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## The Season of Light



Rabbi Motti Wilhelm celebrates the first night of Chanukah at Chabad of Oregon's Chanukah 1800 event at Pioneer Courthouse Square Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023. The eight-day festival begins this year on Dec. 25; read our Chanukah coverage inside on page 4 and enjoy Chanukah-themed episodes of The Jewish Review Podcast on all major podcast platforms. (Rockne Roll/Jewish Review file)

## Pinker joins JFGP

Volunteer Coordinator brings global experience to new role

By **ROCKNE ROLL**  
*The Jewish Review*

Volunteerism has been part of Merit Pinker's life since before college. Now she is helping build volunteer efforts in Portland's Jewish community as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

"We are excited to have Merit in this new volunteer coordinator role based on findings from our community study," Federation President and CEO Marc Blattner said. "Merit is an experienced Jewish communal professional and look forward to her 'jumping right in' and making great things happen."

Following a childhood in

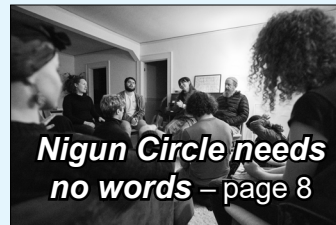
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## The "Chrismukkah Dilemma" this Dec. 25

*Rabbi Eve Posen is Associate Rabbi at Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland and a former Rukin Rabbinic Fellow with 18Doors, a foundation that supports interfaith families in Jewish engagement. She spoke with Jewish Review Editor Rockne Roll about strategies for how multi-heritage families can honor multiple winter holiday traditions in ways that work for them. A portion of their conversation is transcribed below. This transcript has been edited for length and clarity. The full conversation is available in "Managing Many Merriments with Rabbi Eve Posen" from The Jewish Review Podcast, available on all major podcast platforms.*

**The Jewish Review:** So with so many different holidays on the calendar this time of year, what are some of the challenges that interfaith families face in navigating all of this merriment?

**Rabbi Eve Posen:** It's the "Chrismukkah Dilemma," as it were. What do we do with our different holidays happening around the same time? How do we keep them separate and be respectful of that separation and not denigrate anyone's tradition? It's definitely a challenge to do, especially in a year like this year where Chanukah and Christmas are exactly aligned. Chanukah begins on Dec. 25 and ends on New Year's Day, 2025. So I think some

of the challenges are: How do you keep distinct traditions in a way that works for you? Especially with lighting the Hanukkah candles this year and it being Christmas, which do you choose or do you bring them together, and how do you bring them together? How does it feel if you're celebrating a different faith tradition outside of Christmas, that festival at the same time as you want to have Chanukah and not put them in competition with each other?

I hear that answer often is "separate but equal," but also in this space of not wanting one to seem better or more fun than the other, and limiting also the amount of resources we put into any kind of celebration. If you're a parent, you're likely exhausted this time of year, too.

**JR:** What are some of the ways that you've come across that families can handle these sorts of challenges?

**REP:** In my experience, the families that handle these challenges best are the ones where the adults are having conversations ahead of time. Now is a great time to be having those conversations, or at least having conversations outside of earshot of the children, because our children, we know, listen and pick up everything, especially the things we don't want them to pick up in adult conversations. For some reason, their hearing is much better at that moment. So it's having a pre-conversation about what it's going to look like that's as simple as if you're going to have a tree. That's a conversation to have.

I think it goes back to what's the essence of each holiday for the parent whose faith tradition it is. So if it's not Chanukah without "x," let's say it's latkes, but the day that you would normally make latkes happens to be the day of your co-parent's Christmas

party. Maybe it's the smell of latkes. They have latke scented candles now. If the (Christmas) tree is triggering for a Jewish parent to have in their home, and the real reason that the non-Jewish parent wants to have a tree is because it's not this season of the year without that smell of the tree, there's candles. Thinking about what the essence is and what the core value of your own belief is a really good way of making sure that it's not a tit-for-tat kind of situation, but sharing with the children why it matters to you will matter to them as well.

**JR:** I think you point out something important: that it's not just a matter of accommodating the key pieces of both traditions, but the fact that some parts of one tradition can be triggering for someone who comes from another tradition and has had whatever experiences that they've had along the way as an individual person.

**REP:** I think that our larger world outside of interfaith families also struggles with this. There's the ongoing "Happy Holidays" versus "Merry Christmas" or "holiday parties" that are Christmas parties in disguise, trying to be politically correct. It's often easier and less frustrating for the non-Christmas celebrator if you just call it what it is. If you're going to make Christmas cookies, make Christmas cookies. If you want to decorate Chanukah cookies, decorate Chanukah cookies. Calling them "holiday cookies" is way more confusing if you're celebrating both holidays in some way, for children and also for adults. Every human wants to be seen. And when we whitewash it and say "happy holidays," and there's one blue snowflake and everything else is red and green, there's a subtext there, and that's what we want to try to avoid. We want to actually be clear in what we're saying.



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# Families forge tradition amid calendar crunch

By ROCKNE ROLL

*The Jewish Review*

In the depths of winter, the light of a *Hanukkah*, the nine-armed menorah that is the focal point of Chanukah, is always appreciated.

This year, in particular, the candles will illuminate something of a calendar crunch, with the first of the holiday's eight nights falling on Dec. 25. As 42 percent of married Jews in Portland are wed to non-Jewish spouses, according to last year's Community Study, there are plenty of families in Portland trying to navigate the overlap of not just Chanukah and Christmas, but other celebrations, as well. Kwanza, Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, and other holidays with dates late in the Gregorian calendar have the potential to overlap with Chanukah. Christmas, with its broad secularization and pop culture gravitas, is the biggest challenge to handle, especially when the calendars line up like this.

"It's the Christmakkah Dilemma, as it were; what do we do with our different holidays happening around the same time?" Congregation Neveh Shalom Associate Rabbi Eve Posen asked *The Jewish Review* Podcast. "How do we keep them separate and be respectful of that separation and not denigrate anyone's tradition? It's definitely a challenge to especially in a year like this year."

One of the most important tools to help navigate those challenges is communication – early and often.

"We had conversations very early on in our relationship about what that looked like and how that looked like and what felt right for our family," Rachel Nelson, the Director of Educational Initiatives and Associate Director of Community Relations at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, said of how she's negotiated the holidays with her husband, Jason who was raised outside the Jewish community, and their three children. "I think it's a personal decision that has to be made by every single family and couple."

They're big decisions to make, and with so many holidays together, one of the decisions is how not to get them all jumbled.

"It always felt like it was a lot to navigate to keep the holidays separate and also maintain the idea that there are gifts at Hanukkah, but it's also not Jewish Christmas," explained journalist and *Jewish Review* contributor Jenn Director Knudsen. She and her non-Jewish husband, Dave, raised a pair of daughters who are now college age. "It's fun to see as young adults that they look forward to Hanukkah."

Lauren Marx is on that same journey in the present tense. Her non-Jewish husband has two children, ages 14 and 10, that live with the couple full time. It's helped that her husband has mastered Jewish cooking and makes outstanding latkes, she explained.

"I think it's just a conversation every year," she said.

This year, the family is headed to Florida, where they'll embark on a multigenerational cruise around the Caribbean with Marx's parents. Erev Chanukah/Christmas Day will find them in Jamaica.

"I don't know what that'll look like this year," she explained.

While flexibility – and communication – are essential parts of navigating the season in a mixed heritage environment, another step is the development of traditions. For the Marx family, who came together through a mutual admiration of professional basketball superstar LeBron James, the National Basketball Association's slate of nationally televised games on Dec. 25 is a key part of the season.

"My favorite tradition this time of year is watching basketball on Christmas Day," Marx said.

For Director Knudsen, their family's Chanukah tradition is one of both togetherness and *tzedakah*.

"The seventh night of Chanukah has traditionally been designated in our family as the night we each of us choose a charity that we're going to give to," she said. "Dave and I match the gift that the girls give to the charity of their choice."

For Nelson, she makes her signature cheesecake recipe twice a year – for Shavuot and for Chanukah, the latter honoring the connection of Judith, the Jewish biblical heroine who plied an enemy general with cheese and wine before decapitating him, with the holiday.

Nelson has had the conversation with her children about Santa Claus and how their family looks at the bearded gift-bringer differently than some of their family members – or other kids at their school.

"To us, Santa is a fictional character, just like in the movies and storybooks. To some, this is a real thing, and we don't yuck other people's yum, so we just don't talk about that with our cousins," she elaborated. "On the same token, I found out later that my sister-in-law had had the conversation that that my kids don't believe [in Santa]; that doesn't mean that Santa is any less real for them, but that that's not something that lives in our home."

For some, certain expressions of Christmas celebration are secular enough that it doesn't feel like an impingement on their Jewish faith.

"The lights and whatever, you want to listen to like some Christmas music, that's totally fine," Marx said. "The second it starts to get religious, I'm not comfortable with it."

For Director Knudsen, the first year she was engaged to her husband was the first year she had lived with a Christmas tree. That was 29 years ago – 28 more trees have come and gone since. It's taken some getting used to.

"There were years where I was like, 'Oh, there's this thing in the corner. Look the other way.' And then it was like, 'Fine. It's festive, it smells good, it's very much part of what's important to my husband, and that's always going to be there,'" she said. "I think part of my issue was, 'Is this a threat to my own sense of Judaism?' That went the way of the dodo bird many, many years ago."

Director Knudsen's family still lights their candles all eight nights of Chanukah, because that's important to her. There are as many ways to celebrate the season as there are families – and each one gets to make the decision that's right for theirs.

"You have those conversations knowing what you feel

See **CHANUKAH**, page 6



## Dignity Grows packs plenty at Dec. party

Dignity Grows volunteers packed more than 570 hygiene totes for partner agencies at their Sunday, Dec. 8 packing party at Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland. Those in attendance heard from representatives of A Safe Place Family Justice Center, Transition Projects, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center and Our Just Future about how the totes they pack change the lives of those who receive them, and a discussion of advocacy efforts for U.S. House Bill 3646, which would require Medicare to cover menstrual hygiene products and bar sales taxes on those supplies, among other stipulations. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)



# Kosher cupcakes - for a worthy cause

By ROCKNE ROLL

*The Jewish Review*

Tucked into a small storefront in Multnomah Village is one of Portland's few kosher bakeries, and a spot that works for a good cause.

Sarah Bellum's Bakery and Workshop was founded in 2016 by Rik Lemoncello, a professor of speech-language pathology (better known as speech therapy) at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

"I received an award with some funding to start up a new program, and decided that a bakery for hiring and working with folks with brain injuries to get back out into the community was going to be a great a great model," he said.

The bakery's name is a play on "cerebellum," the portion of the brain which controls motor functions, including speech. The staff is largely comprised of people dealing with long-term brain injuries – people whose challenges can exclude them from much of the rest of society.

"For many of our participants, it's an opportunity to get out of the house, to have something with purpose and meaning to do and have a sense of connection," Lemoncello said. "One of the biggest problems after brain injury is social isolation. So having a place where you can feel comfortable, you don't have to explain yourself, and you get to do something with purpose and meaning is valuable."

Two years ago, the bakery received kosher dairy certification from Oregon Kosher. It's a process that started when Lemoncello, who's not Jewish, realized that the bakery's location in Multnomah Village put him near the core of Portland's Orthodox Jewish community.

"I was informed that there are no other kosher bakeries in Southwest Portland other than Safeway," he said. "We can do a product that's much better than a Safeway cupcake or baked treat, and make it more accessible."

The kosher certification process was long, including re-vamping the bakery's entire supply chain to ensure that every ingredient that went into each sweet treat was kosher. With only one set of ovens and facilities, their kosher dairy certification means even the vegan cupcakes are *halachically* a dairy product.

The bakery operates as a 501c3 charitable organization – Lemoncello is a volunteer, and the bakery secured its location thanks to the generosity of the building's owner after operating in its early years at Farmer's Markets in Hillsdale

## CHANUKAH (continued from page 4)

comfortable with and knowing that this might evolve and change. What may have felt comfortable before you had children may not feel so comfortable once you have children," Nelson said. "I think it's keeping those open-ended conversations ongoing, keeping those opportunities to talk available and checking in with yourself and each other before each holiday."

For more insight on how interfaith families can navigate the



Staff at Sarah Bellum's package a holiday cupcake order Thursday, Dec. 12. The bakery's staff are primarily individuals with long-term brain injuries. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

and Beaverton.

"Everything goes back into the organization," Lemoncello said. "We are not a lucrative production bakery. Sales of our products funds about half of our expenses and the rest comes from fundraising and grant-writing support."

Not lucrative, perhaps, but an invaluable connection to community and something approaching normalcy for the 45 brain injury survivors who make the operation go.

"We're all in the same boat," bakery staffer Brent said of his colleagues.

Now 60 years old, Brent was 24 when he was assaulted outside a bar in San Diego. The attack left him in a coma for three months and hospitalized for a year. He started working at Sarah Bellum's in 2017.

"I love this, this is my social outlet," he said. "I come here to be around people, like one of the people."

Among Sarah Bellum's holiday offerings is an extra-chocolate cupcake decorated in blue and white. The bakery will also be producing hamantaschen for Congregation Kesser Israel's Purim celebrations in 2025.

More information is available online at [sarahbellumbakery.org](http://sarahbellumbakery.org).

holiday season, listen to Rabbi Posen on The Jewish Review Podcast in "Managing Many Merriments with Rabbi Eve Posen," available on all major podcast platforms and at [rss.com/podcasts/jewishreviewpdx](http://rss.com/podcasts/jewishreviewpdx), along with last year's Chanukah episode, "Chanukah Cuisine with Sonya Sanford." You can also find resources for multi-heritage families at the Federation's Chanukah Happenings page at [jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources24](http://jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources24).

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# Beit Daniel leader makes first visit to Portland

By ROCKNE ROLL  
*The Jewish Review*

Rabbi Meir Azari grew up in a traditional Sephardic family in Northern Israel. His path since then has been anything but.

Rabbi Azari, the senior rabbi of The Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv, has become one of the leading figures in non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel since opening Beit Daniel in Tel Aviv in 1991. That first location has grown to five distinct congregations in multiple buildings around the metropolitan area, including a guest house for foreign visitors in Jaffa. Rabbi Azari has written three books, including a recently released volume on Jewish leadership.

He's also traveled extensively throughout the United States on speaking engagements, but a recent stop in Portland was his first time in the Rose City.

In a guest sermon during a Kabbalat Shabbat service at Congregation Beth Israel Friday, Dec. 6, Rabbi Azari spoke not only of the growth Progressive Judaism has seen in recent decades in Israel, but how much catching up there was to do. When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, Orthodox groups, particularly Haredi, sometimes referred to as "ultra-Orthodox," groups led the way in developing the religious life of the country while Reform rabbis and other Progressive leaders focused on where their movements had originated – in the diaspora.

"We didn't come," Rabbi Azari said. "All the others, the Orthodox, the Haredi Jewish community, each one of them, understood very well that the future of the Jewish people will be con-



Rabbi Meir Azari of The Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv speaks at Kabbalat Shabbat services at Congregation Beth Israel Friday, Dec. 6. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

nected to the land of Israel. Whether you like it or you don't like it, you have to be there in order to play a major role in this history."

The result: It took decades of legal wrangling with municipal authorities to acquire the land Beit Daniel is built on. Part of why Rabbi Azari travels to the United States to speak so frequently is to raise funds to support The Daniel Centers' work – a concern that the neighboring synagogues don't share, as they are funded through the Israeli government.

"Can you imagine," Rabbi Azari said, "that as a rabbi of your community, you

cannot perform a wedding or you cannot do a funeral, and the synagogue next door is sponsored by the government, and the building of the synagogue is done by the government?"

Despite the hinderances posed by the government, The Daniel Centers have performed an average of 250 b'nei mitzvah ceremonies per year for the last three years. Progressive Judaism – and The Daniel Centers – have grown in Israel because the dichotomy of Orthodox observance or pure secularism doesn't meet the needs of a burgeoning number of Israelis.

"Israelis were offered just one type of Judaism: Be orthodox. That's it. The other option is to be secular," Rabbi Azari said. "But if you ask Israelis, secular Israelis, how they live their lives... 80 percent of secular Israelis in Tel Aviv light Shabbat candles."

His life's work has been offering another path.

"Judaism is about social justice. It's about human rights, about women rights. Tolerate the other, accept the other. Open the door to non-Jews, open the door to Jews that are wondering. Supporting people, don't tell them, 'Just don't do this, don't do this.' Judaism is the ability to progress your life, to learn from mistakes and failures, to look always to be better."

And just as there are those who are hungry for what progressive movements are offering, Rabbi Azari sees Progressive Judaism's viewpoint as essential to the future of a democratic Israel.

"My Judaism, your Judaism, is the spirit of the prophets. Jeremiah Isaiah. They ask questions. They criticize the government. They are even smart enough and brave enough to stand next to King David; Nathan the prophet says, 'David, you are the killer!'" Rabbi Azari said. "We need Reform Judaism today to make sure that the spirit of the State of Israel will be democratic."

"This is not what is going on with the settlers today," he continued. "This is not what is going on with the corrupted leadership that we have today. Israel can be and should be a different place."

Rabbi Azari also spoke at Congregation Shir Tikvah the next morning.

Learn more about The Daniel Centers' work online at [beit-daniel.org.il](http://beit-daniel.org.il).

# Nigun circle creates community around melody

By ROCKNE ROLL

*The Jewish Review*

From their origins in the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, *nigunim* have made their way around the world – including Portland, as a local group that gathers monthly to share these spiritual songs marks its first anniversary.

A *nigun* is a typically wordless melody that has its origins in Hasidic practices around experiencing spirituality, explained Aiden Kent, founder of the egalitarian Portland Nigun Circle.

Rabbis would experience, she said, “spontaneous moments of song in their personal practices, and then they would bring those to their followers.”

While the words of traditional prayers were sometimes incorporated, the lack of words meant that the only way to transmit and exchange *nigunim* was in person, in gatherings that usually included a meal, some study of Torah, and some singing.

“You would learn experientially about the *hasidut* or the *Kabbalah* that you were learning through the song, because the person who taught it to you was having an ecstatic experience themselves,” Kent said. “Sometimes those experiences transcend words and you’re not able to communicate that experience to someone, and so you have to do it in other means, and song was a really great way to do that.”

As time has marched on, the tradition spread both geographically and demographically. While *nigunim* are alive and well in their original, Hasidic context, contemporary Jewish musicians have incorporated *nigunim* into their work - Joey Weisenberg, Aly Halpert



Members of the Portland Nigun Circle share the wordless melodies of a *nigun* in this undated photograph. The Circle meets on the third Wednesday of each month. (Jesse Zook Mann)

and Rena Branson are just a few examples. Neo-Hasidic movements have also brought *nigunim* into progressive settings, opening participation to the full cross-section of gender identities and observance levels.

The latter was how Kent was first exposed to *nigunim*. Growing up without formal Jewish education, she was not aware of the practice until she attended a service at a synagogue in Denver where the cantor integrated a *nigun* by Weisenberg into the *nishmat kol chai* prayer.

“I started sobbing uncontrollably,” she recalled. “After I was done, I thought, ‘oh, this is what prayer is supposed to feel like.’ This is the first time that I fully had an ecstatic experience in prayer.”

Wanting to learn more, Kent dove into the work of modern artists like Weisenberg and Rabbi Deborah Sacks Mintz, as well as discovering recordings of traditional Hasidic *nigunim* and getting to know them.

“When you listen to them now, you can really hear like distinct regional differences,” she explained. “There’s ones that are sad and there

are ones that are for dancing and there are ones that are for weddings and there are ones that are for banging on the table. They all have a different use in a different time, and I think that’s so beautiful.”

The wordlessness of most *nigunim* can be an advantage in terms of creating a spiritual connection, as liturgical Hebrew is not the everyday language of many people outside Israel.

“It creates a transcendent experience where you’re not in your intellectual brain,” Kent said of *nigunim*’s wordlessness. “You have an intellectual filter that you have to pass through when you’re saying [Hebrew prayers]. Doing just the melody, it removes that intellectual experience and just allows you to experience the song in your body and what the transcendent experience of that can be.”

Kent looked at getting involved in a *nigun* circle in Denver but was stymied by a relocation to Portland. In 2023, the Portland Klezmer Festival hosted a *nigun* circle. Kent attended, shared a few *nigunim* she knew and at the end of the evening asked

the all important question to the assembled group – “Want to do it again sometime?” The collective answer was a resounding yes.

“I basically just collected emails and started an Instagram account and then people were following it and over time it’s grown,” Kent said.

Today marks the first anniversary of the first meeting of the Portland Nigun Circle. The group averages between 16 and 25 attendees each month, meeting in member homes or other spaces as available. Meetings are always the third Wednesday of each month, beginning with tea, kosher snacks and schmoozing before moving into singing. No experience is required – Kent teaches simple *nigunim* and many follow a similar structure that’s easy to master. You certainly don’t have to be a good singer.

“I’m not a very good singer, and I know that I’m not,” Kent said, “and that’s not what’s important. What’s more important is how it feels. It doesn’t matter how it sounds.”

No level of religious observance is required, either. While Kent often shares the Hasidic roots of a *nigun*, which she feels is important to understanding its context and history, the level of engagement with any song’s spiritual or religious connection is entirely up to the singer.

“You can come and just sing because you like singing and you like singing with other people,” Kent said. “Whatever your relationship to the G-word is, you can have an experience with a song that is meaningful and take it as

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## PINKER (continued from page 1)

Dallas, Pinker attended Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn., in large part because of its reputation as an incubator for community service.

“It was known as a school for volunteerism; it was a campus with one of the highest rates of student community service,” she said. “I did a lot of community service while I was in Memphis.”

Following her studies, Pinker continued her pursuit of public service by joining the Peace Corps, which saw her head out for what was planned to be two years in Sierra Leone before the COVID pandemic cut her service to just nine months.

“At first they were like we might come back and then after like a week or two, it was very clear we were not going back,” Pinker recalled.

Back in the United States, she headed for Atlanta, where her partner was in law school, and took on a role with Hillels of Georgia, the unique umbrella organization for Hillels throughout the state. She was eventually promoted to Development and Marketing Manager, a role she continued to work in remotely even as she and her partner were drawn westward.

“I moved to Portland because of all that Portland has to offer in terms of lifestyle and the outdoors,” Pinker explained, noting she is an avid hiker and skier.

Her partner took on a role in Portland after law school; after two years of remote work, Pinker decided it was time to invest her energy in the Jewish community here in Portland.

“I got involved with Moishe House and OneTable and other organizations geared toward young adults,” Pinker said, “and I found the Pathways program.”



Pinker

The PDX Pathways young adult mentorship program application process put Pinker in touch with Federation Associate Campaign and Engagement Officer Laura Jeser.

“I was telling Laura that one of the reasons I want to join this program is because I’m looking for a job here in Portland,” Pinker recalled. “She said, ‘Well, we have this job open at Federation. It seems like you might be a good fit. You should look into it.’”

Pinker did, and her passion for volunteer service now carries over into the next stage of her career.

“One of the things that they told us in our Peace Corps orientation that still really resonates with me is: If you are expecting you know to change the world or even change an entire community, this is not the place for you because it’s just not the type of impact that one person often has. But if you can reframe and think of this as your opportunity to influence one, two, three lives and really look at it on a person-to-person

level, you’re going to have an impactful service,” she said. “That resonated with me so much because that’s what volunteering has always been for me. It’s a way to connect to my community and connect to individuals in my community on a very personal level and the kind of an impact can that a community have as a unit.”

In her new role, Pinker is looking to build on a clearly documented interest in volunteer service amongst Portland Jews.

“The Community study that came out in 2023 that found 47 percent of Jewish adults in Portland are volunteering regularly, but only 19 percent of those Jewish adults are volunteering with the Portland Jewish community,” Pinker said. “So it seems like this major gap where there’s clearly an interest for volunteering.”

She’ll be looking to connect people interested in volunteer service with existing opportunities to do so, but also to build new avenues for volunteer service to be a connection to deeper engagement with Jewish life in Portland for those who are looking to find their place therein.

“[Volunteering is] a way for people to access the Jewish community that doesn’t have some of those barriers that people identified as making it hard to join the Jewish community,” Pinker said. “There’s no religious affiliation associated with it. There’s no necessity for preexisting Jewish knowledge associated with it. It’s a very low barrier way to access to Jewish programming and Jewish community.”

Those interested in participating in or creating opportunities for volunteer service in Portland’s Jewish community are encouraged to contact Pinker at [merit@jewishportland.org](mailto:merit@jewishportland.org).

## NIGUN (continued from page 8)

far as you want.”

Many regular attendees do find a sense of spiritual connection through the circle – something they’re struggling to find elsewhere. It’s a theme Kent has noticed

beyond the circle she has built.

“There’s a spiritual desperation that I think a lot of people, especially in Portland, are feeling,” Kent said. “I don’t know if it’s the mo-

ment we’re in or the political climate. I don’t know what’s happening, but all I can say is that people are hungry.”

Kent is looking to launch a second monthly gathering in a more work-

shop-style format.

For more information or to get connected, follow the Portland Nigun Circle on Instagram at @pdxniguncircle or email Kent at [aidenkent13@gmail.com](mailto:aidenkent13@gmail.com).

**SUBSCRIBE:** [jewishportland.org/subscribe](http://jewishportland.org/subscribe)

# Kesser Israel hosts end-of-life planning event

By SURA RUBENSTEIN

*Congregation Kesser Israel*

*Parshat Vayechi*, the final weekly Torah portion in the Book of Genesis, is poignant: Jacob summons his son Joseph to his bedside and requests: “You shall perform with me kindness and truth; please do not bury me in Egypt.”

After Jacob’s death, Joseph and his brothers travel to Hebron and bury their father with Abraham, Sarah, Yitzhak, Rebecca, and Leah in the Cave of Machpelah.

The mitzvah of burying the dead has traditionally been known as *Chesed shel Emet*, the true kindness, since it can never be repaid by the recipient; and *Parshat Vayechi* has become a time of reflection and education about Jewish burial traditions.

This year, Congregation Kesser Israel, together with the Hevra Kaddisha of Portland and the Portland Kollel, is hosting a Shabbat program at the shul and a *Melave Malka* (after-Shabbat gathering) at the Portland Kollel on Jan. 11 to spotlight awareness of and preparation for end-of-life needs. All are welcome to attend.

“Traditional Jewish burial is so important,” says Michael Rosenberg, chairman of the Hevra Kaddisha of Portland. “The whole point is to respect the dead, and everything we do is done with incredible respect and care.”

Robin Meyerson of Scottsdale, Ariz., is the featured speaker. She is the West Coast Coordinator for the National Association of Chevra Kadisha ([www.nasck.org](http://www.nasck.org)), which has provided support and guidance to burial societies, rabbis, and individuals on the laws and rituals of Jewish death and mourning since the 1980s. Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, the founder and president of NASCK, launched the Shabbos Vayechi initiative a decade ago to highlight the wisdom, and importance, of Jewish burial traditions.

Today more than 500 synagogues and 135 communities in North America, England and Australia will offer *Shabbos Vayechi* programming – with topics ranging from ethical wills to caring for aging parents to burial, mourning and grief.

“Preparation for end-of-life is as important as preparing

for any milestone event,” Rabbi Zohn has said. “If we make these preparations responsibly, we can be confident that when the time comes our family will be very grateful that we did.”

“We’re kind of like the Consumer Reports for Jewish burial,” adds Meyerson, who has been involved with the group for some 14 years. “I’m on call 24/6 for people who need help navigating all these issues that come up at the end of life.”

From the first time she assisted with a *taharah*, the ritual preparation for burial, Meyerson felt called to spread the word. “It’s not like I grew up thinking that one day I would do that,” says Meyerson, who grew up in a non-observant home, “but after going to that *taharah*, it became my *mitzvah*.”

She created brochures, websites and other educational material, speaks frequently on Jewish burial topics, and emphasizes the importance of making plans – and sharing them with family members. “Just like we file our taxes,” she says, “we need to file our burial plans.”

Rabbi Sholom Skolnik of Congregation Kesser Israel said the upcoming programs were important opportunities to highlight the work of burial societies, and the importance of planning for end-of-life issues.

“Though the Hevra Kaddisha is not a Kesser organization, I believe it’s important that I as a rabbi am involved in it – and every rabbi should be involved,” he said. “The rabbi should be aware of these acts of kindness going on in the community, and if I want people to join the organization, I should be doing so as well.”

For the Jan. 11 program at Kesser Israel, Rosenberg will speak during services (approximately 10:30 am), and Meyerson will speak afterwards (approximately 11:30 am) at the synagogue. The *Melave Malka*, with food and music, is from 7-9 pm at the Portland Kollel. Meyerson will speak during the program, and resource materials will be available. Registration is available online at [kesserisrael.org/event/Hevra](http://kesserisrael.org/event/Hevra)

For more information, contact [mcarr@kesserisrael.org](mailto:mcarr@kesserisrael.org).

## OJCF Impact Together program to continue in 2025, seeking community input

*Oregon Jewish Community Foundation*

The Oregon Jewish Community Foundation is excited to announce a new year of our Impact Together program. This year we aim to bridge disparate communities through respectful dialogue and discourse. We invite everyone to join us in exploring how we can create spaces that encourage challenging ideas, seek understanding, and examine our assumptions across a diverse range of political, religious, societal and philosophical viewpoints.

As part of our commitment to address social issues in Oregon and Southwest Washington, OJCF launched the Impact Together Fund last year. This fund aims to engage and inform our community about innovative solutions to societal challenges, breaking down silos between organizations that share complementary missions. Recognizing the increasing need for organizations that facilitate meaningful conversations, we have chosen this year’s theme to focus on dialogue and discourse.

Kicking off in November, participating organizations will collaboratively develop educational opportunities for the broader community, set to take place in Spring 2025. This year’s selected organizations include the Civics Learning Project, Crossing Party Lines, the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, Oregon Humanities, and The Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom.

We encourage community members to attend events and to also contribute financially to support these vital

organizations. Donations can be made online, and every contribution, regardless of size, will be invaluable. The Impact Together Fund will distribute all contributions equally among the participating organizations, strengthening our collective mission to foster a more cohesive and understanding community. For more information and to get involved go to [ojcf.org/impact](http://ojcf.org/impact).

For more information, contact Director of Outreach Sonia Marie Leikam at [soniamariel@ojcf.org](mailto:soniamariel@ojcf.org).



Jewish Federation  
of Greater Portland

# CHANUKAH HAPPENINGS

CHECK OUT OUR  
HOLIDAY RESOURCE GUIDE



SCAN ME

<https://qrco.de/resources24>

## A little bit about bollards

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## NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

JAN 8

JAN 2

By JESSICA ANDERSON

If you're like most people, you probably haven't given much thought to the lowly bollard. Truthfully, if you're like most people, you probably don't know what a bollard is. Unless you work in Jewish security, and then, of course, you definitely do! Bollards are the posts that line the area between vehicular traffic and pedestrians and/or building frontage. If you've been out to Congregation Neveh Shalom recently, you may have seen their construction in the roundabout and previously noticed them in the Portland Kollel and Congregation Ahavath Achim parking lot and elsewhere.

The word "bollard" is generally accepted to come from a combination of the Old Norse words "bolr" (Middle English "bole"), which means "tree trunk," and the suffix "-ard," which is generally added to mean "hard." Bollard was initially used in the mid-1800s to describe the short, thick posts used to tie ships to wharves. Since the mid-1900's, the term has also been used to describe traffic control devices.

Bollards are most commonly sturdy posts of a certain height and heft and are designed to protect pedestrians from accidental or purposeful contact with vehicles. They come in many shapes and sizes and aren't always posts. Where space isn't a factor, an organization can be creative and use giant planters (think MJCC), sculptural elements (think the big red balls outside your local Target store), or other innovative solutions.



*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.*

Where space is a factor, such as a sidewalk, there typically aren't other options, and the posts are most common. To be most effective, bollards need to adhere to standards that impact their height and spacing and meet crash testing minimums. Additionally, in our community, most organizations use Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NGSP) funds from FEMA to pay for them, and the requirements are explicit and non-negotiable. NSGP-funded bollards have a specific minimum height, must be buried down into the cement, and have a maximum spacing between bollards. This greatly limits the aesthetic options for organizations.

Concerns about vehicles and people being in close proximity are always present for organizational leaders, and they know it's just a slip of a foot between the brake and acceleration pedals that could cause a car to crash into a crowd of people. One organization in our community has twice had vehicles lose control of the roadway and crash through their property! One is a dot, but two points make a line, and they can see they now have to figure out how to add

bollards near the roadway to prevent another incident.

An added concern is that a purposeful attack will happen. This type of incident is statistically rare, but it has happened, even here in Portland. In May 2018, Greg Porter was arrested for driving his truck into three women walking downtown in downtown Portland. In October 2017, a truck driven by Sayfullo Saipov drove onto a bike path in NYC, killing eight.

Mineta Transportation Institute, associated with San Jose State University's Lucas Graduate School of Business published some research on vehicular attacks in November 2019. They highlighted that there have been 184 known incidents, the first occurring in 1963. Unfortunately, 70 percent of attacks have happened since January 2014, indicating they are becoming more frequent and more lethal. Attacks dropped in 2019, and the researchers were unclear if this was because of countermeasures or because rammings were becoming less trendy. 54 percent occurred in developed countries such as the US and Europe. While vehicle ram-

See SECURITY, page 14



## 'All-Stars' shine at PJA Auction

Sports-attire clad patrons came out in teams to support Portland Jewish Academy at the school's annual benefit auction Sunday, Dec. 15 at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. (Wenty Kahn/The Jewish Review)

## Moving Traditions, JFCS, JFGP host webinars for parents of teens

*The Jewish Review staff*

Moving Traditions, Jewish Family & Child Service and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland present the first in a series of webinars for parents of Jewish teens.

"Promoting Well-being in the Digital Lives of Jewish Teens," Tuesday, Jan. 7 at 7pm, looks at the role of the internet and social media in the lives of Jewish teens. While the internet is an easy conduit to antisemitism and anti-Israel messaging, there's also an upside of Jewish connection and solidarity to be found. Rabbi Daniel Brenner and Pamela Barkley from Moving Traditions discuss how parents and educators can help teens navigate the tangled web of modern digital interaction.

Register for this free webinar, and its follow-up, "Helping Teens Thrive" by Rabbi Brenner Tuesday, Feb. 11, at <https://movingtraditions.formstack.com/forms/motroregonwebinars>.

## OJCF B'nai Tzedek program visits Cedar Sinai for Chanukah celebration

*Oregon Jewish Community Foundation*

Oregon Jewish Community Foundation's (OJCF) B'nai Tzedek program participants met Dec. 8 at Cedar Sinai Park. The event featured a scavenger hunt throughout the campus to learn about CSP's deep connection to the Jewish community. As youth fund holders, these emerging philanthropists actively

engage in tzedakah, by making annual gifts to Jewish organizations from their charitable fund to ensure the continued vibrancy and strength of our Jewish community. The group also engaged in community service, hosting a Hanukkah celebration for CSP residents with holiday crafts, games and treats.

OJCF invites you to open a charitable

youth fund for a loved one between the ages of 12-18. The Foundation will match your \$250 donation to establish the fund. The program instills the values of *tzedakah*, community service, and the collective power of making a positive impact. Visit <http://www.ojcf.org>, email [youth@ojcf.org](mailto:youth@ojcf.org), or call 503-248-9328, Ext. 105, for more information.

## Drinks, dreidel and dancing at Leikam Brewing Dec. 28

*The Jewish Review staff*

Join Leikam Brewing and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland for the Chanukah party of the season Saturday, Dec. 28 at the brewery on East Burnside Street in Portland. A talk on the history of dreidel from Federation Director of Jewish Life and Learning Dr. Yosef Rosen at 6 pm precedes drinks and dreidel. A communal Havdalah and Menorah lighting at 7pm will be followed followed by an epic dance party with DJs fCD and Bambi spinning global beats from Mediterranean disco to elec-

tro-klezmer.

Don your festive jumpsuit/ugly sweater, bring your light-up accessories, and enjoy specialty Hanukkah cocktails. Come immerse in a celebratory evening where tradition meets groove, sacred meets silly, and ritual and revelry unite under the glow of holiday candles! Children are welcome at this free event until 9 pm. Please bring your own menorah. Register online at [jewishportland.org/hanukkahdanceparty](http://jewishportland.org/hanukkahdanceparty).

For more information, email Rosen at [yosef@jewishportland.org](mailto:yosef@jewishportland.org).

## Light It Up Family Fest is Dec. 22 at Maayan

*Maayan Torah Day School*

Come and join in the pre-Chanukah fun at Maayan! We're hosting a 'Light It Up' Family Fest Sunday, Dec. 22 at Maayan from 1-3 pm, with an assortment of children's activities, including Menorah making, Light It Up Science, and Chanukah arts and crafts, as well as

a magic show! It's sure to be a blast for children of all ages. We are also collecting unopened toys to donate to Doernbecher Children's Hospital; you can go to <https://www.ohsu.edu/doernbecher/wish-list> for more info on their wish list.

Invite your friends and register today at [maayanpdx.org/chanukahform](http://maayanpdx.org/chanukahform).



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## DONALD KRAMER

Congregation Beth Israel mourns the loss of Dr. Donald H. Kramer, z"l, who passed away on Nov. 30, 2024 at the age of 93. Donald is survived by his wife Judith, his children JulieAnn (Edmund) and Jeffrey (Frances), his grandchildren Elyse and RachelAnn (Bryan), and his sister Barbara. Donald was preceded in death by his parents Maurice and Celia, z"l, and his brother Richard, z"l. The private funeral will take place at Beth Israel Cemetery. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

## MORRIS GALEN

Congregation Beth Israel mourns the loss of Morris Galen, z"l, who passed away on Dec. 4, 2024 at the age of 97. Morris is survived by his daughter, Candace (Shelly); son, Solana (Maya); granddaughter, Elena, and grandson, Estel. Morris was preceded in death by wife, Evelyn, z"l.

The private funeral will take place at Beth Israel Cemetery. A public celebration of Morrie's life will be held in the spring. Donations in Morris' name can be made to The Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition or The Oregon Cultural Trust.

## LINDA GORDON

It is with deep sadness that Congregation Shaarie Torah announces the passing of Linda Gordon, z"l. Linda passed away on Monday, Dec. 9, 2024 at the age of 82. She is survived by husband Steve; daughter Tammy (Tony) Bardana; sons Wally Newman and Aaron (Lynn) Newman; grandchildren Drew (Amelia) Bardana, Nick (Megan) Bardana Wilder Newman, Austyn Lowichtl and Daisy Newman-Strehlow. She was preceded in death by first husband David Newman, z"l. The funeral was held on Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024 at Shaarie Torah Cemetery.

## Events

Find Chanukah parties and more on the Federation's Chanukah Happenings page at

[jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources24](http://jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources24)

See all of Jewish Portland's upcoming community events online at [jewishportland.org/community-calendar](http://jewishportland.org/community-calendar)

## Jobs Board

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

## SECURITY (continued from page 12)

ming isn't the most lethal tactic, it can be an easy method for people who can't get guns or bombs, so cars become a weapon of opportunity in that they are readily available.

Both intentional and unintentional vehicular attacks remain on the minds of

our community leaders. They work hard to balance the safety of the community with costs, aesthetics, and community tolerance or wishes for additional observable safety measures. Ultimately, they recognize they are responsible for the lives of people who have entrusted

themselves to their spaces and seek to keep you reassured and protected.

If you have any safety or security concerns, please reach out to Jessica Anderson via email or cell, at [janderson@securecommunitynetwork.org](mailto:janderson@securecommunitynetwork.org) or 872-273-9214.

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