

THE JEWISH REVIEW

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OREGON & SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON'S JEWISH NEWSPAPER

February 18, 2026 | 1 Adar, 5786 | Volume 61, Issue 4

BGS's The Spell is Mar. 21

The Jewish Review staff

On Saturday, Mar. 21, a “fun social gathering for Jewish young adults” will be spelled T-H-E-S-P-E-L-L.

Portland’s chapter of the Ben Gurion Society is hosting a spelling bee, The Spell, that evening at Lucky Lab Brewing in Southwest Portland at 7 pm.

Laura Jeser (J-E-S-E-R), the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland’s Associate Campaign and Engagement Officer, was working with the BGS Advisory Board on an event for young adults in the community when she thought of her cousin’s birthday party in Los Angeles last year – which was a spelling bee.

“I could not attend,” Jeser recalled, “but she sent pictures of it, and everyone was so excited about it.”

The Spell will be hosted by Erin Ergenbright, who has been hosting spelling bees in Portland for more than a decade. There will be four

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Col. Miri Eisen, a retired intelligence analyst with the Israel Defense Forces, discusses the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East in a presentation at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center in Portland Wednesday, Feb. 4. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Eisen explains Israel's neighborhood

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Retired Israel Defense Forces Col. Miri Eisen has some experience with war due to a lengthy career in military intelligence followed by her work with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

“War is not pretty. It’s not nice. There’s nothing good about it,” Eisen explained to the crowd assembled at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center in Portland Wednesday, Feb. 4 for a presentation about the state of the Middle East. “At the most, you can hope that it’s slightly heroic, and you really

want to be sure that it’s just. That’s all I can aspire to when I’m talking about war.”

In a talk presented by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland in partnership with the Jewish Federations of North America, the American Jewish Committee, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the Anti-Defamation League and the MJCC, Eisen went through the status of each front in the multi-front war that Israel has been fighting since Oct. 7, 2023 – some of them more obvious than others.

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Israeli Purim party is Feb. 27 at Star Theater

The Jewish Review staff

Purim is often thought of as a children's holiday. Assaf Mevorach has a different idea.

"As adults, we sometimes need permission and space to be silly and to do things again like children," he said.

In this spirit, Mevorach has organized "Purim Balagan: Back to Shushan," a Persian-themed, 21-and-over Purim dance party Friday, Feb. 27 at 8 pm at the Star Theater in Downtown Portland. It's the third year he's put on an adult Purim celebration, taking over the tradition from another Israeli in the area in the wake of Oct. 7.

"Back in Israel, we celebrate Purim as adults in kind of a funny, silly way. It's mostly a children's holiday, kind of like Halloween here," Mevorach said. "It's like, 'you're an adult. Why would you do that anymore?' But we love dance parties and we decided to bring this kind of tradition that Purim is an opportunity for a dance party with costumes and permission to be silly and to bring the spirit of this holiday."

A good party is even better with a theme, and the theme for this year's party is inspired by where the Purim story started in Persia – or at least the fun, whimsical idea of Persia.

"It's kind of like Aladdin and all that era of sultans and magic and genies," Mevorach said.

It's silly and topsy-turvy, to be sure, but it's also an opportunity for community and belonging, something at the core of every Jewish holiday.

"There's something very special and comforting in dancing around people that are all connected in some way," Mevorach added.

Tickets start at \$25 and are available at ticketweb.com/event/purim-balagan-back-to-shushan-star-theater-tickets/14141004.

SPELL (continued from page 1)

rounds, at least one of which will carry a heavy Jewish (J-E-W-I-S-H) influence, along with some surprise guest spellers from among the known personalities in Portland's Jewish community. A \$25 admission ticket includes dinner, your first drink, and the chance to try your hand at spelling- or, if you prefer, watch your friends do so from the audience.

"I bring this up to people and they say, 'oh my gosh, I won the spelling bee in third grade,'" Jeser explained. "There's like a huge component of nostalgia behind it. Erin is working on a component of the audience giving some words in the beginning, some component of audience participation but not having to actually spell if that's something that they're nervous about."

So even if you can't spell for beans (B-E-A-N-S), there's a good time to be had.

Learn more and get tickets online at jewishportland.org/ben-gurion/spellingbee.

Free subscription:
jewishportland.org/subscribe



The hydraulically-operated lift at Rachel's Well Community Mikvah in Portland. (Courtesy Jeffrey Weitz)

Mikvah lift donation marks new era of accessibility at Rachel's Well

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

"According to Jewish law, you're supposed to build a *mikvah* before you build a synagogue," Oregon Board of Rabbis President Rabbi Abby Cohen pointed out.

It is a testament to the centrality of a *mikvah*, the rainwater-fed pool used for numerous Jewish rituals, to the life of a Jewish community. But what happens when not everyone can access that essential resource? Rachel's Well, the community *mikvah* owned and operated by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, was constructed with a preparation room built to Americans with Disabilities Act specifications, but that level of accessibility stopped at the top of the sev-

en stairs into the *mikvah's* living waters.

"We knew that for true full accessibility or as full as we could do, that we would also need a pool lift," Federation Chief Planning and Engagement Officer Caron Blau Rothstein, who managed the *mikvah* construction and continues to serve as its manager. "Unfortunately, delays and budget changes and all of that negated our ability to purchase one right from the outset."

Thus Rachel's Well went its first eight years without that key piece. Its absence was noticed by Charlie Rosenblum. Rosenblum, who underwent a leg amputation in 2011, has spent quite a bit of time around *mikvaot*

See **LIFT**, page 10

PURIM



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'The Art of Prayer' celebrated in new siddur

By POLINA OLSEN

Special to The Jewish Review

"This weekend is known as the Sabbath of Song," Eddy Shuldman said as she welcomed residents and guests to the Cedar Sinai Park Shabbat service on January 29. "This marks the time when we beat it out of Egypt, we left bondage and slavery and got walking into the desert."

And what a perfect time to also mark the first use of the Cedar Sinai Park *Siddur* (prayerbook), "The Art of Prayer." Funded by the Robison Foundation for Jewish Elders, the new Friday-night siddur illustrates prayers with CSP residents' own artwork.

Shuldman and The DownStairs Band have been among the rotating musicians leading services at CSP for years. Prayer books had been falling apart and, as Shuldman said, "never had anything beautiful about them." Shuldman asked ORA members Diane and Daniel Fredgant, Laura Fendel, Cassandra Sagan and Linda Zahavi to help CSP artists select their pieces. Then, she went through the siddur and paired submitted work with specific prayers.

"We thought bringing art



From left, Sheryl Horowitz and Eddy Shuldman perform with The DownStairs Band at the Friday, Jan. 29 release of Cedar Sinai Park's new Friday-night siddur, "The Art of Prayer," at Zidell Hall on the CSP campus. (Polina Olsen/Special to The Jewish Review)

into the prayer book would offer many ways to pray," Shuldman said. "To meditate on a beautiful piece of art and get a sense of creation, get a sense of meaning ... maybe words don't hold, but images do."

Tonight, the team was ready to celebrate with the DownStairs Band, a chocolate-cake oneg and a sanctuary filled with residents, family and friends.

The siddur opens to a miniature Erev Shabbat scene by glass artist Emily Brock. While Shuldman has long

admired Brock's work, she had no idea Brock lived at CSP. In fact, Brock and her poodle, Arlo, have been residents for two years, and although she doesn't work with glass here - "the kilns are a fire hazard" - she displays glass miniature rooms in her apartment, including a replica of the home library her father loved.

Brock's interest started 40 years ago when her husband took a stained-glass class. Finding glass sheets unwieldy, she turned to miniatures. "I did a lot of commis-

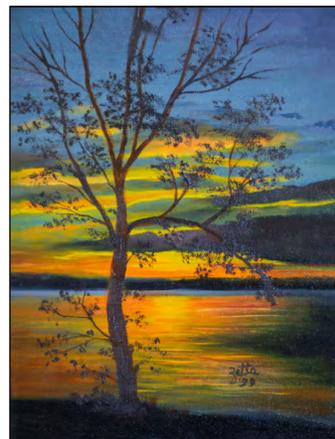
sion work," she said. "Every piece has a story."

After Shuldman led singing and clapping to Shalom Aleichem and Mah To-vu, published poet Caren Masem stood to read her poem, "Shabbat Sail." Masem describes her work as ekphrastic, or painting with words. "I feel spiritual in the outdoors, closeness to G-d," she said, "and I make that clear through poetry."

Pages turned to more artwork. Jeanine Semon's Night Walk is paired with Lecha Dodi, a prayer that welcomes the Sabbath Bride. "I do art that has a healing effect," Semon said. "When you see it, you feel better. Before every new painting, I pray for spiritual support. I ask my angels and guides to be with me."

Zetta Ash's Sunset illustrates the Barchu, a call to prayer, while ORA member Laura Fendel and resident Julie Anne Feinstein worked together on a quilted fabric featuring the Hebrew letter shin. Retired school superintendent Paul Masem received Kennedy Center recognition for promoting the arts in public schools. "Paul's imagery of dancing

See **SIDDUR**, page 9



From left, some of the works included in "The Art of Prayer": "Shin" by Julie Anne Feinstein and Laura Fendel (Courtesy photo); "Blue Gate Door" by Zetta Ash (Edis Jurcys); "Sunset" by Zetta Ash, (Edis Jurcys); "The Plants Come Forth" by Jeanine Semon. (Courtesy photo)

Dream Deli awakens in Southeast Portland

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Jessie Levine and John Bissell have had a dream for most of their relationship – a dream that has now come true in Southeast Portland.

The aptly-named Dream Deli is not just their dream – but a reawakening of Portland’s deli tradition. This dream is a merger of two culinary traditions – Levine’s Jewish background and Bissell’s Italian heritage – each of which is well known for its deli-counter cultural expressions.

“For us, this was about really taking different elements of delis, both on the Italian side and the Jewish side, and then just making our dream version of it,” Levine explained, “which is a place that uses and exemplifies ingredients made and grown by local people who care about what they’re doing.”

Bissell’s culinary career has taken him through multiple destinations and styles, from overnight deli cook to fine-dining chef, culminating in a stint as Executive Chef of Portland Italian landmark Ava Genes, just down the block from his Dream (pun intended) on Southeast Division Street. Levine has also worked in restaurants but has truly made her mark as a food writer and restaurant promoter. Now the Dream she is selling (pun once-again intended) is her own.

“It feels really good to be in the deli,



Above: A spread of offerings from Dream Deli, including corned beef, whitefish salad melt and their signature "Jewish Wedding Soup." Below: proprietors Jessie Levine and John Bissell at the deli on Southeast Division Street. (Christine Dong for Dream Deli)

day in and day out, and meeting our neighbors and building relationships and building community,” she said.

Levine grew up with limited access to Jewish community in the Santa Ynez Valley of Southern California – her mother, who converted when Levine was young, and a handful of other families assembled what she called an “ad hoc Hebrew school” that enabled Levine to prepare for and celebrate her *bat mitzvah*.

“As an adult,” Levine said, “I really relate to secular Judaism and aspects of Judaism on the cultural side, and I’m very, very proud of that heritage.”

Bissell, meanwhile, has had a much steeper learning curve.

“I hadn’t made a matzo ball in my life until about six months ago,” he said. “Now, I have made thousands upon thousands.”

Those thousands of matzo balls have had a starring role in one of Dream Deli’s signature dishes, “Jewish Wedding Soup.”

“It’s a marriage of a matzo ball soup and Italian wedding soup,” Levine said. “It has Italian-style pork meatballs, matzah balls, small, cooked veggies and it’s so delicious. It really is a beautiful mash up of cultures.”

For those interested in a more kosher-style dining experience, Levine

explained that the meatballs are held separately from the soup and can be omitted upon request for those seeking a more traditional matzo ball soup.

From the soup to the corned beef to the whitefish salad and all the bread, everything is made in house. The beef is sourced from Revel Meats and is all from within 40 miles of Portland while the fish in the whitefish salad is wild-caught sable, also known as black cod, from Oregon coastal waters.

“We get the whole fish, butcher it ourselves and lightly cure it before poaching it,” Bissell said. “As opposed to a mashed up tuna salad, we try and preserve the integrity of that whole fish and leave some big flakes in there, but still toss it with some traditional ingredients and a little bit of onion, salted capers, aioli and as much herbs as we can fit in there.”

Naturally, there are knishes – traditional options like potato, more out-there ideas like a Reuben knish with a Swiss cheese sauce and mustard atop sauerkraut and corned beef, and truly radical renderings like a smoked cheddar, potato, ham and kimchi (spicy Korean pickled cabbage) knish. There are also soft pretzels, cookies (with *schmaltz* [chicken fat] subbed in for shortening)

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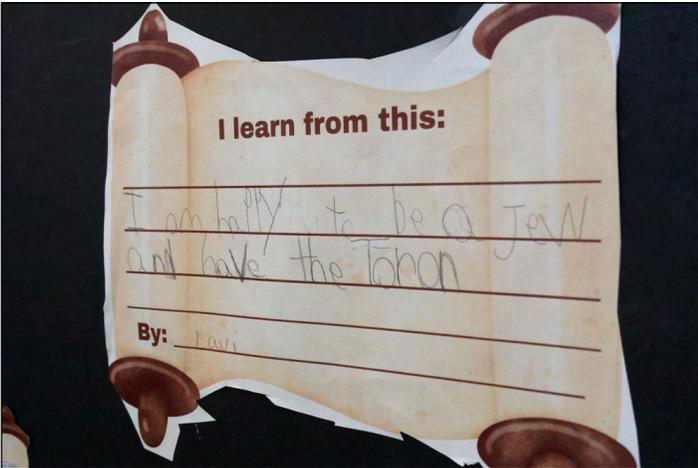


Maayan students shine at annual Torah Fair

Photographs by ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Students at Maayan Torah demonstrated their knowledge of Jewish law and custom at the school's annual Torah Fair Thursday, Feb. 12. Interactive exhibits included a large scale *tefillin* explaining its components and construction and a station where attendees sorted foods by their corresponding blessing .



THE SPELL

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Rabins' latest chronicles spiritual journey

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Alicia Jo Rabins did not set out to write a memoir.

Ten years ago, Rabins, then living in New York, was reading poetry at a conference when a literary agent told her she had a voice that could suit non-fiction. She figured she could weave some personal stories into a work about biblical women – this was when she was developing the “Girls in Trouble” songwriting project that has since become a miniseries.

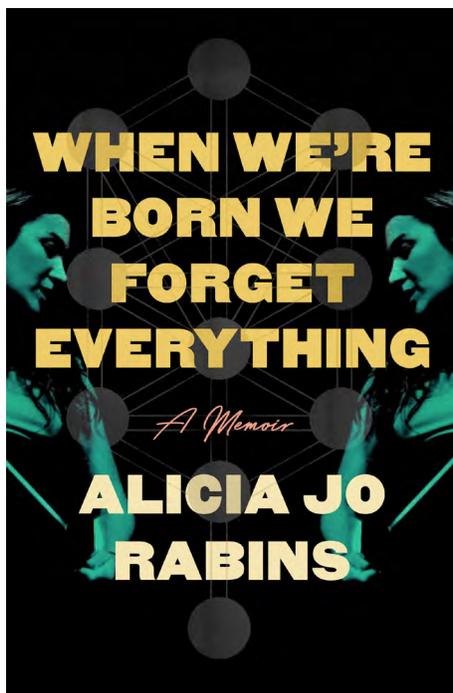
“I started writing some personal stories about my own path,” Rabins said. “It was like a tumbling spring that just kept coming. In the end, the biblical women’s stories are actually woven into my story as opposed to the other way around.”

The product is “When We’re Born, We Forget Everything,” which will be released by Schocken Books on Wednesday, Mar. 3. Rabins will read from the memoir, her fifth book overall, and discuss it with Daniel Pollack-Pelzner at Powell’s Books in Downtown Portland Wednesday, Mar. 4 at 7 pm.

The narrative of “When We’re Born” starts off at the Jerusalem yeshiva where Rabins studied for two years but then goes back to look at what got her there, both as a musician and as a Jew. From a secular Jewish background, Rabins found her way to a Wednesday night Torah study in New York, where she moved for college, where she was assigned to a *chavruta* (study pairing) with a young Modern Orthodox woman who was getting her first taste of the secular world.

“I would tell her about, ‘this is how we date,’” Rabins recalled, “then she was like, ‘this is how we do Shabbat. This is how we study Torah.’ So that ended up leading me to really falling in love with Torah.”

She also learned klezmer fiddle, thanks to a chance encounter with a member of Baltimore’s Charm City Klezmer Orchestra. Both her Jewish knowledge



and musical gifts blossomed in the desert of Jerusalem.

“It was a place where I could be myself and study really intensely,” Rabins recalled. “I came back to the States and slowly began to integrate these worlds and find out who am I, where I am really authentically merging together those values in a way that truly feels right to me, where I’m not sort of leaving part of myself behind.”

It turns out there’s a lot to bring together for Rabins, even just focusing on her public-facing achievements and ignoring the inward, spiritual journey that so much of her new book centers around. Rabins has two published volumes of poetry (“Divinity School,” winner of the Honickman First Book Award from the American Poetry Review, and “Fruit Geode”), a children’s book about Leonard Cohen (“Hallelujah”) and a collection of essays on parenting (“Even God Had Bad Parenting Days”). This is in addition to her much-lauded film, “A Kaddish for Bernie Madoff,” her concert-length collaboration with the Camas High School Choir, “I Was a Desert: Songs of the

Matriarchs” and two albums (“Sugar Shack” and “Wild Nights,” the latter a collaboration with Dao Strom). On top of all that, she teaches Torah through a feminist lens and serves as an independent b’nai mitzvah tutor. It’s the last of those on which she closes the book, providing something of a full circle to the story.

“In a lot of ways, I’m working with families who are similar to the way my family was, which is ‘Jewish, but not really in a community,’” Rabins explained.

But beyond the bibliography, filmography, discography and all the other -ographies that document her professional journey, the meat of “When We’re Born” is centered in common experiences for Jewish Americans, for Portlanders and for human beings in general.

“We’re negotiating these different parts of our identities, our interests, our influences,” Rabins said. “In a way, I do feel like in the biggest picture, [the book] is the story of one contemporary Jewish person’s journey to find integration of all the different parts of myself and how to be fully living in the contemporary world and fully in conversation with these ancient texts. For me, that means also being an artist and how does that play into it?”

It’s a process that’s not always easy in modern life.

“The culture is not realistic about what it’s like to be really human,” she continued. “I hope that this book can be one small step of creating space in the conversation for this kind of authenticity and integration where you don’t have to leave part of yourself behind to be in a community or to see yourself as part of a tradition.”

“When We’re Born, We Forget Everything” is available for preorder from Powell’s Books and other major booksellers. Rabins’ reading at Powells on Mar. 4 is free; details are available at powells.com/events/alicia-jo-rabins-9780593702161.



Click the logo for the latest episode of The Jewish Review Podcast

Rabbi Aviv talks Jewish anxiety in new book, Portland visit

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

“Everybody that I know in my family, in my community that I serve, all my colleagues, all the Jews I know in the world have some degree of anxiety,” Rabbi Caryn Aviv said. “And I wondered why that is?”

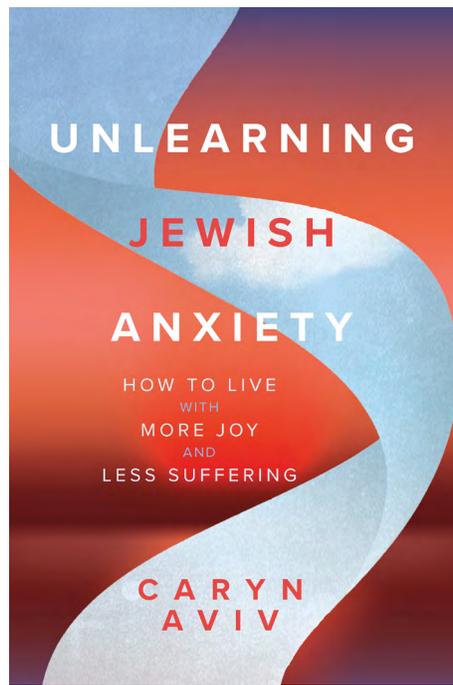
That wondering led to her book, “Unlearning Jewish Anxiety: How to Live with More Joy and Less Suffering,” which was released last Tuesday. Rabbi Aviv will be presenting her book at the Eastside Jewish Commons Thursday, Mar. 5 at 7 pm.

Rabbi Aviv, the Rabbinic and Program Director of Judaism Your Way in Denver, explained that the book spawned from her efforts to address her own anxiety in 2022, during the Omicron COVID surge. She read through “Unwinding Anxiety” by Brown University neuroscientist Dr. Judd Brewer and started looking at the roots of the kind of anxiety she and her fellow Jews all seemed to share.

“Is this cultural? Is this inherited? Is this something about Judaism in our ritual life? And I discovered that the answer is ‘yes,’ ‘yes’ and ‘yes,’” Rabbi Aviv said. “It’s also about the impact of anti-Jewish contempt and oppression and violence on us.”

There’s also intergenerational trauma, of course, and what Rabbi Aviv describes as “vicarious trauma,” of which there was an abundance in the weeks following the Oct. 7 attacks, when Rabbi Aviv decided to write this work.

“When bad things happen to Jews in other parts of the world, many of us have really bad habits of voraciously consuming as much information as possible about those bad things that have happened,” she explained. Furthermore, “there’s a whole section in the book about the shame that a lot of



people carry; that we’re either not good enough or we’re too much as Jews.”

While the causes of the anxiety felt by Jewish people may be distinctly Jewish, many of the symptoms aren’t – even stereotypical ones like “fussy Jewish tummy,” in Rabbi Aviv’s words – nor are typical reactions to them, like doomscrolling, catastrophizing, zoning out in front of the television, or arguing with people on the internet.

The next step is what to do about it – which, in this case, is quite Jewish.

“The last third of the book is really looking at Jewish wisdom practices and texts to help ourselves calm down and notice when we’re in an anxious habit loop, notice the sensations and the thoughts and the feelings, and also to notice what is it that we need when we realize we’re anxious,” Rabbi Aviv explains.

Her approach combines the mindfulness practices that are at the center of much of modern psychology’s ap-

proach to anxiety management with kindness and self-compassion. She found that ideas around mindfulness, often cited from Buddhist philosophy, also have reflections in Hassidic literature. The Hebrew phrase *Mochin d’Gadlut* literally means “expansive mind,” but is discussed in Kabbalah as an expanded consciousness. The idea isn’t that uncertainty and threats can be thought away, but that we can exercise some agency over our responses.

“I am not trying to gaslight Jews that this is all in our heads. It is not. Anti-Jewish contempt is real and the oppression that we experience is real. That’s on the one hand. And then on the other hand, we also can choose, with kindness and compassion and wise discernment, ‘what do I need right now if I feel stressed out?’”

This, too, has roots in Jewish ideals – *tikkun atzmi* (repairing oneself).

“We have an obligation to take care of ourselves. I frame it as an *aleinu*, which is the prayer that ends most prayer services. *Aleinu* means ‘it’s up to us,’” Rabbi Aviv explained, translating the Hebrew. “It’s really up to us to take responsibility for our mental health, our wellbeing, the relationship between our bodies and our thoughts and our feelings and our behavioral choices. And we do have agency. We don’t have to suffer unnecessarily just because we have habits that result in suffering. We can change those habits.”

“Unlearning Jewish Anxiety” is available at Powell’s Books and other major booksellers. Tickets to Rabbi Aviv’s appearance at EJC, co-sponsored by Congregation Shir Tikvah and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, are free and available online at events.humanitix.com/rabbi-caryn-aviv-unlearning-jewish-anxiety-how-to-live-with-more-joy-and-suffer-less.

SIDDUR (continued from page 4)

figures is what we all pray for when we are healing,” Shuldman said.

“Are you feeling Shabbassy now?” Shuldman asked as the service came to a close and the music stopped. She thanked everyone and talked

about her next project, a Saturday morning siddur.

“I wanted the prayer book to reflect the energy and wisdom of folks who have lived amazing lives and have great stories to tell,” she said. “There were won-

derful moments of hearing the residents’ joy in having their work recognized and seeing their smiles.” Shuldman hopes this service will inspire more of CSP’s hidden artists to contribute. “I want people to say, ‘I have

some art. I’d love to be a part of the next project.’”

Polina Olsen is the author of several books on Portland Jewish history and Portland in the 1960s. Learn more at amazon.com/author/polina_olsen.

LIFT (continued from page 2)

(the plural of *mikvah*); participating in *batei din* for conversions at the Harrison Street Mikvah, attending *Shabbatons* led by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, z”l, while he lived in Ashland and serving as a mikvah guide at Rachel’s Well as part of his work with Chevra Kavod HaMet.

“We went to the new mikvah, and I saw it would be difficult for someone like me to use it,” he said. “So, I started thinking about what could be done about that.”

Rosenblum explained that, like his father, he had forged a successful career as an accountant, and that his father had instilled the importance of giving back to the community.

“My father taught me two values of giving,” Rosenblum said. “One was that you have to put more back into the world than you take out of it.”

Rosenblum offered to cover half the cost of buying and installing the lift if the other half could be sourced. Thanks to the Oregon Board of Rabbis, that other half came through.

“We felt like it was worth the investment for people who couldn’t otherwise access the mikvah,” Rabbi Cohen said.

“I think that in our attempt to be as welcoming to as many people in our community as possible, we have made a huge advance thanks to the generosity of the Oregon Board of Rabbis and a philanthropist community member like Charlie Rosenblum,” Blau Rothstein said.

The lift, which is hydraulically operated and runs without electricity, was installed last summer. At the time, Rosenblum’s donation was made anonymously. This was the second value of giving his father instilled.

“He really preferred anonymity,” relaying an anecdote of his father’s dismay one year at being named on the donor list in the annual report of what is now the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts.

However, Rosenblum shared his story with *The Jewish Review* for a reason.

“Rabbi Ariel [Stone], who I’ve learned a lot from, has taught me that sometimes the community needs to know that there’s a real person behind this,” he said, “and that everybody can do something.”

“He didn’t just think about himself. He thought about others who would also benefit,” Blau Rothstein said. “I’m proud of and grateful to Charlie for stepping up in this way to make something possible.”

February is Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month. Blau Rothstein

explained that the pool lift is just one of the ways Rachel’s Well works to ensure accessibility for all those who wish to immerse in the sacred waters of the *mikvah*.

“If they’re vision impaired, and they need an escort (to navigate the steps) and they heard that they can only go in the mikvah by themselves, we can make those accommodations,” Blau Rothstein said. “*Mikvah* really is for anybody and every body.”

Those wishing to make an appointment at Rachel’s Well, whether looking for accessibility support or not, can reach out to the *mikvah* by email at mikvahpdx@gmail.com or by calling 971-220-5580.

Learn more about Rachel’s Well, the first community *mikvah* to be owned and operated by a Jewish Federation, online at jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/portland-community-mikvah.

DELI (continued from page 5)

and fruit rugelach.

“I’ve had a lot of fun kind of exploring the baked goods of Jewish delis,” Bissell said. “I don’t have a huge background with them,

so when making our knishes, it was a little bit more of an idea of what I think that I would want them to be, because I don’t have as much experience.”

Customers seem to share those thoughts – the deli has been doing brisk business since its opening in late November of 2025.

“It feels really meaningful

to be here and meet the community,” Levine said.

Dream Deli is open 11am-3pm Tuesdays through Saturdays. Learn more at dreamdelipdx.com.



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EISEN (continued from page 1)

The way those ongoing, sometimes interlocking fronts affect Israeli society is amplified by the physical scale of the place.

“The amount of time that it takes to fly on an airplane from Las Vegas to Portland is the amount of time that it takes me to drive from my house next to Tel Aviv up to the Syrian border,” Eisen explained. Syria, along with its neighbor Lebanon, have both been in a declared state of war with Israel since 1948.

The most obvious front is, of course, against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Days before her address, the body of Ran Gvili, ז"ל, was returned to Israel from Gaza on Jan. 26. A ceasefire with Hamas remains in place as a mechanism for long-term governance and rebuilding in Gaza grinds haltingly forward. Israelis, almost universally, give credit for both of those achievements to US President Donald Trump.

“Inside Israel, nobody believed that in October of 2025 we were going to see the 20 live [hostages], let alone all the other dead ones, coming back, and that it would be closed on Jan. 26, 2026.” Eisen said.

None of that credit, Eisen continued, goes to their own government.

“There is no plan in the Israeli government of what to do in the Gaza Strip,” she said. “All that has been brought up, from October of 2023, is what can’t happen, not what can happen. And I don’t have to like it, but President Trump brought something to the table: a plan.”

A ceasefire is not peace, Eisen said, demonstrating the point by standing less than an arm’s length from the audience’s front row and jabbing at them with an outstretched finger without actually touching them.

“This is what’s been happening in the Gaza Strip since October,” she said. “It’s poking. It’s edging out the lines. It’s each side trying to show, ‘I defined it.’”

One of the next steps of the plan is an International Stabilization Force in the Gaza Strip, an idea which Israel has opposed but which will be necessary, Eisen said, because the alternatives are the IDF fully occupying Gaza (again) or no one occupying Gaza and Hamas retaking control.

“This is called compromise. It doesn’t sound nice. It doesn’t feel nice. It isn’t a win-win. I’m going to go so far as to say that when it comes to the Gaza Strip, there is no win-win. That’s the tragedy,” she said. “It’s a tragedy for 2.2 million people who live there, who have names and families and they wake up in the morning right now, I’m sure that all they think of is that they hate us, but they’re living in tents in the rain for the second winter.”

Another obvious front is against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Following tens of thousands of rocket strikes and the evacuation of much of Northern Israel, Israel struck back, culminating in the September 2024 pager explosions and the assassination of longtime Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, followed shortly thereafter by the assassination of his successor, Hashem Safieddine. Leadership fell to Naim Qassem, widely seen as an inferior leader, and a ceasefire soon followed.

“You know why you see the new guy? Can I be really rude? Because we haven’t killed him,” Eisen explained. “Nobody’s killing him as of yet, and you see a dramatic difference that’s happened inside Hezbollah the last year and a bit.”

Hezbollah has now retreated north of

the Latani River, away from the Israeli border, and is under increasing pressure from the Lebanese government to disarm. While life in northern Israel is not back to normal by any stretch, the situation is much improved from 30 months ago.

“I want you to understand that for a Lebanese president to stand up and say to Hezbollah, ‘you can’t have arms,’ that’s huge. Can we take a win?” Eisen explained. “I would say that both the President of Lebanon and the Prime Minister of Lebanon hate Israel, at least detest Israel, but you know who they hate more? Hezbollah. You know who they hate even more? Iran.”

The hamstringing of Hezbollah also weakened the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. The new president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, is a former terrorist who has since renounced his former associations and, while admittedly not warm toward Israel, is of a similar mind to his Lebanese counterparts in being more occupied with thwarting Iranian influence in his country, Eisen said.

These changes, along with the international response to the interference of Houthi militias in Yemen on international shipping, which has simultaneously weakened their ability to attack Israel, has ushered in a new state of affairs in Israel’s neighborhood.

“It’s a whole new world,” Eisen said. “These are new alliances. It’s not the same as it was before Oct. 7.”

What there isn’t yet, she cautioned, is peace.

“We’re still in a multi-front war. In some of them, we’re in ceasefires, and that’s good. We’re not in the high intensity warfare, which is very challenging for all of us,” Eisen explained. “But none of them are over.”

Community Youth Foundation benefit dinner is Apr. 16 at MJCC

Oregon Jewish Community Foundation
The Oregon Jewish Community Youth Foundation invites the community to save the date for its annual benefit dinner, the signature event supporting OJCYF’s youth-led grant-making.

The 2026 Benefit Dinner, An Eve-

ning in Tel Aviv—A Community Celebration of Youth Leadership and Impact, will take place on Thursday, Apr. 16, from 5:30–8:30 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.

The event will feature a dynamic keynote speaker and student-led pro-

gram highlighting the philanthropic vision of Jewish teens in our community.

Ticket sales open Feb. 23 and will be available for purchase online at ojcf.org/ojcyf. For more information, contact Susan Berniker at susanb@ojcf.org or 503-248-9328.

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Caplan, Kashinsky receive Peer Recognition Grants

BB360

BB360 is proud to congratulate Michelle Caplan, Assistant Executive Director of Congregation Neveh Shalom, and Josh Kashinsky, Executive Director of Congregation Beth Israel, on receiving Peer Recognition Grants through the inaugural Grinspoon Amber Awards. These honorees were selected by Michelle Koplan, CEO of BB360, following her recognition as one of the first-ever recipients of the Grinspoon Amber Award — a national honor created by the Harold Grinspoon

Foundation to celebrate outstanding Jewish professionals whose leadership and dedication strengthen Jewish communal life.

The Amber Awards reflect Harold Grinspoon's belief that inspired professionals are essential to a vibrant Jewish future, and each honoree receives an award along with the opportunity to "pay it forward" by uplifting peers doing impactful work in the field. Michelle's decision to recognize fellow leaders speaks to her values of collaboration, gratitude,

and community-building, and her own leadership at BB360 continues to expand access, deepen engagement, and create meaningful Jewish experiences year-round. This recognition is a powerful reflection of both her impact and the ripple effect of her leadership.

Nominations for the 2026 Grinspoon Amber Awards are now open through February 28! Nominate an outstanding Jewish professional for a \$10,000 award and the chance to pay it forward at amberawards.com/nominate.

Neveh Shalom hosts Technion students for Israel 360 event

Israel360

Congregation Neveh Shalom's Israel360 is proud to present two brilliant minds shaping Israel's future—and helping transform our world.

Meet some of the Technion's most exceptional students, Hadas Abraham and Tomer Samuel, Technion Visiting Fellows, at a program co-sponsored by Israel360 and American Technion Society Thursday, Mar. 5 at 7 pm at Neveh Shalom.

Hadas Abraham, a Ph.D. student at The Henry and Marilyn Taub Faculty of Com-

puter Science, is focused on advancing DNA data storage and one day leading a major tech company—or founding her own. Tomar Samuel, a violinist and guitarist who played music with shamans in South America, aspires to earn an M.D. in the Ruth and Bruce Rappaport Faculty of Medicine in conjunction with a bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Biomedical Engineering.

Preregistration is free, required, and available online at members.nevehshalom.org/event/TechI360.

OJCF scholarships open now

Oregon Jewish Community Foundation

The Oregon Jewish Community Foundation is pleased to announce that applications are currently being accepted for its Higher Education Scholarships, open from February 1 through March 31, 2026. These scholarships support Jewish residents pursuing formal post-secondary education.

OJCF's scholarship funds—including the Diamond, Goldschmidt-Hillel, Krichevsky, Reynolds, Rosenblatt, Simon, Singer, and Tarshis Funds—offer both need-based and merit-based assistance to students seeking academic, vocational, or Jewish educational opportunities. Applicants only need to complete a single application to be considered for all eligible OJCF scholarship funds.

Eligible applicants must be Jewish residents of Oregon and, for certain funds, Southwest Washington. Full scholarship details and application materials are available on the OJCF website. For questions, contact Susan Berniker at susanb@ojcf.org or 503-248-9328.

Kesser Israel to host Shabbaton with Millers Feb. 27 and 28

Congregation Kesser Israel

Inspiring Jewish educators Rabbi Shmuel and D'vorah Miller are joining the Portland community for a Shabbaton Feb. 27 and 28 at Congregation Kesser Israel.

"We're excited to be able to share the Millers with the Jewish community," said Rabbi Dovid Gleizer of Kesser Israel. "They have been wonderful leaders in different capacities — from leading NCSY to running a shul in South Africa, to heading up a school in St. Louis. They speak to Jews from all different walks of life, and

we are looking to share an uplifting weekend."

Rabbi Miller will be leading a Carlebach-style Kabbalat Shabbat service at 5:35 pm Friday, Feb. 27. He will give the D'var Torah at Shabbat morning services, which begin at 9:00 am (D'var Torah approximately 10:45 am) and will lead a short Parsha class during Kiddush. There is also a Shabbat lunch at the Portland Kollel, \$18 per person, with registration required at kesserisrael.org/Shabbaton.

D'vorah Miller will also be speaking during the Shab-

baton. The full schedule is being finalized.

Rabbi Miller, currently head of school at Epstein Hebrew Academy in St. Louis, holds a B.A. in Psychology from UCLA and post-graduate degree in adolescent mental health from the Tavistock Clinic in the UK. He has served in administrative roles in Jewish day and high schools in the UK, and on the West Coast. "He is dynamic, musical, knowledgeable and engaging," said Rabbi Gleizer.

D'vorah Miller has been educating children and adults

about Judaism, relationships, self-esteem, and spirituality for over thirty years across four continents. She has edited several books, published articles, and posted videos on effective parenting and personal growth based on Torah teachings and is currently the principal of Kadimah High School in St. Louis. She is also the author of a recent book, *Up to God: Down-To-Earth Thoughts on Elevated Living*.

For additional details and more information, please contact Rabbi Gleizer at rabbigleizer@kesserisrael.org or (503) 421-7020.

Security Corner

Keeping up with the Joneses

Published biweekly by
the Jewish Federation of
Greater Portland
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To receive the Jewish
Review in your email
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Federation.

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

MAR 11 MAR 5

By JESSICA ANDERSON

Security improvements for organizations should always be made with consideration for the particular space, in its particular place, with its unique vulnerabilities. However, it is worth noting what other organizations are doing and new technologies that are available. Secure Community Network recently convened a working group with some independent security directors to identify, research, and establish best practices for these new tools. As those are developed, refined, and published, share them with you all.

One of the technologies getting the most attention these days is license plate readers (LPR). These are cameras designed to identify vehicle license plates within a designated area and run them through a database to identify possible threats. Several challenges exist, however. These include the potential for A LOT of data to review, and that the cameras cannot be paid for with FEMA Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funds. They are explicitly prohibited from funding, along with facial recognition and body-worn cameras. The issues are privacy and civil liberty concerns, and the potential misuse of data, including tracking individual movements of identified people. Jurisdictionally, some places also have laws limiting LPR use.

At the annual national meeting of community security directors, we host corporate sponsors who highlight their products and technologies. I always take time to check out the tables to see what's



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.

new in the realm of security technology, and thought I would share a few of them with you:

I first want to highlight Knox as I think this is something that nearly every standalone organization should have. The KnoxBox is a small, metal box that is affixed outside the entrance. The box is locked to everyone except first responders (particularly the Fire Department) who might need emergency access at all hours. Many organizations have hardened their external doors and windows such that it's very difficult for responders to force their way in. The KnoxBox allows access, quickly and easily.

BluePoint Solutions was there with panic/alerting technology. Their systems look like traditional fire alarms but are positioned around an organization, and when activated, notify police, medical, or hazardous materials response personnel.

Flock Safety specializes in cameras, devices, and software, including license plate readers and drone-equipped cameras. It's relatively high-end equipment and is likely beyond the needs of most

small organizations. However, as mentioned above, this technology is increasingly being used at large campuses and community centers, so many organizations are becoming more interested.

A company called CEIA makes metal detectors, including a portable version. The cost (coverable by NSGP funds) was a not-outrageous \$25,000, and the portable quality means organizations could opt to use it or not based on event needs. I also wondered if the community could collectively purchase a set and make it available to all. Issues around training and use would have to be ironed out, but I thought it was an interesting option.

EAGL Response Integration highlighted their gunshot detection technology. Specially attuned microphones are set up around an organization and are linked to emergency response technology. It analyzes the sounds and makes a direct notification if police are needed.

My overall take on the review was that generally, there are no critical technologies that our community is missing out on. The ba-

See SECURITY, page 16

Lipstadt a disappointment

By NANCY BECKER

I read The Jewish Review's coverage of the recent event with Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt at Congregation Beth Israel. ("Amb. Lipstadt speaks at CBI," Feb. 4, 2026, page 1) I was there as well. I've been a fan of hers for many years; I heard her speak in Portland in 2009 and have read her book, which I liked very much. However, I think her recent talk was disingenuous and superficial. There is much more to be said about antisemitism these days, and I was very disappointed with Ambassador Lipstadt's speech.

As an adult child of German Jewish refugees, I am sensitive to the issue of antisemitism and the survival of the Jewish people. I was dismayed that Lipstadt gave a speech that seemed stale and could easily have been delivered 10 years ago. The world has changed quite a bit since then.

After Oct. 7 and the Gaza war, the landscape about criticism of Israel from Jews is very different. The devastation of Gaza and the cruelty shown by the Netanyahu government has shocked and appalled many American Jews, who do not feel comfortable being called "Pro-Israel." They criticize Israel while at the same time embracing Judaism in both creative and traditional ways. Lipstadt smooches them together in a lump and says that it is OK to criticize Netanyahu, but never Israel. These people are Jewish and very committed to being Jewish. We need to understand and learn from them, not write them off en masse.

It is not accurate to say that if you are an "anti-Zionist" (for which there are many definitions) or believe in "one state for both people," that you are, by definition, antisemitic. It's so much more complicated than that, but Lipstadt (rather blithely, I thought) made that assumption. In the process, she lumped together many Jews and non-Jews who are extremely distressed about Israel's behavior both in Gaza and the West Bank with people who are genuinely antisemitic.

She didn't acknowledge Portland's nationally significant history of both Holocaust denial and the fight against it. Eric Ward and Steve Wasserstrom each submitted witness statements during her defamation trial against British Holocaust denier David Irving; she never mentioned any of that, nor the challenges of white supremacy in the Pacific Northwest, even while sitting next to Ward, a celebrated activist against that challenge. Negligent at best, insulting at worst.

Antisemitism on the right is real, and it is dangerous. It motivates violent actions and is championed by the Christian White Nationalism movement. Lipstadt's crack about abstaining from voting in a theoretical electoral matchup between New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and Vice President J.D. Vance was astonishing, ignorant and appalling. Meanwhile, she ignored the vast amount of post-Shoah work done by NGOs, research institutes, Jewish studies departments at universities and Jewish museums and memorials, not to mention synagogues like the one that invited her.

See BECKER, page 16

The weight of the papers

By SUSAN GREENBERG

Jewish Family & Child Service in Portland was founded from an immigrant story—and from the understanding that safety can be fragile.

In 1874, local Jewish women created the First Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society to support Jewish immigrants and families in crisis. They offered food, clothing, and practical help, but what they truly built was a community safety net for people starting new lives far from home. That was the beginning of JFCS.

In 2026, I'm hearing a particular kind of stress from many of the people we serve—stress not only about what is happening now, but about what today echoes from the past. I hear it in the uncertainty people carry. I see it in the way some immigrants feel they must always carry their papers—ready to prove who they are and why they belong.

For many in the Jewish community, that vigilance recalls a painful timeline: the pogroms of the late 1800s; the 1930s and 1940s, when documentation could determine survival; and the instability of the former Soviet Union. Even when circumstances differ, the emotional experience—hypervigilance, uncertainty, and the fear of being questioned—feels hauntingly familiar.

I'm also mindful that many immigrants—often immigrants of color—live with an added layer of daily vigilance. For some, "being prepared" means carrying documents, avoiding certain places, and wondering whether they will be treated with fairness and respect. Our mission is rooted in a simple truth: every person deserves dignity, safety, and belonging.

This commitment was deeply tested in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Portland saw a wave of Jewish emigration from the former Soviet Union. JFCS helped families navigate new systems, a new language, and the overwhelming work of rebuilding.

That support often took tangible forms. Community Warehouse grew out of this era through Operation Exodus, which helped JFCS settle Russian-speaking immigrants. Furnishing a home may seem simple, but it is transformative: a bed, a table, a couch—the basics that make an empty apartment feel like a place where life can begin again.

Among those arriving were Holocaust Survivors—people who had already survived unimaginable loss and were once again rebuilding under uncertain circumstances. Today, JFCS supports over 80 Holocaust Survivors, helping them age with dignity and reduce social isolation. This work is a direct expression of our immigrant-rooted mission.

JFCS exists to be a trusted doorway—helping people feel heard and supported when life becomes overwhelming. In 2026, the same values from 1874 guide us: dignity, belonging, stability, connection, and hope.

Through our Community Support Services, we connect people with trusted community organizations specializing in immigrant and refugee support. Even when someone is

See GREENBERG, page 16

Guest Column

The spirit of Mordechai and Esther

By DAVID FORMAN

Purim celebrates both our joy and the courageous leadership that shapes our future. Mordechai's clarity of identity, and Esther's brave decision to act in the moment presented, remind us how each generation guides and empowers the next. Their partnership mirrors the essence of legacy: we inherit values, but they come alive only when someone chooses to act on them.

Purim's customs of sharing food, supporting those in need, and celebrating together remind us that generosity strengthens the entire community. And Purim also teaches us how quickly fortunes can change. Communities built on strong foundations of compassion, generosity, and shared responsibility are best equipped to meet both celebration and rapidly changing realities with resilience and hope.

At OJCF, the spirit of Mordechai and Esther thrives whenever a donor creates an endowment or legacy commitment. Long-term and permanent gifts are today's expression of their partnership: enduring wisdom, and the courageous choice to secure a better future for others.

As you celebrate this holiday with its customs, costumes, and communal joy, we invite you to consider making your own lasting impact. A legacy commitment or endowment gift can be a modern Purim blessing that ensures that our Jewish community of Oregon and SW Washington remains vibrant, resilient, and full of hope for generations to come.

Chag Purim Sameach!

David Forman is CEO of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation in Portland.

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SECURITY (continued from page 14)

sics of access control and building security still hold as the most important elements. You can be sure that if we see that changing, you and your organizational leaders will be the first to know.

BECKER (continued from page 15)

In spite of her premier institutional position, she provided no new data, no new analysis and no awareness of her local audience. She repeated the warning "you need to take it seriously" while never saying how we are supposed to do that. There are several organizations that are taking a hard look at the new environment vis-a-vis antisemitism; notable among these is the [Nexus Project](#), which provides research, newsletters and a great perspective.

I don't claim to have a smart analysis myself. I am a questioning and very worried American Jew who is committed to the survival of the Jewish people. I was hoping to get some brilliant insights from a premier spokesperson against antisemitism, and I was very, very disappointed.

Nancy Becker lives in Portland.

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GREENBERG (continued from page 15)

not a JFCS client, we ensure they have a reliable place to start, providing vetted referral options and guidance tailored to their specific needs.

When history feels close, support must be both skilled and deeply human. We are here to provide compassionate listening that never minimizes your experience, expert navigation through complex social and legal systems, steadfast follow-through that stays with you as long as needed and restored connection to help you find steadiness in a community.

From the First Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society in 1874 to the stress many clients feel in 2026, the thread remains the same: When people live with uncertainty, community becomes safety. JFCS exists because Portland's Jewish community decided, generations ago, to be that safety net—organized, practical, and compassionate. We are keeping that promise today.

Together, we make sure that no one must navigate uncertainty alone.

Susan Greenberg is Executive Director of Jewish Family & Child Service in Portland.

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The Laurie Rogoway Outstanding Jewish Professional Award is sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland in recognition of Laurie Rogoway, a pillar of Jewish leadership for over 30 years in Portland.

Find Portland's Purim Parties and more online at
jewishportland.org/purim

Obituaries

Submit obituaries to The Jewish Review's online form at form.jotform.com/JFGP/jr-obituary

ROBERT BLOOM

Congregation Neveh Shalom is saddened to share the passing of Robert Bloom, z"l, who died on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2026, at the age of 80. He is lovingly remembered by his brothers, Michael (Jaimee) Bloom and Stephen (Amy Whinston) Bloom; his nieces and nephews, Scott (Amy) Bloom,

Liza (Beth) Milliner, Melissa (Oren) Abu, Jeramie (Andrew Thorry) Bloom, and Deborah Bloom; and his great-nieces and great-nephews, Justin and Mara Bloom, and Sylvia and Luigi Thorry-Bloom.

A funeral was held on Friday, Feb. 13, 2026, at Neveh Ze-dek Cemetery.

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