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Leadership through the lens of Torah

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Debbie Plawner was looking to plan something special for her sister Kim Rosenberg's birthday. The special something became a celebration for the whole community.

Plawner has been taking classes with Jewish educator, mentor and scholar Yiscah Smith online; when Kim who previously studied at Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, started sending her episodes of Pardes' podcast including Smith, it sparked an idea.

"I said 'Kim, that's my teacher,' and I knew I really wanted for my sister to meet my teacher," Plawner recalled.

Smith, a teacher at Pardes, Applied Jewish Spirituality and the Institute for Jewish Spirituality in Jerusalem, had a West Coast speaking tour in the works when she was contacted by Plawner about coming to Portland.



Yiscah Smith presents a lecture on leadership development Thursday, Nov. 21, at Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland. The lecture was part of a weekend of appearances in Portland for Smith, a teacher at Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and other Jewish education organizations. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

As it turned out, Rosenberg's birthday was right in the middle of a series of appearances Smith was scheduled to make in San Francis-

co. Smith thought it was a great idea, covering her own airfare to make it to Portland for the weekend.

The subject was of Rosen-

berg's choosing – she asked for a course on leadership development, Plawner ex-

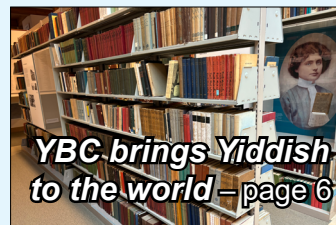
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NEXT Podcast:



Releasing Dec. 11
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Kabbalah: A tradition unveiled

Dr. Yosef Rosen, the inaugural Director of Jewish Life and Learning at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, holds a doctorate in Jewish Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, where his dissertation focused on medieval Kabbalah and The Zohar, one of the foundational works of Kabbalistic literature. He spoke with Jewish Review Editor Rockne Roll about the history and meaning of Jewish mysticism. A portion of their conversation is transcribed below. This transcript has been edited for length and clarity. The full conversation is available in “Kabbalah Crash Course with Dr. Yosef Rosen” from The Jewish Review Podcast, available on all major podcast platforms.

The Jewish Review: What is Kabbalah? And since I’ve usually heard it defined as Jewish mysticism, which is a word that’s kind of nebulous, at least to me, what is mysticism?

Dr. Yosef Rosen: I’ll give almost 3 answers because it’s not an easy question to answer. What does the word ‘Kabbalah’ mean? Kabbalah means tradition in the sense to receive Kabbalah. We might know that phrase from *Kabbalat Shabbat*, which is the Friday night service when we receive Shabbat. *Kabbalat Shabbat* has nothing to do with Kabbalah, it’s just the same word; to receive, to welcome. What do we receive? We receive tradition. Now, growing up, I was steeped in tradition. But I was not ever told that there existed something called Kabbalah. It’s this amazing example of something that is called tradition, but it was meant to be a secret tradition. So that’s what I would say the first answer to what is Kabbalah? It’s tradition, but it’s the hidden tradition.

JR: Not the “singing in a Broadway show” tradition.

YR: And not the “here’s how to eat matzo on Passover” tradition. It’s “what is the hidden depths of meaning in Passover that we might not want everyone to know?”

Kabbalah is interested in what is below the level of the explicit, going a little deeper and that sense also it’s, I think, the best model of something that is within the Jewish tradition that can simultaneously completely rewire our conceptions of what it is to be traditional. We generally think there’s a traditional Jew and there’s a secular Jew and we know what each of those two things look like. Kabbalah offered almost a third way forward, where you weren’t traditional in the old-school way and you weren’t secular in the sense that you wanted nothing to do with Judaism, that mystical, deeper relationship to tradition offered another path. So that’s one explanation of Kabbalah. It’s hidden tradition.

The second, more poetic, existential understanding of Kabbalah, is that to receive Kabbalah, to be a Kabbalist, is to be one who is open to receiving spiritual wisdom, spiritual experience. Many people have many reasons why they go to synagogue. Maybe it’s to schmooze. Maybe it’s to feel like, “I’m connecting to my Jewish people, I’m connecting to something my parents did.” A Kabbalistic experience in synagogue would be, “How do I open my heart, how do I open my consciousness, to tap into something that can in-

spire me? Something can transform me?”

The third is the more complex one. That’s the historical question of what is Kabbalah? That takes us to the medieval period, about 700 years ago, and it starts with someone who was not a Kabbalist, not a mystic: Moses Maimonides, the Rambam. Maimonides is the paragon of a Jewish philosopher, and he said, “I’ve studied all of Judaism and Judaism has no mystical tradition.

So, let’s define mystical. It comes from the same root as something that is hidden. If something is misty, it’s hidden, it’s covered. So mystical has that sense of being hidden or obscured. Maimonides said in the diaspora, as Jews were in exile, they lost their mystical traditions. They lost their secrets. So, if we want to go a little deeper in Judaism, we can’t turn inwards. Instead, Maimonides says something radical: We must turn to Greek philosophy. For Maimonides, the secrets of Judaism were to be found in Aristotle, in Plato, in the Arabic Revival and translations of Greek philosophy that was happening his time. Other Jews, living in mostly in Christian Europe, they hear this and they say, “No way. Not true. I am a lineage-holder of mystical wisdom. I am a lineage-holder of Kabbalah, of hidden tradition.” That really begins this flourishing of Kabbalah, these Rabbis saying, “Maimonides, you’re wrong. We don’t have to turn elsewhere for what’s mystical, for what’s spiritual. We have that within our own tradition.”

There’s something about that today, too, where a lot of Jews since the 50s and 60s, they went to Eastern religions, they went elsewhere to find spiritual depth. At the same time, and recently, Jews have said, “Kabbalah is that mystical well-spring. Within Judaism, you don’t need to go elsewhere. We have that within our tradition as well.”

JR: It’s interesting to hear that that Maimonides, the author of the Mishnah Torah, this person that’s so closely associated with written *halacha* and very rationalist tradition almost accidentally kick-started a revolution in Jewish thought.

YR: He really did. He was a theologian as well. He wrote the Mishnah Torah, which is his legal work. He also has a big theological philosophical work called “The Guide for the Perplexed,” and that’s where he makes this claim. He also makes an even more radical claim that we can’t say anything really about God, that we don’t have the human capacity, the linguistic categories, to say anything meaningful about God. God is so abstract, so beyond all things. There too, the Kabbalists said, “no, you’re going a little too far.” You can simultaneously say that the divine is infinite and finite. They invented a term called *Ein Sof*, which means “that which is without end,” that really at its core God is without end, the infinite. But the Kabbalists also said the infinite begins to emerge into the finite world in these structures, called the *Sefirot*, the Tree of Life. That’s a little more complicated for our podcast, you can look that up on YouTube or Wikipedia. But there, too, they were responding to Maimonides.



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Hillel holds Yizkor service for Trans Day of Remembrance

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Jonah Kaplan became involved in Oregon Hillel his freshman year at the University of Oregon – at around the same time they came out as transgender.

Now, as a senior, Kaplan fulfilled a long-envisioned plan to honor their fellow trans people in a uniquely Jewish way through Oregon Hillel's Transgender Day of Remembrance Yizkor service held Wednesday, Nov. 20 in Eugene.

It's a program Kaplan has wanted to put together since they became a Duck.

"Coming here to Oregon and to UO in particular, was this great opportunity for me to live in and explore that identity a little more outwardly and openly," they said. "I really enjoyed beginning to have Jewish queer space with other queer Jews

for the first time."

But with the High Holy Days often lining up with the beginning of the academic year, it was tough to get the planning and advance work together to make the service a reality. Kaplan remained committed to the concept of a distinctly Jewish observance for Transgender Day or Remembrance – and with the right timing and preparation this year, brought it together.

"I initially wasn't really meaning to do a Yizkor service, but I did want it to feel familiar, at least for folks that are growing up in Jewish spaces. I didn't want to totally reinvent the wheel, because we've been around for so long, there's no reason to be doing that," Kaplan said.

The Yizkor service, tradi-

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P'nai Or Recipe Book holds congregants' culinary treasures

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

P'nai Or of Portland has long been known for its sights and sounds; the byproduct of the Jewish Renewal congregation's musical services. But its members also know about the tastes of the congregation – now, so can everyone.

The P'nai Or Recipe Book, a collection of the culinary traditions and favorites of P'nai Or's congregants organized by synagogue administrator Bronte Grimm, is available to purchase and pickup at the congregation's Chanukah party Sunday, Dec. 28.

The subject of the congregation's collection of culinary gifts came up at P'nai Or's council retreat earlier this year. Someone suggested offhand that it would be fun to have a collection of members' recipes in book form. It was just an idea, and not initially a serious one, but Grimm decided to bring it to life.

"We could actually do that," Grimm recalled thinking. "I can make that happen."

A multi-talented artist with experience in publishing, Grimm set to work collecting recipes from her fellow congregants. Around 35 recipes came in, covering a wide range of tastes and traditions.

"We have all kinds of gluten-free challahs. There are some wonderful lentil dishes, there is this peach tart that looks, and is, absolutely delicious and some amazing honey cake as well," Grimm said, mentioning the dishes compiled in the volume. "Anything from a recipe that they follow religiously from a family cookbook, something they've come up with themselves, anything that had a connection to our members."

As P'nai Or often has potluck events, many of the collection's dishes will be familiar to congregants.

"I'm lucky enough that I've actually had almost every recipe that was sent in," Grimm said. "I feel honored that they would put so much effort and love into these things so that they can share it with us. It speaks to the love in our community."

The submissions came in a variety of forms, from typed out text to pictures of pages in family cookbooks and recipe cards. The compiling, formatting, and design (including the cover) has been its own ongoing labor of love for Grimm.

The collection, Grimm explained, "really gets at what P'nai Or is about and that we truly value our members, that they are our family and that we don't take it lightly when they put labor into bringing us food."

Each book costs \$18. Orders are due by Dec. 9 and can exclusively be picked up at P'nai Or's Chanukah party – shipping is not available. Grimm said it's likely that many of the collection's contributors will be on hand at the party and willing to sign copies.

For more information or to purchase a copy, visit give-butter.com/RecipeBookPnaiOr.

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REGISTRATION TODAY



JNF, Wadi Attir making Negev desert bloom



From left, Wadi Attir founder Dr. Mohammed Al-Anbari and CEO Nimrod Rogel speak at a Jewish National Fund event at Congregation Beth Israel Tuesday, Nov. 19. JNF is a supporter of Wadi Attir, a Bedouin-owned regenerative agriculture project in Southern Israel's Negev Desert. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

At the founding of the State of Israel, David Ben Gurion spoke of making the desert bloom. Today, Jewish National Fund is doing exactly that.

The organization hosted representatives from Wadi Attir for a pair of speaking engagements in Portland at Rose Schnitzer Manor on Monday, Nov. 18 and at Congregation Beth Israel on Tuesday, Nov. 19.

Wadi Attir, founded by Dr. Mohamed Al-Anbari, is a holistic regenerative agriculture project site in the Negev desert in southern Israel. Al-Anbari, a Bedouin scientist, founded the project to help create better opportunities for not just Bedouins, but everyone in Southern Israel.

"We brought this innovative approach to make a change in the community," he said to in-person and virtual attendees at Beth Israel. "We're bringing the

heritage and legacy of the Bedouin, how to survive, and demonstrating it as a model of socially and economically upgrading the community by facing the issue of climate change."

Saul Korin, Pacific Northwest regional director for JNF, told *The Jewish Review* that the projects at the Wadi Attir site span a range of methods of getting the most out of a harsh environment while also minimizing the ecological impact of human habitation on the land.

"They're doing soil rehabilitation, agri-diversity, water and soil conservation," Korin explained, "all the stuff that's important when you live in a desert and don't have a lot of environmental resources."

While the project is Bedouin founded and owned, the team running it and the people who benefit from its work include all those living in Southern Israel.

"It is shared with the society in the Negev," Al-Anbari said. "It does not

belong to any village or any tribe."

One part of that society is the project CEO, Nimrod Rogel, who presented with Al-Anbari in Portland.

"As a Jewish Israeli family man that lives in the Negev," Rogel told the audience at Beth Israel, "for me to have a shared society and a project that is doing positive work with my neighbors, this is the best thing that can happen to my community, and my community is not only the village that I live in, but also my neighbors of the Bedouin villages around me."

Rogel explained that when living nomadically, Bedouins would leave no trace of their presence when they left an area. Now, as Southern Israeli communities have become less nomadic, paid modernization has left desert landscapes filled with trash. As the portion of the Bedouin population over the age of 65 has dwindled to two percent, Rogel and the Wadi Attir project are racing to recapture Bedouin knowledge and apply it to the challenges of modern communities.

"Bedouins survived the desert for thousands of years, so they have enormous knowledge and amazing knowledge on how to survive and how to live in the desert in a sustainable way," Rogel said. "We're trying to take all of this knowledge and maintain it, write it down."

While Wadi Attir's work has enormous potential to benefit the lives of Jewish Israelis, JNF is also supporting the project as part of its commitment to aid development throughout Israel, for all Israelis.

"Bedouins don't always get the services that the rest of Israelis get, so this is a way that we work with them, one of our most vulnerable and marginalized communities," Korin told *The Jewish Review*. "JNF really does its best to provide for the whole community."

Learn more about this work online at my.jnf.org/wadiattir.



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

A Center that's everywhere

Yiddish Book Center's impact reaches beyond its Mass. campus

By JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN
For *The Jewish Review*

It's really a very Jewish story: 3,019 miles from Portland there is a building dedicated to rescued Yiddish books. It exists because of one man's unquenchable passion. And its board chair is a Portland resident.

The Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Mass., was founded by Aaron Lansky in 1980, the same year it was believed roughly 70,000 books in Yiddish still existed on our continent. That very same year saw the recovery of 70,000 books alone, written in the language that was the *mamaloshen* (mother tongue) of about 80 percent (roughly 11 million) of the world's Jewish people for 1,000 years.

Today the Center's Yiddish book collection numbers 1.5 million.

And counting.

Bonus: You don't have to travel to Western Massachusetts to take advantage of the Yiddish Book Center and its astounding offerings. (Lansky himself said its mere existence does feel "like a miracle.")

"Sure, make a pilgrimage," said Susan Bronson, who is the Center's first executive director and has held the position for 15 years. "But much of what we offer is not here."

Which makes it entirely accessible to us here in the Pacific Northwest, and to anyone else, anywhere.

"At the beginning, it was only about collecting books," Ira Wagner said of the hardscrabble genesis of the Center that now sits on 10 acres of land (with an apple orchard) provided by Hampshire College, Lansky's alma mater, a couple hours from where the original *zamlar* – book collector – grew up in a southeastern corner of Massachusetts.

Wagner is board chair of the Yiddish Book Center five years running and a 20-year member. ("I probably first sent them a check for \$18 to become a member," said Wagner, who made Portland home about three years ago.)

"The Center is for the world to know Yiddish everything, instead of knowing little to nothing," he said. "Over time it became an intellectual institute... a substantive, dynamic, amazing place at the forefront of trying to disseminate this information to the world," Wagner said



Yiddish books from among the Yiddish Book Center's 1.5 million (and counting) volumes, carefully itemized, stacked and displayed as part of the Center's permanent exhibit in Amherst, Mass. All are available for purchase. (Jenn Director Knudsen for *The Jewish Review*)

in a recent phone interview.

Scholars like Prof. Natan Meir, chair of the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at Portland State University, mine what he termed the Center's "invaluable" online resources.

"Scanned Yiddish books are by far the most valuable resource for me as a researcher," Meir said via email.

"The books in their digital library would take me weeks to get through interlibrary loan, if I could get them at all," he said, adding that he also refers students to the Center's Steiner Summer Yiddish Program, where learners from near and far gather to dive into Yiddish language and culture.

"Yiddish is not the whole story of the Jewish people by far," Lansky said in a recent interview via Zoom, "but it's a very important chapter in it. Without it, we'll never fully understand where we came from."

Speaking of chapters, let's return to the books.

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Last month, my daughter Alyssa and I had the good fortune to be two of the 10,000 people each year to visit the Yiddish Book Center in person.

In preparation for my visit – and at Wagner's very strident recommendation – I read Lansky's 2005 book "Outwitting History," whose subheader is no exaggeration: "The amazing adventures of a man who rescued a million Yiddish books." (I also strongly recommend it.)

In 312 pages, Lansky tells the tale of a venture that began in his early 20s to save the world's Yiddish books, including those neither the Nazis nor the U.S.S.R. succeeded in eliminating. It was an exhausting hunt from which he never tired.

"At 23, I had an understanding of what was at stake," Lansky said. If people's books in their vernacular are discarded and forgotten, the same would happen to the people themselves.

"Yiddish was quite central to Jewish thought and consciousness. How could a bookish people discard their books?" Lansky asked rhetorically, referring to the core question that launched his literal and physical intellectual trek that began in a U-Haul truck in the mid-1970s.

The loss of Yiddish books would be

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catastrophic. Yiddish is one of 18 distinct Jewish languages and has the most current speakers, including some here in Portland. It is the Jewish language spoken today more than any of the others, according to literature from the Center.

As Dina Gorelik, our Yiddish Book Center (YBC) tour guide, put it, “Most people who fall in love with Yiddish fall in and can’t get out.”

Portlander Perry Hendin, 66, is a perfect example.

Originally from Western Canada, Hendin said his upbringing was typical of those in his generation: His Yiddish-speaking grandparents immigrated to Canada from Eastern Europe, and his parents also spoke the *mamaloshen*. He, though, learned Hebrew at day school; Yiddish was not (and so rarely is) part of the curriculum.

“When I heard that the YBC held a week-long on-site Yiddish course for adults...I decided it was a luxury I wanted to immerse myself in,” said Hendin, noting he – like many students newer to the discipline than he is – took online Yiddish classes during the pandemic. (Lansky proudly says that learning via the Center never stopped during the pandemic.)

Hendin continued in an interview via email, “When I’m there I am simply in heaven.”

There, he wanders the stacks of books more than a century old, “weep(s) at the past ancestors’ bygone lives, culture and struggles, and rejoice(s) in the resurrection mission of the organization and the energy of the people there.”

He adds that Lansky likes to say that most Yiddish



The Yiddish Book Center includes in its permanent collection shelves upon shelves of Yiddish typewriters; most are preserved behind glass for safekeeping, but this one is out for patron's use. (Jenn Director Knudsen for The Jewish Review)

speakers in the Center are less than 40 years old.

Just like our tour guide.

My daughter and I step into the Center – purposefully designed and constructed to resemble the traditional wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe – and are met by Gorelik, a recent college graduate and one of the Center’s fellows.

She takes us on a tour of well-lit rooms that house the permanent exhibit that opened one year ago: “Yiddish: A Global Culture.”

I instantly feel as I do when I walk into any library: So many books, so little time.

I also feel – as I believe so many American Jews of my generation do – my own personal yet tenuous connection

to Yiddish and its culture. My great-grandparents settled in Portland in the early 1900s from present-day Ukraine; they spoke Yiddish while raising children who understood their mother tongue but spoke English. Their children – my parents – knew phrases here and there. I know fewer still.

In the Center, in addition to the books painstakingly stacked seven shelves high, we’re also surrounded by strategically displayed poignant paraphernalia (about 350 objects).

Lansky – his shock of gray hair visible at the top of my computer screen – describes the Center as “a living organization that happens to have a museum on the side.”

Indeed.

The “museum” portion of the Center includes beautiful art; photographs; shelves of Yiddish typewriters; a room that recreates the turn-of-the-last century Shabbos day salons of Polish Yiddishist I.L. Peretz; and the last Yiddish linotype machine dating to the early 1900s on which the Forverts (Yiddish version of The Forward) newspaper was published.

Placed against a wall in the “Khurbn/Holocaust: Martyrs, Survivors, and Books of Remembrance” gallery is a haunting sculpture dedicated to the “vanished book” of storyteller Rokhl Brokhes that World War II disappeared from the world.

Yes, many Yiddish works vanished. But Lansky ensured countless never would, including the first-known published work of modern Yiddish literature in 1864. To shore up the point, Gorelik shares some impressive stats: The Center showcases 25,000 books for sale, priced between \$8 and \$14 per; it keeps another 100,000 in a downstairs vault; and yet another 750,000 works are in an offsite location.

Also on the tour, we meet David Mazower, the Center’s research bibliographer and chief curator.

He said, “The majority of our members don’t have the opportunity to be here and see the Center, but they’re all passionate about the mission,” to which Gorelik recited: “It’s to recover, preserve, teach and celebrate Yiddish literature and culture to advance a fuller understanding of Jewish history and identity.”

“Even if people can’t come to Amherst, they can come to the Yiddish Book Center,” Lansky said, referring to the frankly overwhelming

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amount of information available at the Center's website, such as scanned Yiddish books and those in translation that Prof. Meir of PSU and other scholars access for their research.

The website also houses a digital Yiddish library of millions of books (including children's books and works recorded by Yiddish speakers); recordings of public programs; access to live-streamed events, as well as to online language and culture classes, "The Schmooze" podcast and "Weekly Reader" e-newsletter; fellowship, scholarship and summer programs; and interviews with people well-known (like Lenoard Nimoy) and those less so, all of which are part of the Center's Wexler Oral History Project.

After our tour, Bronson, the Center's executive director, invites Alyssa and me into her office for some forward-looking insights.

Speaking at a clip both fast and enthusiastic, Bronson ticks off the Center's mul-

titudinous programs, those established and new and those Amherst-based and available elsewhere.

"We're throwing a lot of spaghetti at the wall!" she said.

For example, in September, our own Eastside Jewish Commons hosted three musical events sponsored by the Arts and Culture Initiative for Jewish Communities. This program, Bronson explains, "is a way to bring Yiddish content into Jewish communal spaces" outside the Center.

Eric Stern, the EJC's events coordinator and cultural arts ambassador, brought in a few artists, such as Yiddishist Sarah Larsson and her Minneapolis-based trio Red Thread that performed a variety of pieces including songs in Yiddish. Her concert sold out, Stern said.

Today, Lansky – who in 1989 won a MacArthur Fellowship (or "Genius Grant") for his revolutionary and indefatigable work – is 69 and preparing to retire as the Center's president. In his upcoming role as senior advi-

sor, he'll continue teaching modern Jewish literature at the Center and perhaps more widely, too, he says.

Next summer Bronson becomes the Center's president, overseeing a staff of 43 and continuing to submit grants, cultivate visionary donors and steward its \$52 million endowment – all while laser focused on the message of the centrality of Yiddish, to Jews and the wider world.

Head spinning, mind alight, I take a quick break to quench my (literal though also intellectual) thirst before leaving the Yiddish Book Center. A small sign says I'm getting a drink of water at the "Seltzer Shpritzer." The Center truly offers an education at every turn or, if remote, at every keystroke.

Bronson says the Center has about 18,000 members around the globe, noting – with a nod toward young people – that the barrier to join is low at only \$54 a year.

While no longer "young people," my final stop was at the Museum Store, where I became one of the Center's



How do you say "Harry Potter" in Yiddish? Thanks to the Yiddish Book Center, now you know how. (Jenn Director Knudsen for The Jewish Review)

newest members.

A self-described dinosaur who still keeps a hand-written daily calendar, Jenn Director Knudsen has published work in The Boston Globe, The Oregonian, the San Francisco Chronicle, The Forward and HuffPost, among other outlets. Her most recent personal essay is available at [The Mother Chapter](#). Find her on [Substack](#).

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SMITH

(continued from page 1)

plained, “so that people grappling with the changes that are happening within our community are equipped with a deeper resource that could help them deal with some of the challenges they face.”

Smith obliged with a Thursday, Nov. 21 lecture in the Stampfer Chapel at Congregation Neveh Shalom, based on a 2013 essay by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, and a 2022 essay by Rabbi David Ackerman. Both essays examined *Parshat Chukah*, the section of the Book of Numbers where Moses, for a second time, draws water from a rock with his staff.

Rabbi Sacks explains in his essay that, in the first instance of Moses drawing water from the rock, he was directed by G-d to strike the stone with his staff. In Numbers, however, the direction was to take his staff and speak to the rock. However, Moses struck the rock just as he had the first time.

The difference, Rabbi Sacks elaborated, was that these were different people than the first time around. The previous generation was slaves – they understood a stick as a tool of compelling behavior, of control through violence. Forty years on, the community Moses drew water for this second time were free people (born in the desert) – they had to learn – through speaking – to take responsibility.

“A leader must be sensitive to the call of the hour – this hour, this generation, this chapter in the long story of a people,” Rabbi Sacks wrote. “Even the greatest leader cannot meet the challenges of a different generation. That is not a failing. It is the existential condition of humanity.”



Yiscah Smith teaches her Nov. 21 class at Neveh Shalom, above, which ended with a participant breakout session, below. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)



“I’m sure some of you could suggest why we’re in a period now with some of the leaders are hunkering down, digging their heels on the ground; ‘It was, it is, and it will be.’ Meanwhile, more and more people are finding that irrelevant at best, if not offensive,” Smith said. “I think that’s so important that for our leaders today, for you as leaders in whatever capacity you’re leading, that the leadership of today is inspired by, informed by the past, but not defined by that.”

Smith, turning to Rabbi Ackerman’s piece, elaborated on what speaking would have promoted in the moment – dialogue.

“If Moses would have spoken to them, they would have worked it out,” she said. “The distinguishing component here highlights the need for leadership to be in conversation with their followers. I don’t see enough of that.”

Rabbi Ackerman examined, among others, the thoughts of Rabbi Avraham Dov, who wrote that “each

[person] was created to be in service to the Creator in a different manner, according to their soul,” as well as Rabbi Moshe Rothenberg, who wrote that a leader “must know the souls of each and every one and know the service that pertains to that soul.”

“When we weave all these ideas together, might we identify a common denominator shared by all?” Smith asked. “I would argue yes, there is a common denominator in that they all address different shades of a type of leadership that is currently sorely missing and urgently, urgently necessary.”

It’s a leadership that empowers, motivates, and inspires.

“I want my leaders to get me on fire,” Smith elaborated. “I want them to get me so that I can get me, and then I can be the best in the world, for all of you.”

The evening concluded with break-out discussions of personal purpose and how leadership can support that development.

“I really appreciated the breakout and the opportunity to listen to fellow leaders talk about the ways in which they face challenges with leaders with their communities,” Plawner said.

Smith’s weekend Portland continued with a Shabbat dinner on Friday evening and morning services on Saturday, both at private residences, before a meditation workshop Saturday evening at the Eastside Jewish Commons. Smith is releasing a new book soon, Plawner said; she hopes that the tour will include a stop in Portland and an appearance before a larger audience.

Learn more about Smith’s teaching and mentorship work at yiscahsmith.com.

Show Us Your Sukkah Photo Contest

Winner: Melissa and Oren Abu (left)
Runner Up: Cantor Rayna Green/
Congregation Beth Israel (below)



YIZKOR (continued from page 4)

tionally held four times per year in Ashkenazi communities, centers on a series of prayers in memory of deceased loved ones. Its name comes from the first words said in traditional recitations – Hebrew for “may [G-d] remember.” Transgender Day of Remembrance was first observed in 1999 to honor the memory of Rita Hester, Chanelle Pickett and Monique Thomas, Black trans women who were murdered in separate incidents in Boston in the late 1990s. Everytown for Gun Safety’s Transgender Homicide Tracker reports that 296 transgender people have been homicide victims in the United States since 2017 – a statistic which does not include suicides, which a University of California, Los Angeles School of Law study found 42 percent of American transgender adults had attempted.

Kaplan, who has led services at Oregon Hillel and is considering a future in the rabbinate, crafted the service with the assistance of Kim Rosenthal, Oregon Hillel’s Senior Jewish Educator, and resources from Keshet, a nationwide organization working toward LGBT equality in Jewish life, among others. Like many other services held at Oregon Hillel, it was not a passive experience for those attending.

“We like to get really hands on and participatory,” Kaplan said. “We’ll have different people do different readings, and then once that’s done, we recite the memorial prayer, which is the same prayer that we that we would recite as we’re placing somebody’s body into the ground after they’ve died.”

Kaplan wrote a meditation for their service rooted in Jewish trans recording artist Batya Levine’s song “We Are Good, We Are Flawed.”

“I took those words and expanded them out to help people get focused and to set down the busyness and craziness of the week. We did a bit of reflecting on trans identity,” Kaplan said. “There was one reading specifically for people who had

died a violent death, that had been murdered; I thought that it was important and meaningful to have a moment for that grief to be let out very explicitly, and so I took it and adapted it, some of its language, a little bit, and made it more general.”

Kaplan, Rosenthal and some of the attendees read a series of vignettes of historical trans Jewish figures, with students taking turns placing a stone in a vase in reflection of the Jewish tradition of placing stones on gravestones. Kaplan personally adapted versions of other readings – some to make them more relevant to the themes of Transgender Day of Remembrance, others to make work already focused on the subject more accessible or to condense it for the time constraints of the service.

“I’ve never been somebody that takes the easy way as much it would probably make my life a little bit easier,” Kaplan said of their work preparing the service. “I’ve also started more openly transitioning in the past year; I’ve gone through a lot of queer experiences in the past eight months. With everything that’s been going on over the past year, I wanted to make sure that folks felt comfortable showing up to something on our campus, both as trans people and as Jews. Not just comfortable showing up as both of those things, but encouraged actively, because both of those are identities that historically have been tough to exist in fully, authentically and honestly, especially both at the same time.”

“I think it was really powerful to be able to have a space that not only trans people, but trans Jews could be at,” Rosenthal said. “What a legacy Jonah is leaving behind for the next students to do this again, for me, too, as a queer person who’s not trans, but to be in a room of other queer people, however they identify in that rainbow spectrum, who are also Jewish and doing this very traditional service with a queer lens was magnificent. Jonah did fantastic and led the whole thing.”



Twenty four years of Turkey Day Tradition

This year's Jewish Family & Child Service Thanksgiving Food Box program was as sweet as pumpkin pie! In its 24th year, this program is possible thanks to generous community partners, donors, volunteers and agency staff. Nearly 130 boxes of Thanksgiving meal fixings helped feed hundreds of individuals throughout Portland. This year's partners include synagogues, Jewish communal organizations, grocery stores and retail outlets, as well as more than 85 volunteers of all ages. (Photos by Robyn Taylor/JFCS)



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Security Corner

New classes, new grants, new ideas

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

DEC 18

DEC 12

By JESSICA ANDERSON

It's been almost three years since I joined you as your Community Security Director. I love meaningful work, and this certainly fits the bill. There have been some changes to the program since I started – most significantly, I now officially cover the entire state of Oregon and the SW counties of Washington. I was always available to those communities as a resource, but this change codifies it and allows me to expand the program in a meaningful and supported way. Another huge add is the Federation's Security Grant program, which we started this year and is available to all organizations across the state that contribute to the JFGP security program. This Security Grant program is a commitment of \$250,000 yearly in grants to organizations for safety and security expenses. The Federation is incredibly pleased and grateful for the community support that made this grant process possible.

As I move into my fourth year, I'm also continually striving to figure out how to improve on what we're all already doing. How can I use my skills and resources most effectively? How can I facilitate organizations to work together to make us stronger? I love contemplating those questions.

What I continue to hear, particularly now, is that the rise in antisemitic news and activity is unnerving and stressful for many of you. Each of us reacts to negative news differently, and part of my role is meeting individuals and communities wherever they are on that spectrum.



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.

I'm happy to share that the Federation and the communities are working in a myriad of ways to help counter the activity we hear about. Marc often shares Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) updates in his Friday Marc's Remarks. I work with the ADL and the Oregon DOJ Bias Hotline to make sure incidents are reported and resources are made available. On the ground, there are also community groups who actively combat antisemitic graffiti by getting out and buffing out or painting over the vandalism. While these efforts are unlikely to put an end to antisemitic activity, many people feel better taking part and being a part of an effort that is doing something.

A new presidential administration is always a time of change, and I'll be monitoring these changes closely and thinking about how they might affect our community. I've started a quarterly Community Security Working Group made up of representatives from our organizations. The goal is to bring people together a few times a year to hear about what we're all doing to stay safe – it's a sharing of best practices and brainstorm-

ing new ideas. In January 2025 I'll start again with my online safety and security classes, which will be found on the JFGP Security page. Most of us recognize we live in a world where bad and unexpected events can happen out of the blue. My primary goal in offering training is for you to feel more empowered and confident about managing whatever life sends your way. Training instills confidence in ourselves that we are prepared and capable of handling the unexpected.

As always, keep up the reporting! Reporting graffiti, posters, incidents, etc. even if they seem small – is incredibly important. We know antisemitic activity is grossly under-reported. Sharing the information keeps me knowledgeable about what our community is experiencing and lets me share potential concerns with organizations. I also share the information with partners who track incidents nationally, which helps establish the basis for national programs working to combat antisemitism. Reporting can be made to me directly at janderson@securecommunitynetwork.org, 872-273-9214, or at <https://www.jewishportland.org/security>.

Milt Carl Way Award Returns February 2, 2025

By JEMI KOSTINER MANSFIELD
Congregation Shaarie Torah

The 3rd Milt Carl Way Award event, presented by BB360 (formerly B'nai B'rith Camp) and Congregation Shaarie Torah, will be celebrated at a festive brunch Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025 at 11:30 am at the synagogue's historic Northwest Portland location.

Milt Carl, ז"ל, was an icon in our community - a leader who changed the landscape of the Portland Jewish Community. Two organizations were especially important to him were B'nai B'rith Camp (now BB360) and Congregation Shaarie Torah. First launched in 2019, this special award recognizes those in the Portland community who do it "Milt's Way" and represent the two key organizations so dear to Milt's heart. Previous honorees include Jordan Schnitzer, Kyle Rotenberg, Jen Feldman, Irv Potter, Linda Nemer Singer and Priscilla Kostiner.

This year, which would have been Milt's 100th birthday, honors Renee Holzman and Larry Holzman (overall

community), Howard and Wendy Liebreich (BB360) and Sheldon Klappper (CST). Each of these individuals has shown that they care deeply about the Portland Jewish community and do profound work for many organizations. All are dedicated to encouraging others to enjoy the immense pleasure of giving and to seeing the amazing results of a community coming together to make something new a reality. In addition to receiving the award, each honoree will be gifted \$1,000 to donate to the organizations of their choice.

Milt was not just a leader and mensch, he was also a terrific father and grandfather, Michelle Koplan, CEO of BB360, recalls.

"When I was 10 years old, a song leader at BB Camp introduced the song Ani Ve'ata Neshene Et Ha' Olam (You and I will change this world together). I remember discussing the song's impact with my Uncle Milt Carl. We talked fervently about tikkun olam and serving our community with passion," she said. "Milt made an enormous impact on our

community. Howard, Wendy, Shelly, Renee and Larry have all epitomized the 'Milt Carl Way' by their example of giving to our community daily, for which we are all incredibly grateful."

To many leaders in the community, Milt was a mentor in how to conduct oneself in business, in philanthropy and in life. If you Google directions to B'nai B'rith Camp in Neotsu, you will see that you turn onto "Milt Carl Way." The name does not just refer to a street, though, but rather a philosophy of how to conduct yourself in the world. To spend your time supporting others, volunteering your time, donating a bit extra "until it hurts just a little," and always asking others to give.

Funds raised through this event will benefit the Milt Carl Campership Endowment at BB360 and the Mensch Community Youth Education Program at Congregation Shaarie Torah.

Event tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available online at BB-360.org/MiltCarlWay. For more information, please contact Wendy Aronson at waronson@bbcamp.org.

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

Dec. 4: Women's Philanthropy Gather, Network & Collaborate

Quarterly intergenerational Women's networking meet-up at 5:30 pm at Guilder Café on Northeast Fremont Street in Portland. For more information, email wendy@jewishportland.org.

Dec. 5: Learning Lab: Hope, Crisis and Community

Jewish textual study on healing divisions in community hosted by Co/Lab at the Eastside Jewish Commons at 6:15 pm. \$18. Learn more and register at colabpdx.org/learning.

Dec. 6: JFCS Grief Connection

Grief support group at 10

am on Zoom. Learn more at jfcs-portland.org/grief-connection.

Dec. 6: Monthly Sephardic Community Shabbat Dinner

Dinner and Kabbalat Shabbat service at 6:30 pm at Congregation Ahavath Achim in Portland. \$20 RSVP required to melissa@ahavathachim.com.

Dec. 7: Jewish Women's Unity Retreat

Saturday and Sunday women's retreat hosted by Congregation Kesser Israel. \$100 For more information or to register, visit kesserisrael.org/event/retreat.

Dec. 7: Mini Men-sches Tot Shabbat

Shabbat services for children ages 0-5 and families at 9 am at Congregation Beth

Israel. For more information, email chelsea@bethisrael-pdx.org.

Dec. 7: CNS PJ Havdallah in Chanukah Pajamas

Pre-Chanukah Pajama Party at Congregation Neveh Shalom at 5:15 pm for children through second grade and families. \$36 per family. Register at members.nevehshalom.org/event/PJH1224.

Dec. 8: PJA Open House

Open house for prospective students and families at 10 am at Portland Jewish Academy. RSVP at pjaproud.org/openhouse.

Dec. 8: Dignity Grows Packing Party

Hygiene supply packing event at Congregation Neveh

Shalom at 1 pm. RSVP required at jewishportland.org/dignitygrowspack.

Dec. 8: Story Hour for Children and Adults

Chanukah Marketplace story hour with Brian Rohr and Gail Pasternak at 2pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. For more information, email Eddy Shuldman at sparksofspirit@gmail.com.

Dec. 9: Judaism and the Creative Path

Conversation with Rabbi Josh Rose and artist Zac Banik at 5:30 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. For more information, email Eddy Shuldman at sparksofspirit@gmail.com.

See EVENTS, page 14

JOANNE YATVIN

With sad hearts we announce that Dr. Joanne Yatvin, z"l, passed away peacefully on Sunday, Nov. 17, 2024.

Joanne will be greatly missed by her sister and life-long Scrabble adversary, Helen Kapner, and her four grandchildren, Jeremy, Sarah, Daniel, and Jordan.

In lieu of flowers and cards, friends and family are asked to donate to the Lillian Aked Yatvin Scholarship Fund at the University of Wisconsin-Madison set up by Milton and Joanne in memory of their daughter, to support students in the School of Social Work.

CHUCK SAXE

Congregation Neveh Shalom is deeply saddened to announce the passing of longtime congregant Chuck Saxe, z"l, at the age of 72. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, Harriet; his children, Andrea Gilbreth (John) and Wayne Saxe (Karen);

and his grandchildren, Adele and Teddy Saxe. A memorial service was held Tuesday, Nov. 26. The burial service was in Adelphi, MD, at Mt. Lebanon Cemetery Sunday, Dec. 1.)

RONALD GOODMAN

It is with deep sadness that Congregation Shaarie Torah announces the passing of Ronald David Goodman, z"l. Ronald died on Thursday, Nov. 21, 2024. He was 71 years old.

He is survived by wife Donna L Goodman, daughter Jessi L Goodman and grandchild Ezra RL Goodman, granddaughters Brianna Vaughn Burlington, Jessica J Binnard-Smith and Cheyenne Rose, grandsons Brad Burlington, Jeremy Salsbury Jr, Andre Salsbury and Daejon Rose and great granddaughters Xana and Lori, plus countless cousins and beloved family, friends and community.

The funeral was on Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2024 at Shaarie Torah Cemetery.

EVENTS (continued from page 13)

Dec. 10: Mommy and Me

Mothers' networking for those with children through 18 months at 8:45 am at The Gan Preschool. \$36. Learn more at PortlandJewishPreschool.com.

Dec. 10: Trio Deloria Klezmer concert.

Free klezmer concert at 5:30 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. For more information, email Eddy Shuldman at sparksofspirit@gmail.com.

Dec. 10: 18th Annual Winter Sephardic Film Festival

Screening of "Red Sea Diving Resort" at 7 pm at Congregation Ahavath Achim. For more information, email melissa@ahavathachim.com.

Dec. 11: Stories of Light and Strength

Adult story hour with Cassandra Sagan and Gail

Pasternack at 5:30 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. For more information, email Eddy Shuldman at sparksofspirit@gmail.com.

Dec. 11: Lineage, Initiation & Oracle

Storytelling workshop with Seth Lorincezi at 7 pm at the Eastside Jewish Commons. \$12. Learn more and register at ejcpdx.org/events.

Dec. 12: The Havurah Haverim

Concert at 5:30 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. For more information, email Eddy Shuldman at sparksofspirit@gmail.com.

Dec. 13: JFCS Community Connection

Community support group at 10 am on Zoom. Learn more at jfcs-portland.org/services/counseling.

Dec. 13: Moishe Pod Young Adult Shabbat

Dinner

Monthly Shabbat dinner at Moishe Pod West Portland. For more information, email moishepodportlandwest@gmail.com.

Dec. 14: Chanukah Night Market

Annual Chanukah market at Eastside Jewish Commons at 5 pm. For more information, visit ejcpdx.org/events.

Dec. 15: Chanukah Card Making for Israeli Children and Soldiers

Card-making event at Congregation Kesser Israel at 10:30 am. Registration is required at www.kesserisrael.org/event/kindnesscards.

Dec. 15: Hadassah Chanukah Party

Women's Chanukah Party at 10:30. For more information, email pdxevolve@gmail.com.

Dec. 15: War, Peace, Justice, and Recon-

ciliation: An Interfaith Discussion

Interfaith discussion panel at Congregation Neveh Shalom at 2 pm. More information at members.nevehshalom.org/event/WPJR.

Dec. 15: PJA Annual Auction

Annual fundraiser at 6 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. For more information, email bbutterworth@pjaproud.org.

Dec. 17: Moishe Pod Torah and Tea

Jewish learning program focused on dream exploration at Moishe Pod West Portland at 7 pm. For more information, email moishepodportlandwest@gmail.com.

Dec. 18: Israeli Dancing at the Leikam Brewery

Lessons and dancing at Leikam Brewing at 6:30 pm. For more information, email rhonaf@comcast.net.

Jobs Board

See the latest Jewish jobs at jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/jewish-jobs