

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

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jewishberkshires.org

Remembering October 7th: Stories of Lives Changed

PITTSFIELD – On Wednesday, October 7 at 7 p.m., join the Berkshire Jewish Community for an evening of remembrance with portrait photographer David Shlachter, whose new book *Hinenu: Israel at Ten Million* documents the mosaic of human stories across Israel. Drawing from the book, the program will highlight the lives and experiences of four individuals and families changed by October 7, 2023

This event will be hosted by Temple Anshe Amunim, located at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield.

A candle lighting will provide a moment to mourn, honor survivors and heroes, and fill our hearts with strength and hope for the future. Advance registration is requested, and appropriate security measures will be in place. This program is presented in-person, with a livestream available.

This evening is presented by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, Knesset Israel, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Temple Anshe Amunim, Chabad of the Berkshires, Berkshire Hills Hadassah, and the Berkshire Minyan, in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council.

Hinenu: Israel at Ten Million is a new photography and oral-history book by David Shlachter that captures Israel through the lives of 100 people at the exact moment the country reached a population of ten million. Created during wartime and deep national uncertainty, the project pairs striking portraits

REMEMBERING OCTOBER 7,
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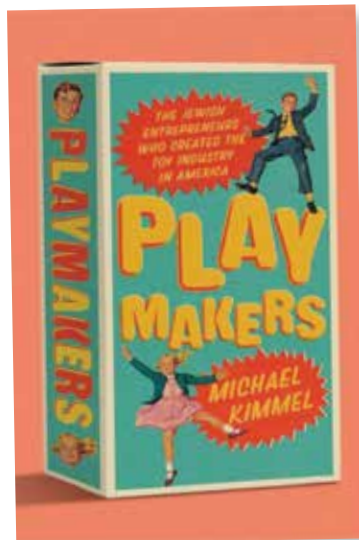
High Holy Days 5787

*“May we be as full of mitzvot
as the pomegranate is full of seeds”*



So reads the blessing over the fruit that Sephardic Jews recite at their Rosh Hashanah Seders, which are traditionally celebrated before the main holiday meal. Pomegranates are often said to have 613 seeds, corresponding to the 613 *mitzvot* – which is not necessarily the case, but which is true in this image by West Stockbridge artist Ilene Spiewak, in which precisely 613 seeds frame the luscious fruit inside. For more on Ilene's work, please see page 23.

Playmakers: The Jewish Entrepreneurs Who Created the Toy Industry in America, with Michael Kimmel



On Thursday, October 29 at 7 p.m., join author Michael Kimmel as he reveals how poor, first-generation Jewish toymakers created the idealized American childhood, based on his book *Playmakers: The Jewish Entrepreneurs Who Created the Toy Industry in America*.

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

In 1902, Morris and Rose Michtom invented the Teddy Bear in the back room of their Brooklyn candy store. Together they launched the Ideal Toy Corporation, joining a set of other poor, first-generation Jewish toymakers: the Hassenfeld brothers of Hasbro, Ruth Moskowitz and Elliot Handler of Mattel, and Joshua Lionel Cowan of Lionel Trains.

For much of the twentieth century, every part of the American toy business was largely Jewish – the company founders, executives, and designers, as well as the factory workers, wholesale distributors, retail outlets, and armies of salesmen. *Playmakers* shows how these poor, Yiddish-speaking, tenement-dwelling children of immigrants invented an enchanted world they never experienced for themselves, full of wild creatures, eternal struggles between good and evil, and endless realms of fantasy

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THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

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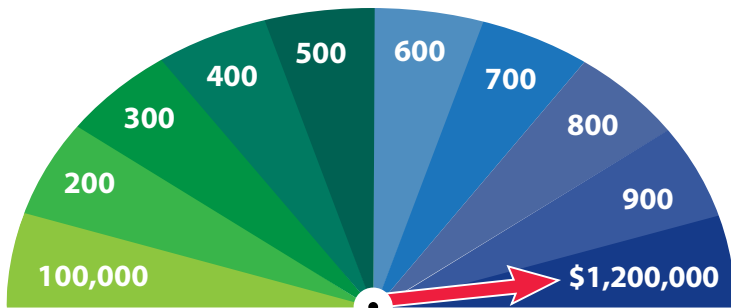
If you have not yet made your gift to the 2026 Annual Campaign there is still time to do so.

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

Donate online at jewishberkshires.org

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

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2026 Annual Campaign
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OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

What Are We Going to Do With Our Convening?

By Rabbi Jodie Gordon / Hevreh of Southern Berkshire



In a few weeks, something remarkable will happen across the Berkshires. Synagogues from Williamstown to Great Barrington will fill with people they haven't seen in months. Summer residents will linger a little longer before heading south. Year-round members will greet familiar faces they only see during the High Holy Days. For a handful of days, the Jewish community in these hills will be as gathered as it ever gets. We don't usually think of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur this way, but they are also our community's annual convening. Every organization, every movement, every civic institution convenes from time to time – not simply to be together, but to remember what it exists for and to decide what comes next.

As a rabbi, I spend weeks preparing these High Holy Days: with Torah at the center, my community around me in concentric circles, and often with a very large coffee sitting next to my computer. Cue sheets and honors assignments, music preparation and sermon writing. But, this year, I find myself thinking less about what I want to say than about what becomes possible simply because we're all in the room together. If the High Holy Days are our annual convening, then a different question emerges. Not what will we hear, but – what will we do with our convening?

We will hear beautiful music. We will hear sermons, some of which will stay with us and some of which we'll forget by Sukkot. We will hear the shofar's ancient, wordless call. Many of us will find ourselves unexpectedly moved simply by looking around the room and seeing one another again. All of that matters. But I don't think it's ultimately why we gather. Underneath the liturgy, the High Holy Days ask us the oldest Jewish question there is: now that we are together, what are we for?

There is something that becomes possible when nearly all of us are in the room together. Most of the year, Jewish life in the Berkshires happens in fragments. We know our own congregation, our own friends, our own committees and routines. During the High Holy Days, those fragments briefly become something larger. We remember that there is, in fact, a Berkshire Jewish community – not just a collection of synagogues, but a people sharing this place and this moment.

Every community has resources it forgets it possesses until everyone is in the room at once. Wisdom. Professional expertise. Young families and elders. Newcomers and lifelong residents. People looking for purpose alongside people who know how to build institutions. When we convene, those gifts become visible to one another.

And visibility changes us. It reminds us that Judaism has never been merely a collection of individual spiritual lives unfolding in parallel. We are a covenantal people. Responsibility becomes less abstract when the people to whom we are

responsible are standing beside us. Possibility becomes easier to imagine when we can finally see the community we actually have.

Judaism has never imagined itself as a private transaction between an individual soul and God. It is unapologetically communal, unapologetically obligated to a world beyond itself. In *Unetaneh Tokef*, the prayer at the heart of these days, we don't ask privately who shall live and who shall die. We ask it standing shoulder to shoulder because the question was never meant to be answered alone. The question, then, is what we do with that possibility.

If teshuvah changes only us,
it isn't finished.

Our tradition has long imagined our responsibilities as a series of widening circles. Hillel captured it in a single, spare teaching: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?" The self matters, deeply. But it is never the whole story.

So this year, I want to offer our community three questions to carry into the season. Not as an assignment, but as a kind of agenda for our annual convening.

How can we be of service to our local community?

The Berkshires are our home, whatever congregation we belong to. Our neighbors are struggling to find housing they can afford. Food pantries continue to see steady need. Older adults face isolation in towns spread across these hills. There are children who need mentors, families navigating illness, and nonprofits that can always use one more volunteer. If *teshuvah* changes only us, it isn't finished. The High Holy Days ask whether our prayers might ripple outward into the place we actually live.

How can we be of service to humanity?

Rosh Hashanah is, notably, not a holiday about the Jewish people's birthday. Right after the shofar sounds, we proclaim *Hayom Harat Olam*, today the world is born. Not the Jewish world. The whole world. Our liturgy refuses to let us imagine that God's concern begins and ends with us.

That universality is no accident. Each service concludes with *Aleinu*, envisioning a world repaired, and throughout these days we pray not only for our own renewal but for justice, compassion, and peace beyond the walls of our sanctuaries. Whatever transformation we seek for ourselves, Judaism asks us to seek it on behalf of something much larger than ourselves.

How can we be of service to the Jewish people?

We are living through a moment when the ties between Jews across communities and continents matter more than they have in a long time. Jewish life feels both more vulnerable and more interconnected than it has in years. Our convening reminds us that belonging isn't an abstraction. We inherit one another. The Talmud teaches that *kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*; all Jews are responsible for one another. What do we owe that peoplehood right now? And how might this season help us live into that responsibility with greater generosity, curiosity, and courage?

None of these questions has tidy answers, and I'm not writing this to hand you one. I'm writing because I think we sometimes underestimate the gift these days offer us. Once a year, almost everyone finds their way into the room. That's no small thing. In Jewish tradition, gathering is never merely logistical; it is a spiritual possibility. Every High Holy Day we are given something precious: not only prayers, but one another.

The High Holy Days are not only a season of repentance. They are our annual convening. Every convening ends with the same question: now that we've managed to get almost everyone into the room, what are we going to do because we were here?

My hope is that we leave these days having done more than pray beside one another. I hope we leave having remembered who we are, what we are capable of together, and what this community is being called to do in the year ahead.

Shanah tovah. May this be a good, meaningful, and purposeful new year for all of us.

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



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OP-ED

FROM THE EDITOR

Thank You for Returning as Voluntary Subscribers

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



In the beginning: At the 2014 General Assembly – Nathan Sharansky with Dara Kaufman, Ellen Masters, Amy Lindner-Lesser, and newly-minted BJV editor Albert Stern

I returned from decades in the wilderness about 16 years ago after having long been unengaged, although not uninterested, in Jewish religious and communal life. I had my reasons. They were dumb. When I finally reconnected, I felt I had to make some kind of *teshuva* and return to what I understood as the proper path for a Jew to travel.

My father was the *davening* Jew and my mother the philanthropic volunteer, and so I decided that the way I would honor their memory and the rich gift of Yiddishkeit they instilled within me was to simply start saying “yes” instead of “no.” I resolved that if someone asked me to do something in a Jewish vein that I thought I could accomplish, I would say yes without hesitation.

This period of return coincided with my move from Brooklyn to the Berkshires a year later. Here, I met **Ellen Masters**. If you know Ellen Masters... let me rephrase that – *Since you know* Ellen Masters, you know that she is not a

person who is shy about asking a person to contribute to a good cause. My son was then in kindergarten and, though I was pushing fifty, I guess I seemed like a fresh young face in the Berkshires. (Fifteen years on, I still often feel like a whip-persnapper.) And so, Ellen asked me to serve as Super Sunday chair to generate awareness and enthusiasm for what Federation does. I said yes. This started a relationship with Federation that included volunteer roles on the executive board and as campaign chair, and then as an employee working as editor of the Berkshire Jewish Voice. It also initiated a cherished friendship with Ellen and her husband, **Stuart**, both of them amazing role models for us all.

For the past several years, most of the time I have to volunteer has been taken up by my role as gabbai at Chabad of the Berkshires. To use a musical analogy, the difference between working at Federation and operating at Chabad is the difference between marching music and jazz. As BJV editor, my job is deadlines, lineups, research, writing, images, and layouts. As Chabad’s gabbai, my job is *aykh vays nisht vus* (Yiddish for ‘I don’t know what’). The newspaper job involves keeping to a schedule, the synagogue job is about being able to go with the flow – both have allowed me to refine different personal qualities, and I continue to enjoy and learn from both.

I had an epiphany not long ago that applied to both of my roles and to Jewish involvement more generally. It was late winter and many of Chabad’s congregants were away in warmer climes. The rabbi and his family were going out of town, as well, and I was charged with running the Shabbat minyan. That much I could handle, along with the haftorah. We also found a Torah reader. But who was going to be the *shaliach tzibur*? None of our *daveners* were around. I had clumsily led perhaps two or three weekday *mincha* and *ma’ariv* prayers and one *musaf* in my entire life, but nothing close to an entire Shabbat service. What was I going to do if no one capable showed up? “Don’t worry,” the rabbi assured me. “Hashem will provide.”

Shabbat morning arrived and I got ready for shul, fretting about whether someone who knew how to *daven* was going to be there. Then I started thinking: I’ve been going to *shul* since childhood and just about every week for the last 16 years, plus holidays. I know the order of things and all of the prayers and melodies. I mean, I might have spent the past week practicing the service in case I was called upon to *daven* on *Shabbos*, but preparing in advance would not have been the Chabad way. But I figured I could do it if I had to.

And that’s when the epiphany hit me: “What if I am what Hashem has provided?”

I think that is a useful question for every Jew and all those who support our community to ask themselves in these unsettled times. Sometimes the fact that a door is open is not going to be enough – a person must also walk through it when called. And these days, we are all being called.

So here I want to thank all of you who responded to our voluntary subscribers drive so far (please see page 5) – we rely on you to help Federation share its story with full-timers, second homeowners, and visitors in this beautiful part of the country. By returning to support Federation year after year and by generously contributing a little bit extra to the Berkshire Jewish Voice, consider that maybe you all are what Hashem has provided to build and sustain Jewish community in this region.

Some of us here do. And all of us are very grateful for all you give back.

Remembering

October 7th

Stories of Lives Changed with photographer David Shlachter

Join the Berkshire Jewish Community for an evening of remembrance with portrait photographer David Shlachter whose new book *Hinenu: Israel at Ten Million* documents the mosaic of human stories across Israel. Drawing from the book, the program will focus on the lives and experiences of four individuals and families changed by Oct. 7th.

A candle lighting will provide a moment to mourn, honor survivors and heroes, and fill our hearts with strength and hope for the future.

Community Gathering

Wednesday, October 7

7:00 pm

Hosted at

Temple Anshe Amunim

Appropriate security measures will be in place



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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Your Federation Presents

Meet Nadine Chisom, Federation’s New Coordinator of PJ Library



Nadine Chisom, Federation’s PJ Library Coordinator

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires would like to welcome Nadine Chisom, our new PJ Library coordinator. Nadine comes to this role after recently graduating from Williams College with a degree in sociology and French. Yet college was not where she earned her familiarity with the Berkshire community. Although she spent the majority of her childhood in eastern Massachusetts, she moved to Lee in 2019 after a mother-daughter trip to the Berkshires that was so enjoyable it prompted her family to buy a vacation house in the area. In the end, they were so charmed by the area that they relocated to Berkshire County full-time.

Her path to Williams is equally whimsical. While on that initial summer vacation, Nadine visited Williamstown and even went to the Williams College Art Museum. In her own words, “I have a fuzzy photo of myself sitting on the eyes outside WCMA from when I was 13. I used to

show it to my contemporaries at Williams events, like a party gag.”

A few years later, while she and her family were in the Berkshires searching for a house, she toured Williams for real, fell in love with it. While at Williams, she was a regular attendee of both French department events and Williams College Jewish Association events. When she was not at either of those, she was most likely studying with her friends, reading, writing, or going to the gym.

Despite her liberal arts background, Nadine is passionate about finance, especially personal and social finance. With her little free time, she runs a personal finance YouTube channel.

People often question how she chose her majors, given her financial interest, but she finds intersections between her interests. “I think that sociology is inextricably linked to finances because how people spend their money and even what they think money is for is based on how they were raised, how they were socialized, their backgrounds, and all sorts of fine details that only sociologists are trained to take into account and analyze.” For Nadine, these seemingly disparate interests all come back to the same question: how do people build lives, relationships, and communities together?

So how did Nadine’s path lead her to PJ Library?

For those unfamiliar with the program, PJ Library is a globally recognized initiative that sends free, high-quality Jewish children’s books and music to families each month. By bringing these stories directly into the home, the program serves as a vital bridge to Jewish life, culture, and values for our youngest generation. It is not just about reading; it is about sparking meaningful family conversations and creating a shared foundation. Within our local Federation, PJ Library is a cornerstone of community growth, helping young families connect,

build lasting friendships, and deepen their connection to Jewish communal life. Nadine says the answer, in part, goes back to when she first moved to the Berkshires as a teenager. She then still went exclusively by her first name, Alexis – Nadine is her middle name – and her mother, in typical hyper-involved mother fashion, slogged through the internet to find any age-appropriate spaces and experiences for youth in the area, and stumbled upon Railroad Street Youth Project.

Nadine recalls when she first walked in there, new to the area, saying, “From the moment I walked in there, they welcomed me with excitement and urged me to sign up for a plethora of programs. I’ve done so many things with them over so many years, and whenever I needed a community to look to for resources or unwavering support, I knew they would have that to offer me. I’ve always cared about society and community service. However, my Railroad Street experience made me understand how important a strong community is and continues to shape how I view what it takes to keep a community productive and together.”

After Nadine graduated, she knew that no matter what, she had to find at least one job that would help support the community to the best of her ability. She sees community as increasingly important in an increasingly atomized world. “As society gets more and more atomized, people are forgetting what it takes to be in a cohesive ecosystem. I feel like every generation is increasingly individualized, but I have this innate drive in me to be a good community member, even if I don’t always know how.”

So how did Nadine’s path lead her to PJ Library?

Therefore, the community involvement of being the PJ Library coordinator was an obvious draw. But what about the Jewish component?

Nadine was not born Jewish, but Williams College was far from her first encounter with Judaism and Jewish culture. From a very young age, she felt an affinity toward Judaism and Jewish people. In middle school, her Jewish friends would commonly refer to her as “Jew-ish.”

Her mother also noticed this pull. When their family spent a brief period in Pittsburgh during Nadine’s high school years and considered settling in Squirrel Hill South, her mother suggested that they explore local synagogues for Nadine to attend. She saw something in her daughter that Nadine herself was still discovering. To this day, her mother sometimes surprises her with Jewish books and other literature she has collected for her.

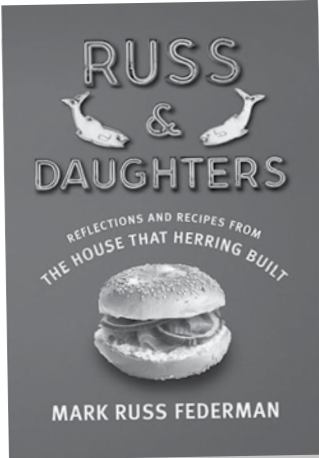
“I know the concept of a Jewish soul housed in a non-Jewish body, like *nitzotz Yehudi* and *Nefesh HaGer*,” Nadine says. “Some of my other friends think that I must have Jewish ancestry that got forgotten through time. I have some Jewish friends who I have never discussed any of this with, who have looked at me out of the blue and said, ‘I think you’re gonna convert to Judaism.’”

Regardless of her ability to explain her undeniable connection to Judaism, Nadine has continued to pursue it with curiosity and seriousness. “I am always trying to further and deepen my knowledge of Judaism. I made a promise to myself that I would get more serious about pursuing Judaism after I graduated, and here I am!”

For Nadine, becoming PJ Library Coordinator feels like a natural continuation of the community relationships that have shaped her life in the Berkshires. She is excited to bring her own experiences, curiosity, and enthusiasm to the role, while helping local families discover the same sense of connection and belonging that has meant so much to her. She hopes to grow PJ Library’s presence throughout the region, introduce families to one another, and create joyful opportunities for children and parents to build Jewish community together. “I feel incredibly lucky to have grown up in a community that has given me so much,” Nadine says. “Now I get to help give some of that back!”

Get in touch with Nadine: nadine@jewishberkshires.org.

Russ & Daughters: 100 Years of Appetizing, with Niki Russ Federman and Josh Russ Tupper



On Thursday, September 17 at 7 p.m., join Niki Russ Federman and Josh Russ Tupper as they share inspiring, appetizing ideas for the Yom Kippur break-the-fast and throughout the year, based on their book *Russ & Daughters: 100 Years of Appetizing*.

This program, part of Federation’s High Holy Day Food Series, will be presented via Zoom. Visit the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of “Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.”

In 1907, a Jewish immigrant named Joel Russ landed in New York, where he took a pushcart of herring and built a legacy. Four generations later, the ancestral heart of *Russ & Daughters* still bustles on the Lower East Side. Over the course of a century, *Russ & Daughters* has fed hundreds of thousands

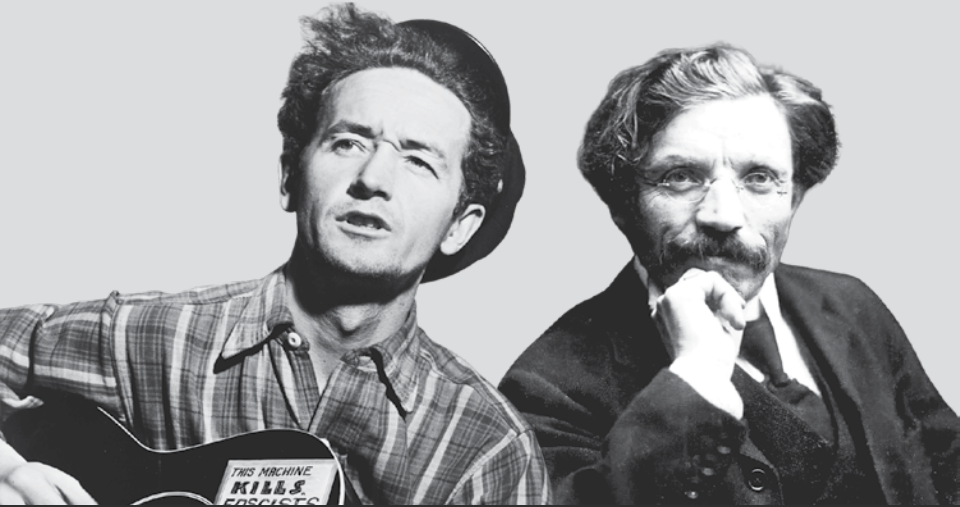
of people, many considering a visit to the original shop a family tradition.

Now *Russ & Daughters* brings its world-famous institution into readers’ homes with *Russ & Daughters: 100 Years of Appetizing*. Its rich history is told through insider anecdotes from the family and characters on both sides of the counter; illuminating guides to its most famed offerings – smoked salmon, sable, sturgeon, herring, and caviar; and more than 100 recipes for favorite foods like latkes, matzo ball soup, babka, and bagels among others.

Niki Russ Federman is the fourth-generation co-owner of *Russ & Daughters*. At the age of 27, Niki chose to return to the shop in which she grew up. Together with her cousin, Josh, she has grown *Russ & Daughters* into what it is today, while preserving its cultural and culinary legacy. **Josh Russ Tupper** is the fourth-generation co-owner of *Russ & Daughters*. Raised in an ashram in upstate New York, he was working as an engineer in Portland, OR when the opportunity arose to join his family business at 26. He has been leading *Russ & Daughters* with his cousin Niki ever since.

TWO LEGENDS. TWO STORIES.

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Join the Yiddish Book Center this fall for two special events exploring the lives, legacies, and cultural worlds of Woody Guthrie and Sholem Aleichem.

SEPTEMBER 6 | 2:00 P.M.
Dust Bowls and Jewish Souls: Another Side of Woody Guthrie
Film screening + Q&A with award-winning director Steven Pressman

OCTOBER 25 | 10:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M.
Community Open House: Celebrating Sholem Aleichem



Amherst, Massachusetts yiddishbookcenter.org

Your Federation Presents

BernBaums: Recipes from Fargo's Nordic Jewish Deli, with Andrea Baumgardner



On Thursday, September 24 at 7 p.m., join chef Andrea Baumgardner as she helps us prepare for Sukkot and Jewish noshes throughout the year, based on her book *BernBaum's: Recipes from Fargo's Nordic-Jewish Deli*.

This program, part of Federation's High Holy Day Food Series, will be presented via Zoom. Visit the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of "Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council."

Since its closure in 2024, BernBaum's has left a bagel-shaped hole in Fargo, North Dakota's restaurant scene. The surprising harmony of Icelandic-meets-Jewish dishes made BernBaum's a hit in Fargo and beyond, earning chef Andrea Baumgardner praise from The New York Times and Food and Wine. Now, *BernBaum's: Recipes from Fargo's Nordic-Jewish Deli* gathers the best recipes from the renowned restaurant to bring Nordic noshes right to your home.

From smoked fish to pickles to lamb meatloaf sandwiches, the cookbook captures this unique deli's most iconic recipes, beginning with the perfect bagel.

Andrea is the Baum behind BernBaum's, the beloved bagel shop and restaurant that graced downtown Fargo from 2016 to 2024. (Husband Brett Bernath provides the Bern.) Baumgardner's food roots can be traced to her high school job at Leeb's where she worked with gruff, knowledgeable butchers and serious farm-style bakers who turned out perfect cake donuts, pies, and lefse. During college, she spent a year in Spain and France, greatly expanding her palate.

A graduate of Macalester College and San Francisco's California Culinary Academy, Baumgardner externed at Chez Panisse before cooking on the line at Vivande and Eos in the Bay Area and at Boxer in Los Angeles. She was a Humphrey Fellow in Public Policy at the University of Minnesota and a James Beard semifinalist for Best Chef: Midwest (2020 and 2024).

Foods of La Frontera: Recipes and New Taste Frontiers from Both Sides of the Border, with Patricia Drjanski De Jinich

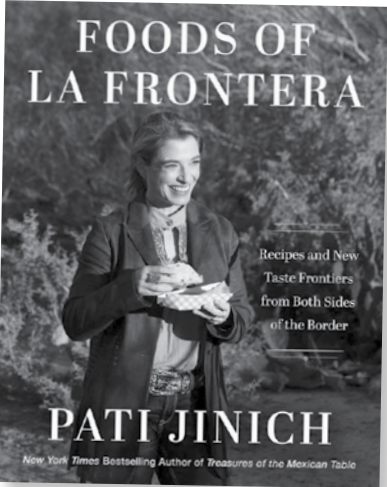
On Thursday, October 1 at 7 p.m., join award-winning author and chef Pati Jinich as she helps us celebrate Simchat Torah and Jewish identity through food on holidays and throughout the year, based on her book *Foods of La Frontera: Recipes and New Taste Frontiers from Both Sides of the Border*.

This program, part of Federation's High Holy Day Food Series, will be presented via Zoom. Visit the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of "Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council."

Pati Jinich's Jewish identity has been shaped in large part by her grandparents, particularly her grandmothers, from whom she learned how to weave Jewish heritage from the countries they came from with their new home in Mexico, and how, by way of the kitchen, they learned to grow roots in Mexico. The idea that identity is something people carry, adapt, and express through everyday life, especially through food – has stayed with Jinich always.

So now, as a Jewish Mexican woman living in the United States, Pati finds herself continuing that weaving – bringing together her Mexican, Jewish, and American identities in a way that feels alive and ever-changing. Judaism, for her, is deeply tied to family, memory, and the act of gathering; Mexico gave her a sense of flavor, warmth, and creativity; and the United States has given her a place to share those stories and connections more broadly. These identities aren't separate – they enrich one another, and together they shape how Jinich cooks, tells stories, and how she understands where she comes from.

Pati Jinich is the author of *New York Times* bestselling *Pati Jinich Treasures of the Mexican Table* and the host of the three-time *James Beard Award*-winning PBS series *Pati's Mexican Table*, and *James Beard Award*-winning PBS series *La Frontera* with Pati Jinich. Named one of the "100 Greatest Cooks of All-Time" by *Epicurious* and *Bon Appétit*, she has won a *Gracie Award* for her television work and is a four-time *Emmy* nominee and four-time *IACP Award* winner. She is the resident chef of the Mexican Cultural Institute and has appeared on NPR, NBC, CBS, and more. Born and raised in Mexico City, she lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with her husband and three boys.



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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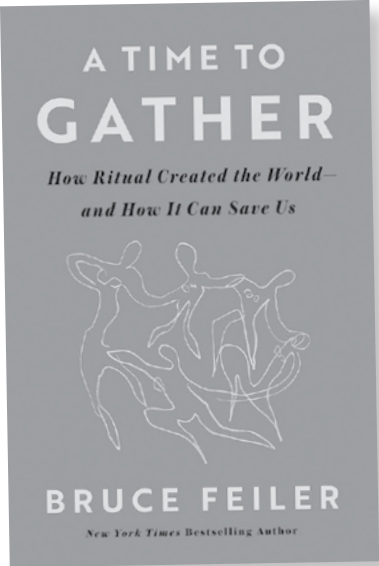
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Your Federation Presents

A Time to Gather: How Ritual Created the World – and How It Can Save Us

A Community One Read, with Bruce Feiler in conversation with Rabbi Angela Buchdahl



On Thursday, October 15 at 1 p.m., join author Bruce Feiler in conversation with Rabbi Angela Buchdahl for a special Jewish Book Month Community One Read book discussion, based on his book *A Time to Gather: How Ritual Created the World – and How It Can Save Us*.

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

One of our great decoders of human connection chronicles the astonishing rise of new rituals around the world—and offers a road map for restoring togetherness with gatherings you’ll love. Humans have turned to ritual to connect us in periods of change. Until today, birth rituals and coming-of-age rituals have plummeted; fewer than half of Americans are married; only one in three is

buried. Feiler went on a round-the-world ritual road trip, attending – and participating in – life rituals in sixteen countries on six continents. Beyond the decline

in traditional rituals, he discovered that we are in the midst of a ritual renaissance that is pushing back against apathy, loneliness, and digital saturation. *A Time to Gather* is both a stirring adventure and practical manual – a landmark guide to modern ritual and a tool kit for turning everyday moments into unforgettable celebrations. **Bruce Feiler** is the author of seven *New York Times* bestsellers, including *Life Is in the Transitions*, *The Secrets of Happy Families*, and *Walking the Bible*. His three TED Talks have been viewed more than five million times, and he teaches the TED Course “How to Master Life Transitions.” **Rabbi Angela Warnick Buchdahl** serves as the Senior Rabbi of Central Synagogue in New York City, the first woman to lead this flagship congregation. Born in Korea to a Jewish American father and a Korean Buddhist mother, she is the first Asian-American to be ordained as a rabbi in North America.

REMEMBERING OCTOBER 7, continued from page 1

with first-person stories that reflect Israel’s full demographic mosaic – Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, sabras and immigrants, elders and children – mirroring the latest census data. Intentionally apolitical, *Hinenu* (Hebrew for “here we are”) is an act of listening: a human portrait of a society still becoming itself, told in its own voices.

David Shlachter is a Harvard graduate and entrepreneur with a background in international development. He worked in New Delhi on a U.S. State Department grant helping establish South Asia’s first mediation center and later researched Rwanda’s electric bus transition through field interviews. Now a portrait photographer based in Tel Aviv, he documents human stories across Israel to deepen empathy and understanding.

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Visit hevreh.org/holidays for service times, ticketing, childcare, and more.

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Your Federation Presents

Thank You, Volunteers!

Thank you to our volunteers and all who showed to celebrate their vital work on the steamy summer evening of August 6. Against the scenic backdrop of Onota Lake, Coordinator of Volunteers Heidi Katz explored the different tracks that Federation volunteers might take in contributing their skills. To find out more, contact Heidi at federation@jewishberkshires.org.



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Shalom

BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

Everyone is welcome to attend services and events at any of the organizations listed here. Please call the organizations directly to confirm service times or to inquire about membership. Learn more about our Jewish community and find great events on the community calendar at:

JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

Berkshire Minyan <i>Lay-led, Traditional, Egalitarian Minyan</i> South County berkshireminyan.org	Hevreh of Southern Berkshire Reform 270 State Road, Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-6378, hevreh.org
Berkshire Hills Hadassah P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA (413) 443-4386 Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com	Israel Philatelist Society c/o Dr. Ed Helitzer, (413) 447-7622
B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326	Jewish Federation of the Berkshires 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA (413) 442-4360 jewishberkshires.org
Chabad of the Berkshires 17 West Street, Lenox, MA (413) 499-9899 jewishberkshires.com	Jewish War Veterans Commander Robert Waldheim (413) 822-4546 sellit4@aol.com
Chabad of Williamstown 292 Cole Avenue #2E, Williamstown, MA (413) 770-1185 chabadwilliamstown.org	Jewish Women's Foundation of the Berkshires Website: JWFB.org Email: jwfberkshires@gmail.com
Congregation Ahavath Sholom <i>Reconstructionist</i> Now at Temporary Home: 1089 Main Street, Housatonic, MA (413) 528-4197 ahavathsholom.com	Knesset Israel <i>Conservative</i> 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA (413) 445-4872 knessetisrael.org
Congregation Beth Israel, Reform 53 Lois Street, North Adams, MA (413) 663-5830 cbiberkshires.com	Temple Anshe Amunim Reform 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield, MA (413) 442-5910 ansheamunim.org



Shana Tova!

Wishing you a good and sweet year filled with celebration and togetherness.



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HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS IN THE BERKSHIRES



Jewish Federation of the Berkshires wishes all a happy and healthy 5787!

The schedules that appear were provided by local congregations, which should be contacted directly for more information, advance ticketing requirements, confirmation of times and events, online options, and details about other planned holiday season programming that may not be listed. The congregational directory with contact information and addresses is on page 7. Services will take place at the locations appearing in the directory, except as noted in the listings that follow. Candle lighting and Havdalah times are for Pittsfield and were taken from the Knesset Israel calendar.

L'Shana Tova!

Temple Anshe Amunim



Pittsfield | ansheamunim.org
Find community, joy, and meaning at Temple Anshe Amunim! TAA is thrilled to invite all to observe the Jewish new year, Yom Kippur and other High Holy Days. Non-members are welcome, but please register in advance at tinyurl.com/hhd-26. TAA is a Reform congregation in Pittsfield where services offer a blend of jubilation, comfort, and inspiration. High Holy Days provide rich opportunities for reflection, community, and learning. The congregation is led by Rabbi Val Lieber, who is joined by choir director Dr. Alan Gold and the TAA choir. Services are highly inclusive and accessible. TAA represents a wide variety of family structures, identities, and backgrounds. First timers welcome. All services will be in person and available via livestream, unless otherwise noted. For more information, please visit the TAA website at ansheamunim.org, contact the TAA office: templeoffice@ansheamunim.org or call (413) 442-5910.

Hadassah Berkshire Hills Chapter wishes everyone a

Shana Tovah!

May your New Year's blessings be as plentiful as the seeds of the pomegranate!

Join and support Hadassah berkshirehadassah@gmail.com

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High Holy Day Calendar			
Holiday	Date	Candle Lighting	Havdalah
Selichot	Saturday, September 5		8:02 p.m.
Erev Rosh Hashanah	Friday, September 11	6:52 p.m.	
Rosh Hashanah – First Day	Saturday, September 12	7:51 p.m.	
Rosh Hashanah – Second Day	Sunday, September 13		7:49 p.m.
Shabbat Shuvah	Saturday, September 19		7:30 p.m.
Yom Kippur / Kol Nidre	Sunday, September 20	6:36 p.m.	
Yom Kippur	Monday, September 21		7:35 p.m.
Erev Sukkot	Friday, September 25	6:27 p.m.	
Sukkot – First Day Yom Tov	Saturday, September 26	7:26 p.m.	
Sukkot – Second Day Yom Tov	Sunday, September 27		7:24 p.m.
Sukkot – Chol Ha'Moed	Monday, September 28 to Thursday, October 1		
Hoshanah Rabbah	Friday, October 2	6:15 p.m.	
Shemini Atzeret	Saturday, October 3	7:13 p.m.	
Simchat Torah	Sunday, October 4		7:12 p.m.

- SERVICES
- Selichot** – Service at 7 p.m.

Erev Rosh Hashanah – Service and dessert oneg at 7:30 p.m.

Rosh Hashanah 1st Day – Morning service at 10:30 a.m. / Interactive intergenerational service at 9 a.m.

Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day – Abbreviated service in nature at 10:30 a.m. (in-person only at Fred Garner Park in Pittsfield or at TAA if raining) / *Tashlich* at 11:30 a.m.

Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre – Service at 7:30 p.m.

Yom Kippur Morning – Service at 10:30 a.m. Study sessions at 1:45 p.m. / Interactive intergenerational service at 3:15 p.m. / *Yizkor* and *Ne'ilah* at 5 p.m., followed by break-the-fast potluck.

Simchat Torah Celebrated – Friday, October 2 at 5:30 p.m.
- OTHER EVENTS
- Sukkah Building and Decorating** – Friday, September 25 at 4 p.m.

Sukkot Potluck Lunch – Sunday, September 27 at noon.

Congregation Beth Israel



North Adams | cbiberkshires.com
Join the Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires community for the Days of Awe 5787! All are welcome. There are no fees or tickets for services, though CBI asks those planning to attend to RSVP ahead of time via the website's calendar. There will also be meaningful and robust experiences via Zoom for digital participants. Please register for each service / event at cbiberkshires.com/series/days-of-awe-5786. Services at CBI will be led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat and cantorial soloist Ziva Larson, with support from community members and the CBI choir. Expect poetry, prayer, harmony, melodies both traditional and contemporary, and a warm, participatory experience. Families with children of all ages are welcome. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur morning, CBI will offer childcare and holiday-oriented activities outdoors or in the classrooms for the youngest attendees. Older children are encouraged to join the service in the main sanctuary. *Tashlich* (casting our mistakes upon the waters) will take place after first day Rosh Hashanah services. CBI observes two days of Rosh Hashanah. This year, the second-day service will again be a Four Worlds service, moving in stages from body (contemplative practice / walking meditation) to heart (prayer and song) to mind (Torah study) to soul (the sound of the shofar). Shabbat Shuvah (the Shabbat between the holidays) will be contemplative, featuring a stripped-down liturgy and ample silent meditation time. CBI will also offer a full day of Yom Kippur davening and learning. *Yizkor* services will take place at the end of Yom Kippur morning services, probably sometime in the noon hour. There will be a creative retelling of the Book of Jonah at *minchah* services in the afternoon, as well as an encounter with the ethical mitzvot at the center of the Torah. Yom Kippur will culminate with *Ne'ilah* and Break-the-Fast at sundown. Register to attend in-person or on Zoom at cbiberkshires.com/events/category/holidays/days-of-awe/.

- SERVICES
- Selichot** ("Forgiveness") Service at 8 p.m., onsite & online.

Erev Rosh Hashanah – Service 7 p.m., onsite & online.

Rosh Hashanah 1st Day – Service 9:30 a.m., onsite & online. Children's service, childcare, and activities. *Tashlich* (casting bread upon the waters) follows.

Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day – "Four Worlds" Morning Service at 9:30 a.m., onsite & online.

Shabbat Shuvah contemplative, chant-based service, 9:30 a.m., onsite & online.

Yom Kippur / Kol Nidre – Service at 5:50 p.m., onsite & online.

Yom Kippur – Service at 9:30 a.m., onsite & online. Children's service, childcare, and activities. *Yizkor* at the end of the morning service. All afternoon, all are welcome to enjoy the CBI labyrinth and pollinator garden. Yom Kippur *Mincha* and *Avodah* service, 4:30 p.m., onsite & online. *Ne'ilah* service, 6 p.m. onsite & online. Break-the-fast follows at 7 p.m. – Please RSVP by September 10 (\$20 for adults, \$5 for children, free children under 5).

HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS IN THE BERKSHIRES

Shemini Atzeret & Yizkor, 10 a.m., onsite & online.
Simchat Torah Musical Celebration, Saturday, October 3 at 7 p.m., onsite only.

OTHER EVENTS

Service of Remembrance, CBI Cemetery, 512 Walker Street, Clarksburg, Sunday, September 6, 2 p.m., onsite only.
Harvest Moon Sukkot & Potluck Supper around the campfire, Friday, September 25 at 5:30 p.m., onsite only. Bring a vegetarian dish to share and musical instruments to play, if you'd like. RSVP please.

Kneset Israel



Pittsfield / knesetisrael.org
Kneset Israel is an innovative congregation known for tremendous lay participation and leadership, deep spiritual experiences, opportunities for lifelong learning, social action, and inclusivity. All services at this Conservative synagogue will take place in the main sanctuary and will also be available for viewing at knesetisrael.org/

livestream and on the Kneset Israel channel on the Boxcast App (Roku, Kindle FireTV, Apple TV). Children's programming will take place on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur in the congregation's chapel. The congregation gathers for the symbolic casting away of transgressions – Tashlikh – this year on the second afternoon of Rosh Hashana at a local stream.

Tickets for in-person attendance at High Holiday services are included with Kneset Israel membership and are also available for purchase by non-members. Kneset Israel offers reciprocal tickets for people who are members of other synagogues yet find themselves in the Berkshires this autumn. Advance registration helps Kneset Israel ensure a safe space for prayer and reflection during the holidays. For more information about Kneset Israel's services, please visit knesetisrael.org. To register, please call the Kneset Israel office at (413) 445-4872 or email office@knesetisrael.org.

Kneset Israel celebrates Sukkot, the fall harvest festival, and its concluding celebration, Simchat Torah, with services, meals, and programs for the entire family. The weeklong celebration will include a Families Together program exploring the holiday and dinner as part of Hebrew School on Wednesday, September 30, for school-age children and their families. This is a joint program for Kneset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim.

Additionally, festive morning services featuring the psalms of Hallel take place on the first two days and last two days of the holiday. A Simchat Torah celebration including dinner, live klezmer music, dancing with the Torah scrolls, an aliyah for the children, and root beer floats, will take place on Saturday, October 3, at 6:15 p.m. RSVP required to knesetisrael.org/rsvp.

SERVICES

Selichot – Maariv, Havdalah, and Selichot at approximately 8:30 p.m. Mincha and study session at 7 p.m.
Erev Rosh Hashanah – Service at 6:15 p.m.
Rosh Hashanah 1st Day – Service at 9 a.m., Torah service at 9:45 a.m., approximately. Families programming 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Babysitting (please RSVP) 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day – Service at 8:30 a.m., Torah and shofar at 9:45 a.m., approximately. No family service. Babysitting (nursery and playroom; please RSVP) 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tashlich at 4 p.m. (at Pomeroy Avenue Bridge).
Shabbat Shuva – Kabbalat Shabbat Friday at 5:45 p.m., Shabbat morning service at 9:30 a.m.
Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre – Mincha at 6:20 p.m., followed by instrumental Kol Nidre, Kol Nidre, and Maariv at 6:30 p.m.
Yom Kippur – Service at 9 a.m. Torah service and Yizkor after 10:30 a.m. Families programming 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for ages 5 to 12. Babysitting (please RSVP) 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Afternoon service at 4:45 p.m. and Ne'ilah at 6:10 p.m. Concluding services at 7:35 p.m.
Erev Sukkot – Kabbalat Shabbat at 5:45 p.m.
Sukkot Yom Tov – Services both days at 9:30 a.m.
Hoshana Rabbah - Kabbalat Shabbat at 5:45 p.m.
Shemini Atzeret - Service at 9:30 a.m. (with Yizkor at 11 a.m.) Erev Simchat Torah celebrations begin with a light meal at 6:15 p.m., followed by Maariv, hakafot, and ice cream beginning at 7:30 p.m.
Simchat Torah - Service at 9:30 a.m.

OTHER EVENTS

Cemetery memorial service, Sunday, September 6 at 10 a.m. at KI Cemetery, Peck's Road in Pittsfield.

Berkshire Minyan

Great Barrington | berkshirereminyan.org
The Berkshire Minyan is a self-organized group that provides a liturgically traditional, egalitarian davening experience in South Berkshire County. Please visit berkshirereminyan.org for information on the congregation's holiday schedule.

Create a Jewish Legacy Campaign

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Congregation Ahavath Sholom

Housatonic | ahavathsholom.com
Congregation Ahavath Sholom, a Reconstructionist Movement synagogue whose motto holds "The Creative Spirit Lives Here," has found a new place to gather after water damage to its building in Great Barrington. Services will be held at the congregation's temporary home at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of Southern Berkshire in Housatonic.
Writes Rabbi Jennifer Rudin: "With the challenge of being displaced from our building, we saw opportunity. The larger space at UUMSB allows us, this High Holiday season, to invite our neighbors from across the Berkshires to join us for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services at no charge (though donations will be greatly appreciated)."
Rabbi Rudin and Rabbi Jeff Eisenstat will lead services. Each will bring their own musical inspiration and many years of experience. Rabbi Rudin will bring to services the melodies of Hadar's Rising Song Institute, which cultivates Jewish spiritual life through song. Rabbi Eisenstat has led High Holiday services since he was a child in Junior Congregation at Temple Israel in Scranton, PA in 1959! Drawing on his experience as the founder of Camp JRF (now Camp Havaya), the Reconstructionist Movement's overnight camp, and years spent leading services in various congregations, he will share melodies from Reconstructionist communities and camp.
Pre-registration required; please email casoffice15@gmail.com. Call Rabbi Jennifer Rudin at (508) 333-1991 with any questions. Security will be provided.



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SERVICES

Erev Rosh Hashanah – Service at 7 p.m.
Rosh Hashanah 1st Day – Service at 10 a.m.
Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day – Family service at 2:30 p.m. at UUMSB that includes Tashlich by the river and then apples and honey, songs, prayers, and shofar blowing.
Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre – Service at 7 p.m.
Yom Kippur – Service at 10 a.m. with Yizkor. Afternoon service and Ne'ilah at 5 p.m., followed by break-fast.
Erev Sukkot – Service at 5 p.m. followed by potluck dinner.
Sukkot Yom Tov – Saturday service at 10 a.m., followed by kiddush.
Shemini Atzeret – Friday, October 2 at 5 p.m. After services, Rabbi Rudin and CAS members welcome newcomers for a wine and cheese reception to learn more about CAS. RSVP at casoffice15@gmail.com.
Simchat Torah Celebration – Saturday, October 3 at 10 a.m.

OTHER EVENTS

Kabbalat Shabbat service on October 16 and Shabbat service on October 17
HIGH HOLY DAYS, continued on page 10

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HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS IN THE BERKSHIRES

HIGH HOLY DAYS,
continued from page 9

Chabad of the Berkshires



Lenox | jewishberkshires.com
Chabad of the Berkshires – “Traditional. Contemporary. Welcoming.” – invites all to friendly and inspiring High Holy Day services at its expansive Jewish Center in downtown Lenox. Co-directors Rabbi Levi and Sara Volovik emphasize that everyone is welcome, regardless of affiliation or membership: “According to tradition, at the New Year the Doors of Heaven are open – G-d accepts all

prayers, from anyone. We open our doors as well.”
Services feature meaningful prayer, inspiring messages, and readings from the *machzor* (High Holiday prayer book) in both Hebrew and English, making them accessible to participants of all backgrounds and levels of experience.
While purchasing tickets is not required, an RSVP to attend services will be required for admittance. Donations and sponsorship opportunities are encouraged – please call Chabad for more information.

SERVICES

- Selichot** – Check website for service time.
- Erev Rosh Hashanah** – Service at 6:45 p.m., followed by dinner (RSVP required – \$60 for adults and \$36 for 12 and under).
- Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service at 10 a.m., followed by kiddush. Children’s program at 11 a.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – Service at 10 a.m., shofar at 11:30 a.m. Children’s program at 11 a.m.
- Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – Service at 6:30 p.m.
- Yom Kippur** – Service at 10 a.m. with *Yizkor* at approximately noon. Children’s program at 11 a.m. *Mincha* and *Ne’ilah* at 5:45 p.m., followed by break-the-fast.
- Erev Sukkot** – “Sukkot Under the Stars” celebration at 7:15 p.m. (RSVP required).
- Sukkot Yom Tov** – Services both days at 10 a.m.
- Shemini Atzeret** – Service at 10 a.m. with *Yizkor*. Erev Simchat Torah hakafot and deli dinner at 6 p.m.
- Simchat Torah** – Service at 10 a.m.
- For Chol Ha’moed Sukkot, Hoshanah Rabbah**, and more information on ordering lulav and etrog, visit Chabad’s website or call.

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Great Barrington | hevreh.org
As the Jewish New Year approaches, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire invites the community to join in a High Holy Day experience that reflects the very best of who Hevreh has always been: warm, beautiful, welcoming, and deeply participatory.
Services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur will once again take place in Hevreh’s beloved open-air sanctuary, where congregants of all ages gather in a setting that combines the spiritual power of the season with the natural beauty of the Berkshires. A hallmark of Hevreh’s High Holy Days is the active involvement of congregants throughout the services, creating a meaningful and authentic communal experience.



Music will once again play a central role in Hevreh’s High Holy Day celebrations. Under the direction of Amy Renak, Hevreh’s High Holy Day Choir will help create a rich and uplifting musical experience, bringing together the voices and talents of community members in song. The choir’s presence is a cherished part of the holidays, adding beauty, depth, and inspiration to worship throughout the season.
This year also brings an exciting addition to the holiday celebration: Hevreh welcomes Cantor Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel. A gifted musician, educator, and spiritual leader, Cantor Elenbogen-Siegel will lend her voice throughout the High Holy Days, enriching worship with her musical talents and heartfelt presence. She will join Rabbi Jodie Gordon, Hevreh’s High Holy Day Choir, and Hevreh’s own Sarah Aroeste in creating a vibrant and diverse musical tapestry. In particular, Sarah Aroeste will offer selections drawn from Sephardic and Moroccan traditions, sung in both Ladino and Hebrew, alongside beloved High Holy Day liturgy.
Families, in particular, can look forward to Cantor Elenbogen-Siegel’s creative leadership in Hevreh’s family services. Through music, storytelling, and interactive experiences, she will help bring the themes of the season to life for children and adults alike, fostering connection, joy, and spiritual engagement.
“These High Holy Days will be both familiar and fresh,” said Rabbi Jodie Gordon. “We’ll continue the traditions that make Hevreh so special – our welcoming atmosphere, beautiful open-air setting, broad congregational participation, and the extraordinary contributions of our choir–while also embracing the energy, creativity, and musical gifts that Cantor Elenbogen-Siegel brings to our community.”
All are welcome to join Hevreh for the 5787 High Holy Days. Whether attending for the first time or returning as part of a cherished annual tradition, participants can expect an experience grounded in community, reflection, music, and belonging.
For information about High Holy Day services and registration, visit hevreh.org/holidays. Please contact the congregation at info@hevreh.org for more information on how to participate.

SERVICES

- Selichot** – Service at 8 p.m..
- Erev Rosh Hashanah** – Service at 7:30 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 1st day** – Family service from 9 a.m.-9:45 a.m. Morning service at 10:30 a.m. *Tashlich* at Lake Mansfield at 4 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 2nd day** – Service and Torah study at 10:30 a.m.
- Shabbat Shuvah** – Service on Friday, September 18 at 6 p.m., with Shabbat services and Torah study on Saturday at 10 a.m.
- Yom Kippur / Kol Nidre** – Service at 7:30 p.m.
- Yom Kippur** – Family service from 9 a.m.-9:45 a.m. Morning service at 10:30 a.m. Spiritual Small Groups (Meditation and Study) at 1:30 p.m. Afternoon service, *Yizkor*, and *Neilah* begin at 2:45 p.m. A communal break-fast will follow immediately after the concluding service on Yom Kippur.
- Sukkot Events and Services** – Visit Hevreh’s website for info.
- Simchat Torah** – Celebration on Friday, October 2 at 6 p.m.

Chabad of Williamstown

Williamstown | chabadwilliamstown.org
Chabad of Williamstown celebrates its first High Holy Days season with traditional services and meaningful celebrations. All in the Williamstown Jewish community can expect a warm welcome from co-directors Tzivia and Rabbi Mendel Volovik at locations that will be shared when you RSVP at chabadwilliamstown.org\highholidays26.

SERVICES

- Erev Rosh Hashanah** – Service at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service at 10 a.m., followed by lunch at 1 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – Service at 10 a.m., with shofar at approximately 11:30 a.m. Lunch at 1 p.m., followed by *tashlich*.
- Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – Pre-fast dinner at 5:30 p.m., followed by service at 6:30 p.m.
- Yom Kippur** – Service at 10 a.m. with *Yizkor* at noon. Afternoon service and *Ne’ilah* at 6 p.m., followed by break-fast.
- Sukkot Services and Celebrations** – Check the Chabad of Williamstown website for more info.

OTHER EVENTS

- Shofar Social** on Sunday, September 13 at 6 p.m.

2026

2027

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
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35th Season in the Berkshires
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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2026 • 4PM
SALUTING THE CLARINET –
MOZART, BEETHOVEN, BARTÓK AND GERSHWIN
With Alexander Fiterstein, clarinet;
Michael Chertock, piano;Daniel Panner, viola;
Xiao-Dong Wang, violin; Yehuda Hanani, cello

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2026 • 4PM
COME TO THE CABARET!
PARIS AND WEIMAR BERLIN
With Yael Rasooly, vocalist, actress, director;
Daniel Rein, piano

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2027 • 4PM
BACH AND HANDEL
With Simone Dinnerstein, piano;
Yehuda Hanani, cello; Hannah Sohn, cello

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2027 • 4PM
SKYLARK VOCAL ENSEMBLE
With Matthew Guard, artistic director

SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 2027 • 4PM
DVOŘÁK–IN THE NEW WORLD AND OLD WORLD
Anna Polonsky, piano; Miranda Cuckson and Giora Schmidt, violins;
Helena Baillie, viola; Yehuda Hanani, cello; Tyler Duncan, baritone

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2027 • 4PM
VIVACE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA–
THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF CLASSICAL MUSIC
With Joshua Gerson, conductor

SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 2027 • 4PM
WORLD PREMIERE–METAMORPHOSIS: LOVE
Jorge Martín, Tchaikovsky, Kenji Bunch, Grieg, Poulenc
With Yehuda Hanani, cello; Max Levinson, piano;
Omar Najmi, tenor; Samuel Solomon, percussion;
Dana Varga, soprano; Nancy Zeltsman, marimba

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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.



DONATE ONLINE AT JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG. THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Your Federation Presents

Thank You, Major Donors!

You sustain and strengthen Jewish life in the Berkshires and beyond

On July 26, more than 300 of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' major donors filled the banquet room at Berkshire Hills Country Club in Pittsfield – our largest celebration to date of their vital contributions to Jewish life!

Thank you so much to event co-chairs Ken and Mimi Heyman for their commitment and their ongoing efforts to raise consciousness about all Federation accomplishes and the importance of contributing to our work. As leaders in major organizations, they were able to share their insights about why committed Jewish engagement and legacy giving is more important now than ever.

Our dynamic Host Committee made all who attended feel welcome and uplifted. Their collective enthusiasm for our work, and their willingness to

share their commitment to Federation, made all in attendance feel that they were among friends, as well as supporting an important cause

Thank you, too, to Chris Meador, our Super Tzedakah Week co-chair, who spoke movingly about how his family's Jewish journey in the Berkshires has been supported at each stop along the way by the generous donors in the room. We also enjoyed the excerpts of the new musical, *Someday Soon*, and the story of how a musical about World War II diarist Rutka Laskier is making its way to new stages.

Major Donors – we couldn't do what we do without you. All of us at Federation look forward to another successful year building and sustaining Jewish life in the Berkshires.



Co-chairs Mimi and Ken Heyman with Federation president Arlene Schiff



Super Tzedakah Week co-chair Chris Meador



Thank you, Host Committee!



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Your Federation Presents



CELEBRATING JEWISH PLAYS

Knosh and Knowledge—

A discussion of Israeli theater with Michal Peles-Almagor

Friday, October 9, 11 am

Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre
Presented in partnership with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

After the Revolution

by Amy Herzog

Friday, October 9, 2 pm

Tina Packer Playhouse

Bad Jews

by Joshua Harmon

Saturday, October 10, 7 pm

Tina Packer Playhouse

Many Jewish Voices—

A String Trio and a Trio of Poets arranged by Owen Lewis

Sunday, October 11, 2 pm

Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

Broken Glass

by Arthur Miller

Sunday, October 11, 4 pm

Tina Packer Playhouse

OCTOBER 9–11

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LOCAL NEWS

Rock ‘n’ Roll and Hebrew: Autumn Classes at TAA

PITTSFIELD – This fall, learn about prominent Jewish rock stars and improve your Hebrew with Temple Anshe Amunim’s Rabbi Valerie Lieber.

Jews Who Rock: 3 Wednesdays at noon, October 7, 14, and 28.



Amy Winehouse, z’l

Rabbi Val teaches about some of the most influential, important and beloved Jews in rock, pop, punk, R & B, Latin pop, and heavy metal. She will profile the individuals, listen to music, and discuss what makes them unique. Some of the artists to be covered include Lou Reed, Bob Dylan, Amy Winehouse, Slash, David Lee Roth, Pink, Joey Ramone, Carly Simon, Herb Alpert, Regina Spektor, Marc Bolan, Geddy Lee and more. Free for TAA and KI members. \$18 for non-members. Register at ansheamunim.org/event/jews-rock.

Beginner Hebrew for Adults: 12 Thursdays at noon October 15 through January 21, 2027.

It’s time you learned your Hebrew letters, and it will be fun. Rabbi Val teaches everything you need to know to begin your Hebrew reading journey. Twelve 40-minute sessions plus workbook included. No cost to members of TAA and KI. Non-members \$54. Sign up at ansheamunim.org/event/hebrew-beginners.

Intermediate Hebrew for Adults: 12 Thursdays at 1 p.m., October 15 through January 21, 2027.

Brush up on and improve your Hebrew reading. You will be able to keep up with the prayerbook and learn more! Whether or not you join TAA’s February through June Adult B’nei Mitzvah cohort, this class will help you feel more confident in your Hebrew. 40-minute sessions plus workbook included. No cost to members of TAA and KI. Non-members \$54. Register at ansheamunim.org/event/hebrew-intermediate.

Mohammad Darawshe to Discuss Givat Haviva’s Intra-Organizational Jewish-Arab Partnership at KI



Mohammad Darawshe

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel is honored to welcome Mohammad Darawshe from Givat Haviva on Saturday, September 26, where he will be speaking during and after the Shabbat/Sukkot morning service.

Givat Haviva is a civil society organization for social change in Israel, working to promote an equal and prosperous democratic society for all citizens. The organization’s activities focus on the areas of education, language acquisition, development of shared leadership, culture, and art.

Givat Haviva’s unique knowledge and expertise are based on its intra-organizational Jewish-Arab partnership, which is a central foundation of its organizational and value-based worldview.

Mohammad Darawshe is the Director of Strategy at the Center for Shared Society at Givat Haviva. He holds a master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Management from Haifa University and is a Robert Bosch Academy Fellow and faculty member at the Hartman Institute. He previously worked as co-director of The Abraham Initiatives, as elections campaign manager at the Democratic Arab Party and United Arab List, and was a leadership fellow at the New Israel Fund.

Darawshe is a member of the executive boards of other civil society organizations such as Darkenu and Pnima, as well as of the Aaron Economics Center. He is the recipient of the Peacemakers Award from the Catholic Theological Union and the Peace and Security Award of the World Association of

NGOs, and is a member of the National Committee on Coexistence Education Policy, the Three-Sector Roundtable at the Prime Minister’s office, and the Strategic Planning Authority for Economic Development of Arab Sector. He previously served as an elected council member of his hometown, Iksal, and has presented lectures at the European parliament, NATO Defense College, the World Economic Forum, Club de Madrid, US Congress, and Israel’s Presidential Conference.

Shabbat morning services begin at 9:30 a.m. For more information, contact Rabbi Pam Wax at rabbipwax@knessetisrael.org.

Blessing of the Animals on Shabbat Noach



PITTSFIELD – On Saturday, October 17 at 10:45 a.m., Temple Anshe Amunim invites animals of all religions (and no religion at all) with their humans to brief blessings for health, happiness and love. Prizes will also be given for special talents and characteristics like waggiest tale, fuzziest, most well-behaved and more.

No need to register, but please bring animals on leashes or in carriers. For more information: rabbipwax@ansheamunim.org.

20

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Thursday, Sept. 17 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

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Thursday, Sept. 24 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

BernBaum’s: Recipes from Fargo’s Nordic-Jewish Deli

with chef Andrea Baumgarten

Thursday, Oct. 1 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

Foods of La Frontera: Recipes and New Taste Frontiers from Both Sides of the Border

with award winning author and chef Pati Jinich

Thursday, October 15 at 1:00 p.m. (virtual)

Community One Read

A Time to Gather: How Ritual Created the World —and How It Can Save Us

with Bruce Feiler in conversation with Rabbi Angela Buchdahl

Thursday, Oct. 29 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

Playmakers: The Jewish Entrepreneurs Who Created the Toy Industry in America

with author and Prof. of Sociology Michael Kimmel

Monday, Nov. 2 at 10:45 a.m. (virtual)

Always Carry Salt: A Memoir of Preserving Language and Culture

with author Samantha Ellis

REGISTER AT JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

One Story

Each year, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires directs annual campaign dollars to our overseas partners. Here is one story of how The Jewish Agency for Israel, a beneficiary of our \$15,000 allocation, puts those funds to work.

Bnei Menashe Community of India Building New Lives in Israel

Since April, the Jewish world rejoiced in the remarkable homecoming of the Bnei Menashe community from the mountains of Northeast India to their long-awaited arrival in Israel. Now their incredible journey has entered a new chapter.

Recently, the renovated Tavor Absorption Center in Nof HaGalil was officially inaugurated, welcoming hundreds of Bnei Menashe immigrants as they began building new lives in Israel. Operated through a partnership between Israel's Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, The Jewish Agency for Israel and the Municipality of Nof HaGalil, the center provides families with the support they need to integrate and thrive. The renovated facility features Hebrew classrooms, communal spaces, a synagogue, youth facilities and practical integration programs that help new immigrants navigate housing, employment, education and daily life.

Now, 330 new immigrants call the center home, including 108 children already enrolled in local schools and dozens of young adults beginning their futures in Israel. Among them is Reuven.

Just days before his planned flight to Israel, Reuven suffered a serious



Reuven with Doron Olmog, chairman of The Jewish Agency for Israel

medical emergency that left him unable to walk. After waiting years to reunite with family in Israel, it seemed his lifelong dream might be out of reach. But with the determination of his family and the dedicated teams supporting the Bnei Menashe homecoming operation, Reuven made the journey, arriving in Israel in a wheelchair.

Since landing in Israel, Reuven has received medical care, rehabilitation and ongoing support through the absorption process; and today, he stands and walks again. His progress reflects the purpose of centers like Tavor: not only bringing people home, but giving them the care, community and opportunity to build a new life.

His story reflects the bigger story of the Bnei Menashe: one of enduring hope and resilience. It reminds us that this journey is not only about bringing people to Israel, but also about ensuring they are embraced, supported and given the tools to begin again.

For the Bnei Menashe community, Tavor is more than an absorption center; it is where a lifelong dream becomes reality and where families like Reuven's take their very first steps home.

SWEETWOOD OF WILLIAMSTOWN

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Our community is a destination for those seeking a fulfilling and worry-free lifestyle. At Sweetwood, seniors living independently discover a range of amenities designed to enrich their everyday experiences. Our commitment extends beyond just offering a place to live—we provide an unwavering dedication to well-being. Our top priority is to cultivate a sense of belonging and ensure that each day is sweeter than the last.

Multigenerational Living & Learning



Sweetwood takes pride in its collaborations with community, educational, and cultural institutions to foster a culture of learning and individual development. Through partnerships with esteemed institutions such as Williams College, Berkshire Community College, and other local organizations, our residents have the opportunity to flourish and prosper.



Independent Living

Our all-inclusive living experience means that you can focus on enjoying life to the fullest, without the stress of homeownership. With a variety of apartment sizes to choose from, with rental and buy-in options, each resident enjoys a comfortable and personalized living arrangement



Medical Care

We understand that your healthcare needs may evolve over time, and we're here to provide the support you require. We offer concierge healthcare services for an additional fee, tailored to your specific needs.

Interested in learning more about Sweetwood?
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LOCAL NEWS

Color Your World Mussar

PITTSFIELD – Mussar is a Jewish spiritual practice of cultivating character through dedicated attention to designated virtues (*middot*) such as compassion, patience, or equanimity. Kneset Israel welcomes your participation in its monthly Mussar class, whether you are new to the practice or a veteran. Fall sessions will take place on Monday evenings, 6 p.m.to 7:30 p.m., October 5, November 9, and December 7. Tentative 2027 dates are: January 11, February 8, March 8, April 12, May 10, and June 7.

Attendance in person at Kneset Israel in Pittsfield is highly encouraged for those who are local, with a Zoom option available for those who are not.

The course will be facilitated by Rabbi Pam Wax, KI's Director of Adult Education and Programming, who has been studying and practicing Mussar for over 25 years. She is the author of Mussar curriculums for both adults and teens through Chai Mitzvah, was the co-author (with Rabbi Marc Margolius) of the Mussar Torah commentary *Pitchei Ha-Levavot* distributed by The Institute for Jewish Spirituality in 2015-16, was on the editorial committee for *The Mussar Torah Commentary: A Spiritual Path to Living a Meaningful and Ethical Life* (CCAR Press), and has taught Mussar in dozens of venues for many different populations.

Pre-register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp. There will be 9 monthly sessions from October-June, \$120 for those who are not members of Kneset Israel or Temple Anshe Amunim.

Plus: Walking the Labyrinth into 5787

A labyrinth can serve as a wonderful “right-brain,” meditative or spiritual tool to help us prepare our hearts and minds for the Days of Awe. Join Rabbi Pam Wax on Wednesday, September 2, 10:30 a.m. to noon to learn about the labyrinth and to experience walking it. RAIN-DATE: Thursday, September 3, 10:30 a.m. This event will take place at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Stockbridge. Please pre-register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp to receive the exact meeting location.

A Genetic Family Secret Uncovered, with Dr. Susan Liebman



Dr. Susan Liebman

On Tuesday, October 6 at 7 p.m. via Zoom, Kneset Israel and Berkshire OLLI host Dr. Susan Liebman, who will speak about her book *The Dressmaker's Mirror: Sudden Death, Genetics, and a Jewish Family's Secret*.

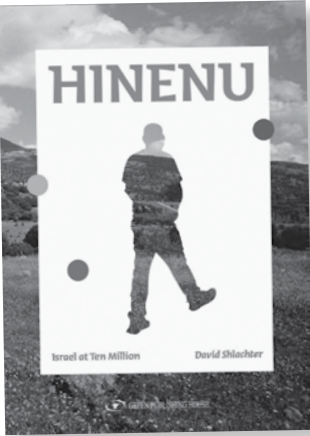
In the wake of her 36-year-old pregnant niece's sudden collapse and death, geneticist Susan Liebman embarked on a frantic search for answers. The hunt culminated in the discovery of a previously unknown heart disease gene and an Ashkenazi Jewish mutation within it. Against this backdrop, Liebman's book, intertwines heartfelt stories of generations of love, loss, and resilience, with insights into genetics and the ongoing genetic revolution.

The book is a compelling call to action for readers of all ethnicities on how to use the frequently

overlooked tool of genetic testing to safeguard their families' health and save lives.

Generously sponsored by KI members Marc Rudholz and Lisa Hochman, the program is presented as a collaboration between Kneset Israel and OLLI. Pre-register for the Zoom link on the OLLI website.

Williams College Jewish Religious Center to Host Photographer David Shlachter for More on *Hinenu: Israel at Ten Million*



WILLIAMSTOWN – On Tuesday, October 6 at 7 p.m., the Jewish Religious Center at Williams College invites the community to hear David Shlachter.

Please note: This program is being offered with support from Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and is separate from the community October 7 program being offered the following night. The

program at Williams College will deal more broadly on the stories behind *Hinenu: Israel at Ten Million*, while the Federation program will focus more on

commemorating the events of October 7, 2023.

Hinenu: Israel at Ten Million is a new photography and oral-history book by Dave Shlachter, capturing Israel through the lives of 100 people at the exact moment the country reached a population of ten million. Created during wartime and deep national uncertainty, the project pairs striking portraits with first-person stories that reflect Israel's full demographic mosaic – Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, sabras and immigrants, elders and children – mirroring the latest census data. *Hinenu* (Hebrew for “Here We Are”) is an act of listening: a human portrait of a society still becoming itself, told in its own voices.

All are welcome to Dave Shlachter's talk and presentation about this timely and important work. Free of charge. The Jewish Religious Center at Williams College is at 24 Stetson Court in Williamstown.

Questions? Email Rabbi Seth Wax, Director of Religious & Spiritual Life and College Rabbi at Williams College, at smw4@williams.edu.

Elul Study: Unpacking the *Unatane Tokef*

Join Kneset Israel online for the last two (of three) sessions on the *Unatane Tokef* prayer on the Tuesdays of September 1 and September 8, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Rabbi Pam Wax, director of Adult Education and Programming at Kneset Israel, will lead a deep dive into this seminal High Holy Day prayer. What does this prayer mean theologically, and what does it mean to us personally? How might we reimagine

ELUL STUDY,
continued on page 17



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LOCAL NEWS

ELUL STUDY,
continued from page 16

tefilah/prayer, tzedakah/righteousness, and teshuvah/repentance? What about that enigmatic “severe decree”?

Compare this prayer to some of the deathbed tales of the Rabbis and of the Hasidim, in search of a wisdom about life and death that can inform our High Holy Day observance—and the rest of our lives.

On Zoom only. Register for the Zoom link at knesetisrael.org/rsvp. Free for members of KI and Temple Anshe Amunim / \$36 for non-members.

Musical Minyan and Community Dinner at KI

PITTSFIELD – On Friday, October 16, join Kneset Israel for an acoustic, musical, family-friendly Kabbalat Shabbat service at 5:45 p.m., followed by a kosher dinner at 6:45 p.m.. Registration necessary for dinner. Sponsored by Kneset Israel and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Adults \$25. Under 18 free. Register online at knesetisrael.org/RSVP.

Ramblin’ with the Rav Hikes Into Autumn

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 Kneset 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 knesetisrael.org/rsvp. Participants must be responsible and realistic regarding their pace, fitness and stamina.



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

Sunday Morning, October 11
Williamstown Rural Lands, Williamstown
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This hilly corner of the state features alpine meadows, forests, streams, and stunning panoramic views of Williamstown and Mt. Greylock. Why wait until cross-country skiing season? Explore this network of trails together with fellow community member. Who knows – maybe you’ll meet this old friend again. Hiking pace 2 mph; the climb comes at the end of the hike. Leashed dogs are welcome. Rain Date Tuesday, October 13. Register for meeting place (carpool or trailhead) and time.

New Thursday Morning Class at Kneset Israel: “Heschel’s *The Sabbath*”

PITTSFIELD – *The Sabbath* by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel is a brief yet comprehensive introduction to Jewish practice, thought, and spirituality. The book deepens the reader’s appreciation of the rituals and rhythms of Shabbat and the Jewish year, while opening doors to deeper intentionality and meaning. A poetic masterwork, *The Sabbath* is a staple of adult education, rabbinic education, and even divinity school curricula.

In this class, facilitated by Rabbi David Weiner of Kneset Israel, participants will engage with Heschel’s chapters, read Heschel’s primary sources, which he drew from 3000 years of Jewish literature and philosophical writing, and explore the connections among ancient texts, contemporary interpretations, and the practice of Shabbat. Expect



dynamic, interactive sessions with intense discussions that invite students to reflect on their personal practice of Shabbat as well as that of the congregation. Participants will be asked to prepare by reading from Heschel’s book between classes.

Rabbi Weiner’s Thursday morning adult education classes, which meet simultaneously at Kneset Israel and over Zoom, 10:45 a.m. to noon, resume after Simhat Torah. Open to members and nonmembers of Kneset Israel, the first class is October 8, then October 15, 22 & 29. There is no charge for the class, and the Zoom link is bit.ly/thursdaymorningadulted.

With some exceptions, weekly classes will continue until mid-December. Please purchase *The Sabbath* from your favorite bookstore.



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LOCAL NEWS

The Man Who Changed Jewish Bedtime Stories is Still Reinventing Himself at 97

By Penny Schwartz / JTA

Most people spend their later years looking back. Harold Grinspoon has spent his reinventing himself.

The businessman became a philanthropist. The philanthropist discovered Jewish children's books and created PJ Library. In his late 80s, he became a sculptor after a cherry tree fell in his yard.

Now, as he turns 97, Grinspoon is reflecting on the unexpected pivots that have defined both his life and his approach to Jewish giving.

Known for innovative programs like PJ Library – which engages young Jewish families with monthly deliveries of age-appropriate children's books and music – Grinspoon and his eponymous foundation have focused on programs that, in the spirit of the real estate business that made his fortune, build Jewish habits, institutions and relationships that he hopes will outlast him.

"I was 10 years old in 1939 when the Holocaust began and the horrific news of what was occurring to the Jews in Europe over the ensuing years made a deep impression on me," he recalled in a recent email interview. "I have spent my life reflecting on the inhumanity of the Holocaust and what small part I could play in helping to rebuild the Jewish community."

That help is also coming from JCamp 180, a program that now supports over 175 Jewish day and overnight camps by providing strategic and organizational development, and Life and Legacy, which provides training and incentives for institutions to plan for their futures.

To date, with Life and Legacy's assistance, \$350 million has been placed into organizational endowments, and over \$2.2 billion has been committed for the future of Jewish communities. Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' president Arlene D. Schiff was the former national director of this program.

Visitors to the foundation headquarters in Western Massachusetts find a philanthropy that often runs like a think tank, looking for answers to out-of-the-box questions within the Jewish world and the local community. How can art be used to promote Jewish values? What's the best way to help local farmers? What do the intimate, lay-led congregations known as *havurot* need to survive and thrive?

Many of these questions are posed by Grinspoon himself.

*"I believe in helping others.
Being generous. Being grateful.
We try to be good citizens,"*
~ Harold Grinspoon

"That's always struck me as the essence of who Harold is: curious, fearless, and determined to understand the things he supports from the inside out. He shows up, asks questions, listens, and follows through," Jamie Simon, CEO of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, wrote in an email.

Simon first met Grinspoon when she headed up Camp Towanga, the Jewish overnight camp near Yosemite National Park. She remembers how on a visit, he laced up his hiking boots for the steep hike down to the river, eager for an up-close look.

Curiosity and high energy drive Grinspoon, agrees Adrian Dion, COO of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Dion said Grinspoon likes to take his early morning work meetings during his daily 4-mile walk. Once, they encountered a flooded road.

"We took off our socks and shoes and walked through, then jumped in the back of a pickup to get back. That's Harold. Roll with the punches but



Harold Grinspoon received a warm welcome by the several hundred participants at PJ Library's conference held in April 2026 in Springfield, Massachusetts.
(COURTESY PJ LIBRARY VIA JTA). HAL LEWIS

keep the work going," she wrote about the avid outdoorsman.

In his wide-ranging email interview with JTA, Grinspoon reflected on his turning points, philanthropy, his love of Yiddishkeit, world travels and discovering a new life as an artist.

"I always knew that if I made money, that I would give it back to the Jewish people," Grinspoon wrote.

"If" became "when" in 1991, when he and his wife, Diane Troderman, founded HGF. He had made his money as founder of Aspen Square Management, a property development company in Agawam, Massachusetts, near where the couple live.

In his mid-70s, Grinspoon, a cancer survivor and grandfather, was introduced to the world of Jewish children's books by his daughter-in-law, Winnie Sandler Grinspoon. Like other Jewish philanthropists of his era, he was concerned by research showing that young Jewish families were increasingly opting out of synagogues and other legacy Jewish institutions.

Grinspoon had no idea that there were such beautifully illustrated, high quality Jewish-themed books that his grandkids were eager to read. The challenge – and opportunity – was getting them into the hands of Jewish parents, and creating Jewish moments for unaffiliated and interfaith families with little or no connection to Jewish institutions.

He launched PJ Library in 2005. He was inspired by Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a national literacy program he supported in his area.

Today, the HGF's signature program is a global, multi-lingual organization with more than 670,000 subscribers, in 40 countries, across five continents. A sister program in Israel, Sifriyat Pijama, reaches 350,000 children, while Maktabat-al-Fanoos provides books in Arabic to Arab-speaking school children.

Looking back, Grinspoon marvels about the endurance of PJ Library, whose name is a nod to family bedtime reading.

Among his favorite books are *Bagels From Benny*, by Aubrey Davis and *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*, by Simms Taback, a classic that PJ sends to every new subscriber.

PJ Library has not only helped connect families with Jewish values and stories, according to Naomi Firestone-Teeter, CEO of the Jewish Book Council, but its impact on publishing Jewish children's books has been remarkable.

"PJ Library has helped create a strong, reliable audience for Jewish children's books," she wrote. "We've seen that influence reflected in the revival of out-of-print titles and the introduction of new voices and books that speak to the diversity and richness of Jewish life."

The year before PJ Library began, HGF established JCamp 180. The foundation committed up to \$10 million to a matching fund to help the overnight camps weather the pandemic crisis, when they had to cancel an entire summer session.

The foundation, with assets reported at just over \$1 billion as of 2025, along with its philanthropic partners, has invested more than \$700 million in Jewish programming and communities in Israel, the US, and around the world.

In 2012, the foundation launched Life & Legacy, a partnership program aimed at strengthening management at Jewish institutions across the country.

Sandler Grinspoon is the current president of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation but will soon retire from the role and remain as a board chair, according to a spokesperson. Through a second foundation, the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation, her father-in-law also supports numerous non-Jewish civic causes, including awards programs for local farmers and educators.

Grinspoon's wealth and optimism belie his early years.

Born in 1929, Grinspoon was raised in a poor family in Newton, a suburb of Boston. One of five kids, he attended elementary school in Auburndale, one of the city's neighborhoods with few Jewish residents.

Dyslexic and bullied because he was Jewish, Grinspoon attended Newton's vocational high school, where he was one of the few Jewish students. To earn money when he attended Marlboro College in Vermont, Grinspoon sold ice cream in the summer, so successfully that he left school to manage a fleet of ice cream trucks. After serving in the U.S. Navy, Grinspoon bought a two-family home in West Springfield, Massachusetts. He renovated homes in need of repair and rented them as affordable housing. Over the decades, his real estate enterprise expanded across the country.

A decade after launching PJ Library, the ever-ebullient Grinspoon, then approaching 90, had another "aha" moment that once again transformed his life.

When a large cherry tree fell in the yard of his home, Grinspoon didn't feel right having it carted away. Instead, he set to work creating a large sculpture from the distressed wood.

A creative spark was kindled – leading him in a left-turn journey into the life of a sculptor. Working with an artistic partner for the past seven years, he's created more than 140 large-scale, modern, abstract sculptures, many on display in the Berkshire Mountains of Western Massachusetts, where he supports a number of Jewish and local institutions.

"Somewhere inside me, I discovered a bend towards art. When I stepped back from my active role in my business and the foundation, I found the time to play with some concepts," he wrote.

He works with distressed wood and recently, with modern media, including found objects. Among his works is "Cosmic Dreidel" and "Floating," a newer work, a towering piece of 550 12-inch glass and stainless steel balls. "Make sure to show a picture of that one," he wrote.



"Floating," a sculpture created by Harold Grinspoon in 2025, is located in Agawam, Massachusetts.

GRINSPOON,
continued on page 22

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OBITUARIES

Jane Marie Gangloff Green, 92, committed to community, outspoken advocate for all

GREAT BARRINGTON – Jane Marie Gangloff Green, 92, passed away, surrounded by her family. A contrarian to the end, rather than being born on, she died on the 4th of July.

Born April 25, 1934, in New York City, Jane spent the first four years of her life at The New York Foundling Home. At age four, she was adopted by her loving parents, Clement and Marie Marshall Gangloff, and lived in Tarrytown, NY. The family moved to Hillsdale, NY, where she spent her fondest years as a child, surrounded by family, friends, developing a love of nature, animals, music, reading, creative writing and cultivating the person she would come to be.

Jane was embraced by both sides of her parents’ families, the Gangloffs and the Marshalls, forming bonds that have endured through the years and generations.

The family moved to Great Barrington in her teens, where she later raised her two sons, Bob and Tom Jones. She married Bernard Green, her husband of 51 years, on August 15, 1959 in Copake, NY. From that union, came her son, Steven and daughter, Tobi. Jane and Bernie raised all the children as their own, one family. Together, they celebrated Christmas, Chanukah and all of Christian and Jewish holidays with great zeal, and in a way that only Jane could provide.

Jane loved entertaining and will be remembered for her culinary skills and sumptuous meals for the masses.

Her home became a magnet for family, friends, and neighbors. While Jane held down the fort at home, Bernie was hard at work at the family business, Harper’s Rexall Pharmacy.

Jane was committed to her community and served as the head of Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation for many years. Her service, throughout the years, was extraordinary; Fairview Hospital Auxiliary, Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Committee, President of Education Association of Monument Mountain Regional High School, President of Hadassah, member of Hebrew Ladies Aid, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, Thursday Morning Club, Gray Lady, Red Cross, District Commissioner of the U.S. Pony Club, and the Board of Great Barrington Housing Authority. In 1998 she was honored by the Rotary Club as Citizen of the Year. In 2003, she received the Governor’s Award for Outstanding Volunteerism. Jane was a tireless and outspoken advocate for the elderly and all until the end of her life.

Jane is survived by her children Robert Jones (Karen) of Lee, Thomas Jones (Michelle) of Great Barrington, Steven Green of Springfield, and Tobi Green of Nashville,TN; grandchildren Joshua Jones (Megan), Rebecca Newton (Blain), Lainey Jones (Tyler), and Kali Casey (Elias); and six great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her husband, Bernard Green, her nephew Gordon Green, her niece, Shelley Green, and beloved friends.

A memorial service was planned for Friday, July 17 at the Birches-Roy Funeral Home, Great Barrington.

Donations may be made to Unbuckled Foundation, 1275 Webster Rd., Shelburne, VT 05482 or unbuckled.org which advocates for families impacted by childhood cancer.

Max Curtis Rothschild, 7, smart, adventurous, determined

WILLIAMSTOWN – Max Curtis Rothschild, 7, beloved son, brother, grandson, nephew, cousin, and friend, died tragically on Friday, August 7, after being hit by a car while riding his bike.

Max had just learned how to ride a bike and was so proud of himself. He was practicing to get ready for a longer bike ride on an upcoming family vacation.

Everyone who met Max was struck by how smart he was. He loved math and loved learning. He had an incredible sense of direction and always knew where he was and where he was going. Max loved going to chess club and especially chess camp this summer. He also loved soccer camp and was so proud when he was named player of the day on his last day of camp.

Max loved swimming and being in the water. On a family trip in Maine a couple of weeks ago, he went in lake after lake and still wanted to go back in the pool after dinner for night swimming. He loved skiing, too. He loved family trips to Vermont, eating pizza and playing

arcade games the night before skiing, and then spending the next day skiing moguls and through the trees. He was just getting into golf and proudly said the night before he died that he had won two of the competitions at his golf clinic. Max loved adventure of any kind, like ropes courses, ziplines, or hiking over rocks.

Max was a good friend, if sometimes a little bossy. He had a strong personality and knew what he wanted. He had so much confidence. In pre-school, his family referred to him as the mayor of the school because he walked around like he owned the place (and that’s how he was treated). He was also an amazing brother, even if fights did happen. He loved his siblings, Caleb and Ellie, and they will miss him every day.

Max leaves behind a whole world of people who love

him so much - his nana and poppy, David and Deborah Rothschild, and his grandpa Steve Kaufman; Uncle Aaron Rothschild; Aunt Sarah Kaufman and Uncle Paul Zinn; cousins Sophie and Henry Zinn; brother Caleb and his sister Eleanor (Ellie); parents, Laura Kaufman and Adam Rothschild; and so many more.

Max brought so much joy and love into all our lives. We will miss his incredible mind, his determination, his mischievousness, his adventurous spirit, his bossiness, his smile, and all the little things that made him exactly who he was. We will all miss him forever. Seven years with Max was not enough time. Donations may be made in Max’s memory to the Williamstown Youth Center, where Max went after school.

PLAYMAKERS, continued from page 1

and beauty. Kimmel also portrays the rise of an entire culture focused on children, led by Jewish comic book creators, children’s authors, parenting experts, and child psychologists.

Michael Kimmel is SUNY Distinguished Professor of Sociology Emeritus at Stony Brook University, and the author of many books, including Angry White Men, Guyland, and Manhood in America. He is also the great-grandnephew of Morris and Rose Michtom. He lives in Brooklyn.

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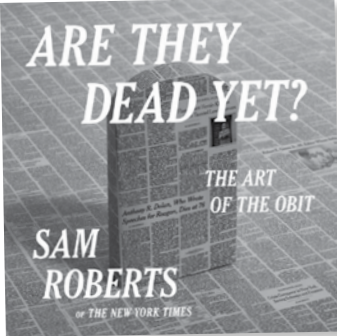
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CULTURE & ARTS

Are They Dead Yet?
A upbeat exploration of the obit beat by
NYT obituarist Sam Roberts

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



“If journalism in general is the first draft of history,” writes Sam Roberts, “obituaries are the clincher. That makes them more challenging to research and to write than any other category of news gathering I’ve encountered in more than fifty years of reporting.” Despite the image conveyed in fiction and films of the obit desk being a dead end for washed up or inept reporters, Roberts shares that “reporters and even editors at the Times queue up to be enlisted as obit writers.” In 2026, he points out, the Times had nine reporters assigned to its Obit Desk.

The essential point that Roberts demonstrates in his utterly winning new book, *Are They Dead Yet?*, is that an obituary is not about death, but rather about life. “They are not necrology,” he writes. “They are not eulogy. They mention the word *died* only once. Even the derivation of the word – from the Latin *obire* – obliquely suggests not only mortality but a going forth, a rite of passage.” In the book’s prologue and sixteen fast-moving chapters – each one chockablock with surprising information – Roberts examines different aspects of the history and meaning of obituaries.

Moreover, there are more laugh-out-loud anecdotes or insights than one might expect going in to a book about the demised. I wouldn’t want to steal Roberts’s thunder by citing the funniest, but since I enjoy Bette Davis stories, I’ll share the one about Times reporter Albin Krebs, who was ostensibly interviewing the actress about a made-for-TV movie, but who asked her such broad questions about her life that she caught on that he had an ulterior motive. As Roberts relates: “[S]he said, ‘By any chance are you interviewing me for my obituary?’ When Krebs fessed up, Davis withdrew her offer of tea, disappeared into the kitchen, and returned with a shaker of martinis.”

And there’s something (and usually more than one thing) just as amusing on every page. *Are They Dead Yet?* is intelligently conceived and masterfully executed by a true pro – it’s easily the most entertaining book I’ve read in some time. The BJV spoke with Sam Roberts in August. Our conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

The BJV Interview: Sam Roberts

I want to start at the term “obituarize.” And when I first read it in your book, it seemed to me such an unusual word that I wondered if you coined it, but I guess not. Is that how people in the business use it – “I obituarized Jimmy Carter today”?

No, not really. I think that’s kind of a technical term you’d find in a dictionary. But most people say we write obituaries. You know, as I said in the book, I come from a culture of denial of death. [Note: Roberts describes himself as a necrophobic youth coming of age in the years after World War II in the then-Jewish enclave of Brownsville in Brooklyn.] So when I was asked to do this about a decade ago, I was none too pleased. But then I realized, you know, of course, obituaries are not about death at all. They’re about people’s lives. And the one thing I learned in doing this over 10 years and writing some 1,500 obituaries is that there really are no ordinary lives, that everyone has something that he or she in his own way contributes, is either transformational or emblematic of some sort of transformation. And we can learn lessons about life and death from all of these people. I’ve certainly learned a lot. People say to me, well, isn’t it depressing to write about death all the time? And I say, first of all, you’re not writing about death but writing mini-biographies about people’s lives. And secondly, if anything depresses me, it’s how much more they’ve accomplished than I have. And that on some level ought to be an inspiration for me and everyone else who reads what obituarists write every day.

What did you learn about writing a good obituary that had not been apparent to you when you first sat down with the assignment?

I found there’s a lot more flexibility in it. It’s not quite the same as writing a judgmental biography, but you do have to make judgments about who gets an obituary. Secondly, how do you put in context and perspective the various parts of someone’s life in the trajectory of their life. If they made a mistake in their youth, if they took a wrong turn, if they did something enormously successful and never did anything again. How do you put that in some sort of context when you’re looking in an obituary at an entire life, not an incident, not a news event? And I found that I needed to make judgments like that. I also start off with the goal that I mentioned in the book about trying to find the “Rosebud” moment. What was it in that person’s life that elevated them into the status of deserving, if you will, a New York Times obituary? What was the epiphany? Who was the teacher who set them on a different course? Or the clergyman or the neighbor or the sibling or the event that suddenly turned them into the kind of person who would accomplish what became worthy of a Times obituary.

How much of a by-committee process is the decision to publish an obituary in the Times?

They’re usually self-evident. The problem is that about 150,000 people die every day, and we have room for about 3 or 4 obituaries. So, it’s a very subjective

judgment, and it’s very hard to defend to someone who says, well, wait a minute, you had this big obituary about this mass murderer, but you left out my father, who was a country doctor who, you know, cured all sorts of people and helped them. You can’t explain away something like that. It’s a vetting process that starts off with a very long list of people who are potential candidates, and then editors and occasionally reporters look into them.

Now, I’ve suggested people who’ve been turned down, and I’ve gone back to the editors and said, here’s why I think this person deserves an obituary. And, you know, the editors are persuadable. It’s a very flexible process. There’s no ritual formula to it. Obviously, there’s been more of an effort to include women and members of minority groups who clearly have been overlooked in the past. I can say it’s really on merit and defining merit as someone who is important and intrinsically interesting, someone who made a difference.

Your book is chock-full of anecdotes, stories, information. What was your process in collecting all that information? When you started, did you think about keeping files of obituary-related stuff that you could pull together later?

There wasn’t a feeling when I started doing this about a decade ago for the Times that I was going to write a book. I mean, I didn’t want to write anything more about dead people than I had to. But when I began to explain to people, including my editors at Bloomsbury, what I did every day for a living, they said, it’s pretty fascinating that you’re delving into people, sometimes with interviews for advanced obituaries of people who are, you know, the “nearly departed,” as we call them. You get a chance to interview people about what was important in their lives. You get a chance to make snap judgments, if you will, on what people contributed. These are not, again, biographies. They’re not histories. They’re something that comes out within a day or a couple of days after the person died. You’ve got to be very careful in what you’re saying and what judgments you make, and also understand that those judgments change over time.

I guess what I’m also asking is how did you store the information that you kept in the book?

That would have been much too much organized for me. It’s something I should have done, no doubt. Frankly, I would much rather do the research than the writing, because it satisfies my curiosity and I’m not that facile a writer. But you just accumulate everything you possibly can. You read a book about something and there’s one little line about someone and then you go back and do more research. It comes down, I guess, to curiosity. Once I decided I was writing this book, I began to keep notes as much as possible and then try in my own head to break the narrative into chapter headings. A lot of it is serendipitous – just finding things, stumbling across things, grasping things, asking about things.

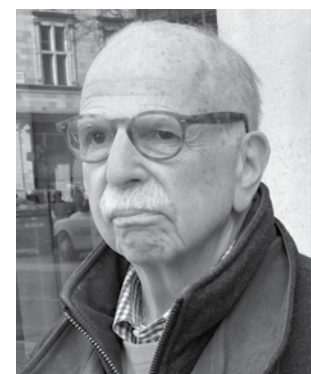
It would seem that writing an obituary for a great person would be straightforward, although being selective about what information to include would be a difficult part of the process. But then there’s a person like the one you write about who came up with the Alka-Seltzer advertisements in the 1960s. First of all, how do you find a detail like that, if that perhaps was the only thing of note that person did? And then what kind of obituary is more fun for you to write – one for a great personage, or for the guy who came up with “plop plop fizz fizz”?

Thomas Carlyle, advocated the great man or great person theory of history. But then he went on to say, well, who was greater, Hannibal, who moved his army across the Alps, or some anonymous guy who invented the spade? To me, most interesting are the people who might well be important, but who I still had never heard of. I have to say, and I feel a little guilty about this, that when I started out half a century ago writing for the New York Daily News, it was a lot tougher doing research than it is with the availability of the internet. If I wanted to find out someone’s phone number out of town, I had to schlep over to the New York Public Library and look at a phone book. Now, because of the internet, you have access to video interviews with people, you have access to much of their written material. You have access to oral histories that they’ve conducted or compiled, and it makes the obituary writing so much richer because you have that so-much-larger pool of information.

I’m obsessive about gathering information, which is why I’m usually behind deadline on books, something you can’t be writing for the daily newspaper. But there is so much more material out there that you can grasp and accumulate that tells what Anne Rowe, obituary editor of The Economist, says is the soul of the person. It’s not just the dates and the chronology of where they went to school and what kind of degree they got, but what their view of the world was and how that view was formed and how that view may have changed over time.

I enjoyed your story of the entrepreneur who invented the cheerleading industry and many of its conventions, and made millions. Who would have thought that one guy was a mastermind behind cheerleading?

Some might well say, what difference does that really make about society? But it says something about what we do every day. It says something about the Super Bowl halftime show, what we value, what we are interested in, what we pay money for, what we learn from. So you know, all of these things which infinitesimally may not seem that significant, add up to what our society is all about, something about who we are as people.



Sam Roberts

ARE THEY DEAD YET?,
continued on the next page

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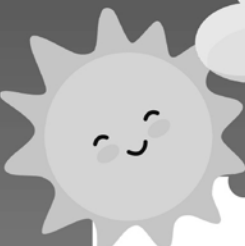
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CULTURE & ARTS

Early in the book, you write: “Especially in small towns and mid-sized cities, local newspaper obituaries bind one generation to the next by recalling where the deceased were, went to school, and whom they married, who survived. The obits provide the frames from a moving picture of continuity and narrative of cohesion.” When I first moved out here and started reading the local paper, I was surprised that the obituary pages took up so much space. And they usually conveyed something mundane like, “She enjoyed crocheting and was always a hit at the Italian American Club potlucks with her famous baked penne.” Tell me a little bit about what you learned about how obituaries play a role in smaller town consciousness.

It’s so unfortunate that the coverage of local news has declined so much, whether it’s in New York City or whether it’s in the Berkshires or anywhere else. Part of it is a question of economics, of course. I think we lose something in our ethos, in our values, in our sense of history and context when we don’t commemorate, in some way, the people whom we have lost. When 9/11 occurred, the Times did something totally out of character. We began those portraits of grief of ordinary people, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of ordinary people. The essence of it was: who would you miss more, your mayor or your mailman? Those obscure, so-called ordinary people have a big impact on our lives and, vice versa, we do on theirs.

I think people are interested in things like the penne that so-and-so used to make and the tomato sauce or the gefilte fish or whatever it was. This says a lot about people. It says why we remember them, why we consider them important, why we memorialize them, why we care about them still. And it’s something that gets passed down from generation to generation. People – and it’s especially a small-town phenomenon – clip out the obituaries and save them as keepsakes, as mementos, because that is kind of the last word on a person’s life. Frankly, that to me is an awesome responsibility. It may sound a little immodest, but you are assessing someone’s life and you know – they’re not going to get too many other chances to be written about. You’ve got to be as careful and as full and as fair as you possibly can. That to me is the biggest challenge.



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

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

- Anonymous (10)

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ALL ARE WELCOME: Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays 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

AUGUST

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable frittata (GF), salad, hash brown potatoes, stewed tomatoes, croissant, and butterscotch Bundt cake.

SEPTEMBER

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

10:45 a.m. program: Seniors Acting Up: A Look at Life from a Different Perspective.

Noon, In Person Rosh Hashanah Lunch...
Traditional holiday brisket (GF)(DF), tzimmes, savory noodle kugel, butternut squash and apple soup, challah, and honey cake.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

Closed for Labor Day

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Noon, Lunch...Potato pierogi, California blend vegetables, beets, cabbage soup, rye bread, and mixed berry crisp.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

Noon, Lunch...Shepherd’s pie (GF)(DF), green beans, roasted cauliflower, vegetable soup, hearty white bread, and fruit cocktail.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

Noon, Lunch...Mustard crusted salmon (GF), rice with peas, broccoli, salad, multi-grain bread, and chocolate pudding.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Closed for Yom Kippur

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Noon, Lunch...Chicken fajitas (GF)(DF), yellow rice, fiesta corn, honey lime coleslaw, tortilla, and pineapple.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

Noon, Lunch...Turkey meatballs in marinara (GF) (DF), pasta, baby carrots, salad, Italian bread, and brownie.

OCTOBER

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

Noon, Lunch...Butternut squash risotto (GF), spinach, stewed tomatoes, salad, dinner roll, and peaches.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), mashed potatoes, peas, salad, whole wheat bread, and apple sauce.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

Noon, Lunch...Potato knish, sautéed cabbage, green beans, salad, rye bread, and rice pudding.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

Closed for Columbus Day

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

Noon, Lunch...Ricotta and spinach stuffed shells, baked artichoke hearts, Italian green beans, minestrone soup, garlic bread, and blondie.

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

These are Shabbat candle lighting times for Fridays that do not coincide with holidays. For holiday times, please see page 8.

Friday, September 4..... 7:04 p.m.
Friday, September 18..... 6:24 p.m.
Friday, October 9 6:03 p.m.
Friday, October 16..... 5:51 p.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Michael and Briana Duffy, who welcomed their son, **Bennett Collins Duffy**, on June 20. Proud grandparents are **Debora Cole-Duffy and James Duffy, Tammy Vosburgh**, and **Scott Pudlo**.

Sherry Greenbach, whose “Be Miep” series of paintings will be on view at The Gallery at JWS in Great Barrington September 1-30. Her work was featured in the May/June issue of the BJV.

GRINSPOON, *continued from page 18*

Grinspoon and Troderman follow the news, Grinspoon said, acknowledging the distressing rise in antisemitism. “My mind flashes back to when I was a young kid and antisemitism was rampant. This is the second time it has happened in my lifetime,” he wrote.

Post Oct. 7, 2023, his foundation continues its investment in programs that connect Jews around the world with Israel, Dion told JTA. Support for PJ Library is stronger than ever, she said. “This is a moment in time to double down on our flagship programs – PJ Library, Life and Legacy and JCamp 180,” she wrote. “We will continue to grow and evolve as we have for the last 30 years,” and continue to look for new partners.

For Grinspoon, that’s the only way he knows how to respond to a challenge.

“I believe in helping others. Being generous. Being grateful. We try to be good citizens,” he wrote. In celebration of his 95th birthday, Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno presented Grinspoon with the key to the city, the largest in Western Massachusetts.

Nearly a century after growing up amid American antisemitism, living through the Holocaust, watching Israel’s triumphs and challenges, and witnessing the American Jewish community’s prosperity and vulnerability, Grinspoon says one of his greatest sources of optimism is Maktabat al-Fanoos, the Arabic-language children’s literacy program his foundation supports in Israel. Like many of the programs he funds, it builds on family connections in service of creating civic and communal connections.

“It gives me hope,” he wrote. “I hope all Israeli citizens can be great neighbors.”

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



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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

Celebrating Jewish Plays Returns to Shakespeare & Company

With a special Knosh & Knowledge on October 9



Alli Ross at last year's reading of an adaptation of the National Jewish Book Award-winning novel *The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish, currently in development by Kate Kohler Amory and Tamara Hickey.

LENOX – Shakespeare & Company welcomes back Celebrating Jewish Plays from Friday, October 9 through Sunday, October 11, featuring three readings presented over three days during the Columbus Day weekend, plus live poetry, speakers, musical performances, and more that have been added to this year's event.

Bev Hyman, chair of Shakespeare & Company's Board of Trustees, said she and the Celebrating Jewish Plays planning committee saw an opportunity to continue great momentum following the inaugural weekend last year.

"Throughout the festival, there was an intense and building sense of community," she said, "and of common values, understanding, and experience. We're excited to bring this celebration back to the Berkshires, expanded to celebrate many different types of art and at a time of year when we can gather and share this experience with our Berkshire neighbors and beyond."

Artistic Director Allyn Burrows added that the heart of Celebrating Jewish Plays is a belief in the power of art to reinforce a universal need for empathy.

"Every one of the writers presented in the weekend examines personal experiences that illuminate broader insight and significance, supported by language that will have audiences leaning in," he said.

On Friday, October 9, at 11 a.m., Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in partnership with Shakespeare & Company kicks off the weekend with a free Knosh & Knowledge discussion of Israeli theater with Michal Peles-Almagor, a postdoctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a research fellow at Tel Aviv University.

The weekend continues on Friday afternoon at 2 p.m., with a reading of *After the Revolution* by Amy Herzog, and resumes on Saturday at 7 p.m., with Joshua Harmon's *Bad Jews*.

On Sunday, October 11 at 2 p.m., a new offering will be staged at the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre: "Many Jewish Voices – A String Trio and a Trio of Poets," by Owen Lewis, who also joined the Celebrating Jewish Plays planning committee this year after witnessing last year's successful event.

"I was pleased to join this year's planning committee to help include other Jewish arts in the 2026 mini festival: poetry, chamber music, klezmer, and a talk on contemporary Israeli theater," he said. "Each performance includes time for audience engagement – the conversation deepens!"

On Sunday, October 11, at 4 p.m., a reading of *Broken Glass* by Arthur Miller closes the event.

Tickets and multi-show weekend passes, which allow patrons to choose their seats early at reduced convenience fees to see all three readings, are now available. For more information, visit shakespeare.org or call the box office at (413) 637-3353.

Artist Ilene Spiewak Helps CAS Greet Each New Year

By Dawn Rosenberg McKay

Ilene Spiewak opened her email on the first day of June to find this message from Rabbi Jennifer Rudin of Congregation Ahavath Sholom: "Good Morning Ilene. I'm thinking about the prayer, *Chadesh Yameinu*: 'Renew our days.' This piece of liturgy is a request to be made new while simultaneously making our lives 'like they used to be' (ancient/old). It is forward-looking to spiritual rebirth while drawing upon our core values and the wisdom of the past. How can we be renewed and made like we used to be at the same time?"

Upon reading Rabbi Rudin's words, deeply rooted in Reconstructionist philosophy, Ilene began a creative journey to design this year's Rosh Hashanah greeting card, which will be sent to each member of the congregation. As she has done for the past seven or eight years, Ilene began to think about how she could take her rabbi's High Holiday message and convey it visually to her fellow congregants. When she first began what has become a beloved tradition, she transformed Rabbi Emeritus Barbara Cohen's concepts into a visual piece of art. For the past two years, she has collaborated on this message with Rabbi Rudin, CAS's current spiritual leader.

Ilene, a CAS congregant for more than 15 years, is also a member of the synagogue's board of trustees and the creative arts team. Her background as a visual artist is in both oil and acrylic painting. She said it is a challenge to translate her paintings to graphic design, which is then reproduced into a greeting card, but one she considers an honor. When painting, Ilene says, "she appreciates imperfections and exaggerations expressed in loose brushwork, but a card, given its smaller format, has to be precise and tight." Another challenge she faces is "taking someone else's concept and making it her own. There's spirituality in any creative process," says Ilene. "It's about listening to and seeing what the work needs [in addition to taking into account the Rabbi's words and your own thoughts] and being open to translation." Ilene reports that it takes weeks, and sometimes months, "to conceptualize an image and bring it to a satisfying resolution."

Once the design is complete, the Rabbi adds her written message to the card. After it is printed, Ilene's work is not yet finished. She hand-addresses each card for her fellow CAS congregants, and even selects a postage stamp that complements the artwork and the Rabbi's message.

One of Ilene's favorite cards features pomegranates (see the image on page 1) bordered by the arils that are found inside the bright red fruit. An interesting aspect of this artwork is that she has painted 613 arils along the border of her artwork. Some believe that Rabbinic tradition states that the number of arils in the fruit equals the number of Mitzvot in the Torah.

Another of Ilene's favorite cards is a multi-media collage of a dove of peace with an olive branch and a rainbow background. She created the original design in acrylic paint and graphite in 2021, during the COVID pandemic.

CAS congregants like me consider themselves so fortunate to receive a work each year from this incredibly talented artist. Ilene's self-portrait was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. There will be a solo show of her work at the Springfield Museum from March through August 2027.



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CULTURE & ARTS

A YIVO Exhibit Explores Jewish Fascination With Mysticism, Fortune Telling and Occult Practices Across Generations

By Andrew Silow-Carroll / JTA

NEW YORK CITY – In a speech last spring on nutrition, the nation’s top health official offered a perhaps surprising explanation for what is ailing Americans.

“We’re engaged right now in spiritual warfare and ... the malevolent forces want to drive us apart and end our connection to each other,” Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on March 5.

It’s not clear if Kennedy was speaking metaphorically, having frequently talked about his own spiritual crises over the years. But he was using language many thought was targeted at those who believe that modern science is no match for the unseen “malevolent forces” assailing Americans’ physical and mental well-being.

According to recent polling, 54% of Republicans and 37% of Democrats believe in the literal existence of demons. A Marist Poll found that the number of Americans who claimed to have actively been in the presence of a ghost or spirit doubled between the 1990s and the 2020s from roughly 24% to 30%.

TikTok is awash in tarot readers, crystal healers, astrology influencers and wellness gurus promising access to unseen forces. Influencers peddle alternative COVID cures and supernatural explanations for current events. Essayists and social sciences are attributing the popularity of the occult, the supernatural and conspiracy-minded thinking to a rejection of institutional authority. In a period of profound economic and political instability, they suggest, people seek metaphysical answers when the official explanations feel insufficient.

But if this all feels very 2026, a new exhibit at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research suggests we’ve been here before.

“Jews Are Magic,” which will be on view at YIVO’s Manhattan headquarters through December 31, explores the Jewish fascination with mysticism, fortune telling, amulets, psychics and occult practices. While the exhibit reaches back to the biblical and Talmudic periods, its main focus is on the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. In the face of increasing urbanization, oppression in Russia and the pull of assimilation, Jews in Eastern Europe and New York’s Lower East Side, no less than their non-Jewish neighbors, found solace in the occult.

“In this time period, when people commonly think that sort of magic is getting left at the wayside and people are becoming more modern, they’re just as engaged with these unseen realities as they were beforehand,” said Samuel Glauber, a specialist on the Jewish occult and adviser to the exhibit.

And it wasn’t just the huddled masses. Writers, intellectuals and scientists were fascinated by the supernatural, adding a sheen of respectability to fortune-telling, seances and what Sigmund Freud called the “uncanny.”

The exhibit includes palm-reading manuals, amulets against the evil eye, fortune-telling guides and advertisements for Jewish psychics drawn from YIVO’s archives. They promise to help readers and clients find romance, settle lawsuits and cure illness. One display includes heavily used Yiddish divination books whose margins still contain penciled calculations from long-ago readers trying to conjure their futures.

At least in theory, Jewish tradition forbids such practices. The exhibit opens with an admonition in Deuteronomy against consulting with an “enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits.” Nevertheless, folk religion flouted these prohibitions, and many rabbis went along.

“Officially these kinds of materials are, at some level, considered unacceptable,” explained Eddy Portnoy, YIVO’s senior academic advisor and director of exhibitions. “Yet a lot of rabbis participate in this.”

Some of the exhibit’s most poignant artifacts are drawn from a cache of roughly 5,000 *kvitlekh*, or handwritten petitions, sent to Rabbi Eliyahu Guttmacher, a 19th-century Polish rabbi and mystic known as the “Tzaddik of Grodzisk.” The letters were discovered in an attic in 1932 by YIVO collectors and offer an intimate archive of Jewish anxiety on the edge of modernity.

After Guttmacher reportedly cured a child believed to be possessed by a demon, Jews from across partitioned Poland began writing to him seeking help with illness, infertility, poverty, bad luck and psychological torment. The letters blur the line between religion, folk healing and occult practice. Guttmacher’s responses haven’t survived, but a nearby display case includes various spells written by other rabbis, meant to ward off the evil eye and often invoking kabbalah, the Jewish mystical practice that offered rabbis an acceptable foothold in the esoteric.

The stars of “Jews Are Magic,” though, are the flamboyant hustlers, healers and self-invented mystics who turned Jewish occultism into performance art and entrepreneurial spectacle.

Among the most colorful is Naftali Herz Imber, best remembered today as the poet who wrote the words that became “Hatikvah,” Israel’s national anthem. Long before that, however, Imber was touring America in flowing robes as

a clairvoyant known as “The Mahatma” and “The Apostle of the Kabbalah and the Emissary of the 37 Masters.”

Imber’s career as a clairvoyant eventually collapsed into alcoholism, bar fights and arrests, but his wit apparently never deserted him. Thrown out of a Zionist congress for bad behavior, he reportedly shrugged and said: “They still have to sing my song.”

Another standout is Khayem-Mordkhe Shiller-Shkolnik, perhaps the closest thing prewar Poland had to a celebrity psychic.

Born in a shtetl near Lublin in 1874, Shiller-Shkolnik fused occultism with the language of modern science and self-improvement. He advertised expertise in hypnosis, telepathy, handwriting analysis, phrenology (skull-reading) and “psycho-phrenology,” a discipline of his own invention.

Glauber, the Miriam Barr Librarian for Jewish & Near Eastern Studies at Washington University, said practitioners like Shiller-Shkolnik took advantage of the burgeoning market for mass-market periodicals and books to become their era’s influencers.



Yiddish advertisement for Professor Abraham Hochman's Clairvoyancy services. Reprinted in “Der shlisl tsu der nevu'e” (“The Key to Prophecy”) 1909. (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

“He was a master of press advertisement,” Glauber said. “The amount of coverage he was able to generate for himself was really incredible.”

On the Lower East Side, celebrity psychic Abraham Hochman operated out of 169 Rivington Street, where he dispensed prophecies, published manuals and built a small business empire that included custom wedding contracts, a wedding hall and a Catskills hotel.

Hochman specialized in finding runaway husbands – a genuine social crisis in immigrant Jewish New York.

In one celebrated case, Hochman told a woman exactly where and when she would find her missing husband: on the corner of Pitt and Grand Streets at 10 p.m. She arrived with a police officer and found the man leaning against a lamp-post precisely where Hochman “predicted.”

Portnoy acknowledges that many such stories are almost certainly exaggerated or invented. But that, he says, misses the point.

“These people are having real problems, and they haven’t had solutions,” he said. “Having tried other things, they finally decide to approach these wonder workers who can work their magic.”

The exhibit’s most tragic figure may be Erik Jan Hanussen, born Herschel Steinschneider to a Jewish family in Vienna. Reinventing himself as a Danish aristocrat and celebrity clairvoyant, Hanussen became one of Europe’s most famous hypnotists during the Weimar years, hosting lavish séances and publishing a newspaper called The Clairvoyant News.

By the early 1930s he had insinuated himself into Nazi circles and allegedly befriended members of the SS. Communist journalists exposed his Jewish origins, and Hanussen’s body was later found dumped by the roadside, apparently by the very movement he thought he could manipulate.

It is tempting to treat these stories as colorful relics of an immigrant past – quaint tales of gullible Jews and charismatic hucksters. But “Jews Are Magic” insists on something more unsettling: The allure of the occult never disappeared.

The Hasidic press continues to carry advertisements for spiritual healing, and Sephardic Jews in Israel have an ongoing tradition of seeking help and protection from wonder rabbis.

And both Glauber and Portnoy see a poignant similarity between the Yiddish-speaking amulet-makers and Jewish fortune-tellers and today’s wellness influencers and conspiracy mongers.

“Anytime people feel the pressure of the world, this is something they always turn to,” he said. “Because it’s entertaining, but it also provides a hopeful window into something else.”

“Jews Are Magic: Occult Practices from Palmistry to Professional Psychics” will be on view at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, located at the Center for Jewish History in New York City.

And also at YIVO: “Psychedelicatessen: A Powerful Dose of Art by Steve Marcus”

From the YIVO website:

“Take a long, strange trip into NYC artist Steve Marcus’ cartoon universe of kosher folk art with a new series of works of Jewish pop art inspired by a parodic fusion of the psychedelic counterculture of the 1960s with Judaism and Jewish culture. Marcus’ new project seamlessly marries his Jewish spirituality with his past work in the counterculture and the cannabis reform movement, putting a modern spin on Jewish topics that create alternative cultural classics for a new generation of Jews. Turn on, tune in, drop in and enjoy, laugh, and space out on Steve Marcus’s kabbalistic Jewish artwork inspired by underground comics, Hasidism, Jewish tradition, and the psychedelic art of the free love era.”

The Berkshire Jewish Voice has featured Steve’s exhibitions at the Yiddish Book Center and in Krakow, Poland, and we wish him lots of success with his new work. The show will be on view through December 31, 2026.

