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THE JEWISH REVIEW

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LA fires felt in Portland

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Lauren Tarlow clearly remembers the Shabbat morning service she attended Saturday, Jan. 4.

She was visiting a friend whose daughter was celebrating becoming *bat mitzvah* that weekend. Tarlow received an *aliyah* at that service, reciting the blessing before a section of the Torah portion was chanted to the congregation. Later in the service, she and her 6-year-old daughter ducked into a conference room at the synagogue to play.

Tarlow recalls that service so clearly because it was at the Pasadena Jewish Temple & Center. Three days later the Conservative synagogue was destroyed by the Eaton Fire.

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A day off to work



Participants at Monday, Jan. 20's Work For The World volunteer service event at Portland Jewish Academy decorate a *tzedakah* box. See more images from the annual service event on page 5. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Federation announces Gather Grants

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Looking to build Jewish community in your part of Portland? The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland can help through their new Gather Grants program to support small Jewish gatherings throughout the area.

Caron Blau Rothstein, the Chief Planning and Engagement Officer for the Federation, explained the Gather Grant program is based off a model that was pioneered in Atlanta and is an expansion of the idea behind OneTable and PJ Library's Get Together Grants.

"You give community members a small amount of money," to help defray the expenses of hosting a program, Blau Rothstein said, "and you help to support them with resources to do Jewish themselves in

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Federation to host Resetting the Table to promote Israel dialogue

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Even with the announcement of a ceasefire in Gaza, the subject of Israel – its policies, its role in Jewish life, even its very existence – remains a volatile conversation topic. But the conversations are important, and work is underway to help those conversations be more productive.

Resetting the Table, a nonprofit organization that works to promote pluralism and combat polarization, is partnering with the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland to bring their approach to respectful conversations to Portland's Jewish community. A group of 72 participants will be selected for a Community Speaking Across Conflict Workshop led by Resetting the Table, followed by a Community Town Square to put the workshop's skills into practice.

"Our Community Study indicated a desire among community members to come together to have these conversations in safe spaces," Federation Chief Community Relations and Public Affairs Officer Bob Horenstein said. But simply hosting a forum wasn't a realistic option – the result would be a collection of people with differing views talking past one, not with, one another.

The 72 selected participants will be grouped into three cohorts for the workshop, which will be a three-hour, in-person session between Tuesday, Mar. 4, and Thursday, Mar. 6. One of these cohorts is exclusively

for young adults, ages 22-35, while the other two will be open to all ages. Beyond that, Horenstein is trying to cast as wide a net for participants as possible. Those cohorts will be reshuffled into two groups of 36 for the two-hour Town Square, held virtually on either Tuesday, Apr. 8, or Wednesday, Apr. 9, as a facilitated opportunity to put those skills into practice.

"We want people to come who are passionate about Israel, whatever their views are, but who are open to having dialogue with people who they disagree with to create more understanding," Horenstein said. "We want people who want to learn to dialogue and who can take those skills and hopefully use them in whatever setting, whether it's in a private social setting, a Shabbat dinner table or within an organization or congregation."

Not only do surveys show that the younger generation of Jews' views on Israel are, as a whole, different from those of the rest of the Jewish community, but younger Jews have had a different experience with Israel based on the events of their lifetime. Horenstein noted that while older generations' recollections of Israel started with the Jewish state fending off foreign invaders through the second half of the 20th century, a 25-year-old's recollection might start with the Second Intifada or the expansion of settlements in the West Bank. The focus on a full cohort of young adults is important, Horenstein said,

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JFGP joins Minneapolis webinar on intergenerational conversations about Israel

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

At the outset of his recent webinar on intergenerational conversations around Israel, Rabbi Wesley Gardenswartz of Temple Emanuel in Newton, Mass., laid out a hypothetical family dilemma in which the daughter of a pair of second-generation American Jews, both ardent Zionists, left for college and came back transformed.

"She would say things like, 'You lied to me. My teachers lied to me. The rabbis lied to me. All those Jewish programs you sent me to lied to me. Why did you never tell me?'" Rabbi Gardenswartz read from the hypothetical. The parents responded, he continued with, "We love you, but we don't even recognize you anymore."

The rift grew until, finally, their daughter refused to come home for Passover, instead leading an Anti-Zionist Seder at a Pro-Palestinian encampment on their college's campus.

The rabbi's webinar, "Become Engaged -The Challenges of Inter-Generational Conversations About Israel," hosted Tuesday, Jan. 7 by the Minneapolis Jewish Federation and brought to Portland by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, is important because Rabbi Gardenswartz's hypothetical isn't hypothetical at all.

"This, by the way, is a real deal," he explained. "These are families in my community."

It's a dilemma that resonated with participants – and while there's an impulse to ignore it, Rabbi Gardenswartz explained the impracticality of such an approach.

"It's like ignoring a toothache or even a heartache," he said. "It's just hard to ignore real pain."

He proposed four lenses to see the situation through, the first of which is that narrative, not facts, drive the conversation. It's why sending someone you disagree with links to news stories and videos that counter their perspective is rarely successful. It's why there was significant public sympathy for the accused murderer of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson. It's not the reserve of just one political viewpoint – or generation.

"So many on Oct. 7 and Oct. 8, even before Israel mounted its war, they couldn't see the death and destruction that Hamas visited on Israel, because that's not their narrative. And to be honest, how many of us couldn't see the suffering of Palestinians during the war? I couldn't see it and couldn't make myself care about it, because I was focused on Israel fighting a just war, and on what had been done," Rabbi Gardenswartz said. "I was fully in that narrative. Therefore, when articles would come about what's happening in Gaza, I couldn't bring myself to care, because I was focused on my narrative, which is the death and destruction of innocent Jews in Israel."

The second lens is the idea that the views of those you disagree with may have some truth to them. This was

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GRANTS



SCAN FOR DETAILS

Rabins receives Covenant Foundation grant

Portland artist releases choral performance album; set to publish two books

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

Alicia Jo Rabins has been busy.

She's recently released a live album of her collaboration with Camas High School, which was performed Portland in April of 2024 and in New York last May. She's also just received a Covenant Foundation grant for her ongoing web series exploring the stories of biblical women – subject matter which is also at the root of her musical collaboration with the CHS Choir. She's releasing a children's book this fall and a memoir next fall. If that wasn't enough, she's studying toward Rabbinic ordination.

"Girls In Trouble TV," Rabins' web series, is an offshoot of her long-running Girls In Trouble musical project and educational curriculum – the development of which was supported by a previous grant from the Covenant Foundation. The foundation, based in New York, works to support Jewish education, with particular interest in the intersection of arts and education – a natural fit for Rabins. While the original Girls In Trouble program is in-depth and immersive, Rabins had a different goal for this permutation of the project.

"I wanted to do kind of the opposite, which is to take my teaching about biblical women and my art about biblical women and turn it into something that's super accessible," she said. "Anyone can just press play and get like the information delivered in a way that makes sense and it's entertaining."

Thus, she reunited with the team that she worked with to



Alicia Jo Rabins performs with the Camas High School Choir at their "I Was a Desert: Songs of the Matriarchs" concert Thursday, Apr. 11, 2024 at Revolution Hall in Portland. (Jason Quigley)

create "A Kaddish for Bernie Madoff." The model is something akin to a culinary or travel show, with Rabins serving as something of a tour guide to the heroines of Jewish tradition.

"They're so good at taking information that could be dry or hard to convey, and they have somebody who's really passionate about it at the center who turns it into an adventure," Rabins said of the culinary show format, mentioning chefs Anthony Bourdain and Samin Nosrat as inspirations. "I also go out in the world with my team, and we interview different artists, teachers, activists, rabbis who are doing really interesting work in the Jewish world, to kind of shine a light on what they're doing and get their perspective on the characters so that it's not just my voice."

The first episode of the series, centering on Vashti, is

available now on [YouTube](#). A second episode on Esther is expected before Purim this year. Thanks to the support of the Covenant Foundation, the series will encompass seven episodes in total.

Her new album, "I Was a Desert: Songs of the Matriarchs," released in December of 2024, is a recording of her concert with the Camas High School Choir at Revolution Hall in Portland in April of that year – a performance which was repeated at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage in May. The Camas choir, under the direction of Ethan Chessin, commissions work from a Portland composer every other year whose work is not primarily in choral music. Chessin, who was nominated for a Grammy Award for music education for the collaboration, is a Portlander and, like Rabins, the parent of a student at Havurah Sha-

lom's Hebrew school program.

"This was his 13th year teaching at Camas," Rabins said of Chessin, "so he decided, for his bar mitzvah year, to focus on Jewish culture."

"Collaboration" is a key and apt description of the work – the Camas High Choir are an accomplished outfit, and Rabins said that she and the 135 students learned a lot from each other. The performance also incorporated a string trio, a three-piece rock band and an animated visual element – along with spoken passages where choir members read their classmates' anonymous reflections to the material they were signing about.

"I gave them prompts about some of those stories and asked them to anonymously contribute responses to how they connected to the stories and sort of little tidbits about their own inner lives and then edited them into a little spoken section," Rabins said. "We had these beautiful moments where we got a glimpse into the students' inner lives, which is very key to what I am interested in doing. It's like, 'where do our personal questions and struggles and feelings and needs at the moment intersect with these ancient stories?'"

A live video of Rabins' performance with the Camas High Choir is available on [YouTube](#), along with an exclusive mini-documentary about the project, and the album is available on major streaming services or through [Bandcamp](#).

Rabins tells a less ancient story in "Hallelujah: The

See **RABINS**, page 11

Work For The World draws hundreds



Photographs by ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Nearly a hundred families piled into Portland Jewish Academy on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day for the school's annual Work For The World volunteer service event, co-sponsored by the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, PJ Library, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland and BB360. The bulk of the school's upper floor classrooms were taken over with hands-on projects to support those in need, from preparing food to making dog toys for shelter animals and crafting cards to place in supply packs to share a little love with the area's most disadvantaged. Even play time was for a cause - a basketball contest raised \$500 for the Federation's Los Angeles Wildfire Relief Campaign.

Kesser Israel hosts "Spiritual Path in Marriage"

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Portland family therapist Jacob Spilman has been practicing for more than 40 years. Along the way, he noticed something.

"There are certain psychological concepts that seemed to be played out in metaphor in the Talmud," he said.

Spilman is bringing his insights into psychology, Jewish wisdom and married life to a three-part series, "A Spiritual Path in Marriage," hosted by Congregation Kesser Israel Sundays, Feb. 2, 16 and 23, at 7 pm at the Portland Kollel.

Spilman's clinical approach, and the approach of this series, is rooted in the work of John Gottman, the son of an Orthodox Rabbi who pioneered what's known as the Cascade Model of Relational Dissolution through his research at the University of Washington; research which was transformative for therapists like Spilman.

"The thinking back then was that if you could solve a couple's problems, they treat each other better," Spilman said. "What [Gottman] found was something quite interesting: You have to get the couple to treat each other nicely first, and then they'll solve the problems."

Early on in his career, he also noticed the similarities between Freud's theories of the structure of the human psyche and the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) discussed in the Torah, which is also referred to as the "animal soul."

"You have to domesticate that animal," Spilman said. "That's work of psychotherapy, and that's work of spiritual work."

"It's really a great system that deals with how to manage conflict and create stronger connection with your partner," Congregation Kesser Israel's Rabbi Sholom Skolnik said of Gottman's methodology. "To that, [Spilman] brought a very strong Torah perspective to it about how a lot of this is doing your

own internal work on character traits and building a better self; When you do that, you become a better spouse."

Sharing knowledge of Torah – and practical ways to apply it – is a good day's work for a synagogue, of course, but there's more motivating Rabbi Skolnik's impetus to bring this program together.

"I was looking for ideas of things that would be of real service to the community and that would also bring people through the door. Not just Kesser people, but the broader community as well," he said, "My goal is to spread this light and frankly, it doesn't have to be just Jewish people either. It's relevant to everybody, and part of what we believe in is spreading Torah light and wisdom throughout the world."

The full series costs \$18 and preregistration is required online at kesserisrael.org/event/marriage. For more information, email mcarr@kesserisrael.org.

GATHER (continued from page 1)

micro communities."

The Federation is launching the program as a response to findings from their 2023 Community Study showing that Portland Jews are looking to connect with one another in grassroots ways and that geographic distance from physical institutions of the Jewish community is one of the challenges to building community.

"People seem to really want to find community, but geography can be a barrier because they live all over town," Blau Rothstein said, "or that what's being offered is not of interest or they don't feel confident in their Jewish literacy."

The Gather Grant model comes from the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, which developed the idea in response to its own community study. The program was initially targeted to the northern suburbs of Fulton County, where it was quick-

ly successful.

"There were a lot of geographic locations in Atlanta here individuals wanted to do more Jewish programs and didn't have access to the infrastructure that was providing them," Carla Birnbaum, the Relational Engagement Manager for JFGA, said. "What we realized by piloting in the northern suburbs is that there were people who sort of came out of the woodwork."

The program has now expanded to 33 zip codes in the Atlanta metropolitan area, with around 1,100 grants being issued in total since the program began in 2022. In addition to supporting Jewish community programs, the grants have given the Atlanta Federation even more data on who's engaging Jewishly, where and how.

"What we've learned is that Jewish Atlanta is much larger and more spread out than even our community-wide

studies have shown," Birnbaum said. "There are Jews in rural areas that are looking to have meaningful Jewish experiences and those look different in various areas of the city."

Data on Gather Grant recipients in Atlanta has shown that around 25 percent have moved to Atlanta in the last three years and that 48 percent want to be more involved in Jewish life in the area. Hosts seem to like it, too – 99 percent in Atlanta said they would recommend hosting a Gather Grant-funded program.

Portland isn't the first to bring in this model.

"Close to a dozen other communities have adopted Gather Grant models in different ways," Birnbaum said. In Portland, applications for events held through the end of March are now open. To be eligible, programs should include at least six people outside the host's household,

and hosts will need to complete a post-event survey to receive their funds as a reimbursement. Grants are available for a maximum of \$120.

What kind of program? The options really are endless, and Federation staff are available to talk about ideas and help connect you with people who might be interested in joining you.

"It's not just about the money, it's about helping you feel confident to host these things," Blau Rothstein said. "Gather Grants are for people to be empowered and supported in doing community-based, DIY Judaism."

The Gather Grant program in Portland is supported by the Federation's Catalyst Fund as well as the Community Endowment Fund of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation.

Learn more and apply for your own Gather Grant at jewishportland.org/gather-grants.



Pathways at play

PDX Pathways participants improvise their way to career development in the Change Through Play: Improvisational Skills for Career Enhancement Workshop led by CTP founder David Koff Sunday, Jan. 12. (Laura Jeser/The Jewish Review)

WGC grants open until Feb. 28

The Jewish Review staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Women's Giving Circle is now accepting applications for its 2025 grant-making cycle. The group, a division of the Federation's Women's Philanthropy program, will award grants between \$1,000 and \$5,000, with a total of \$26,000 in grant funding available.

The circle is also implementing a new policy which limits organizations to a maximum of three consecutive years of WGC grant awards. After a one-year pause, grant recipients will be eligible to re-apply.

Applications are due Feb. 28 and can be completed online at form.jotform.com/243574905380158. For more information, email Federation Chief Development Officer Wendy Kahn at wendy@jewishportland.org.

Kollel to host Rabbi Buxbaum as scholar-in-residence Jan. 31

The Portland Kollel

Rabbi Shlomo Buxbaum, a passionate Jewish educator, author, motivational speaker and musician, will focus on how to find greater meaning, purpose and possibilities in life during a Scholar-in-Residence program at the Portland Kollel Jan. 31 and Feb. 1.

Titled "Elemental: Discover Your Soul Type and Spiritual Element," the program, co-sponsored by Congregation Kesser Israel, draws on Rabbi Buxbaum's two books, "The Four Elements of an Empowered Life" and "The Four Elements of Inner Freedom." Activities include a Friday night reception, a Shabbat lunch at the Kollel, and a Saturday night post-Shabbat musical evening.

"Rabbi Buxbaum brings deep wisdom and engaging insights to audiences worldwide," says Rabbi Chanan Spivak, head of the Portland Kollel, who invited Rabbi Buxbaum to co-lead his "Shabbat Experience" class at the Kollel Saturday morning. "We are honored to host him."

For the past six years, Rabbi Buxbaum and his wife, Devorah, have led The LEV Experience, a Washington, DC-based organization that aims to help people from all walks of life discover their unique potential and to find the joy in their Judaism. He lectures on a wide range of topics, including daily spirituality, love and relationships, law and ethics and Jewish mindfulness, and also hosts the "Empowered Jewish Living" podcast.

Prior to his work with the LEV Experience, he was a lecturer at Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem, and then was executive director of Aish DC.

"We want people to see their connection to Judaism not as an affiliation with an organization, but as something that is spiritually rich, and that's inspiring," Rabbi Buxbaum told the *Washington Jewish Week*. "There's depth, and it becomes their own spiritual journey."

For more information, or to register, visit portlandkollel.org/elemental.

SUBSCRIBE: jewishportland.org/subscribe

OU's Chana Katz to visit Kesser Israel Feb. 7-9

Congregation Kesser Israel

Chana Meira Katz, a popular lecturer with the Orthodox Union's Women's Initiative, will discuss lessons about leadership and hope during a special Scholar-in-Residence weekend at Congregation Kesser Israel Feb. 7-9.

Katz, originally from South Africa, currently teaches at Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy in Los Angeles, and also hosts weekly lectures in her local community. She is dedicated to making Torah learning not only accessible, but profoundly relevant to individuals' lives.

"We are so excited to bring Chana Meira to Portland," says Erica Goldman, a member of the committee planning her visit. "She is a lovely person, and is a delight to learn from and learn with. The weekend offers opportunities to both hear her speak and engage in active learning with her."

Katz will be speaking after Shabbat services — approximately 11 am — Feb. 8 at Congregation Kesser Israel, on "Leadership through the Lens of *Tanach* (Hebrew Scriptures)." That evening at 7:30 pm, she will lead a session at the Portland Kollel on "Finding Light in Dark Times." The event will also feature a light supper. Sunday, Feb. 9, at 9:30 am, during a Women's Brunch, Katz will lead a study session on several *Tehillim* (Psalms).

Katz's visit is part of an international celebration of women's Torah study on *Shabbat Shira* (the Sabbath of song), when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea in joy and with song. This year, it also marks the beginning of the second part of the Women's Initiative's NACH Yomi program, in which women study a chapter a day of Prophets (*Nevi'im*) and Writings (*Ketuvim*) during a two-year cycle. The current cycle, which

began a year ago, is nearing the end of Prophets, and on February 15 will begin the study of Psalms, Proverbs and other books in the Hebrew Bible.

Today, some 14,000 participants from 28 countries have signed up for the third cycle of the free program. "The beauty of this program is that it is accessible from anywhere and geared to learners of all levels," says Adina Shmidman, founder of the OU Women's Initiative. "The diversity in age, stage, background, and level of Jewish practice brings a richness to our virtual classroom." For more information, visit www.ouwomen.org/nach

All events are free, but pre-registration is requested at kesserisrael.org/event/nachshabbat and kesserisrael.org/event/womensbrunch.

For more information about the local events, please contact info@kesserisrael.org

RESETTING

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"because of that and because of the lack of engagement, which may have to do with not feeling comfortable expressing their views."

While there's no intention or goal of persuading anyone one way or another in terms of their views on the Jewish state, Horenstein is hopeful that the process may change perceptions of Federation.

"We are a Zionist organization, we're supportive of Israel," he said, "but I think there's a perception that Federation, that the [Jewish Community Relations Council] are either right-wing or in lockstep with the Netanyahu government, which is really not true. I think this will hopefully help debunk some of those misconceptions."

Applications are open now through Feb. 15 at form.jotform.com/242477212467055. For more information, email Horenstein at bob@jewish-portland.org.

WEBINAR (continued from page 2)

evidenced in "Lost & Found: A Memoir" by Kathryn Schulz. Rabbi Gardenswartz explained that Schulz, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, met her partner as her father was terminally ill.

"It is perfectly possible in the course of any given hour to be charmed by your 9-year-old and infuriated by your 12-year-old and worried about an upcoming job interview and also worried about global climate change. This endless clamor sometimes produces difficult juxtapositions," Rabbi Gardenswartz read from Schulz's book.

The third lens was how to process those contrasts, wisdom for which Rabbi Gardenswartz found in the settlement of the Talmudic argument between the students of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai. While the Divine Voice declared both schools' opinions valid, the teachings of Beit Hillel were set as the law. This was because, the Talmud explains, "they were agreeable and forbearing, showing restraint when affronted, and when they taught the *halacha*, they would teach both their own statements and the statements of Beit Shammai."

"It's not because they're smarter and it's not because they're wiser and it's not because their views are more correct. It's all about how they argued. It's all about how they engaged with their antagonist," Rabbi Gardenswartz elaborated. "It's about hu-

mility. It's about listening, and it's about genuine curiosity."

The fourth lens is time. Rabbi Gardenswartz again pointed to Jewish text. Jacob's son, Levi, is notable for his wrath, partnering with his brother, Simeon, to slaughter the inhabitants of Shechem as revenge for the rape of their sister, Dinah; Jacob remembers this violence on his deathbed. Levi's descendants, of course, become the priests and staff of the Temple in Jerusalem.

"The ones who are so violent become officiants, offering sacrifices to G-d. So, I think this fourth lens tells us that if we can't win the argument with our daughter now, there is hope to be had in that there could be a softening," Rabbi Gardenswartz explained. "People's thinking evolves, softens, and changes. Maybe, with the passage of time, we can see more truth in the narrative of our children, and our children can see more truth in the narrative that we hold dear."

At the end of the day, persuasion can't be the end goal.

"Our work is to figure out, how do we live with that and still love them," Rabbi Gardenswartz offered. "How do you live with deep and painful disagreement, disagreement that makes you see red?"

A recording of Rabbi Gardenswartz's talk is available online at youtu.be/jNkXHlfuFEU.

Moving Traditions parent webinars are Feb. 11, Mar. 18

The Jewish Review staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland knows that the mental health and wellbeing of the Jewish youth in our community are of utmost importance. We are therefore excited to expand our work in this area in collaboration with Jewish Family & Child Service, and together partner with Moving Traditions, as part of the BeWell Initiative of the Jewish Federations of North America.

Since its founding in January 2005, Moving Traditions has championed impact-focused youth-serving programs at the intersection of gender, wellbeing, and Judaism. Along the way, they've partnered with 650+ synagogues, JCCs, camps, day schools, and emerging organizations and trained almost 3,000 educators and clergy to meet the needs of 40,000 Jewish preteens and teens. Today, 20 years of research and careful program evaluation shows just how well Moving Traditions strengthens Jewish educators, emboldens preteens and teens, and engages families.

"Our teens today are struggling with anxiety, social isolation, and hopelessness at unprecedented rates. But they also have so much untapped potential," says Shuli Karkowsky, Moving Traditions' CEO. "Moving Traditions is uniquely equipped to support teens, their parents, teachers, mentors, and clergy to engage with the challenges of our era and to help teens find resources and supports in the Jewish community that will help them thrive."

Staff of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, JFCS, and Moving Traditions have already planned the first events of the year. On Feb. 11 and Mar. 18, they are hosting two parent webinars where Moving Traditions VP of Education, Rabbi Daniel Brenner and Chief Growth Officer, Pam Barkley, LCSW will facilitate conversations on "Helping Teens Thrive in 2025" and "Promoting Well Being in the Digital Lives of Jewish Teens." Here is a

link to learn more and register: [Oregon Partner Webinars](#). The three organizations will be working together all year to create multiple learning opportunities for the Jewish community.

"With teen mental health being a major follow-up area to the Community Study, the Jewish Federation is proud to partner with Moving Traditions and JFCS. Together, their expertise will enable our community to better support our teens" explained Marc Blattner, Federation President and CEO.

Moving Traditions also hopes to expand the number of Jewish institutions in the region that partner with them on their suite of programs, including their B-Mitzvah Family Education Program for preteens and parents; Kulam, a plug-and-play curriculum for Hebrew High Schools; and Teen Groups: Rosh Hodesh for girls, Shevet for boys, and Tzelem for LGBTQ+ teens. These programs can be a powerful way for teens to build Jewish identity and to experience some of the important protective factors that mental health experts recommend for supporting youth wellbeing, while having fun and making meaning together through the journey of adolescence.

"We are so excited to partner with the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland to bring Moving Traditions to Portland, said Douglass Ruth, Clinical Director at Jewish Family & Child Service. Engaging our parents and educators and community to help build an ecosystem of support to embolden Jewish youth is needed more now than ever."

If you have any questions or would like more information, please email Rachel Nelson, JFGP Director of Educational initiatives & Associate Director of Community Relations at rachel@jewishportland.org or Chaviva Greenberg, JFCS Mental Health Clinician, at cgreenberg@jfcs-portland.org.



You're Invited to Participate in the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland and Jewish Grandparents Network **Grandparent Engagement Survey**.

Your responses will help shape future programs and resources for grandparents in our community.

Jewish grandparents survey open until Feb. 14

The Jewish Review staff

If someone calls you “*bubbe*,” “*zayde*,” or any other variation of “grandparent,” the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland wants to hear from you!

The Federation and the Jewish Grandparents Network have partnered to reach out to Greater Portland’s grandparent community to explore opportunities for engaging grandparents and their families through a brief survey, available at survey-monkey.com/r/Portland-Grandparent through Feb. 14.

All Jewish grandparents, whether your grandchildren are local to Portland or live elsewhere, are invited to complete this survey to help understand area grandparents and how our community can best support Jewish grandparenting.

MJCC to host Shabbat dinners third Fridays

The Jewish Review staff

The Mittleman Jewish Community Center is setting the table for Shabbat.

Thanks to an anonymous donor, the center will host a community Shabbat dinner on the third Friday of each month at 6 pm.

“It’s really designed to bring the community together, to allow a space for kids who maybe don’t know each other to play together, for adults who don’t know each other to meet,” explained MJCC Development Events

and Community Programs Manager Bess Butterworth.

Kosher meat and vegetarian options will be served buffet-style by Century Catering.

Dinner is \$5 per person, with a maximum family price of \$15. Preregistration is required. For more information or to RSVP to an upcoming dinner, visit oregonjcc.org/arts-culture/calendar. For more information, email Butterworth at bbutterworth@oregonjcc.org.

There will also be an opportunity to participate in online focus groups (limited space available) to delve deeper than the survey to deepen our understanding of the “joys and oys” of Jewish grandparenting today.

JGN is a national organization that educates, connects, and supports grandparents as essential partners in enriching Jewish life. JGN believes that when grandparents have the knowledge and confidence to share their love of Judaism, Jewish family and community life are strengthened for generations to come.

For more information, contact JFGP Chief Planning and Engagement Officer Caron Blau Rothstein at 503-245-6449 or caron@jewishportland.org.

Maayan Torah early childhood open houses are Jan. 26, Feb. 3

The Jewish Review staff

Maayan Torah Day School has announced that its early childhood education program will now be called Ilan Katan at Maayan. The school will also be implementing the Tools of the Mind early childhood curriculum program. Tools of the Mind was initially developed by Deborah Leong and Elena Bodrova based off the work Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and is now on its eighth edition.

Ilan Katan will host a pair of open houses at the school, scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 26 from 1:30-3 pm and Sunday, Feb. 9 from 10:30 am – noon. Those interested should RSVP online at maayanpdx.org/ilan-katans-open-house. For more information, email info@maayanpdx.org.

JWRT Silver Anniversary Havdalah is Jan. 25 at Cedar Sinai Park

The Jewish Review staff

The Jewish Women’s Round Table will host their annual Community Havdalah Service Saturday, Jan. 25 at Cedar Sinai Park at 7 pm. This year’s service will be led by Rabbi Eve Posen and Cantor Eyal Bitton of Congregation Neveh Shalom.

Ellen Bick told *The Jewish Review* in 2024 that the annual tradition started when a friend and fellow member of the Congregation Beth Israel Sisterhood mentioned that her mother was living at Rose Schnitzer Manor.

“She was saying, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if we did some kind service there for the residents?’” Bick recalled.

The service is free and open to the public. Refreshments will follow the service, which expands on the traditional *Havdalah* service marking the end of Shabbat with extra songs and explanations of the components of the service.

For more information, email JewishWomensRoundTable@gmail.com.

—PINK LINK EVENT—

Q&A:

Genetics and Breast Cancer in the Jewish Community

Wednesday, March 5
12:00-1:15 pm

A Virtual Presentation with
Dr. Magdolna Solti,
Medical Oncology, Hematology



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RABINS (continued from page 4)

Story of Leonard Cohen,” to be published by Behrman House later this year. It will be her fourth published book after two collections of poetry and a volume of personal essays on the intersections of early parenthood and Jewish spirituality. As opposed to her pitching the idea for the book, Rabins was recruited by Behrman House to pen a children’s book on the legendary singer and songwriter.

“At first, I was like, ‘I don’t know how to write a kids’ book,’” Rabins said. Her publisher responded, she recalled, “Well, you write poetry. It’s really similar.”

Rabins’ memoir, set to be published in 2026, centers on her spiritual journey.

“It’s about growing up in a non-observant Jewish family in an area with very few Jewish people and having very little awareness of my culture heritage,” she said, “and then just feeling very much called to learn about my heritage, learn the text and the rituals and the traditions. I never wanted to leave the world I grew up in; I just felt I was missing a certain kind of grounding and finding my own authentic practice. Part of that was also becoming a teacher and finding my way of stepping into the chain of teaching and transmitting the texts and traditions to my students.”

For someone who has been used to writing in songs and poems, longform non-fiction was a whole new world of creating.

“It was like learning another language,” she said. You have to think about plot, even if it’s nonfiction. You have



Above: A scene from the first episode of Alicia Jo Rabins' web series "Girls In Trouble TV." Production of the full seven-episode series is being funded by a grant from the Covenant Foundation. (Courtesy Alicia Jo Rabins) Below: Rabins performs with the Camas High School Choir at Revolution Hall in Portland Thursday, Apr. 11, 2024. (Jason Quigley)



to think about keeping it interesting, you have to think about suspense, and you have to be able to remember, 50 pages later, what you said 50 pages ago.”

Amidst it all, Rabins remains a student. She is studying independently for rabbinic ordination with a trio of rabbis she has known throughout her creative career, building on subject matter covered in the two

years she spent studying full-time in a Jerusalem yeshiva and while earning her master’s degree in Jewish Women’s and Gender Studies from The Jewish Theological Seminary – plus her 20 years’ experience teaching. It’s a process she expects to complete in 2026.

Rabins found herself motivated to pursue ordination following multiple instances where, in her role leading

services for her independent study b’nai mitzvah students, she would be mistakenly addressed as “rabbi.”

“It got to a point where I was like ‘I actually am doing the work of rabbi and I should just earn that title in whatever way works,’” she said. “That almost more out of respect for [Rabbis] and their path.”

FIRES (continued from page 1)

“We flew home Sunday,” she said. “Tuesday night, it was gone.”

Since that Tuesday, a total of 31 wildfires have burned more than 40,000 acres in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, damaging more than 17,000 structures and killing 28 people. More than 200,000 people were evacuated. More than 40,000 remain evacuated from the areas around the two fires still active as of press time, the Eaton Fire in the San Gabriel Valley north of Los Angeles and the Palisades Fire in the Santa Monica Mountains along the coast in the northwestern portion of the city.

With a tragedy as mammoth as the Los Angeles-area fires, myriad connections like these reveal the breadth and depth of the hurt such devastation brings – especially considering the vibrancy of the Jewish community in Los Angeles. While Tarlow’s presence at PJTC on what proved to be the building’s final Shabbat morning service is far from the deepest of these hurts, it illustrates how easy it is to find the connections amongst Jewish communities – and how real even those faint connections are.

“I keep thinking about being in this conference room with my daughter doing this puzzle and how I was crawling around under the table trying to find these missing puzzle pieces,” Tarlow recalled. “Now that rug that I was crawling on is just gone.”

Shannon Rubenstone grew up attending Portland Jewish Academy, a school her mother led, and worked at the

Mittleman Jewish Community Center during her college days. She has since moved to Pasadena, taking up residence with her husband and two daughters in a 1912 Craftsman-style house. It’s old, single-pane windows let in the scent of smoke that gave the family an indication that things were getting dangerous Wednesday morning, Jan. 8.

“That was really my indication by morning when our house smelled smoky. That’s why we got out before we ever were ordered to evacuate,” Rubenstone said. “It started to smell smoky inside and the smoke wasn’t just campfire smell anymore. It was toxic smelling.”

The family decamped to Rubenstone’s grandmother’s house in Sherman Oaks – which ended up being evacuated as the Palisades Fire spread. They eventually went to the Bay Area where her parents live. Their home in Pasadena is still standing, however it is covered in ash from the fire, which includes asbestos, lead and other toxins from burned buildings. To add insult to injury, a tree has fallen on the house.

“The gut punch is both of my daughters’ schools burned down,” Rubenstone said.

The daycare for their youngest has already announced that it will not rebuild. Rubenstone’s husband is currently back in the Los Angeles area trying to find a new daycare for her. There isn’t yet a timetable for the older daughter’s school to resume – nor is there a timetable for the Rubenstone family’s return to their home.

“The cleanup of these neighborhoods,

that is going to continue to stir up a lot of this toxic ash,” Rubenstone said. “Something that I’m wrapping my brain around is that this is a multi-year process now; to come back to some semblance of what this community used to feel and look like and what it’s going to mean for our family, too.”

Many Portland Jews have family in the Los Angeles area who have been affected by the fires. Jewish Federation of Greater Portland Chief Development Officer Wendy Kahn grew up in the San Fernando Valley, attending high school in Los Angeles before college at the University of Southern California. Much of her family is still in the area – including three cousins who lost their homes.

Kahn, like most of the Federation’s staff, was in Los Angeles on the day the fires sprung up for a regional conference of staff from Jewish Federations along the West Coast – including a sizable contingent from the Los Angeles Federation. As fires continued to pop up and grow, she watched as places that had been key settings of her formative years – like her favorite stretch of beach at Will Rodgers Park near Pacific Palisades – go up in flames.

“It was like my childhood, my high school, everything I knew: Gone. Obliterated,” she said. “It’s like you never existed.”

Hayley Terris also grew up in Los Angeles – she’s one of the few people in her family that lives elsewhere. She,

continued on next page



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Review Podcast

continued from previous page

too, spent big parts of her childhood at Will Rodgers Park, which was close to her uncle's house near Temescal Canyon. She lived there for a summer and would often sleep over while she was working her first job in television writing, which was based in a much ritzier portion of Pacific Palisades. Her uncle, a widower who was taking care of a severely disabled adult daughter, had owned his home for 41 years before the Palisades Fire destroyed it.

"It was kind of like a second home in LA for me," Terris said of her uncle's house. "He was a kid from the San Fernando Valley who used to bike over two hours to get to the beach when he was growing up, so having proximity to the beach was so awesome for him when he got the house in the early 80s."

They're staying with one of Terris' sisters in Koreatown for the time being. Terris has another sister who works in special education at multiple school sites – she's been wearing an N95 respirator mask to cope with the poor air quality – as well as other family and friends all over the area, many of whom have been evacuated or lost homes. But the loss of her uncle's home is a singular devastation for her family.

"My uncle is somebody who is not wealthy," she said. "Everything was in

that house for him."

While many with Portland connections are hurting in the wake of the fires, others with those same Portland connections have been able to step in and help.

Rabbi Leibel Hanokah is Associate Rabbi and Youth Director of Chabad of Pasadena and a cousin to Rabbi Motti Wilhelm. Rabbi Wilhelm was living in Southern California at the time that the Pasadena Chabad was founded, and he remembers going there in its early days to help make a minyan. Now there's a large center that was not damaged by the fire and has served as a base for support efforts in the area.

"They have been checking in on people, helping people check in on their homes," Rabbi Wilhelm explained.

The first Friday after the Eaton Fire started, Chabad hosted around 100 people for a Shabbat dinner, and has been providing drop-in daycare for parents who are otherwise out of options.

As Rabbi Wilhelm explains, Rabbi Hanokah was out checking in on homes with colleagues when he came upon a house that was starting to catch fire – its detached garage was already fully engulfed. There was no water on hand – water shortages have plagued fire suppression efforts throughout the area – so Rabbi Hanokah made do with

what was at hand.

"They ended up putting out the flames with dirt. They took these flowerpots, and they used the dirt to put out the fire," Rabbi Wilhelm explained. "They were able to literally save two homes."

It was a heroic effort – and entirely in keeping with Jewish tradition.

"What is it about our people that makes us so adept at responding to a crisis," Rabbi Noah Farkas, President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, wrote in a piece for [eJewishPhilanthropy.com](https://www.eJewishPhilanthropy.com). "There's something special about the Jewish soul that compels us to always help our neighbors in need."

The five people who spoke to *The Jewish Review* for this story all have one thing in common: All their friends, families and other loved ones in the Los Angeles area are physically safe.

But, as Rubenstone mentioned, the clean up and recovery process is just beginning and will be a lengthy one.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland is running a Los Angeles Wildfire Relief Campaign that has raised more than \$54,000 thus far, all of which has been sent to communities in need in Southern California. Donations can be made online at jewishportland.org/lacountyfires

THE JEWISH CHANGEMAKERS FELLOWSHIP



The Jewish Changemakers Fellowship engages young Jewish adults, **ages 21-27**, in a **six-week** online leadership experience.

We are now recruiting for the **Winter 2025 session**, beginning February 11, and **Spring 2025 session**, beginning April 22.

Participants will meet **inspiring professionals and peers** in a national fellowship that aims to **expand their networks**, **hone their leadership skills**, and **jumpstart their careers**.

DEADLINE TO APPLY/NOMINATE IS JANUARY 27, 2025 @ <https://changemakers.jewishfederations.org>

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

FEB 5

JAN 30

Security Corner

Get prepped for NSGP apps

By JESSICA ANDERSON

Now is a great time to start thinking about and prepare for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) application launching this spring. This FEMA-administered program awards up to \$150,000 to organizations susceptible to terrorist activity. The applications are typically due in May/June, but it takes time to develop a competitive package. These awards are not easy to get, so starting this process early will absolutely produce better results. The 2025 program is likely to be announced in a couple of months. Last year, there were some changes made to the program that (I think) increase the likelihood of smaller applications being awarded funds. If you have security additions you'd like to make to your spaces, I encourage you to contact me for more information.

Here are some steps you can take to begin preparations:

Phase One

- Contact me to schedule a Threat, Vulnerability, and Risk Assessment (TVRA). The TVRA describes the changes that could be made to your space that would "harden" it and make it less susceptible to criminal activity. The TVRA is generally valid for up to 36 months, and it must include the projects that you are requesting in your NSGP application.

- If you have multiple addresses/building lots as part of your property, you are eligible to submit one application per address.

- Review the TVRA with



Jessica Anderson is the Portland-area Director of Community Security. She was previously an FBI agent for 24 years. This position is funded by SCN (the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America) and a local three-way partnership of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Oregon Jewish Community Foundation Endowment Fund and multiple Jewish organizations in the region.

your security committee or leadership to identify and establish security priorities that are eligible for the NSGP funds.

- Sign up for alerts from Oregon's FEMA office. They will alert you when pre-registration is open. In Oregon, you must pre-register for the NSGP. If you don't, you cannot apply when the application submission time arrives. Here is the website for OR FEMA – check back for when the notification sign-ups become available. <https://www.oregon.gov/oem/emresources/Grants/Pages/Nonprofit-Security-Grant-Program.aspx>

Phase Two

- Get estimates for planned projects -- you will need to build a realistic budget for your application. You won't have to submit the estimates with the application, but accurate and realistic amounts for your projects will be expected by the application reviewers. They know when you're guessing!

- Draft the Investment Justification (IJ). The IJ is the application that addresses your identified risks. You'll need to describe the risks you face, how your

building is vulnerable to them, the consequences of the risk should something happen, and how you suggest the desired changes would prevent or protect against potential terrorist or extremist attacks. This is the hardest but most important part of the application. It's very difficult to do an adequate job at the last minute.

Phase Three

- Prepare an organizational Mission Statement. The Mission Statement describes the "who, what, and why" of your organization. The FEMA office will review the mission statement along with your application in the Investment Justification to confirm that your organization is one of the following types eligible for the grant: ideology-based/spiritual/religious, educational, medical, or other. Different types of organizations are awarded different point values, so choose the classification that awards you the most points.

- Finalize all submission documents.

SCN has so many free resources to help you through this application. From preparing TVRAs to webinars

See **SECURITY**, page 16

Know your energy consumption this winter

When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them, for you may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, to go into the siege before you? - Deut. 20-19

By JOSH WNUK

Each winter we bundle ourselves up to ward against the cold. We also tend to subtly adjust upward the thermostats in our homes to enjoy the cozy comfort of our dwellings in juxtaposition to the out of doors. This winter, the Climate Action Committee invites you to reflect upon the broader impact of

your home's energy needs and to educate yourself about where your energy is created and how you can lessen the impact of warming your home. Please consider following the link from the JCRC Climate Action Committee's website to our January 2024 Climate Action Focus on Energy to learn more about where your energy comes from and what you can do to mitigate climate change as a more informed consumer.

<https://jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/climate-action-committee>

This text was chosen to be highlighted this month as one interpretation is to not cut down the trees from which future generations may eat. It is rele-

vant to this month's Climate Focus as we ask that you stop and consider the near-term value and the long-term consequences of your energy consumption choices.

The Climate Action Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland is sharing tips and resources for healing the Earth in a periodic Climate Corner in the Jewish Review. The 2-year-old group is committed to the important work of tikkun olam, repair the world.

If you would like to join the Climate Action Committee, please contact Rachel Nelson at rachel@jewishportland.org.

Events

More upcoming community events online at jewishportland.org/community-calendar

Jan. 22: Cutting Edge Medical Creativity

Presentation by Dr. Maurits Beeri of ALYN Hospital in Jerusalem at Congregation Neveh Shalom and on Zoom at 7 pm. For more information or to register, visit nevehshalom.org/israel360/.

Jan. 23: Red Cross Blood Drive

Blood donation event at Congregation Neveh Shalom from Noon – 5 pm. Register at redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=NevehShalom.

Jan. 24: "Shishi" Shabbat

Israeli-American Shabbat dinner at Congregation Neveh Shalom at 6 pm. Soup, salmon, challah and drinks provided; please bring dairy or parve sides and dessert. \$6 per person, ages 2 and under eat free. Register at

members.nevehshalom.org/form/shishi-shabbat-dinner-2025.html.

Jan. 24: Death Over Deserts

Discussion of Jewish death practices at Leikam Brewing hosted by Jewish Association for Death Education at 7 pm. Free. Preregistration required at lu.ma/te8fvl6f.

Jan. 25: Havdalah Cafe Klez Edition

Community Havdalah gathering at the Eastside Jewish Commons at 6 pm. Free. Preregistration required. For more information, visit ejc-pdx.org/events.

Jan. 25: JWRT Community Havdalah

See story, page 10.

Jan. 26: Maayan Preschool Open House

See story, page 10.

Jan. 30: EJC Indie

Pop Up

Screening of "Free for All: The Public Library" at the Eastside Jewish Commons at 7 pm. Free. Preregistration required. For more information or to register, visit ejc-pdx.org/events.

Feb. 1: Mini Men-sches Tot Shabbat

Shabbat morning service for ages 0-5 and families at Congregation Beth Israel at 9 am. For more information, email chelsea@bethisrael-pdx.org.

Feb. 1: P'nai Or Poetry Havdalah

Havdalah featuring poet Brian Rohr at Hillsdale Community Church at 5:30 pm. \$18. Tickets at givebutler.com/PoetryHavdalah.

Feb. 2: From Galicia to New York

Presentation by author Mil-

ton Koch on Zoom at 10:30 am, sponsored by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Oregon. Register at jgsoregon.wixsite.com.

Feb. 2: Milt Carl Way Awards

Third annual awards ceremony at 11:30 am, hosted by Congregation Shaarie Torah and BB360 For more information, email executivedirector@shaarietorah.org.

Feb. 2: A Spiritual Path in Marriage

See story, page 6.

Feb. 7: Sephardic Community Shabbat Dinner

Kabbalat Shabbat service followed by Sephardic dinner at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 6:30 pm. \$20/members, \$30/non-members. RSVP to info@ahavathachim.com.

Free online subscription: jewishportland.org/subscribe

Obituaries

Submit obituaries online at form.jotform.com/JFGP/jr-obituary

DEBRA WEITZ

It is with deep sadness that Congregation Shaarie Torah announces the passing of Debra Asistent Weitz, z"l, who passed away on Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 in Mansfield, Texas, at the age of 67.

She is survived by husband Gary, daughters Elisha (Na-

than) Woodward and Daniele Weitz; sister Lynn Doraine, brother Robert Asistent; and grandson Elias Woodward. She was predeceased by parents Fredericka and Irving Asistent, z"l, and uncle and aunt Rabbi Yonah and Lisl Geller, z"l.

A private funeral ceremony was held in Texas.

SECURITY

(continued from page 14)

to a review of your application pre-submission, we are here to help. Please go to <https://www.securecommunitynetwork.org/secure-facilities/nsgp/>

to register for the upcoming FY2025 SCN NSGP webinars, watch past webinars, find additional NSGP resources, and sign up for SCN's NSGP newsletter. Each webinar will feature panelists who will guide your organization through various stages and components of the NSGP process. For more information, contact me at janderson@securecommunitynetwork.org or 872-273-9214.

Jobs Board

See the latest Jewish jobs at

jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/jewish-jobs

Life cycle

Submit births, b'nai mitzvah, engagements, weddings, anniversaries and landmark birthdays to The Jewish Review's new online portal at form.jotform.com/JFGP/jr-life-cycle

Free subscription:

jewishportland.org/subscribe

Burial Societies

Portland has two holy societies of volunteers who prepare the deceased for burial according to Jewish tradition: Chevra Kavod haMet and the Portland Hevra Kaddisha.

For questions about end of life, death and mourning, email chevrakavodhamet@gmail.com, visit ChevraKavodHaMet.org, or contact the Portland Hevra Kaddisha at michael@cashcolan.com or 503-519-2454.



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