teams and strategies, particularly in the fields of:

- Design thinking
- Change management
- Balancing internal capacity with external opportunities
- Sustainability
- Ensuring strategic alignment with organizational strategies

Learn more about our Federation at jewishberkshires.org, and about Jewish Federations of North America at jewishfederations.org.

SUPER TZEDAKAH,

continued from page 1

Federation is there to lead when it is needed most. At a time of rising antisemitism and uncertainty, Federation is called upon to convene, coordinate, and respond. Your support ensures that we can stand as a steady, visible presence, advocating on behalf of our community, addressing incidents, and strengthening the relationships that help keep us safe.

Your gift also extends far beyond our local community. It allows us to remain steadfast in supporting humanitarian relief for those under attack in Israel and for vulnerable Jewish communities around the world. In moments of crisis, your support ensures that help can be immediate, meaningful, and sustained.

At the same time, your support is meeting rising needs across our community, expanding social services, increasing assistance to individuals and families in crisis, and serving a growing number of participants through our kosher meals on wheels program.

This is what your partnership makes possible.

This year's expanded \$1.6 million Annual Campaign goal reflects the true scope of this increased responsibility.

Your gift today is an investment in safety, in resilience, and in creating the vibrant and strong Jewish community we want for ourselves, our children, and for generations to come.

Now is the moment to step forward and make a meaningful gift to the 2026 Annual Campaign.

Every gift matters, and your past support has made a meaningful difference. Today, the scope of need requires even more. We invite you to consider increasing your commitment this year if you are able, so that together we can meet this moment with the strength it demands.

If you are new to our community or considering your first gift to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, we warmly welcome your support and your involvement. Your participation helps strengthen and sustain Jewish life here in ways that are immediate, meaningful, and lasting.

Together, we will ensure that Berkshire Jewish life continues to be filled with purpose, compassion, and joy.

Open Doors All Along the Journey – Chris and Molly Meador, Super Tzedakah Week Co-Chairs

"Federation has played such a meaningful role in our family's life," says Chris Meador, "and being part of this is our way of giving back."

Chris's wife and Super Tzedakah Week co-chair, Molly Meador, was for three years Federation's coordinator of PJ Library and volunteers, a job that helped the family relocate to the Berkshires during the unsettled days of the Covid-19 pandemic. When they arrived, they toured homes for sale while "dressed in hazmat suits." As for himself, he says, "You know, I'm a Jew named Chris – @AJewNamedChris on Instagram – so I didn't come into this tribe by accident. Federation is the reason I went to Israel in 2022 for the first time coming out of my conversion and really getting to experience that piece of my Judaism."

Chris cites how his sons, Theo and Benny, have been educated at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire's religious school, one beneficiary of the \$90,000 Federation directs to Jewish education in the Berkshires. This summer, both will be going to Eisner Camp in Great Barrington and, Chris asserts, "I want to say it out loud, full stop – they wouldn't be going to camp without Federation." This year, Federation has allocated \$80,000 to help ensure that every child from our community who wants to go to Jewish summer camp can have this powerful and transformative experience.

"At every turn," says Molly, "Federation met us where we were at. The doors are open wherever you are in your Jewish journey, and that is really important to us as a family that was interfaith, and that is now fully Jewish."

In fact, this summer Chris will be making another stop on that journey when he celebrates his bar mitzvah at Hevreh. When asked what compelled him to take that next step, Chris answered: "So – I love a hora." Even more than that was the acceptance his family has felt from the Berkshire Jewish community as a whole, and he adds that: "A continual source of strength to us is that there are resources here, many of which are established by Federation or funded by Federation, that allow us to feel seen as the Jews that we are and want to be seen as."

The Meadors were part of the great Covid migration to the Berkshires from large cities in 2020. "We left Brooklyn knowing we needed to leave the city," remembers Molly, "but not knowing where we were going to go. It was very important to us to find some place with a strong Jewish life, with a cultural life and politically like-minded life in a place was vaguely equidistant from New York and Boston. That is the Berkshires. But we had no connection to the Berkshires, unlike many people

SUPER TZEDAKAH,
continued on page 7



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Your Federation Presents

SUPER TZEDAKAH,

continued from page 6

who moved here at that time. The fact that we ended up in place that is so clearly the right place for us to be at this moment was really providence, really *bashert*.”

At previous stops in Seattle and New York, the Meadors, whose “guiding star has always been raising a Jewish family and cultural and community connection,” were active in Jewish life and cultivated close friendships among other parents. Although their Berkshire move was a bit of a journey into uncharted waters, they found unexpected connections to many members of our Jewish community, including having been next-door neighbors in Brooklyn to Hevreh’s Rabbi Jodie Gordon, although they did not know each other then.

Hevreh has been central to their Jewish lives since they arrived, but Molly observes that within the Berkshires, “whatever way you choose to be Jewishly involved, there is a way to be involved. And I think that that happens through programming by Federation and within the congregations. The congregations in the Berkshires are disparate, and Federation really is the glue that holds everyone together.”

There are resources here, many of which are established by Federation or funded by Federation, that allow us to feel seen as the Jews that we are.

~ Chris Meador

As a Federation employee, Molly’s role allowed her to develop relationships with PJ Library families and our stellar volunteers. When she started, “we were coming out of Covid, and there was this beautiful movement of people and families who were new to the Berkshires. PJ Library activities became a great entree for people to get to know each other and to get out in the world. Those months of coming out of isolation and quarantine provided such a great opportunity for people to come together again, especially for the really young kids who had not gotten to participate in group events because of what was going on in the world.”

She adds that the essence of PJ Library is “doing fantastic activities around this shared love of Judaism, of the culture and of the books. In a place where our kids are truly minorities in their school environments, to have this opportunity to be in a place to come together and say, ‘you know, I’m in a room full of people all celebrating Purim, and I might go to school tomorrow and nobody knows what that means. But here today, celebrating Purim together is an amazing thing.’ It bolsters their Jewish identity for them to look around and say, ‘I am among people for whom this is a shared experience.’”

In terms of volunteers, Molly says, “what sticks with me is the Rosh Hashanah and Purim care packages delivered to people who may not be actively

participating in Federation programming, just to let them know that they are not forgotten, that they are still part of our community. Being able to do that brings back people who volunteer every year and also brings in new people who want to be a part of that.”

Molly now works in development at Barrington Stage Company, which aligns with her background in theater. Chris worked in marketing before arriving in the Berkshires, and now is an AI and leadership consultant and founder of Yes And Thinking (yesandthinking.com). Both acknowledge that the Berkshires can be a challenging place for people in mid-career, not only because of the realities of the local economy but also because a lot of people work remotely from their homes. Folks are spread out across the county, and those who aren’t raising families may have a harder time meeting people. Federation is addressing that need by establishing “connection points” like the Berkshire Jewish Collective for younger adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s.

Molly recalls how during her time at Federation, she appreciated the opportunity to “program throughout the county. It’s easy to get focused on South County if that’s where you live, and if you live in Pittsfield, everything you do is around Pittsfield, and North County is the same.” By bringing people together in different parts of the Berkshires, Federation provides “the opportunity to open our eyes to what exists around us and what are the hidden gems all across the county that we can take advantage of.”

She adds that with the wealth of online programs offered year-round, “Federation doesn’t let your location stand in the way of your being connected and involved. Federation offers so many amazing opportunities to connect in different ways whether you are here year-round or only during the summer months.”

Both Chris and Molly will be traveling around the county in May and June to meet with the different congregations to share their story and support for Federation’s Annual Campaign. The highlight this year, as it is every year, will be Jewish Community Day at High Lawn Farm on June 7.

“Jewish Community Day stands out as one of the best programs we do because it brings families together to show the multigenerational aspect of the Federation community and the Berkshire community,” Molly says.

Their overarching message, as Chris puts it, is that “Molly and I feel really lucky to have this Federation in the Berkshires. Not every Jewish community has this kind of support, and it has had a real, lasting impact on our family. Being part of this has also helped me see just how much Dara and this small but mighty Federation team do for all of us.”

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Climb Every Mountain!

Celebrate Shavuot in nature with PJ Library

Though Passover is long in the rearview mirror, in the spirit of the Pesach Seder we're retelling the story of PJ Library's fantastic Pre-Passover Palooza Art Party! Ten families learned together and got creative making colorful Miriam's Cups and afikomen bags to bring home for their very own Seders while listening to some great Passover tunes! It was wonderful to see families coming together to celebrate Passover and Jewish joy here in the Berkshires. A HUGE thank you to The Foundry in West Stockbridge for being such amazing hosts!

And though Purim is even longer in the rearview mirror, PJ Library families celebrated the holiday with a Royal Tea filled with delicious hamentashen, creative crown-making, and special story time. Together we learned about the courage of Queen Esther and how each of us can be brave, strong, and proud of who we are.

Join PJ Library at Mass Audubon Pleasant Valley on Sunday, May 17 at 1:30 p.m., for a joyful Shavuot and Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) celebration! In the spirit of climbing Mount Sinai and receiving the 10 Commandments, we'll take a gentle nature walk, decorate stones with kind words and affirmations, and enjoy yummy bagels with cream cheese and JAHM!

Work With Federation! Seeking PJ Library Coordinator (Part-time)

Join the Federation team as our next PJ Library Coordinator! Help connect local families raising young children to Jewish life through books, programs, and community-building experiences. See the house ad on page 25.

Cream Cheese & JAHM
 PJ Library Celebrates Shavuot & Jewish American Heritage Month
 Sunday, May 17
 1:30 - 3 PM
 Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

Jewish Federation PJ Library

Purim Royal Tea Party



Pre-Passover Palooza Art Party



ENTERTAINMENT

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LOCAL NEWS

Jewish Women's Foundation of the Berkshires Solicits 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 the basic needs of those they serve by providing 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 \$7,500. Only organizations with registered 501(C)3 status may apply. The application can be accessed at jewishberkshires.org/jewish-womens-foundation/jwf-grant-proposals. You can also use the QR Code below.

The deadline for submission is **May 31, 2026**. Final decisions will be announced in September.

In 2025, the Foundation awarded \$140,000 to 28 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.



Hevreh Seniors to be Honored at Shavuot Confirmation Service

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will celebrate the festival of Shavuot and the ritual of Confirmation on Friday, May 22, at 6 p.m. The evening marks the seasonal celebration of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai while honoring the ongoing commitment to Jewish learning by the community's youth.

This year's graduating confirmands are Ava Mozian and Sadie Honig-Briggs. Both students have been lifelong members of the Hevreh community, notably celebrating their B'not Mitzvah during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and evolving into prominent young leaders within the congregation.

The festive Shavuot Shabbat service will be led by the confirmands alongside their peers in the 8th through 12th-grade classes. A highlight of the evening will include personal Divrei Torah (words of Torah) and reflections shared by Mozian and Honig-Briggs.

In keeping with Shavuot tradition, the community is invited to a celebratory dairy oneg following the service.

ENTERTAINMENT

Books in the Berkshires



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One Story

Your generous contributions to Federation’s Annual Campaign lead to meaningful initiatives in Berkshire County that educate local students about bias and antisemitism. Here is one story of how a local teacher partnered with Federation and brought engaging and impactful programs to her school in Sheffield.

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

In February, the Berkshire Jewish Voice reported on how Lindsey Brown, a science teacher at Mount Everett Regional School in Sheffield, took the initiative to partner with Jewish Federation of the Berkshires through our Hate Has No Home Here initiative. The school has also taken advantage of the resources provided by the Changemakers for Good program – funded locally by Federation – which teaches students strategies that facilitate discussions with their peers around issues such as bias and antisemitism.



Mount Everett students with performers of 3RD GEN

In February, the school welcomed choreographer Shany Dagan for 3RD GEN – A Survivor’s Story, one day after dancers Yochai Greenfeld and Morgana Mauney and multi-instrumentalist Luke Wygodny performed the piece at Jacob’s Pillow, a program co-sponsored by the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County and Federation. 3RD GEN incorporates interviews that Dagan’s maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather recorded at Yad Vashem – both stories are gut-wrenchingly violent and heartbreaking, and no

doubt represented the first time many of the students had been exposed to firsthand survivor testimonies.

A talkback followed the performance, during which students asked Dagan pointed questions about her grandparents’ Holocaust experiences. They also wanted to know more about the creative process – how Dagan conceived the piece, how Wygodny composed the music, and how the dancers inhabited their roles. Experiencing the performance with an audience of enthusiastic and thoughtful teenagers demonstrated the effectiveness of exploring difficult and important stories outside a classroom setting. Kudos to Sherry Londy for bringing 3RD GEN to the Berkshires and sponsoring the performance at Mount Everett.

In March, the Massachusetts Mobile Museum of Tolerance (MMOT), an initiative of the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, visited the Mount Everett campus for two days of workshops. The MMOT is funded by the Massachusetts state legislature and our Federation has partnered locally with Berk12 to make its powerful educational experience available to all middle and high schools in the Berkshires.

While the MMOT offers engaging multimedia approaches to telling stories about the Holocaust in Europe and the Civil Rights movement in the United States, even more impressive to me were the erudition and didactic facility of the two presenters, lead educator Brian Strafach and associate Elijah Cohen. Using a 1937 painting of Hitler’s Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, “In the beginning was the Word,” the two educators led the 9th grade students through the

I was not only impressed by how perceptive the students could be...but also by how much history they already were aware of and how eager they were to learn more.

artwork’s propagandistic messaging not only to teach them about the history, but also to impart messages relevant to their own experiences and impressions of the unsettled times in which they are growing up.

The students picked up on a key point the educators imparted about stereotyping – if a bad actor can get you to believe one big lie, they can probably get you to believe other lies. They screened a short film with footage from the 1930s and 1940s, after warning the students that what they were going to see was not AI and was in fact real acts of violence and images of dead bodies. Students were given the opportunity to opt out, but in both sessions, none did. Indeed, in their discussion of the film, they seized on the idea that it was in fact ordinary people who enabled the horrors of the Holocaust, not just their leaders. Strafach and Cohen then presented them with images from a children’s book of the era that portrayed Jews as poisonous mushrooms. The students were quick to recognize how teaching hatred to children



Students in the MMOT with lead educator Brian Strafach

ONE STORY, continued on page 23



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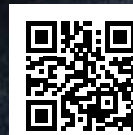


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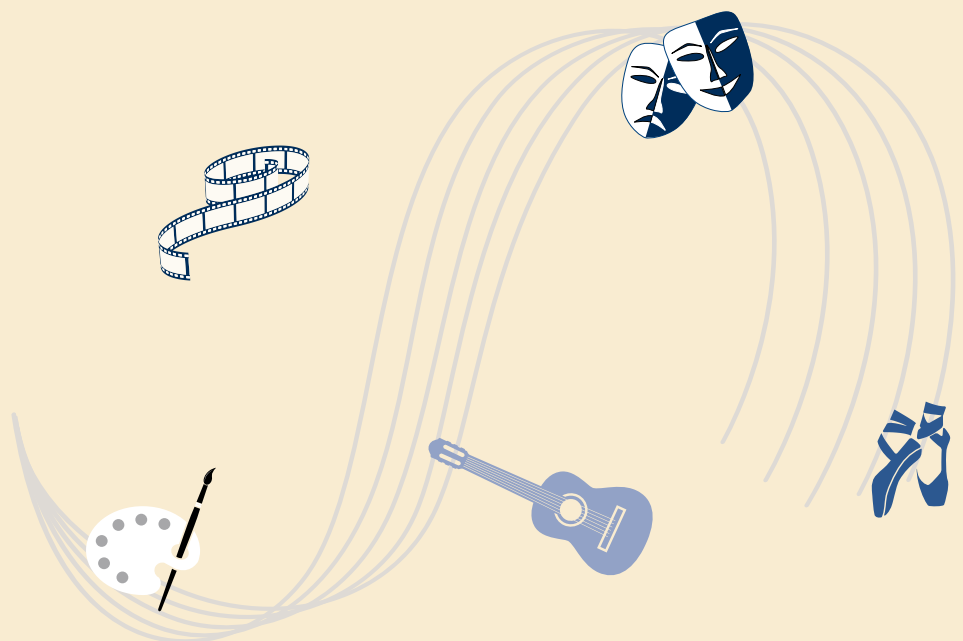
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LOCAL NEWS

Shavuot with Spirit and Song at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites the community to join the CBI choir and musicians for a musical celebration of Shavuot commemorating the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. The concert will take place at CBI on Saturday, May 23 at 2 p.m.

Musical selections include settings of psalms (from traditional Sephardic settings to Ashkenazi melodies of the late 1800s), excerpts from the Book of Ruth, and an R&B number about making it to the mountaintop.

With spirit and song, celebrate reaching the spiritual pinnacle of Sinai – and the many musical forms into which Jewish sacred music can flow. The concert will be followed by a potluck reception. Dairy foods and fruit are traditional; bring a dish to share.

RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/shavuot-2026/

Pittsfield Congregations to Study Decalogue at Joint Shavuot Tikkun

PITTSFIELD – Rabbis from across the Berkshires will lead a contemporary exploration of the Ten Commandments during a joint Tikkun Leil Shavuot on Thursday evening, May 21.

The event, hosted at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road), brings together leadership from both Knesset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim. Rabbis Val Lieber, David Weiner, and Pam Wax have each selected one of the traditional prohibitions – including stealing, idolatry, false witness, and coveting – to examine through a modern lens.

The Tikkun Leil Shavuot is a traditional vigil dedicated to the study of Torah, commemorating the revelation at Mount Sinai. Following the study sessions and a brief Maariv service, the community will celebrate with the customary Shavuot dairy feast, featuring cheesecake and ice cream. The tradition of eating dairy symbolizes the Torah's role in nourishing the Jewish people like mother's milk.

The program begins at 7 p.m. Attendees are asked to pre-register at knessetisrael.org/RSVP to ensure ample study materials and refreshments.

Congregation Beth Israel Spring Shabbat

NORTH ADAMS – Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires (CBI) continues its rich schedule of Shabbat worship, learning, and community programs through the spring season, with offerings both in person and on Zoom.

Shabbat Services

Regular Shabbat Morning Services will be held Saturday, May 23 at 9:30 a.m. at CBI. Services will feature words of Torah, prayer, study, and song in the spirit of Shabbat's sweetness, framed by the sanctuary's sweeping views of the natural world.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services take place on the Fridays of May 15 and 29 at 7 p.m. at CBI. All are welcome to usher in Shabbat with prayer, music, poetry, and Torah teaching. On some weeks, the CBI choir and musicians will join Rabbi Rachel Barenblat in leading services, offering a reflective transition from the week into sacred time.

Jewish Journeys Shabbat

On Saturday, May 9 at 10 a.m., join CBI for a special family Shabbat interweaving the morning service with opportunities for Jewish Journeys students to share what they have learned. Services will be led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat and Rabbi Jarah Greenfield. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share following the conclusion of services. All are welcome! *This event is a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel and Nefesh, with major financial support from Sally Gottesman and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation as well as funding from other private donors.*

Soul Spa Torah Study

A weekly Zoom "Soul Spa" Torah Study meets Saturdays at 10 a.m. on May 16, 23 & 30. Jointly led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat (CBI) and Rabbi David Markus (Congregation Shir Ami), the group explores the weekly parashah through women's commentaries and midrash. Mourner's Kaddish is included when there is a yahrzeit.

RSVPs for all services are requested at cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events. Some dates may be subject to change; congregants are encouraged to check the calendar for updates.

Shavuot is a Peak Holiday in the Berkshires

LENOX – On Friday, May 22, the community is invited to celebrate the beautiful holiday of Shavuot with Chabad of the Berkshires. The event will feature the reading of the Ten Commandments along with a festive dairy luncheon and grand ice cream party. Services begin at 10 a.m., with the Ten Commandments read at noon, followed by the festivities.

At the crossroads of religion and cuisine, Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai more than 3,300 years ago. Over time, it has also become known for its rich tradition of dairy foods.

"As the Torah was given and the laws of kosher dining were first received," explains Chabad co-director Rabbi Levi Volovik, "the Jewish people were not yet capable of properly preparing meat, and so they ate dairy. The rest is history."

Today, the holiday is marked by an array of beloved dairy dishes, including cheesecakes, pesto pastas, lasagna, and classic cheese blintzes.

"When people think of Jewish holidays, Passover, Chanukah, and Yom Kippur often come to mind," says co-director Sara Volovik. "Nevertheless, Shavuot is one of Judaism's major holidays and was historically a pilgrimage festival, when all of Israel would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate at the Temple."

She adds, "No, it isn't all about the food. What matters most is that the community comes together to hear the Ten Commandments and celebrate the Torah – but the good food certainly helps!"

The event is open to all, regardless of background or affiliation. Chabad of the Berkshires is located at 17 West Street in Lenox.

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

Celebrate With Temple Anshe Amunim this Shavuot

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim invites you to a community simcha celebrating the one-year anniversary of Rabbi Val Lieber and 2026 TAA Member of the Year, Michael Duffy.

The celebration coincides with Shavuot, on Friday, May 22 at 5:30 p.m. There will be a holiday service followed by a vegetarian dinner catered by Jae's and traditional Shavuot desserts made by Lynn Anstett of Monarch Butterfly Bakery.

Cost is \$36 for adults, \$18 for teens 12-18, and no-cost for children under 12. Register at: tinyurl.com/simcha-2.

Temple Anshe Amunim is at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield. For more information, call (413) 442-5910 or email: templeoffice@ansheamunim.org.

Award-Winning Scholar Miriam Udel to Explore Yiddish Childhood at KI Brunch

Then join a community outing to the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst



Miriam Udel

PITTSFIELD – Professor Miriam Udel, a two-time National Jewish Book Award winner and alumna of the Knesset Israel (KI) Preschool, will return to her home congregation on Sunday, June 7 at 10 a.m., for a special brunch-and-learn presentation titled "How *Mensch*es Were Made in Yiddish."

Udel, the Judith London Evans Director of the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies at Emory University, will discuss the bold 20th-century project of Yiddish educators to create a "better world" (*a shenere un besere velt*) through children's literature. Her talk will unpack how these texts served as a foundation for ethical formation and cultural transmission.

A prolific translator and scholar, Udel was ordained in 2019 by Yeshivat Maharat. Her most recent work, *Modern Jewish Worldmaking Through Yiddish Children's Literature*, received the 2026 National Jewish Book Award.

The brunch is generously sponsored by Lawrence, Sarah, Jacob, and Kaetah Klein in honor of June Lippa and the Kleins' 28th wedding anniversary. Registration is required via the KI website (knessetisrael.org).

Community Trip Planned to Yiddish Book Center in Amherst

Following Professor Miriam Udel's lecture on Yiddish literature, the local community is invited to a guided tour of the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst on Tuesday, June 9.

The tour, which departs from the Knesset Israel parking lot at 9:15 a.m., offers a firsthand look at the preservation of Yiddish culture. Highlights include a viewing of children's books referenced in Udel's talk and the "mural in the attic" – a historic piece recovered from an old synagogue in North Adams that was previously featured in the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

The cost is \$12 per person (dropping to \$10 for groups of 11 or more). Participants may also join an optional group lunch in Amherst following the tour. Those interested in attending or carpooling should contact Rabbi Pam Wax at rabbipwax@knessetisrael.org by May 20.



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MAKE YOUR GIFT OR PLEDGE TODAY!

Your gift to Jewish Federation supports the most vulnerable, strengthens Jewish identity in our youth, fights rising antisemitism, and builds joyful Jewish life for people of all ages across the Berkshires, in Israel, and beyond.



JEWISH LIFE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

You help young families embrace Jewish values and traditions while building a supportive community with Jewish peers through family programming, PJ Library, and volunteer opportunities.



RESOURCES TO FIGHT ANTISEMITISM

You support young people to stand up against hate through anti-bias education in our public schools. You also combat antisemitism through our Hate Has No Home Here campaign, community programming, and local advocacy.

DIGNITY & COMPASSION

You provide older adults and homebound individuals with nutritious meals and programming served up with a side of companionship and compassion through our *Connecting With Community* program and Kosher Meals on Wheels.



JEWISH EDUCATION & VALUES

You nurture a strong Jewish future by providing a high-quality, meaningful, and affordable Jewish education for hundreds of children through critical grants to all of our local Jewish religious schools.



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

You strengthen, sustain, and connect our community through hundreds of educational programs, holiday celebrations, and the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, which bring people together and engage them in meaningful Jewish life.



A STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY

You help young people build strong Jewish identities and become future leaders through scholarships for Jewish summer camp, and Israel experiences, as well as leadership development and holiday meals on college campuses.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

You help individuals facing unexpected challenges and life transitions receive the support and resources they need. You also provide a safety net of emergency assistance in our local community.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY

You provide a proactive voice in our community, schools, government, and media, as well as advocacy to address and respond to antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in our community. And state



A SECURE JEWISH COMMUNITY

You keep our community and our institutions safe through ongoing security trainings, building assessments, security grants, a community alert system, and the sharing of best practices to ensure we can freely and securely celebrate Jewish life.



CRISIS RESPONSE WORLDWIDE

When a crisis hits in Israel or around the world, you mobilize local resources to respond with immediate relief and longer-term recovery. From the October 7 attacks in Israel, to the war with Iran, to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, to the LA wildfires, you help deliver an SOS humanitarian response.

A CLOSE & CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

You connect the Berkshire Jewish Community with Israel through our Afula-Gilboa partnership. You also provide programs for at-risk students, shelter for abused women, and support services for disabled youth in Israel.



YOUNG ADULT INITIATIVE

You support adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s to create meaningful Jewish community and the next generation of Jewish leaders from the ground up with the Berkshire Jewish Collective, through Shabbat dinners, social meet-ups, and holiday celebrations.



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What Zionism Has Always Been

A visit with Partnership2Gether friends in Afula-Gilboa

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

This is Part 2 of a story on a recent visit to Israel. Part 1 might appear in a future issue of the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

After my gracious host Itzhaki Golan and I shared breakfast on my first morning in Ram-On, we boarded his ATV for a tour of the moshav. I'd arrived in darkness the evening before and was for first time soaking in the surroundings – citrus trees heavy with fruit, almond groves just coming into early February bloom, green hills in the distance.

"So how far do you think we are from the border," Itzhaki asked.

I shrugged – no clue.

"I didn't want to mention it last night, in case it would prevent you from having a good night's sleep," he said, and then drove the 200 yards to the barbed wire-topped fence separating Ram-On from the West Bank territories. He pointed to the nearest town, Silat al-Harithiya, not far across the fence and then toward the city of Jenin, a perennial hotbed of unrest situated 10 kilometers south-east of Ram-On. Like many of the older residents of the Gilboa region I met on my visit, Itzhaki shared memories of a time when neighbors got along better – Israelis used to visit Jenin to have their cars repaired or to go to the dentist or even to talk shop with Arab farmers nearby. While those days are long over, Gilboa itself is a place where Jews and Muslims co-exist – the population of the region today is approximately 35 percent Israeli Arab.



At the border fence

The kibbutzim overrun by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023 had been approximately 4 kilometers from the Gaza border, Itzhaki explained. Ram-On is right against a fence that, although constantly monitored by cameras and well-patrolled by armored vehicles, does not exactly seem impregnable. Like most of the Israelis I spoke to during my 11 days in Israel, Itzhaki spoke about how much worse Oct. 7 could have been had coordinated attacks been launched from places like Jenin and Lebanon. The vulnerability of a place like Ram-On was uncomfortably exposed. Moreover, Israeli actions in Jenin after Oct. 7, 2023 revealed a terrorist infrastructure widespread enough that one person with a thoroughgoing understanding of security in the region described the city as "the little Gaza." As I stood along the border fence, it was impossible not to transpose

images of the horrors and atrocities upon the peaceful and productive moshav of Ram-On. Later in my visit, I'd visit the uninhabitable ruin of Kibbutz Be'eri and was struck by how similar it was in scale to Ram-On.

The Israelis I spoke to were angry and heartbroken about Oct. 7, directing blame at the terrorists but also, in varying degrees, at their leadership and even at themselves for being distracted from the dangers across the border. But Israelis are *bitter* about the betrayal by the Palestinians who worked within Israel who provided intelligence to the Oct. 7 attackers – and who knows how much information about places like Ram-On.

And yet, as Itzhaki told me, "This proximity is what Zionism has always been."

I've been publishing stories about the Afula-Gilboa region for years now, since our Federation joined on to the Partnership2Gether Global Network of The Jewish Agency for Israel. I felt frustrated editing these stories without having any knowledge of what the place looked like or felt like, and while I only spent two days there, I did have a chance to see how our Partnership2Gether dollars are being used and to meet some of the fine people doing the hard work. One of them was my host, Achiya Ben Ari Buganim, director of the Afula-Gilboa-Southern New England Consortium (SNEC), who had visited the Berkshires on a snowy January evening just weeks before my visit.

While I was in Israel in early February, the probability of war with Iran was much on people's minds – when speaking to me about the situation, nobody expressed hope that conflict

would be avoided, only that they hoped it wouldn't happen before I was safely back in America. The Gilboans I've been in touch with since Operation Roaring Lion began on February 28 report that they are indeed feeling the strain, even though the region has been relatively peaceful. Visiting Gilboa allowed me to apprehend the vulnerability of Israel's Northern District, and to meet the people who use our community's contribution to deliver vital services and support while the conflict rages and eventually in its aftermath – they are beyond grateful for what we do and that we care.



Meeting Andrian Judro at the Municipal Art Gallery



My first stop was the Municipal Art Gallery Afula, whose director Andrian Judro oriented me to the city's history from its ancient settlement through its centennial as a Jewish settlement in 2025. Key events in the Bible took place in the Jezreel Valley, including the tale from Judges 4 about Deborah and Barak defeating the Canaanites, which was recounted in the haftarah for Parshat Beshalach that we read in shul just one week earlier.

At the turn of the last century, Afula was a railway hub connecting Haifa and

Damascus to cities like Nazareth and Jenin, with considerable strategic value during World War I. It was established as a Jewish settlement in the 1920s after much of the surrounding Jezreel Valley – one of the most fertile agricultural regions of Eretz Yisrael – was purchased by Jewish organizations. Early Jewish settlers were from Poland and the United States and Afula was designed to be the municipal hub of the region. The town was laid out in a circular pattern – its original center felt to me like a '15-minute city' of the type championed by many of today's urban planners.

"Afula was established as a place for Jews," Judro explained, and efforts to largely keep it so have been a source of occasional tension between local Jewish and Arab residents – 2022 census figures show that 90 percent of the city's population are Jews, with Israeli Arabs mostly make their homes in Gilboa's five Arab villages. Afula is a diverse city that absorbed immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union in the 1980s. Judro immigrated from Eastern Europe and is maybe the biggest Afula booster I met during my visit – he proudly points out that while polls show that 45 percent of Israelis describe themselves as happy, in Afula the number is 70 percent. The walls of his expansive gallery express his love of place and are bedecked with colorful paintings of the Jezreel Valley and nearby Mount Gilboa, some of them his own.

The city has expanded considerably beyond its original layout and is now attracting Israelis (among them many religious Jews) from other parts of the country who are seeking affordable housing. Accompanying Gilboa residents' cultural diversity has been sharper disparities in economic status and more need for social services than in other parts of Israel. It is those issues addressed by the staff at Youth Futures, a Jewish Agency positive-intervention program for at-risk youth, a third of which is funded by philanthropy, another third by the local municipality in which it operates, and the rest by the Israeli government.

Anat Katina, director of the Afula family center, says the mentorship model used by Youth Futures rests on four principles. A professional *local* mentor – who is not a teacher or a therapist – works with a child and his or her family in a long-term relationship, at least three years. "Many of these families don't know what help is available or even how to ask," she explains. "We teach them how to get the services to which they are entitled." Second, intervention is holistic, with home visits and a presence in the clients' schools. Social skills, explains Anat, were eroded first by the Covid pandemic and then by ongoing military conflicts that inhibited teens' normal socializing, education, and socialization. A third principle for Youth Futures is to also work on the parents' issues through education and workshops. "Afula wasn't evacuated, and in some ways that was worse," Anat says, as family conflicts within households were unseen and unaddressed, particularly if parents became unemployed during work stoppages. Moreover, Afula residents did not receive the same kind of support and tax breaks that evacuees from northwest Israel received, even as many of those evacuees were temporarily resettled in the Gilboa region.

Finally, Youth Future mentors "work on what a child is good at," says Anat. In initial encounters, she says, they don't let a parent out of the room "until they can say one thing that a child is good at" – ruefully adding that it's not always easy getting there.

Ruthie, a young mentor whose family is of Ethiopian origin, told me that "something broke everywhere in Israel on October 7. Everyone felt unprotected." At-risk children who saw their parents' struggling to cope have been acting out themselves, creating greater needs and more stress for mentors like herself, particularly because Youth Futures is intended to be a prevention program, not crisis management. "Emotionally vulnerable families are complex," she says, adding that she has encountered problems with delinquency, domestic violence, parents in jail, and sexual abuse.

"Israeli society wants to deal with these problems," says Anat, "but doesn't have the resources or the time. Israel is occupied with other things. We understand. We get help, but if the country had answers, they wouldn't need us." And, she stresses, they need and appreciate the help they get from us.



As the "honored guest" at the Jewish Agency's *aliyah* village for Ethiopians at Kibbutz Beit Alfa, I had the privilege of saying the *mezonet* blessing and cutting into the *dabo* bread just out of the oven, which we washed down with freshly brewed *buna* (coffee). Set against the backdrop of the Gilboa hills, the absorption center was sited in this rural area rather than a city to ease the transition of these new *olim* in a landscape reminiscent of Ethiopia.



Slicing the *dabo* at Beit Alfa

Moran Abudraham-Ohana, the site director, explained that recent Ethiopian *olim* face different challenges than did the immigrants who arrived in Operation Moses (1985) and Operation Solomon (1991). The Ethiopians who arrived earlier possessed a stronger Jewish identity than the 3,000 or so newcomers brought to Israel as part of the recent Operation Tzur Yisrael, who grew up distant from any kind of Jewish community. Still, she said, "they were waiting to come to Israel. They dreamed of coming to Israel." The Jewish Agency does its best to match new *olim* to one of the 15 absorption centers it operates in Israel, but when they come to Israel, "all is different, including their skin color." In the first year, the adults learn how to interact with the state to receive benefits, while the children enter school at the grade level appropriate to their age and start to participate in at least two extracurricular activities. "Parents take longer to adapt," said Moran. "Children do better."

There is a rabbi who lives in the village with his family to instruct them in Jewish practice at the synagogue; ultimately, they will undergo a conversion ritual. In the second year, the adults who can go to work – The Jewish Agency

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ensures that their labor is not exploited and that they begin to save money to buy a house. They have mentors who teach them how to live in a contemporary setting. The residents of Beit Alfa generally remain for about 3.5 years, after which they tend to move to communities in the southern part of the country where they might have relatives.

But adjustment can be difficult on many levels beyond integrating into Israeli society – in the domestic realm, “Ethiopian fathers are like kings,” said Moran, “but in Israel, women are equal and so men feel less important.” Many find their social status reduced – she cited the situation of a man who was a supreme court justice in Ethiopia who could only work as a community moderator in Israel. “So many had dreams and found that when they got here, those dreams could not be fulfilled.” They are also prepared by staff for the racial profiling by the police that they might face.

In all 311 *olim*, 124 of them children, were living in Beit Alfa when I visited. The sun was setting and a fire was being kindled for a pita bake for the kids. We walked through some of the small fields under cultivation – one of the farmers shared some leaves of gomen (collard greens) he grows and sells in a local market-place. The people I talked to were friendly and were impressed when I told them I had traveled through Ethiopia many years ago. Being in Beit Alfa transported me back to those African villages and it seemed almost impossible to imagine how these *olim* would emerge from this pastoral setting into Start-Up Nation.

But then I thought of Ruthie at Youth Futures, every inch a sabra, and of the Black IDF soldiers with strapped-on machine guns with whom I davened at the Kotel three days earlier. It had been long enough since I'd visited Israel that I had no real idea of how Ethiopian Jews had become Israeli Jews – something that has a chance to happen for the Beit Alfa kids, despite the many obstacles they will face. The reality of Jewish peoplehood is utterly different than it was when I grew up, and at Beit Alfa, I got a chance to witness the beginning of a transformation from African to Israeli. What is happening now is likely to be the last resettlement of Africans in Israel – unless some other lost branch of Jews turns up somewhere, we will never again see what the start of the process looked like. I felt lucky for having had the opportunity to do so – and grateful that our Federation has long supported these metamorphoses.



Itzhaki Golan is the president of Merhav Neshima BaEmek (breathing space in the valley) program at Kibbutz Geva and shares a generic story that captures the plight of IDF soldiers who return from combat suffering from PTSD and their families. You have a couple, married or not, perhaps with children or without. He goes to war. When he returns, he is no longer the same person. Maybe things were once fine, but now he has difficulty with anger management or with the children. Maybe he is isolating himself socially, trying to hide the PTSD from society – but his wife and children feel it. There is intense social pressure not to break up.

“Now he walks around always with a ‘Tisha B’Av’ face,” says Itzhaki – but what to do? The government understands the problem and NGOs like NATAL also provide funding, guidance, and support. “But we are not waiting for the government. Though there is enough money, we have to ensure that it gets to the right places.”

The initiative started approximately eight years ago to address the PTSD of victims of terror and IDF combat soldiers. The group’s work rests on three principles:

Everyone is aboard – the group’s outreach and impact are intended for all those affected, folks who may not know about the help available to them or who may even feel inhibited from getting help.

The space functions as a regional resource focused on providing direct support to Gilboans from within the local community – to the extent possible, cutting through red tape and other barriers.

Holistic treatment of the entire family, not just the member with PTSD – “dealing with PTSD is not a personal project.”

I met with Itzhaki at a group home within Kibbutz Geva, along with co-founder Noa Raz-Melamed and site manager Yael Ziv. It’s a secluded site outside of Afula that offers privacy for families creating community with peers. The site hosts workshops and therapy for its members, but just as crucially it is a space where participants can just drop in and chill – they’ll find a stocked refrigerator and a kitchen and outdoor grill where they can prepare dinners and gather for celebrations.

Itzhaki says that issues related to PTSD had long been an undercurrent in Israeli society. “The Holocaust, of course, was the mother of PTSD in Israel,” he says. After a conflict in Israel, traffic accidents spike. People are tense and “not focused. They are in another place,” says Itzhaki, himself a veteran who served for decades in an elite search and rescue unit of the Israel Air Force. Two events

brought the problem of PTSD to the fore of Israeli consciousness. First was the self-immolation of combat veteran Itzik Saidian on Israel’s Memorial Day in 2021; Saidian survived his burns and has become an advocate for soldiers with PTSD. Second, of course, was Oct. 7, 2023 – like never before, Israelis saw their fellow citizens on television talking about their trauma in the wake of the attack and later about the harrowing ordeals endured by hostages in Gaza.

When I asked the women present – Noa, Yael, and Achiya – if Israeli society prepared its women

to deal with the men in their lives who might come back from a war with PTSD, I was struck by the vehemence with which they answered that no, Israel culture did not do so in either a formal or informal manner. I was surprised – you mean, I asked, that mothers do not talk to their daughters about what could happen, even after generations of Israeli families facing similar problems? All three women said no. “I’m not sure why,” Noa said. “Maybe it’s just human nature to think it won’t happen to you.”

I have to admit that their answer surprised me. But it was echoed again the next day when I met with Daphna Dovev, CEO of BeMeitavi – The Ruth Vrobel Foundation, and Adi Bar-Shalev, who leads the group’s marketing. “BeMeitavi” means “at my best” and the group’s mission is to develop “a holistic, human-centered response to people coping with illness, crisis, and trauma.”

A main component of that approach is the HIBUK (“hug”) initiative that provides scholarships to students in health and care programs and connects them with individuals coping with chronic illness, training them to see the person and not just the condition. Another initiative, KAN (“here”), is a therapeutic emergency response framework staffed by professionals and coordinated with Israel’s healthcare, welfare, and government systems. KAN interacts with victims of trauma in the immediate aftermath of their experience, the goal being to stabilize the client and prevent the development of lasting PTSD. Along with the Municipality of Afula and Shchakim Community Center, BeMeitavi operates the Stronger Together Center in Beit Poznek for cancer survivors and their families, offering free classes and workshops.

Also in Afula, BeMeitavi facilitates connections among the wives of IDF soldiers called up for reserve duty, peer groups where the women can meet and commiserate with others in the same situation. “These women are told by others that they are lionesses,” says Daphna. “But what the women tell us is that they don’t want to hear that – they say ‘help us, don’t tell us we’re doing great.’” She cites as a great success a remote “Unleash the Power Within” event with motivational speaker Tony Robbins that brought together October 7 survivors, reserve soldiers, and caregivers to develop tools to build resilience and change mindsets.

Ultimately, says Daphna, BeMeitavi is dedicated to finding out what works in order to share holistic therapeutic strategies. She echoes Itzhaki Golan’s thoughts on the Holocaust, and how that most extreme of all Jewish traumas provided data on how people endure and recover from extreme situations and distress. The unique Israeli experience has also provided opportunities to observe and treat people who have experienced unimaginable duress and, unfortunately, “we see no end to the need.” But life more generally also provides more everyday challenges that BeMeitavi addresses, such as chronic illness. “The people we work with are not seen, often forgotten. We are trauma experts and what we do is like a laboratory. We want to give what we know to the rest of the world with big love.”



The next morning, I visited Gan Ner, another moshav pressed against the West Bank border. The reality of life for the 700 or so families in the village was brought home by the thick walls protecting the kindergarten from missiles – I couldn’t help thinking about the expanding efforts at home in the United States to harden the security at our Jewish spaces. Gan Ner is an outpost in a vulnerable location basically in the middle of nowhere and here we are in America needing similar kinds of protection. Once I would have seen that bunkered kindergarten and thought, “Ach, life in Israel.” When I visited Gan Ner, I thought, “Ach, life for us Jews.”

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Itzhaki Golan sharing how HaKfar supports soldiers and victims of terror with PTSD

Shabbat Across the Berkshires

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 12 at 6:00 p.m.

Hosted by

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Jewish Federation
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With JAFI’s Achiya Ben Ari Buganim (left) and Daphna Dovev and Adi Bar-Shalev of BeMeitavi

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I got a chance to look around inside the nearby security center, where an LED screen displays the feeds from security cameras positioned in and around the moshav. Round-the-clock patrols leave from this place, which was formerly a bomb shelter and is now the village armory housing dozens of machine guns that were obtained with private overseas funding after the October 7 attack. Kind of a grim place, yet one that's manned by folks who haven't lost their sense of

humor, as evidenced by the crude drawing on the wall of David Ben Gurion doing a handstand on the beach, based on a famous photograph.

Gan Ner was also home to probably the happiest place I visited in Gilboa, Dorot be-Gilboa Regional Center for Senior Citizens, which our Federation supports with a direct contribution. Itzik Hanam, a charming and effervescent man, is one of the senior staff at Dorot be-Gilboa, a hub of activities for older adults, from those still independent to those with physical and cognitive challenges. Dorot be-Gilboa hosts lectures, films, classes, crafts, physical exercise, coffee hours, and much more at the center and has a staff of four supported by 80 volunteers who provide at-home visits and meals for seniors unable to visit in person. Staff help the homebound install safety features, and counsel families making sensitive decisions about the levels of care their elders need. As public transportation is limited in a region as spread out as Gilboa, the center provides eight cars to pick up seniors throughout the region. "If we couldn't bring them here," says Hanam, "no one will."

In all, Hanam estimates that 2,000 seniors avail themselves of services provided by Dorot be-Gilboa. On top of the ordinary challenges of aging that they face, seniors have a much harder time adapting to the pressures of war time. Hanam says that many people are simply afraid to leave their homes, even for a stroll or to visit a friend. Seniors are susceptible to injury as they rush to the safety of a bomb shelter, so many simply sit tight as sirens wail; moreover, the home care aides they might have are instructed to keep themselves safe. "If you want to stay where you are, okay," says Hanam, "but you can't ask an aide to stay."

He adds, "We were under the misconception that no one would come during the war, but just the opposite – more come because they feel safe in the shelter." In recognition that dozens of seniors, many in varying states of incapacity, cannot be efficiently evacuated in an emergency, spaces like the gym have been built as reinforced bomb shelters and seniors conduct drills six times each year. Early in the previous war, the center closed, but kept its kitchen operational, preparing hundreds of meals each day and delivering them in cars protected by armor and bulletproof windows.

None of this comes cheap. Hanam says that the budget is around \$1.5 million per year – and that the funds received from our Federation and SNEC, a drop in the bucket in the scheme of things, are the only financial support they get from US organizations. Hanam says he really saw how much Dorot be-Gilboa's seniors value the center during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the facility had to close completely. Users who can afford it pay a fee of 3,000 shekels (around \$1,000) per year – and insisted on paying that amount during the pandemic even though they could not use the facilities.

My visit to Dorot be-Gilboa and conversation with Itzik Hanam provided me with a new understanding of how the Jewish community needs to reconceive its idea about our elder population. I, and probably most of us in the US who are above a certain age, hold the image of European immigrants and Holocaust survivors as comprising "the older generation" – but that's not so anymore. Most of those folks have passed. The older generation's members now are heroes who fought the 6 Day War and Yom Kippur War, who built up Israel from a poor, perennially imperiled backwater into a prosperous international force. It's perhaps easy to think of what they achieved as a subsequent chapter of Jewish history. I don't – I think the creation of the Jewish state is maybe the

most meaningful part of our Holocaust story, and not its last chapter, either. Visiting Dorot be-Gilboa made me proud that Israel (and our Federation) are honoring these people by providing them with a meaningful and dignified old age.

"The people here now are the people who built Israel," says Hanam. "Before they were here in Gilboa, there was nothing from here to Beit She'an but swamps. They built Israel."



Coffee hour at Dorot be-Gilboa – a happy place



For about five or six years, I had been assuring my pal Tanya Fredman on her annual summertime family visits to the Berkshires that whatever year we were in was *for sure* going to be the year that I visited her the Mishkan Museum of Art Ein Harod, where she works as an educator. But each time, *shana ha'zeh* remained *shana ha'bah*. So it was a true pleasure to walk with her through the light-filled galleries Mishkan, getting the guided tour of the permanent collection and a compelling retrospective of the career of Israeli artist Bianca Eshel-Gershuni.

I won't write too much about the Mishkan – Tanya has presented programs for our Federation and the BJV has spilled a lot of ink about it. I only want to share some of thoughts shared by Tanya and the museum's director, Orit Lev-Segev, on what the Mishkan meant then and means now. The families who started Kibbutz Ein Harod didn't come from Western Europe and its museum culture – they came from Ukraine and Russia, where communal life and culture centered around the synagogue. The kibbutz established its permanent home here in 1930, with 59 families still living in tents. By 1938, they founded the museum.



The synagogue at the Beit Alfa absorption center, with the rabbi and his children

"The swamps were still here, but the people wanted to find meaning," says Lev-Segev. "The question they grappled with was how to create a new nation. Their answer was with art." The museum's first project was to collect masterpieces, but after World War II, its mission became saving Jewish culture. I liked the distinction suggested in the way Lev-Segev phrased it – the urgency suggested by "saving" rather than "preserving" Jewish culture, because after the war that is what the project must have felt like.

The building – a gem of mid-century Modern architecture – was built in 1948. As much as it is a repository of Jewish art and culture, it upholds its civic role, most recently when 300 families were evacuated to Ein Harod from towns along the Lebanon border in 2023 and 2024. The museum re-opened two days after the October 7 attacks, asserting itself as a safe place where life could continue and art could serve as a palliative to the trauma and dislocation felt by evacuees and the Gilboa community. "Families evacuated from the north felt a certain shame at leaving home," says Lev-Segev. The museum became central to those evacuees' lives, particularly to the children. "They would tell us 'thank you for not judging us.'" While the museum asked for funding from Israel's Ministry of Education, "we did not get a penny. Only contributions from communities like the Berkshires enabled us to continue."

Tanya spoke of the previous outbreak of hostilities when she told me that the museum "is part of the chain connecting these children from the shelter back to regular life." The Mishkan, with our continued generous support, is serving the same purpose as this war continues.



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This event is open to leadership donors who make a gift of \$1,000 or more to Federation's 2026 annual campaign.



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Your Federation Presents



The Afula Youth Orchestra rehearsing

On my last evening in Afula, after a meeting with Deputy Head of the Gilboa Regional Council Daniel Benn that I will write about in the next issue of the BJV, my host Achiya took me to a rehearsal of the Afula Youth Orchestra, which is slated to pay a visit to our region in 2027.

I'd come to Israel this time not to sightsee, but rather to visit with family and just soak up the vibe of Israeli life. My time in Gilboa was packed and it was work taking it all in, interviewing people in both English and Hebrew. So it was soothing to sit back and listen to music performed by talented teenagers inside the empty auditorium of the Afula Cultural Center – just the kind of experience I enjoyed most during my time in Israel.

The musicians, about 25 of them, worked through a sort of jazzy piece of music that I didn't recognize under the baton of a punctilious conductor who kept stopping them to explain what he expected them to play. It brought me back to my own son's concert performances in high school and his music instructor's ways of getting his charges to understand the music and perform. And this guy was hard on them, and even took a few minutes to hector them about how he expected them to arrive for their next performance. He seemed, quite frankly, like he could be a real pain in the tuchis. But then after a few more stops and starts and scolds, the orchestra got it and played the piece beautifully with the color and gentle swing he'd been coaxing out of them.

When they did, the conductors face lit up and when he did, you could sense the musicians relaxing into the music and leaning into the sounds they were making together. From Europe, Ashkenazi Israelis brought their love of music and their belief in its importance in developing character, discipline, and artistic appreciation. It used to be that everyone growing up played an instrument – I don't know if that is still the case, but these kids were already very polished. Listening to these young people play was my most retro experience in the new Israel and also the most peaceful. This, I thought, is what Israelis wanted for themselves and their children, as expressed in the Book of Isaiah:

[It has pleased] God to deliver us,
That is why we offer up music
All the days of our lives
At the House of God.

Israel is not yet that place. As Achiya and I left the auditorium, we passed by a memorial wall in the lobby of the soldiers from Gilboa who have fallen in Israel's wars. Many were not much older than the musicians I'd just listened to, teenagers who, in a year or two, would be called up for military service.

We proceeded to our last destination, a *tekes* ceremony inducting new members into the *Sayeret Haruv* (Carob), an elite IDF reconnaissance unit that conducts cross-border operations and is associated with Afula. I had wanted to soak up the vibe in Israel, and this was a vibe. In contrast to the serenity of the youth orchestra rehearsal, coming into the auditorium packed with soldiers and families was an assault on the senses – music blared, lights flashed, and video and images of commandos engaged in derring-do were projected on screen. Lovely, ferocious female soldiers emceed the spectacle, introducing a rock-style military band with two singers who alternately sang patriotic rave up anthems and sentimental power ballads. The songs extolled the homeland and the martial comradery of the fighting unit that bound these young men from all parts of Israel who had trained together for 14 months. The mayor gave a speech. We heard the highest-ranking unit leader, who wasn't there, exhorting the young warriors via audio, his voice strangely disembodied over a blank screen that gave that part of the ceremony a strange science fiction movie feel. A mother poured out her heart to the gathered to acknowledge the pain and resolve of the other parents sending their sons off to fight. *Haruv* officers gave testimonials about the strength of the young men they had trained and were preparing to lead into battle and then stood onstage as each inductee came up on stage to receive his first salute.

I understood about half of the Hebrew and all of the emotion. I felt a little ashamed of myself for thinking that all of it seemed like a slick GI Joe cartoon, but we are in the 20th century and this must be how these things are done. After the *tekes* had gone on for some time, Achiya asked me if I was ready to leave. "No way," I replied. "If I don't hear *HaTikva* after all this, I won't be able to sleep."



Afula Mayor Avi Elkabetz at the *tekes* for Sayeret Haruv

And hear *HaTikva* I did, tears streaming down my cheeks. These young men were about to do something extraordinary for all of us and I couldn't restrain my gratitude, my respect, and my devout hope that each one of them would emerge from their experience unscathed. The probability of war with Iran was much on people's minds in early February – when speaking to me about the situation, nobody in Israel had expressed hope that conflict would be avoided, only that they hoped it wouldn't happen before I was safely back in America.

The next war was, in fact, close. But this proximity is what Zionism has always been.

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LOCAL NEWS

Like a Startup with Extreme Young Energy

Chabad of Williamstown's doors are open in the northern Berkshires

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



Rabbi Mendel and Tzivia Volovik, co-directors of Chabad of Williamstown

The recently opened Chabad of Williamstown is located in one of the most attractive settings in the Berkshires, surrounded in the distance by some of the prettiest hills we have in the region. But its first home in "The City Beautiful" is a little on the rough side, situated in an apartment building a bit outside the center of town.

But even before the door opened on my first visit, the wafting aroma of chocolate chip cookies baking hit me, activating food-centric memories of the many Chabad outposts I've visited over the years. The warm hug from Rabbi Mendel Volovik as I entered the space was also familiar – I've known Mendel since he was a serious and devout child at Chabad of the Berkshires, which his parents Sara and Rabbi Levi Volovik opened 21 years ago in Pittsfield and which moved to its new building in Lenox last summer. Full disclosure – I am the gabbai at Chabad of the Berkshires and have been spiritually and emotionally invested in its expansion. If my experience of the Lenox center is of seeing something blossoming upon deep roots, on my visit to the Chabad of Williamstown I felt I was witnessing a newly planted seed just beginning to germinate.

Rabbi Mendel, 25, is now a serious and devout adult, husband to Tzivia, 23-years-old and the co-director of the new Chabad, and father to an infant son, Yosef. The couple is not much older than the students at Williams College with whom they have started to connect – this spring, the Voloviks were regularly hosting Shabbat dinners that attract from twenty to forty people from the college on Friday evenings. These students will mostly use Williams as a springboard to careers in the wider world; in contrast,

the Voloviks know that Williamstown is a lifelong commitment, as Chabad *shluchim* (emissaries), despite the international character of the movement, typically remain in one community for the duration, no matter how Jewishly remote that location might be. And despite all Chabad outposts being connected through the movement, each center is a separate entity operated by its *shluchim*, who must raise funds and manage all aspects of its day-to-day functions and long-term planning.

Rabbi Mendel says he'd contemplated the possibility of becoming an emissary since his mid-teens, but that "it wasn't necessarily a given that I wanted to go into a Jewish field. I have family from both sides that are successful in the world of business, and that was definitely something that could have had an appeal. My children might be able to go to a Jewish school five minutes away, where they'd have friends like them. Nevertheless, we decided to come to Williamstown. To be honest, we didn't really look at it as a way of going back to the Berkshires, because it's so far from where my parents live."

Says Tzivia: "When we got married, we both had the same idea that we wanted to go out there and create our own community where we could be there for Jewish people. But it was not just about us, but where can we find the place that actually needs us? Where is there a need we could fill based on our dreams? It was the students at Williams who did call out to us and tell us that there was a need."

The couple brings different experiences of the Chabad world to this new endeavor. Mendel is the oldest of seven children and grew up in Pittsfield, where his family lived above the living room *shniebel* where Chabad of the Berkshires conducted services in all but the height of the summer season, often struggling to make a minyan during the cold winter months. In contrast, Tzivia is the sixth of eight

We're very into personal connections, one student at a time...That's how we're building our community.
~ Co-director Tzivia Volovik

children whose parents are two of four co-directors of the Montreal Torah Center, connected with 1800 families in a metropolitan area with more than 90,000 Jews and at least 14 other Chabad synagogues and more than 40 Chabad-affiliated social, educational, and outreach organizations.

"At the groundbreaking for [the Torah Center], I was in my stroller," Tzivia says, "so I don't remember life before my parents had a building. But in general, they're very growth-oriented people. Yes, Montreal is a big town that comes with its own set of chal-

lenges and its own set of perks. But at the end of the day, the goal and the mindset are the same – we want to find every Jew and make sure that they know that we're here for them and that they're Jewish, and that they should be proud Jews and know that we're a community. I did definitely grow up in the environment where things were more established, but the mentality was always there that we always need to grow. So, I do understand the drive of building something up." Tzivia's parents, Rabbi Itchy and Zeldie Treitel, operate The Family Store, a subsidized grocery warehouse offering affordable food

and household essentials to over 500 families in need. She says her own outlook has very much been shaped by her parents' efforts to nourish members of her community by giving them the opportunity to shop for kosher food with dignity.

The Voloviks also embark on their *shelichut* at a time when campus life can be fraught for Jewish students experiencing antisemitism from their peers and even from their teachers and administration. Mendel says that the Williams community has been very welcoming, and that he has met with key administrators and studies weekly with Rabbi Seth Wax, the College Chaplain and Director of Jewish Life at Williams College. "We've never experienced antisemitism," he says, "but we know that some students have. Our goal is to do what we can to pump up the pro-Semitism and see to it that they feel safe, secure, and comfortable."

The Voloviks had ongoing conversations with other campus Chabad emissaries to learn how to work within a university setting where the student body changes from year to year and the academic calendar organizes everyone's schedules. Being a *shaliach* with a university focus requires engagement not only with undergraduates and graduates, but with professors, administrators, alumni, parents, and faculty families, as well. The Voloviks also intend Chabad of Williamstown to ultimately serve as a Jewish hub for the entire Jewish community of the northern Berkshires, but say that in these early stages most of their time is invested on establishing personal relationships within the college in order to find out what students want from their Chabad. "We're going to ask them what do they want to see," says Mendel, "and as long as it works with *halacha*, we will do the best we can."

Williams College senior Arielle Levy is one of those students who reached out to the Voloviks and who says she is thrilled with the first steps they have taken to establish another Jewish space for students in Williamstown. "It's kind of like a startup," says the Political Science major. Friday night dinners have "extreme young energy in a setting with a treehouse aesthetic. They are extremely motivated." Levy is a product of a Ramah School in New Jersey and is founder of the Williams chapter of the TAMID Group, which connects future leaders with Israeli-based startups for hands-on business experience. Her previous connection with Chabad was as a traveler and then as a regular when she studied at the London School of Economics. She says that she and other Jewish students felt isolated on campus after October 7; through connections made with Chabad of Williamstown, she has found peers who are now part of an online social group, as well as regulars on Friday night. As someone who has, as she describes it, a "traditional background," she appreciates the "powerful display of Jewish pride" she's experienced at the new Chabad House. Levy, who will be working in finance after graduation, says she hopes to help create an alumni group in the years ahead.

"We're very into personal connections," says Tzivia, "one student at a time. One student will come over for Friday night dinner, and then they want their friend to be involved. And that's how we're building our community. We started with knowing one student and now we have a group chat with more than 40 students." She is also the engineer of "The Chicken Soup Express," which delivers containers of homemade Jewish penicillin to the dorms and can be ordered by students and their parents via the Chabad of Williamstown website.

"I think a mistake people make is to think Chabad is an Orthodox shul with things on the side," says Mendel. "On the contrary, we are a home for every Jew. Like the Rebbe said when he assumed leadership in 1951, on the heels of the Holocaust, that Hitler chased down every Jew with hate and that we are going to make an army to chase down every Jew with love. We are not going to wait for a Jew to come to us. We are going to make sure they know we're here for them and we're embracing them. And, we're going to have a shul on the side – but that's not the main thing."

For two people who are so young, the Voloviks are uncommonly grounded as they look toward the future. Rabbi Mendel says he looks forward to

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LOCAL NEWS

CHABAD OF WILLIAMSTOWN,

continued from page 20

establishing a career that lives up to an institution of Williams College's caliber, and to working with the generations of bright individuals who will study and teach there. He impressed me when he shared that now he may seem like a peer to the students who come to Chabad of Williamstown, but that as he gets older, he might seem more of a parental and then even a grand-parental figure. For me, hearing the couple talk of their future as young Yosef bounced on Mendel's knee was especially poignant in light of the ordeal they experienced two days after their son's bris and just after the conclusion of Rosh Hashanah, which they spent with Tzivia's family in Montreal.

"On Wednesday night, as I wished my wife a good night, I collapsed due to a cardiac arrest," writes Mendel. "They didn't know if I would survive, let alone return to good health. Our entire world turned upside down. I finally woke up two days later. It took about a week before the doctors realized that I would return to full health. But obviously, it took a few months for me to recover, and that's why we were only able to arrive in Williamstown in January 2026, rather than at the start of the school year."

When asked how their experience affected their outlook, Tzivia answered: "It solidified what our beliefs were before. From the Rebbe, we have this mindset that we have a mission and that we are here for a reason. Time is precious. Every moment matters. And I think we really learned that from experience is that it's not even moments – it's more like seconds. Everything takes a second. And every second in our life is a time where we could choose to do something good for the world. It just strengthened our urgency to do what's needed from us and to be active players in the world."

"We definitely learned the power of time and moments and days," Mendel adds. "Such darkness can happen in a split second – but light is so much more powerful than darkness, right? Especially the light of Hashem, the light of a Jew, the light of Torah."

Interfaith Pride Gathering Replaces Saturday Services at Hevreh



Rabbi Jodie Gordon (seated left) at last year's Pride Prayer Gathering and Breakfast

LEE – In a move to foster community and inclusivity, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will join interfaith partners for a special Pride Prayer Gathering and Breakfast in Lee on Saturday, June 13, at 9 a.m.

The event, held in partnership with the Southern Berkshire Interfaith Clergy Council, will take place in the Community Room of the First Congregational Church of Lee (25 Park Place). The morning will feature a program of prayer and reflection followed by a light dairy breakfast co-sponsored by the host church and Hevreh.

Congregants should note that there will be no regular Shabbat morning service held at Hevreh's Great Barrington home on June 13, as the congregation moves its Saturday morning worship to Lee to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community.

The gathering offers a unique opportunity for Jewish community members to engage in spiritual celebration alongside neighbors of diverse faiths during Pride Month.

B'Yachad: Rekindling the Light and Joy – Congregation Ahavath Sholom at the Reconstructing Judaism Conference

By Rabbi Jennifer Rudin / Congregation Ahavath Sholom

In March, members of Congregation Ahavath Sholom proudly participated, for the first time, in the Reconstructionist movement's convention in Philadelphia. "B'Yachad: Rekindling the Light and Joy, hosted by Reconstructing Judaism," brought together communities from across the world to explore how Judaism can meaningfully meet the needs of the present moment. Our congregation was represented by a vibrant delegation of eight participants – two rabbis, two Executive Committee members, and four congregants – one of the largest representations among attending congregations.

The size and diversity of our group reflected the strong commitment within our community to learning, engagement, and the ongoing work of building a Judaism that is both deeply rooted and forward-looking. Throughout the conference, participants attended sessions, shared ideas with other communities, and explored how Reconstructionist values continue to evolve in response to contemporary challenges and opportunities.

The enthusiasm of our delegation was palpable. Members returned energized by conversations with fellow attendees and inspired by the movement's dedication to thoughtful engagement with today's social, cultural, and spiritual realities.



CAS congregants Dan and Joan Burkhard and Alison Adams Weinberg at "B'Yachad: Rekindling the Light and Joy"

through a willingness to be open to all people, while remaining embedded in the larger culture with sensitivity and awareness."

This openness – paired with a deep respect for Jewish tradition – is central to Reconstructionist Judaism. Rather than seeing tradition as fixed, the movement views Judaism as an evolving religious civilization, shaped by each generation's values, insights, and experiences. The conference provided many opportunities to explore how communities are bringing that philosophy to life in meaningful and practical ways.

For our delegation, the theme B'Yachad – "together" – was especially powerful. Participants spoke about the sense of connection they felt not only with Reconstructionists from around the country, but also with one another. Traveling, learning, and reflecting as a group strengthened relationships within our own congregation while deepening a shared vision for the future.

As attendees return and share what they learned, the conference will continue to ripple through our community. Ideas sparked at B'Yachad will inform programming, conversations, and initiatives in the months ahead.

Most of all, the experience reminded participants that Judaism thrives when communities gather, learn from one another, and work together to ensure that our traditions remain vibrant, meaningful, and responsive to the world we live in today.

In the spirit of B'Yachad – together – we look forward to continuing the work of rekindling the light and joy within our congregation and beyond.

Joan Burkhard, a member of the Executive Committee, reflected on the experience: "The Reconstructionist movement works hard to be contemporary with the issues of the world. That commitment is demonstrated

Spring is Here and It's Time to Ramble with the Rav



Azaleas in bloom behind the Ramblin' with the Rav hikers

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, 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 where and when to meet, the route, what to wear, what to bring, 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 pace, fitness and stamina.

All hikes are potentially family-friendly; most welcome leashed dogs as well. 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.

Sunday Morning, May 17

Stony Ledge & Hopper at Mt. Greylock, Williamstown

Strenuous, 5.7 miles, about 1500', 3+ hours

Arguably the best view from Mt. Greylock isn't from the summit but from Stony Ledge, on its western flank. This hike combines a rewarding climb with an expansive panoramic view, then an intimate experience of the unique Hopper habitat on the way down. This hike is only suitable for people with strong hips, knees, and hearts. Hiking pace ~2 mph. Leashed dogs are welcome.

Rain date Tuesday, May 19. Register for meeting place (carpool or trailhead) and time.

Sunday Morning, May 31

Azaleas (and Engineering) at Pittsfield State Forest, Pittsfield

Moderate, 5.2 miles, 935', 2.5-3 hours

The crowning gem of Pittsfield is its grove of wild azaleas. You can see them by driving up the park loop road, but it's more rewarding to climb the hill one step at a time, then luxuriate in their incomparable pink glory. On the way down, take in the view over New York State, rest by Berry Pond, and check out an enormous beaver dam. Hiking pace ~2mph. Leashed dogs are welcome.

Rain date – Tuesday, June 2. Register for meeting place (trailhead) and time.

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OBITUARIES

Marshall Raser, 97, longtime respected business owner, faith and community involvement were at the core of his life
PITTSFIELD – Marshall Raser, 97, passed away peacefully on Saturday, March 14, leaving behind a legacy of love, service, and community impact.

Born August 28, 1928, in Dorchester, MA, the son of Russian immigrants Joseph and Rose Raser, Marshall epitomized the American dream through his remarkable life journey.

Marshall graduated from Boston English High School and Northeastern University at the young age of 17. His dedication to his country led him to serve honorably as a Corporal in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

In 1962, Marshall, alongside his late brothers, Nate and Max, purchased Carr Hardware & Supply Co., Inc. from the late Sam Carr, where Marshall served as president. His leadership and vision made a significant impact on the Berkshire business community, earning him respect and admiration. He was a proud member of the Berkshire Business community, a past board member of the Central Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, a founding member of Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., and a recipient of the Downtown Person of the Year award.

Marshall was a lifelong Rotarian and served as the past president of the Pittsfield Rotary Club, as Assistant District Governor aide, and was honored with the Paul Harris Fellow Award for his service. He volunteered for 40 years with his wife, Marian, for Freedom Guide Dogs, where they boarded, trained, placed, and fundraised for the blind. He served on the board of the Lake Onota Preservation Association and the Pittsfield Economic Development Center (PERC), along with many other local boards and charities.

A longtime member of Knesset Israel, Marshall's faith and community involvement were at the core of his life. His commitment to service and community has left a lasting impression on those who knew him. Marshall's family would like to thank the staff of Berkshire

Medical Center for the care in his final days.

He was a devoted husband to his late wife, Marian Raser, and a loving father to his only son and business partner, Barton Raser. Marshall also cherished his role as a grandfather to Georgia and Charlie Raser, who brought immense joy to his life.

Funeral services were held at Knesset Israel on Tuesday, March 17, with burial following at Knesset Israel Cemetery. Donations can be made to the Pittsfield Rotary Club, the Berkshire Humane Society, or Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in his honor.

Ephraim Alexander Schwartz, 36, passionate advocate for justice, took great joy in life's smaller moments

PITTSFIELD – Ephraim Alexander Schwartz, 36, passed away at his home on Thursday, March 5. He will be remembered by his dozens of friends and his chosen family as a warm presence, treasured for his love, light, and heart.

Ephraim was a passionate advocate for justice, morality, and ethics. He found a deep sense of purpose as a voice for underrepresented and underprivileged communities and was widely known for his persistent political advocacy. He found a meaningful home and sense of belonging in the Berkshires as a member of both the LGBTQ and Jewish communities, as well as through the many organizations and causes to which he dedicated his time and energy.

Ephraim also took great joy in life's smaller moments. He loved gardening, learning, and lively, witty conversation. Known for his flair, fastidious nature, and ability to work a room, he formed connections easily, even with those who disagreed with him politically. He believed in listening deeply and helping others better understand the needs and perspectives of those around them.

He was known for his thoughtful questions at the adult study sessions at Temple Anshe Amunim and had recently joined the choir. He was an activist, writer, and event planner, and a driving force in the Berkshire Queer community. He had many friends, both locally and abroad.

Ephraim was one of the

early organizers of Queer Men of the Berkshires (Q-MoB), served on the board of Berkshire Stonewall Community Coalition, was one of the founders of the Berkshire Queer History Project and interviewed and filmed many queer activists and elders, building an important collection of stories from the early days of Berkshire queer history through stories of more recent activists and actions.

He was one of the founders of Pittsfield Housing for All, a coalition of organizations and activists taking action. He also was instrumental in blocking bills to outlaw the homeless in Pittsfield, and in building a network of support for trans and other people discriminated against or struggling in the Berkshires. He consistently turned his outrage into sustained, effective action that came from a deep love and respect for those struggling at the edges. His smile and clever sense of humor brightened many rooms, as did his practical wisdom about how to turn outrage into effective action.

Though his life was tragically cut short, Ephraim pursued his convictions with passion and purpose. While he achieved many of his ambitions, he also leaves behind dreams that will remain unrealized. He is mourned by his many friends, members of his chosen family, the Queer and Jewish communities, and by numerous political allies, and even opponents, who will remember him with respect and affection. Many were inspired by his courage and enjoyed his charming company.

A memorial service was held Sunday, March 15, at Temple Anshe Amunim, Pittsfield.

Marshall Rosenthal, 85, worker for civil rights, lifelong learner, community volunteer

SAVOY – Marshall Rosenthal, 85, passed away at Berkshire Medical Center on Saturday, March 7, after several years of declining health. He met every medical challenge with grace and good humor.

Born in 1940 in Brooklyn to Joseph Rosenthal and Rose (Schulman) Rosenthal, Marshall graduated from the Bronx High School of Science and received a bachelor of science degree in Biology from

City College of New York. He was proud of the work he did for the Medical Committee for Human Rights (a support group for civil rights workers in Mississippi) during "Freedom Summer" in 1964, working alongside doctors at a medical field station. That summer was a dangerous time for civil rights workers in Mississippi, but Marshall believed in the cause. He later returned to school and earned a master's degree in Cultural Anthropology from Syracuse University.

An avid reader and lifelong learner, he applied what he learned, both formally and informally, to occupations in the fields of health care, teaching, community organizing, and retail. He always wanted to help people. He used community organizing skills he learned as a VISTA volunteer to help start up organizations including the Becket Volunteer Ambulance Squad and the Northern Berkshire chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

After becoming an EMT on the ambulance squad in Becket, Marsh served with the Adams and North Adams Ambulance Services and the Savoy Volunteer Fire Department. This also led to work he did as an orderly at the North Adams Regional Hospital. A quick study, he taught Sociology at North Adams State College when their regular professor became unavailable to teach. Later, he was a substitute teacher in the North Adams public schools.

A creative soul, Marshall enjoyed drawing and painting, crafting, and writing. He was a good singer, and had an ear for music. In his earlier days, he enjoyed road trips, hiking, fishing, canoeing, attending pow-wows, and visiting museums and natural wonders. Trained by MUFON, he investigated UFOs, having seen one in 1959. He studied alternative healing methods like Reiki.

Marshall loved animals, especially the many cats he lived with over the years. In his later years, he liked watching westerns and old movies on TV, and playing backgammon.

Marshall is survived by Susan Rosenthal (his loving wife of 54 years) whom he married in 1971 in Ithaca, NY. He leaves his brother-in-law, Ronald Frappier, and many friends, including his neighbors

Steven Andrews and family. He was predeceased by his parents and his brother, Robert.

Private graveside services were held at Bellevue Cemetery in Adams on Wednesday, March 11, with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat officiating. Memorial donations may be made to Northern Berkshire EMS or the Savoy Volunteer Fire Department in care of Flynn & Dagnoli-Montagna Home for Funerals, Central Chapel, 74 Marshall Street, North Adams, MA 01247.

Miriam Goodman Silver, 96, fervent desire to improve the world for those less fortunate, active in the Jewish Community

BENNINGTON, VT – Miriam Goodman Silver, 96, passed away at home on Monday, February 9.

Miriam lived a full and textured life as a loving daughter, devoted wife and partner to her late husband Kenneth, nurturing and enlightened mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Miriam had many professional accomplishments about which she was justifiably proud, and her life was informed by a fervent desire to improve the world around her for those less fortunate.

Born May 16, 1929 in Brooklyn, daughter of the late Leon and Rebecca Goodman, Miriam was raised in Highland Park, NJ. A graduate of Douglas College (Rutgers University), she obtained her Masters of Education from Bank Street College of Education. Miriam taught second grade in a NYC public school and a preschool teacher at a DayCare sponsored by Bank Street College. She founded a cooperative nursery school, still operating, in Piscataway, NJ. She joined the faculty of Montclair State University in 1964, establishing the division of early childhood within the Home Economics Department. At age 52, while teaching full time, she earned her doctorate in education from NYU.

While her teaching was focused on training students to become early childhood teachers, much of her professional life was directed towards bringing innovative, progressive early childhood educational programs to underserved and underprivileged groups in her community.

In 1965, she obtained a




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OBITUARIES

government grant to direct the first Head Start Training Institute for urban NJ Headstart workers. Under her direction, the program arranged for prominent minority leaders in the arts and political arenas to share their stories as role models to participants. In the late 60's, Miriam was a trainer for VISTA, working with volunteers and community organizers to establish preschool centers for immigrant children in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

After studying a program developed in Israel for impoverished children whose parents were illiterate, Miriam implemented a similar program in East Orange, NJ working with children living in poverty. The research proved that this program benefitted mothers in poverty as well as their children. The program became known as Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) and grew to provide services all throughout Essex County. HIPPY became an international program, training educators from different countries.

In 1984, Miriam and a colleague established a non-profit, Programs for Parents, a resource and referral agency for working families seeking child care. This agency serves over 20,000 families and more than 32,000 children. Living in Montclair from 1966 to 1996, she and her husband were active in the movement to integrate the public schools. She was the liaison between the University to the public school's experimental early childhood project using Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory.

An active member of the Jewish community, wherever she lived, was central to her life. In Montclair, she and her husband were co-founders of the first Reconstructionist Synagogue, B'nai Keshet, named after a kibbutz Kenneth helped build in Israel in 1948. She served as president and later sat on the National Board of the Reconstructionist Movement. In Naples, FL, Miriam was an active member of Collier County Hadassah, serving as President for two years. She was appointed to the Central Atlantic Region Board of Hadassah as Vice President of Education.

Retiring from Montclair University in 1997, she and her husband moved to Naples, FL. She joined the board of Naples Alliance for Children, serving as Chair of their Child Care Committee. She initiated the founding of a National Association for the Education of Young Children, Naples Chapter. Miriam served on the

faculty of Florida Gulf Coast University and consulted with those starting the Child Care Center on campus.

Miriam and Kenneth Silver were married for 49 years, a true partnership, informed by intense love, respect, and support. Kenneth died suddenly in 2005 and Miriam moved to Bennington to be closer to her son, David. Soon her son Daniel moved to Bennington to live with her. She was an active member in Congregation Beth El and joined the American Association of University Women where she made several good friends. Her life was enriched by her loving sons and friendships. She presided happily as family matriarch and especially appreciated the great care her son Daniel gave her.

Miriam is survived by her two sons, David and Daniel Silver; cherished friend, Amelia Wood Silver; grandchildren, Caroline Rebecca Myran (Joe Myran), Natalie Russell Silver (Dan Bak), Alex and Michael Silver; great-granddaughters, Briana, Eloise and Willa Myran; nephews, David Leon Goodman and Michael Ochs Goodman (Leann Neals). She was predeceased by her brother Marvin Goodman of New York City.

Donations may be made to The Arava Institute at arava.org.

Mary Jane Dorey Handler, 90, interior designer, enjoyed classical music, a source of strength

PITTSFIELD – Mary Jane Dorey Handler, 90, died on Tuesday, April 7.

Born in Philadelphia, Mary Jane was a graduate of Friend's Central High School and Drexel University. She moved to Pittsfield in 1959 and later enjoyed a long and successful career as an interior designer at Paul Rich & Sons, where her eye for detail and style touched many homes in the community. Mary Jane was best known for her fierce independence, her big laugh, and her direct, honest communication style. She remained sharp and engaged living in her home throughout her entire life. As the matriarch of her family, she was a source of strength and guidance.

A longtime supporter of Tanglewood and the Boston Symphony, Mary Jane appreciated classical music and the arts. In recent years, she enjoyed reading, listening to music, and the view of the Berkshire hills, always with her devoted companion dog, Jamie, by her side.

Mary Jane was married

to her loving husband Joseph Handler for 59 years until his passing in 2018.

She is survived by her children, David and Terri Handler, and Susan and Cliff Monac; her grandchildren, Alexandra and Eddie Segel, Rebekah and Frank Guia Handler, Sam and Dana Monac, Ben and Poppy Handler, Emily Monac, and Chris Wyllie; and her great-grandchildren, Hannah, Josh, Asa, and Miriam.

A graveside funeral service was held on April 9 at the Pittsfield Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Elizabeth Freeman Center in Pittsfield, MA.

Deborah Golden Alecson, 71, educator, volunteer, community organizer

LENEX – Deborah Golden Alecson, 71, died after years of struggle with advancing vision impairment. She had a chosen death in her home.

Born in Brooklyn, NY on June 29, 1954 to Marcia Damsky and Hal Golden, she is survived by her son, Skyler Golden Alecson. Her beloved husband, Lowell Alecson, died on January 28, 2001.

Deborah was a retired professor of thanatology. After her retirement, she volunteered as a coordinator for the Exit Guide Program of Final Exit Network, a death with dignity nonprofit organization.

Deborah was known in the community as an educator in end-of-life decision-making. She taught classes on mortality awareness for OLLI, lectured widely, and wrote a monthly column for The Berkshire Eagle called "Musings on Mortality." She is the author of two books, *Lost Lullaby* and *We Are So Lightly Here: A Story About Conscious Dying*, and *Complicated Grief: A Collection of Poems*.

Her first career was in special education. After working in early intervention with children with special needs and their families, she went on to specialize in autism.

Deborah was an avid swimmer and a regular at local pools and lakes. She loved music. A highlight of her life was dancing in the audience at her son's electronic music performances.

More recently, Deborah took great pride in being a founding member of the South County Resistance, the group responsible for hosting rallies at Town Hall in Great Barrington. She was committed to the idea that the only way to fight fascism in our country is to resist openly and as a community.

ONE STORY,

continued from page 12

was essential to an oppressor's success, but also a way of undermining the confidence and sense of self of young people of a reviled group.

And the students by and large seemed able to draw parallels to antisemitism today. I was not only impressed by how perceptive the students could be as they were guided by Strafach and Cohen, but also by how much history they already were aware of and how eager they were to learn more.

Student Owen Siket, who says he is a history buff, observed: "The workshop showed how normal it is in society for people to believe misconceptions and how easily hate can spread." His classmate Olivia Fusco said that the separate sessions on the Holocaust and the struggle for civil rights connected the two events and allowed her to see "other peoples' perspectives from other times." She added that she was able to see how hate gets normalized when ordinary people "are surrounded by other people saying 'Heil, Hitler' or when you see signs for segregated water fountains."

No session is exactly like another, says Brian Strafach. "We go to wherever the students are going. Most important, we are having conversations with students that they don't have otherwise."

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and our partners are doing our utmost to reach out to young people and meeting them where they are at in order to educate them about the history and dangers of antisemitism and bias. Every day, it seems, a new poll comes out showing how significant pluralities among young people – and sometimes even majorities – harbor negative impressions about Jews and Israel. These polls are very disturbing, but I have to say that after experiencing 3RD GEN and MMOT workshops with the young people at Mount Everett, I came away more hopeful. The students I met were thoughtful, sympathetic, culturally aware, and curious. They understand the power of their cell phones and that social media outlets feed them misinformation. They know more about history than I expected and clearly want to learn more. Moreover, they are capable of engaging with and processing very difficult ideas.

No doubt this is, in part, to having teachers like Lindsey Brown, who took the initiative to work with Changemakers for Good, the MMOT, and our Hate Has No Home Here campaign. As she explained to me, the entire process started when she contacted Federation and began to explore possibilities with our executive director, Dara Kaufman. The enthusiasm and support she received allowed her and Mount Everett to implement ongoing initiatives to combat bias.

I know that in the months to come, you'll be hearing a lot from us about our 2026 Annual Campaign – what Lindsey Brown and students and staff at Mount Everett are accomplishing is just one story of how your generous donations to our Federation help us promote tolerance, community, and education in Berkshires.

For more on how Changemakers for Good is having an impact in the Berkshires, please see Phil Fogelman's letter on page 4.



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Calling All Readers

Local Hadassah book club returns for its 21st summer season

The Berkshire Hills Hadassah Summer Book Club will launch its 21st season in May with a list of critically acclaimed readings. Meetings take place at 10 a.m. on Fridays. The following books and the dates of meetings are:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| May 22 | <i>Fagin the Thief</i> , by Allison Epstein |
| June 19 | <i>Hill of Secrets</i> , by Galina Vromen |
| July 24 | <i>Unfinished Acts of Wild Creation</i> , by Sarah Yahm |
| August 28 | <i>Dog</i> , by Yishay Ishi Ron |

All members and associates are welcome. For more information, please contact Carol Goodman Kaufman at cgkaufman@hadassah.org.



Kosher Meals to Go—Meals on Wheels

ALL ARE WELCOME: Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays (until May 28), and Thursdays. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon. Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60; \$7 for all others

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED 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

MONDAY, MAY 4

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), potato kugel, peas and carrots, salad, whole wheat bread, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, MAY 5

Noon, Lunch...Fettuccine with peas, mushrooms, and spinach, stewed tomatoes, broccoli, zucchini soup, Italian bread, and bread pudding.

THURSDAY, MAY 7

Noon, in-person Lag B'Omer Barbecue...Barbecue chicken (GF)(DF), potato salad, three bean salad, mixed greens, roll, and apple crisp.

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

MONDAY, MAY 11

Noon, Lunch...Spinach pie, lemon potatoes, baked artichoke hearts, creamy Greek yogurt salad, pita bread, and baklava.

TUESDAY, MAY 12

Noon, Lunch...Swedish meatballs (GF)(DF), mashed potatoes, California blend vegetables, vegetable soup, white bread, and peaches.

THURSDAY, MAY 14

Noon, in-person Mothers' Day brunch...Berries and cream stuffed French toast casserole, O'Brien potatoes, roasted asparagus, beet and arugula salad, croissant, and old-fashioned lemon fruit cocktail cake.

Special Theme: Join us for 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.

MONDAY, MAY 18

Noon, Lunch...Potato pierogies with mushrooms and onions, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, salad, rye bread, and tapioca pudding.

TUESDAY, MAY 19

Noon, Lunch...Franks and beans (GF)(DF), tater tots, brown sugar glazed carrots, salad, multi-grain bread, and ginger spice cake.

THURSDAY, MAY 21

Noon, in-person Festive Shavuot Lunch...Cheese blintz souffle, creamed spinach, cauliflower, carrot salad, challah, and cheesecake (sundae bar for those in-person)

Special Theme: Join us for a festive Shavuot lunch celebrating dairy delights including an ice cream sundae bar!

MONDAY, MAY 25 - CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY

TUESDAY, MAY 26

Noon, Lunch...Tuna casserole, peas and carrots, zucchini, tomato soup, whole wheat bread, and peach Bundt cake.

THURSDAY, MAY 28

Noon, in-person Memorial Day Picnic...Hamburger (GF)(DF), pasta salad, baked beans, coleslaw, burger bun, and watermelon.

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.

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

JUNE

MONDAY, JUNE 1

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF) (DF), mashed potatoes, four blend vegetables, salad, multi-grain bread, and brownie.

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

Noon, in-person National Cheese Day lunch...Macaroni and cheese, peas, green beans, broccoli cheese soup, puff pastry cheese straws, and carrot cake with cream cheese frosting.

Special Theme: Join us for a celebration of National Cheese Day. Cheesy jokes are welcome!

MONDAY, JUNE 8

Noon, Lunch...Vegetarian chili (GF)(DF), rice, sweet potato, salad, corn bread, and rice pudding.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11

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

Noon, Lunch...Honey mustard chicken (GF)(DF), roasted potatoes, asparagus, minestrone soup, garlic bread, and fresh melon.

Knesset Israel – 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield



ONGOING MINYANS

Saturday, 9:30 a.m.
Sunday, 8:45 a.m.
Friday, 5:45 p.m.

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Friday, May 87:42 p.m.
Friday, May 15..... 7:49 p.m.
Erev Shavuot
Thursday, May 21..... 7:55 p.m.
Shavuot
Friday, May 22..... 7:56 p.m.
Friday, May 29..... 8:02 p.m.
Friday, June 5..... 8:08 p.m.
Friday, June 12.....8:12 p.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Roman and Larisa Rozenblyum on the recent marriage of their granddaughter, **Polina Potochevska** to **Michael Gimlewicz**.

Laura Rosenthal on her special birthday.

Susan Frisch Lehrer on her special birthday.

Joshua Bloom, who researched the exhibition on view through the end of June at the Lee Library, "Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Mass.: An Historical Exhibit Covering Century-Long Relationship." Visit linktr.ee/jacobspillowinleemass for a schedule of events.

Show Up As You Are!

**Lag B'Omer at the lake
with the Berkshire
Jewish Collective**



PITTSFIELD – Hey, Jewish 20s, 30s, and 40s – join the Berkshire Jewish Collective on Sunday, May 3 for a fun, relaxing afternoon on Lake Onota.

Families with kids, singles, and couples are all welcome. We'll be serving light snacks and drinks and exploring the holiday of Lag B'Omer.

Drop in any time between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. and meet some of your Jewish young adult peers in the Jewish Berkshires. We'll be set up in Burbank Park on Onota Lake Beach (500 Lakeway Drive in Pittsfield).

RSVP please to our new email address: bjc@jewishberkshires.org.

The Berkshire Jewish Collective for 20s, 30s, and 40s is an initiative of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires with support from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

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.

CULTURE & ARTS

Hadassah to Host “Books in the Berkshires” in June

Author talk with Tova Mirvis and Marilyn Simon Rothstein to benefit Youth Aliyah

Interview by Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

LEE – In advance of her appearance at Berkshire Hills Hadassah’s “Books in the Berkshires” event on Sunday, June 14 at 11 a.m., the Berkshire Jewish Voice had the opportunity to speak with bestselling author Marilyn Simon Rothstein. She is the bestselling author of four novels: *Who Loves You Best*, *Crazy to Leave You*, *Husbands and Other Sharp Objects*, and *Lift and Separate*, winner of the Star Award presented by the Women’s Fiction Writers Association for Outstanding Debut.

Also appearing will be novelist Tova Mirvis, author of the memoir *The Book of Separation*, as well as four novels: *We Would Never*, *Visible City*, *The Outside World*, and *The Ladies Auxiliary*, which was a national bestseller. The authors will be in conversation with Dr. Barbara Viniar (author of the novel *Little Bird*).

This event is a fundraiser for Hadassah’s Youth Aliyah.

For more information about this event, email berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com or visit <https://events.hadassah.org/BHBooks>. Register by May 15 to receive a free copy of the authors’ most recent books. Location of this event will be sent to you after registration. RSVP no later than June 4 – no walk-ins.

The BJV Interview: Marilyn Simon Rothstein



Marilyn Simon Rothstein

You earned your degree in journalism before working at Seventeen Magazine, then you ran an award-winning advertising agency for more than 25 years. When did you start writing fiction?

I was 17 years old, had always written in school, always knew I wanted to be a writer. I had no idea about what that involved, but my family read newspapers ferociously. We would get three papers a day, so somewhere in my brain it must’ve clicked. It was something called journalism that you could make a living at and not have to sit.

It was in the 70s when I took a class thinking I was going to write a book with one of my professors at NYU. So, I started this book about three kids at NYU. He took it to his agent. His agent was interested and told me to keep going. I did keep

going, but the answer was no.

I graduated from NYU and I still wanted to write books but now I had a job. I started taking courses, writers’ workshops everywhere. Then I got my master’s degree, but I don’t think I ever realized how to get a book published, which is harder than writing the book.

I’d been in advertising all this time, and I just knew I wanted to write a book. I knew that if I stayed in the advertising business it wasn’t going to happen. I gave up the day job and made that decision to write.

I didn’t start writing seriously as a novelist until my kids were out of the house, and I spent about ten years writing my first book. I went to all these workshops to learn about the business of how to get published. The result was *Lift and Separate*.

Do you see any similarities between copywriting and fiction?

Because I was writing advertising, I never thought about how novelists had to market themselves. It’s awful, isn’t it? The hardest part of all of it is not the art and the craft of it. It’s the business end.

What’s your workday like? Do you outline? Do you have a word count that you shoot for every day?

I am very unorganized. I’m a morning person so I write as long as I can. This sounds horrible, but I have no structure. I don’t outline. I think of things, like just now I was walking and I started thinking about something I’m working on now, and it came to me. I put it down, not well written, but just so it’s in my head. And it can sit in the back of my head for two weeks. When I sit down and I get on a roll, I could go for a long, long period.

That’s my outline.

You tackle serious issues with humor. Have you always been funny? How did you develop your distinctive voice?

I think it goes back to my childhood. When we were sitting around the kitchen table in Queens talking, if you could be funny while you were explaining something or telling what happened at school or making fun of a relative, you got attention because everybody was laughing.

As for my voice, my friends can hear me talking in the book even though 90 percent of the book is fiction. It’s as if they’re sitting across from me. I want to use my voice, and no matter what the occasion, even a sad occasion, humor can help you get through the worst.

What happened to that first book that you were writing in college with the professor?

Occasionally I take it out and think wouldn’t be cool to do this, but I’d have to set myself back in time because the book takes place in 1971 in a dorm room. Who knows? Maybe one day it’ll show up like a flashback.

What are you working on now?

I am not sure exactly where it’s going. It’s humorous and it’s a story about the relationships between women or sisters, but that’s all I can really tell you. These are two things that really interest me, so that’s the way I’m going.

I look forward to hearing you on June 14!



Return of the Birch Festival

LENOX – The Birch Festival partners with the Tanglewood Learning Institute at the Linde Center for a Saturday, May 9 concert at 3 p.m. featuring Llewellyn Sánchez-Werner, the Borromeo String Quartet, and the Jewish Berkshires’ own Yevgeny Kutik. The specially curated program is titled “When Voices Meet.”

Centered around Ernest Chausson’s monumental “Concert for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet,” the program also includes works by Florence Price and Louis Moreau Gottschalk, as well as the Massachusetts premiere of a brand-new work by Jonathan Leshnoff. Leshnoff’s piece is inspired by George Washington’s famous 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, affirming religious freedom and coexistence in the newly formed United States.

As part of Birch Festival’s mission, they offer free tickets to Berkshire students and their guardian, as well as a May 8 workshop with Kids 4 Harmony. Please email to reserve: thebirchfestival@gmail.com.

For more info and links for tickets, visit thebirchfestival.org.

Newish & Jewish in the Berkshires

Are You a Newcomer to the Berkshires?

Welcome! Join us for a casual gathering to meet others who are “Newish and Jewish,” enjoy refreshments, and learn more about the Berkshire Jewish community. We look forward to connecting.

Wednesday, June 3, 5:00-6:30 pm

Hosted by Skipper and Ezra Singer, Lenox

Tuesday, July 14, 5:00-6:30 pm

Hosted by Jane and Howard Jacobs, Great Barrington

Thursday, September 3, 5:00-6:30 pm

Hosted by Melissa and Fred Kleiman, Otis

Space is limited. Registration is limited to two events. Host address will be shared with registered guests the week before the event. There will be no solicitation of any kind.

Advanced registration required: tinyurl.com/NewishJewish2026
ktodd@jewishberkshires.org, (413) 442-4360, ext. 16



Jewish Federation
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Join Our Team!

Part-Time PJ Library Coordinator

PJ Library is an award-winning program that brings the joy of Jewish life into homes through free children’s books and meaningful family experiences.

We are seeking a warm, creative, and organized PJ Library Coordinator to develop and implement engaging, inclusive hands-on programs for young families in the Berkshires—creating opportunities to connect through Jewish values, traditions, and community.

This flexible part-time role (15–20 hours/week) is ideal for a parent with school-age children or someone with an education background who is passionate about building community.

Full job description at tinyurl.com/PJPosition

Send resume to Rabbi Daveen Litwin at dlitwin@jewishberkshires.org



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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Scenes from a Bomb Shelter in Jerusalem

By Howie Stier / Special to the BJV

Just before the early morning dawn they tried to murder me – yet again. That is, myself and the thousands of Jews living in the Nachlaot neighborhood of Jerusalem, have again been targeted by Iran's murderous missile barrage.

This is the fourth alert in 24 hours and the attacks haven't relented for some two weeks as I write. This routine began as I visited Israel for my first Shushan Purim – the *chag* celebrated solely by Jews in cities walled at the time of Joshua's conquest of Canaan. And since then Iranian missiles and unmanned aircraft have been launched at Israel from the Galil to Eilat, joined after the first week from the north by Hezbollah launches from Lebanon.

In that time, I realize while making my dash to the *miklat* (shelter) I've not once slept through the night.

Arriving at the entrance, *besiyata deshamaya* (with the help of heaven) there's the grand Beethoven-boom of a successful interception overhead. Which of Israel's defense systems engaged is unclear but the Islamic regime's ballistic missile coming for us was destroyed in the upper atmosphere (*mamesh* in space!). Its payload however wasn't. I foolishly point my phone skyward and watch in wonder an array of glowing balls descending gracefully, when an Israeli woman with survival instincts stronger than mine shoves me through the door of the shelter.



Pets in the shelter

I had just witnessed the deployment of cluster munitions – ruled illegal in warfare, numbering about ten bomblets to a warhead. Each with four pounds of high explosives that could raze an apartment building. Combined they carry enough destructive force to send a city block into oblivion. Later, when I log on to news sites, I'm disturbed – but not surprised – to see that Western media is nonchalant to this form of attack on Israel's civilian centers, while social media cheers it on, and Jews in America seem oblivious.

One of these cluster bombs injured some 60 people northern town of Zarzir. The victims weren't in an underground shelter when walls of homes were torn off and glass from windows ripped into flesh.

The diversity of our neighborhood's residents is displayed in the shelter. From the toddlers who play happily the moment they hit the bottom of the steep flight of concrete stairs to the white-haired couple who arm-in-arm gingerly descend, three generations of Israelis who have endured combat on their homeland together are here.

Chassidim reluctantly snuff cigarettes before entering. A dandy draped in a fashionable scarf shows up swirling wine in a massive glass. There are dogs and cats in carriers, and one woman brings her pet parrots. "They don't get along," she explains, shushing them as I watch them peck each other inside a specialized clear vinyl canister.

Initially, alerts are marked by camaraderie. Pianists flaunt their skills on an aged upright piano, Cyrillic text testifying to Soviet origin. A whiskey aficionado pours single malt shots for all. "Lama lo?" (why not?) he queries, seemingly offended when I turn down booze at 5 a.m. Seeing opportunity in crisis, Israel's tech start-up mentality inspires a dating app for the shelter visits – run for your life, scan a code and see what singles are also in panic.

Under repeated attacks I get the hang of this. Especially at overnight alerts. I become practiced at waking, dressing within a minute and navigating the streets to a shelter, and have shaved a minute of my response time adopting mission-appropriate foot gear. Wartime survival note: Hoka slides are game changers, both lace free and responsive. Crocs, I noted, are also favored by Israelis running for their lives.



Why did I come here knowing war was imminent, anticipating as I did that the momentousness of Purim would not be missed by Israel? One inspiration was the bleakness of this Berkshire winter. Trudging a mile through February's slush to the Big Y only for a loaf of their joyless supermarket bread, bitter wind raking my face coming and going, was the final straw. Relentless gray frozen days got me wondering: "Why did I move to Pittsfield in the first place?" I grabbed a flight to Israel in part to evade the snow, partly to return to a yeshiva I'd studied in last May. It's my contribution to the war effort, as Torah study protects Israel in wartime, the Talmud teaches.

"As long as I am engaged in Torah, Yoav is victorious in battle," King David – learning in Jerusalem – said of general Yoav ben Tzeruyah leading troops at the front. These two leaders enabled one another, explains the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Schneerson in a *sicha* (lecture) of 1967 following the Six Day War.

And I went to plan a wedding in Jerusalem – my own. While I had the chance to travel on my first trip to Israel earlier in the year, visiting the artist colony of Ein Hod and holy Safed, now there's little to do. No gatherings are permitted, all museums are closed, and bus schedules are limited. I spend mornings at yeshiva, afternoons with my *kalle* (bride-to-be) Revital Ben David, and together we visit graves of *tzaddikim*. And as often as we pray to HKBH (*Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu*), each day we run to the shelter.

Following a week of continuous attacks, the shelter party mode palpably changes. Children still play loudly but everyone else speaks quietly amongst friends, comforting pets, turning inward.

The dandy with his stemware now stares into a beer. Reservists, recently under arms and any day facing combat deployment to Syria or Lebanon, sit somber-faced until the all-clear signal sounds.

A woman in her 40s and long-time resident of the Nachlaot neighborhood, Revital abides the disruptive alerts, but the stress wears on her. We intend to marry; the war complicates things. We spend a lot of time together in the shelter. I check email from on my phone, she looks for news on the strike while tensely waiting for the alert to be lifted.

I share an upbeat announcement. Chabad of the Berkshires will be hosting a pre-Passover wine tasting and chamber music concert.

"How nice – I'm envious of Jews in the US who go to wine tastings and concerts and movies, instead of running to the *miklat*," Revital says. "But Israel has a holy mission. It's a *zechut* (privilege) to live here – *ke'ilu b'emet* (an Israeli idiom more or less equivalent to our "for sure"). This land is *adamah mikudeshet be dam* (land sanctified by blood). We do our *avodah* (work) and HKBH joins us – it is a miracle we exist. We have a job to do in Israel – it's not going to wine tastings."



I am finally forced to bail out of wartime Jerusalem – not to "go home" because home now can only be Israel – but to hustle together my rent money. I must get back to Pittsfield. But it wasn't easy.

"There are no flights!" an overwhelmed US embassy staffer snaps at me after I show up at Ben Gurion Airport and security won't let me anywhere near check-in. "You only have one bag? I can get you a flight we've chartered to Athens," he tells me. I'm not buying what he's selling. "Athens? And then what?" "Get me on the rescheduled EL AL flight at 6 a.m.," I respond. That's on you he tells me.

Those EL AL seats went to VIPs, I learned from TV news the next day (specifically from Channel 14, "the only channel that actually likes Israel" is how a rabbi at Yeshiva Mayanot put it). I chat with a *yeshiva bocher* who was bouncing to Athens and then flying to Tbilisi, where he'll overnight and then catch a plane to Zurich and then to the US. His parents, he said, will handle the tab. But that's not me. Even if my frugal survivor-dad were around he'd only laugh good – and my cards are maxed.



Fleeing to safety, an intercepted missile exploding overhead

Back to Jerusalem, my stay extended. I return to mornings of breads churned out of the Shuk's century-old ovens. To learning, as my yeshiva continues with classes exempt from the shutdown, as its students dorm in the building. To joyously resuming shul hopping – from Shacharit at the comfortable Haredi Batei Munkatch *shtiebel* to Shabbos among English-speaking *olim* with their awesome cholent at Kollel Chaverim. Next trip, I'll get to visit a museum and, *be'ezrat Hashem* (with God's help) when peace returns to Israel, get this wedding out of the way.

A week later a WhatsApp message (Israel adores the secure phone app) alerts me to a seat on a plane to New York City take it or leave it. The United States had pressured Israel to step up recovery flights and while missiles rained down on Tel Aviv, military restrictions at Tel Aviv International limiting flight capacity are lifted.

My train to the airport is just approaching Ben Gurion station when an alert sounds. There's no stopping. To minimize casualties, the emergency protocol while aboard demands you lay flat on the cabin floor. I enter the airport station in prone position, arms stretched forward – like Superman.

I finally make it back to the Berkshires before Pesach. I do not attend the Chabad wine tasting.



One night during Pesach in Jerusalem there is no alert – the warning system isn't infallible. Awakened by the siren blaring across Jerusalem, Revital stumbled into the dark narrow streets half awake, tripped, fell hard. A stranger scoops her up and they make it to the shelter before the doors clang shut.

This isn't sustainable, she tells me later. "*Ein li koach* (I don't have the strength.) We are running on fumes."

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



Revital at the miklat



CULTURE & ARTS

POETRY CORNER

Monsterwörter I Know, Though I May Never Visit Germany

by Pamela Wax

In the *Zeitgeist*

the ghost forgets to stay dead,
settles down,
becomes the spirit of the times.

After *Kindergarten*

you learn to get by without nap time
until middle age.

Your *Doppelgänger*

is named Amy.
People call you by her name.
You look for her all your life.

Untermenschen are packaged

in the language of infestation,
all manner of vermin – rats
and roaches creeping after your women,
your *Kinder*.

They call it *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*

or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*
when a whole country gets on the couch
to work through their issues with Motherland
and Fatherland. Imagine two different
Monsterwörter to describe that reckoning.

Admit it, you feel *Schadenfreude*

when they get their comeuppance.
What else do you talk about at the *Kaffeeklatsch*
but how the mighty have fallen, tripping
over *Stolpersteine* every day,
as if blind to the past.

There's that reprieve of *Waldeinsamkeit*

when you walk in the woods,
breathing sylvan charm. But then the news
sneaks in the front door behind you.

You could talk about the weather, this *Heisszeit*

of hot, hotter, dead—or how
the *Kummerspeck* of your grief weighs
you down like a trussed hog.

Kristallnacht comes

like a *Geist*
to scare you under the bed
again and never again,
again and again
and again

while the dust mites speak of *Wanderlust*,

but there's no place
else to go.

From Pamela Wax's new collection of
poetry, *Every Single Beast of My Heart*,
published by Sheila-Na-Gig Editions and avail-
able for sale by the publisher (sheilanagigblog.
com) and at local booksellers.



JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, February 19 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

*The Einstein of Sex: Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld: Visionary of Weimar
Germany* with journalist Daniel Brook.

Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

*Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose Kushner, Evelyn Lauder
and the Dawn of The Breast Cancer Movement*
with founder of A 2nd Act and author Judith Pearson.

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

The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz: A Story of Survival
with biographer and correspondent Anne Sebba.

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

Eminent Jews: Bernstein, Brooks, Friedan, Mailer
with author David Denby.

Friday, June 26 at 10:45 a.m.

In-person at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Carol King: She Made the Earth Move
with journalist Jane Eisner.



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Check out our website!

www.jewishberkshires.org

For calendar listings and events

CULTURE & ARTS

Form + Substance

New exhibit featuring West Stockbridge artists David Goldstein and Sherri Greenbach now on view

WEST STOCKBRIDGE — The Guild of Berkshire Artists presents 'Form + Substance,' a new exhibition featuring the work of husband-and-wife artists David Goldstein and Sherri Greenbach. The exhibit will be on view through May 31 at the Art on Main Gallery, located at 38 Main Street in West Stockbridge. Gallery hours are Thursday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and an Artist Talk is scheduled for May 24 at 2 p.m.

Greenbach's featured series, "Be Miep," occupies the intersection of color, narrative, and texture. Created with layers of paint, paper, and raw canvas, the series reflects contemporary conversations around immigration and calls viewers to take action. The title draws inspiration from Miep Gies, who helped hide Anne Frank and others during World War II.

"Be Miep" – What Would You Risk?

By Sherri Greenbach

"Be Miep" is my body of work presented in "Form + Substance," and my hope is that it engages you in the conversation about immigration today, in these challenging days where immigrants are scared to leave their homes.

A few years ago, I began volunteering at a food pantry. In the beginning I was helping to stock the shelves and distribute the food, concerned that there were people in our community who did not have enough food. As ICE raids started to feel more likely, the pantry realized there are some families afraid to wait in the line, which requires them to be outside and vulnerable.

A group was quickly organized to shop for these families and deliver food to them weekly. Soon after, that became my weekly volunteer responsibility, along with a few other people. One volunteer created an order form in Spanish so that families still had some agency over their food choices. These order forms became the start of my "Be Miep" series.

The more I learned about families in our community who were living in fear, afraid to wait in a line for the food pantry, to send their children to school, or to bring their young children to a playground, the more I felt a need to do something. As a young girl I remember being asked, 'what would you do if you were an ordinary German citizen during the 1940's?' 'What would you risk?' These questions seemed theoretical and thus it was easy to say I'd risk everything. I never thought I would actually be faced with these questions. And yet, here we are. We may not be hiding people in our attic, the way Miep Gies hid the Frank family, but our neighbors are hiding in their own homes.

I decided to take action and deliver food each week to anonymous families. I am only one link in a chain, doing my part by helping to keep our community safe. "Be Miep" was made using a mono printing method called gelli printing, where images and patterns were transferred, layered, and printed onto either raw canvas or onto the order forms used by the food pantry for their patrons who are afraid to wait in the outdoor line. These prints were then cut into specific shapes and adhered to painted wooden boards in a structure inspired by the Talmud, a key Judaic text. The faces you see in "Be Miep" are portraits taken by photographer and Ellis Island clerk, Augustus Sherman.



"Be Miep (Purple)" by Sherri Greenbach



"Whispers of Antiquity," by David Goldstein

"ADHD Is My Superpower!"



HUDSON, NY – Artist Nina Lipkowitz, whose work we always enjoy sharing in the BJV, has an exhibition of new work titled "ADHD Is My Superpower!" It will be on view at 510 Warren Street Gallery through the end of May. Above is "WHICH WAY IS UP?", mixed media on canvas. For more on Nina, visit Ninalipkowitz.com. For gallery hours and location, visit 510warrenstreetgallery.com.

JAHM

 **JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH**

Each May, Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) celebrates the contributions and experiences of Jewish Americans. Raise awareness by sharing JAHM resources within your community and on social media.

Visit jewishamericanheritage.org for ways to spread the word

JAHM TOOL KIT: Download sample social media posts, posters, a resource guide and more for your use and spreading awareness

READ, WATCH, LISTEN: Find curated lists of cultural content that brings the diversity of Jewish stories and voices to life.

PROGRAMS: Join Federation online on May 7 at 7 p.m. as we explore the very vibrant stories of **Eminent Jews: Bernstein, Brooks, Friedan, Mailer** with author David Denby. On May 17, young families are invited to celebrate Shavuot and explore Jewish American Heritage Month with **Cream Cheese and JAHM**, at the MA Audubon Pleasant Valley Nature Sanctuary in Lenox. Register at jewishberkshires.org.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: Bring JAHM into your classroom. Find lesson plans, teaching ideas, reading lessons, and more, as well as teacher friendly tools for identifying encountering antisemitism.



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