



SHALOM



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KISLEV-TEVET 5776

Unity highlighted at Leadership Gifts event

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Jewish unity was the theme of a discussion with Larry Sternberg at this year's Leadership Gifts event held at the home of Vic and Dena Hammel. More than 50 people turned out for a conversation on the major challenges facing the Jewish community today

Although we face anti-Semitism, the BDS movement,

assimilation and the recent public disagreements between U.S. and Israeli administrations, Sternberg posited that the biggest threat is Jewish disunity. However, he expressed optimism, noting that the openness that allows arguments is a fundamental Jewish value that can lead to unity by concentrating on core Jewish values shared by us all. The discussion was followed by

a Q&A and dessert reception.

Many familiar faces enjoyed catching up and spending the evening together and welcomed some first-time attendees to this annual event. We were blessed to have three generations of one family in attendance for the first time at a Leadership Gifts event. Sid & Esther Bratt were joined by their daughter Corrine and her

husband, Andy Wernick, as well as their granddaughter Michele Leisawitz and her husband, Ben.

2016 Campaign chairs Dr. Meir and Haia Mazuz highlighted the theme of "It's Good to Be Jewish and It's Jewish to Be Good" as the evening wrapped up. Overall the evening was a great success and a wonderful kickoff to our 2016 Campaign.



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2015 totals as of Nov. 13

Jewish Community Campaign \$433,047 from 203 donors

*Includes transfers from Donor Advised Funds



Hilde Gernsheimer, Harriet Baskin and Rosalye Yashek



Three generations: Michelle and Ben Leisawitz, Esther and Sid Bratt, Corrine and Andy Wernick



Vic Hammel welcomes Federation supporters to his home.



An impressive crowd gathers for a fascinating talk.

Yemin Orde Educational Initiatives make a difference

In 2006, Israel's Ministry of Education urged Yemin Orde Youth Village to expand its unique and successful circle of care to thousands of other children-at-risk throughout Israel and, consequently, Yemin Orde Educational Initiatives (YOEI) was launched.

The Initiatives directly impact Israel's struggling youth village populations by providing teacher training, workshops, interventions and other special programs. YOEI's innovative "Village Way" methodologies are designed to enhance the spiritual well-being, character development and leadership potential of first-generation Israelis who come from poverty-stricken families and broken homes.

YOEI's methodologies are integrated into university-level education courses (Oranim University, Haifa) and in Israel's public school system.

As of September YOEI is working with 27 educational communities in Israel:

- 10 Ministry of Education youth villages: Kedma (northern Negev); TOM (coastal plain region); Neveh Hadassah (Sharon region); Aloney Yitzhak (near Cesearea); Kfar Hassidim (lower Galilee, near Haifa); Ketziney Yam Ashdod (southern coastal region); Manof (northern region); Hadassah Neurim (Mediterranean Sea coast, near Netanya); Nahalat Yehuda (in partnership with Avi Naor's Youth Village initiative).

- 14 public high schools: Branco-Weiss Tachkimoni School (Hadera); Beit Shean Ort Technology (Beit Shean); Marom Acco Ort Technology (Acco); Amal Yaffo School (Tel Aviv); Beit Ha'arava Ort Technology (Jerusalem); Yad Shapira Ort Technology (Tel Aviv); Daliyat Al Karmel Ort Technology (Haifa);

Amal Shimshon Technical School (Lower Galilee); Ashdod Amal Technology (Ashdod); Adivi Ashkelon Ort Technology (Ashkelon); Mahat Acco Ort Technology* (Acco); Tamra High School* – serving 146 students from the Arab community and part of the Arab Sector Initiative of the Kennedy Leigh Charitable Trust; ORT Mitrani Holon High School; Kfar Manda High School serving students from the Arab community.

- 3 Ministry of Welfare therapeutic residential schools: Eden Therapeutic (community for girls); Talpiot (residential and day programs, children 6-14 years old); Beit Haboger (community for boys).

Since beginning the program, YOEI has reached more than 9,000 children and 1,300 staff members. The goal is to reach a total of 53 educational communities in Israel by 2020.

"Yemin Orde Educational Initiatives has shown us the importance of every small detail - the physical appearance of the village, the language we use, how we interact with the children, cultural codes of behavior. I leave every workshop with so much knowledge and new ways to think." -COORDINATOR, KEDMA

Yemin Orde Educational Initiatives is ready for the next phase of its expansion. Its Village Way methodology has proved itself an effective and relevant educational and life skills tool in theory and in practice in a variety of settings. YOEI is pursuing the possibility of working with an entire town's education system (1,200 children) and is working with a public high school in an Israeli-Arab community.

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

Community getting stronger thanks to your enthusiasm, support

By **Richard Nassau**
Development Director

Thank you for supporting the 2015 Jewish Community Campaign! It may sound clichéd, but every gift you make, no matter what size, actually does make a difference in someone's life — whether it buys canned goods to be handed out at our busy Food Pantry or increases the scholarship award for a deserving young student.



In November I was honored to

represent Reading's Jewish community at the national Federation's General Assembly in Washington. What I learned was that even though we are facing serious challenges — renewed anti-Semitism, shifting demographics, increased social service needs here and in Israel — our community is responding quickly and in many cases more effectively than many cities. For example, there are not many places where the Annual Federation Meeting is a picnic designed to include entire families. More than 100 people attended our event in June, from 7-month-old babies to 90 year olds, because we cherish every member of our Jewish family.

You may have noticed a resurgence of energy in our Jewish community. You can feel it among the 170 participants who attended Federation's Community Shabbat this year. You can hear it in the anticipation of attendees at the Jewish Film Series. You can sense it in the hush of nearly 200 people commemorating Yom Hashoah. You can see it in the 80 children participating in our PJ Library program, in which children receive free Jewish-themed books and take part in related monthly activities. And when 100 people attend Federation's Purim Carnival, the energy is palpable.

It is also quiet and unseen. It is felt by the 40 older adults joining together

in a Jewish Family Service Shabbat or holiday program. It is confirmed in a heartfelt thank-you from the 150 families receiving groceries each month at no cost through the JFS Food Pantry. It is present in the animated discussions of 25 teens interacting with their peers weekly at Jewish Community High School classes.

Energy is contagious. Help us grow with enthusiasm and purpose. Make a monetary gift, or share the gift of your time and expertise to help us serve others.

If you have any questions about our services or programs, contact me at RichardN@JFReading.org.

Meir Panim succeeds in helping struggling single mother

Ofra, a single mother of four living in one of Israel's struggling development towns in the south, finally has a smile on her face. With a new job and a refurbished apartment, she is breaking out of the cycle of poverty that has plagued her since she left her abusive husband.

"I owe so much to Meir Panim," Ofra said. "Their generous help saved my family." Ofra is one of the estimated 1.6 million Israelis who struggle to make ends meet while living under the poverty line. Living in an apartment subsidized by the state, her situation was dire. Meir Panim became aware of her plight when she came to the organization's free

restaurant-style soup kitchen.

"It is embarrassing to ask for food," Ofra said. "With Meir Panim's sensitivity, when I came to them for food, they had me stand in line with caretakers who pick up food for people like homebound holocaust survivors. In that way, I looked like a caretaker rather than a person struggling to feed my family."

"Seeing a mother with several young children asking for food implies that a family needs more than just a meal," said Goldie Sternbuch, Director of Overseas Relations for Meir Panim. "We asked Nissim, who runs our southern branch, to visit Ofra's apartment to better assess her needs."

Meir Panim's southern branch

serves some of the most impoverished communities in Israel, including the towns of Dimona and Yerucham, where services are in great demand.

What was found in Ofra's home would break even the toughest of hearts. The refrigerator was bare. The walls and bathroom were mold infested, even with Ofra's attempts to keep the place clean and orderly. Worst of all, gas canisters were next to and attached to the stove, which could have caused an explosion.

Meir Panim sent in a team of volunteers to help this struggling family with needed improvements to the house, Sternbuch explained.

"We have a holistic approach to poverty," she said. "Though providing food is essential, we understand that lack of food can be a symptom of many more challenges."

Sternbuch recently visited Ofra to check how she and her children were doing. She was happy to see that they have a new lease on life. Meir Panim's assistance with dignity gave the family the ability to not only feel better about their current condition, but hope for a brighter future.

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

Film series continues with look at football in Israel

By **Amanda J. Hornberger**

Reading Jewish Film Series 2016 opened with a great start in November with a screening of the hilarious British comedy "Dough." The film series, in its second year, is being held at Fox Berkshire, and attendance increased more than 30 percent from last year! We are thankful for the Rubin Educational Fund and Fox Theatres for their ongoing support of the series. New this year is the free dessert

receptions following each screening, compliments of Sweet Street Desserts.

The fun continues Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. with the documentary "Touchdown Israel." It follows the fast growth of American football in Israel. The Israeli Football League has grown to over 600 players and 10 teams in a nation roughly the size of New Jersey. The league is 80 percent Israeli with secular and Orthodox Jews playing with and against Israeli

Arab, Christian, Thai and Palestinian players. New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft is a large supporter of the league as well. Come out and learn more about this unique Israeli version of America's favorite sport.

Admission is \$5 per film or \$20 for the series of five films. Showings are on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. at Fox Berkshire, 800 Berkshire Blvd., Wyomissing. Tickets

can be purchased at the theater beginning at 6:30 p.m. the day of the screening, or series tickets can be bought at the JCC. Cash and checks are accepted.

The remaining films for *Reading Jewish Film Series 2016* are:

Dec. 2 — "Touchdown Israel"

Feb. 10 — "24 Days"

March 16 — "Above and Beyond"

April 20 — "Run Boy Run"

A program for women on their own



Are you an adult woman who is single, never having found a life partner or have lost one due to divorce or death? Tired of being a single in a couple's world?

The JCC is looking to start a social group of women who have found themselves traveling through life on their own. We plan to meet once per month on a Sunday morning, at the JCC or area synagogues, for breakfast and chat. If possible, we would also meet another time during

the month for a social outing, such as dinner.

If you think that this group would be of interest to you, please contact either Sari Incedon at the JCC (sari@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624) or Sheryl Weintraub (member of Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom) by email Sheryl.woto@gmail.com.

We hope to have the first meeting at the JCC in Wyomissing sometime in January. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Yodka & Latkes

December 19, 2015
7:30 p.m. at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom
555 Warwick Dr. Wyomissing
Cost: \$20 per person


**Jewish Federation of Reading invites you to
Chevra's Yodka & Latke Chanukah party!**

The party will be held at RCOS and will include potato latkes, potato vodka and a special vodka tasting. There will also be plenty of other beverages and food, as well as music to enjoy.


Come celebrate Chanukah with your friends at this inaugural event!

This event is for Chevra (young adults) ages 18 and up (must be 21 to drink).
Reservations are required by December 9th, 2015
RSVP to Brendas@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624


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From the President's Desk

Doing things right to meet community's challenges

By William D. Franklin
President

In mid-November Haia Mazuz, Tracy Rossi, Richard Nassau and I took part in JFNA's General Assembly (GA). We and 3,000 other Jews spent three days discussing innovative ways to meet the challenges facing our communities. Specialists in key areas such as outreach, U.S.-Israel relations and community building presented their experiences and led problem-solving discussions. The four of us came back tired but energized, looking forward to putting what we learned to work.

The good news is we are doing things right. The theme of the GA was "Think Forward." Our plans focus on



enhancing outreach, growing our Jewish education efforts, increasing community understanding and support for Israel, and expanding interfaith programming. This resonated well with what we learned.

We have already started on many of these. For example, reaching out to all elements of our community, the *Reading Jewish Film Series* kicked off its 2015-16 season with the showing of "Dough" at the Fox Berkshire Theater. More than 70 of us enjoyed the continued support of Fox Theatres and JFR's Rubin Educational Fund and stayed to discuss the movie while enjoying desserts provided by Sweet Street Desserts. Later in the month we had a wonderful group of all ages come to the JCC to enjoy a deli dinner and play Music Trivia.

On the interfaith front, Rabbi Abelson and my wife, Andi, joined a dozen Jews

from Allentown, 40-plus Jews from Philadelphia and more than 300 Christians at a "Night to Honor Israel" in Quakertown sponsored by Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and the Morningstar Fellowship Church. Israeli Consul General Yaron Sideman was one of the speakers. All of the speakers declared themselves to be eternal friends of Israel, apologized for their communities' lack of actions during the Holocaust and vowed to stand with Israel against all threats. The next Sunday, Rabbi Abelson, Andi and I joined Elsayed (Steve) Elmarzouky, Tahara Akmal and Karima Archie at Immanuel United Church of Christ to discuss Abraham's influence on our three religions. Short presentations by the six of us were followed by a question and answer period.

Our Leo Camp speaker, Dr. Adam Garfinkle spoke to an audience of 150 at Albright College explaining in detail "The

Mess in the Middle East." He focused on the history and causes of the current internecine strife throughout the Middle East and showed it to be unrelated to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

And just recently we had our first "Better Together" session as nine of our community's seniors met with nine of our teens and Rabbi Lerner to study a biblical text, chevruta style, and discuss issues raised that have a contemporary context. The thoughts and perspective put forth by the different generations were exciting to observe, and everyone is looking forward to their monthly meetings.

I love seeing that so many of us have a desire to come together and laugh, learn, argue, and schmooze. Continue your feedback and suggestions — they help us grow and strengthen our Reading Jewish community.

Thank you.

Jewish Food Festival a deli cornucopia

By Larry Rotenberg
Chairman

The RCOS Jewish Food Festival and its accompanying cultural and social events have become one of the most important occasions for both the Jewish and gentile communities in the region.

Last year we sat with a group of people who came from the Lehigh Valley, and have made this pilgrimage an annual event for their family.

This year's festival held Nov. 1 was, if anything, bigger and better. The corned beef was lean and ample. The chicken soup with matzo balls was so delicious that several people took the largest containers, and several of them to save for later and for relatives who were housebound.

Holly Michelson, with some help from congregants, made more than 1,000 cheese blintzes, each one of which was more delicious than the next and which truly sold like the proverbial hotcakes. Added to these were packages of marmalade and sour cream, which makes my mouth water just as I am writing these lines.

The potato knishes were rich and crisp. The Jewish Apple Cake remained a favorite. And one could go on and on.

Culturally, Student Cantor Harriet Dunkerley prepared songs and other performances, including some Broadway songs.

But what made the event unique, is the gathering of Jews from all parts of our own ethnic and religious background, together with all of our neighbors from every other origin.

At our temple sat a widower who clearly appreciated the inclusion in the conversation, and who told us about



how he manages after the loss of his wife last year.

All of the classes of our society were represented at this egalitarian feast. And while Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom makes a profit from the festival, the price of the goodies, was such, that it was equally accessible to everyone.

Adding to the homey feeling, was Rabbi Brian Michelson, who with his apron, presented as a welcoming host.

It was a gorgeous fall day, and a drive to the Temple was just what the doctor ordered.

Many of us decided to go early, to avoid the after-church crush, and that seemed a good strategy.

And while in the past, we would take food home to eat, this time we stayed, ate, and socialized. This approach seemed the most gratifying.

So, anyone, who does not believe, that the way to a man's (or a woman's) heart is not through the stomach, has not been to the wonderful RCOS Festival.



SHALOM

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Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the 2015 Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly

General Assembly a worthwhile event

Attended by nearly 3,000 representatives from Jewish Federations throughout North America, the theme of the 2015 JFNA General Assembly was Think Forward. People came together to discuss issues that are of concern to everyone and share information about their work that is advancing the Jewish community. Programs at the GA focused on issues that are having an impact on Jewish life in many communities. These issues ranged from anti-Semitism to building community to addressing Jewish identity.

Haia Mazuz, Tracy Rossi, Bill Franklin and Richard Nassau

represented Reading at the GA. Attending multiple sessions throughout the three day assembly, they heard presentations on ways Federation programs are building stronger Jewish communities. They attended sessions on Fedovations — new ways Federations are building stronger Jewish communities through innovative programs. They heard presentations on engaging the new generation of Jewish leaders; reimagined opportunities for connecting with Israel; and how Federations are helping lead the way in creating a vibrant Jewish future.

Federation leader calls for unity in wake of Iran debate

The Jewish community needs to unite and heal the wounds after a painful debate over the Iran nuclear deal, Jerry Silverman, president and CEO of The Jewish Federations of North America, said during a speech at the General Assembly in Washington.

“Too much of the language was vicious and beyond the pale, and has no place in our community,” Silverman said. “It is imperative as we think forward and work to heal the wounds from that debate.”

Going forward, he said, “Let’s reinforce that Jewish Federations are places for diversity, evolving and adapting as North American Jews grow and change their perceptions of themselves, of Judaism, and of the world. We don’t need to be unanimous in our opinions, what we do need to be is unified as a community. Let’s remember that for all the trauma of the past year, our Jewish Federations and agencies continued their daily work in local communities educating our children, caring for our vulnerable, assisting our elderly and ensuring that our vital work continues in Israel and around the world.”

The comments were made hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Barack Obama

concluded a two-hour meeting at the White House, a meeting described as productive and tensionless.

Israel’s Opposition Leader Issac Herzog, who also spoke at the gathering, said, “I

sincerely hope that what comes out of the meeting has to do first and foremost with strengthening and fostering Israel’s security.”

Herzog expressed hope that the “vociferous debate” between the two

leaders “is behind us.”

“I think we must go back, we must return to intimate relationships between the Oval Office and the Prime Minister’s Office,” he stressed.

This Chanukah, DO GOOD EVERYWHERE. FROM ANYWHERE.

It’s Chanukah! You’re in the kitchen frying up latkes. Lighting the menorah. Giving out gifts. Good things you do every year for your family.

But while you’re doing them— why not do good things for your global family as well? Like nurturing and strengthening Jewish life. Helping the vulnerable. Inspiring the young. And safeguarding our people.

This Chanukah, change Jewish lives for the better everywhere. You can do it from anywhere. **Even your own kitchen.**

Please give generously to the Jewish Federation of Reading.

Israel commits to sustainability

Israel is fully committed to the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the 70th General Assembly, first secretary at the Israeli Mission to the UN Nizar Amer said.

The plan consists of 17 sustainable development goals, and the agenda states the countries’ commitments to work toward fulfilling these targets over the next 15 years. At the top of the list is eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere, ending hunger, promoting gender equality and combating climate change.

UN member state leaders will gather in Paris from Nov. 30 to Dec. 11 for the 21st annual session of the UN Climate Change Conference, which will strive to achieve a binding and universal agreement on climate signed by all nations.

Amer said Israel considers the 2030 agenda a historic opportunity to make a decisive push against poverty and its worse manifestations and that the country has already demonstrated its commitment to such issues.

Amer also stressed that gender equality is a priority for Israel and that the country considers it to be inextricably linked to sustainable development. “If we fail to empower women and to give them equal opportunities in their societies, he said, “we will never accomplish what we have set to achieve,” he said.



The Jewish Federations
OF NORTH AMERICA

* Federation touches more Jewish lives on the planet than any other organization. With programs in 70 countries around the world, our work includes: aiding over 70,000 poverty-stricken Jews in war-torn Ukraine; helping needy Holocaust survivors worldwide; providing Jewish education for children and teens; helping connect young Jewish adults to their religion, culture and to Israel. And so much more.



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New menorah to light up downtown Reading thanks to effort

Reading's revamped holiday display in Penn Square will feature a new menorah this year thanks to members of our community working in cooperation with the Reading Downtown Improvement District (DID).

Michael Leifer, president and CEO of The Peanut Bar, said the idea came about through the City of Reading Holiday Planning Committee on which he serves along with Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz, Pier Ignozzi-Shaffer, Evan Siegel, Lori Kaplan and others.

Leifer said that while he appreciated the efforts of city workers to put up a menorah made of PVC pipe in Penn Square each year, he did not believe it represented the Jewish community as well as it should.

Reading DID was already working on plans for an improved holiday display at Fifth and Penn streets,



and it agreed to advance the money to purchase an automated 12- by 8-foot Giant Display Menorah that

packs up in its own storage case for year after year of use. It was purchased through www.menorah.net, which is run under the auspices of Chabad of Essex County, N.J.

Leifer said the group was able to negotiate a special discounted price of \$1,699 and is seeking donations from the community to reimburse the DID for the cost. As of mid-November the group still needed about \$1,500 for the menorah and was looking for additional funds to set aside for its maintenance.

Donations should be made directly to DID at 645 Penn St., Suite 505, Reading, PA 19601. Please make clear that the donation is in support of the menorah. Call the DID office at 610-376-6424 with questions.

Middle East history focus of 36th Leo Camp Lecture

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Before a crowd of more than 100 people, *The American Interest* editor Dr. Adam Garfinkle described the current situation in the Middle East through the lens of history at the 36th Annual Leo Camp lecture on Nov. 10.

Explaining the in-depth, deep rooted cultural and historical issues throughout the region, Garfinkle held the audience captive with his detailed explanations and understanding of current problems in the Middle East.

Garfinkle was engaging and energetic, speaking for more than 75 minutes and then entertaining numerous audience questions. Even after the lecture and Q&A Garfinkle

was generous with his time and continued to speak with community members well after the room cleared. For those looking to learn more about this topic you can subscribe to *The American Interest* in print or online at www.the-american-interest.com.

In a follow-up email regarding recommended reading for better understanding the situation in the Middle East, Dr. Garfinkle suggested the two-part essay "Making Enemies" by Anna Simons from *The American Interest*. Due to copyright laws it cannot be distributed, however a copy of the complete essay is available at the JCC if anyone would like to read it.



Join PJ Library for Chanukah celebration at Barnes & Noble

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Just in time to celebrate Chanukah, join your friends from PJ Library and Lakin Preschool at a special PJ Library event at Barnes & Noble on Sunday, Dec. 6, at 1 p.m. We'll be reading

special Chanukah stories and doing a Chanukah-themed craft right before the first night of the holiday.

Carole Robinson will be leading this event, and the students from Lakin Preschool and all other children are

welcome to attend this fun, FREE event! Please RSVP to Carole by Friday, Dec. 4, at caroler@jfreeding.org or call 610-921-0624.

Are you interested in signing up your child for PJ Library? Please email

Amanda at amandah@jfreeding.org for sign up instructions. Current PJ Library parents are encouraged to make sure their email address is accurate so that they are receiving the latest in PJ Library information.

Save the Date: Community Night at the Reading Royals Jan. 23

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Reading Royals hockey has been a staple of Berks County for the past decade. The team's winning records, fun and exciting games and family-friendly atmosphere make it a great activity for all ages. The JCC invites you to gather

your friends, family and neighbors for our Jewish Community Night at the Reading Royals on Jan. 23 at 7 p.m.

The JCC is offering Red Zone tickets for a discounted group rate of \$17 for the game. Tickets can be purchased online under "Group Central" on royalshockey.com

with the code JFR or by contacting our group representative Derrick at dleshko@royalshockey.com or 610-898-7216.

The game on Jan. 23 is also fan favorite game as it is THON Night. There will be a postgame jersey auction to

benefit The Four Diamonds Fund which supports childhood cancer research.

We hope community members of all ages will join us for this fun evening of great hockey! Questions? Please contact Amanda at amandah@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.



An interfaith conversation on Abraham

Leaders of the Jewish community joined local Muslims and Christians for an interfaith discussion regarding Abraham's role as the father of the three monotheistic faiths. Gathered at Immanuel United Church of Christ, Shillington, are the Rev. Dale Davis (from Immanuel); Karima Archie, Elsayed Elmarzouky and Tahara Akmal (from the Islamic Center of Reading), Rabbi Matt Abelson from Keshet Zion Synagogue and Andi and Bill Franklin from the Jewish Federation of Reading.



Students help feed Opportunity House clients

Sixth-graders at Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom's Religious School prepared a meal at Opportunity House Nov. 15 as part of the school's emphasis on community service.

Congregational News

Celebrate Chanukah by giving rather than receiving

By Rabbi Brian Michelson

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom

All too often the coming of Chanukah fills families with dread. In a misguided attempt to keep up with Christmas, we put far too much emphasis on receiving gifts. The idea of exchanging gifts for Chanukah comes from the giving of gelt, money, given to children to allow them to play dreidel. It was never intended to be a present for every night or anything extravagant.

Recent research shows us that one of the most satisfying things we can do is not to receive gifts, but rather to help others. Studies have shown that we take pleasure



in helping and giving to others even more than we appreciate receiving. This Chanukah, I want to challenge you to make and model giving within your own families. If you have a favorite charity, instead of one present make a donation instead. Even better, sit down with the recipient, especially if they are a child, and give the money together so you can model the importance of giving for them. If you are not sure of where to give, let me make a couple of suggestions.

Maya Rigler is the 10-year-old daughter of two of my colleagues in the Philadelphia area. Maya was diagnosed with cancer at age 2 and was successfully treated and cured. Now the cancer has returned, and she is fighting what she "affectionately" calls "Bob the Blob". When Maya was diagnosed

for the second time, she did not want anyone to feel sorry for her or to give her gifts. She set out to raise money for Alex's Lemonade Stand to help find a cure for pediatric cancers. To date, Maya has raised more than \$184,000 working towards a goal of \$250,000. She was recently chosen as "Stand Host of the Year" and will be honored at the annual Lemon Ball. You can help Maya reach her goal by going to www.alexslimonade.org/mypage/1121536 and making a donation.

Another great way to give is through the micro-loan organization Kiva (www.kiva.org). Kiva allows you to make small loans to help people start or expand business all over the world. You can read a full profile of each loan requester and learn what they want to do with the

funds. Especially with a child of 10 or above, imagine sitting down and deciding where to loan the money together. Is there any better way to model the behavior of giving than this? Once the money is loaned, you can track the repayment of the loan. Once repaid, the money can be withdrawn or used to make additional loans. With just a couple of small \$25 gifts, I have been able to make 19 loans totaling more than \$490. For less than the cost of a night at the movies, you can make a difference in someone else's life.

This year, as we light the Chanukah candles, let us add even more light to the world by giving instead of receiving. It will make us feel good and it will help to ensure that our children and grandchildren understand the importance to Tzedakah.

Holiday gives us an opportunity to contemplate miracles

By Rabbi Matthew Abelson

Keshar Zion Synagogue

I cannot conceal my excitement. Even though I know that Chanukah is on the lower end of the Jewish holiday hierarchy — below the Yamim Noraim and the three festivals of Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot — and that no book of the 39 in the Tanakh even mentions the holiday, I cannot curb my enthusiasm for this occasion.

Part of the reason for this is obvious. I associate it with presents, which I received from my parents as a child.

Perhaps the reason that Chanukah excites me today is that it gives me the opportunity to consider miracles.



Judaism is not founded on miracles, but miracles have a critical role in our Scripture.

Sara birthed Isaac even though she had "stopped having the periods of women" (Genesis 18:23). When the Egyptians pursued our people as we fled from slavery "the waters were split, and Bnei Yisrael went into the sea on dry ground" (Exodus 14:21-22). When the five Amorite kings battled the people of Israel in eretz Israel, "the sun stood still and the moon halted" (Joshua 10:13).

Yet one can be a Jew — even a believing Jew — and not believe in miracles...most of the time. Chanukah and Purim are the two holidays that specifically ask us to consider the reality of the miracle. This is not an easy task in a scientific age. Science explains the natural world by exposing its patterns,

its regularities. Miracles are, by definition, breaks with the regular pattern of nature. Especially when we try to integrate miracle into our scientific worldview — by describing an extraordinary event such as the birth of a child or the fantastically complicated inner workings of our own bodies as miracles — we fail. As amazing as they are, both of these are examples of regularity in life, not breaks with regularity.

Nevertheless, in the Amidah, which we pray three times a day, we insert a paragraph during Chanukah, which includes the phrase *b'zman ha'zeh* — in our own time. This inclusion instructs us to search for miracles in our time. By restricting our search for miracles to an eight-day period at the end of one Jewish month, Kislev, and the beginning of another, Tevet, we acknowledge a

scientific worldview, but we do not submit to it.

The primary disagreement today between those who subscribe to a scientific worldview and those who subscribe to a religious worldview is whether the existence of the universe itself is a miracle. If what differentiates science from miracle is regularity, then both positions have what to stand on. To establish regularity, something must happen not only more than once, but a series of times.

To the best of our knowledge, the existence of the universe is a one-time occurrence. That means the disagreement between the scientific and religious worldviews has yet to be adjudicated. For eight days, we stake our claim firmly with the religious worldview that believes in the miracle.

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Saturday, 4/9/16 at 10:00 am
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Starting November 8, 2015 through January 31, 2016.
Each class will be 90 minutes.

Recommended: [JPS Hebrew - English Tanakh](#) or [Tanakh a New Translation of the Holy Scriptures](#). Please send check for \$30.00 payable to Keshar Zion Synagogue if you would like to purchase either book through the synagogue.

"The Tanakh in Ten Weeks" Schedule

There will be two classes per week. One class Monday at 7p.m. and one class Tuesday at 1p.m. This is so people can attend either or class with their schedule. The same material will be discussed on both days.

Evening Schedule—Mondays at 7:00p.m.

12/7/15
12/14/15
1/4/16
1/11/16
1/25/16
2/1/16

Day Schedule—Tuesdays at 1:00p.m.

12/1/15
12/8/15
12/15/15
1/5/16
1/12/16
1/26/16
2/2/16

Each of us can bring light to the world during this dark time

By Rabbi Yosef Lipsker
Chabad Center of Berks County

We are all reeling from the senseless horror of what has taken place in Paris; Our hearts are breaking, and the questions — the questions are unanswered, unanswerable...



The one question that we can and must answer is, "What are we going to do, how will we react?"

The clear and obvious struggle between good and evil, between wickedness and the rest of the world, has been a global problem for as long as anyone can remember. Terrorism, though, is a relatively new phenomenon. When human beings unleash rounds of indiscriminate murders and coldblooded slaughter against Western interests, sowing terror and inflicting pain and suffering upon innocent men, women and children — whether in France, Spain, Turkey, India, England, the United States, and, of course, in Israel — it is not a fight over territory or even

ideology, but a war of instability, intimidation and evil.

The question must be asked: What is going on? To understand, we can look in to the Torah portion "Toldos," that ironically was read in synagogues the same Shabbat as Paris was being attacked. The portion begins with the troubling pregnancy of the matriarch Rebecca. The sages of the time explained that she was not just carrying two children, but also hauling representatives of two diverse incipient nations, two types of diametrically different lifestyles. (Braishis (Genesis) 25:22-23).

One of the children, Jacob, would teach and lead his descendants to be associated with study, intellectual development and accepting spirituality. The other, Esau, would be attracted to idol worship, deception, and a life of succumbing to physical pursuits and lusts.

Since the time of Jacob and Esau, the nations have developed into either the "people of the Book," or people of the sword and war. And this dichotomy continues to this day between those who seek to lead a decent life of peace and

stability, and those that wish to implement merciless horror and primitive instability.

And goodness, which is the path of Jacob, must prevail.

But it is not merely a war out there in the world. This conflict also plays itself out within each and every one of us every day. It is a war, a struggle, between choosing goodness over evil, between spiritual pursuits over physical delights, between self-centeredness and ego, to cooperation and compromise. And here, too, the path of goodness must prevail.

Most of us cannot make global decisions. Our actions are, for the most part, concentrated on our immediate environment. The truth is, though, even our own personal actions do affect the globe and the collective whole. For even those whose actions affect the whole world, they must also take the time and effort to concentrate on their personal lives. And even those whose

circumstances allow them to affect just themselves must understand that each one of us is an integral part of the whole world, and, as such, we do affect the world.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that we are all players in the global war for goodness through personal reflection, as well as through efforts for others; and this war can only be won by the good guys.

Just last month, more than 4,000 of us gathered together for the annual convention of Chabad Rabbis. At this convention, the global need for good was expressed and the efforts were called into focus as to how the winning team can continue to win for good. Now is the time to wake up and increase our attention to ourselves and to the world. We need to introduce more goodness, light and G-dliness to our needy world.

May the lights of Chanukah and its timeless message of light prevailing over darkness bring peace and tranquility to the world.

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND SERVICE TIMES

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

KESHER ZION SYNAGOGUE (610) 374-1763
 Weekly services Saturdays: 9:30 a.m.; Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.
 Friday Evening Service – Please call for service information
 Babysitting available upon request with one week's notice

REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB SHOLOM (610) 375-6034
 Fridays, Dec. 4 and 25: 6 p.m. Shabbat service.
 Friday, Dec. 11: Chanukah Family Service and Dinner, 6 p.m.
 Friday, Dec. 18: Shabbat service, 7:45 p.m.
 Saturday, Nov. 21: Tot Shabbat, 10 a.m.

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Youth News

'Better Together' off to a successful start

Teens from Reading Jewish Community High School and local youth groups gathered with area senior citizens Nov. 15 for the inaugural "Better Together" intergenerational study event. The group, led by Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner, will meet monthly from 5 to 6:15 p.m. The focus is on traditional texts and modern applications of a Jewish perspective on the inter-relationship of generations. Seniors and Teens sat in traditional "hevruta" fashion, each pair discussing the subject facing each other. "It was magic," said Rabbi Dov, "and the success was exactly what I hoped would be. Across the ages and experiences of two ages they were sharing Torah, literally 'dor l'dor,' 'generation to generation.'"



Liberty Region BBYO: Join in the fun!



BBYO is the largest pluralistic youth movement and most effective provider of identity-building and leadership development programs for Jewish teens. Our region, Liberty Region #13, was created after Central Region East and Philadelphia Region merged together into a mega-region in 2013. Liberty is comprised of chapters along Eastern Pennsylvania (including Philadelphia), Delaware, and two areas of southern New York: Binghamton and Elmira.

Throughout the school year, many meaningful and fun events take place locally, regionally, and even internationally. Liberty hosts five main conventions during the year: Regional Leadership Training Institute (RLTI), Tournies, IT Convention (In Training - new members convention), WOW Convention, and Spring Convention. BBYO is a youth-lead organization with chapter and regional boards that help make the region run smoothly.

See below for calendar of events

****Please watch for the announcement of the date, time and location of [Back to BBYO Night](#) in your chapter/community!**

Regional Kick-Off

September 12

Brunswick Zone XL, Feasterville-Treose, PA

Open to ALL Jewish teens in grades 9-12

Come celebrate the official start to an incredible year of BBYO with bowling, laser tag, arcade games, friends and fun!

Regional Leadership Training Institute (RLTI)

September 18-20

Camp Kweebec, Schwenksville, PA

Open to ALL members

This convention focuses on the development of participants' leadership skills through interactive programming, skills workshops and teen-led training sessions. This year's RLTI will be extra awesome as we will be joined by our friends from BBYO Keystone Mountain Region (KMR)!

Tournies Convention

November 13-15

Harrisburg JCC, Harrisburg, PA

Home Housed

Open to ALL members

During this convention weekend, teens compete to show chapter spirit in many different activities ranging from water polo to debate – there is an event for everyone!

Marathon Madness

January 17

Location TBD

Open to ALL Jewish teens in grades 8-12

BBYO's new Movement-wide Stand UP initiative brings Jewish teens together from around the world to support causes they care about and make a difference through the power of community, while having a lot of fun! It has never been easier, or more fun, to make a difference. Join us for a dance party bigger than our region has ever seen!

International Convention (IC)

February 11-15

Baltimore, MD

Open to ALL members

IC is an opportunity for members to become more familiar with BBYO on the international level, experience innovative Shabbat services, take part in community impact projects and connect with Jewish teens from all around the world.

In Training (IT) New Member Convention

March 4-6

JCC of Wyoming Valley, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Home Housed

Open to ALL NEW members

New members are invited to spend the weekend getting to know one another and learning more about BBYO.

WOW Weekend Convention

April 15-17

Hotel TBD

Open to ALL members

During WOW Weekend, teens experience "wow programming" in a variety of topics, such as community service, social action and brotherhood/sisterhood.

March of the Living (MOTL)

May 2-16

Poland and Israel

Open to ALL members

MOTL is a two weeks-long program focused on Holocaust education and remembrance. Teens spend one week in Poland and end their trip with a week-long celebration of the Jewish peoplehood in Israel.

Spring Fling Convention

May 20-22

Camp Kweebec, Schwenksville, PA

Open to ALL members

As the culmination of the program year, this convention allows to teens to listen to State of the Region addresses from their regional presidents, hear and take part in Life Ceremonies given by outgoing seniors, and elect the Regional Board for the following calendar year.

Want to learn more about Jewish youth groups?

For BBYO, contact Janine Ure via the Jewish Federation, 610-921-0624.

For National Federation of Temple Youth, contact Scott Stein via Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom, 610-375-6034

Product labeling plan by Europe deepens Israel's isolation

The European Union's decision to start labeling Israeli products made in the West Bank delivered a resounding show of international disapproval over Israel's expansion of Jewish settlements and raised the pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to renew peace efforts with the Palestinians.

Israel condemned the measure as unfair and discriminatory, but it appeared helpless to stop its growing isolation over the settlement issue and its treatment of Palestinians. Relations with the EU in particular have deteriorated in recent years due to disputes over the settlements.

"The EU decision is hypocritical and constitutes a double standard," Netanyahu said, adding that Israel had been unfairly singled out. "The EU should be ashamed."

Israel captured the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and began settling both areas shortly afterward. The Palestinians claim both areas as parts of a future state, a position that has global support.

The international community opposes settlement construction, saying their continued growth undermines establishing an independent Palestine alongside Israel. Today, nearly 600,000 Israelis live in the two areas, almost 10 percent of the country's Jewish population.

Israel's centrist and dovish opposition also supports the idea of a Palestinian state, saying a separation is the only way to preserve Israel's Jewish majority.

While Netanyahu has endorsed this "two-state solution," critics say he has done little to promote it.

EU officials described their decision as technical, saying it merely clarified existing policy.

Lars Faaborg-Andersen, the EU ambassador to Israel, said the 28-nation bloc does not recognize lands captured in 1967 as Israeli territory.

The EU has taken other steps to protest settlement construction. A free-trade policy with Israel does not apply to settlement goods, and a landmark technology-sharing agreement does not allow EU funds to be spent beyond Israel's pre-1967 lines.

The economic impact is likely to be minimal. While the EU is Israel's largest trade partner, settlement products account for less than 2 percent of Israel's \$14 billion in exports to Europe each year. But the move is highly symbolic.

Once implemented, European consumers will be able to read on the label of most products — including agricultural goods, olive oil, cosmetics and wines — that were produced on Israeli settlements. Although such products will not be banned, Israel fears the labels will be a political stigma and could lead to a fuller boycott.

Israeli officials noted the decision came amid a two-month wave of violence, which has been characterized by dozens of seemingly random Palestinian stabbing attacks, and would weaken

Former ambassador protests move

Member of Knesset Michael Oren went to a supermarket in Jerusalem and placed blue EU stickers on products from Spain, France, and Germany to protest the pending publication of guidelines to enable EU member states to place consumer labels on exports from east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

"The EU decision to label Israeli products is anti-Semitic," Oren said. "There are dozens of border disputes and 'occupations' in the world but the EU decided to single out Israel."

Oren complained that the decision ignored that six Israeli prime ministers tried to negotiate a two-state solution but the Palestinian Authority rejected their offers. He said the EU had not taken into account that the PA was refusing to negotiate with Israel and is

inciting attacks against Jews.

The former ambassador to the US questioned why the EU would take steps that could result in hundreds of Palestinians losing their jobs. But he said the oddest decision was to label products from the Golan Heights at a time when there is no functioning Syrian government with which Israel could negotiate a peace agreement.

"Do they want us to give the Golan to Isis?" Oren asked. "Israeli consumers need to know that when they buy European products, they are supporting the EU's anti-Semitic policies."

Oren noted that European anti-Semitism predates Christianity. He noted that past European labeling of Jewish products led to dark days in Europe.

any incentive for the Palestinians to return to negotiations. Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon called it a "shameful step that grants terror a prize."

Avi Roeh, chairman of the Yesha settlers' council, said "this attempt to

isolate us or differentiate us from the rest of Israel won't succeed." He said the biggest victims would be the estimated 80,000 Palestinians who risk losing their jobs if the businesses that employ them in the settlements are hurt.

Going away for the winter?

Keep up with what's going on in our Jewish community by continuing to receive Shalom and other mailings from Federation and the JCC. Please contact the Federation office to be sure we have your address.

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Mark Your Calendars Now!

World Class conference on the Holocaust and Genocide returns to Millersville University April 6-8

Every two years Millersville University hosts the Conference on The Holocaust and Genocide. The 34th Conference in April will have presentations on the centenary of the Armenian genocide and the 70th anniversary of the Nuremberg Tribunals. The focus will be on the consequences of the Holocaust and genocide, problems of survivors, trials of perpetrators, racism and state and popular anti-Semitism in postwar Europe.

The keynote speaker will be Professor Ronald Grigor Suny of the University of Michigan. An international lineup of presenters is expected.. Previous speakers have included Martin Gilbert, Robert J. Lifton, Samantha Power, and Elie Wiesel, among others.

There is no charge to attend, but contributions are being accepted to establish an endowment to assure the event's future.

For more information go to www.millersville.edu/holocon

B"H

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December 20 - Hummus

January 24 - Cake Decorating

February 21 - Challa bake

March 13 - Hamantaschen

April 10 - babka

May 15 - Sweet and Savory Noodle Kugel

All classes are located at 2320 Hampden Blvd.
call or email Chana Lipsker for more information 610-334-1577 or lipskerreading@aol.com

JNF Program Areas

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND gives all generations of Jews a unique voice in building a prosperous future for the land of Israel and its people.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

JNF enhances quality of life in Israel by building new communities and bolstering existing ones, especially in the north and south.

PROJECTS INCLUDE: Go North Initiative, Blueprint Negev, Be'er Sheva River Park, Nefesh B'Nefesh, Sderot Indoor Recreation Center, Friends of Israel Firefighters (FIF), Project Wadi Attir

FORESTRY & GREEN INNOVATIONS

As an innovator in ecological development and a pioneer in forest creation, JNF has planted more than 240 million trees in Israel, providing lush belts of green covering more than 250,000 acres.

PROJECTS INCLUDE: Firefighting & Fire Prevention, Agricultural Infrastructure Development, Soil Conservation, Combating Desertification, Harvey Hertz-JNF Ceremonial Tree Planting Center

WATER SOLUTIONS

JNF has been at the forefront of water management & conservation in Israel for two decades, increasing the water supply by 12% and helping Israel become a world leader in water recycling.

PROJECTS INCLUDE: Recycled Water Reservoirs, River Rehabilitation, Rainwater Harvesting Program, Constructed Wetlands

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

For over 100 years, JNF has sponsored research initiatives in Israel as part of its efforts to cultivate the land. JNF is a world leader in both technological and environmental innovation.

PROJECTS INCLUDE: Agricultural R&D Stations, Solar Power Innovation, Fish Farming, Coral Reef Restoration, Water Research & Technologies

ZIONIST EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

JNF is the single largest provider of Zionist engagement programs in the U.S. and offers myriad ways to connect young American Jews to Israel.

PROJECTS INCLUDE: Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI), Alternative Spring Break (ASB), Green Horizons, Caravan for Democracy, Blue Box Bob

HERITAGE SITES

JNF is committed to the preservation of historical sites associated with Israel's rebirth and to ensuring that the stories behind them are properly

Jewish National Fund's work addresses crucial global issue

One of the important organizations the Reading Jewish community supports is the JNF— Jewish National Fund. Its charter specifies reclamation of land as its primary purpose.

Two decades ago Ron Lauder, JNF Board Chairman surveyed the Kinneret-the Sea of Galilee and was shocked to see that the only freshwater reservoir in Israel was running dry. He began JNF's support for solving Israel's drought and water issues would be solved.

JNF took on the challenge of mitigating the water crisis and discovering solutions to an issue that no other country had yet solved. Prior to 1995 there were only three reservoirs in Israel. JNF helped build 200 reservoirs between 1996 and 2005. These reservoirs were desperately needed to store recycled water and rainwater, which would then be utilized by Israeli farmers to bring food to the markets during the country's dry summer season.

Israel started to recycle water for reuse. Desalination was the highly recommended solution, but that method alone was too costly and years way from coming to fruition. A stopgap solution of building recycling plants and reservoirs was implemented with immediate results.

Israel now uses recycled water, together with brackish water from deep underground, mixed with rainwater, and is able to produce tomatoes that have longer shelf lives and are sweeter than others in the world. Water from fish

farms is drained and used to irrigate olive orchards. For us, every rap of water is preserved and used more than just once.

As recently highlighted in *The New York Times*, Israel reuses nearly 85 percent of its water. Today, more than 250 reservoirs store more than 350 million cubic meters of recycled and reusable water and harvested rainwater providing 55 percent of the agricultural water for the land and people of Israel. Desalination provides the remaining 45 percent. And more than 50 million cubic meters of water, stored in JNF reservoirs, is made available to Jordan as part of the peace agreement.

Israel shares her technology around the world. Water filtration systems created in Israel are being used in cities across the globe and soon in Southern California. An African farmer puts food on the family table because of water advancements created in Israel. Israel's achievements are being used in Southeast Asia, and young people from around the world are trained at the Arava International Center for Agricultural Training (AICAT). Project Wadi Attir, one of the largest Bedouin projects in Israel, is using every drop of water for agriculture and is bringing sources of environmental technologies and economic development to over 10,000 Bedouins.

Israel is willing to share its solution as this challenge is one the world must all face together.

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All Around the Town

Mazel tov to **Ellen and Don Abramson** on the marriage of their son Joseph to Debra Konstadt in New York.

Mazel tov to **Paul and Ellen Mitnick** on the birth of their twin grandsons Oren and Heath to Allison and her husband, Eben Wilson.

Mazel Tov to great-grandparents **Esther and Sid Bratt**, grandparents **Corinne and Andy Wernick** and

parents **Melissa and Aaron Wernick** on the birth of baby Maya Rachel Wernick.

Mazel tov to **Audra Nemirow** and **Zoe Graff**, who have been cast in Berks Ballet Theatre's "The Nutcracker" Dec. 19 and 20 at the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

We love good news about members of our community! Please share it by emailing Marknem@aol.com.

Until next time: Shalom!

Obituaries

Maxine R. (Rosner) Henry, 88, of Wyomissing. Maxine was a member of Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom and was an active community volunteer for more than 40 years. She is survived by a daughter, Jill Henry. Other survivors include her sister Carole Beck, one nephew and two nieces.

Beverly (Ostroff) Bloom, 81, of Reading. Beverly taught first grade in the Reading School District at the former 15th and Perkiomen Elementary School. She also was a Weight Watchers leader. Beverly is survived by her husband, Seymour Bloom and her two daughters Merryl Eisenberg of Sinking Spring and

Shelley Hamsher and her husband, Jeffrey, of Wyomissing. Other survivors include her five grandchildren.

Goldie (Board) Heisler, 94, of Reading. Goldie was a longtime member of Shomrei Habrith Synagogue and ran their bus trips to Atlantic City. She was the manager of the former Flemington Outlet. Goldie is survived by her two sons Harry Ronald Heisler and his partner Linda Baer of Florida and Allen Heisler of Reading, her four grandchildren: Samantha, Zachary, Laine and Abigail Heisler and her great-granddaughter Camilla Heisler. Other survivors include her brother Philip Kommit of Canada and her niece and nephew of Reading.

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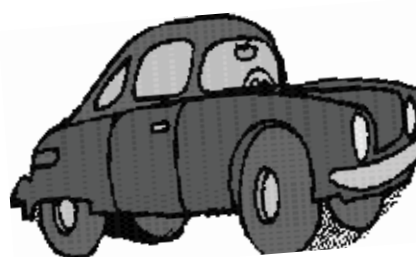
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The Cohens assert their Jewish identity during the holiday season

Book Club recap: Becoming ambassadors for Israel

By Andi Franklin and Amanda J. Hornberger

The Jewish Federation of Reading held its first Israel Book Club discussion Oct. 21. We discussed Michael Oren's book "Ally," a chronicle of his experience as Israeli ambassador to the United States.

In sometimes painful detail, Oren describes the four points of fracture in the relationship between Israel and the United States. There is increasing coolness in the U.S.-Israel political alliance. The American Jewish-Israeli Jewish alliance is also suffering. And there is increasing fragmentation within the American Jewish community and within the Israeli Jewish community. A particularly poignant moment in the book is the description of Oren's personal fracture when he relinquished his United States citizenship to serve as Israel's ambassador. Everyone in our group was affected by this event in Oren's journey.

However, this book is more than an account of Oren's tenure. It is, itself, a manual of ambassadorship and diplomacy. It describes how Oren triaged challenging moments and celebrated joyous ones. It shows how he successfully reached out and connected with every ambassador and every political, military, social and religious institution. His circle of influence encompassed every age, gender, race and individual he could. Oren and his wife Sally did this by embodying in their hearts a deep love for both the United States and Israel...two countries whose ideas and ideals of liberty, democracy and social good are older than both countries.

We had a wonderful discussion of this book, agreeing that it is not only a manual for future ambassadors but also for us. We are the unofficial ambassadors who must continue to support and maintain the "unbreakable, unshakeable" alliance between each other and between the United States and Israel.

Book Club meets again in January

At our next meeting, we will discuss Daniel Gordis' book "Menachem Begin:

The Battle for Israel's Soul." Join us on Wednesday, Jan. 20, at 7 p.m. at the JCC for our discussion.

"Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul" can be found at local libraries, Amazon or other major book retailers.

If you have questions or would like more information about the JCC Israel Book Club, please contact Amanda at amandah@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.

One reader's view

Moisey Schneider took part in the Israel Book Club discussion of "Ally" and offered these thoughts:

I was at the book discussion and found it very enlightening. "Ally" is well-written and enormously interesting. There is an absolutely devastating portrayal of President Barack Obama. He is described as always on the side of Israel's enemies: Mahmoud Abbas, the Muslim Brotherhood and Turkish President Erdogan. The democratically elected prime minister of Israel was treated shabbily and called names by the White House staff. Oren showed that Obama put more daylight between the U.S. and Israel and pressed for a full freeze of construction of settlements, even in places that belong to Israel. In the book Obama's coolness to Israel was very visible.

For Oren more painful were the widening gaps between American Jews and Israel. He speculates as to why some American Jews and journalists such as Roger Cohen, Paul Kruger, Frank Rich and especially Thomas Friedman take the positions they do. His answer is not politics and ideology, but insecurity, fears of anti-Semitism and disloyalty to the Democratic Party. After Benjamin Netanyahu's speech in Congress with standing ovations from both Democrats and Republicans, Friedman wrote in *The New York Times* that the applause was no surprise because Congress is bought by the Israeli lobby (by that he meant

Gardening with Vicky

Seek out native alternatives

By Vicky Sokoloff

In a time when we are all more aware of the importance of protecting the environment, it would be good to consider native alternatives before planting. The Norway maple is considered invasive. Two native alternatives are the Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) and Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*).

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is very invasive in our area. It is also the preferred host for the highly invasive spotted lanternfly. Although this tree can be hard to get rid of, every effort should be made to get it off your property. Native alternatives include Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*), Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), and Sitka Mountain Ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*). The book "Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants" is an excellent resource on this subject.

As the quarantine area for spotted lanternfly expands, we will all have to be on the lookout for signs of this insect and do our part to prevent it from invading additional areas. Although it can fly, it is more of a jumper. Much of its spread has come by moving material infected with insect egg masses. The quarantine zone was expanded again in November to include Boyertown, South Coventry Township in Chester County and Douglass Township in Montgomery County. More information on this pest can be found at www.agriculture.pa.gov (click spotted lanternfly under hot topics on the left side).

You have probably read or heard about colony collapse in honeybees. There has also been a significant decline in other bee populations, including our native bumblebee. Pesticides have played a part in this problem. But nontoxic chemicals that disrupt the bee's sense of smell are also a factor since bees use scent to locate their food sources.

Research by Dr. Jordanna Sprayberry at Muhlenberg College showed that even fertilizer applied at the recommended rate has a negative effect on bees.

For years the typical suburban landscape was primarily turf grass. Turf grass does nothing to sustain pollinators; rather, it is a vast wasteland they have to cross to get to a food source. This is one reason many homeowners are cutting



Two views of the spotted lanternfly



Tree of heaven

down on grass and replacing it with more wildlife-friendly alternatives. Lawns require fertilizer, weed killer, possibly insect killer, water and mowing. All of these things are not only expensive and time consuming, they have a negative effect on the environment.

Setting aside part of your garden for herbs & vegetables provides you with fresh food for your table as well as plants for pollinators. Adding native plants, ornamental grasses, or even a small meadow can make a big difference in our future.

Jews), invoking the worst anti-Semitic stereotype.

The same, Oren says, is true of some Jewish-American politicians. The Democratic Party is expected to nominate Hillary Clinton, who served as Obama's secretary of state and has had, according to "Ally," her own share of dustups with Oren and Netanyahu. Oren asks—is no Israel better for the United States than any Israel?

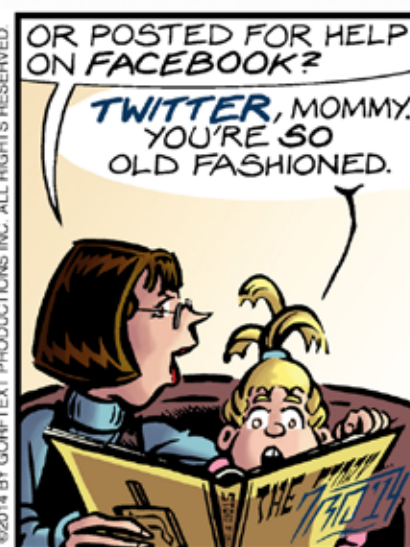
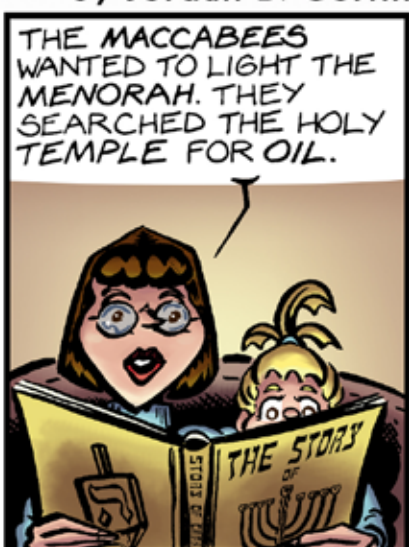
It is interesting to note that according to CNN and Gallup polls sympathy for

Israel is the highest among Republicans at 83 percent and high for Independents at 59 percent, but for Democrats it is lower than it has ever been at 31 percent.

American Jews care deeply about Israel and yet overwhelmingly are voting for the Democratic Party that has become more anti-Israel. We abandoned the ship "St. Louis" with Jewish men, women and children and they perished. Don't abandon our ship Israel as she is surrounded by hostile neighbors.

EVERYTHING'S RELATIVE

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Jewish Family Service

United Way



Stimulate your child

By Sari Inledon, M.Ed.

Many of my articles focus on caregiving for senior adults. This month I would like to focus on a different kind of caregiving – for young children and how our everyday activity of talking to them can have a dramatic impact on



their brain development. Professor Dana Suskind, M.D. is the founder and director of the Thirty Million Words Initiative, a research program at the University of Chicago based on the scientifically demonstrated critical importance of early language exposure on the developing child. Suskind, a pediatric cochlear implant surgeon pursued this line of research trying to understand why some of her young transplant recipients were so much more successful than others in acquiring and understanding language.

Dr. Suskind was inspired by the research of two University of Kansas researchers who found that socioeconomic status, race, gender or birth order were NOT the key components in a child's ability to learn language. Their research found the essential factor that determined the future learning trajectory of a child was the early language environment: how much a

parent talked to a child. In her book *Thirty Million Words*, Dr. Suskind reports, "the more parents talked to their children, the faster the children's vocabularies grew and the higher the children's I.Q. test scores at age three and later."

Literacy and studying have always been important to the Jewish people. We are, after all known as "the people of the book."

Our culture encourages learning so the specific strategies that author recommends may seem obvious to some but their importance should not be underestimated. By developing literacy skills the suggested activities can be an important part of enhancing the parent-child relationship.

The Thirty Million Words Initiative is based on the three T's - Tune In, Talk More, Take Turns. Tune in — can be done at every opportunity — What is the child feeling, thinking or doing? Use a rich and varied vocabulary to talk about it. Take Turns by encouraging a child's participation with open ended questions. A fourth "T" is "Turn it off" referring to technology. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no television or technology for children under 2. Their recommendation for children 2 and up is that parents limit screen time to less than one or two hours a day and restrict content as well.

I encourage everyone who spends time with young children and or who cares

about child development to read *Thirty Million Words* and learn more about what works and what doesn't. The first step in nurturing successful lives is talking to children in way that build their brains.

Need a gift for a Broadway show lover? Or just enjoy reading about pop culture. Try "Wonder of Wonders a Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof" – by Alisa Solomon, who teaches at the Columbia University School of Journalism. Solomon traces how and why the story of Tevye the milkman, the creation of the great Yiddish writer Sholem-Aleichem, was reborn as blockbuster entertainment in America and around the world.

Solomon follows Tevye from his appearance on the New York Yiddish stage, to his Broadway debut and in

the decades that followed in innovative productions in the twenty-first century. A delightful and entertaining read.



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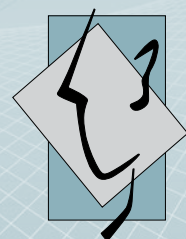
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In memory of:

Maxine Henry – Rosalye Yashek

Jacob Krumholz – Amy Schein Hollowbush

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Jewish Family Service

In honor of:

Brooke Gunter’s marriage – Don and Ellen Abramson

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Birth of Jackye and Jim Barrer’s grandson – Barbara and Seth Rosenzweig

In memory of:

Maxine Henry – Ruth Isenberg

Shirley Weintraub – Louise Zeidman and family

Harriet Zeigerman (Debbie Goodman’s mother) – Barbara and Seth Rosenzweig

Beverly Bloom – Ruth Isenberg, Barbara Nazimov, Debbie Goodman and John Moyer, Selma Cutler

JFS Food Pantry

In memory of:

David Hyman – Helene and Henry Singer

Honorials and Memorials

Contributions may be made to the following Funds:

Federation Jewish Community Campaign	\$10
Jewish Family Service	\$10
Leo Camp Lecture Fund	\$10
JFS Food Bank	\$25
JFS Taxi Transportation Program	\$20
Holocaust Library & Resource Center	\$18
Doris Levin Fund	\$10

Doris Levin Fund

In memory of:

Maxine Henry – Howard and Vicki Hafetz

Federation Jewish Community Campaign

In honor of:

Birth of Jackye and Jim Barrer’s grandson Harrison – Susan and Richard D’Angelo

In memory of:

Harriet Zeigerman (Debbie Goodman’s mother) – Phyllis and Barry Goldberg, Penny Golden, Mel and Susan Blum

Maxine Henry – Rob and Yvonne Oppenheimer, Dena and Vic Hammel, Mel and Susan Blum, Debbie Goodman and John Moyer, Louise Zeidman, Cheryl and Eric Farber

Beverly Bloom – Cheryl and Eric Farber, George and Marlene Weiss, Judy, Bob and Susan Pollack, Carol and Bernie Gerber

Evelyn Thompson Nursery School Fund

In honor of:

Brooke Gunter’s marriage - Bob and Beth Caster

In memory of:

Shirley Weintraub— Bob and Beth Caster

How to teach kids to support Jewish causes

Though it is important that our next generation of kids want to give to the wider community, the flight from specifically Jewish concerns comes with worrisome implications.

First, it accompanies a gradual diminishment in Jewish ethnic feeling and connection — a diminishment that is part of larger trends within the American Jewish community.

Second, if we don’t teach our kids how to give Jewishly, they will never learn. No one else will step up for

them, and those Jewish causes will go unsupported. Eventually they will die. If only one generation of Jewish kids fails to learn how to support the Jewish community, the Jewish people and Israel, Jewish giving will be over. Because Jewish giving, like any kind of moral engagement, is a muscle — if you don’t develop the muscle, it atrophies.

So what can Jewish parents do to make sure they are keeping the chain of Jewish giving intact? First, teach your kids about local Jewish needs, causes

and organizations. Talk to them about the work of Federations, community centers, Jewish family and career services. Take them to see what those organizations are really doing. Talk to them about projects in Israel. Teach them about what Jewish organizations are doing all over the world. Make it real for them.

Second, link your child’s interests to Jewish causes. Your daughter likes baseball? There’s JChoice.org, a group that provides baseball equipment and supplies to kids in low-income areas.

Dance? Give to The Israel Ballet. Horses? Try the Israel National Therapeutic Riding Association, which uses horseback riding to help people coping with disability or injury. There are other such opportunities, many of them contained in “The Mitzvah Project Book,” by Liz Suneby and Diane Heiman.

Tikkun olam is great. But tikkun ha’am — repairing the Jewish people — is just as important. We do that when we connect our values to our people, and to our sense of what we believe.

Jewish responses to Europe’s refugee crisis

Budapest was the center of Europe’s refugee crisis during the summer. Having traversed across continents, thousands of refugees from Syria and elsewhere found themselves bottlenecked at the city’s main railway stations.

Their ambition was safe passage onto more open and hospitable countries such as Germany and Sweden. But Hungarian government policy, or a lack thereof, meant that these refugees became stuck in Budapest without aid or shelter.

Members of Budapest’s Jewish community took action. Though the Alliance of the Jewish Communities of Hungary did not offer a formal response to the crisis, Aurora, the alternative Jewish community center that is a hub of social activism in Budapest and located near Keleti railway station, used its space as temporary housing for refugees, among other things.

Budapest’s Jews also threw themselves into the wider effort. Luca

Gelleri, 26, saw pictures of refugees in need on Facebook. She took clothing and spent 18 hours volunteering assistance at the Keleti station.

András Léderer, 31, saw a large Muslim family in obviously bad condition, wandering around Budapest. The father showed him a piece of paper, in Hungarian and without a map or directions, which said the family had to get themselves to a certain refugee camp within 24 hours. Directing them was his first encounter with the refugees and the practicalities of their ordeal. Subsequently, Léderer found out about a group organizing efforts to help the refugees at the train stations and joined them. He and others bought food and tickets for public transport for the refugees and became better acquainted with the official documentation with which the refugees had to grapple.

Léderer would go so far as to shelter refugees in his own home. Two Syrians who stayed with him turned out to be a

Christian and a Muslim. When they found out he was Jewish, the Muslim smiled and laughingly commented, “Well, then, we are cousins.”

Gelleri compared the reaction of those who went to Keleti station to the shock of visiting Auschwitz. It made the tragedy unavoidable and compelled people to understand, to search for answers, and to find ways to help and alleviate human suffering.

Léderer looks at the legacy of the Holocaust in a different way: “When you see that the state purposefully abandons groups of people, especially extremely vulnerable people, then you have an obligation to do something about it.”

Refugees, he said, are the most vulnerable “in the sense that normally there is a state behind us that nominally protects us. At the end of a day, a passport can guarantee us certain rights.

“That is not the case for these people — there is no one to protect them. ...

Precisely because of what I see as a consequence of the Holocaust, you cannot just pass by these people on the street.”

The refugee crisis has, for now, passed over Budapest. The flow of refugees has been stemmed and diverted. But those who make it to Hungary still are to be found in camps or processing centers erected at the border.

As cold weather sets in the refugees are in need of tents, warm clothes including winter jackets, and shoes. The shifting focus of the refugee crisis from the cities to the borders means that it is harder to find volunteers.

“It’s really difficult to find good volunteers who are willing to go to the countryside for days or weeks. And it’s a financial issue too, to find someplace to live down there. The people who are typically flexible are students but they are in school now,” Gelleri said. “I’m really curious to see what the future will be.”

Knesset marks International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Knesset members discussed the plight of poor Israelis and proposed related bills as the legislative body marked the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

As MK Yossi Yonah (Zionist Union) pointed out in a speech, “Poverty Day,” as lawmakers nicknamed it, has become an annual tradition in the Knesset, which he said showed the government’s failure to help the indigent.

The Caucus to Fight Poverty, which consists of MKs Ilan Gilon, Eli

Alalouf, Ayman Odeh and MK Meir Cohen, a former welfare minister, held a conference in the Knesset. Alalouf, former chairman of the Welfare Ministry’s appointed committee to fight poverty, said the budget that the Knesset is expected to vote on does not dedicate enough money to the cause.

“I come from a poor family,” Cohen said. “I was the ninth of nine children with a single mother. I promise that poverty will not be taken off the Knesset’s

agenda.”

Alalouf, who is also chairman of the Knesset Labor, Welfare and Health Committee, said. “I am embarrassed to be a Jew in the State of Israel where the Arab population is so poor and the haredi population lives in poverty.”

Odeh said two of every three Arab children in Israel are poor, and as such, the fight to reduce poverty must also be a fight against discrimination and racism. The Joint List chairman accused government ministries of ignoring Israeli

Arabs’ needs.

The Knesset Labor, Welfare and Health Committee reviewed research conducted by the National Insurance Institute that says poverty will be reduced by 6 to 14 percent by 201, due to changes to the state budget.

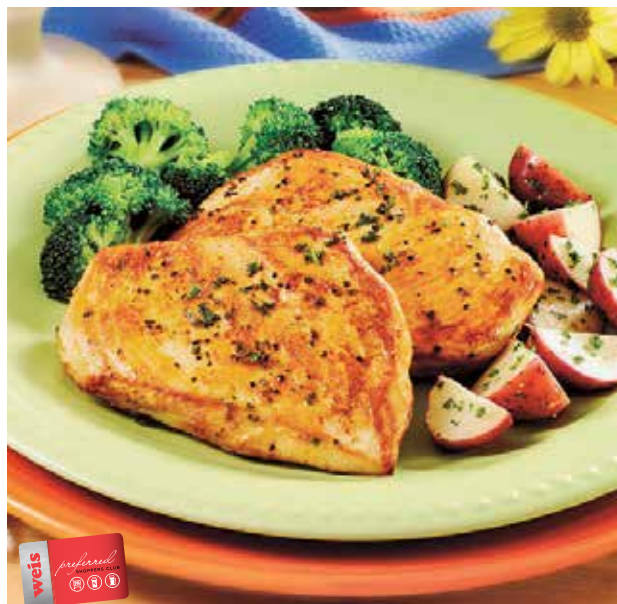
Among the moves expected to help are increases in supplementary income payments to the elderly and child allowances, the opening of government saving accounts and reducing the value-added tax.

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