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# The JEWISH REVIEW

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## 'No greater *mitzvah*'



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Above: Attendees at Tuesday's Community Gathering for the Hostages at Congregation Neveh Shalom hold flameless candles in solidarity with the 150 hostages still held in Gaza following the Oct. 7 terror attacks. Left: Effrat Avsker is embraced by her son, Amir Avsker, as she recounts the details of her 12-year-old nephew Eitan Yahalomi's captivity in Gaza. "They kept him in a room all alone. They forced him to watch videos of Oct. 7," she said. "They would not allow him to cry." Yahalomi was released over the weekend; his father, Ohad Yahalomi, remains a captive of Hamas. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)



From left, Rabbi Rachel Joseph, Ellen Zellinger, sisterhood vice president, Susan Berniker, OJCF Collaborative Giving Director, Cantor Rayna Green, and Senior Cantor Ida Rae Cahana hold up brochures promoting the B'nai Tzedek Program. (Courtesy OJCF)

## OJCF, Beth Israel launch B'Nai Tzedek program for sixth graders

*Oregon Jewish Community Foundation*

At this month's 6th-grade religious school family program at Congregation Beth Israel, students and parents were surprised to learn that each student will have a donor-advised fund opened in their name at the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation (OJCF) to mark the occasion of their B'nai Mitzvah. This pilot project—a partnership between the Congregation Beth Israel Education Department, WRJ/Beth Israel Sisterhood, and OJCF—will provide the students with a long-term opportunity to practice *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam* and learn about their local Jewish community.

At the end of the year, WRJ/Beth Israel Sisterhood will contribute \$250 for each of the more than 30 students who attend the required activities of the WRJ/Beth Israel Sisterhood-sponsored B'nai Tzedek Program to open their B'nai Tzedek Youth Fund. OJCF will provide a \$250 match per student to reach the \$500 needed to open a youth fund. Ellen Zellinger, sisterhood vice president, made the announcement to the group. "We're excited to pilot this program and support our young families along their philanthropic journey."

Rabbi Joseph emphasized that "not everyone has the resources to open a fund, so this creates an equitable experience for this class to actively take part in philanthropy."

Friends and family can support the members of the upcoming B'nai Mitzvah class by contributing to a student's B'nai Tzedek Fund. "Donating to the fund is a meaningful way to mark any simcha and propel the students' journey as grantmakers to help improve the world," added Susan Berniker, OJCF's Collaborative Giving Director.

Parents, friends, and family members can open a B'nai Tzedek Youth Fund for youth between the ages of 12-18 for \$250 and OJCF will provide the \$250 match. A community-wide B'nai Tzedek Program will launch in 2024 for all middle school students who hold B'nai Tzedek Funds to provide these middle schoolers with an opportunity to meet quarterly to learn about philanthropy and experience the joy of charitable giving together.

Each year OJCF staff meets with B'nai Tzedek Youth Fundholders to facilitate their annual grant-making. OJCF is dedicated to building and promoting a culture of giving in Oregon and Southwest Washington that supports a thriving Jewish community now and for generations to come.

For more information about opening a B'nai Tzedek Youth Fund and/or participating in OJCF's B'nai Tzedek Program email [youth@ojcf.org](mailto:youth@ojcf.org) or call 503 248-9328.

## "Voices From Israel" series launches today

By ROCKNE ROLL

*The Jewish Review*

While the Oct. 7 terror attacks were almost two months ago, everyday life in Israel is still profoundly altered, and it can be hard to know what's going on from so far away.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland is looking to bridge that gap with a five-part webinar series "Voices From Israel," featuring conversations with those on the ground in Israel beginning today, Nov. 29, at 9am and continuing each Wednesday for the next five weeks.

"During COVID, we did a webinar series where we brought in experts in the community on different topics and we wanted to do that again to make sure to show the voices on the ground, what's happening in Israel," explained Federation Director of Educational Initiatives and Associate Director of Community Relations Rachel Nelson.

Presenters for the series include:

- Dror Israel, an educational charity that has been working with children of those displaced from the Gaza Envelope. (Nov. 29)
- Israel Defense Forces public information staff (Dec. 6)
- Sovie Berzon Mackie, a survivor of the attack on Kibbutz Be'eri. (Dec. 13)
- The staff of the Israel Story podcast, producers of the Wartime Diaries series. (Dec. 20)
- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. (Dec. 27)

"We are bringing together a diverse group of folks over the course of the next five weeks to share their stories," Nelson said. "What are these people feeling? What is everyday life like for them? How has life changed since Oct. 7? What is Israel doing in the community to bring the community together?"

Some of the accounts relayed may be graphic, Nelson cautioned.

Each presentation will be followed by a Q-and-A period, and each event will be recorded for later viewing. To register or for more information, visit [jewishportland.org/Israelwebinars](http://jewishportland.org/Israelwebinars).

## Chabad and Blazers celebrate Chanukah Dec. 14 vs Utah

*The Jewish Review staff*

Chabad of Oregon and the Portland Trail Blazers are once again partnering for Chanukah Jewish Heritage Night Thursday, Dec. 14, at 7 pm as the Trail Blazers take on the Utah Jazz at the Moda Center in Portland on the seventh night of Chanukah. As part of this special event, all participants will enjoy exclusive perks, including special savings and early access to watch the teams' warm-up sessions before the game. Join us for the Menorah lighting, festive celebrations and enjoy the game, all in the company of your friends, family and fellow Jewish community members! Tickets start at \$16 and are available directly from the Trail Blazers with promo code "HANUKKAH2023" at [rosequarter.com/groupnights](http://rosequarter.com/groupnights). For more information, contact Joshua Peters at [Joshua.peters@trailblazers.com](mailto:Joshua.peters@trailblazers.com).

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A photograph of a young child with curly hair and a woman smiling at a table with candles. The child is wearing a white shirt and a yellow sash. The woman is on the right side of the frame, looking at the child. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wooden chair and a green wall.

# CHANUKAH HAPPENINGS



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**CHECK OUT  
OUR HOLIDAY  
RESOURCE GUIDE**



**Jewish Federation**  
of Greater Portland



# A festival of light - and pride

Chanukah celebrations differ, but center on the light of Judaism

By ROCKNE ROLL

*The Jewish Review*

With the physical darkness of winter and the psychological darkness of war and rising antisemitism, it's hard to remember a year where the light of Chanukah would be more welcome.

Chanukah, running from Dec. 7-15 this year, marks the rededication of the Second Temple – the holiday's name is Hebrew for "dedication" – and the miracle of one day's worth of consecrated lamp oil lasting eight days. A key observance of the season remembers this miracle with the lighting and display of a nine-canded menorah called a *chanukiah*. These are typically tabletop size, but can be much larger.

Chabad owns a 12-foot menorah that has been displayed each Chanukah in downtown Portland, typically at Pioneer Courthouse Square, for 40 years. This year is no different, but Rabbi Motti Wilhelm thinks it's especially important.

"We need more light than ever," he said.

To that end, all are invited to join him at 5 pm on Dec. 7, the first night of Chanukah, at Pioneer Courthouse Square to light the first candles. The goal is to light up downtown with 1,800 candles.

"We want to publicly share the miracle and share their message that light is stronger than darkness," Rabbi Wilhelm said. "Hope is stronger than despair and the message that G-d comes to our aid and helps us in moments that seem completely unwinnable."

While there is an awareness of increased public hostility toward Judaism, Rabbi Wilhelm sees it as being all the more important that the message of the season is shared proudly and publicly.

"We know that there is the growing need for vigilance, the growing need to be situationally aware, but we also believe that at this time it's more important than ever that we not go into hiding and we not stop sharing our message," he said.

Rabbi Wilhelm recalled the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, z"l.

"Our master tells us that a little light sheds a lot of darkness," Rabbi Wilhelm said. "We are attempting to not only have a little light, but we want to have a lot of light, so we're going to shed a lot of darkness."

You can RSVP for the downtown menorah lighting at [tinyurl.com/ChabadChanukah1800](https://tinyurl.com/ChabadChanukah1800).

There are other – less flammable- ways to



In this undated photo, Chabad of Oregon Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm lights the organization's *chanukiah*, often known as a menorah, at Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland. (Jewish Review file)

share one's festive spirit and Jewish pride this season.

Rabbi Eve Posen, associate rabbi of Congregation Neveh Shalom, has amassed a collection of Chanukah-themed clothing – enough for a Chanukah outfit each day of the festival without repetition.

"You're supposed to put the menorah, the chanukiah, in the window, you're supposed to say, 'Look at this,'" Rabbi Posen explained. "But we don't have a window, we can't put one in in our house, so the next best thing was to wear the clothing."

Rabbi Posen's collection started not with Chanukah, but with a matzo-patterned dress from a store called Midrash Manicures, founded by her friend Rabbi Yael Buechler. Then there was a dreidel-patterned dress, and things took off from there.

"I didn't intend to have a collection, but

it happened that as Chanukah merchandise has become popular over the years, I've been fully sucked in," she said.

This includes Chanukah pajamas – in matching styles for her family – that come from either Midrash Manicures or Portland pajama purveyor Hanna Anderson. While the matching is fun, Rabbi Posen also sees a deeper symbolism in the idea of pajamas that celebrate this holiday. Unlike the High Holy Days, which are typically spent in a synagogue, Chanukah is observed at home, with family, typically at night; conditions which are made for pajamas.

"It's about being in the home and like cozying up with family and being present with family for the holiday," she said. "So having Hanukkah pajamas is also about that moment of bringing light in, being

*continued on next page*





Congregation Neveh Shalom Associate Rabbi Eve Posen shows off some of her Chanukah-themed stylings, including pajamas, second from left, and her dreidel-pattern dress, far right. (Courtesy Rabbi Eve Posen)

*continued from previous page*

present with each other in that way.”

She also noted that pajamas are an ideal garment for latke consumption thanks to elastic waistbands and the ease with which the smell of frier oil washes out of them.

But much like the public display of candles, Chanukah themed garb is a way to proudly proclaim Judaism -very much the spirit of the season.

“If you look at the Chanukah story as a whole, it really is a story about having Jewish pride,” Rabbi Posen said. “The Maccabees, they were the ones that said, “We want to keep being Jewish. I know that you have shopping malls and gyms, Greek culture, that’s great. But this is also important to us.”

Now that oil is used less for illumination and more for cooking, the modern miracle of Chanukah is, to many, made of potatoes.

The latke, a fried potato pancake that originated amongst Ashkenazi Jewish populations in eastern and central Europe, has become something akin to the official food of Chanukah, with the frying oil standing in for the oil of the ancient menorah.

“Beyond the symbolism of the oil, fried food in the wintertime is just comforting,” Rabbi Posen noted.

Portland chef, culinary instructor and food writer Sonya Sanford’s parents emigrated from Ukraine in the 1970s – the same part of the world that brought us the latke. Her first cookbook, “Braids: Recipes from my Pacific Northwest Jewish kitchen,” debuts late this month.

“My platonic ideal of a latke is something that is not too thick and not too thin,” she explained, “definitely not a hockey puck like you sometimes find in restaurants, that

is very crisp and golden brown on the outside and very soft and tender on the inside.”

Traditionally, latkes are served with applesauce or sour cream. Sanford, a self-proclaimed maximalist in this area, prefers both. She also explains there are a much broader range of topping choices available.

“A chutney is good on a latke. Ketchup is good on a latke, just like a hash brown,” she said. “A great aioli could be good on a latke. Whatever you like on a fried potato could fit on a latke.”

But there’s more to the Chanukah than fried potatoes – Sephardic communities around the world have centered their celebrations on various kinds of donuts, some stuffed with delicious fillings. Sanford, who admitted she gets burned out on latkes after a point, said that there are plenty of oil-themed foods that are in keeping with the season that never go near the fryer. She is particularly fond of a one-bowl olive oil cake recipe as well as her grandmother’s oil marinated roasted peppers.

“I also think it’s a really good time to maybe buy a couple different oils, good quality, extra virgin olive oils, and you could set up a little tasting with different kinds of bread or things to dip in the oil,” she said. “There’re so many ways in the culinary world that you can celebrate the miracle of oil.”

Sanford described one of her most meaningful Chanukah experiences was quite recently in 2020, where a friend invited a group to an outdoor, Covid-safe celebration on Sauvie Island north of Portland.

“It was the first Chanukah where we couldn’t gather with family,” she said. “We lit menorahs outside in the night on the beach and sang songs, and it was such a touching and beautiful way to be connected

to the water and the air and the land here and celebrating the bringing in light in the darkest time of the year in a very dark time.”

With dangers abounding at home and abroad, this Chanukah feels darker than most. But its these moments when light is needed the most.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland is encouraging everyone to “Shine the Light” by lighting and displaying chanukiahs this year to add more light, joy, and Jewish pride to the world.

“In these challenging times, every bit of light counts,” Federation President and CEO Marc Blattner said. “We’re counting on every family to help our community shine our light together this Chanukah.”

Find more Chanukah resources at [jewish-portland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources23](http://jewish-portland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources23).



Click the logo to hear Sonya Sanford discuss latkes and other tastes of the season on the latest episode of The Jewish Review Podcast



# Chang makes Impact at MJCC

By ROCKNE ROLL

*The Jewish Review*

While Thursday, Nov. 16's Impact event, hosted by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Women's Philanthropy, was an evening of celebration and fun, there were certainly also serious topics to address.

The evening's keynote speaker, ABC journalist Juju Chang, immediately pointed out the enormous spike in antisemitism that has been observed in recent years.

Part of the answer, she explained to the more than 220 people gathered at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, is, to build up Jewish communities.

"It's what the Jewish Federation does, day in and day out," she said.

It was a sentiment echoed by Federation Board Chair Mindy Zeitzer earlier in the evening.

"A strong local Jewish community helps us, support us and holds us together," she said. "Together, we help those in need. We help those in need here, and those around the world."

Attendees responded to that sentiment, with the event raising more than \$166,000. Federation Chief Development Officer Wendy Kahn explained that donors from previous Impact events increased their contributions an average of 12 percent this year from previous events.

Some of those from around



Above: Juju Chang addresses the crowd at Impact, hosted by The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Women's Philanthropy Thursday, Nov. 16 at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Below: An attendee fills out a pledge card. (Andie Petkus Photography for The Jewish Review)

the world chimed in with their thanks. One was Carmi Tint of Dror Israel, an educational charity that is supporting children evacuated from the Gaza envelope. The Federation has contributed to Dror Israel's work each year and has sent an additional \$100,000 to support the organization's wartime efforts.

"I just wanted to say thank you to the Portland community for helping us not only with our emergency time, but over more than 10 years," Tint said.

Some of that work overseas can be seen much closer

to home. Daria Levit is an Ukrainian refugee that the Federation brought to Portland and has supported as she and her family – including three cats – resettled in the area.

"We would like to say a huge thank you to Marc Blattner with the Jewish Federation, because he spent a huge amount of time trying to find the best way to fly with three cats," Levit said. "Frankly speaking, we just could not believe that all the people from our Welcome Circle, the Jewish Federation and [Jewish Family & Child Service] would do such a great job."

Roma Peyser of Transition Projects also spoke to how important the work of Women's Philanthropy's Dignity Grows project, which helps supply feminine hygiene products to those who can't afford them. It has been an enormous help to Transition Project's efforts to help those experiencing homelessness move to permanent housing.

"As an outreach worker, and a woman I relate to the importance of these packs," she said.

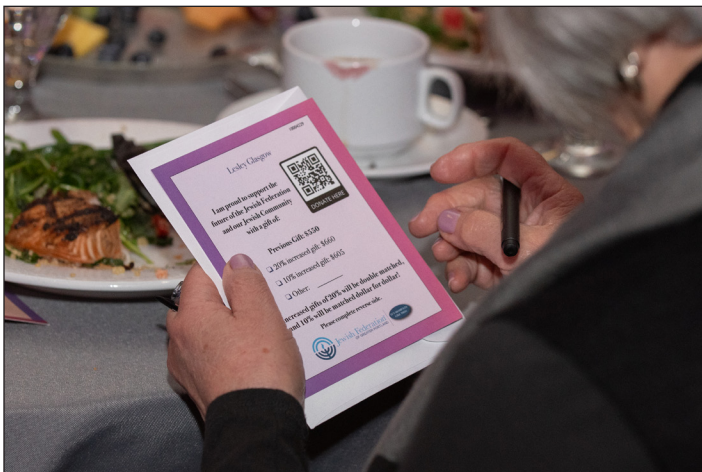
"You have to ask yourself, 'Well, what is going on? What's in the water? What's in the air?'" Chang said of rising antisemitism. "And yet my rabbi keeps reminding me that the big picture is that we still live in a time and a place where Jews have never before enjoyed as much as freedom from discrimination throughout our history."

Chang structured her talk like a Passover seder, centering on four questions: "One, why is my career in journalism perhaps different than other journalists? Two, how has my path to Judaism been different? Three, how is antisemitism perhaps different than other types of hate? And four, how can we make a difference?"

Chang discussed how her journalism was influenced by her experiences as a Korean immigrant, being bullied in school and watching her family suffer through discrimination.

"For the next 35 years, I have been drawn to stories about people who were voiceless, about people who were powerless."

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As for her journey to Judaism, she explained that she had told husband Neil Shapiro that she would not be converting, joking that she was not prepared for a headline in *The New York Times* reading “Juju Marries Jew.” But after 12 years together, Chang recalls turning to her husband one day and declaring her intention to become part of the Jewish people.

“I don’t want to do it for you. And I don’t want to do it for kids,” she recalled saying. “I really want to do it for me.”

Chang’s three sons are, as she likes to say, “50 percent Asian and 100 percent Jewish.” She observed the recent spike in antisemitism along with the hate speech and violence directed at Asian communities during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, to answer her third question.

“The short answer is, it’s not,” Chang said to how antisemitism is different from other forms of hate. “It’s exactly the same. It is based on ‘the other,’ it is based on ‘us versus them.’ It’s based on dehumanizing stereotypes that are just below the surface. When you activate that in times of crisis, people can turn to violence.”

Chang turned to address the Oct. 7 attacks head on, declaring the horror of Hamas’ attacks and the need for Israel’s military campaign to remove the threat of further terrorism while also addressing the need to remember the innocents caught up in the crossfire.

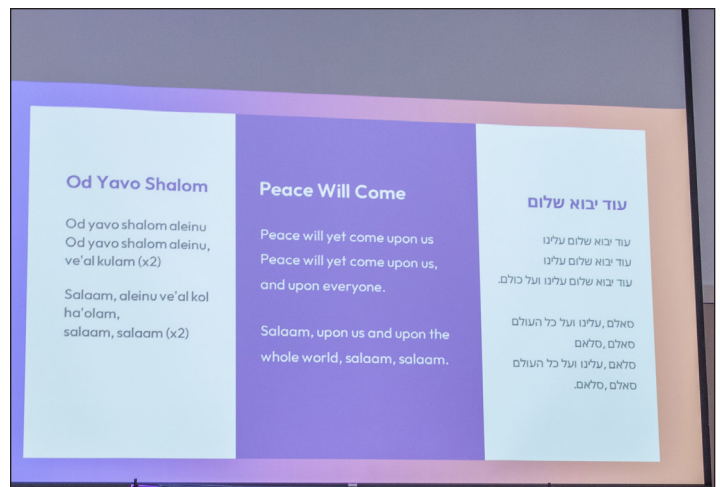
“As generals and historians have told us for millennia, war is brutal. War is tough,” Chang said. “And as it takes its toll on civilians, we all need to see the humanity of all innocent civilians, period, full stop, which is why it was so deeply offensive to so many in the Jewish community that after the terrorist attacks of October 7, some in the US were quick to dehumanize the Jewish victims, to victim blame a child who was killed kidnapped.”

Chang compared the common protest chant, “from the river to the sea,” to the Confederate flag as being facially a symbol of something innocuous enough but carrying a more insidious meaning that is unspoken but well understood.

What can be done? In addition to community building, Chang said it starts with education, noting the two-thirds of those in Generation Z that are unaware that six million Jews were murdered in The Holocaust.

“Ultimately, we’re not just fighting hate, we’re fighting ignorance,” she said.

Clockwise from top: Juju Chang discusses a question from Nadine Gartner in their Fireside Chat. JFGP Board Chair Mindy Zeitzer speaks during the opening portion of the program. From left, Impact Co-Chair Karen Blauer, Campaign Co-Chair Leslie Beard, Zeitzer and Gartner sing “Od Yavo Shalom” with the crowd at the conclusion of the evening. Chang speaks to a packed house at the Middleman Jewish Community Center ballroom. (Andie Petkus Photography for The Jewish Review)





# The colors of the Torah

By GLORIA HAMMER

For The Jewish Review

Debbie Plawner has spent her career as a market researcher and strategic consultant, conducting global studies for high tech giants, universities and non-profits. She now applies her understanding of color to helping people tap into the wisdom of color.

Oracolor Torah wisdom cards is a deck of cards for understanding how to direct energy. Oracolor applies color theory to major teachings of the Torah for personal inquiry, intention setting and spiritual exploration.

"According to *Kabbalah*, every week has its own energy and opportunities for transformation," Plawner said. "Tapping into the week's energy empowers us to make major changes we yearn for in our lives."

With a deep love of her Jewish roots, Plawner created Oracolor because she hoped the Torah could help her find balance in her career, marriage, mother-

hood and the loss of a parent. Through her studies, she said, "I grew to understand Torah in an inner, profound and joyful way."

Her program illuminates pathways for those seeking direction, clarity or the energy needed to make changes in life. She calls this a comprehensive exploration for mind, body, heart and spirit. She offers card readings, plus an introductory class and quarterly classes for the High Holidays.

"*Ora* means 'light' in Hebrew. Light is the energy we see in the world through the spectrum of color," Plawner said. "By taking core concepts of the Torah and connecting them with specific colors, they work together to become infused with energy."

To learn more, visit [oracolor.com](http://oracolor.com).

*Gloria Hammer, a Portland educator and Pilates instructor, was a producer for OPB's Emmy-nominated documentary "The Three Rabbis."*



Debbie Plawner's Oracolor deck uses a color-aligned system to make Torah teachings accessible for those seeking personal development. (Gloria Hammer for The Jewish Review)

## Applications open for renamed Sussman-Shenker Scholarship

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

The Sussman Scholarship has been supporting Jewish students from Portland in pursuit of higher education since 1981 and will continue to do so, but with a new name.

Now known as the Sussman-Shenker Scholarship, the fund will award between two and five scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,800 to Jewish Portland-area high school graduates pursuing undergraduate studies at an accredited American college or university. The new name honors Arden Shenker, husband of Lois Shenker, the daughter of scholarship founders Lillian and Gilbert Sussman, on his 85th birthday. Among many other contributions to Portland's Jewish Community, Arden Shenker is a former board chair for the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland and was chair of the annual campaign in 1974, the first year the campaign raised over \$1 million. He remains engaged in Jewish community leadership on

a national level.

"The bottom line is it's really not about us, it's about shared goals," Lois Shenker said. "He shares the values of my parents who created the fund originally."

She explained that her parents came to her as their 50th wedding anniversary approached, looking for a way to celebrate. Shenker, who had one child in college at the time with two more soon to graduate high school, suggested a scholarship fund. Since then, more than 100 scholarships have been awarded.

While academics are a consideration, the scholarship is focused on recognition of involvement in Jewish communal life – in whatever form that may take.

"Lois's parents were leaders in the Jewish community, and Lois and Arden have been incredible leaders in Portland, so they see the importance of being involved in creating a strong community," explained Rich Meyer, chair of the Sussman-Shenker Scholarship

board. "That has always been one of the criteria is making sure that people have been involved here in some way. Everyone has their own way of being involved."

"It is such a testament to the breadth and depth of our Jewish community to see the varied applications," added Federation Director of Educational Initiatives and Associate Director of Community Relations Rachel Nelson. "Some are peripherally connected to the Jewish community and yet feel so strongly Jewish, and some are deeply enmeshed in the community."

Nelson received the scholarship twice – recipients were previously eligible for multiple awards – and appreciated how the scholarship enabled her to continue her involvement in Jewish communal life during and after her studies.

"It very much helped me finish up my degree at University of Oregon and focus on the important work of studying and being a part of the community

without necessarily needing to worry so much about the finances," she said. "At the same time, it was a great reminder and validation of the support of the local Portland Jewish community as I continued my studies and it helped shape, to some extent, my going into the field of Jewish communal service because I knew the Jewish community has always been supportive."

Unlike many scholarships, the Sussman-Shenker Scholarship is awarded as a cash payment directly to the student, an important distinction in a time where expenses beyond tuition contribute heavily to making post-secondary education less accessible. The scholarship is not need based.

Applications are now open at [jewishportland.org/shenker-sussman](http://jewishportland.org/shenker-sussman) until March 1, 2024. For more information about applying, or to donate to the Sussman-Shenker Scholarship Fund, contact Nelson at [ra-chel@jewishportland.org](mailto:ra-chel@jewishportland.org).



# JFCS delivers dinners by the carload for Thanksgiving

## Volunteers prep hundreds of holiday dinners for local families in need

Clockwise from right: Roz Babener drops a sack of potatoes into a waiting box at Jewish Family & Child Service's annual Thanksgiving Food Box Packing and Delivery Sunday, Nov. 19 at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Michael Seale loads one of 180 food boxes onto a cart to go to a volunteer delivery driver. JFCS Volunteer Coordinator Sammy Monk double-checks boxes before delivery; in a first this year, 40 boxes went to Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church in North Portland to support the 200 dinners the church served on Thanksgiving. JFCS Child and Family Therapist Laura Cohen hauls turkeys out to the loading zone; kosher turkeys and vegetarian options were provided to accommodate recipient dietary needs. Cans of sweet potatoes stand ready to load into boxes; unused non-perishable items went to Lift Urban Portland, a partner of the Oregon Food Bank. Sam Gottlieb, left, and Carolyn Gorin get boxes of stuffing ready for distribution; 25 volunteers helped pack food for delivery on 35 different routes, each driven by a volunteer driver. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)





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# Chaplain's Corner

## Keep Chanukah hope-filled

By RABBI BARRY COHEN

Chanukah will be bittersweet for us this year. This holiday is meant to be our celebration of religious freedom. Nearly 2200 years ago, the underdog Maccabees won their religious freedom from the Seleucid Greeks. Our ancestors were literally fighting for their Jewish existence.

Historically, we know that the conflict was intense and nuanced. For some unknown reason, Antiochus Epiphanes, leader of the Seleucid Greeks, decided to outlaw Jewish traditions and ritual practice. This forced the Jewish community to choose: Would they rally together to face a common foe, or would elements side with the Greeks?

The story we tell is "us vs. them." (i.e., The Jewish people rose up united against the Greeks to defend their religious liberty.) In reality, it was much more complicated. A significant percentage of the Jewish community completely rejected Greek fashion, culture and practices. But many in the Jewish community embraced aspects of Greek influence and were attempting to maintain a core Jewish identity and acculturate into Greek-influenced society. Other Jews rejected Judaism completely and preferred to assimilate.

In this way, the war against the Seleucid Greeks was partly external (us vs. them) and partly internal (a civil war). In many ways, all those years ago, we were fighting a war over who we wanted to be as a people. We were fighting for the right to determine our own Jewish identities.

Israel is now fighting another war with Hamas, an enemy that rejects Israel's very right to exist. And once again, Jews disagree over why to fight the war and how to fight the war.

What makes this war more tragic, above and beyond those Hamas murdered on Oct. 7, is the hostages they took into captivity. In a major development, Hamas has released 51 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners. But as of this writing, Hamas is still holding more than 150 hostages.

For both those freed and those still in captivity, what will Chanukah mean to them this year? What will this holiday mean to their family and friends? What are they feeling? How are coping?

In 2023, the Israeli people, Jews throughout the world, and all our allies



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are still waging a war for the sake of religious freedom, for the sake of safety and security and for the sake of being Jewish.

We can celebrate Chanukah by utilizing the symbolic power of light – of hope and a vision for a safer future. Centuries ago, the Schools of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai debated how to light the Chanukah menorah. Shammai said that on the first night of the holiday, we should light the full Chanukah menorah and decrease by one candle each evening. Hillel said the opposite: On the first night, light one candle, and increase it each night until the Chanukah menorah is full. As we know, we follow Hillel's vision, to ensure that the lights only grow brighter and more numerous during the 8-day holiday.

For Chanukah this year, to ritualize the plight of the remaining hostages, I propose we light an additional Chanukah menorah. And let us light it in a unique fashion. On the first night, light all 8 candles. On the second night, light 7. On the third night, light 6. And on the fourth night, light 5. This will represent how our hopes and dreams have been diminished this year because of the hostages' pain, isolation and powerlessness and what the recently freed hostages and their families have ensured.

But then on the fifth night, light 5 again. On the sixth night, light 6. On the seventh night, light 7. And on the eighth night, light 8. In doing so, we express that we will not allow our hope and optimism to be further diminished. Further, we pledge to do whatever we can to draw attention to the remaining hostages. All of them must be freed and returned to their families.

As we celebrate Chanukah this year, may we fulfill our sacred responsibility to ensure that the hope of freedom, safety and security burns bright for the hostages, for Israelis and for the greater Jewish community.

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## Clergy Corner

# Why Chanukah's miracle matters

By **RABBI DANIEL BORSUK**

The Chanukah story seems particularly relevant this year. During these times of challenge, finding inspiration and recognizing God's presence in our lives can be difficult. But we as a nation have been through challenges before and can learn from them.

The Chanukah story has two seemingly unconnected parts. The first: a small group of faithful Jews, persecuted by a world power, miraculously winning battle after battle and reclaiming their independence and their Holy Temple. The second: after the rededication of the Temple, a thorough search found only one small jar of pure oil which miraculously lasted the eight days needed to produce new pure oil.

At face value, the first miracle is far more impactful and important than the second. Without the victory over our oppressors, we would have continued to be persecuted and forced to abandon our Jewish identity. On the other hand, the miracle of the oil did not signify critical importance for our existence. So why does it get such prominence during Chanukah?

Rabbi Yehuda Loew, the 16th century scholar known as the Maharal of Prague, suggests that the victory is indeed what we are celebrating. But a military victory, even "the few in the hand of the many," is still able to be credited to man's strength. The miracle of the oil was clearly above nature, so everyone recognized that the credit was truly God's. This in turn made it evident that just as God created the miracle with the Menorah, so too it was God who made them victorious in the war. To this day, we celebrate these miracles to remind us to bring God into our lives.

This message creates a major shift in our perspective. In our daily encounters, we see things that appear to be natural and in our control. Only with a deeper look can we appreciate and understand that it is God who is orchestrating our lives. With our eyes closed, even an incredible military victory can seem to be unrelated to God. But if we look for God's hand in our lives, we can find it everywhere and it will give us strength and security. We are secure in the knowledge that God will be right there with us, guiding, protecting, and bringing us to victory.

This can be so helpful to us as we think of the heroic work our nation is currently undertaking. We must do our part to support our brothers and sisters who are risking their lives to fight our enemies. At the same time, we acknowledge that God will win the war for us, and we must never forget that God can do anything, despite the odds. The security of knowing that nothing is impossible for God uplifts us and gives us hope no matter the situation. May we merit to see God's hand in our lives, both individually, and as a nation, and be blessed with peace.

*Rabbi Daniel Borsuk is Director of Development and Seventh and Eighth Grade Judaics Teacher at Maayan Torah Day School in Lake Oswego.*

*The Jewish Review regularly invites local clergy to share their insights with the community. These opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Review, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, or its staff.*

## Hellenic Center to host Ladino concert Nov. 30

*The Jewish Review staff*

Portland's Hellenic-American Cultural Center and Museum is hosting an evening of chamber music written not in Greek, but Ladino.

The museum has partnered with the Greek Chamber Music Project for "A Concert Celebrating the Jews of Greece" tomorrow, Nov. 30, at the museum at 3131 NE Glisan St. in Portland. A reception at 6:30 pm precedes a 7:30 pm concert.

"I thought it would be an interesting topic for our audiences and hopefully provide some schematic diversity to the stories and the history that we're presenting here," explained HACCM Director Maria Phoutrides.

Flutist Ellie Falaris Ganelin from GCMP is joined by Sarah Aroeste and pianist Shai Bachar. Aroeste sings both traditional pieces and her own original compositions in Ladino and is an activist for the preservation of Ladino culture and language.

"Sarah is actually going to be showing video footage and photographs from her family's experience in Greece and what's now Northern Macedonia during the performance and she'll also be projecting some of the lyrics on the screen as well so that people can follow along," Phoutrides said.

The event is co-sponsored by the University of Portland's Hellenic Studies Program, the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at Portland State University, Congregation Ahavath Achim, John Skimas, Stefanos and Mary Vertopolous, Ben Braat and Stephanie Whalen.

Tickets are \$40, \$35 for HACCM Members, with free admission for those 12 and under. To purchase tickets, visit [tinyurl.com/HACCM-Concert](https://tinyurl.com/HACCM-Concert).

"I think this is going to be a really a really great opportunity," Phoutrides said, "to come together and celebrate some really beautiful music and think about the power and the resilience of culture."

See the latest Jewish jobs at  
[jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/jewish-jobs](https://jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/jewish-jobs)

### VOICES FROM ISRAEL

HEAR FROM PEOPLE ON THE GROUND

WEDNESDAYS 9-10 AM PST THROUGH DECEMBER

<p>NOVEMBER 29</p>  <p>DROR ISRAEL Funding Partner of JFGP</p>	<p>DECEMBER 6</p>  <p>IDF BRIEFING FOR THE PORTLAND JEWISH COMMUNITY</p>	<p>DECEMBER 13</p>  <p>SOFIE BERZON MACKIE Survivor of Kibbutz Be'eri</p>
<p>DECEMBER 20</p>  <p>WarTime Diaries</p> <p>ISRAEL STORY Podcast</p>	<p>DECEMBER 27</p>  <p>JDC Funding Partner of JFGP</p>	 <p>ISRAEL WEBINARS <a href="https://jewishportland.org/israelwebinars">jewishportland.org/israelwebinars</a></p>  <p>Jewish Federation of Greater Portland</p>



# Obituaries

Submit obituaries to The Jewish Review's online form at [form.jotform.com/JFGP/jr-obituary](http://form.jotform.com/JFGP/jr-obituary)

## SHELLI STERN

It is with deep sadness that Congregation Shaarie Torah announces the passing of Shelli Stern, z"l Sunday, Nov. 12. She was 74 years old.

She is survived by her stepmother, Myra Jackson; sisters Abby (Rick) Menashe and Suzi (Bob) Fiore; stepbrothers Todd Coblens, Ross, z"l (Sarah) Coblens, and Glen (Mia Birk) Coblens; cousins Tom (Mary Jane) Stern, Eve (Les Gutfreund) Stern, and Sharon (Steve Rallison) Stern; and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her parents, Sol Stern, z"l, Sylvia Stern Jackson, z"l and Hy Jackson, z"l.

The funeral will be held Thursday, Nov. 16 at 2 pm at Shaarie Torah Cemetery, 8013 SE 67th Avenue in Portland.

## RALPH HOCKLEY

It is with deep sadness that Congregation Shaarie Torah announces the passing of Ralph Hockley, z"l, beloved father of Cliff Hockley. Ralph died Wednesday, Nov. 8 in Dallas, TX. He was 98 years old.

He is survived by his wife, Carolyn Glover Hockley; children Denise Hockley, Cliff (Julie) Hockley, Heidi (Greg) Hargis, Kirk (Michelle) Harris and Kris (Donna) Harris; 12 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held on Sunday, Dec. 10th at 2 pm Central Time at Congregation Shearith Israel in Dallas, TX. The service may be viewed live online at [shearith.live/beck-family-sanctuary](http://shearith.live/beck-family-sanctuary) or

[facebook.com/ShearithLifecyle](https://facebook.com/ShearithLifecyle).

## ELIZABETH 'CHRIS' FEVES

Elizabeth Christine Feves, z"l, known to her loved ones as Chris, passed away peacefully Nov. 25 at her home in Sherwood, Ore. She was born Feb. 26, 1949 in Chicago, Ill., to Dr. Victor Gregory and Dr. Cecilia Dolores Gregory. Chris was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Michael Gregory of Walnut Creek, Calif.

Chris is survived by her loving husband, Michael Feves; and their children and stepchildren, Leira Feves Rodriguez, Victor Feves, Jordana Levenick and Margot Pearmine; as well as her sister, Victoria Leary. Chris leaves behind three wonderful grandchildren, Sadie Levenick, Henry Levenick and Jax Pearmine.

Chris was a strong, smart and compassionate individual who had a deep love of animals, especially horses. In her late 30's she acquired her first horse when her mother knew someone who wanted to give their horse away to a good home. Anyone involved with horses knows that there is no such thing as a 'free' horse. Mickey was the beginning of a new lifestyle for Chris. Eventually, Chris and her husband Michael built a horse boarding and training facility in Sherwood, Ore. Chris competed in dressage, jumping and eventing, but mostly she just wanted to be around horses and other animals. Throughout her life she cared for and loved over a dozen dogs and countless cats, not counting the strays that she found

homes for.

In addition to equestrian activities, Chris loved downhill skiing, watercolor painting, reading and traveling with her husband in their Airstream trailer.

Chris attended Laurelhurst Elementary School in Portland, and she spent most of her high school years at Summerhill School in England while her mother attended medical school in Maryland. Upon her return to the United States, she earned a BS degree in Geology at Portland State University where she also worked as a teaching assistant. After gaining several years of experience working as a geotechnical engineer, she returned to school at Texas A&M University to work on a Ph.D. degree in Geotechnical Engineering.

Chris' professional career included a wide range of experiences. She was a team leader at the Basalt Isolation Project at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Richland, Wash. She conducted numerous site investigations and monitored construction at many projects in the Pacific Northwest including construction of the Satsop Nuclear Plants in Elma, Wash. Chris and her husband Michael founded Earth Dynamics and worked together on many geophysical field studies and rock testing projects.

A funeral will be held at 11 a.m., Nov. 29, 2023, at Ahavai Shalom Cemetery Chapel, 9323 S.W. First Ave., Portland, OR. No flowers please. Contributions in her memory may be made to Forward Stride at [www.forwardstride.org](http://www.forwardstride.org) or to an animal welfare organization of your choice.

## Klezmetics play Portland Dec. 6

*The Jewish Review staff*

Grammy Award-winning Jewish roots band The Klezmetics will visit Portland Wednesday, Dec. 6, for an evening of Jewish-inspired music at the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts in Beaverton. With their unique blend of klezmer music mixed with shtetl melodies, raucous Latin stomps, wild jazz riffs, and provocative Arabic, African, American, and Balkan rhythms, the NYC-based band brings their acclaimed program Happy Joyous Hanukkah - which sets lyrics by the late Woody Guthrie to

their delightful original compositions - to audiences across the US this holiday season.

Happy Joyous Hanukkah features Klezmetics members Lorin Sklamberg (lead vocals, accordion, guitar, piano), Frank London (trumpet, keyboards, vocals) and Paul Morrisett (bass, tsimbl, vocals) Matt Darriau (kaval, clarinet, saxophone, vocals) and Lisa Gutkin (violin, vocals) and Richie Barshay (drums, vocals).

Tickets range from \$30-50 and can be purchased at [thereser.org/event/the-klezmetics/](http://thereser.org/event/the-klezmetics/)

## Events

See upcoming community events online at [jewishportland.org/community-calendar](http://jewishportland.org/community-calendar)

