



SHALOM



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CHESHVAN-KISLEV 5777

Celebrating Chanukah by helping the hungry

It's just about time for Chanukah, and our community's annual "Chanukah at the Mall" celebration will be held in advance on the holiday with a new twist.

The community will gather Dec. 15 near the Boscov's entrance inside the Berkshire Mall to build a "canorah," a menorah made out of cans of food that will be donated to the Jewish Family Service Food Pantry.

You "CAN" light up a life!
Join us in adding your donated cans to finish building the "canorah" and watch it being lit.

We will light all eight lights in preparation for Chanukah with the "torch



of Jewish continuity" as we honor those in our community who dedicate themselves to bringing vibrancy to our heritage.

Together we "CAN" make a difference!
The event is sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Reading, Chabad Lubavitch

of Berks County and Boscov's.
This is one of several local activities taking place to mark the holiday.

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom will be hosting a Latke Shabbat on Friday, Dec. 23, the night before Chanukah officially begins. The event is open to both members and nonmembers. See Page 9 for details on how to make a reservation for the dinner that follows the 6 p.m. service.

And on Dec. 25 at 5 p.m., Chabad is hosting a kosher Chinese buffet, menorah lighting and movie screening. The entire community is invited. See Page 10 for details.

Kesher Zion holding services in JCC after selling building

Kesher Zion Synagogue is holding services at the Jewish Cultural Center on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings after the congregation sold its longtime home in Reading.

The JCC is located at 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125, Wyomissing. Shabbat services are held Saturdays at 9 a.m., and there is a weekly minyan on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

The congregation's phone number remains 610-374-1763 (Fax- 610-929-0886).

Its new mailing address is: Kesher Zion Synagogue, PO Box 14112, Reading, PA 19612

The congregational leadership announced that the Kesher Zion Synagogue Memorial Plaques that were located in the Main Sanctuary have been removed and are safely stored in a storage unit. KZ is considering possibly creating a new memorial wall in the future, and



The Wenger and Zeidman families gather in Kesher Zion Synagogue's sanctuary prior to the congregation's move.

the community should rest assured that the congregation's plans call for keeping them.

Kesher Zion officials told the *Reading Eagle* they are looking for a location that better suits the size and finances of the Conservative congregation, which had operated at 1245 Perkiomen Ave. since 1950. The structure will become a New Story school for students with behavioral health challenges.

Kesher Zion has been having discussions with Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom about the possibility of sharing space in the RCOS building in Wyomissing. Until an agreement there or at another site is worked out, Kesher Zion will continue to operate out of the JCC.

The Jewish Federation of Reading monthly food pantry that had operated at Kesher Zion will continue to serve city residents, now at the Olivet Boys & Girls Club's facility in Pandora Park.

Yemin Orde grad blazes trail for Ethiopian-Israelis

Yemin Orde graduate Yitzhak (Itzik) Dessie is the first Ethiopian-Israeli to receive a law degree.

Itzik is credited with assisting generations of Ethiopian-Israelis through Tebeka, a nonprofit organization he created in 2000 that provides free legal assistance to thousands of Ethiopian immigrants a year. Tebeka is Amharic for "advocate of justice."

Itzik is well-known throughout Israel for his leadership in advocating for education and job opportunities for Ethiopian-Israelis. He is especially noted for his achievements in the fields of civil and human rights, and his story reflects an arduous path from the ancient communities of Ethiopia to the knowledge-based and technology-driven economy of Israel. He arrived alone at the age of 13 after making a seemingly-impossible 800-mile trek, at times on foot, from Ethiopia, north into Sudan

and then a flight to Israel.

"I remember with excitement the way the asphalt felt to my lips when, like many others on my plane, I kissed the ground when we finally landed in Israel," said Itzik. "I laugh remembering my first few years in this new country. Learning to fit in, to be Israeli was such a challenge."

A short time later, he was welcomed at Yemin Orde Youth Village, where he developed self-confidence, independence and leadership skills and learned to embrace and respect his Ethiopian cultural identity. "My time at Yemin Orde as a high school student was one of the happiest times of my life," he said. "Yemin Orde will always be my home."

After graduation, Dessie served in Israel's army as its first Ethiopian combat medic. Following military service, he attended the University of Haifa and in 1993, was one of the



first Ethiopian Israelis to attend its law school. In 2007, he received a scholarship to study for a Master's degree in law at the American University's Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C.

"I had to close many academic gaps, and my Hebrew was not quite sufficient to study law," Itzik said. "But, as I was taught at Yemin Orde, I worked hard."

After completing his law degree, he interned at the Haim Zakok & Co. law firm in Tel Aviv.

He opened a private practice in 1998 and was promptly inundated with Ethiopians in need of legal assistance. In 2000, he established Tebeka and served as its director until 2013. Also, in 2013, Itzik received the prestigious New Israel Fund UK Human Rights Award, an honor given to Israeli human rights activists.

He is studying at Bar Ilan University for an advanced law degree that will enable him to become a law professor and teach in one of Israel's universities.

"It is a great privilege to count myself among the social entrepreneurs who chose to make use of their education and status to improve society," said Itzik. "I feel privileged to be able to be a part of the change I wish to see."

Yemin Orde is supported by local dollars through the Israel Now campaign of the Jewish Federation of Reading.



Jewish Food Festival draws community together at RCOS

Page 6

Year-end advice lowers tax bill while helping Federation

Page 2

Community invited on JCHS trip to museum

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Help Federation just by buying books at Barnes & Noble

Page 11

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE: Book offers excellent advice for parents of young athletes
Page 16



2016 totals as of Nov. 17

Jewish Community Campaign \$443,459

**Includes transfers from Donor Advised Funds*

Federation is making a difference locally and around the world

By Richard Nassau
Development Director

"I can't believe that someone who doesn't know us would want to help." These words were spoken by Taly Mair, director of the Jewish Community of Athens, Greece.



Athens is probably not the first place you think about when making your contribution to our annual campaign. Yet it is because of your annual support of the Jewish Federation of Reading that in places like Athens there is a community where Jews can come together and organizations where Jews can turn to for help.

The number of Jews in the Greek capital is approximately the same as the number of Jews in Berks County. There are many similarities between our two communities. Athens, like Reading, is a tight-knit community where the people care about each other and care about the Jewish people. They provide food and clothes, social services, and support for people who are in need. They celebrate holidays together, hold

Chanukah bazaars and honor their past through memorial programs and services.

There are also differences. The Athens Jewish community, like most of Greece, has felt the impact of the financial crisis and economic recession. Many of their members are unemployed and a large portion is elderly, including many Holocaust survivors.

Their institutions are also struggling. Their synagogues, Jewish school, a cultural center, and a soup kitchen are on the brink of closure. They've also experienced firsthand a dramatic rise in anti-Semitism.

In response the Athens Jewish community sought assistance from Federation's international partners. Partner organizations such as the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), along with the Jewish Agency for Israel and other international Jewish relief groups. These organizations are able to respond because of your support of the Reading Federation. Jews are responsible for each other, and so part of your annual contribution is allocated by us to organizations like the JDC.

The Joint Distribution Committee is

the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization working in Israel and in 70 countries, including Greece. JDC's work with the Greek Jewish community is well documented. Fifty years ago JDC was helping the community become self-sustaining, equipping Jewish elementary schools, providing vocational training, and cultivating community leaders to ensure a viable Jewish future in Greece.

Today in the wake of the economic crisis, JDC is continuing to work with the local Jewish community to supply food, shelter, and other relief services to the elderly. JDC is providing social services for children, young families, and others thrust into poverty by job loss or severely reduced incomes.

JDC is again building for tomorrow by helping educate young Greek Jews, supporting their participation in regional leadership retreats and by providing scholarships to camp programs. Their goal is to ensure Athens has an informed and energetic group of young community leaders.

The Jewish Federation of Reading and partner organizations such as the Joint Distribution Committee serve:

- The poorest Jews in the world, including isolated elderly, at-risk families, and vulnerable children
- Jewish communities around the globe building their future, wherever they may be
- Israel's most disadvantaged citizens, including at-risk children and youth, the elderly, immigrants, and people with disabilities
- Victims of natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies

Taly Mair, "The fact that we are supported by JDC ... gives us strength and optimism, making us feel that we are not alone. And hopefully, we never will be."

The Athens Jewish Community, like many Jewish communities, is being helped because of you. Thank you for your support of Federation.

You can make your annual campaign gift, helping both local and international Jewish communities at www.readingjewishcommunity.org. Federations touch more Jewish lives than any other organization in the world.

Contact us for more information about the JDC or the global work of the Jewish Federation of Reading.

IRA Charitable Rollover can be good for you, and Federation

Anyone 70½ and over who has an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) should consider how the IRA Charitable Rollover can benefit themselves and make a meaningful gift to the Reading Jewish community, in addition to saving taxes.

IRA assets are among the most highly taxed. Making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (the term used in the law) from an IRA directly to the Federation, before year-end, is an opportunity donors often overlook.

Distributions from your IRA may save taxes because the distribution counts toward your Required Minimum Distribution but is not included in your

taxable income if the distribution is made directly to the charity. This tax-free distribution of up to \$100,000 is available for donors who itemize and those who do not.

Distributions from an IRA directly to the Federation may be used in many ways, including creating a permanent endowment fund. In recent years, our donors have used these IRA distributions to directly benefit our Jewish community. Distributions may not be made to a donor advised fund, supporting a private foundation or for a life income plan such as a gift annuity or remainder trust.

The easiest way to make this gift

is to instruct your IRA administrator in writing to distribute any amount, up to \$100,000, from your IRA to the Jewish Federation of Reading. Many plans have standard forms you can use to make this gift. Qualified Charitable Distributions take time to process, so don't wait to get started. You can also contact Federation

staff as needed.

This material is presented for informative purposes only and should not be construed as legal, tax or financial advice. When considering gift planning strategies, you should always consult with your own legal, tax and financial advisors.

Contributing gifts of securities

Your charitable contribution to the Jewish Federation can be made with a gift of long-term appreciated securities — i.e. stocks, bonds and/or mutual funds that have realized significant appreciation over time. It is one of the most tax-efficient ways to give.

Making a gift using appreciated securities generally offers a two-fold tax savings. First, because Federation is a charitable organization, when you make a gift of securities you avoid paying any capital gains tax on the increase in the value of the securities you transfer. Second, gifts of appreciated securities are fully deductible (subject to certain limitations) for the full fair market value of the securities at the time of the gift.

To qualify for these year-end deductions, make sure you have owned the securities for more than one year and your gift of securities is delivered

to Federation before Dec. 31.

If you choose to contribute mutual fund shares to the Federation, you will receive the same tax advantages as if you donated appreciated stock. However, because of the complexities involved in the transfer of mutual fund shares, we encourage you to begin the transfer process well in advance of Dec. 31.

A stock broker or trust officer can arrange to transfer a year-end gift of securities from your account to the Federation. Have them contact Federation, 610-921-0624, for details.

This material is presented for informative purposes only and should not be construed as legal, tax, or financial advice. When considering gift planning strategies and year-end gift opportunities, you should always consult with your own legal, tax, or financial advisors.

State strikes blow against BDS

The Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition (PJC) commends Gov. Tom Wolf and the state General Assembly for passing and signing legislation to combat the discriminatory boycott, divestment, or sanction (BDS) movement that unfairly targets the United States' democratic ally, Israel. House Bill 2107 prohibits the Department of General Services from signing procurement contracts with companies that participate in BDS. This bipartisan legislation was overwhelmingly passed by the House and Senate, and was signed by Gov. Tom Wolf as Act 163 of 2016. The PJC wishes to thank our state elected officials for making this statement in support of Israel.

"Anti-BDS legislation is the next step after the enactment of Iran free procurement in 2014, and terror-free investment in 2010," said PJC Chairman

Matt Handel.

Pennsylvania is the 14th state to have enacted such a law.

The PJC believes in the importance of standing up against all forms of bigotry in our society, including anti-Semitism. The BDS movement against Israel is based on a clear message of hate and intolerance due to its imposing of double standards against the world's only Jewish state.

"The Pennsylvania House and Senate (especially their leadership) were critical in the movement and passage of this legislation," Handel said. "The PJC would also like to thank the Jewish Federations throughout Pennsylvania for their support, guidance, and grassroots effort to keep this issue in the forefront of our elected officials to see this bill through to enactment."

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Our community’s role in the wake of the election

By William D. Franklin
President

Regardless of how one voted, the American Jewish community is uncertain about the impact of the Trump presidency. Many of the issues were reflective of constituencies that are geographically and culturally detached from our Jewish community. However, we also have a role to play in healing the social fractures of our nation. Assaults on the pluralistic and diverse character of this society threaten the tenets of American democracy. Many in this country are financially in trouble, fearful of the future and do not trust that the



government and its leaders can or will be able to repair the economic and social rift that has occurred. We must continue to work to ensure that our government officials, at all levels, continue to be committed to fairness for all. Your Federation has expanded programs to reach out and work with different minority groups in our community. We need your help in supporting these efforts and helping identify key members of these communities for us to collaborate with. It will be essential for us to continue to work in coalition with others to respond to potential challenges.

A key initiative will be to continue to combat rising anti-Semitism. As Jews, we must push back against the threats of political hate on the right. However, our community must mobilize to offset attacks

directed against the State of Israel and the Jewish community emanating from the political left, as expressed through the BDS Movement and from religious, ethnic and racial groups on campus and beyond. Across the globe and within the United Nations, this assault on Jews, Judaism and the State of Israel needs to take priority. We must encourage the Trump administration to strengthen the Washington-Jerusalem partnership.

This may be a critical juncture in our national saga. Our values didn’t change, our government did. If we fought to enact things last year, we should fight to protect them this year. If we stood for certain things before Nov. 8, nothing that happened on that Tuesday suggests that the will of the Jewish American community has changed.

Preserving and strengthening our liberal democracy must continue to be a goal for our community. As Jews, we are deeply invested in the success of the American enterprise. It is incumbent on our community and its institutions to ensure the future of our democracy by joining with others in advancing the public interest and in promoting the general welfare.

We will be celebrating Chanukah soon — a holiday of light that falls at the darkest time of the year. We are and will continue to be a light unto our nation and the world. As part of advancing the great American story, Jews have worked across party lines and with those with whom we may have had political disagreements in order to achieve what is best for this nation, and we will do so again!

Message from the Chair

A heartwarming show of community warmth and caring

By Haia Mazuz
Federation Chair

Meir and I signed up for an evening of the top 100 comedy clips at the JCC on Saturday evening Nov. 19.

We arrived at 6 p.m. to find the main space filled with long tables, and 60 members of the community of all ages gathering for a deli dinner and chuckles.

It was heartwarming to see the wide range of ages represented that evening. Lines formed for the dinner, and we spent half an hour eating and chatting. Eventually Amanda Hornberger introduced the program, and we thought we were heading toward a hilarious



evening. The first clip was a Bugs Bunny cartoon parody of a Wagner opera. The volume was so low, none of us were able to understand what was going on. There ensued a scramble to remedy the situation, with several “mavens” pitching in to help out. It took close to half an hour before a solution was found. The movie was connected to the screen on the wall in the small adjacent room. Folks pitched in helping to bring chairs into the room. Skeptics considering skipping the showing, but eventually most headed into the room. Several others stayed in the larger room continuing the social banter. What a warm gathering of community on a cold, wet winter night.

We are a warm and caring community and the vibe that night was wonderful. This was a relief after a nasty and contentious election campaign took

much out of us all, no matter whom we supported.

Now to a different kind of event I invite you to consider attending with me.

On Sunday Jan. 15, the Friends of Chamber Music (FOCM) Reading is presenting in concert David Kim (concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra) and Friends for the fourth in its series of world class chamber music concerts each season. More details about this event are below.

The connection between FOCM and JFR is that both were awarded a sizeable grant by the William Davidson Foundation (WDF) in memory of Jake Krumholz after he died in Septemer 2015. His widow, Arlene, was approached by a college friend of Jake’s asking where she would want donations in Jake’s memory directed and she suggested FOCM and JFR. We are

in the company of some very important recipients of William Davidson generosity, including the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

Davidson and three college friends (Jake being one of them) stayed fast friends after college . You may read about Davidson and the foundation at <http://williamdavidson.org/our-founder/>.

Jake was a warm , outgoing man with a radiant smile and great sense of humor. He was talented as a builder, musician (playing clarinet), a photographer and woodworker. During the month of January there will be photographic exhibit of works by and about Jake at the WCR Center for the arts, the venue for the concert.

Contact me at mazuzorchim@aol.com if you cannot attend the concert but would like to see the photographs on exhibit subsequent weekends in January.

Impoverished Holocaust survivor couple rescued just in time

With 60,000 Holocaust survivors in Israel living below the poverty line, social workers are unable to keep up with demand to care for this aging population. Meir Panim, Israel’s premier charity organization, has been stepping in where government aid is not enough.

“Meir Panim’s Or Akiva branch in northern Israel is known by city officials as the place to turn for help when government staff and aid run short,” explained Goldie Sternbuch, Director of Overseas Relations for Meir Panim. “Branch manager Ilanit Hafuta goes way



beyond the call of duty to help everyone in need.”

With that outstanding reputation,

the social worker brought a lonely couple to the attention of Meir Panim.

Both Holocaust survivors, 87-year-old Rivka from Poland and 91-year-old Jacob from the former Soviet Union, were lacking basic necessities such as food and were living in squalor. Without children or family and suffering from physical disabilities, they rely on each other to navigate with difficulty through their day.

“As soon as Ilanit heard the story, she enlisted her team of volunteers to jump into action,” said Sternbuch. “They revamped the couple’s entire apartment. This was more than just for aesthetics. They had gas canisters directly next to their stove which could have exploded at any moment. Everything had to be redone for their safety as well as for their dignity.”

The help did not stop there. Meir Panim went above the call of duty to ensure that the couple would live out their final years in a respectful fashion. Meir Panim provided them with walkers and orthopedic mattresses. A safety bar was installed in their bathtub. They were also given essential appliances, including a new washing machine and refrigerator.

“Because it is so difficult for this couple to get to Meir Panim’s local restaurant-style soup kitchen, volunteers come three times a week

and stock their new refrigerator with fresh food and pre-cooked meals,” Sternbuch continued. “These volunteers also provide much-needed company and check on the couple’s welfare.”

Now that this couple has come to the attention of Meir Panim, children are sent to their home to entertain and visit them during holidays. Older volunteers fill their prescriptions and deliver medications directly to them. This relieves some of the couple’s loneliness and isolation.

“There is a tremendous need to help Holocaust survivors, and the welfare system does not have enough resources, personnel or time to handle every case,” explained Sternbuch. “Meir Panim staff, unlike social workers who work set hours, work all hours of the day and night in emergency situations. People know that they can count on us.”

Or Akiva social workers have informed Meir Panim of a large group of Holocaust survivors in need. “As long as we have the resources we will help with our whole hearts and souls,” said Sternbuch. “Meir Panim takes personal responsibility for everyone that comes to our door. We provide help in a holistic manner.”

Meir Panim is supported by local dollars through the Israel Now campaign of the Jewish Federation of Reading.

SHALOM

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Next deadline, Dec. 5

JCHS students get taste of museum in advance of trip

By Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner
Reading JCHS Director

What did it take to be a Jewish immigrant to the U.S. between 1890 and 1920? “The Traveling Suitcase” is designed to support and enhance a visit to Philadelphia’s National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH). Students from the Jewish Community High School of Reading were introduced to “Eva Baen,” a young Jewish immigrant to Philadelphia in 1913 by Barbara Mollin Lerner, a docent from NMAJH.

“The Traveling Suitcase” program is sent to potential visitors to the museum and familiarizes students with the realities faced by many immigrants who came to the United States at the turn of the 20th century.

Barbara was invited to visit JCHS to prepare for the Dec. 11 trip of Better Together Seniors, our teens and other members of the Reading Jewish community to NMAJH and Mikveh Israel Synagogue. She trained as a docent for two years before the museum’s new facility opened in 2010 and has been serving them for a number of years since. She is also married to Rabbi Dov.

Our JCHS students spent Nov. 20 walking in Eva’s shoes by piecing together aspects of her life, using Eva’s personal objects and documents — from a suitcase similar to what contained the sole surviving possessions of immigrants to America. Program participants were encouraged to analyze and discuss challenges faced by Jewish and Eastern European immigrants in the early 20th century. The suitcase included primary source documents, prompting a discussion of what “papers” were important for immigration, ranging from money to a passport. Items included about which students were encouraged

to ask “why” were they brought to America: muffin tins, an embroidered table runner, a composition notebook, 3 school attendance cards, a flag, the Oath of Allegiance and more.

On Dec. 11, the Jewish Community High School is sponsoring a trip to the museum and nearby Mikveh Israel. Mikveh Israel is the oldest continually functioning synagogue in North America, founded in 1740. Program participants will be treated to a buffet luncheon featuring foods from various Sefardi regional sources.

The trip, free for Jewish teens, is open to all community members at a cost of \$40. RSVP requested by Dec. 1 to 610-921-0624.

Guest teachers

Rabbi Brian Michelson inaugurated a JCHS class teaching “Sex in the Texts/” for our second mini-mester, which runs through Jan. 22. He is the first of our community Rabbis who have volunteered to each teach for a mini-mester. As Rabbi Michelson described his course to the students:

Judaism, in its more than 4,000-year history, has had an astonishing breadth in its perceptions on every aspect of our sexual lives. We will start with the book of Genesis and explore Talmud and other rabbinic sources that are not usually discussed in the classroom, to discover what does Judaism teach about sex and interpersonal relationships. We will examine and discuss topics such as sexuality, love, dating, marriage, adultery, and abortion. We will see how our ancient tradition can teach us about the world of the 21st century.

Calendar note

There will be no classes on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. JCHS returns from winter break on Jan. 8.



Barbara Mollin Lerner meets with JCHS students to discuss the National Museum of American Jewish History.

PJ Library: Chanukah story time at Barnes & Noble in Wyomissing

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Get ready to celebrate Chanukah at a special PJ Library story time at Barnes

& Noble in Wyomissing on Sunday, Dec. 18, at 11 a.m. We’ll be reading special Chanukah stories and doing a

Chanukah-themed craft.

All children through age 8 are welcome to attend this fun, FREE event! Please RSVP to Amanda by Friday, Dec. 16, at amandahr@jfreading.org or call 610-921-0624.

Are you interested in signing up

your child for PJ Library? Please email Amanda at amandah@jfreading.org for sign up instructions.

Current PJ Library parents are encouraged to make sure their email address is accurate so they receive the latest in PJ Library information.

Obituaries

Mitchell Brenner, 84, of Flying Hills, PA. He is survived by his wife Marlene and his two sons, Jack and Keith Brenner. He is also survived by his sister Rhoda Baker.

Miriam Linker, 95, of Wyomissing,

originally from Philadelphia. Miriam’s great love was playing and listening to classical music. She also enjoyed reading. She is survived by her two daughters; Debbie and her husband, Dr. Jeffrey Frank, of Wyomissing; and Wendy and her husband, Gene Rindner. Other survivors include her three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

ATTENTION ACTORS AND PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

The JFR/JCC is proud to produce a reading of the play “The Trial of Aaron” by Jesse Waldinger on April 22 at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom, directed by Vicki Haller Graff. We are looking for teen and adult actors (ages 15 - 115!) to play a variety of roles:

- Joshua, the Judge.
- Bailiff.
- Hur, the prosecutor. (Male.)
- Milcah, Aaron’s attorney. (Young adult female.)
- Eldad, an elder, witness for the prosecution, expert on the Ten Commandments.
- Azubah, a gentle 18-year-old girl, intern in Milcah’s office.
- Imnah, a Levite, witness for the prosecution, hostile to Moses and Aaron. (Male, 30.)
- Aaron, the defendant.
- Foreman (or forelady) of the jury

No experience or memorization necessary. Two or three rehearsals will be scheduled preceding the performance.

Questions? Interested? Please contact Vicki at vhgraff@gmail.com or 484-797-2156.



Help with retirement planning at the JCC

Jewish Family Service held a pair of programs in November to assist the community with retirement planning. The emphasis was on better understanding Social Security and Medicare benefits.

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To give through Federation, and transform lives.

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Save the Date: Join us for the 2017 Community Shabbat

By Amanda J. Hornberger

On Feb. 10 our community will gather for its annual community Shabbat service and dinner. This year our community Shabbat will be held on Erev Tu B'Shevat, and trees and

strong roots will be our theme.

Chabad Lubavitch of Berks County will serve as the host for this year's Community Shabbat. Specific details including a full dinner menu and RSVP information will be mailed to the

community in December.

Last year more than 200 community members attended our community Shabbat, and our wish is that we will have another large group joins us on Feb. 10 for this special experience. Coming

together as a community for this annual event is a special treat for community members of all ages!

For questions or additional information, please contact Amanda at amandah@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.

Lancaster County author to deliver presentation at RCOS

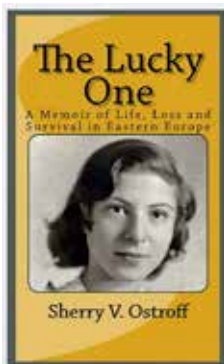
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom will be hosting a presentation by Sherry Ostroff on her book "The Lucky One," which tells the story of her family's flight from the pogroms in Russia.

The program is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 4 at 11:15 a.m. It is suitable for audiences age 11 and older.

Ostroff, a retired schoolteacher who lives in Lititz, Lancaster County. "The Lucky One" recounts the true story of her mother's harrowing flight from Russia's infamous pogroms of the early 1900s. The story consists of the memories of Ita, Ostroff's mother, interspersed with the author's meticulous historical and

cultural research of life and events of the Pale of Settlement, a large swath of land in Western Russia, where Jews were forced to live for centuries.

"My mother was born there in 1918," Ostroff said. "So she was caught in the middle of two revolutions, the first ending the tsarist regime, the second, a bloody civil war for control of the country. Wave



after wave of murderous anti-Semitic pogroms descended upon the Jewish shtetls. Escape was the only way to survive."

Ostroff's grandfather perished in a pogrom, but 3-year-old Ita and her mother managed to escape, literally running out of Russia, facing danger around every corner. For six years, they lived in Romania, a country only slightly less dangerous for Jews than Russia, but finally they got permission to come to the United States. The Great Depression didn't make their new life in America easy, but – as Ostroff says – Ita was still lucky.

"For one thing, she was lucky to survive the pogroms and escape from Russia," Ostroff said. "Secondly, she was lucky to get into the United States based on American attitudes towards immigrants in the 1920's and the restrictive quota laws meant to keep Eastern European Jews out. And, finally, she was lucky to have escaped the Holocaust which wiped out millions of Jews from Eastern Europe. When my mother and grandmother came to the United States they corresponded with relatives still in Russia, but after World War II and with the rise of McCarthyism, they didn't hear any more."

'Liam's World' photo exhibit opens at the JCC

By Amanda J. Hornberger

This winter the JCC is pleased to host a collection of photography by Bill Harkins. Under the professional name of Liam, Harkins has turned from film to digital photography, mostly processing

his works on metal papers or solid metal. Liam captures the inspiring yet simplistic designs of natural elements. He enjoys working in the area of the abstract, artistically using macro lenses.

Liam has been recognized with

awards, and a work of his was one of 25 accepted in a world-wide competition in the Kiernan Gallery in Lexington, Va. Recently, Liam earned awards in the Berks Senior Art Shows and in "The Art of Jazz" at the GoggleWorks Center for

the Arts in Reading.

"Liam's World" is on display at the JCC, and there will be an art opening on Thursday, Dec. 8, from 5-7 p.m. Light refreshments will be served that evening. Come out and enjoy the photography!

How high can you jump? Find out at next JCC youth event

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Get out some energy prior to Chanukah at the new Xtreme Air indoor trampoline center on Thursday, Dec. 22. JCC youth in grades 1-8 are invited to enjoy the trampoline jumping, foam pit diving, dodge-ball playing, basketball

dunking and Ninja course fun!

Our group will meet at the Works, 1109 Bern Road in Wyomissing, at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 22. Parents or guardians are required at drop-off to sign waivers (if not completed prior to arrival) and then our group will have one hour of

trampoline fun from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Pick-up is at 7:30 p.m. Kids will be separated by size (46" tall & over are considered adult jumpers and under 46" tall is a junior jumper).

The cost is \$8 per child for JCC members and \$10 per child for non-

members. Cost includes special required jumping socks. All children are invited. If you need financial assistance please contact Sari Incledon at 610-921-0624.

Please RSVP with payment to Brenda by Monday, Dec. 19, at brendas@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.

Food Festival a big hit at RCOS



Good News Israel: Spotlight



Israeli doctors save Syrian lives as civil war rages

Israel21c.com

Six-year-old “B” arrived at the Ruth Rappaport Children’s Hospital in Rambam Health Care Campus in early February with injuries sustained in her country’s civil war. She was then found to be suffering from a hematological disease and stayed for treatment. On Aug. 21, her new Israeli friends – doctors, nurses, medical clowns and volunteers — held a farewell party and presented her with many gifts.

“I would lie if I said that I expected the kind of humanity I discovered here,” B’s mother said at the party. “I am grateful for your care and sensitivity; may God protect you. And we will always remember what you did for us.”

B is just one of the Rambam Health Care Campus’s many Syrian patients. The medical center in Haifa has treated 140 Syrian men, women and children over the past three years. Though Syria and Israel are enemy states in the political arena, it was obvious to the Israeli doctors that this little girl would be treated like any other patient and would only be discharged when she was healthy enough.

The Syrian civil war erupted in March 2011. Shortly afterward, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) set up a field hospital on the border to treat victims. The field hospital project was hush-hush at first. But as the number of Syrians willing to trust the so-called enemy (Israel) grew, the humanitarian crisis brought Israeli medical teams to the headlines. In February 2013, the IDF began granting special permission of entry to Israel for the critically injured. “Our policy is to help in humanitarian cases, and to that end we are operating a field hospital along the Syrian border,” then Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon told the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. “In cases where there are badly wounded, we transfer them to Israeli hospitals.”

No one predicted that the influx of Syrian patients would continue so long, but even today Israeli hospitals are treating many wounded Syrians who reach its border. Since February 2013, four medical facilities in northern Israel — Rambam, Ziv



Medical Center in Safed, Medical Center of the Galilee in Nahariya, and Poriah Hospital near Tiberias — have treated more than 1,200 Syrians wounded in their civil war. Each hospital boasts a mixed staff of Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze doctors, nurses and technicians as well as Arabic-speaking social workers, trauma specialists and support staff.

Since the first unexpected encounter with Syrian casualties in February 2013, Ziv has treated over 650 Syrians (as of August 2016) of whom 17 percent were children, many in critical condition, suffering from severe trauma inflicted by explosions, shrapnel and bullet wounds, burns and crush injuries. Most of the patients require numerous, complex operations. “It’s our duty as a regional hospital, where we are located along the Lebanese border on one side and the Syrian border on the other side,” Dr. Amram Hadary of Ziv Medical Center told ISRAEL21c. “We cannot ignore that the Syrian conflict is happening behind our door. We cannot close our eyes, ears and hearts to what is happening there. It’s a catastrophe.”

Each new admission is a heart-rending case. There was the 12-year-old Syrian boy who arrived by donkey from Damascus in serious condition to an IDF border post and was transferred to Ziv with injuries to his arms, leg and eyes from a mortar shell that had exploded near his home. There

was the critically injured 15-year-old Syrian girl who came to Israel for more than a month of surgeries and rehabilitation.

In June 2013, a handwritten note addressed to Israeli physicians was attached to a Syrian patient’s clothes, explaining prior medical care and requesting lifesaving treatment. “This marked a turning point,” then Ziv Medical Center director Dr. Oscar Embon told ISRAEL21c. “The note shows me that they’re aware that we’re treating the injured and that it’s okay to refer patients who need enhanced treatment. The note was like any normal letter between two hospitals.”

“I was deeply impressed by the dedication of the medical staff that is sparing no effort to provide the injured patients, many of them children, with the best possible medical care,” Lars Faaborg-Andersen, head of the Delegation of the European Union to Israel, said in 2013 after visiting Syrian patients in Israeli hospitals. “This commitment to the welfare of other human beings, regardless of the fact that they belong to an enemy nation, should be a source of pride to all Israelis.”

Dr. Kamal Al-Labwani, considered one of the most prominent members of the Syrian opposition movement, came to Israel in 2014 to visit the Syrian casualties hospitalized here. “I am filled with appreciation for the devoted medical care that the Ziv Medical Center is providing for the Syrian casualties, people

from my nation, who have been injured in the war. This is a touching humanitarian gesture and an opportunity to bridge between the nations and a hope for peace in more quiet times,” he said.

Throughout Israel’s history, doctors have treated people regardless of their ethnicity, even if their country was at war with Israel. Ziv doctors cared for enemy soldiers and a Syrian pilot as far back as the 1982 Lebanon war, hospital officials said. “We’re saving lives, not with expectations for the future. We’re doing it because it’s our job,” said Hadary. “Let’s hope for peace and be realistic at the same time.”

There are also many local charities at which Israeli physicians volunteer to treat patients from adversarial states. IL4Syrians, known for sending supplies to Syrians in need, also supports 17 field hospitals and surgery rooms in Syria, all manned by Syrian NGOs. “We are a group of Israeli citizens who love their homeland and believe in a Jewish tradition and culture that values a compassionate, open-minded respect for the sanctity of human life and dignity. We believe we are blessed to be born in a democratic country that enables its citizens to travel to challenging and dangerous places,” reads the group’s mission statement.

And while the majority of Israel’s humanitarian medical aid has been dedicated to Syrians these last few years, local hospitals and aid organizations are offering charitable medical support to anyone who needs it. A cross-border humanitarian mission brought a young Muslim Ethiopian boy, who was almost mauled to death by a wild hyena, to the government-run Western Galilee Hospital in Nahariya for lifesaving surgeries. “It’s a humanitarian effort,” Dr. Masad Barhoum, director-general of the Nahariya hospital, told ISRAEL21c. “It is Israel’s nature to help whoever can be helped. I’m proud to be a part of this healthcare system that acts without hesitation to provide humanitarian aid internationally when we are able. This is an all-embracing mitzvah.”

Jewish state on quest to lead agricultural cooperation around world

Surrounded by an inhospitable mix of barren desert and malaria-ridden swampland, the fledgling State of Israel had little food with which to sustain its increasingly hungry inhabitants. Fast-forward a mere six-and-a-half decades and the Little Country that Could is not only nourishing its own 8 million citizens but is also helping developing countries around the world do the same. “We are the only country in the world that has come to such a high development stage in such a short period of time; it’s a miracle,” Yakov Poleg, head of the Agriculture Ministry’s CINADCO: The Center for International Agricultural Development Cooperation, told *The Jerusalem Post*. “The beauty is that Israel is willing to share all its development achievements with other nations,” he said.

Israel began its quest to become a key player in the international development sphere in 1957, with the launch of the Foreign Ministry’s MASHAV (the Hebrew acronym for Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation), the creation of MASHA of then-Foreign Minister Golda Meir. “We were a country of refugees. There was a sort of austerity in Israel, but we transformed rather quickly to an OECD country — one of the 35 most developed economies in the world,” Gil Haskel, head of MASHAV, told the *Post*.



Along with the country’s growth into a modern state, Israeli technological demonstrations and training programs — in the sectors of agriculture, public health, education and women’s empowerment, among others — gradually began to appear around the globe. Since its establishment, MASHAV has trained some 270,000

participants from 132 countries in its various courses both abroad and in Israel — of which about 70 percent involve agriculture. While some of the instruction occurs in a traditional classroom setting, the Israeli government agency has gone out into the field, setting up a unique array of fully functioning farms around the world.

Perhaps Israel’s greatest agricultural success story on a government-to-government level is its partnership with India, which has led to hands-on collaborations with farmers all over the subcontinent.

Prior to the establishment of official diplomatic relations in 1992, ties between Jerusalem and New Delhi were far from friendly, following a period that Haskel described as 44 years of lost time. “As we went on, the Indians came and said, ‘We don’t only want the technologies — we want the entire value chain. Tell us how you made Israel,’” said Haskel. Out of this mutual aspiration — and a memorandum of understanding signed in 1996 — grew MASHAV’s largest venture in the world to date, the Indo-Israel Agriculture Project, launched in 2008. Daniel Carmon, Israel’s ambassador in New Delhi stated:

“India specifically is a country that is confronting developing challenges, scarcity of water and food security challenges. “We are cutting, adapting and pasting the Israeli farms to the Indian scene.”

The Indo-Israel Agriculture Project boasts 26 Centers of Excellence either operating or in the works, with 15 already fully functional, according to Dan Alluf, counselor for international cooperation for the Israeli embassy and MASHAV.

Congregational News

Martyrdom and the martial ethos

By Rabbi Matthew Abelson
Keshar Zion Synagogue

In Jewish homes throughout Berks County from the evening of Saturday, Dec. 24 until Sunday evening, Jan. 1, parents will distribute gifts to their children just as their parents distributed gifts to them. As a result, from a young age, Chanukah – the Festival of Lights – comes to be associated with the receipt of gifts. The giving of gifts conceals the more profound, inspiring, and troubling aspects of Hanukkah. What follows is for adolescents and adults only.

Historically, two seemingly contradictory responses to violent assault resulted from the period that we commemorate through the Festival of Lights. The first is martyrdom; the second is the martial ethos. Rabbi Yitz Greenberg writes in his book "The Jewish Way," "The First Book of Maccabees tells how a band of Jews was trapped in a cave on the Sabbath by a Syrian/Hellenizer army. The Jews, refusing to fight or even to wall up the caves on the holy day, were killed without offering resistance" (264). Maccabees I, which is part of the Christian – but not the Hebrew – Bible, emphasizes this and other acts of martyrdom, which were the hallmark of the first stage of the conflict between the Hellenizing Syrians and the Jews. The willingness to be killed rather



than violate the Torah achieved the pre-eminent status it has through the events that Chanukah commemorates.

Martyrdom alone, however, could not defeat the Hellenizing Syrians. The Maccabees realized that if they relied exclusively on martyrdom, Antiochus' forces would wait until the Sabbath to attack; unwilling to break the Sabbath, the Jews would, in turn, be defeated. To avoid this fate, the Maccabees formulated the principle that was later termed pikuah nefesh: One can violate the Torah in order to save a life. Now, this principle seems self-evident. If the Torah's central teaching is the promotion of life, quantitatively and qualitatively, then the saving of a life must take precedence over the observance of the Torah when the two are in conflict. Yet, in the 160s B.C.E., pikuah nefesh was an innovation.

Once they established the principle of pikuah nefesh, the Maccabees' martial efforts were unhindered. Eventually, by these efforts, the Maccabees defeated Antiochus' troops and reconsecrated the Temple. The lighting of the Chanukah candles marks the act of re-consecration. Thus, Chanukah bears a dual heritage: 1) martyrdom 2) and the martial ethos. The two can never be united, but they can co-exist.

During 2,000 years of exile, the Jewish people came to rely excessively on martyrdom. Among of the founding events of Ashkenazi Jewry were the acts of martyrdom in the middle Rhine cities of Speyer, Worms, and Meyer at the

hands of Christian Crusaders in 1096. The overreliance on martyrdom evoked the ire of early Zionists Chaim Nachman Bialik and Micah Yosef Berdyczewski. Consequently, one of the founding tenets of Zionism was the restoration of the martial ethos among the Jewish people. In spite of the success of restoring the martial ethos, the state of Israel has not been able to shed the legacy of martyrdom, as those whose lives have

been lost to terrorism attest.

As we bask in the light of the Hanukkah candles and the joy on the faces of our children when they receive our gifts, we acknowledge the heroic and painful dimension of Chanukah. Chanukah carries martyrdom and the martial ethos within it. As we pray for a time of peace, we acknowledge that which has enabled us to survive in an un-peaceful world for millennia.

When light conquers darkness

By Rabbi Yosef Lipsker
Chabad Center of Berks County

This year, immediately after Shabbos on Dec. 24, we light the first light of Chanukah. Over eight days, we will introduce additional light, transforming the darkest part of the winter into something brighter and nicer. It is remarkable that the only festival of the dark, gloomy, winter is one that involves light! For added celebration, we eat delicious fried foods (think doughnuts & latkes) and give our family Chanukah Gelt (money) and gifts.

There is an extra joy and celebration on the fifth night.

Why the fifth night?

On the first night of Chanukah one



branch of the Menorah will be illuminated - while seven remain empty and dark. On the second night, the ratio is 2 to 6. The next night it is 3 to 5. Then on night number four — the halfway point — it is four bright lights against four unlit.

But on the fifth night, the majority of the Menorah will be lit. This is the first time that one can, at last, taste victory and unmistakably observe light overpowering darkness. Even as each night represents a move in this direction, it is only on the fifth night that one can truly appreciate this important lesson — that even a tiny light has the power to banish the gloom and dark.

I hope you all enjoy a wonderful and peaceful Chanukah. Savour each day, celebrate it with your family, and on the fifth night add a little something extra. Your family will certainly thank you!



Mini Chefs program debuts

Chabad's new Mini Chefs program debuted in November and continues Dec. 18 at 2:30 p.m. with a doughnut workshop. See page 12 for details.

~ KESHER ZION ADULT EDUCATION ~

"Women in the Bible"

with Rabbi Matthew Abelson

Classes will be held at the JCC located at: 1100 Berkshire Blvd. Suite 125, Wyomissing, PA 19610

While women play a less prominent role than men in the Tanakh, they nonetheless fulfill a unique role. We will examine a plethora of passages that feature women, including the books of Ruth and Esther; the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah; and several anonymous women. We will consider the following two questions: 1. How are women presented in the Tanakh? 2) How does this presentation agree with and differ from the outlook of modern feminism? Ultimately, our exploration will rely heavily on the responses of course participants.



RUTH



ESTHER



SARAH



REBECCA



RACHEL & LEAH

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Please circle and/or inform us of the dates you plan on attending. We will be providing printed packets and need to know in advance how many people will be attending.



Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m.

November 29, 2016
December 6, 2016
Two week hiatus
December 27, 2016
January 3, 2017
January 10, 2017
January 17, 2017

Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

December 1, 2016
December 8, 2016
Two week hiatus
December 29, 2016
January 5, 2017
January 12, 2017
January 19, 2017



Please mail response to Keshar Zion Synagogue, P.O. Box 14112, Reading, PA 19612

or email kzsecretary@entermail.net or call 610.374.1763

Introduce your child
to the joy of Shabbat!

Tot Shabbat

is a musical, story-filled, interactive hour for children through grade 2. Bring your family & friends to celebrate with Rabbi Michelson and stay for a pint-sized one of juice, challah, fruit, and child-friendly treats.

Join us
next time!
Dec. 17th
at 10 am

Members and non-members are invited. No registration is required. Tot Shabbat services are held Saturday mornings at 10:00 am at Reform Congregation Ohev Shalom, 555 Warwick Drive, Wyomissing unless noted. Please call the Temple office with any questions, 610.375.6034.



UPCOMING DATES:

January 21 • February 11
March 25 at 10:00 am - Intergenerational Tot Shabbat at The Highlands
April 22 & May 13

Festival celebrates man’s partnership with God

By Rabbi Brian Michelson
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom

When discussing the Chanukah the Talmud asks, “*Mai Chanukah?*” “What is the significance of Chanukah?” This question is unique. It is not asked about any other holiday in the cycle of the Jewish year. What is it about Chanukah that the rabbis found it necessary to pose this question?

With all the other holidays; we hope, the significance is obvious. We celebrate freedom on Passover, the giving of the Ten Commandments and Torah on Shavuot, and the victory over Haman on Purim: the meanings of the holidays are clear. For most, they are defined



in the Torah and throughout Jewish tradition. Chanukah, however, is open to different interpretations and views. There is a certain ambiguity about this festival.

One can easily view Chanukah as a military celebration: a holiday that celebrates the victory of the weak over the strong, the few over the many. We could see it as a festival that celebrates the accomplishments of man. Or, one can view the holiday in more spiritual terms. The miracle of the oil — Divine intervention in averting what could have been an energy crisis preventing the proper rededication of the Temple.

Thus, “*Mai Chanukah?*”—What is Chanukah? Is it a physical or metaphysical celebration? Do we express gratitude to the mighty Maccabees and their armies? Do we praise their military might and

strategy? Or, do we express our thanks to God? The answer is clearly both. During Chanukah we recite the words of Al HaNisim, For These Miracles, which emphasizes the military victory — the human achievements. However, we light the Chanukah menorah in memory of God’s intervention and the miracle.

Chanukah, in my opinion, is the perfect mix. It is a holiday where we recall and recognize great human achievements. We remember soldiers and civilians who banded together to defeat an army that could not be beaten. However, at the same time, we are reminded that human achievement is not the only factor; God’s involvement cannot be

diminished or excluded.

Chanukah reminds us that in life we live in partnership with God. God and the Jewish people must work together to redeem ourselves, the Jewish people and the world in which we live. Chanukah reminds us that we cannot achieve this on our own nor can we expect God to do it for us.

“*Mai Chanukah?*”— What is the significance Chanukah? Chanukah reminds us that we are members of a partnership and that neither half of this partnership can succeed alone. Our strivings and our achievements can be made holy when learn to recognize this.

Chag Chanukah Samayach!

December ☆ Kislev - Tevet	
 Shabbat Candle Lightings	 Torah Portions
December 2 4:20 p.m.	December 3/Kislev 3 Toldot (Genesis 25:19 – 28:9)
December 9 4:19 p.m.	December 10/Kislev 10 Vayeitzei (Genesis 28:10 – 32:3)
December 16 4:21 p.m.	December 17/Kislev 17 Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4 – 36:43)
December 23 4:24 p.m.	December 24/Kislev 24 Vayeishev (Genesis 37:1 – 40:23)
December 30 4:29 p.m.	December 31/Tevet 2 Mikeitz (Genesis 41:1 – 44:17)

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND SERVICE TIMES

KESHER ZION SYNAGOGUE (610) 374-1763
Weekly services Saturdays: 9:30 a.m.; Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.
SERVICES HELD AT JCC, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125, Wyomissing

REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB SHOLOM (610) 375-6034
Friday, Dec. 2: 6 p.m. Fridays, Dec. 9 and 16: 7:45 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 17: Tot Shabbat, 10 a.m.
Friday, Dec. 23: Latke Shabbat followed by dinner, 6 p.m.

CHABAD CENTER OF BERKS COUNTY (610) 921-0881
Saturday mornings: 9:30 a.m.; Friday evenings: 6:30 p.m.

CONGREGATION SHOMREI HABRITH

Annual Community-wide Chanukah at the Mall

Bring canned food and help construct a giant

“CANORAH”

All the cans will be donated to the Jewish Family Service Food Pantry.



You CAN light up a life - Feed the Hungry

Thursday, December 15, 2016
6:00pm
Berkshire Mall
(Bosco’s entrance)

Dreidels

Chocolate Gelt

Potato Latkes

Jewish Rock & Roll Band!

Fun for the whole family!

Aso starring the Lakin preschool of RCOS who will perform Chanukah songs for us



Sponsored by:
Chabad Lubavitch of Berks County
Jewish Federation of Reading
Bosco’s Dept. Stores



REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB SHOLOM
INVITES YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO A

Latke Shabbat Family Service & Dinner

WE WILL LIGHT SHABBAT CANDLES TOGETHER ON THE BIMAH
SO PLEASE BRING YOUR SHABBAT CANDLES FROM HOME

Friday, December 23, 2016
6:00 pm Service • 7:00 pm Dinner

YOUR CHECK IS YOUR RESERVATION.
CHECK PAYABLE TO RCOS &
DUE TO TEMPLE OFFICE BY DECEMBER 16TH.
FEE PER PERSON: ADULTS \$14. CHILDREN 6 & UNDER \$8.
MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS WELCOME.

BUFFET DINNER INCLUDES CHICKEN, LATKES & APPLESAUCE
SIDE DISH, DESSERT, AND DRINKS.
VEGETARIAN OPTION AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB SHOLOM
555 WARWICK DRIVE, WYOMISSING, PA 19610



Israel Book Club: ‘Let There Be Water’

By Moisey Schneider & Andi Franklin

The world is entering a prolonged water crisis. The question is how severe the disruptions will be. Twenty percent of the world’s population – about 1.5 billion people — will be the first victims of the water crisis. Already 600 million have begun to experience water shortages. Depleted water supplies pose a risk to us and the global food market. Prices for agricultural products have risen and water restrictions of increasing severity have been imposed, even in California. Seth M. Siegel illustrates in his book, “Let There Be Water,” how Israel, with 60 percent of its country being desert, has not only solved its water problem but has created an abundance of water and supplies water daily to the Palestinian territories and Jordan.

This book is the account of how and why Israel developed its sophisticated approach to water. Starting long before its independence, Zionist leader Theodor Herzl said that this country needs nothing but water and shade to have a very great future and predicted that the Jewish engineers would be its heroes. No decision made by the Zionist pioneers has had a greater impact on Israel’s water culture than a decision to make water the property of all. The kibbutz philosophy of common good was the foundation for establishing that all water resources are public property. The available water is allocated according to what is seen as the best use. Israel’s national water system is the most successful application of socialism in the world today.

A driving factor of the increased concern for water was the rise of Hitler. Millions of Jews were expected to arrive in Palestine and would need water for household use and agriculture. Simcha Blass, a Polish immigrant, proposed a three-phase approach to national self-sufficiency of water. First, he scoured the land for possible wells and springs. Second, he created a plan for bringing

water from Tel Aviv’s Yarkon River to the Negev. And third, he proposed a pipeline to bring water from the north to the Negev. With this plan, Ben Gurion was able to convince the British to allow more refugees to emigrate to Israel.

American Jewry donated two-thirds of the money for the second phase, with the rest raised by the sale of Israel bonds. The country’s new system improved water reliability and quality and served as a great inspiration. It helped unify and strengthen the young nation and enabled the Negev desert to fulfill Ben Gurion’s pledge that Israel would make the desert bloom.

There were also tremendous agricultural innovations. One day Blass noticed a tree, taller than others of the same species and age. He discovered a tiny leak in the irrigation system that was the cause of this superior growth. This led to the development of drip irrigation, which saves 50-60 percent of the used water and increased harvest yields.

Israeli seed breeders developed plants that thrive on brackish water, the previously useless salty water found in abundance under the Negev desert sands. As the plants absorb the salty water, there is a change in the plant cell structure that produces sweeter fruits and vegetables.

Israel developed geological and hydrological expertise in identifying where water is and how to get it. Brackish water found in the Arava supports field crops, date palm plantations and dairies. Arava farming enterprise demonstrated to Israel’s neighbors that they also could use the brackish water under their sands for agriculture. The world should think of Israel as a laboratory and inspiration.

The Israeli government and farmers developed a waste water infrastructure to make use of sewage. Over 85 percent of the nation’s sewage is reused and is seen as a treasured national resource. This changed the agricultural landscape,

permitting Israel to feed itself and to be an agricultural exporter of significance. The treatment of sewage reduces pollution and improves the quality of lives. Today, the country’s rivers are clean.

Lyndon Johnson and Ben-Gurion had a deep interest in desalting water. They believed that it would have a future in both countries and would transform the Middle East. Alexander Zarchin arrived in Israel from Russia in 1947 and had an idea of desalting water by freezing it. Although his process wasn’t utilized, desalination water transformed the country and region. Desalination plants now dot Israel’s Mediterranean coast. Desalination has transformed the water profile in Israel. It has had enormous positive implications for environment, economy, infrastructure, social harmony, public health and Israel’s relationship with its neighbors. Israel has gotten ahead of the climate change and can withstand a long drought.

Intense utilization of Israel’s land led to severe pollution of its rivers. An environmental accident highlighted the level of pollution in the Yarkon River, resulting in the death of young Maccabee athletes. Dr. David Pargament became the head of the Yarkon River Authority and changed everything. He made the river a success story — species of fish came back and fed on mosquitos, keeping the pest population low for nearby Tel-Aviv. Dr. Nechemya Shahat is spearheading the restoration of the Shikma-Besor River near Beersheba, and the vision of transforming the desert city has started to become a reality.

The Sea of Galilee was the largest single resource for fresh water. Unfortunately, its water level had significantly decreased, causing majors concerns across the country. Today far more water is derived from desalination than from the lake and the lake has stabilized. Like the country

itself, Israel’s fresh water lake is now immune to weather fluctuations and even to drought. Israel has turned the Sea of Galilee into a reservoir as a part of an intergrated, flexible water system that is mature and resilient. No Israeli need lie awake at night anymore worrying about the lower red line of the Sea of Galilee.

Israel’s global water industry has annual sales of \$600 billion, making it bigger than the biotech and telecommunications sectors. Research shows that a third of the world will be living in water-stressed regions by 2025 if actions are not taken soon. However, the Dead’s Sea’s dropping water level is still a challenge being addressed.

Israel went from scarcity of water and fear of drought to abundance and independence from climate conditions. The dramatic change was made possible because of Israeli scientists, engineers, and managers and would not have happened without crucial help from Jewish-American donors. It is important that we give special recognition to Dr. Howard and Lottie Marcus, Holocaust survivors living in the United States, who gave \$400 million to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev for its research on desalination, desert farming and water management. This is the largest charitable gift in Israel’s history. The couple gave their money to Israel because they believed a strong and secure Jewish state will save Jews if needed and benefit the world. Israel has exported its water expertise to its neighbors in the Middle East, to Africa, Asia, Brazil and the United States. The world knows that when it needs to address their water problems, Israel has answers.

The next book for our Israeli book group is Theodor Herzl’s “The Jew’s State.” We will be meeting to discuss it on Wednesday, Feb. 15. Please join us.

REFORM CONGREGATION
OHEB SHOLOM PRESENTS
a NEW program



ONEG SPEAKER SERIES



SHABBAT SERVICE AT 7:00 PM
SPEAKER/ONEG AT 8:00 PM

Speakers will present in the Social Hall during the oneg for about 45 minutes. The Speaker Series is for adults only. Babysitting is available for free for children ages 2-8 and tweens ages 9-13 with a reservation by calling the office the Friday before the event, 610 375-6034.

Appreciation is extended to Sisterhood for supporting the Speaker Series onegs.

PROGRAM #2:
FRI., JANUARY 27, 2017
We Finally Have A New President...Now What?
featuring Bernard Whitman.
Bernard is a brand & political strategist with over 25 years experience advising some of the world’s most powerful leaders, companies, and organizations. He is a frequent television commentator with more than 500 media appearances on networks including CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, ABC, CNBC, and Fox Business. Bernard is the brother of student Cantor Harriet Dunkerley.

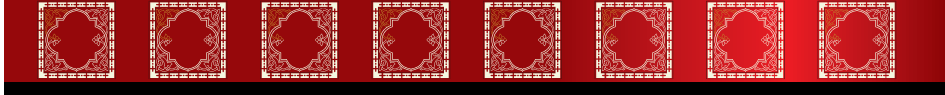
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Buy books at Barnes & Noble and support Federation!

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Need to find a gift for that special reader for Chanukah? Plan to shop at Barnes & Noble in Wyomissing (or online!) on Sunday, Dec. 18, and 10

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PJ Library Chanukah story time!

Questions or need more information? Please contact Amanda at amandah@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624.

If you don't have a will, Uncle Sam has one for you

By Richard Nassau

If you don't have a will, you may end up leaving a lot less to family and charities you want to support. Without a will, everything may go into probate, and the government can get involved in settling your estate. Statutes dictate who receives what. Hard-earned assets, even family heirlooms, may go to beneficiaries you didn't intend.

A will keeps you in charge of the planning. Without a will you risk putting loved ones through emotional trauma and depleting your estate by incurring taxes that estate planning might prevent.

Basic estate planning is important for everybody. Using a will, you leave assets to whomever you wish. A will gives you and your loved ones peace of mind knowing everything you

worked for and all that's precious to you will pass according to your intent.

Consult a qualified professional advisor. Prepare a will. Leave Uncle Sam out of the process.

When preparing or updating your Will, please remember to include the Jewish community. Consider changing a portion of your beneficiary designation in life insurance, retirement assets such as

IRA's and 401(k)'s and other assets such as real estate. Contact your local Federation to discuss ways of creating your Jewish legacy with a gift to your favorite organizations

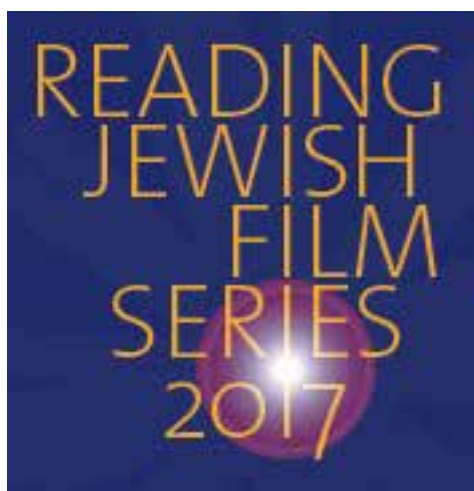
This article is for information purposes only and not intended to be tax or legal advice. Always consult your own trusted professional advisors before making any financial plans.

Documentary explores contemporary Jewish life in Germany

By Amanda J. Hornberger

It may surprise readers to know that Berlin is a hot spot for Jewish life in Germany, particularly among Israelis who flock to the hip city to work and maintain their Jewish identity abroad. Modern day Germany's experience with Jews is explored in the documentary "Germans & Jews."

Germany is considered one of the most democratic societies in the world, assuming the position of moral leader in Europe as it embraces hundreds of thousands of refugees. Neither of these developments could have been imagined in 1945. Through personal stories Germans & Jews explores the country's transformation from silence about the Holocaust to



facing it head on. What began as a private conversation between the two filmmakers and friends, Tal Recanti

(Jewish) and Janina Quint (non-Jewish German), grew into a cultural exchange among many.

"Germans & Jews" will be shown on Wednesday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. at FOX EAST, 4350 Perkiomen Avenue, Exeter Township (next to Boscov's East).

The 2017 Reading Jewish Film Series is co-sponsored by the Rubin Educational Fund of the Jewish Federation of Reading and Fox Theatres. Admission is \$5 per film or \$30 for the series of eight films. All films will be shown on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. at FOX EAST. Tickets can be purchased at the theater beginning at 6:30 p.m. the day of

the screening, and series tickets can be bought at the JCC. Cash and checks are accepted.

The 2017 Reading Jewish Film Series continues through the spring:

Dec. 7 — "Germans & Jews"

Jan. 18 — "Rosenwald" with the Central Pennsylvania African American Museum*

March 1 — "The Sturgeon Queens"

April 5 — "Women in Sink" and "In Search of Israeli Cuisine" (Two Films) with the Islamic Center*

May 17 — "Apples from the Desert"

*Facilitated discussion to follow the film.

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Raves for rugelach at Chabad cooking event

By Sandra Fishman

Making rugelach is both an art and a science. Add to that faith and family in a warm and welcoming atmosphere and you have Chana Lipsker's recipe for that tasty Eastern European pastry.

More than two dozen women participated in a rugelach baking class

led by Chana at the Chabad Center on Oct. 30.

Her interesting introduction about the history and varieties of rugelach was followed by her clear and precise instructions that suited both the culinarily challenged as well as the experienced baker.

The pre-class preparation required getting all the ingredients and utensils ready for the class, and the simplicity with which she taught made it both fun and rewarding. The outcome of the evening was delicious; in both the pastry baked and the friendships forged and renewed.

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5.30pm

At Chabad Lubavitch

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Reading, PA 19604

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Next
cooking class
will be on
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Israeli scientists develop new drug that may be AIDS cure

TEL AVIV — A groundbreaking Israeli-invented drug may be the cure for AIDS, with trials showing a 97 percent decrease of the virus in patients’ blood in just over a week.

The Gammora drug, developed at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is being tested at the Kaplan Medical Center in Rehovot.

The drug was inserted into test tubes containing the blood of 10 AIDS patients, resulting in a 95-97 percent

reduction in the HIV virus count in only eight days.

Professor Zeev Steger, head of Kaplan’s Naveh Or AIDS clinic, said the medication is causing the death of HIV cells.

The drug’s active ingredient is a peptide developed by Hebrew University’s Abraham Loyter and Assaf Friedler. It causes infected cells to self-destruct.

While current treatment curbs

the progress of the virus, it doesn’t eliminate it entirely.

Loyter explained that the new treatment acts to get rid of the cells altogether.

“Our approach destroys the cells, so there is no chance that the virus will return one day, because there are no cells, there will be no cells that contain the virus,” Loyter said.

He explained that “the drug enhances certain processes in the body during

the spreading of the virus and that enhancement kills certain cells.”

The medication, developed by Zion Pharmaceuticals, still has a long way to go before getting approved. Next year the developers hope to begin clinical trials on AIDS patients and HIV carriers.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry has announced that prophylactic drugs would now be available for populations at higher risk of contracting HIV.

Israel’s Ethiopian National Project on mission of better integration

The Ethiopian National Project (ENP) unites global Jewry, the government of Israel and the Ethiopian-Israeli community in its mission to advance the integration of Ethiopian-Israelis into Israeli society.

ENP is a partnership between the Jewish Federations of North America, the Government of Israel, representatives of Ethiopian Jewish community organizations, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Israel (JDC-Israel) and Keren Hayesod-UIA. ENP works in true partnership with the Ethiopian-Israeli community, involving them at local and national levels at every stage of the creation, implementation and evaluation of ENP programs.

After an extensive review of the needs and programs available for the Ethiopian community, ENP decided to focus its efforts on youth ages 13 – 18. In 2004, ENP launched a major multi-year effort in order to provide quality opportunities for Ethiopian youth. ENP’s programs includes after school scholastic assistance, neighborhood outreach centers for youth-at-risk and workshops designed to empower parents and community leadership.

The Ethiopian National Project strives to provide social and educational opportunities to help Ethiopian-Israeli teenagers realize their full potential. ENP programs take a “big picture” view of the cultural, social and emotional challenges faced by Ethiopian-Israeli teens that constrain their advancement. Today, the Ethiopian National Project

operates in 23 communities across Israel, serving approximately 3,413 youth in its scholastic assistance programs and almost 1,900 youth in 14 outreach centers.

Key initiatives are at the heart of ENP’s work:

- Scholastic Assistance (3,413 students):

ENP’s Scholastic Assistance Program promotes academic growth and improvement by providing supplementary tutoring to students in small groups. Alongside its academic components, the Program works to strengthen students’ self-esteem and leadership skills by addressing obstacles to social integration and personal development. The Program helps students to connect to their heritage, and to incorporate this ethnic culture into their everyday lives. Students enrolled in the Program also receive preparation for army service, which enables them to choose from a broader base of positions once enlisted. Lastly, the Scholastic Assistance Program provides all of its participants with a lunchtime meal, which helps ensure that students attend tutoring sessions engaged and ready to learn.

- Youth Outreach Centers (14 centers)

ENP’s Youth Outreach Centers provide safe physical havens for at-risk youth. This model provides children with critically necessary programs and staff, utilizing resources and knowledge efficiently to meet the most pressing needs of the local populations. ENP youth workers direct outreach activities

in areas with dense concentrations of Ethiopian-Israeli children. They extend themselves to alienated youth, offering guidance in neighborhood centers.

Among the programs available at these centers are: computer lab courses and drug/alcohol abuse prevention workshops, DJ lessons, photography tutorials, as well as dance and martial arts classes. Sports instructors provide youth with structured athletic activities, while other community leaders help to promote proactive methods of problem solving by directing workshops in violence prevention.

ENP also works with parents to get them involved in activities at the Centers and leaders at the Centers provide them with tactics to foster more supportive home environments. Together, these factors enhance participants’ self-esteem and help them to develop a stronger connection with the surrounding community and with the State of Israel.

- Leadership Training

The Ethiopian community can realize its immense potential if it is provided with the appropriate tools and support networks. ENP’s Leadership Development Program trains Ethiopian-Israeli activists and grassroots leaders, including: local steering committee members and activists, organization representatives, and national ENP leaders. The program prepares community members to become leaders, and works to increase the involvement of Ethiopian-Israelis in their own processes of absorption

— helping to catalyze a change from within. ENP’s Municipal Leadership Development Program forms a group of immigrant activists nationwide that are empowered to strengthen and advance their community.

- Parents Workshops

ENP’s Parent Workshops program enables parents to become involved in their children’s education by providing them with important skills and information about Israel’s school systems. The Program furnishes parents with knowledge about their children’s individual academic goals and needs so that they will be able to step in when intervention is required. Additionally, ENP’s Parent Workshops inform guardians of their rights and obligations within the educational system. The Program reinforces parents’ roles as educators and protectors of ethnic Ethiopian language, heritage, and culture.

- University Scholarships

Every year, more Ethiopian-Israelis gain access to higher education. Yet a great number still face financial hardships. While the government provides tuition assistance through the Student Authority, many students do not qualify due to age- and duration-of-study-related eligibility limitations. Students who do receive tuition reductions are often still unable to afford schoolbooks, academic supplies, and other living expenses. These constraints cause students to drop out and prevent them from returning to their studies. Thanks to the support of three Jewish US communities ENP is able

Report: More than 200 U.S.-approved textbooks teach Palestinians to kill Jews

Israel21c.com

More than 200 U.S.-government-approved textbooks administered in hundreds of Palestinian UNRWA-sponsored schools are reportedly teaching Arab children between the first and ninth grades to kill Israelis, and sacrifice themselves as martyrs to drive Jews out of the country. The violent curriculum can be found in 240 books — ranging from civics to mathematics — in more than 400 UNRWA schools in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, said experts at the Center for Near East Policy Research in Jerusalem.

David Bedein, who heads the research institute and Israel Resource News Agency, said the disputed books were purchased from a warehouse owned by the Palestinian Authority and then carefully vetted by a team of researchers. Despite repeated reassurances from the Palestinian Authority’s Minister of Education that all the textbooks would teach a “united curriculum,” Bedein said the findings showed a central theme: “the preparation of the children for war.”

Indeed, among the myriad examples presented from the books including a math word problem asking students to use variables including the number of Jews killed during the first and second intifadas, to a poem excerpt including:

*Hearing [weapons] clash is pleasant to my ear
And the flow of blood gladdens my soul
As well as a body thrown upon the ground
Skirmished over by the desert predator
By your life! This is the death of men
And whoever asks for a noble death – this is it!”*

“We have copies of the books and went through them, and what’s happening is very clear: The American government told Israel that they had checked out the school

books and that everything is fine, and it’s not,” said Bedein. In all the books you have right of return and armed struggle being taught. Even in math books.”

Moreover, Bedein claimed that when the findings were to be presented to Congress in March by Dr. Arnon Groiss, former director of research for the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, the White House was not interested. “When we brought Dr. Groiss to testify, the Obama administration issued a memo saying there is no problem with the books, and that the hearing was not necessary,” he said. “We have in writing from a White House spokesperson, who sent a memo to all members of Congress, that everything is fine.” Groiss, who has closely analyzed PA textbooks for years, said that despite the US’s approval, the books used to teach 25 percent of Palestinian students in UNRWA schools in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem, are indeed riddled with incitement.

“The books present Israel as the ‘Jewish other,’ and are based on three fundamental principles introduced by Yasser Arafat when he took over the educational system in the West Bank and Gaza,” said Groiss. They include: the delegitimization of Israel and Jews in this country; no recognition of any Jewish holy places; and the demonization of Israel and Jews.” Groiss said none of the books he reviewed advocate peace or coexistence. “They encourage violent struggle for the liberation of Palestine, which they consider all of Israel – including Haifa and Jaffa – and the right of return, which is also violent,” he explained. “Within that curriculum – which is not restricted to the West Bank and Gaza – they use traditional Islamic concepts such as jihad, martyrdom and ribat, which mean to stand with God

against Islam’s enemies.”

The textbooks in question range from history, geography, Islamic education, language exercises, national education, and Christian education, said Groiss. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) in 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programs for Palestine refugees. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN member states, and features services encompassing education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict. It does not produce its own textbooks, instead relying on the PA to publish them.

Christopher Gunness, an UNRWA spokesperson, denied the allegations against the agency. “Independent reviews, including those commissioned by the U.S. State Department, have highlighted the absence of incitement to terrorism and no presence of the dehumanization of the ‘other,’ as often portrayed in articles and media,” he said in a statement on Tuesday. “The findings of the 2013 Israeli/Palestinian joint review — conducted by Israeli and Palestinian academics, and funded by the US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor — corroborate this. Other independent studies conducted by the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information between 2003 and 2006 also support these findings.” Gunness added: “The government of Israel also authorizes the use of the PA curriculum in the schools in occupied East Jerusalem, which it administers.”

A government official deemed any suggestion that books teaching incitement are “authorized” as “absurd.”

Using the power of Israeli backpackers to help the world

Each year some 40,000 Israeli youngsters — about 85 percent of them fresh out of the IDF — get inoculated against exotic diseases, buy a pair of boots, strap a pack on their backs and head for the hills of South America, Africa and the Far East.

In 2013, Gili Cohen, now 29, was one of them. Leaving the army after serving eight years in the elite Duvdevan unit, he deposited his year-and-a-half-old daughter with his mother-in-law and took his wife to Thailand for three weeks. The Beit Shemesh native had been abroad only once before — to Turkey.

What left a lasting impression on him in Thailand, however, was less the Crystal Creek Waterfall in the northern city of Chiang Mai, or the Mekong River along the border with Laos, or the beaches of Koh Samui in the south, but that on one regular July Friday night in Koh Samui, some 1,350 Israelis were clamoring to take part in a Kiddush at the local Chabad house.

There were so many people that they had to be divided into three shifts. Looking at the faces, Cohen was struck with the realization that the vast majority were recently released IDF veterans going not to Europe or the US but to some of the most far-flung – and often most poverty-stricken – places on the globe. That’s when the proverbial light bulb switched on in his mind. “I said to my wife that there is something going on here, and that we have to tap into this and show the real Israel,” Cohen explained.

Having just been released from the army, and still pumped up with a great deal of patriotic fervor and motivation, he told his wife that just as there are organizations such as Doctors Without Borders which sends doctors abroad to assist others, the reservoir of IDF vets going abroad after their service could be parlayed into something similar that could benefit Israel, while doing good for the local population.

So when Cohen returned to Israel, he set to work. He met for coffee with a couple of other IDF officers, Yair Atias, 27, and Boaz Malkieli, 27, and they discussed the idea of using the thousands of Israelis going to Third World countries each year to show the world the IDF soldiers they don’t necessarily see on their television screens live, from Gaza. The idea was to use the backpackers as the infrastructure for people



Fighters for Life volunteers are seen at a makeshift medical clinic in Ethiopia.

to do ‘blue-and-white’ humanitarian work to show the real Israel to the world,” he said.

“Not through words — that we have an abundance of — but through concrete actions. We wanted to do something different — a different kind of Israeli start-up.”

The three opened up a Facebook page for the group they decided to call Lohamim L’lo Gvulot, which literally means Fighters Without Borders. But they didn’t like the literal translation, concerned that in English that name had an aggressive and even militaristic ring to it. So they changed the English name to Fighters for life (FFL). “We wrote on the Facebook page that our goals were to turn Israel into a humanitarian power, not only a technological and agricultural power; to do good in the world; and to show another side of Israel that people do not see. We wanted to create a different discussion about Israel. We wanted to do a good Jewish deed, and also do hasbara (public diplomacy) for the country, but do it differently.”

The idea was to get a group of the backpackers to start their trek not going directly to destinations such as Kathmandu or Lima, but to volunteer for a couple of weeks in one of the countries they would be touring. The three wrote that they were putting together a delegation to India, and asked if anyone was interested. Within three days they had 15 people, 45 in the

first week. Today, the FFL Facebook page has some 11,000 followers, and some 550 applicants applied for one of 35 slots on the delegation currently volunteering in India. “We thought we would have to convince people that this is something worth it for them,” he said. “In the end, we have intensive interviews and choose whom we want.”

The project works like this: Cohen will place a notice on the FFL Facebook page about a delegation forming to go to one of four destinations: Mumbai, Buenos Aires, Gondar, or — the newest destination that will receive a group in 2017 — Mexico City. Once there, the group volunteers in one of the more run-down neighborhoods in the city, generally in schools where they teach everything from English, math and science, to dance, personal hygiene and Krav Maga.

One of the unique aspects of the program is that it is so cost-efficient. With the youth going on their trek abroad in any event, there is no need to buy their tickets. FFL only has to provide room and board for two and-a-half weeks. As a result, Cohen said, it is possible for as little as \$11,000 to send a delegation of some 35 highly motivated Israeli youth to work in the slums of Mumbai.

So far, the organization has sent six groups abroad, and by the end of 2017 the number will reach 10. “For \$100,000 we can send nine delegations to nine different

countries a year,” said Cohen, who works on a voluntary basis as the group’s director-general. The volunteering takes part at the very beginning of the treks, which generally range from about three months to a year. The participants usually fly over together as an organic group, and then, after the volunteering is done, often continue their travels with one another.

Another benefit, said Guy David, an ex-officer in the Home Front Command’s Search and Rescue Unit, is that by starting off the trek with this type of volunteering, the participants come into contact with the people and the culture in a way that they would not be able to do by bouncing from one hostel to the next, or from one hike to another. David, currently in Mumbai leading the FFL delegation there, is already on his third stint. Generally, the only contact people backpacking across India have with Indians is with “the guy who sells the bus ticket,” he said in a recent interview over Skype. “Here you meet the people, learn about the culture and understand the country at a much deeper level. It enriches your trip. We are giving, but also get back.”

David’s group of 35 Israelis is working in a three-story building in the run-down Santacruz neighborhood that houses three schools, one on each story, for Hindi, Marathi and Urdu students. The Urdu school is Muslim, and from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., the Israelis — fresh out of army service — split up into pairs and give instruction on a wide range of subjects. Cohen said that the delegation goes back to the same school and works with the same children each year, to ensure continuity. The administrators of the school, the teachers, parents and children are all well aware of the fact that the volunteers are Israeli, because they wear an Israeli flag on their shirtsleeve.

Each delegation is named for a soldier who fell during Operation Protective Edge.

David said his delegation has not run into any difficulties because they are so visibly Israeli and ex-soldiers. Not only has their nationality not caused any problems, he said, but an administrator from another school in the hardscrabble Mumbai neighborhood came up to him and asked that he send a delegation to his school as well. He quoted the administrator as saying, “Look at this! I’m a Muslim, you’re a Jew, and we’re sitting here talking about education.”

Interfaith, international dig yields new discoveries in Galilee town

JNS.org

When Father Juan Solana, a Catholic priest, wanted to construct a guest house for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land in the Galilee region in 2009, he couldn’t have imagined he’d become the leader of incredible archaeological findings, exposing the rich Christian and Jewish history of the area.

The findings include the remains of a first century synagogue, dated to the Second Temple period and the time of Jesus’ life. Solana was sent to Israel by the Vatican in 2004 to direct the Holy See for the Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center.

In 2009, the Mexican-born priest received a building permit for his guest house on plots of land near northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee (“Kinneret” in Hebrew), and the Israeli city of Migdal. The town is named after the ancient town of Magdala, which was known as Migdal Nunia (“fish tower”) and by the Greek name Taricheae (“place of salted fish”). Magdala was the largest urban center on the Sea of Galilee’s west coast before Tiberias was founded in 19 CE. For Christians, the town is significant because it is thought that Mary Magdalene, as her name suggests, came from Magdala.

As part of the permit process Israeli

law required an archaeological evaluation of the site, which led to a few of the most important archaeological discoveries in Israel in the past 50 years, Solana told JNS.org.

“The site is significant since it only keeps one layer of history, unlike other towns around in Galilee,” Solana explained. “It (also) has a strong connection with the (Roman-Jewish) historian Josephus Flavius,” who came from the city and is also known by the Hebrew name Yosef ben Matityahu. Flavius was governor of the Galilee region during the Great Jewish Revolt in 66-73 CE, during which time the town was a gathering place for Jewish rebels. The Romans destroyed the city in 67 CE.

More broadly, the findings at Magdala shed light on first century life, religious practices, and architecture. The site was excavated by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) in 2009, and since 2010 in conjunction with a Mexican team from the Anahuac University of Mexico and the National Autonomous University of Mexico. “Archaeology helps to enlighten one of the most important periods of history, the relationship between gathering places with the daily life of its inhabitants,” Marcela Zapata-Meza, PhD, from the Anahuac University of Mexico told JNS.org. “The research done so far contributes

to an enriched description of the earliest synagogues and ancient Judaism,” which makes it “possible to understand the trade routes (of a community, and) the role of a community spread (across) the country but unified by religious law,” she said.

Some researchers speculate that Jesus may have taught in this synagogue. Solana explained that Magdala was “most likely, a place where Jesus could encounter Mary Magdalene” and heal her, as outlined in Matthew 4:23. The scripture states that Jesus “went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people,” according to the King James version of the Bible.

According to Solana, this makes “Magdala the capital of the first followers of Jesus. We are talking about the beginning of Christianity. It was a time wherein Jews and Christians shared daily life, they would be from the same families and may have gathered together at the synagogues and in their homes. It was a significant time for Jews, as for Christians. Therefore, Magdala is defined as (the) ‘Crossroads of Jewish and Christian History.’”

Inside the synagogue’s ruins, archaeologists had also discovered what has become known as the Magdala Stone,

a stone block with carvings depicting the Second Temple, likely created by an artist who had seen the temple. They also found the remains of an ancient marketplace and fishermen’s quarters, and most recently — in the summer of 2016 — a domestic water installation and water channel from the same Second Temple period located in the back of a market shop that was likely used as a Jewish ritual purification bath (Miqveh) for its owner, or as a source of underground drinking water.

“Based on the architectural evidence we can say that Magdala was a settlement that prior its establishment was thought and planned according to the water supply (as were many other sites in antiquity),” Zapata-Meza said.

The newly discovered canal will lead researchers to further study soil samples from the area to make more precise judgments on how the canal was used.

Other items discovered on the site include an oil lamp and Second Temple-period pottery. Also, this summer, archaeologists excavated more than 200 Herodian and Hasmonean coins, as well as a bronze incense shovel.

These items are being studied by more than 40 Israeli and international volunteers and researchers from institutions around the world.

Gardening with Vicky

Be careful what you wish for

By Vicky Sokoloff

When we moved to our current home back in 1996, it was a huge change from a postage size yard in Hampden Heights to 6 acres in a semi-rural area. It was a new house with nothing in the yard. So we had the opportunity to create the garden. My vision was a very natural garden – one that made you think ‘look how that grew’ rather than ‘see what they did.’

Having a garden that was wildlife-friendly was also a priority. Getting a visit from a flock of more than 200 wild turkeys, a red fox, and a dozen or more deer was fun to watch. But seeing the destruction done by the deer was not. We have more than 30 varieties of day lily, and the deer like all of them. So we learned how important it is to spray them with deer repellent.

Though deer have a reputation for eating hosta, they have never touched them here. But eating is not the only damage done by deer. Several young trees were killed when the bucks rubbed off the bark with their antlers. Two things have helped solve this problem. A soda bottle or can filled with smelly soap and tied into the tree is one way to discourage the deer. Hanging mylar streamers also helps. But any deterrent will only work for so long. It’s important to vary forms of deterrent so the deer don’t become so used to them that they are no longer effective.

Bluebirds and hummingbirds are a joy to watch. The hummingbirds are really smart. If they arrive before the feeder is out, they just hover at the window reminding us to feed them.

Squirrels present their own challenges. We thought a squirrel-resistant bird feeder was the answer. But the squirrels quickly learned that while their weight would close the feeder, they could hang on the wire and use one foot to open the feeder and help themselves. Mixing hot pepper flakes in the bird seed does cut down on the squirrel invasions. But those pesky critters find other ways to be annoying. They dig up newly planted seedlings. When they bury a nut and forget about it we have a new tree growing in the middle of the lawn. They also do a lot of damage to bulbs.

Groundhogs are another problem. A few years ago a mother had babies under our shed. Getting them all

out so we could put down screening was quite a challenge. There is now also a pinwheel by the shed to help discourage another groundhog invasion.

Having so much wildlife means our vegetable garden must be fenced. You would be surprised how much even one baby bunny can eat.

Once or twice a year a flock of hundreds of grackles decide to roost in our bamboo for a couple of days. The noise is hard to comprehend if you have never heard them. At a recent presentation by the Pennsylvania Game Commission we learned that mylar streamers or balloons and laser lights can be effective ways to discourage them.

There are organizations that will send you a certificate or sign certifying your garden as wildlife friendly (for a price). But since none of the animals around here can read, I have never been tempted to do that. Seeing the creatures that not only live, but thrive, in your garden is really the only thing you need to know that you have been successful in creating a wildlife-friendly habitat.

People have a love/hate relationship with wildlife in their yards. You can tell by the books that are out there. My own collection includes “Deer Proofing Your Yard & Garden,” “Outwitting Squirrels,” “Attracting Hummingbirds,” “Your Backyard Wildlife Year,” “Woodlands & Wildlife,” and “Endangered and Threatened Species of PA.” So what’s the answer? Like most things in life: moderation. It’s worth making some sacrifices to see the antics of the blue jays, the beauty of a goldfinch, the glory of the woodpecker, the soaring of the raptors, and the fledging of the bluebirds.

Upcoming programs at Berks Hort Club:

Jan. 17: Jonathan Dailey from Horn Farm. The topic is Hugelkultur.

Feb. 23: Brooke Umberger, Horticulture Coordinator from Hershey Gardens, will speak first about roses and then about the new conservatory that just opened at Hershey Gardens.

Both programs start at 7 p.m. at the Berks County Agricultural Center in Bern Township and are open to the public.



Sick of catering to the whims of spoiled children, Santa goes into hiding.

Cooking featured in 92nd Street Y program

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Join us at 2 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 19 at The Highlands Cultural Center Side B (2000 Cambridge Ave. Wyomissing) for our next 92nd Street Y program featuring Daphne Oz in conversation with Mario Batali.

Learn how eating well can be a breeze!

Oz, the best-selling author and Emmy Award-winning co-host of ABC’s “The Chew,” talks with her co-host,

superstar chef and restaurateur Batali, about her joyful, easy and healthy approach for cooking.

Oz’s new book, “The Happy Cook,” is packed with friendly advice and inspiring ideas for celebrating every weekday with delicious meals that are as easy to create as they are to enjoy.

The 92nd Street Y programs are FREE and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

Muses

By Anne Seltzer

I have written and rewritten this article many times over the days since the election. I don’t want to appear to be overdramatizing my fears and feelings, nor arguing with those with opposing views. Please understand that I do respect everyone’s opinions to vote for their candidate, even if it’s not the same person I supported. And truthfully, I believe there would have been better choices on both sides.

What this is about is getting down on paper my thoughts and fears. It isn’t entirely Donald Trump I am worried about. It’s the people who have hitched themselves to his wagon. David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan have expressed support for him. Trump called Mexicans bad hombres, drug dealers, etc., and wants to build a wall. He has said harsh words about Muslims, calling for barring foreign Muslims from entering the country and making comments that suggest he might favor a registry for American Muslims. Ben has had Muslim students in his office crying, asking him if they/their families will be deported. Jonathan is concerned about losing his health insurance because of his pre-existing condition. Another friend is worried because he’s on Medicaid and not well enough to hold a full time job at this time. LGBT couples are concerned, because if Trump has two appointees to the Supreme Court they can overturn gay marriage, thus voiding their unions. Trump made remarks about people with disabilities and insulted a former Miss Universe because she gained a lot of weight. Then he took to Twitter about her. He has not taken back any of those remarks. I pray that he tells his followers that it is not OK to be bigoted, prejudiced and hateful. That they need to love.

By the same token, it is not OK the way Hillary supporters have



burned flags and effigies of Trump. That is just as bad, every bit. I don’t have tolerance for them either. I don’t believe Obamacare as it is works. Trump says he will repeal and overhaul it, putting something better in its place. If he does some of the things he has said on his health care policy, it will be better. He has said he favors keeping the under-26 provision and the inability to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions or charge them more. That would be good. But the bigotry must end. Naming Steve Bannon as his chief adviser is really scary. He’s a white supremacist. The swastikas on buildings are real. Talking about making Muslims sign a registry is real. Talk of building a wall is real. Hatred is real. Time will tell, but the fear is real. I pray that we are all wrong and the hatefulness and the fear mongering will stop.

Four years from now, I hope I can eat my words. It will truly make me happy. I only want the best for our country and that means all of us. For now I am baking even more cookies. I made these recently.

Mocha-Ricotta Puffs
Dorie Greenspan)

2 c. all-purpose flour
¾ tsp. fine sea salt
1/3 c. unsweetened cocoa
2 tsp. instant espresso
1 tsp. baking soda
1 large egg, room temp.
¾ tsp. cinnamon 1 tsp. vanilla
1 stick butter, softened
¾ c. ricotta cheese 1 ¼ c. sugar

Beat butter 2 minutes until soft. Add sugar and salt, beat 2 more minutes. Add espresso, then egg and vanilla, beat 1 minutes Add ricotta. Mix 2 minutes. Add ½ dry ingredients. Mix. Add rest of dry ingredients. Mix well. Drop by tablespoons onto parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake at 325° for about 15-20 minutes, rotating pans halfway through, until edges are firm and give on top when gently pressed. Cool on sheets. Enjoy!

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Jewish Family Service

'Matheny Manifesto': Advice for parents of athletes

By Sari Incledon, M.Ed.

For someone who is not much of a sports fan, over the last 10 years I have attended quite a few youth sporting events. I have traveled to Cooperstown, N.Y., (three times), Lewes Del., Aberdeen, Md., and various Pennsylvania locations to watch nephews, nieces and a cousin play soccer, lacrosse and baseball. It has been fun showing support for the next generation of our extended family and an enjoyable way to relax with loved ones. In recent years our grandson has developed athletic interests and we have been attending even more athletic events.



Our grandson Aidan just completed fall baseball on a successful team of 8-10 years old, playing teams all around Berks County. His team was fortunate to have an excellent pitcher who often led them to victory. The pitcher's mom, while very knowledgeable about many aspects of the sport, yelled all types of instructions, advice and words of consolation before and after each and every pitch, "Breathe", "You can do it", "that's all right". She even yelled the same instructions when Aidan pitched!

Just as many question or criticize the behavior of "stage moms" (the seemingly overambitious parents of children involved in theater), I am often wondering about the ill effects the over-the-top behavior of some "sports parents" can have on their offspring. Fortunately for me, an NPR interview with Major

League catcher/manager Mike Matheny addressed this issue while discussing his *New York Times* best-selling book "The Matheny Manifesto: A Young Manager's Old-School Views on Success in Sports and Life" (written with co-author Jerry B. Jenkins).

In 2008 Matheny was recovering from a concussion caused by a collision at home plate. He was not sure if his career was over when parents approached him to coach 10-year-old boys. His reply, a five-page single spaced typed letter that offered his thoughts about and conditions for coaching. The letter found its way to the internet and went viral. This letter formed the basis of his book. Matheny says that in the decades since his childhood there was a shift in values and actions of parents and coaches that has made it impossible for youth to

love the game as he does.

He believes that it is no surprise that kids quit sports to play video games, as a way to avoid parental screaming. He believes the biggest role a parent should play is to be a silent source of encouragement.

Matheny lists the following values as some of the non-negotiable for playing on his team.

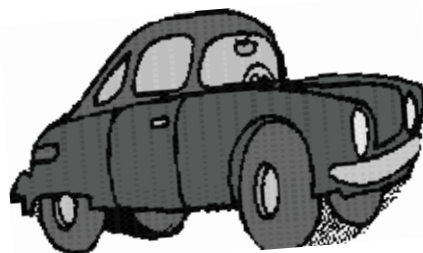
- baseball experience is focused on the players
- culture of respect from players, parents and coaches
- emphasis on attitude, concentration and effort
- parents role as a silent support

For anyone who questions the values and culture of their child's athletic program, I highly recommend reading "The Matheny Manifesto" and sharing it with other families and athletic groups.

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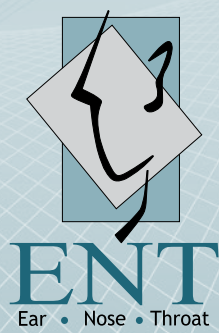
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for the winter?

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Muslim-Jewish advisory council to work with Trump administration

A newly formed council of prominent American Muslims and Jews announced its formation in November in the wake of President-elect Donald Trump’s victory on Election Day.

Spearheaded by advocacy organizations the American Jewish Committee and the Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council wasn’t a response to the election outcome, said Robert Silverman, AJC director of Muslim-Jewish relations.

In fact, he said, it’s been in a process of formation all year. “This is not at all a reaction to Trump,” Silverman told the Huffington Post. “It’s a reaction to divisions in our country.”

The advisory council is comprised of a bipartisan coalition of more than 30 religious leaders, business executives and scholars from around the country.

Stanley Bergman, CEO of Henry

Schein, and Farooq Kathwari, President and CEO of Ethan Allen, are serving as the council’s co-chairs.

“This is a group chaired by businesspeople intentionally,” Silverman said.

The group’s focus won’t primarily be dialogue, he noted, and instead will work to draft policy proposals likely to make a concrete difference in people’s lives.

“Muslims and Jews have many things to share, not only common faiths but also common fate,” Silverman said.

The council is focusing on developing a domestic policy agenda to propose to Congress and held its first planning meeting in early November in New York City.

So far, Silverman said, the agenda includes topics such as immigration and refugee issues, religious liberty as it applies to “reasonable accommodations of

religious practices in the workplace,” and improving the enforcement of hate crimes laws already on the books.

The council will host a public event Feb. 1 on Capitol Hill to present its policy agenda, Silverman said. Members of Congress are invited to attend.

Of the incoming Trump administration Silverman commented; “We’re not going to assume the worst. We want to work with the new administration, but we’ll be very vigilant.

‘If there are any kind of bigoted statements, we’re going to be one of the first to speak out.”

Deborah E. Lipstadt, a historian and author of “Denying the Holocaust” who famously went to court with a Holocaust denier in the 1990s, is among the new council’s members. She said she considered the advisory group a “tentative early step” toward greater relations between Muslim

and Jewish communities.

“It cannot hurt, and it might even help,” she said in an email to HuffPost.

Daisy Khan, executive director of the Women’s Islamic initiative in Spirituality and Equality and a member of the council, said one of the group’s key goals is to “promote respect and understanding” among the two faith communities and “use our collective wisdom to pre-empt any potential crisis from forming.”

Imam Shamsi Ali, president of the Nusantara Foundation and a member of the new council, reiterated that the group isn’t a response to Trump, but rather evidence of “a strong commitment to both Jewish and Muslim communities to engage in a constructive dialogue, reconciliation, and partnership.”

“We truly believe that Muslims and Jews have many things to share,” he told HuffPost, “not only common faiths but also common fate.”

EVERYTHING’S RELATIVE

by Jordan B. Gorfinkel • www.jewishcartoon.com

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