**Caught Moments, Odd Angles, and Awkward Poses**

**Actress/Artist Lisa Edelstein charms with off-kilter family portraits**

Many of us know TV star Lisa Edelstein for her role in *House, M.D.*, but locally, many folks also know her as Bonnie and Alvin’s daughter – the Edelsteins had homes in the Berkshires and were members of Knesset Israel for years. During the pandemic, Lisa tried her hand at painting, creating watercolors that were recently on view in an NYC gallery. For more on Lisa Edelstein’s painting and Berkshire memories, please see the story and BJV Interview on page 18.

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**From Miniskirt to Hijab, with Jacqueline Saper**

**Memoir recounts life in a Jewish family in post-revolution Iran**

On Thursday, March 2 at 6:45 p.m., Federation hosts Jacqueline Saper, who will talk about the experiences she recounts in her compelling memoir, *From Miniskirt to Hijab: A Girl in Revolutionary Iran*. Born in Tehran to an Iranian Mizrahi father and a British, Ashkenazi mother, Jacqueline has been a bridge between the East and the West since birth. Saper’s comfortable childhood and adolescence ended at eighteen with the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The Shah was ousted, Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile, and Iran became an Islamic theocracy. Almost overnight, she went from wearing miniskirts to wearing the hijab, by force. She continued to live in the Islamic Republic for eight more years, hiding in the basement as Iraqi bombs fell over the city during the Iran-Iraq War. Saper finally escaped Iran with her husband and two young children in 1987.

In this timely talk, we will get to the heart of Ms. Saper’s story of “how extremist ideologies seized a Westernized, affluent country and transformed it into a fundamentalist Islamic society.” She will also talk about her experiences as an immigrant to the United States, where, after starting with few resources, she and her family members all were able to join the professional class and prosper.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs. If you buy Saper’s memoir via bookshop.org, a portion of the proceeds will be donated back to the local Bookstore in Lenox.

THE BJV INTERVIEW WITH JACQUELINE SAPER APPEARS ON PAGE 20

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**“Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women from Lilith Magazine,” with Susan Weidman Schneider and Yona Zeldis McDonough**

On Thursday, March 16 at 6:45 p.m., join in a conversation with editors Susan Weidman Schneider and Yona Zeldis McDonough about their ground-breaking Jewish feminist short story collection, *Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women from Lilith Magazine*.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs. This program is a part of “Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.”

Moderating this program will be Rabbi Elyse Frishman, the editor of Mishkan T’filah, the Reform movement’s prayerbook. Purchase the book at bookshop.org and a portion of the proceeds will be donated back to the local Bookstore in Great Barrington. A limited number of copies of the book will be on loan from Federation in Pittsfield – call (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 for availability.

As the editors write:

*Frankly Feminist,* focusing on Jewish writers have – no surprise – typically given women authors short shrift. This new volume represents the best Jewish feminist fiction published in Lilith Magazine and does what no other collection has done before in its geographic scope, its inclusion of 21st-century stories, and its Jewish feminist focus.

This collection showcases a wide range of stories offering variegated cultures and contexts – no surprise – typically given women authors short shrift. This new volume represents the best Jewish feminist fiction published in Lilith Magazine and does what no other collection has done before in its geographic scope, its inclusion of 21st-century stories, and its Jewish feminist focus.

FRANKLY FEMINIST, continued on page 4
Rabbi Reflection

Every Generation Inherits Tradition. Every Generation Creates Tradition.

By Rabbi David Weiner / Knesset Israel

I have been chanting the Megillah annually for nearly 30 years, since the first Purim after my bar mitzvah. I enjoy the dramatic scenes, the punchy and ironic dialogue, and the book’s multiple levels of meaning. Studying the text in depth brings many number of profound messages, some of which stand in tension with each other. This book is about disguises and hierarchy, exile and power, patriarchy and politics, God’s role in history and God’s absence from it. Fanciful, the book is meant to appeal to children; still, adults find it in a sophisticated commentary on some of the most challenging struggles in the story of the Jewish people. Yet for me, even just holding the scroll and chanting from it is a religious experience. Like a Torah, every scroll of the Talmud, rather than avoiding questions of the holiday’s origins, provide us with insights into religious creativity and the beginnings of tradition.

From the Talmudic conversation, we learn that popularity was a key factor in establishing this holiday. Rav Shemuel bar Yehuda imagines: Esther – perhaps the queen, perhaps the book – once sent a message to the sages, “Set my day as a holiday for the generations!” The sages nervously responded, “But you stir up jealousy among the nations of the world!” And Esther replied, “My story is already written in the Chronicles of Medea and Persia” (Megillah 7a).

Despite its potential for incitement, despite its cheeky political humor, despite the Jews’ status as a people living under the thumb of other nations, Purim was a brand new holiday. Unlike Passover or Sukkot, even the most pious among us cannot argue that this book or this holiday is a part of Judaism because God put them there. So discussions of the establishment of Purim recorded in the Talmud, rather than avoiding questions of the holiday’s origins, provide us with insights into religious creativity and the beginnings of tradition.

Next, the Talmud turns to the question of who decided the book was holy, and why. Several rabbis proffer specific verses from the book that prove the prophetic gifts of the author. Rabbi Akiva reflects on the impression Esther left on a crowd, which simply could not be suppressed. The cat was already out of the bag. No matter what ‘they’ might say, this triumph demanded a grateful, celebratory, and enduring national response – an annual holiday. The impulse came from the people, not their leaders.

The Jews chose Esther. The Jews chose Purim. Long before their leaders finished deliberating the pros and cons, the Jewish people established a new tradition, and God decided that was alright.

It turns out that chanting Esther from the scroll is not only a mitzvah, it’s an excuse for a spring party, a connection with the Jewish people all over the world and throughout time, and an opportunity to start conversations about important themes. Chanting Esther is also a tribute to Jewish religious creativity. So are the other rituals of Purim – listening to the Megillah, sending mishloach manot food baskets, making gifts to the poor, and attending a Purim party. Including Purim in our people’s calendar underscores the message: Every generation inherits tradition. Every generation creates tradition.

Just like choices made by our ancestors, our religious choices, as a community and as a generation, will leave an impact. Purim might remind us of the high stakes – and great reward – of innovation in Jewish life.

Rabbi David Weiner is the spiritual leader of Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.

Amid rising antisemitism in the United States, data from a new American Jewish Committee (AJC) public opinion survey reveals key information on the state of mind of American Jews following the hostage situation at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas last year. A majority of American Jews – or 54 percent – said they heard a lot or some about the Colleyville crisis.

Of those U.S. Jews, 18 percent felt a great deal less safe at the time, 33 percent felt a fair amount less safe, and 36 percent felt a little less safe after the 11-hour hostage crisis. Only 13 percent of the survey respondents who had heard at least some about the situation said they did not feel less safe. The questions on the Colleyville synagogue attack are included in AJC’s 2022 State of Antisemitism in America report, comprised of a survey of U.S. Jews and a companion study of U.S. adults.

Congregation Beth Israel Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and three congregants were held hostage by Malik Faisal Akram, who entered the sanctuary during Shabbat morning services on January 15, 2022. “The Colleyville attack clearly reverberated throughout the Jewish community. No Jew should ever feel unsafe anywhere, anytime in America simply because they are Jewish,” said AJC CEO Ted Deutch. “As we have seen on a local and national level, these antisemitic incidents don’t happen in a vacuum. They are rooted in an age-old hatred that cannot go unchecked.”

AJC’s survey also found that younger Jews expressed greater concerns about their physical safety than those in older age cohorts. Among Jewish adults ages 18 to 29 who heard a lot or some about the Colleyville hostage crisis, 67 percent felt a great deal or a fair amount less safe, compared to 43 percent of those ages 30 to 49, 47 percent of the 50 to 64 cohort, and 50 percent of those aged 65 years and older.

Jewish adults belonging to a religious denomination also expressed greater concerns about their physical safety than those in older age cohorts. Among Jewish adults ages 18 to 29 who heard a lot or some about the Colleyville hostage crisis, 67 percent felt a great deal or a fair amount less safe, compared to 43 percent of those ages 30 to 49, 47 percent of the 50 to 64 cohort, and 50 percent of those aged 65 years and older.

American Jews are Deeply Concerned

Nine out of ten American Jews believe the cancer of antisemitism is spreading in the United States. Eight out of ten believe Jewish hatred has been on the rise in the last five years. And neither age, political affiliation, nor level of religiosity makes much of a difference in who feels that way.

The vast majority of Jews believe the extreme political right (91%), extreme political left (71%), and extremism in the name of Islam (86%) present an antisemitic threat in America. In fact, 31 percent of American Jews say they are less secure than in 2020 and nearly one in four respondents said the Jewish institutions to which they belonged had been targeted by antisemites.

There’s a Disconnect on Antisemitic Attacks in America

At a time when American public discourse renewed its focus on hate, racism, and xenophobia, AJC’s survey shows that U.S. adults were far less likely than American Jews to have heard about the wave of violent antisemitism in May. Only 48 percent of the general public said they had heard “a lot” or “some” about Jews being attacked during that period, compared to 71 percent of American Jews who said the same.

Significantly, of the large majority of American Jews who heard about the attacks on Jews in May 2021, 72 percent said it made them feel less safe as Jews in the United States.

Fears of Antisemitism Impacts Jewish Life

Many of the antisemitic attacks in May of 2021 targeted Jews who could be identified as Jewish because of their clothing or something they were displaying. This has led a sizable portion of American Jews to question whether they should display their Judaism. Twenty-two percent of the U.S. Jews said in the past 12 months they have avoided publicly wearing, carrying, or displaying things that might help people identify them as a Jew. One out of four Jews said they avoided posting content online that would broadcast them as Jewish.

What does it say about America that approximately four out of every ten American Jews (39%) have changed their behavior out of fear of antisemitism? And neither age, political affiliation, nor level of religiosity makes much of a difference in who feels that way.

Jews and the General Public Agree: Anti-Zionism is a form of Antisemitism

There is widespread recognition among American Jews – and among the general public – that hostility toward Israel and hatred of Jews are closely intertwined. Anti-Zionism – that is, the belief that Israel has no right to exist – is viewed by more than 80 percent of American Jews and the general public as antisemitic. This includes 92 percent of Republicans and 83 percent of Democrats.

The overt antisemitism of the anti-Zionist movement has emerged most recently in the U.S. in the form of battles over intersectionality and clashes of identities. In several cases, social justice activists representing a variety of causes have tried to exclude Jews who support the Jewish state, as most do.

Takeaways from the AJC’s State of Antisemitism in America Report 2021

Is antisemitism rising in America? How have American Jews been impacted by antisemitism? How does the general public view antisemitism? The AJC study, the largest of its kind, is based on parallel surveys of American Jews and the U.S. general public on their perceptions and experiences of antisemitism in the U.S.

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Jews and Ukraine in Times of War

In hundreds of separate incidents, ordinary people robbed their Jewish neighbors of impudence, burned down their houses, ripped apart their Torah scrolls, sexually assaulted them, and killed them. Large forgotten today, these pogroms – ethnic riots – dominated their lives. Largely forgotten today, their houses, torn apart their Torah scrolls, sexually assaulted them, and killed them. Large forgotten today, these pogroms – ethnic riots – dominated their lives.

In the midst of Civilized Europe: Jews and Ukraine in Times of War

Jeffrey Veidlinger is also the author of the award-winning books, In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The 1918-1921 Pogroms in Ukraine and the Onset of the Holocaust, a finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, a Times of London “Book of the Week,” and a Kirkus Top Nonfiction Book of 2021. This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

Between 1918 and 1921, over 100,000 Jews were murdered in Ukraine by peasants, townsmen, and soldiers who blamed the Jews for the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. In hundreds of separate incidents, ordinary people robbed their Jewish neighbors of impudence, burned down their houses, ripped apart their Torah scrolls, sexually assaulted them, and killed them. Large forgotten today, these pogroms – ethnic riots – dominated their lives.

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If you think it all began with The Jazz Singer, then in A. J. Liebling’s words, “You ain’t heard nothing yet!” How did early silent films rely on ethnic stereotypes? When did screen depictions of Jews and their culture evolve? How have films dealt with the Holocaust and its survivors? And how have recent filmic treatments of the pogroms with formerly ignored aspects of Jewish life? With fascinating film clips and behind-the-scenes stories, entertainment historian John Kenrick examines a rich but rarely discussed cinematic legacy.

Entertainment historian John Kenrick has worked in the theatre at every level from amateur to Broadway, eventually serving as personal assistant to six Tony Award winning producers, including the team behind the original production of Fiddler. He has taught musical theatre history courses at New York University’s Steinhardt School, The New School University, and Philadelphia University’s School of the Arts. John’s books include Musical Theatre: A History, and he is featured in The Cambridge Companion to Operetta. He is one of the curators for the new Museum of Broadway, and is the creator of the educational website Musicals101.com.

In the Midst of Civilized Europe: Jews and Ukraine in Times of War

On Thursday, February 23 at 6:45 p.m., join Jeffrey Veidlinger, Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, who will talk about his latest book, In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The 1918-1921 Pogroms in Ukraine and the Onset of the Holocaust, a finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, a Times of London “Book of the Week,” and a Kirkus Top Nonfiction Book of 2021. This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

On Thursday, March 9 at 6:45 p.m., join entertainment historian John Kenrick for a multi-media look at how the depiction of Jews on screen has evolved over the years: “Hollywood Yiddishkeit: Jewish Images in American Film.” This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

Frankly Feminist,continued from page 1

Susan Weidman Schneider is a founding mother of Lilith, the “inde- pendent, Jewish and frankly feminist” award-winning women’s magazine. She has been its editor-in-chief since its debut in 1976. The magazine and her books, articles, and lectures are entrusted with changing the way women shape their roles and the world around them. Schneider’s groundbreaking reporting has covered, among other subjects, Jewish women’s philanthropy, the Jewish state in abortion rights, gender stereotypes of Jews, and the positive effects of feminism on Jewish life.

Yona Zeldis McDonough is the author of nine novels, two of which are published under the name of Kitty Zeldis, as well as over 35 books for children’s readers. Articles, and essays have been published in antho- logies as well as in numerous national magazines and newspapers. For over twenty years, Yona has been the fiction editor at Lilith Magazine. She works independently to help aspiring writers polish their manuscripts. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.
Too Long, Too Foreign...Too Jewish? The Politics of Jewish Name Changing

Dr. Kirsten Fermaglich upends these cliches by examining previously unexplored name change petitions. In 20th-century New York City, thousands of ordinary Jews legally changed their names to respond to institutionalized antisemitism. While name-changing allowed Jewish families to achieve middle-class status, the practice also became a source of family pain and community stigma.

Join Dr. Fermaglich for a deep dive into this often misunderstood story. A Rosenberg By Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America (NYU, 2018) was awarded the Saul Viener Book Prize by the American Jewish Historical Society in June 2019. Purchase the book at bookstore.org and a portion of the proceeds will be donated back to the local Bookstore in Great Barrington.

Dr. Fermaglich is also the author of American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965 (Brandeis University Press, 2006) and the co-editor of the Norton Critical Edition of Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (2013), with Lisa Fine. She is currently pursuing two research projects: one looks at antisemitism in the federal government, and the other focuses on the migration of Jewish academics to college towns throughout the South and Midwest in the years after World War II.

Tu B’Shevat Birthday Party with PJ Library

By Molly Meador / Director of PJ Library

On Sunday, January 29, families gathered to celebrate Tu B’Shevat, with a Birthday Party for the Trees! We made tree pictures, using collage, markers, and paint. Then we read the PJ Library book Happy Birthday, Tree! by Madelyn Rosenberg, talked about how trees grow, and practiced growing fast and slowly, and took turns being sunshine, wind, and rain to help each other’s trees grow. Then we returned to our art to add to what we had made, adding animals, dinosaurs, and even Transformers – everyone needs trees! We finished up with cupcakes and sang happy birthday!
Kosher Community Seder 5783

Enjoy a traditional Passover experience on the first night of the holiday

PITTSFIELD – Come out for a first night of Passover community Seder on Wednesday, April 6 at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road.

Participants will enjoy a traditional kosher Seder experience with plenty of explanation, insight, and song, enhanced by musicians with instrumental accompaniment. Enjoy all the ritual foods, ceremonial wine, and a delicious four-course Passover meal prepared by Chris Goretz of KL.

Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available upon advance request. Attendees are invited to bring their own kosher for Passover table wine.

Rabbi David Weiner of Knesset Israel will serve as Seder leader. Children of all ages, extended family, and community friends are welcome.

The cost is $45 for adults and $22 for children ages 5 through 17. Children 4 years and under are free of charge. Advance reservations and payment are required by March 22. Financial assistance is available to all who might need it – please call Dara Kaufman at Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 12. Reservations can be made by calling the Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 or online at www.jewishberkshires.org.

The Seder is sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in collaboration with Knesset Israel.

Volunteers Are Vital!

We are grateful to Federation volunteers Stuart and Ellen Masters for helping Kimball Farms residents celebrate Shabbat. If you are interested in volunteering to conduct a short Kabbalat Shabbat service for residents at a local senior residence, contact Molly Meador at mmeador@jewishberkshires.org.

Your Federation Presents

Federation and Eisner Day Camp have teamed up to make day camp affordable for every family! Eisner offers a $100 per week, per child discount to families whose children are enrolled in a Berkshire school district year-round. Families may also apply to Federation for an additional $100 per week in financial assistance.

DEADLINE: APRIL 30

Download an application at jewishberkshires.org or email federation@jewishberkshires.org to receive the link.

We know why you are here.

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70,000 People from 95 Countries make Aliyah in 2022

The most olim in more than two decades arrived in Israel this year, representing a dramatic increase from 2021

JNS – Some 70,000 people from 95 different countries immigrated to Israel in 2022 with the assistance of The Jewish Agency for Israel, in cooperation with the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration. It was the most olim in 23 years and a dramatic increase from 2021, when about 28,600 immigrants arrived in the country.

Jewish Agency data for the period between January 1 and December 1, 2022, shows that 37,364 olim arrived from Russia; 14,680 from Ukraine; 3,500 from North America, with assistance from Netefsh B’Netefsh; 2,049 from France; 1,993 from Belarus; 1,498 from Ethiopia as part of Operation Tzur Israel; 985 from Argentina; 526 from Great Britain; 426 from South Africa; and 366 from Brazil.

Approximately 27% (about 19,000) of this year’s olim are young people between the ages of 18 and 35, who will boost Israeli society and the economy, including professionals in fields where there is a labor shortage in Israel such as medicine, engineering and education. Around 24% (16,500) of the olim are ages 0-17; 22% are between 36 and 50 years old; 14% are aged 51-64; and 13% are 65 and over.

“It was a dramatic year that emphasized the value of mutual responsibility among the Jewish people and during which the Jewish Agency helped strengthen the resilience of Jewish communities, empowered weaker populations in Israel, brought tens of thousands of olim, saved lives from all over Ukraine and brought them to a safe harbor in Israel,” said Jewish Agency Chairman Mark Regev.

“Aliyah is of existential importance to the State of Israel, both at the practical and moral level. It expresses the nature of Israel as the state of the entire Jewish people and the strategic partnership between Israel and world Jewry. The tens of thousands of olim who came to Israel this year will help build the resilience of Israeli society and will be a major growth engine for the Israeli economy,” he added.

The Jewish Agency’s operation to rescue Ukrainian Jews following Russia’s invasion in February was unprecedented in its scope. The organization opened centers to receive the wave of Jewish refugees and provide them with warm beds, meals, medical care and activities for children.

A total of 290,000 meals were distributed in these centers and thousands of the refugees, including hundreds of seniors and Holocaust survivors, were flown to Israel on rescue flights. Emergency grants were also transferred to strengthen Jewish communities within Ukraine, and 354 tons of personal equipment was collected in Israel and distributed to refugees in Ukraine.

In light of the surge in arrivals, the Jewish Agency is preparing to operate a new model of “open absorption centers” where young olim will live in the same apartment building and receive community support services. The Jewish Agency also lent a facility to a center for lone soldiers (those without family members living in Israel who can help them) in Tel Aviv as part of the Wings program.

The program, a joint initiative of the Jewish Agency, the Merage Foundation, the Spirit of Israel social action platform and Keren Hayesod, provided a supportive framework for 2,200 lone soldiers this year – from those preparing for military service to those who have already discharged and are establishing their lives as civilians.

Finding Her Place and People in Israel

Halifa has been even better than she imagined.

The Jewish Agency’s Ulpan Etzion program is Israel’s flagship intensive Hebrew learning program designed specifically for young immigrants who hold college degrees. The five-month-long experience provides a solid academic Hebrew foundation for those who wish to develop their language skills in Israel and also gives young adults the opportunity to meet other Jews from around the world who are newcomers to Israel as well.

At Ulpan, Micaela has class Sunday through Thursday, with plenty of free time in the afternoon for lunch, followed by homework and studies, then grocery shopping, socializing, or running by the beach. She’s also been taking advantage of the many activities available in Haifa, from free traditional Israeli dance classes to concerts and museum visits.

And while Micaela always felt Israel was a part of her before making Aliyah, her connection to the Jewish homeland has strengthened since becoming an olah chadashah (new immigrant). Likewise, her relationship with Judaism has grown.

“Ulpan Etzion has helped me improve my Hebrew level to a point where I feel comfortable having conversations in Hebrew. But beyond Hebrew, Ulpan Etzion created a place where I made friends that I know will be there for the rest of my life, friends that have the same struggles as I do and who are also figuring out their place in Israeli society,” shared Micaela. “I honestly believe Ulpan gives olim (immigrants) a smoother landing to Israel and the tools needed to feel confident in their new home.”

It’s never too early to START PLANNING for your best senior living.

Don’t struggle with aging at home and the isolation and challenges it can bring. Life at Geer Village means less stress on you and your family, and more chances to live life with renewed energy and purpose.

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We believe in supporting seniors throughout all stages of life. Contact us today to learn more.

At Geer Village, our rates are all inclusive and affordable. Call 860.824.2625 to schedule your in-person or virtual tour.
Meals-on-Wheels & Meals to Go – Advance Reservation Required
Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. to reserve your meal for pickup and to arrange delivery if standing instructions are not in place. All are welcome to reserve meals for pick-up, although delivery may be limited in certain circumstances.

The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients. When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy. Adults 60 and over: $3 suggested donation. Adults under 60: $7 per person.

Volunteers are Vital! Volunteer drivers who can deliver meals-on-wheels are always appreciated. Please call Molly Meador at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14. The Federation’s kosher hot lunch program is offered in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire County.

![Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.](image)

FEBRUARY
Tuesday, 21 .............Breaded chicken cutlets#, egg drop soup, spicy dipping sauce, egg rolls, white rice, Oriental vegetables, rye bread, and pineapple.

Thursday, 23 ..........Vegan lentil stew**, rice, brown rice, salad, multi-grain bread, and cherry pie.

Monday, 27 ...........Roasted chicken**, mixed bean soup, noodles and onions, roasted broccoli, whole wheat bread, and applesauce.

Tuesday, 28 ...........Pepper steak with Korean barbecue sauce**, mango juice, white rice, Oriental vegetables, salad, white bread, and Mandarin oranges.

MARCH
Thursday, 2 ..........“Pepperoni” pizza, beets, salad, and fruit cocktail.

Monday, 6 .............Meat loaf**, chicken soup, peas and carrots, mashed potatoes, rye bread, and pears.

Tuesday, 7 ..............Poultry pot pie** (GF without crust), rice, salad, whole wheat bread, and hamantaschen.

Thursday, 9 ..........Italian Day (dairy), minestrone soup, Italian beans, garlic bread, and apricots.

PLEASE NOTE: The suggested donation is completely voluntary. Seniors who cannot pay a voluntary donation will continue to receive a meal, no questions asked. We appreciate your understanding.

Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?
Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-2200.

![Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.](image)

MAZEL TOV!

Maxine J. Stein, on wrapping up her role as CEO of Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts.

Adam Lehrer on his super special birthday.

Knesset Israel
16 Colt Road, Pittsfield
ONGOING MINYANS
Saturday, .......................... 9:30 a.m.
Sunday, ........................... 8:45 a.m.
Tuesday, .......................... 7 p.m. Zoom only
Thursday, .......................... 7 p.m., Zoom only
Friday, ............................. 5:45 p.m.

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES
Friday, February 24 .......... 5:18 p.m.
Friday, March 3 .............. 5:27 p.m.
Friday, March 10 .......... 5:35 p.m.
Friday, March 17 .......... 6:43 p.m.

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL!
You can now read and share Berkshire Jewish Voice feature stories online! Visit jewishberkshires.org and select Community & Events>Berkshire Jewish Voice for links to highlights of current and past issues.

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Julia Kaplan
Event Photographer
Serving the Berkshires
From small events to family portraits to large, informal events
973-590-7276
JuliaBKaplan@gmail.com
“A lot of people like snow. I find it to be an unnecessary freezing of water.”

So opined one of our Sages, the late Carl Reiner, about winter weather. Like it or not, snow covered the ground and a record-breaking chill froze the Berkshires solid on February 4 – nevertheless, more than 70 hardy community members showed up (and 50 more joined on the livestream) for Federation’s Hootenanny Havdalah. You all made it one of the warmest gatherings of the year.

Thanks to our affiliates for co-sponsoring this spirited evening of song, to the musicians (and guests who sat in to jam) for playing their hearts out, and to Knesset Israel and Rabbi David Weiner for being such gracious hosts.
Across the Berkshires

Kosher Hot Meals & Care Visits Provided more than 3,400 nutritious meals, 414 holiday packages, and visits for hundreds of older adults.

Social Services Provided case management and counseling, through a Jewish lens, by a licensed social worker to more than 87 community members.

Emergency & Specific Assistance Provided 75 holiday food cards, emergency grants, and interest-free loans to provide a safety net for community members.

Jewish Education Provided a high-quality Jewish education for 127 children and young adults through Jewish education grants to TAA, KI, CBI, and Hevreh’s religious schools.

Family Programming Engaged over 200 parents, grandparents, and children in Jewish programming and Tikun Olam, strengthening their connections to the Jewish community and helping them build supportive relationships with Jewish peers.

PJ Library & PJ Our Way Distributed more than 1,936 books and CDs to 163 children, nurturing their Jewish identity and helping their families embrace Jewish values and traditions.

Camp, Israel, and Campus Life Funded transformative Jewish camp and Israel experiences for 38 local youth and enhanced Jewish life for over 2,500 college students at UMass Amherst and Williams College.

Community Programming Engaged more than 5,000 participants in celebrating Jewish life and connecting as a community through more than 82 cultural, educational, and holiday programs.

Berkshire Jewish Voice Primary resource for over 5,000 readers engaging our community in Jewish life and broadening our spiritual, political, and cultural understanding.

Community Relations & Advocacy Provided a proactive voice and advocacy combating anti-Semitism in our community and supporting anti-bias training for over 2,500 students and educators in Berkshire County schools.

Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network Engaged over 200 volunteers in more than 2,000 hours of service to the Berkshire Jewish Community.

In Israel & Overseas

Through our partners, the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), and World ORT, our Federation helped fund:

- Lifesaving emergency assistance for more than 50,000 Jews fleeing the fighting in war-torn Ukraine.
- Resettlement services and job training for more than 46,000 Jews fleeing Ukraine and Russia for a new life in Israel.
- Food card, meals-on-wheels, homeless care, winter relief, and medicine to more than 50,000 of the world’s poorest Jews.
- Food cards, medical treatment, and activities for more than 21,000 at-risk children.
- Jewish education, camp, and Israel experiences for more than 6,500 youths in the Former Soviet Union.

In addition, we provided direct support in Israel to after-school programs for at-risk students, shelter for battered women, a supportive home for abandoned youth, counseling for sexually abused women, food security for low-income individuals and youth, and assistance for the frail and elderly.

This is just a sampling of how, together, we made a difference in the lives of others this year.
Thank You for Making a Difference!

"It is not what one says, but rather what one does that makes all the difference in the world" – Pirkei Avot 1:17

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires acknowledges the tremendous effort of over 1,152 donors and many community volunteers who helped make the 2022 campaign a resounding success. Together, we bring dignity and care to the vulnerable, engage the next generation, and create meaningful Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.

The 2022 Annual Campaign raised $1,170,600
Thank you!
Thank You!
Celebrate Purim with Hevreh

GREAT HARRINGTON - This year Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is celebrating Purim along the yellow brick road with a special Wizard of Oz-themed Purimspiel and children's Purim Carnival.

On Monday, March 6 at 6 p.m., follow the yellow brick road to Shushan for a very Oz-some celebration of Purim. Join Hevreh for an abbreviated Megillah reading in the Sanctuary before the Confirmation Class Purimspiel production of "The Megillah of Oz." Bring a box of macaroni and cheese to use as a gigger during the service. The food will be collected and donated to the People's Pantry. All are welcome.

The Religious School program at Hevreh is holding a Purim Carnival on Sunday, March 12 at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome to the family-friendly carnival celebration of Purim. Join in for games, a costume contest, and prizes!

For more information on Hevreh events and activities, visit www.hevreh.org.

Shabbat, Purim, and Parenting with Temple Anshe Amunim

FITTSFIELD - Join Temple Anshe Amunim for Shabbat, Purim, and Parenting Book Club this winter.

TAA Young Families Purim

On Friday, March 10 at 5 p.m., TAA invites young families to join together in celebrating Purim during Kabbalat Shabbat. Pizza will be served.

Jewish Parenting Book Club

Please join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch on Tuesday, March 14, at 8 p.m. for a discussion of The Man Who Sold his Holy Land, by Omer Friedlander. TAA invites anyone who identifies as a parent to join our discussion. Participants will read and understand the book through a parenting lens. Pre-registration is required. To register: tinyurl.com/Mur14BookClub.

Kabbalat Shabbat

Join Rabbi Hirsch at 5:30 p.m. every Friday night for Shabbat services. All are welcome to join in person or via livestream. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to the livestream.

Torah Study

At 9:30 a.m. every Saturday, Rabbi Hirsch leads a Torah study session. All are welcome to join in person or via Zoom. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to Zoom.

Temple Anshe Amunim is a Reform Jewish Congregation that promotes engaging and wide-spread participation in services, education, and cultural and social action programs. The Temple, located at 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield is an accessible building. For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910, email templeoffice@ansheamunim.org or visit www.ansheamunim.org.

Purim Around The World with Chabad of the Berkshires

The Jewish holiday of Purim explores a journey like never before

FITTSFIELD - Purim Around the World is Chabad of the Berkshires' creative twist this year on their traditional Purim party, and will accommodate the anticipated crowds of men, women, and children who thing to Chabad for their annual Purim celebrations.

The celebration is in honor of the special Hakhel year on the Jewish calendar this year. Sara Volovik, program director of Chabad of the Berkshires says, “This year is an opportune time to promote Jewish unity and gatherings to recreate a microcosm of the past grand Hakhel event that took place in Jerusalem every seven years.” Hakhel is a biblical commandment that all Israelites, men, women, and children, as well as converts, assemble to hear the reading of the Torah by the king of Israel once every seven years. “We combine ancient Jewish traditions with a modern twist,” says Rabbi Levi Volovik, co-director of Chabad of the Berkshires. “We focus on doing interesting and innovative holiday programs, yet still focus on the traditional holiday themes.”

“This ‘epic Purim party’ will be held by Chabad of the Berkshires on Tuesday, March 7 at 450 South Street in Pittsfield. The celebration will begin with a unique Multimedia Megillah Reading at 5 p.m., followed by a delicious buffet dinner including cuisine from all over the world. There will be music, entertainment, and hamantashen!” In the spirit of Purim, come in any costume - as innovative or as funny as you'd like to be included in the lively competition. All are welcome to join regardless of affiliation or background - there is no fee, however, reservations are required.

“On Purim eve, Chabad’s the place to be!” says Rabbi Volovik, who adds, “Purim celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people. In the year 3405 from Creation (356 BCE), from Haman’s plot to annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day. Purim literally means ‘lots,’ for Haman determined the day of annihilation by a lottery. It is observed by public readings of the megillah, "The Scroll of Esther" – and by sending food portions to friends, giving gifts of money to the poor, and enjoying a festive meal accompanied by joyous drink.

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KI Band Celebrates Jerry Garcia for Annual Purim Concert

FITTSFIELD - On Saturday, March 4 at 7:30 p.m., the Knesset Israel Band returns for its 14th annual Purim musical costume party. This year, the band will be covering the music of Jerry Garcia. Garcia is well known as a founding member and lead guitarist / vocalist of The Grateful Dead. His body of work also includes many popular Motown and rhythm & blues arrangements with The Jerry Garcia Band and an incredible bluegrass repertoire with David Grisman and Old & in the Way.

The KI Band will tell the story of the Megillah with new lyrics to some classic Jerry Garcia arrangements. You'll hear bluegrass classics like 'Midnight Moonlight' and 'Wild Horses,' Jerry Garcia Band arrangements of 'Tangled Up In Blue' and 'Two Sweet It Is,' and, of course, Grateful Dead classics including 'Friend of the Devil,' 'Uncle John's Band,' 'Casey Jones,' and much more!

This incredible musical and community event will include snacks and beverages. Tickets at the door are $15 for adults and $8 for kids 12 and under. Come in costume, bring some friends, and be sure to wear your dancing shoes!

“We have been waiting 14 years to tackle the music of Jerry Garcia,” said Jonathan Denmark, founder of KI's Purim musical costume party. “The catalog of music is incredibly vast, but we are excited to bring some of the most well-known arrangements to the wider community. This concert is going to be so much fun, and will include something for everyone, from well-known covers to classic licks that the Deadheads will love!”

Purim Tradition at Knesset Israel – Megillah and a Meal

FITTSFIELD - While the legendary Knesset Israel Purim Concert has become a fixture of our community's Purim revelry, there's still no substitute for the traditional celebration that Jews have been doing for...
RSVPed, CBI will be able to inform you if they need to. CBI choir. Light candles and welcome Shabbat with. Present bask in Shabbat's sweetness. CBI's spiritual programs and projects in Israel, also has a local bond. Project for Purim!

Shabbat Services

Friday evening, March 17 at 5:30 p.m., join CBI on Shabbat morning to celebrate Shabbat with prayer, song, and poetry. You will hear some words of Torah (and some words about Torah) as all present bask in Shabbat's sweetness. CBI's spiritual tools include traditional liturgy, contemporary poetry, chant, and song as well as the spectacular views from the sanctuary, which connect worshippers with the natural world and with our Source.

On Friday evening, March 17 at 7 p.m., join CBI for a beautiful, musical Kabbalat Shabbat service led by Rabbi Rachel Barshon, with harmony from the CBI choir. Afterwards, and welcome Shabbat with prayer and song. Let go of the week, breathe in the “extra soul” that Shabbat brings, and let poetry and melody replenish your heart and soul. All are welcome to join in person or on Zoom. Please use the CBI calendar to RSVP for all services and events - cbi.knessetisrael.org/calendar-of-events/. If you have RSVPed, CBI will be able to inform you if they need to move to Zoom in the case of severe inclement weather.

Since 2011, at Christmastime, we have contributed books, toys, blankets, and other items to this special Center devoted to assisting victims of domestic violence and community centers. It can’t (and wouldn’t) promise the type of baccanal that Ashura’s heirs might have hosted a few centuries later in Shushan. But we can promise great food, great fun, and more hamantashen than you can shake a grogger at. 

Dinner is at 5:30 p.m. Megillah reading is available at 6:15 p.m., with hamantashen to follow. Costumes are encouraged!

Dinner is free of charge, but RSVP is required: www.knessetisrael.org/rsvp.

Music, Food, and Friends to Start Shabbat at Knesset Israel

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel will host a Shabbat Shabbat with prayer, song, and poetry. You will hear some words of Torah (and some words about Torah) as all present bask in Shabbat's sweetness. CBI's spiritual tools include traditional liturgy, contemporary poetry, chant, and song as well as the spectacular views from the sanctuary, which connect worshippers with the natural world and with our Source.

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Throughout his career travels, Dr. Grayzel has also pursued his strong personal interest in local Jewish history, an interest he attributes to the influence of his now-deceased uncle, Rabbi Solomon Grayzel, who was the author of the well-known book A History of the Jews. It was during Dr. Grayzel's four years of living and working in India from 1989 to 1993 that he not only studied but participated, with his family, in Jewish life in India. This presentation will give an overall sense of the incredibly rich, varied, and intriguing over 2,000-year history of the Jews in India, including some of the contributions they made to India's culture and development despite their relatively small numbers. In addition to the history itself, Dr. Grayzel will ask participants to reflect on the probing question as to why Jews outside India know so little about the Jews of India. Many Jews in the United States were not even aware of the existence of a Jewish population until the 1980s.

An anthropologist with over 40 years of worldwide multicultural experience, Dr. Grayzel's interna- tional career spans the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines, India, Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, and Africa. A graduate of University of Oregon, Stanford University Law School, and Columbia University, his career includes over 30 years working in international development and 10 years teaching in academia.

Bene Israel Jews of India

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OBITUARIES

Shirley Irene (Wood) Finkelstein, 89, big heart, avid reader, active in the community

NORTH ADAMS - Shirley Irene (Wood) Finkelstein, 89, died on Thursday, January 26 at Williamstown Commons. Born in North Adams on October 25, 1933, a daughter of Samuel and Haer (Atwood) Wood, she graduated from Drury High School in 1951 and received her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Massachusetts in 1955.

Shirley married Dr. Manuel Finkelstein on June 13, 1957. Not only were they husband and wife, but they were also best friends, doing almost everything together. Though small in stature, Shirley had a big heart and would help anyone who needed it, donating annually to many causes, both locally and globally. She was also an avid reader and made it a goal of hers to read at least 52 books every year.

Shirley was active in the community with her husband, as the two of them were longtime volunteers together. Survivors include her two sons, Daniel (Mary) Finkelstein of Troy, MI, and Andrew Finkelstein of North Adams, with whom she made her home; sister-in-law, Susan Wood of Long Island, NY, and Egremont, MA; as well as several nieces and one nephew. She was predeceased by her husband, Edwin (Ned), and a son Joseph.

Funeral services were private and burial was planned in Southern Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to Friendship Center Food Pantry and MASS MoCA in care of Flynn & Dagnoli-Montagna Home For Funerals Central Chapel, 74 Marshall Street, North Adams, MA 01247.

“Can I Drive, Dad?”

A Story of the Teenage Years
By Albert Stern / Special to the BJV

The Scene: My son, Eliot, and I are in the car. In a parking lot, about to drive home at night after dinner. He is 16 years old and has recently obtained his learner’s permit to drive. I have given him my car keys.

Me: Eliot, just be careful. The last thing I need right now – the last thing – is to get into a car accident.

Eliot: I’m a good driver.

Me: I’ll admit it. You make me nervous. Not because I think you’re a bad driver, but because I’m not used to driving with you yet. So just be…what are you doing?

You’re going in reverse! Why are you going backward??

Eliot: I’m backing up.

Me: Don’t back up! Just go forward!

Eliot: Can I go forward that way?

Me: Why not??

Eliot: I don’t know!

Me: Go forward! Jesus. Alright. Take a right. Then the next right – no turn on red.

Eliot: I see it.

Me: Good. Be careful. (Engaging in mindful deep breathing.) Alright, take the next left. Indicate that you’re changing into the center lane and then…

carefully…get into the turning lane…good, and…OH MY GOD THAT CAR COMING AT US IS TOO CLOSE! DON’T MAKE THE TURN! STOP! STOP! GAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH – DAMNIT!

Eliot: Dad! Why are you yelling?

Me: Because the car was too close and coming at us too fast and you should have waited!

Eliot: I could have made it!

Me: I could have been crushed in the passenger seat if you didn’t! And I’m letting you drive – I’m teaching you to drive – and I said you shouldn’t have made the turn. So don’t tell me what you’re doing right or wrong – I’ll tell you!

Eliot: Mom lets me drive! Mom doesn’t get nervous when I drive!

Me: Well, I’m not Mom. I’m me. By the way, is that the same “Mom” who fell asleep at the wheel on the Mass Pike and crashed both of you into a guardrail?

Eliot: [Silence.]

Me: Goddamn it. Just…just…just goddamn it.

Eliot: It’s the same thing with Frankie – he likes to drive with Andrea because she doesn’t freak out. [His Dad] I’m freaks out just like you do when they drive.

Me: So what you’re saying is that I’m acting normal? Like a normal father, right? That there is nothing abnormal about the way I’m acting – that this is the way other normal fathers act, right?

Eliot: No, I’m…

Me: No to you – what you’re saying is that I’m not a uniquely flawed person, that I’m just acting like other normal people do when riding around with their kids who are learning how to drive, right?

Eliot: Not! No! I’m stopped getting all freaked out after the third time they drove together!

Me: Okay, Eliot – how many times have we been driving together?

Eliot: [Pause.] Um…four.

Me: Four. Okay, Eliot – so maybe I’m still the normal one here. Normal and just a little…bang…ah…snoozzzzzzz.

[Silence the rest of the ride.]

THE END
Graffiti Artists Raise Colorful Walls Against Antisemitism

NY Holocaust hero’s mural at an iconic NYC hotspot

NEW YORK – A dangerous surge in antisemitism in New York City and around the world is being fought with aid from an unexpected source – graffiti artists who have formed a global task force to fight hate and promote cross-cultural unity.

In their latest mission, a mural encompassing the entire outside of the iconic SoHo hotspot, Vig Bar at the busy corner of Spring and Elizabeth Streets, features a towering portrait of Tibor Baranski a Hungarian-American American artist born and raised in Queens. SKI has joined forces with other top urban artists around the world to participate in the “Righteous Among the Nations Global Mural Project.” Together they are painting building-sized murals honoring the heroes who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust at their own peril. The Righteous Among the Nations Global Mural Project is an initiative of the non-profit, Artists 4 Israel. The goal is to empower a new generation to fight the latest resurgence of an ancient hatred.

When Tibor Baranski was 22, he was studying to be a Catholic priest in Hungary. When the Nazis occupied Budapest, the young seminary student fast talked his way into the Papal Nuncio’s residence and persuaded the Vatican’s representative to let him use Church resources to save Jews. Baranski set up safe houses and printed official looking, but fraudulent, passes to get Jews out of the country. He even called Adolf Eichmann a scoundrel to his face. He alternated between charming and bullying. He was fearless when Nazi soldiers pointed guns at his head. He even called Adolf Eichmann a scoundrel to his face.

The unveiling of the mural on the first night of Chanukah (December 18) featured musical performances by the Jewish singer Neshama Carlebach, and remarks by Baranski’s sons.

The mural is the work of SKI (Fernando Romero), a Dominican...

...at Concepts of Art in Lenox, a Judaica and jewelry shop that has long supported the Berkshire Jewish Voice as an advertiser, and by being one of the places in Berkshire County where locals and visitors can pick up a free copy of the paper and connect to our Jewish community. As for our fine yarmulke frozen friend, there must have been some magic in that yarmulke they found.

Excellence in Health Care for You and Your Family.
Right Here in the Berkshires.
By Linda Buchwald / JTA

Lisa Edelstein, TV star with a family connection to the Berkshires, captures her Jewish mishpocha in a solo painting exhibit

Like many of us left without plans during the initial COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, Lisa Edelstein spent some of her time rummaging through old family photographs. But instead of just basking in the nostalgia, she was also on the lookout for her next painting project.

Since then, the actress, known for her often Jewish roles on several hit TV shows – from “House” to “Girlfriends’ Guide to Divorce” to “The West Wing” to “The Kominsky Method” – has been producing paintings that recreate old photos of her Jewish family. She showed them at her first solo art exhibition, titled “Family,” at the SPA Advisory art gallery in downtown Manhattan, which closed in January.

“I don’t think there is any way around my Jewishness being a part of what I do or make, whether or not I intend to make it a part of it,” says Edelstein. “Almost every role I get turns Jewish if it lasts long enough. I don’t think of myself as so obviously a Jew, but my name definitely gives it away and I don’t mind.”

Her Jewish identity comes through in her paintings, too. Like the photos they are modeled after, they capture family members in candid moments, often at group events. There are works of men in yarmulkes kissing family members on the cheek at a celebration, of a woman mid-phone call, of kids and adults stuffing their faces at a pizza parlor.

“What I’m looking for are those images that tell a more honest story, a caught moment, an odd angle, an awkward pose,” Edelstein said. “We don’t have images like that anymore, the world is too camera savvy and our phones are so high tech that we can just delete things that tell stories we’d like to forget or filter them into something else. Back when we took pictures on film, each photo took time, effort, and money to produce, so even if we hated it, we tended to keep it, at least in a box somewhere. Those are the ones I’m looking for.”

Edelstein, 56, grew up in Wayne, New Jersey, in a Conservative Jewish household observing all the holidays and Shabbat. [Editor’s Note: Her parents, Bonnie and Alvin Edelstein, had a home in the Berkshires and were members of Knesset Israel.]

“Though I was raised with a healthy Jewish identity, it wasn’t without embarrassment and apologetics,” she said. “It didn’t help that the local head of the school board, who later became mayor, published an article in a local paper telling people not to vote for the Jews for the school board because they would cancel Christmas.

“The way people talk about Jewish women in particular, with for example the word Jew [a derogatory term used to describe young Jewish women] is really disgusting. On some level, I think there was a feeling that I needed to dissociate myself with that identity in order to not be that thing that people associated with that identity,” she said.

She did consider changing her name when she moved to Los Angeles in 1991, thinking it could help her career. But she said it would have taken away from any feeling of true success. It was letting Hitler win, she said.

She has since dealt with antisemitism in her career, from being lumped into a non-specific “ethnic” category at the start of her career, to not getting a job because they already had a Jewish actor – and two Jews were considered one Jew too many.

A few years ago, Edelstein posted an old photo of herself with her mother and two siblings on Instagram for her mother’s birthday, and it happened to be in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. She got death threats in public comments, which she deleted, on the post.

“And lately, just painting a yarmulke feels like a radical move, never mind painting an El Al logo or even just Jewish faces. It’s suddenly daring to just be publicly Jewish,” she said.

But she wasn’t afraid to put Jewish-themed art on display. She was more nervous about the entire project in the first place.

“Actresses are a breed that people love and they also love to hate, so you just don’t know what the public response is going to be. But I felt very supported within the art community, at least the one I’m in,” she said.

Edelstein enjoyed drawing as a child and teen, but she didn’t continue with it after high school. It wasn’t until the pandemic lockdown that she returned seriously to the art form. It started with buying adult coloring books to fill the time, but she didn’t like the images in them and decided to make her own. Her husband, Robert Russell, an artist himself, pushed her to do more, and the images got larger and larger, until she went from magic marker to watercolor.

Russell always encouraged her to make things – when they first started dating, he asked her to make him a drawing about a week into their relationship. Always a fan of using photography as a starting point for her work, she gave him a drawing of herself at four years old sitting on the beach holding a crab. (He had given her a painting of two doves on their second date.)

“Suddenly I realized I actually did have permission to do this stuff, not because he gave it to me, but because I always had,” Edelstein said.

She will continue to act, write and direct, but she wants to continue in her next painting project. Edelstein is toying with the idea of adding drawings to a Passover Haggadah that she wrote for her family and updates every year. If she published the Haggadah for public consumption, the drawings could turn the Seder book into a coloring book of sorts for small children.
LISA EDELSTEIN, continued from page 18

“I have a lot of energy, so I'm up for whatever,” she said. “And I think it's important to view all of these things as one. They're just different ways my body pushes out ideas. Each one feeds the other.”

The BJV caught up with Lisa Edelstein by email in early February about her work and experiences in the Berkshires.

When the JTA article about your work was published online, my inbox was inundated with emails sent by your parents’ Berkshire friends at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield – and I’ve been asked to pass along best wishes. Do you have any thoughts or memories to share about the Berkshires or your parents’ experience here?

How sweet! Yes, my parents kept a house in the Berkshires since I was a teenager. At first, they lived in Otis, then they later moved to Pittsfield. They loved it there and spent every summer with their East Coast friends. I really wasn’t there very often once they moved to the Pittsfield house, but the Otis house has some childhood memories attached to it for sure. The sweetest is of a night that my father and I took a canoe out onto the lake. The lake was covered in fog so being on the canoe was like floating on a cloud. The sky was so clear we could see the Milky Way. And there were so many fireflies that it was hard to tell where the sky ended and the ground began. Magical! I also loved going with my mother to see dance performances at Jacob's Pillow. What an incredible place to perform.

You used old family photos as a resource in creating the work that was on view at the SFA Gallery. How do your childhood memories, the images captured in those old photographs, and your creative imagination intersect in your paintings? How much do your paintings capture what is portrayed in those old photos and how much do they diverge from them?

For the most part, the images I painted were painted as I saw them in the original photo. The creative part was finding the photos that had the kind of imagery I was looking for, which considering how many photos I had access to, was surprisingly difficult. I was specifically looking for pictures that felt closer to the memory of the moment than the posed way we all tend to use to try and capture our lives in stories. Sometimes there may have been multiple shots of the same moment – one before people were ready for the picture, and that would be the moment I was more interested in.

In an interview, you described your painting as “an extension of what I’ve always been doing – story-telling.” What is the story you are trying to tell with this series of works and how would you characterize its Jewish aspect?

I think part of what attracted me to an image was whether or not the people in it, the characters, were having an honest moment. That’s the kind of thing that always makes me lean into an image and I suppose I was hoping others would feel the same pull, even if the people in the image itself did not look like they did. Because these are all personal photos, the Jewish aspect was unavoidable. But beyond that, having rarely seen Jewish representation or identity in contemporary art, I was definitely drawn to the moments where that aspect of my family was front and center. The humanity, the Jewish humanity, is absolutely its own character in the storytelling.

You started painting more ambitiously during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Now that we’re living in the new normal and I’m supposing you are busier with your acting career, what direction are you taking with your painting?

Once we were about six months into the lockdown I started working a ton. I was shooting both The Kominsky Method and Love, Star, so I was being tested 12 times a week and driving all over the city. I still managed to paint! When I had to go to Manitoba to shoot Little Bird (an as-of-yet unreleased Limited Series by Freemantle/CBC) I painted on location, in my hotel, and even in my trailer. I feel so lucky to have this other thing to do now! An actor’s life, even in busy times, is full of waiting. I’m not good with waiting. Now I don’t have to be.

And is the show going to travel?

That’s not completely up to me, it depends on the interest of the right gallery at the right time in the right place. So I don’t know yet! I’ll be sure to post about it if and when that does happen. In the meantime, I’m having a blast making more.

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF SFA ADVISORY
I happened to read Jacqueline Saper’s From Miniskirt to Hijab – a cautionary story, in essence, about what can happen to Jews who stay too long in a Diaspora country that has become inhospitable – on a weekend in which the Iranian authorities showed up organically in the Torah portion, in my social media, and in the news.

The weekly Torah reading was Parshat B’to, in which Egypt suffers the final plagues and the Children of Israel are packed up and prepared to leave. Hashem instructs Moses and Aaron about the Passover sacrifice and then offers this curious instruction: “This is how you shall eat it: with your lots girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly” (Exodus 12:11). In other words, keep your eye on the door.

There are many opinions, approving and disproving, about what might be called “the parasitic style” in the Jewish worldview, but it is abundantly clear that the notion of itinerancy was installed in Judaism from the dawn of the faith. As the old blues song puts it, “When the Lord gets ready, you got no move” – whether you’ve been living in bondage or in Paradise.

Erev Shabbat that week marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, and I was reminded by a post on Facebook by an Israeli cousin of my generation about how staying too long also constituted our own families’ and communities’. When do you know that there is no choice and you must go? Hannah Arendt understood right away. The Nazis arrested her, she understood already in 1933, and she left Germany immediately. She was an immigrant without citizenship for almost twenty years.

My great-grandfather David Fishman from Belarus refused to leave. [He] explained to my grandmother in a letter that he knew the Germans – they were here during WWI and everything is fine. Until the summer of 1941, when they murdered him with his entire family.

When do we know?

And as Holocaust Remembrance Day ended in Israel, seven worshipers outside a synagogue in Jerusalem were murdered by a terrorist, a reminder that not only are enemies of the Jewish people eager to kill us in their countries but in our own land, as well. Except there is no door for Jews living in the State of Israel to keep an eye on – the Jewish homeland is the end of the line, corporally for all of us.

So it’s fair to say that I brought along a bit of extra baggage reading From Miniskirt to Hijab – I predict most Jewish readers will say so as well. Saper’s narrative follows an arc similar to that of Marjane Satrapi’s Persepolis, and fans of that comic book will want to read this book, which has a Jewish resonance provided by her family’s multicultural Jewish identity. Her father was a professor whose Mizrahi family had been in Persia for millennia, while her British Ashkenazi mother had to adapt to life in Iran, but also exposed her daughter to life in a Western country during summer visits back in England.

Because of the convergence of events on the weekend before we spoke, a question very much on my mind was: “When do we know?”

Jacqueline Saper provided some answers. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

First of all, how do you relate to someone like your father who chose to stay while friends and other family members left? Is there any bitterness? What’s that dynamic like?

Well, how can I put it? Chaos happens so fast and you are off-guard – life happened extremely fast. When I grew up in Tehran, the capitol city, was crazy. There were things happening in Tel Aviv. But it’s hard to understand that a generation before or two generations before, 30 years before; in the 1940s when armies invaded Iran, there was a famine. The illiteracy rate was quite high among women, even in the 1970s. People didn’t travel that often. The elite did, but not the majority. When you went to the rural areas traditional women still guarded their hijab.

So once you all finally did get out, and not just for your family, but in other families that you have seen, are there resentments? Does the issue of whether or not the correct decision of when to have left was made become the fulcrum of family resentments? Or is it something that people tend to be more accepting of?

Depends on the person. Depends on each family’s dynamic. Our family dynamic was quite unusual because we were hiburalic in the Jewish community of Iran. I read articles, about the second and third generations of Iranians who were born or grew up in America. They call themselves hiburalic because they had the conflict between their Iranian parents at home and the American culture at school and outside.

But nobody has had my unique experience of living in Iran, being exposed to the Western culture, but being hindered by Middle Eastern cultures while living in a house that was of both cultures. So it was a little different coming to America. As an immigrant, my issue was I was very much American.

Many people didn’t even know Iran even had a Jewish community. People regarded all refugees the same. I wrote the book mostly to explain who I was.

One of the lines that struck me from your book, you said that the race to modernity did not feel authentic in the Iranian culture. Can you talk a little bit more about that and what?

Very much so, because modernity happened extremely fast. When I grew up in Tehran, the capitol city, was crazy. There were things happening in Tel Aviv. But it’s hard to understand that a generation before or two generations before, 30 years before; in the 1940s when armies invaded Iran, there was a famine. The illiteracy rate was quite high among women, even in the 1970s. People didn’t travel that often. The elite did, but not the majority. When you went to the rural areas traditional women still guarded their hijab.

It was a double life between modern major cities and smaller parts of the country. And I encountered many highly-educated people whose mentality was from the Middle Ages – women were not equal and many other things. So there was a paradox and conflict between acting like a Western society and a superstitious, ideological mentality that most people had. That was the clash and that’s why they backed Khomeini, who never explained his agenda. People thought he’d be like a kind grandfather who would go back to the seminary. But he hijacked the revolution.

Do you think that’s going to be, as the world moves forward, a perpetual pull on the Islamic world of societies wanting to go back to Islamic rule?

I don’t, because of the new generation. Iran, when the revolution happened, had 35 million population. Now it has almost 85 million. That means 70 to 75 percent of the Iranian population today never saw the pre-revolution era. They weren’t born during the revolution. And with the advent of social media, the world is so connected and the youth of Iran are not bound to the superstition and tradition of Islamic ideology of their parents or grandparents. They are modern. Not all of them, but many are. They see what’s happening – they just go on their Instagram and TikTok to see what’s going on in the world. When you look at other Islamic countries, I see Jordan is very modern. I don’t know Lebanon is modern. I think it’s changing.

There is a chapter in my book, “Public Life, Private Self” – it’s exactly the same in Iran now. Iran has an alcohol problem – although it’s bad. Facebook is bad, but there are millions of users. There is underground music and underground parties. It’s a paradox. People have to live double lives. It’s us against them.

But when is that going to be reconciled? I know there have been protests. It is a start of a revolution, though I don’t know if I can name it that right now. I think revolution happens when it’s finished. But what’s going to change? I know that Iran, after September of last year, after [anti-hijab protestor] Mahsa Amini’s death, is not going to go back to what it used to be. Pandora’s box has been opened, something has changed. But the regime is so brutal and it has so many layers. That is not easy. The regime is homicidal, but not suicidal. That’s how it put it. It’s not going to go away easily.

Will this regime fall? I think eventually it will, but when and how, I don’t know. What this regime kept on telling people is that if there is chaos and protests, the Iranian people and Iran will be divided. Because Iran has a lot of ethnicities – Turks, Kurds, Baha’is, Arabs, Persians – they say if anything happens, Iran will be divided. But nobody has had my unique experience of living in Iran, being exposed to the Western culture, but being hindered by Middle Eastern cultures while living in a house that was of both cultures. So it was a little different coming to America. As an immigrant, my issue was I was very much American.

Many people didn’t even know Iran even had a Jewish community. People regarded all refugees the same. I wrote the book mostly to explain who I was.

Do you think to effect real change they’re going to need a real leader?

Not necessarily, because I think we are, in this day and age, the 21st century. I think revolutions have changed, too. The way things are happening is different nowadays.