

# Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

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## Passage to Sweden

**Community commemoration and film screening will mark Holocaust Remembrance Day**

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, April 16, at 2 p.m., join the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for a community commemoration of Yom HaShoah-Holocaust Remembrance Day with a screening of *Passage to Sweden* and a family story told by Agi Sardi, daughter of a Holocaust survivor saved by Swedish intervention. Candle lighting and prayers of remembrance will follow the film.

This free in-person event will take place at the Berkshire Museum's Little Cinema, located at 39 South Street in Pittsfield. Space is limited – please register on our calendar of events listing at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

### About the Film

*Passage to Sweden* tells the lesser-known story of events occurring in Scandinavia and Budapest during World War II, focusing on the heroic actions of ordinary people who saved the lives of thousands of Jews and fellow countrymen.

Between 1940 and 1945, the sheer luck of where a Jew in Scandinavia lived made a world of difference. For political and geographic reasons, the Scandinavian Jews of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark had very different experiences. During the German occupation, Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. In defiance of the occupying German forces, spontaneous and dramatic rescue operations were conducted to save thousands of Jewish lives and those of other citizens

SWEDEN,  
continued on page 4

## What's on the Israeli Breakfast Table? Delicious Food!

**Celebrate Israel's 75th birthday with food and Federation**

In celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's 75th birthday, bring your appetite and join Delicious Israel for a live tour to explore the diversity of Israel through the infamous Israeli Breakfast!

During our 1-hour online experience, Delicious Israel's culinary expert guide will lead us, interactively, through an engaging, educational and fun online activity. on a personalized virtual food tour of Israel focusing on



The most important meal of the day – and, in Israel, often the most delicious

the Diversity of Israel: What's on the Breakfast Table.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom on Thursday, April 27 at 10:45 a.m. Links at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

During the first part of the session, our Delicious Israel culinary expert guide will share history, stories, maps, videos and other engaging materials followed by Q & A about any Israeli food questions.

Then, we'll join together with an intimate chat about one of the country's greatest treasures – its delicious food!

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## Holy Work That Enriches Us All



© DANIEL LEVIN 2021

**Explore a heroic effort to restore violins that survived the Holocaust**

In commemoration of Yom HaShoah, on Thursday, April 20 at 6:45 p.m., Federation hosts celebrated photographer, author, and professor Daniel Levin for an online discussion about his new book, *Violins and Hope: From the Holocaust to Symphony Hall*, which explores master violinmaker Amnon Weinstein's effort to restore violins that survived the Holocaust. Weinstein's workshop is shown above. For more, please see page 28.

## SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK

Plant the Seeds to Help Our Community Bloom

### SAVE THE DATES

#### DONATE

**2023 Annual Campaign Launch**

Keep an eye out for your solicitation letter and make your gift to the Federation's 2023 Campaign to help our community.

#### CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY

**Sunday, May 21 at 2 pm**

**Jewish Community Day at High Lawn Farm  
Sustaining Our Community and Our World**

Join in a fun filled day of ice cream, cows, crafts, music, and more as we seek to make our community and our planet a better place.

**Wednesday, May 31 at 7:30 pm**

**To Boldly Grow: Judaism, Food & Sustainability**

An inspirational discussion with James Beard Award-winning columnist and author Tamar Haspel in conversation with educators from Isabella Freedman's Adamah Farm and Teva programs.

#### DO A MITZVAH

**Stay tuned for an opportunity to make a difference in our Berkshire community.**



Jewish Federation  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.  
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.



OP-ED

How Israel is Using Digital Diplomacy to Win in Iran

By David Saranga/ Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Four hundred and fifty million. That's the number of times social media users across the globe engaged with Farsi-language digital content generated by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs last year. And guess what: 93 percent of these viewers were in Iran – a country committed to wiping Israel off the map.

For more than a decade, Israel's digital diplomacy team has maintained channels in more than 50 languages which reach some 2 billion people each year. But somehow Farsi has become the most popular language of all – even more than Hebrew and English combined.

Since the beginning of the demonstrations in September 2022, [Israel in Persian] has evolved into an unlikely voice for the Iranian people

How did this happen? For one thing, unlike in other, more digitally cautious nations, Israeli diplomats can post both personal and professional content with relatively few restrictions. This openness suits a country where technology and innovation are our greatest competitive edges. And the digital sphere is no exception – particularly when it comes to dealing with our enemies.

The United States and the West have much to learn from Israel's efforts to penetrate audiences in hostile nations. Consider Iran. In a country where traditional and social media networks are heavily censored, millions use VPNs to access content blocked by the regime. For more than a decade, Israel has worked within these constraints to build an online community of Iranians interested in learning about Israel, a place Iranian leaders have long called "the Little Satan."

Israel's digital journey in Iran is proof that both governments – and their people – need little more than a smartphone to shape public opinion abroad. To do so, governments must first and foremost speak the languages of their target audiences – literally and metaphorically.

The woman behind our Israel in Persian accounts on Twitter and Instagram escaped Iran as a teenager and moved to Israel, where she lives today. Persian food, holidays and Farsi are not just hobbies for her, they're core components of her identity. Iranians following @IsraelinPersian can see themselves in the content she produces on Twitter and Instagram.



Iranian protestors in September 2022

Both @IsraelinArabic and @IsraelinPersian create content that focuses on shared culture, music, food and values. For Iran, this has meant postings celebrating Persian holidays like Norwuz alongside, more recently, content that publicly supports the thousands of Iranians protesting for their basic freedoms. This approach appears to be working: In October 2022, the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed to conduct a poll inside Iran which revealed that over 70% of Iranian respondents expressed positive sentiments towards the Jewish State.

Before the latest protests, Israel in Persian covered everything from Israeli technology to Persian Jewish history to ongoing human rights abuses of the Iranian Regime. However, since the beginning of the demonstrations in September, the account has evolved into an unlikely voice for the Iranian people whose media options have never been more limited. Content today now focuses on the horrific beatings, executions, and violations perpetrated by the regime.

Starved of information, Iranians appear to want what we are offering: Since the beginning of the protests, Israel's Persian-language activity has skyrocketed – with Instagram followers surging from 400,000 to 1.1 million in the last year alone, while our Twitter numbers have risen nearly 15 percent. All of this growth is organic.

The Israeli government differentiates between the brutal ayatollahs and ordinary Iranians fighting against decades of oppression and abuse. Israel in Persian openly criticizes the Iranian regime while supporting the Iranian people in their fight for freedom. At a time when many Iranians have never felt more voiceless, other countries might consider following our lead.

As new AI technologies such as Chat GPT emerge, the still-nascent world of digital diplomacy will continue to strengthen as countries innovate and iterate their official social media strategies. True, there is no replacement for traditional face-to-face diplomacy. But digital tools now allow governments to shape public opinion online for policies they wish to promote offline – often in ways unimaginable even a decade ago.

In fact, our @IsraelinArabic efforts did just that. Our first Arabic-language social media channels launched almost a decade ago – long predating the signing of the Abraham Accords, which saw Israel and a quartet of Arab and Persian Gulf nations establish diplomatic relations in September 2022. Years before the Abraham Accords, our Arabic teams were planting the seeds of regional peace by highlighting historic and cultural commonalities.

One viral Facebook video from 2019, for instance – which showed the similarities between words in Hebrew and Arabic – has been viewed nearly 7 million times and was even shared by a high-ranking UAE official who praised the bonds between the two languages. Social media – with all of its flaws and challenges – has allowed countries like Israel to bypass the constraints posed by conflict and warfare and speak directly to the citizens of countries with which Israel hopes to one day align.

And now back to Iran. Government change in Tehran is inevitable. Which is why Israel's digital diplomats are preparing Iranian public opinion for the day when the still-unrealized "Cyrus Accords" will be signed bringing peace between Israel and Iran. None of us know when that will happen. But in the meantime, our digital diplomats will continue to serve as unexpected voices for the Iranian people.



Ambassador David Saranga is the Director of the Digital Diplomacy Bureau at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This article originally appeared in the New York Post and was reprinted with permission of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

IN HONOR OF YOM HASHOAH  
HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY



Free Film Screening and Memorial Candle Lighting  
*Passage to Sweden*  
April 16, 2023 at 2 pm

The Berkshire Museum, 39 South Street, Pittsfield, MA

*Passage to Sweden* tells the lesser-known story of events occurring in Scandinavia and Budapest during WWII. It focuses on the heroic actions of ordinary people who saved the lives of thousands of Jews and fellow countrymen.

AFTER THE FILM

Agi Sardi, the daughter of a survivor who received a certificate of protection by the Swedish legation, will share her family's story. Candle lighting, prayers, and a moment of reflection in memory of the victims of the Holocaust will follow.



ISRAEL TRAVEL & STUDY GRANTS FOR YOUTH

The Michael Nathaniel Shute Endowment Fund provides grants to Berkshire area youth for educational travel or study in Israel.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Awards are made within 45 days of receiving the application. Additional funding is available through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Download an application at jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Federation's office 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA





OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

Miracles are Challenging and Complex Gifts – Are We Ready to Receive “The Offer”?

By Rabbi Barbara Cohen / Congregation Ahavath Sholom



Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles.... Would you know a miracle if you fell over one? Would you take the time to wonder about what just appeared in your life or would you be busy with the practicalities...would you ignore it, dismiss it, complain about the fall, move on? Would you fail to notice?

April is a month filled with miracles. Yom HaAliyah, Pesach, Yom HaZikaron, and Yom HaAtzmaut – depending on your political and spiritual perspective, all could be considered to be stories about miracles. Yom HaAliyah, a national holiday in Israel, celebrates the movement of the Israelites into the Promised Land in ancient times and immigration now. Joshua was said

to have led the people over the Jordan on Nisan 10 (April 1 this year). And a case could be made that the Passover saga really begins with a burning bush and man who turns to look at something long enough to recognize that an extraordinary thing is happening. Operative words... ‘turns’ and ‘long enough’.

Our High Holy Day liturgy refers to us as ‘stiff-necked’ and stiff-necked people have a hard time turning their heads to take in what may be remarkable around them. Sometimes the insistence on rationality won’t let us entertain such out of the ordinary perceptions, and sometimes miracles do really come in complex forms. We’ve been schooled on miracles in our tradition to be interventions of the Divine, the biggest one, our core story, the gift of freedom from the oppression in Egypt and the splitting of the Sea of Reeds to assure our escape. Trouble is, not all miracles are received by all people in the same way. Even those for whom they are meant to be a gift sometimes reject the ‘offer.’ Suspending disbelief for a moment, we don’t talk much about those who may have decided to stay behind in Egypt and not make the leap of faith to follow Moses and Aaron into the wilderness. We certainly know, the Torah tells us, that some of the people who did decide to go complained incessantly about the (miraculous) manna, the lack of (miraculous) water, and even the leadership of Moses.

Everything about the story of the Exodus and the wandering demands an acceptance of the miraculous. The Divine provides sustenance, guidance for the way forward, and for some it wasn’t enough. The cry ‘Dayeinu’ was not universal. The miracles of freedom, manna from heaven, and water from a rock were rejected by many and accompanied by ingratitude, carping, distrust, and small-mindedness. No matter how the Torah is regarded – divine, divinely inspired, a compilation and retelling of the stories of the region – it is how the biblical saga of the Jewish people is told. These miracles and others in our history and the reactions to them have made their way into our teachings, imaginations, and cultural inner life...down to the very discussions around our tables as we gather.

Yom HaZikaron is also in April, a day on which all the fallen who died to defend their land are remembered. The following day is Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel’s 75th Day of Independence, when Israel celebrates the miracle of its very existence as a modern nation since 1948. As varied as the stars in the sky are the feelings about this subject. Civil discourse is a goal and yet it is so hard to achieve. Righteous passions erupt from all directions and the heat can blind and deafen to possible solutions. The tenet that we are schooled on from the very beginning of our education as Jewish children is to welcome the stranger for we were once strangers, and yet strangers have become a terrifying prospect to children in our modern world. How do we explain and justify behavior antithetical to that compassion?

My heart wishes for the miracle of peace and my experience tells me that miracles are challenging and complex and are sometimes achieved at the expense of others. As we tell the story each year of the 10 plagues at our Seders, how much time do we give our spiritual imaginations to contemplate and discuss how the Egyptians suffered for the megalomania of their Pharaoh and for the prolonged and intentional suffering inflicted upon them by the God of the Torah?

The word ‘nes’ (nun samech) in Hebrew means miracle. We know it from our Chanukah story and from the letters on the dreidel – Nes Gadol Hayah Sham – a great miracle happened there. Interestingly, these letters appear in the word for ‘test’ in the Torah, ‘nisah’ (nun samech hey) in the story of the Akedah, ‘God put Abraham to the test’ and later in the book of Exodus, Moses tells the people

Everything about the story of the Exodus and the wandering demands an acceptance of the miraculous. The Divine provides sustenance, guidance for the way forward, and for some it wasn’t enough.

not to worry, that God is just ‘testing’ them. In a different order, the letters form the word ‘sneh’ (samech nun heh), the burning bush of Moses and yet in another configuration the letters are part of Sinai (samech, yud, nun, yud).

All of these occurrences can be thought of as times of intense experience of the Divine, of awareness of miracles. Yet they are also tests of clarity and of the potential that we can be of this world and also know when we are also glimpsing something beyond. This clarity includes having the wisdom to value and be grateful for the gift of insight. Let us face the test with awe, strength, and thanks.

In all our blessings and challenges in this season, let us journey forward together. Chag Pesach Sameach!

Rabbi Barbara Cohen is the spiritual leader of Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington.

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Berkshire

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# Your Federation Presents

## Federation Welcomes Mark Cohn as its Development Officer



Mark Cohn

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires announces the appointment of Mark Cohn as its development officer. In this capacity, Mark will be responsible for working in partnership with the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, and the Development Committee to plan and implement Federation’s annual campaign and major gifts fundraising effort.

Cohn, an ordained Reform Rabbi, previously served as rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Winston-Salem, NC, where he was honored with the title Rabbi Emeritus upon concluding his service. He also served as the assistant rabbi of Congregation Schaarai Zedek in Tampa, FL.

“Having spent my professional life in the Jewish community, working at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is home, even in its newness to me,” says Cohn. “I have already seen how this Federation serves a beautiful and important role in connecting synagogues and individuals, social services and families to one another so that we, collectively, may strengthen Jewish peoplehood and the surrounding community.”

Originally from the San Francisco Bay area, Cohn earned his B.A. in History from UCLA and an M.A. in History from Lehigh University. In 1998, he received his rabbinic ordination through Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion having studied in Jerusalem and Cincinnati, OH.

Cohn has two children, his son Eitan, 25, and daughter Harli, 20. In 2022, he married Rabbi Amy Wallk, who serves as the rabbi of Temple Beth El in Springfield, MA.

**Mark Cohn**, development officer of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, can be reached by email at [mcohn@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:mcohn@jewishberkshires.org) or by calling (413) 442-4360, ext. 19.

## Contemporary Jew Hatred in Universities and Popular Culture in America



Dr. Charles Asher Small

On Thursday, March 23 at 6:45 p.m., respected scholar, author, and speaker Dr. Charles Asher Small will explore issues of contemporary Jew-hatred in the United States, including antisemitism in American universities, popular culture, and hip hop.

**This program was rescheduled from an earlier date.**

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) for links to our programs.

Dr. Small is the Founder and Executive Director of International Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) and the Director of the Fellowship Training Programme on Critical Antisemitism Studies at Woolf Institute, Cambridge.

Through ISGAP, he has convened groundbreaking academic seminar series, conferences and programming in the emerging field of contemporary antisemitism studies at Harvard University, Yale University, Columbia University, Stanford University, Fordham University, McGill University, University of Miami, La Sapienza University in Rome, the Sorbonne in Paris, the National University of Kyiv, the CNRS (the French National Center for Scientific Research or Centre national de la recherche scientifique), and other top-tier universities around the world.

Dr. Small is committed to creating scholarly programming and research on contemporary antisemitism at top-tier universities internationally, and establishing contemporary antisemitism studies as a recognized academic discipline.

He is the author of books and articles including the six-volume *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity* and *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective* (vols. 1-3).

## SWEDEN,

continued from page 1

in Scandinavian nations. Firsthand accounts depicted in the film also convey the extraordinary ways Swedish diplomats leveraged their political position to save Jews from within Hungary and Germany.

The film pays special homage to the Norwegian resistance, the citizens of Denmark, the Swedish Red Cross, Raoul Wallenberg, and Count Folke Bernadotte, a Swedish nobleman and diplomat. Risking their own lives, their selfless acts of courage and compassion provide a powerful example of how anyone can make a difference.

*Passage to Sweden* is an inspiring film depicting decency, humanity, and courage, in a rare bright spot during the darkest of times.

### About Our Speaker

**Agi Sardi** is the daughter of Dr Andrew Sardi, a Hungarian Jew who experienced pervasive pre-war antisemitism. He recounted that his earliest memory was at the age of 6, when a friend whose parents forbade her from seeing him explained he had “killed Jesus.” His response: “It must have been the other Steiners!”.

Hungary experienced increasing pressure to isolate and annihilate its entire Jewish population, until it was directly occupied by the Nazis in 1944. Sardi’s family realized how precarious the situation was after seeing the horrors in the city of Budapest while being forced into labor clearing rubble. His mother was able to procure a certificate of protection issued by the Swedish legation, and the family was sheltered in a Raoul Wallenberg safe house from October 1944 through Soviet liberation.

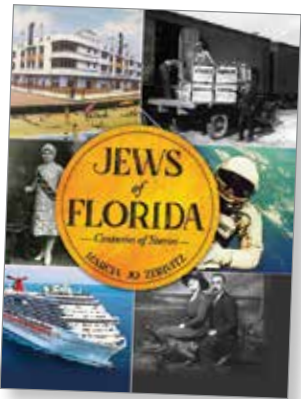
Dr. Sardi passed away in 2003. He was dedicated to ensuring the Holocaust would never be repeated.

Agi Sardi was born in Budapest and fled with her family through France to finally settle in the USA. She is speaking on behalf of 3GBoston which is a non-profit organization founded by the grandchildren (3rd Gen) of Holocaust survivors who have come together to create an outlet for Holocaust remembrance in the Greater Boston area. Their collective mission is to honor grandparents’ legacies by educating future generations to learn from the lessons of the Holocaust and be upstanders in the face of hatred and antisemitism. They empower grandchildren of Holocaust survivors to share their grandparents’ stories and provide a human face to the Holocaust.

## Jews of Florida – Centuries of Stories, with Marcia Jo Zerivitz

On Thursday, March 30 at 6:45 p.m., we host Marcia Jo Zerivitz, founding executive director of Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU in Miami Beach. She has been a leader in the American and Floridian Jewish communities for more than 50 years, with a specific focus on museums and Florida Jewish history. Her talk will be based on her book, *Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories*, which was released in 2020 and is the first comprehensive history of the Sunshine State’s Jews from colonial times to the present.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) for links to our programs.



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Ilse Browner  
Larry Frankel and Elisa Schindler Frankel  
Diana and Andy Geller  
**9 Households have given in 2023**

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# Your Federation Presents

As Marcia Jo Zerivitz writes:

*Despite not being officially allowed to live in Florida until 1763, Jewish immigrants escaping expulsions and exclusions were among the earliest settlers. They have been integral to every area of Florida's growth, from tilling the land and developing early communities to boosting tourism and ultimately pushing mankind into space. You will meet contemporary Floridian Jews – names that are recognized globally – and pioneers who impacted history beginning 257 years ago and possibly in 16th-century Florida.*

*The Sunshine State's Jews, working for the common good, have been Olympians, Nobel Prize winners, computer pioneers, educators, politicians, and leaders in business and the arts, and more, while maintaining their heritage to help ensure Jewish continuity for future generations.*

In 1995, **Marcia Jo Zerivitz** founded the Jewish Museum of Florida (JMOF), now housed in two adjacent restored former synagogues in Miami Beach that are on the National Register of Historic Places. JMOF collects, preserves, and interprets the Jewish experience in Florida in the context of American and world Jewish history, art, and culture, and also reflects the immigration experience of all Americans. In 16 years, Zerivitz produced more than 70 exhibits and led the fundraising for \$36 million. She initiated the legislation for both a Florida Jewish History Month (FJHM) each January and a Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) each May to increase awareness of the contributions of Jews to the state and nation.

In 2009, as part of the Museum's strategic plan, Zerivitz began a search for an academic partner to help ensure the long-term impact and outreach of the mission of JMOF. She initiated contact with Florida International University, and, in 2012, the partnership was finalized, resulting in JMOF-FIU.

Zerivitz retired from JMOF in October 2011. She continues to curate exhibits, research, and write books and articles on Florida Jewish history.

## Too Long, Too Foreign...Too Jewish? The Politics of Jewish Name Changing

On Monday, March 20 at 6:45 p.m., we host Kirsten Fermaglich, a professor of History and Jewish Studies, Michigan State University, for a program based on her 2018 book, *A Rosenberg By Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America*.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) for links to our programs.

Our images of name changing are frequently clichés: movie stars who adopted new names or Ellis



Professor Kirsten Fermaglich

Island officials who changed immigrants' names. Dr. Fermaglich upends these clichés 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](http://bookstore.org) and a portion of the proceeds will be donated back to the local Bookstore in Great Barrington.

## Kosher Community Seder 5783



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

PITTSFIELD – All are invited to participate in a kosher community Passover Seder at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 5 at Kneset 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 Goetz of KI. 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 Kneset 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 contact Dara Kaufman at Federation at [dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org) or by calling (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](http://www.jewishberkshires.org).

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

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# Allocations 2023



JAFI – Aliyah Rescue



Local Jewish Education Grants



World ORT – FSU Schools



UMASS Hillel

## Federation Announces 2023 Allocations

In January, the Allocations Committee of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires announced its recommended allocations for 2023. In all, \$442,784 will be distributed to worthy organizations in the Berkshires and beyond.

“As Jews, we recognize that the world is bigger than us,” said Allocations Committee chair Judy Usow. “Bigger than just our congregation or favorite Jewish organization. Bigger than just our Berkshire Jewish community. The Talmud teaches us that that ‘kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh’ – all of Israel is responsible for one another. Through our allocation process we accept this notion of communal responsibility and commit to the larger efforts to care for those in need and sustain Jewish community wherever Jews in the world need us.”

The dollars allocated are drawn from Federation’s annual campaign, endowment funds, donor-directed gifts, and other sources.

### For Our Safety: Security Grants for Berkshire Jewish Organizations

With concern for a climate of increased antisemitism much in mind, the committee allocated \$45,000 in 2022 to fund security grants for local Jewish organizations to strengthen the physical security at their facilities. Of that, only \$7,500 was paid out due to supply chain issues – the remaining \$37,500 was rolled over and will be paid out as part of the 2023 allocations process.

### For Our Youth: Jewish Education, Jewish Camp, and Israel Experience Scholarships

Last year, a Federaton education task force created a new grant application with input from the schools, teachers, and national Jewish educational organizations to promote innovation in Jewish education. The new process sets a two-year funding commitment to allow the schools time to implement and evaluate new programming. The committee funded \$70,000 towards Jewish education grants for the four Jewish religious schools in Berkshire County – Congregation Beth Israel, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim – to support the 126 students enrolled for the 2023-24 school year. An equal amount will be allocated in the 2024-2025 school year.

The committee allocated funds for overnight Jewish camp scholarships to provide a joyous identity-building experience for Jewish youth. Additionally, the committee allocated funds for financial assistance for full-time Berkshire families sending children to URJ Camp Eisner day camp in Great Barrington – families can receive as much as \$100 per week in assistance per child.

The committee also allocated funds for young adults aged 18 to 26 who participate in Birthright Israel, a program for which costs have greatly increased. Pre-pandemic, roughly 20 to 23 young adults participated in this program each year.

### For Our Region: Anti-Bias, College Engagement, and Honoring Our Past

Recognizing Berkshire County’s struggles with incidents of anti-Semitism and racism in its public schools, the committee allocated funds to continue the ADL’s successful A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Anti-Bias Peer Training Program and NO Place for Hate program in local schools. To date, over 3,000 students and faculty have participated in this important program. Our funding also helped train Berkshire District Attorney’s Youth Advisory Board to co-facilitate discussions around identity, bias, and allyship at the DA’s annual STRIVE conference for Berkshire County Schools

The committee awarded UMASS Hillel in Amherst funds to support programming and construction that will significantly upgrade their building’s accessibility. The Williams College Jewish Association received an allocation to support its outreach, programs, and High Holiday dinner.

The committee also provided meaningful financial support so that Ahavath Sholem Cemetery can be maintained in a safe and dignified manner. The cemetery was started by a Pittsfield congregation that no longer exists.

### For Strengthening Our Global Jewish Community

As they do every year, our Israel and overseas partner agencies will receive meaningful

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# Allocations 2023



A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Educators Training



JDC – Chesed Relief



JAFI – Afula Gilboa-Berkshire Partnership



Neve Michael Childrens Village

contributions to implement programs that save lives, build resiliency, and support Jewish life in Israel and in fragile Jewish communities around the world. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, we and our partners mobilized to support Ukraine and its Jewish community through the current crisis. Emergency relief funds were raised and directed to families, individuals, and institutions upended by the conflict, as well as to refugees seeking resettlement in Israel – applications for *Aliyah* from Eastern Europe increased by nearly 400 percent.

The committee directed funds to our partners and the services and programs they provide:

**The Jewish Agency For Israel – jewishagency.org**

- Aliyah of Rescue: Brings any Jew to safety in Israel
- Masa Israel: Immersive Israel experiences for young adults
- Partnership2Gether: Our living bridge program with Israel’s Afula-Gilboa region
- Youth Futures: Mentoring for at-risk Israeli children
- Youth Villages: Boarding schools for at-risk Israeli children
- Youth Activism: Leadership training for vulnerable populations
- Small Business Loan Funds: Focused on new immigrants, Ethiopian-Israelis, Arab-Israelis, and ultra-Orthodox
- Project TEN: Global Tikkun Olam: Young Jewish adults from all over working in developing countries
- Amigour Subsidized Housing in Israel: For the elderly, new immigrant, and single-parent families

**The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) – jdc.org**

- Hesed Centers & Social Welfare Programs: Vital support of basic needs for Jews in need around the world.

- Entwine Program: Young Jewish leadership to make an impact of global Jewish needs
- Jewish Summer Camps & Leadership Programs: Jews from Former Soviet Union countries reconnecting to their Jewish heritage
- Global Disaster & Emergency Relief: Immediate response to natural disasters and crises worldwide
- Israel Social Service Incubator Programs: Social services at-risk children, the physically and developmentally disabled, and low income elderly

**World ORT – ort.org**

- Reclamation and rebooting of Jewish life through high-quality education
- Schools and science & technology centers across Israel, Europe, the FSU, and Latin America that provide hundreds of thousands of Jewish individuals (children and adults) with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster economic self-sufficiency and a reclaimed sense of Jewish identity
- Smart Classrooms: Technology-based learning in under-resourced peripheral communities in Israel, and 120,000 hospitalized children

**iRep – The Israel Religious Expression Platform (New in 2023)**

- A coalition of Jewish Federations and foundations that work together to advance legitimacy and provide funding support for Jewish religious diversity in Israel. Funding support is through an allocation process focused on serving the priority areas of marriage freedom, pluralistic options for celebrating bar/bat mitzvahs, meaningful options to celebrate Jewish holidays for all Israelis, and working with decision-makers on promoting Jewish diversity.

**For Our Living Bridges With Israel: Afula-Gilboa Partnership, Arts Collaboration, and Social Services**

The Partnership2Gether program in which we and 11 other New England federations participate connects us to the Afula-Gilboa region of Israel and fosters personal connections among our communities. This investment of Federation funds in Afula-Gilboa will continue to benefit the lives of children, women, and young people at risk, as well as support NGO non-profits working for coexistence and humanitarian initiatives.

Funds will be directed to the collaboration between the Mishkan Museum of Art in Ein Harod and the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown. “Disruption and Reemergence” is a program that brings together high school students from Israel and the Berkshires, combining museum visits, art workshops, and collaborative digital projects. Federation funds will enable Israeli students to participate with their Berkshire peers.

Other Israel-directed allocations will benefit:

- *Yad L’Kashish* – A Jerusalem workshop supporting senior artisans, providing not only a sense of empowerment but also essential services. Federation funds will cover the cost of the national health insurance premium for one month for 166 elderly participants.
- *Israel Association for Child Protection (ELI)* – Provider of prevention and treatment services for children suffering emotional and sexual abuse, as well as support for their families. Federation’s allocation will support crisis and therapeutic interventions for IDF soldiers who have been sexually abused during the time of their service.
- *Haifa Women’s Crisis Shelter* – Federation’s allocation will fund enrichment activities and other therapeutic empowerment and

ALLOCATIONS,  
continued on page 10



Jewish Summer Camp Scholarships



Ethiopian National Project



Meir Panim Meals for Israel’s Needy



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LOCAL NEWS

Leading Jewish Environmental Organization formed through Hazon-Pearlstone Merger, Now Becoming Adamah

Mission is to cultivate vibrant Jewish life in deep connection with the earth

BALTIMORE / CANAAN, CT – Two organizations at the center of the Jewish environmental movement, Hazon and Pearlstone, launched a new identity for their merging organization: Adamah, chosen to emphasize the deep connection between people and planet, adam and adamah.

The combined resources of the new Adamah organization will allow it to strengthen and expand its current educational, retreat and climate programs.

Adamah's mission is to cultivate vibrant Jewish life in deep connection with the Earth, catalyzing culture change and systemic change through Jewish environmental education, immersive retreats and climate action.

The new brand is the result of research and discussion among stakeholders to better understand how they perceived the two parent organizations and what they most valued. This process involved hundreds of hours of work, dozens of meetings and many voices from within both the Pearlstone and Hazon communities.

The Pearlstone Campus outside of Baltimore remains an agency of

The Associated: Jewish Community Federation, and will serve as Adamah's new headquarters. Alongside the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Canaan, CT, these represent Adamah's two core campuses and largest platforms for immersive impact. As the pandemic recovery continues, Pearlstone and Isabella Freedman will impact tens of thousands of participants each year through immersive Adamah experiences.

In addition to these core campuses, Adamah is building Community Impact Hubs in major Jewish communities across North America. Detroit is the most impactful and longest established hub, and this year Adamah plans to launch hubs in both Southern California and New York City. Additional hubs will be established in years to come, in partnership with local Jewish communal leadership. Adamah will manage an estimated \$13 million budget and a staff of over 150, and directly engage nearly 40,000 program participants annually.

The organization has launched a new website as part of the brand launch. It can be found at: adamah.org.

“The Sassoons” – A Jewish Museum Virtual Tour with Rena Tobey



Members of the Sassoon family

On Sunday, April 23 at 1 p.m., Congregation Ahavath Sholom presents “The Sassoons,” the fourth in their series of virtual museum tours conducted by renowned lecturer Rena Tobey. The exhibition is currently at the Jewish Museum in New York City through August 13, 2023.

“The “Sassoons” reveals the fascinating story of a remarkable Jewish family, following four generations from Iraq to India, China, and England through a rich selection of works collected by family members over time.

The exhibition highlights the Sassoon family's pioneering role in trade, art collecting, architectural patronage, and civic engagement from

the early 19th century through World War II using over 120 works – paintings, decorative arts, illuminated manuscripts, and Judaica – amassed by family members and borrowed from numerous private and public collections.

Highlights include lavishly decorated Hebrew manuscripts from as early as the 12th

century; Chinese art and ivory carvings; rare Jewish ceremonial art; Western masterpieces including paintings by Thomas Gainsborough and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, and magnificent portraits by John Singer Sargent of various Sassoon family members.

“The Sassoons” explores themes such as discrimination, diaspora, colonialism, global trade, and war that not only shaped the history of the family but continue to define our world today.

Cost: \$20 Members of CAS; \$25 Non-members

Reservations are required. Visit ahavathsholom.com for more information and to register.

Shabbat Services and More at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Congregation Beth Israel leaps in to spring with its welcoming Shabbat services.

Shabbat Services

Saturday morning services are scheduled on April 1, April 8, April 22, and April 29 at 9:30 a.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 worshipers with the natural world and with our Source.

On Friday evening, April 21 at 7 p.m., join CBI for a beautiful, musical Kabbalat Shabbat service led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, with harmony from the CBI choir and accompaniment by musical director and pianist Adam Green. Light candles 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 - cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events/ Masks are required indoors.

From Darkness to Light: A Yom HaShoah Journey in Music

On Yom HaShoah, Sunday, April 16 at 5:30 p.m., CBI remembers the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust and honor those who survived.

Join the CBI community and choir for an evening of music, readings, and reflection to commemorate this horrific tragedy and move through mourning into hope.

Second Night Community Seder at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Join Congregation Beth Israel on Thursday, April 6 at 6 p.m. for their Second Night Community Passover Seder. All are welcome to this family friendly Seder.

Relive the Exodus through ritual, poetry, song, and story. Savor familiar melodies, stirring poetry, an impromptu Exodus play put on by community kids, and more.

A full kosher-for-Pesach meal will be provided (with vegetarian option.) Fee is \$45/adult, \$10 per child ages 5-18. Please register by March 27 – office@cbiberkshires.com.

Young Family Fun at Congregation Beth Israel

NORTH ADAMS – Families with young children will find much to experience and enjoy with Congregation Beth Israel's Young Families Program.

**Kids' Art at MASS MoCA** – On Sunday, April 30 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., meet up with Corry Buckwalter, CBI member, artist and art educator, in the lobby of MASS MoCA. Visit Kidspace - a child-centered art gallery and hands-on studio. Make art together, and then, if desired, explore the Sol LeWitt galleries with Corry.

Contact office@cbiberkshires.com by April 26 to register. Admission to Kidspace is always free. Admission to the other galleries (including Sol LeWitt) is \$4/child and \$18/adult with a group of 10 or more people and \$6/child and \$20/adult with a group of 9 or less. Kids age 5 and under are free. CBI will cover the cost of tickets for the first 25 children to register.

**Families Celebrate Shabbat** on Saturday, April 15 at 9:30 a.m. Join together for a joyful, engaging, and participatory family service led by Rabbi Jarah Greenfield. All are welcome, and there will be special roles for children of all ages.

CBI's family programs are sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. See all of scheduled family programs at cbiberkshires.com/upcoming-family-events/.

Domaney's to Host a Wine, Charoset, Matzoh Balls, and Dessert Tasting to Celebrate Passover

GREAT BARRINGTON – Thumbing through your Passover recipe file? Hoping to kick your humdrum charoset, matzoh balls or gluten free desserts up a notch or two? Wondering if there's more to Passover wines than that syrupy-sweet stuff that usually ends up on your Seder table? Wishing you knew what Passover was all about, anyway?

Get into the spirit of the “Season of Liberation” with Chabad of the Berkshires at Domaney's Liquors and Fine Wines, 66 Main Street in Great Barrington. The program will take place, on Friday, March 31 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Sip some wine, taste a bit of charoset, try a matzoh ball, and indulge in some Passover desserts.

The event is sponsored in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Domaney's will showcase its extensive selection of outstanding kosher for Passover wines. Serious winemakers in Israel and across the globe have raised the bar for kosher wines, which oenophiles can count on for excellent quality in an extensive array of varietals and blends.

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LOCAL NEWS

Charoset (derived from *cheres*, the Hebrew word for clay), a traditional Passover food that is found on every Seder plate, is a sweet mixture of dried fruits, nuts and wine, and represents the mortar and mud bricks used by the enslaved Jews to build Egypt's cities. Sara Volovik will bring her international culinary expertise to the table, making all the foods at the tasting in Chabad's Pittsfield kitchen.

The tasting is free and open to the public, and everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend, regardless of religious affiliation.

Please contact Chabad's co-director Sara Volovik at (413) 499-9899 or sara-volovik@gmail.com for more information.

Hevreh Celebrates Passover!

GREAT BARRINGTON - Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will celebrate Passover with several events and Seders this year.

"As we celebrate Pesach, we are ever grateful for the blessings of freedom and connection that our Hevreh community shares," Rabbi Jodie Gordon said.

Yachad Passover for Religious School Families & Families with School-Aged Children

On Sunday, April 2 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Hevreh celebrates Passover together with a special school-wide Chocolate Seder. They'll ask four questions, dip strawberries in bitter chocolate, drink four cups of chocolate milk, and explore the traditions of Passover in a sweet way!

All are welcome to join Religious School students, parents, teachers and *madrikhim* for this special school-wide celebration of Passover.

*Intergenerational Women's Seder Experience*

On Sunday, April 2 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

At 4 p.m. – The Gathering: Join together for a warm and welcoming reception to mingle and connect.

At 4:30 p.m. – The Journey: Interactive Seder experience led by artist-in-residence Peri Smilow, Rabbi Gordon and friends.

To learn more and to register to attend, please visit [hevreh.org](http://hevreh.org).

Choosing Hope: An Evening With Dr. David Arnow, at Kneset Israel



David Arnow

PITTSFIELD – Throughout our history, Jews have traditionally responded to our trials with hope. David Arnow, a clinical psychologist, will be the guest speaker at Kneset Israel on Sunday evening, April 30 at 7 p.m., to discuss his new book *Choosing Hope: The Heritage of Judaism*. The book journeys from biblical times to our present day to explore nine fundamental sources of hope in Judaism. Grounded in contemporary theology, the book may help us both affirm hope in times of trial and transmit our deepest hopes to the next generation.

During his presentation, Dr. Arnow will explain the differences between hope, resilience, and optimism and provide practices to sustain hope. A book-signing will follow. (The book can be ordered at a discount through the Jewish Publication Society with the promo code 6AS22 for a limited time, or you can purchase a copy at full price at the event on April 30.)

Dr. Arnow is a scholar of the festival of Passover and the author of many articles and two books on that subject, including *Creating Lively Passover Seders: A Sourcebook of Engaging Tales, Texts & Activities, 2nd Edition* (2011), and *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries* (2008), co-edited with Lawrence A. Hoffman. He is a co-author of the website "Exodus Conversations: How the Story of the Exodus Speaks to Jews, Christians, and Muslims" and of *Leadership in the Bible: A Practical Guide for Today*, co-authored with Paul Ohana.

The event is free, but pre-registration is requested: [knesetisrael.org/event/david-arnow.html](http://knesetisrael.org/event/david-arnow.html)

Note that a weekly discussion of David Arnow's book will take place Mondays from 3 to 4:30 p.m. at KI, facilitated by Rabbi Pam Wax, starting on April 3 and continuing through June 5.

Friday Night Lights: Start Shabbat with Music and Friends at Kneset Israel

PITTSFIELD – This spring, Kneset Israel welcomes all to join together to greet the Sabbath in a variety of uplifting expressions of the Kabbalat Shabbat service.

**Shirei Shabbat: Friday, April 14, 5:45 p.m.**

The extended musical family of Kneset Israel relishes the privilege of coming together once each month to lead this upbeat Friday night service, including contemporary songs alongside traditional Kabbalat Shabbat melodies. The *ruach* and community feeling at Shirei Shabbat services is irresistible, encouraging all to raise their voices in song and prayer.

**Musical Minyan with Community Dinner: Friday, April 21, 5:45 p.m.**

The Musical Minyan offers a unique Kabbalat Shabbat experience, with a small acoustic ensemble providing the backdrop for the Friday night service. The music comes from Israel, Eastern Europe, the US and South America, with new and traditional melodies to welcome the Sabbath Bride. At times meditative, at times spirited, this musical service is the perfect start to a sweet and spiritual Shabbat.

Register in advance for the community dinner following the services on April 21: [knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://knesetisrael.org/rsvp). Dinner

is \$20 for adults, free for under 18. Supported by The Harold Grinspoon Foundation Rekindle Shabbat Grant.

**Traditional Kabbalat Shabbat Services: Fridays, March 24 and 31, and April 7 and 28, 5:45 p.m.**

Adult Education: Knowledge Springs Anew at Kneset Israel

PITTSFIELD – Spring is finally arriving, bringing with it the chance to defrost our brains and come out of hibernation to learn and have fun together. Kneset Israel's spring courses offer a chance to meet friends old and new, learning together in a warm and supportive environment.

**Mondays: A Jewish Field Guide to Hope, with Rabbi Pam Wax**

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, once said that while the Greeks gave the world the concept of tragedy, the Jews gave the world the concept of hope. David Arnow has explored the concept of hope in Jewish history, theology, and practice in his book *Choosing Hope: The Heritage of Judaism*. Join KI for a 9-week immersion into Arnow's book, discussing one chapter each week. Topics will follow the chapters of the book, including "Repentance," "*Tikkun Olam*", "Covenant," "Jewish Eschatology," "Israel," "Jewish Humor," and more.

The hybrid class facilitated by Rabbi Pam Wax will take place on Mondays, April 3-June 5, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Please pre-register to at [knesetisrael.org/event/omer.html](http://knesetisrael.org/event/omer.html)



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LOCAL NEWS

Note that David Arnow will also be visiting KI on Sunday, April 30, 7 p.m. to discuss his book. See the related article on page 9.

Tuesdays: Hebrew Classes with Rabbi David Weiner

This ongoing class blends Hebrew reading practice, vocabulary, grammar, and deeper discussions of content with the aim of helping participants grow in their understanding of the *siddur*. It's intended for those who already read Hebrew but are looking for greater understanding of the language and the prayer book.

Tuesdays, usually 10-11:15 a.m., but please check the calendar before attending. In-person only.

Counting the Omer: Let Me Count the Ways

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, March 26 from 10 a.m. to noon, stand up and be counted!

For those who already count the Omer and for those who don't as of yet, come for an introduction to this rich spiritual practice.

Rabbi Pam Wax will introduce many different methods of marking this period of time between Passover and Shavuot—and why we might want to take it up as a practice in our own lives. This workshop will take place at Knesset Israel. Please pre-register at [kessetisrael.org/RSVP](https://kessetisrael.org/RSVP). A Zoom link will be made available for those who cannot attend in person.

First Night Seder With Chabad of the Berkshires

PITTSFIELD – Chabad of the Berkshires will host a communal Passover Seder on the first night of Passover, Wednesday, April 5, at 7:30 p.m., at the Chabad House on 450 South Street.

“The Seder will take participants through the wondrous liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage,” says Chabad’s co-director, Sara Volovik. “It will also help participants understand the Seder’s relevance to today’s life.”

Included in the Seder will be the traditional hand-baked *shmura* matzoh, the ritual four cups of wine, and a delicious, full-course Passover

dinner that includes gefilte fish, delicious salads, hot chicken soup, a chicken/ brisket main dish, and a delectable dessert.

“Passover is a time when family and friends sit together and discuss our rich heritage,” said Rabbi Levi Volovik, co-director. “And at Chabad, every Jew is part of our family.”

Seating is limited, and reservations are required before March 27. An additional \$10 fee will apply after March 28.

Cost is \$40 per adult; \$20 for children under 12;

“No one will be turned away for lack of funds,” said Rabbi Volovik.

Alternatively, for those unable to attend and would like a Passover package, Chabad of the Berkshires is offering dinner and a Seder plate to go. If you would like to order or sponsor a package to go, the cost is \$45 per person.

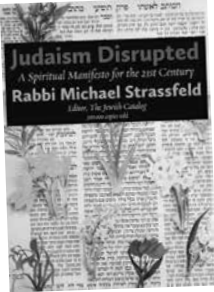
For reservations, more information, or to sponsor a family, call Sara Volovik at (413) 499-9899.

Rabbi Michael Strassfeld to Speak on his New Book, Judaism Disrupted

CHATHAM, NY – On Sunday, April 30 at 4 p.m., rabbi and author Michael Strassfeld will appear at the Chatham Synagogue, to talk about his new book, *Judaism Disrupted: A Spiritual Manifesto for the 21st Century*. The book was published on the 50th anniversary of Strassfeld’s 1973 breakthrough best-seller *The Jewish Catalog*, which has sold over 300,000 copies.

In *A Spiritual Manifesto*, Rabbi Strassfeld, who spent 25 years as a Reconstructionist rabbi in New York City and who owns a home in the Berkshires, is calling for a seismic shift in Jewish practice. The book provides a framework for a new paradigm and helps the reader explore the evolution of an ancient faith – showing how it can be reinvigorated and practiced anew.

Writes Rabbi Art Green: “*Judaism Disrupted* is a book for our times. In



it, Michael Strassfeld bares his soul as a lifelong struggler with the value and truth of Jewish existence. It is accessible, personal, but above all deeply honest. There are no holds barred in this bold encounter between a rich, well-informed Judaism and the demands of the present hour.”

Read the next Berkshire Jewish Voice for an excerpt of Rabbi Strassfeld’s book!

The Chatham Synagogue/Netivot Torah, located at 1536 County Route 28 in Chatham Center, NY.

Shabbats, Passover Seder, and Parenting with Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – Join Temple Anshe Amunim for Passover and Shabbat Services

**Congregational Seder**

Please join Temple Anshe Amunim for the Second Night Seder on Thursday, April 6, at 5:30 pm. All are welcome to join us in person. Please reach out to the temple office at: (413) 422-5910 or [templeoffice@ansheamunim.org](mailto:templeoffice@ansheamunim.org) for additional information.

**Kabbalat Shabbat**

Join Rabbi Liz P.G. 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 widespread 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](mailto:templeoffice@ansheamunim.org) or visit [www.ansheamunim.org](http://www.ansheamunim.org).

Young Families Programs at Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim Young Families services are geared for children ages kindergarten through Grade 5.

**Celebrate Passover!**

Please join Rabbi Liz Hirsch for a Young Families Shabbat with celebration of Passover on Friday, March 31 at 5 p.m. Pizza will be served. All are welcome to join in person.

**Celebrate Israel!**

Please join Rabbi Liz for a Young Families Shabbat with celebration of Israel on Friday, April 28 at 5 p.m. Pizza will be served! All are welcome to join in person.

ALLOCATIONS, continued from page 7

- education at the center offering refuge for domestic abuse victims and their children.
- *Ethiopian National Project* – Federation funds will enable students to participate in the SPACE Scholastic Assistance program in Afula.
  - *Neve Michael Children’s Village* – Arrival packages for youth arriving at this multi-disciplinary therapeutic facility for children/ youth at risk will be funded in part by Federation dollars.
  - *Meir Panim* – Its six restaurant-style soup kitchens serve Israel’s poor and hungry of all backgrounds with dignity, as does its extensive meal delivery program – more than 1 million meals per year. Federation’s allocation will fund 1,000 of them.

**Thank You, Committee Members!**

Many thanks to the members of our Allocations Committee: Judy Usow (chair), Elisa Schindler Frankel, Kathy Fraker, Gail Orenstein, Aviva Wichler, Stephanie Ilberg-Lamm, Ellen Masters, Tom Sawyer, Liz Miller, Scott Hochfelder, Kara Thornton, Ken Fishman, Michael Ury, Josh Cutler, and Executive Director Dara Kaufman.



BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

**Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires**

Everyone is welcome to attend services and events at any of the organizations listed here.

Please call the organizations directly to confirm service times or to inquire about membership.

Learn more about our Jewish community and find great events on the community calendar at:

**JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG**

**Berkshire Minyan**  
*Lay-led, Traditional, Egalitarian Minyan*  
South County  
[berkshireminyan.org](http://berkshireminyan.org)

**Berkshire Hills Hadassah**  
P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 443-4386,  
[Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com](mailto:Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com)

**B’nai B’rith Lodge, No. 326**

**Chabad of the Berkshires**  
450 South St., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 499-9899,  
[jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com)

**Congregation Ahavath Sholom**  
*Reconstructionist*  
North St., Great Barrington, MA  
(413) 528-4197, [ahavathsholom.com](http://ahavathsholom.com)

**Congregation Beth Israel**  
*Reform*  
53 Lois St., North Adams, MA  
(413) 663-5830, [cbiberkshires.com](http://cbiberkshires.com)

**Hevreh of Southern Berkshire**  
*Reform*  
270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA  
(413) 528-6378, [hevreh.org](http://hevreh.org)

**Israel Philatelist Society**  
c/o Dr. Ed Helitzer,  
(413) 447-7622

**Jewish Federation of the Berkshires**  
196 South St., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 442-4360, [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)

**Jewish War Veterans**  
Commander Robert Waldheim  
(413) 822-4546, [sellit4@aol.com](mailto:sellit4@aol.com)

**Knesset Israel**  
*Conservative*  
16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 445-4872, [knessetisrael.org](http://knessetisrael.org)

**Temple Anshe Amunim**  
*Reform*  
26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 442-5910, [ansheamunim.org](http://ansheamunim.org)



OBITUARIES

**Janine Engel, 92, proudest achievement was her family**  
BOCA RATON, FL - Janine (Jackie) nee Kramer Engel, 92, passed away peacefully on Saturday, January 21.

Born in Cairo, Egypt, Jackie came to the U.S. in 1945. Upon graduating from Endicott College, she met the love of her life, Harvey, to whom she was married for 66 years. They shared homes in Manhattan, Lenox, and Boca Raton.

Jackie had impeccable style and a keen eye for all things beautiful. In the 1970s, she founded Janine Engel Associates, a premier jewelry business. Her curiosity fueled her love of international travel, art, and nature. A wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, her proudest achievement was her family.

She is survived by daughters Leslie Engel and Laurie Lawrence (Mark Lawrence Jr., deceased); granddaughters Nathalie Cicurel, Emily Lawrence Rasekh (Ari Rasekh), and Callie Lawrence (Brendan Leanos); great-grandchildren Libby, Maya, and Lia Rasekh, Leigh and Harvey Lawrence; sister-in-law Jane Engel.

Please consider donating to The Alzheimer's Association: <https://www.alz.org>.

**Sigmund Tobias, 90, leader in the field of educational psychology**  
SARASOTA, FL - Sigmund Tobias, 90, passed away after a brief illness on Tuesday, January 31. He was a longtime resident of Pittsfield before relocating to Sarasota in 2019.

He was born in Berlin, Germany, on November 26, 1932, to Frieda and Moses Tobias. After Kristallnacht in 1938, his family realized they needed to leave Europe but had few options to emigrate. Eventually, they obtained transit visas for Japanese-occupied Shanghai, where

they remained from 1939 to 1948. Sigmund Tobias recounts his wartime experience in his memoir, *Strange Haven: A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Shanghai* (U of Illinois Press, 1999).

Sigmund emigrated to the US in 1948, followed by his parents in 1949. He received his BA in Psychology from the City College of New York in 1955. It was during that time that he met Lora (née Sussman) Tobias on a blind date at CCNY's Lewisohn Stadium. They married in 1955, and she remained his constant companion until the end.

In 1960, he received his Ph.D. from Columbia University. After a brief stint teaching at Brooklyn College, he joined the faculty at the City University of New York, where he was a professor until 1997. Although his doctorate was in clinical psychology, he became a leader in the field of educational psychology. He published over 150 scholarly articles and was elected president of the American Psychological Association's Division for Educational Psychology.

Sigmund loved skiing and tennis and credited his wife, Lora, with cultivating his love of opera, travel, and fine cuisine. He was a member of Knesset Israel when in Pittsfield. Nothing gave him greater joy than spending time there.

He is survived by his wife, Lora Tobias; daughters, Susan and Rochelle Tobias; and grandchildren, Jessica and Daniel Schapiro.

Donations can be made in his name to HIAS and the Anti-Defamation League.

**Lawrence C. Berke, 91, husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather**  
CANTON, MA - Lawrence C. Berke, 91, died on Saturday February 18, at his home.

Born in New York City on October 23, 1931, the son of Irving Berkowitz

and Rose (Margulies) Berkowitz, Lawrence earned his master's degree in Industrial Engineering and Management Research from NYU.

Lawrence was vice-president of marketing for Parker Hannifin's Aerospace Division until his retirement. He was a member of Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.

He was predeceased by his first wife, Sheila Joy (Rubin) Berke, who died in 1976.

Survivors include his wife, Helene (Silverstein) Berke, whom he married on July 2, 1978; daughters Billi (Alan-deceased) Kersh of NJ; Steffi Berke (Robert Shuchatowitz) of MA and Carol (Paul) Campbell of MA; son, Jeffrey (Pam) Silverstein of NJ; grandchildren Yael (Eric), Adin, Oren (Arielle), Etai (Tamar), James, Michael, Eli, Cobi, Ian (Samantha) Madison, Dana, and Lucy; great-grandchildren Ariel, Kayla, Danit, Gideon, and Ezra.

A funeral was held Tuesday, February 21, at Knesset Israel, with Rabbi Seth Wax officiating. Burial followed in Knesset Israel Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to Hebrew Senior Life Hospice Care, 80 Newbridge Way, Dedham, MA 02026.

**Michael Hurvitz, 78, avid lover of Patriots, Celtics, Red Sox, and all things Boston**  
LAKE WORTH, FL - Michael Hurvitz, 78, of Lake Worth, FL, formerly of Pittsfield, passed away on Thursday, February 16.

Born in Boston, son of the late Judith and Martin Hurvitz, Michael served honorably in the Navy during the Vietnam Conflict. Later, he worked as a merchandise replenisher for KB Toys for 27 years.

Mike, known to many as "Da Herv," was an avid lover of the Patriots, Celtics, Red Sox, and all things Boston.

He grew kinder and gentler with age. Michael volunteered at his local hospital for over a decade, helping those in need. His courage and optimism during the last years of his life will leave a lasting legacy for those who loved him.

Michael was the devoted husband of Yolanda "Jo" Cardona; beloved father of Arri Better, Bram Hurvitz, Myra Carmona, Leason Carmona, and Eva Alexander; adored grandfather of Emanuel Hurvitz, Ayla Better, Alex Rivera, Danielle Morris, Zoe Ramos, Josh Ramos, Caleb Ramos, Joseph Ramos, and four great-grandchildren; dear brother of the late Bruce Hurvitz and Ira Hurvitz.

Services were held at the Ashkenaz of Cambridge Cemetery on Sunday, February 19. Expressions of sympathy may be made to Trustbridge Hospice Foundation: <http://trustbridge.com/>.

**Augusta Barbara (Spellman) Leibowitz, 82, dedicated educator, active volunteer with community and cultural organizations**  
LENOX - Augusta Barbara (Spellman) Leibowitz, 82, died Tuesday, February 21, at her home.

Born January 2, 1941 in Schenectady, NY, daughter of Henry Spellman and Mary (Rapport) Spellman, she graduated from Albany (NY) High School and received bachelor's and master's degrees from SUNY-Albany.

A dedicated educator, Augusta worked as a science teacher for the Albany, Pittsfield, and Armed Forces School (London) systems. She ran for and served two terms as a member of the Pittsfield School Committee.

After retiring from the school committee, she worked as the Western

OBITUARIES,  
continued on page 22

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# Connecting with Community

## Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

### 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 Kneset 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.



### Kneset 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, March 24..... 6:51 p.m.  
Friday, March 31..... 6:59 p.m.  
Wednesday, April 5  
(first night Pesach) ..... 7:05 p.m.  
Thursday, April 6  
(second night Pesach) ... 8:06 p.m.  
Friday, April 7 ..... 7:07 p.m.  
Tuesday, April 11  
(seventh night Pesach)... 7:11 p.m.  
Wednesday, April 12  
(eight night Pesach) ..... 8:13 p.m.  
Friday, April 14..... 7:15 p.m.  
Friday, April 21..... 7:23 p.m.  
Friday, April 18..... 7:31 p.m.

## What’s for Lunch?

Gluten Free Main Entrée \*\* and Dairy Free Main Entrée #

*Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.*

### MARCH

**Monday, 20** ..... Shepherd’s Pie\*\*# or lamb based pastitsio (chef’s choice), chef’s choice of soup, broccoli, pumpernickel bread, and chocolate babka.

**Tuesday, 21** ..... Asian glazed chicken\*\*#, mini egg rolls, mixed vegetables, rice, multi-grain bread, and cranberry oatmeal cookies.

**Thursday, 23** ..... Fish chowder with corn\*\*, dairy chopped suey, oven roasted Brussels sprouts, challah, and Mandarin oranges.

**Monday, 27** ..... Pasta delight (dairy), tomato soup, beets, salad, bread TBA, and cookies.

**Tuesday, 28** ..... Closed for Passover Preparation.

**Thursday, 30** ..... Closed for Passover Preparation.

### APRIL

**Monday, 3** ..... Passover roasted chicken\*\*#, matzo ball soup, salad, asparagus, matza, and Passover desserts.

**Tuesday, 4** ..... Closed for Passover Seder Preparation.

**Thursday, 6** ..... Closed for 1st day of Passover.

**Monday, 10** ..... Lemon chicken and mushrooms\*\*#, salad, roasted sweet potatoes, asparagus cuts n’ tips, matza, and Passover desserts.

**Tuesday, 11** ..... Passover brisket\*\*#, baby carrots, salad, roasted potatoes, matza, and applesauce.

**Thursday, 13** ..... Closed for 8th day of Passover.

**Monday, 17** ..... Tuna salad platters\*\*, mushroom soup, potato chips, coleslaw, scones, and grapes.

**Tuesday, 18** ..... “Chicken” souvlaki (dairy) with tzatziki, sweet potato fries, beets, pita bread, and baklava.

**Thursday, 20** ..... Fresh fish\*\*, kugel, salad, green beans, cranberry orange muffins, and apricots.

**Monday, 24** ..... Sweet and sour meatballs\*\*#, chicken soup, noodles, green beans, pumpernickel bread, and parve cookies.

**Tuesday, 25** ..... Cornichon, tarragon, and mustard chicken (dark meat only)\*\*#, rice pilaf, broccoli, salad, challah, and pears.

**Thursday, 27** ..... Pappardelle with tomatoes, white beans, ricotta, and basil, salad, garlic bread, and chocolate chip cookies.

### MAY

**Monday, 1** ..... Meat loaf\*\*#, French fries, peas, salad, rye bread, and peaches.

**Tuesday, 2** ..... Turkey salad platter\*\*#, gazpacho, three bean salad, Italian bread, and fruit cocktail.

**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.



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Visit [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)  
and select **Community &  
Events>Berkshire**  
**Jewish Voice** for links to highlights  
of current and past issues.

**VOLUNTEERS  
ARE VITAL!**

### 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.





# Volunteers Are Vital!

## Purim Gift Bag Deliveries Reached Hundreds Across Berkshire County

By Molly Meador / Director of Volunteers and PJ Library

A special thank you to the kids and volunteers who helped prepare, pack, and deliver Purim care packages (*mishloach manot*, one of the holiday's 4 essential *mitzvot*) to hundreds of older adults in Berkshire County, Southern Vermont, and New York's Columbia County!

*Kol hakavod* as well for all the support from Federation's dear friend and former colleague Susan Frisch Lehrer, who helped on this mitzvah project as she has for years. Known as Joe's Project in memory of the late Joe Madison, who started this program with a group of his hiking buddies, this is a communitywide program that delivers Purim bags and Rosh Hashanah gift packages to local seniors.

To get involved with Federation as a volunteer, email me at [mmeador@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:mmeador@jewishberkshires.org) or call (413) 442-4360, ext.14. There is always a lot to do!



### JEWISH DAY CAMP 2023 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE



**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 can also apply to the Federation for an additional \$100 per week, per child in financial assistance.


**APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 3**

Download an application at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) or email [federation@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:federation@jewishberkshires.org) to request the link.



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### COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

**The Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and Dr. Stanley and Fay Simkin Scholarship Fund**

Annually awards one or two scholarships to graduating seniors who have demonstrated leadership and participation in the Berkshire Jewish community.

**Deadline: April 22**

**Download an application at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)**  
or pick one up at the Federation's office  
196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA



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# Your Federation Presents

## Sharing the Warmth of Federation's Major Donors Meet-Ups in Florida

The weather was warm and the reception was even warmer as Federation executive director Dara Kaufman and president Elisa Schindler Frankel traveled South to meet up with our Major Donors wintering in Florida. Thank you to all who were able to join! It was lovely to reconnect with one another and share the good work that happens year-round in the Berkshire Jewish community.

A very special thank you to our gracious hosts for opening their homes: Bobbi and Mike Cohn in Boca Raton, Audrey Weiner and Jeffrey Solomon in Miami, Anne Schnesel in Naples, and Alice and Len Schiller in Sarasota.





Your Federation Presents



THIS PASSOVER, AS WE RECALL  
THE STORY OF OUR ANCESTORS . . .

Let's also write the next chapter.  
HOW WILL YOU ENSURE  
THE JEWISH FUTURE?

To create your Jewish legacy contact: Dara Kaufman  
dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org, (413) 442-4360, ext. 12

Jewish Federation  
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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES – FOOD!

Parsley, Sage, and Horseradish?  
How to plant a spring garden or Passover garden

By Miriam Rubin / Special to the BJV



“Parsley,” by David J. Lesako

Starting late April through mid-May, when the weather begins to warm, if it’s not too rainy, it’s time to start planting your garden. If you’re new to gardening, herbs are a super-rewarding way to begin, even if that’s all you do. Herb plants are ready to harvest soon after planting; simply snip a few leaves to add freshness to any dish. And you can proudly display your home-grown parsley on the Seder plate.

**When to begin:** If you have an established garden plot or raised beds, squeeze a handful of soil; it shouldn’t clump or feel overly cold or damp. Frost too should be mostly behind us. In Pittsfield and Boston, average last frost dates are May 1 to 15, though most of these herbs survive a light frost.

**How to start:** For an established garden bed, dig up or pull any weeds and chop compacted soil. Work in about 1 inch of compost. For raised beds, the soil warms more quickly and you’ll have fewer weed problems but still, yank any out, adding soil if needed and compost to aerate compacted soil. For first-time gardeners or for small yards, an easy solution is to grow herbs in large containers or pots. Place the container in a sunny spot, layer gravel in the bottom for drainage, then fill with organic potting soil.

**What to plant:** Parsley, sage, thyme, and chives are good beginning herbs; they can take a little cold and a bit of frost. Start with herb plants instead of seeds. Don’t reach for basil and rosemary just yet. Wait until the weather warms.

Choose organically-grown plants whenever possible to protect the butterflies and bees. Plants should be perky and fresh-looking, no wilted leaves. Avoid those with a mass of roots at the bottom of the pot which means the plant has been there a while.

Sage, thyme, and chives are perennials, meaning they’ll come back year after year, with luck, but **parsley** needs to be replanted each year. It’s a biennial, meaning it comes back once but it will bolt, or go to seed quickly. I generally plant flat-leaf Italian parsley; it’s the most flavorful.

For **chives**, I plant the thin, needle-like chives instead of wider, flat-leafed garlic chives, which spread and can be tough when raw. The Chinese kitchen adds garlic chives to stir-fries and dumplings, delicious, but you’d have to grow quite a lot! Regular chives are mainly used to impart a mild allium accent. Garlic grass, the chive-like plants found in your lawn or garden, grow like the weeds they are but they are edible. Cultivated chives won’t spread and most often, return each year. In late spring, they sprout charming purple flowers. Trim off the flowers and stems and use the flowers for violet-colored chive-flower vinegar. Put them in a jar with white wine vinegar and brew in a cool, dark spot about 3 weeks. Strain before using.

**Sage** has multiple varieties, all members of the large genus, *Salvia*, but we’re talking culinary sage here. Select common sage or the larger Berggarten sage, both with lovely grey-green soft leaves to flavor roast chicken or salmon. Sage develops attractive purple flowers for bees and other pollinators. Trim them so the plant continues growing.

**Thyme** has many varieties also, but for culinary uses, choose French or English thyme. Add thyme leaves to chicken, lamb and vegetable dishes. Lemon thyme is lovely but it spreads so put it in its own pot.

**How to plant.** Choose a sunny location and dig a hole that’s about the same depth and width as the pot. Remove the plant from the pot, shake off some of

the planting medium and plant it. Shovel dirt around it, firming it with your hands. Water well. That’s it. Check the tag for spacing as herbs will grow bigger. Follow the procedure for warmer-weather herbs, such as basil, cilantro, dill and rosemary. Mint and oregano are invasive. They need their own pots. Heading into Passover, spring’s also the time to plant **horseradish** which takes well to our climate. Plan ahead though, it needs about a year to form roots. If it takes, you’ll have it forever. Look for a root or starts from a nursery, order from JohnnysSelectedSeeds.com or get a piece from a friend’s patch. Plant the crown, with a piece of attached root but no leaves. Give it its own space – not in your garden bed – it needs good sun and rich, soft soil,

no rocks. Or few rocks. It’s pretty tough, actually, and grows deep – so dig down about a foot, digging in compost or manure. Plant the root and harvest it in spring the following year.

To prepare horseradish, wash the root and peel. Grate it with the shredding blade of the food processor, leaving it in the workbowl. Averting your eyes from the volatile oils, place the knife blade in the processor and grind the shreds. Let it sit for 3 minutes for hotter horseradish, then add a little sugar if you want, salt and apple cider vinegar to taste, making a paste. Transfer to a jar. Store refrigerated. For red horseradish, add beet juice from a can.

Want to plant more? Other plant starts or seeds to plant in spring include lettuces, arugula, spinach, radishes, leafy greens, such as chard and kale, green peas and beets.

*Freelance food columnist and cookbook author Miriam Rubin was the first woman to work in the kitchens of New York City’s famed Four Seasons Restaurant. She went on to become the food editor of Weight Watchers Magazine, and her work has appeared in many other publications. Rubin’s first cookbook, Grains, was published in 1995, and her second book, Tomatoes, in 2013. She edited Gil Marks’ Encyclopedia of Jewish Food and edited and developed recipes for Matzo Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South. Find out more at her website MiriamRubin.com and Instagram @Miriam Rubin.*

Karpas Salad

This was named after the spring herbs and bitter greens featured at the Seder. Hopefully you’ll have some homegrown bounty to add to this inviting salad.

- SALAD:
- 6 ounces baby arugula (about 6 loosely packed cups)
  - Leaves from 2 bunches flat-leaf parsley (about 4 cups)
  - Leaves from 1 bunch cilantro (about 2 cups)
  - 1/2 cup chives cut into 1/8-inch lengths
  - 3/4 cup dried pitted dates, thinly sliced
  - 1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted and cooled
  - 1 1/2 cups pomegranate seeds (about 2 pomegranates)
  - Fresh dill sprigs, to garnish

- DRESSING:
- 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
  - 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
  - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- For the salad: In a salad bowl, combine arugula, parsley, cilantro and chives. Add dates and pine nuts and toss. (Cover and chill if needed to serve a bit later.)

- INSTRUCTIONS:
- For the dressing: In a small bowl, whisk lemon juice (to taste) and oil. Season with salt and pepper. Toss salad with dressing. Sprinkle with pomegranate seeds and dill to garnish, adjust seasoning and serve.

Makes 8 side-dish servings

Adapted from *The Community Table: Recipes and Stories From the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan and Beyond* by Katja Goldman, Judy Bernstein Bunzl and Lisa Rotmil (Grand Central Publishing, 2015, \$35)



As we recall our people's journey from slavery to freedom and celebrate the blessings in our lives, may we also remember that for many people the journey to freedom is still difficult.

Thank you for sharing the blessings of help and hope with the Jewish community across the Berkshires, in Israel and around the world

On behalf of the Federation board and staff,  
we wish you and your loved ones a meaningful Passover.





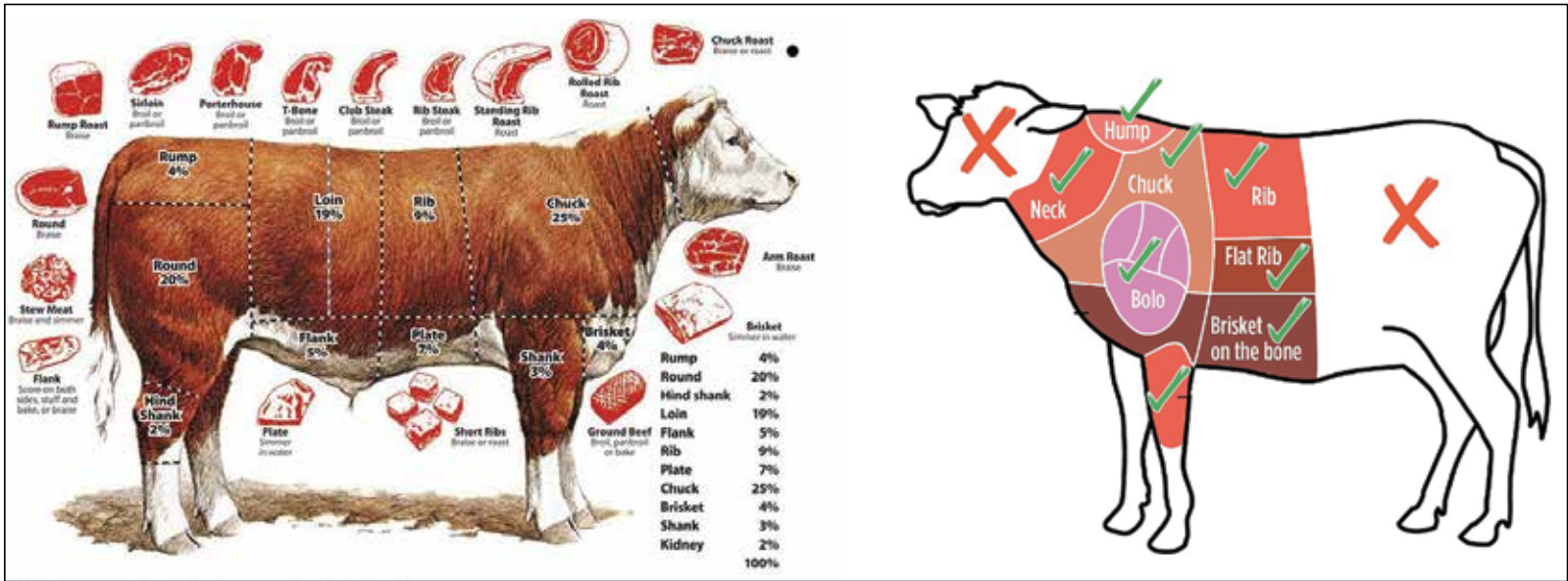
BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES – FOOD!

Don't Let the Perfect Become the Enemy of the Pot Roast

Late winter comfort food shouldn't take you out of your comfort zone

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

Editor's Note: Last issue, our overworked Traveling With Jewish Taste correspondent Carol Goodman Kaufman needed a break. Because God forbid anyone should feel hungry, I filled in, but had to bump the story to this issue.



'X' marks the trayf

I never fail to be impressed each time I visit our Federation's executive director in her office and note the saying she has posted on her computer monitor:

Don't let perfection become the enemy of the good.

I find it admirable that she keeps those words in front of her as a reminder to step out of her own way sometimes, acknowledging a self-identified "opportunity" (as they euphemistically put it in executive development seminars) that, as a passionate, idealistic, and dedicated leader, she wishes to work on. Lucky for those who work for her, she succeeds.

For someone as thoughtful as our executive director, a motto about not letting the perfect become the enemy of the good is wisdom with practical resonance. Someone like myself, on the other hand, will stumble upon a meme like this...



...and, with a sigh of relief, think, "My people are out there."

One area of endeavor I can get very fastidious about is my cooking. When I embark on a culinary mission, however, I never quite believe that I'm going to end up slaving over it as much as I usually do. Nothing in the kitchen pulls me outside my comfort zone quite so much as comfort food, perhaps because I go in thinking that cooking that kind of meal will be as comforting as eating it. Of course it never is, especially if one has a personality, like mine, that is rife with "opportunities."

My mission to cook the perfect Dutch oven of braised meat started some 20 years ago during a visit to Las Vegas. I was assured that one meal I *could not miss* during my stay was served by Craftsteak at the MGM Grand Hotel – Chef Tom Colicchio's "24-hour Braised Short Ribs." I was an obsessive foodie in those days – I worked for several years as a contributing editor for the Zagat Survey empire – and burned to know what the best of everything tasted like. I can't explain it, but when you get into a foodie *meshuggah* brain, you read PR fluff like this from the MGM website – "James Beard Award-winning chef Tom Colicchio uses only the finest ingredients to create dishes bursting with...the true flavor and essence of each dish" – and get really excited. Superstar chef! True flavor! The essence of each dish! *Perfection!* You do some research and find out that Craftsteak in Las Vegas prepares 1,200 pounds of braised short ribs each week, and it takes just a bit of back-of-the-envelope calculation to figure out that at 7 pounds of rib meat per cow, 7,213 head of cattle have to perish each year to satisfy the ravenous appetite of Craftsteak customers for just this one dish. That's nearly three times as many kine as comprised the herd that Captain Augustus "Gus" McCrae and Captain Woodrow F. Call drove north from Lonesome Dove, Texas, to the lush summer grazing grounds of Montana.

Most short rib recipes call for braising the meat for 2 to 3 hours, until fork tender. And it would seem to be enough. Who would think – who would *dare* – to braise short ribs for 24 hours? Chef Tom Colicchio, pilgrim – that's who. And why



Former Texas Rangers captains Gus McCrae and Woodrow Call

24 hours? *Because 24 hours is better than 23 hours.* This is, after all, still America and its capital is still Las Vegas.

Hopped up on the hype, I sat down at my table at Craftsteak and ordered the short ribs. They arrived in a tureen. I raised a forkful to my mouth and folks, those short ribs were...not that much better than the minute steak pot roast that my next-door neighbor in Miami Beach, Mrs. Magda Weiss, used to prepare for Shabbos when I was growing up. Oh, the short ribs were fantastic – but so was Mrs. Weiss's pot roast. I left Craftsteak wishing I had, like my dining companions, ordered the grilled ribeye – I should have realized that braised meat is properly home cooking, not restaurant food.

Let me tell you – nothing burns at a foodie as fiercely as the idea that he has, unknowingly or unwisely, not ordered the best plate of food on the table. It's not a feeling of disappointment, exactly – but more a feeling that a misstep has been made and must somehow be rectified. (If you're a foodie, you'll know what I'm talking about; if not, there is no way I can explain.) To make things right in the universe, I either had to go back to Craftsteak and order the ribeye, or set off to do battle with Chef Tom Colicchio by making the supreme home-cooked braised short ribs.

I started by attempting a version of the Craftsteak recipe – pretty simple actually (call it '2-to-maybe-4-hour braised short ribs'), but with some fussy ingredients like fresh hot cherry peppers and sherry vinegar that actually turned some people off. I went through all the promising short rib recipes in the cook-books I owned, and they all turned out well enough. But, as any home cook worth his or her salt knows, if you want the perfect, the road inevitably leads to Cook's Illustrated, the flagship publication of America's Test Kitchen.

The co-founder of Cook's Illustrated, Christopher Kimball, is a wicked man, the real-world incarnation of the old Saturday Night Live character "The Anal-Retentive Chef" (although he has performed a kind of *teshuvah* with his more recent Milk Street project). America's Test Kitchen might prepare dozens upon dozens of versions of a dish, meticulously documenting the details of each iteration, until it arrives – with scientific fussiness – at its supreme expression. The truth is, the Cook's Illustrated version is almost always the best – but you have to do exactly what the recipe says. No cutting corners.

It's been long enough now that I don't remember exactly what I had to do to prepare the Cook's Illustrated short ribs recipe, only that it was back-breaking labor and everyone loved it. After the first time I made short ribs that way, if I happened to make them again and serve them to you for dinner, it probably meant I loved *you*. And then I stopped making short ribs altogether – because the Cook's Illustrated recipe was too effortful and all other recipes did not quite measure up.

Then, I came across a recipe called "Brisket is Beautiful," published by food writer Robert Rosenthal, a friend of a friend also known as "The Short Order Dad." Basically, his recipe comes down to this – brown the meat (brisket, pot roast, or short ribs), throw all the other ingredients into a pot, and simmer for a couple of hours. But it wasn't the ease that attracted me – what piqued my interest was the way Robert (an award-winning international advertising executive and former stand-up comedian, as well as a professionally trained chef) P.T. Barnumed the top ten reasons why brisket is beautiful:

1. It is easy to make. (And hard to screw up.)
2. It is mouth-wateringly delicious.
3. It's inexpensive.
4. It requires only one pot.
5. It produces its own gorgeous gravy.
6. It makes your house smell really, really good.
7. It's at least as good the next day. ("It makes a nice sandwich.")
8. It feeds a lot of people.
9. It's an extremely adaptable recipe.
10. Everyone loves it—kids and grownups alike. (Vegetarians, not so much.)



Top Chef Tom Colicchio, ready to take on all comers to his throne



BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES – FOOD!

History demonstrates that Jews respond to lists of ten. Since then, I've never strayed from Robert's recipe when braising meat. Mostly, I make pot roast and over the years the comments from people have run the gamut from "Like buttah" (the most glowing) to "Ethan's dad's pot roast is better than yours" (the harshest, uttered by my teenaged son in order to wound me – but the little thug cleaned his plate, so I let it slide).

Let me tell you another thing: Not only is Robert Rosenthal's braised meat recipe easy to make, but it is also 90 percent as good as Tom Colicchio's fancy-pants 24-hour braised short ribs. And 90 percent as good as those short ribs is *pretty darn good*. And at 10 percent effort for 90 percent of Cook's Illustrated deliciousness, it's an absolute no-brainer.

So we've reached the last paragraph of this story – the summing-up in which a clever writer tries to stick the landing by returning to where he or she started, showing that every oddball tangent was actually part of a well-worked-out plan. Rereading what I've written, I realize that kind of craft ain't happening – what can I tell you, I started this article because my Traveling With Jewish Taste correspondent needed a break and I thought writing a food story would be easy. I considered going back and working harder to tie up loose ends, but realize that I have a great recipe to land this thing on and I should just step out of my own way. Why let the perfect become the enemy of the pot roast?



Pot Roast is Beautiful (via “The Short Order Dad”)

Robert Rosenthal suggests that the recipe is really just a starting point, and you can add things to it to suit your taste. My comments are in italics.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 chuck roast, (about 2.5 to 3 pounds), rinsed and patted dry
- Garlic cloves, peeled and sliced thin (*as many as you like – I like a lot*)
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper (up to you)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 pounds onions, peeled and sliced
- 2-3 bottles lager or amber beer (*This is secret weapon #1 – beer is better than wine, ale is better than lager, and you probably won't need more than 1 bottle for pot roast or short ribs, but you might with brisket*)
- 10 ounce can of crushed tomatoes (*You might like more – diced tomatoes also work*)

MAKE THE POT ROAST

With the tip of a sharp knife, make slits in both sides of the meat and stuff with slices of garlic. Season each side generously with salt and black pepper. (*You don't have to do it this way – chopping up the garlic and throwing it in with the rest of the ingredients works just fine.*)

Place oil in a large Dutch oven over a medium-high flame. When hot, brown the meat on both sides, lowering the heat as necessary so as not to burn.

When browned, add onions, cayenne, the remaining salt, beer, and tomatoes. Stir and bring the mixture to a boil, then lower the flame so that the broth simmers. Cover the pot. You can leave it on top of the stove OR place it in a 300-degree pre-heated oven. (*The oven is better, as it distributes the heat more evenly.*)

Cook until meat is very tender but not falling apart, at least 2 hours. More is fine.

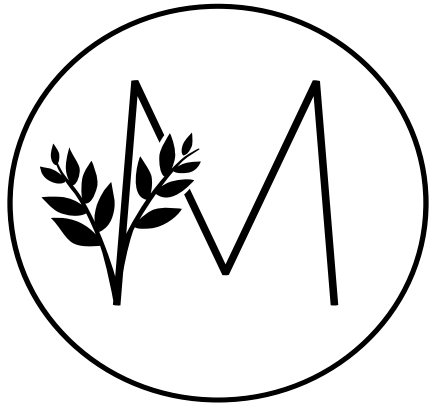
Remove meat to a carving board. Place the broth/gravy back on the stovetop, at a higher temperature, and reduce it to the consistency you desire. Taste and adjust seasoning. Then slice against the grain and top with onion gravy.

*Comments: I throw in a couple of sprigs of thyme into the pot. If you want to add a vegetable, do so about 30-45 before you finish cooking. I like carrots (for the love of God, not the peeled baby ones), but think potatoes mess up the flavor and consistency of the gravy. Secret weapon #2 for me is to throw in a mess of potato gnocchi (DiCecco or Barilla) toward the end of cooking if you want to add a starch – the gnocchi absorb some of the gravy and provide a pleasing dumpling chewiness. Get an OXO fat separator and use it if you want a sauce that is less heavy.*



Serves 4 (and [possibly] provides leftovers)

*You need one*



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TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Tea for Jew, and Jews for Teas

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



In my last column, I rhapsodized about Israeli coffee and, after filing said story, even started a shopping list for son Avi’s upcoming travels to Israel.

But let’s not forget tea, after water the most popular drink in the world. When we think of tea, supermarket staples like Lipton, Salada (with their message tags), Tetley, or Red Rose likely come to mind. At a higher level, there’s Twinning’s, Bigelow, and Harney & Sons. (That last one actually did a Zoominar for our community at the beginning of the pandemic shutdown.)

Then there’s that Passover favorite, Wissotsky, straight to our Seder tables from Israel. Now, Wissotsky is not just the leading tea distributor in Israel. Founded in 1849 in Moscow, making it one of the oldest tea companies in the world, this family-owned company grew to become the largest tea firm in the Russian Empire. By the early 20th century, it was the largest tea manufacturer in the world.

I’m sure that I’m not the only person of Ashkenazi ancestry who can remember a relative, sugar cube held in his/her teeth, sipping tea from a glass. And at least one of our readers has probably inherited a brass samovar that speaks volumes about our collective history in the Pale, and the gallons of tea consumed.

So, what actually is tea?

Traditional tea comes from the *camellia sinensis* plant, an evergreen shrub native to southwestern China and northern Myanmar. It includes a variety of types, including black, white, green, yellow, oolong, and yerba mate, and is prepared by pouring hot or boiling water over the dried or fresh tea leaves.

Historical documents record tea drinking as early as the third century in China, where its popularity grew. The custom spread throughout East Asia and ultimately arrived in Europe in the 1500s. A hundred years later, the English adopted it and instituted the cultural rites known as “afternoon tea” (the one with those tiny sandwiches, cakes, and scones) and “high tea” (the evening meal, with meat, fish, and egg dishes, as well as dessert). Those of us who enjoy British television know that characters will refer to any meal as “tea.”

The British loved their tea so much that they started tea plantations in India to add that commodity to the spices and other exotic items they imported to Europe. They established the East India Company in 1600 to function as an arm of the Crown. But, as we well know from other peoples’ experiences in the Empire, the British were not beloved in India, and in 1857 the Indians revolted. The East India Company was dismantled.



Wissotsky tea packaging from the Russian Empire. From Wikipedia: ‘During the Russian Revolution, an anti-Semitic ditty mentioning Wissotsky tea made the rounds of Russian society, spreading the idea that Russia was the victim of Jewish domination: “Tea of Wissotsky, Sugar of Brodsky, and Russia of Trotsky.”’ The Wissotsky family relocated the company out of the Soviet Union in 1920.

company. Harvesting wild herbs he found in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, he grew his business to become a \$100 million company.

When I went to Israel as a kibbutz volunteer in my late teens, heavily sweetened mint tea was the only choice that I knew. Merchants in the Old City *shuk* would offer potential customers the beverage to soften them up. And back at the kibbutz, I learned fairly quickly that inviting a naïve young girl for tea — also suffused with fresh mint leaves and lots of sugar — was just another term for “Come up and see my etchings.”

But just as coffee has evolved in Israel (and I hope the pick-up lines have, as well) so has tea. And grocery chains like SuperSol or Rami Levy’s aren’t the only places to purchase it.

Mahane Yehuda is no longer the simple, somewhat primitive, fly-infested open-air market selling whole fish, olives, and cheap plastic utensils. It has morphed into Quincy Market on steroids, with over 250 vendors selling an amazing array of items from halvah to cheese (although a lot of food products are still left open and uncovered). And when the sun sets, it becomes the hottest nightspot in the city. Bars and restaurants, each and every one blaring ear-splitting music, line the alleyways of the market.

Stopping at one of many spice dealers, we bought a large bag of za’atar, that wonderful Middle Eastern herb mixture composed of hyssop, sumac, sesame seeds, and other spices. There’s nothing like sprinkling fresh za’atar over hummus, labneh, or baba ghanouj, or rubbing it into chicken for a savory delight.

But the spice vendors are now also selling herbal tea. And not your Celestial Seasonings variety. One of the most popular items in the market now is a new



Klonimus Wolf Wissotsky, who founded the tea company carrying his name in 1849, was called “the Russian king of tea.” He was also a prominent figure in the proto-Zionist Hovevei Zion movement and was part of the leadership of the Bilu movement, founded in 1882.

concoction containing various herbal ingredients. While some were savory, such as one made of turmeric, the majority on offer were composed of dried citrus rind and tiny cubes of dried fruits. So, after sampling the wares (because how can you say “no”?) we bought an enormous bag of honey-tinged cubed dried ginger, citrus peel, and dried cranberries. It is delicious. What makes this tea unique is that after drinking the steeped mixture you can eat the fruit (I can’t really call this stuff the dregs) with a spoon.

So, now I have another item to add to my shopping list.



DIY Herbal Tea a la Mahane Yehuda

Until I can get back to Israel, here is my attempt at imitating the tea we have enjoyed.

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ lb. crystallized ginger
- ¼ lb. dried cranberries
- ¼ lb. dried orange peel

DIRECTIONS:

Cut the ginger into 1/8-inch cubes.  
Mix with the other ingredients.  
Put a tablespoon of the mixture into a large mug.  
Pour boiling water over the mixture and let steep for at least five minutes.  
Drink it up, and when you get to the bottom, spoon up the fruit.

Carol Goodman Kaufman has just published the second picture book in what is planned as a series about nature for young children. Written under the name Carolinda Goodman, *Pirate Ships and Shooting Stars* is written in rhyme, and its lively stanzas encourage young children to use their imaginations when looking up at the sky. From rainbows to constellations to pictures in the clouds, Kaufman believes there is much to see if only they lift their eyes.

In addition to her work for children, Kaufman also writes under her “real” name about food history (including for the Berkshire Jewish Voice), and her first novel, a murder mystery, will drop in 2023.



BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Accepting the Inevitable: Coping With My Mom’s Decline

Endeavoring to choose life every day while coming to terms with the painful reality of our elderly mother’s mortality

By Ruth Kaplan

For the past 12 years, my sister (who lives in New York City) and I have been doing our utmost to support our elderly mom, Eleanor, who lives 10 minutes away from me in a senior residence in Boston. This January she passed the milestone of 102. Having an elderly mother who’s got her wits about her has been a gift. Until recently, she’s been able to play bridge, attend lectures, participate in group discussions, read poetry, short stories and the newspaper and listen to nonfiction on audio-books. Ellie has never stopped engaging with the world, constantly quizzing her nephew who works for a U.S. senator about the ins and outs of D.C. politics. In fact, at ages 99 and 100, she made two separate radio appearances on NPR affiliate WGBH commenting on the national scene.

Up until now, I have been in semi-denial. However, as I reach a new level of understanding and acceptance of the inevitable, I am seeking ways to make this new phase meaningful for my mother, for my family, and for me.

Her grandchildren adore her and have been deeply affected and influenced by her astute observations of life and people. In the last few years, she’s witnessed the weddings of her three granddaughters and celebrated the birth of a great-grandson. She has a wealth of family and friends – even many newer ones – who care deeply about her and vice versa. As so many of my friends have said repeatedly, “She’s amazing.” But lately, it seems my mother is approaching the finish line. While she is not in acute pain, she’s very weak physically and is rapidly declining before our eyes; it’s hard to watch. We have upped the ante with her home health aides to provide many more hours of care a day. We understand her need to engage with close family members to the maximum extent in her waning days – or weeks or months or perhaps years. But as her “local” daughter, I constantly face the dilemma of how much of my own life to devote to my mother at this stage of her life. To attend to her whenever she calls and be available to be by her side, I am constantly canceling or postponing meetings, social events, and even phone calls. In fact, I’m at the point now where I hesitate to plan anything; I’m more or less living in the moment. My loving and supportive husband is a great help. Our congregational rabbi, too, has been a true source of support to my mom, my sister, and me, calling and visiting her frequently. Of course, I went through this when I lost my father 12 years ago, but each situation is unique. I’ve developed a closer relationship with my mother over the past decade than I ever had with her as a younger person, and while her impending loss cannot be considered “tragic,” it will nonetheless be profound for me. Caring for her and being at her side for so many years has become

an integral part of my life, but it’s coming to an end before my eyes and still it’s hard to accept. Up until now, I have been in semi-denial. However, as I reach a new level of understanding and acceptance of the inevitable, I am seeking ways to make this new phase meaningful for my mother, for my family, and for me. It means becoming more intentional about our interactions: saying words to each other that we might not ordinarily say, and leaving no room for any regrets about important thoughts left unsaid. All of that is easier said than done, of course, but still I’m trying to ask questions and express thoughts that are not always natural or easy. Also, I have been asking myself, what is there in Jewish tradition that can help during this period? We are not yet grappling with a death, but for sure we are in a stage of needing to face up to imminent loss. How do we continue to talk about the future with her while all along accepting the reality of death? A Catholic cousin of mine told me poignantly on a day when Ellie seemed particularly weak that my mom “is in God’s hands now.” Such a simple formulation but so wise. And comforting. In other words, her fate is essentially out of our control. I have found a number of Jewish teachings helpful to me in coping. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us poignantly: “To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, a time to die....” So, there you have it, this is the time to die – it’s as fundamental as it gets. And no one can argue that my mother has not been granted a very full season of life. My takeaway from these verses is to try to review and celebrate with her the many positive aspects of her fulfilling life and even to talk about the disappointments, as well. We actually have an excellent model for this kind of retrospective review of one’s life in our Torah: When Moses knows he’s going to die and will never get to enter the promised land, he uses the time he has left on earth to review his life and that of his nation. Both my sister and I continue to encourage our adult children to spend quality time with their Nana during this fraught period and to listen to her stories and share memories. As we know from the Torah, our biblical patriarchs are depicted as blessing their children before they die. Blessings can be powerful and the first ethical will is attributed to Jacob. This could be the time to seek out my mother’s blessings for her children, grandchildren and great-grandson. What final words of wisdom can she impart to each one of us? We’ll never know unless we ask, and time is of the essence. I also find the wisdom of Rabbi Hillel in *Pirkei Avot* very helpful: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” The first rhetorical question is critical to my mental and physical state. It can be exhausting to provide consistent support to an elderly parent. Hillel advises that we engage in ongoing self-care. I’m making an effort to continue to socialize, write essays and engage in meaningful professional tasks that make me feel productive, but all to a lesser degree. (And so far, I have not given up manicures!) Without a healthy dose of self-care and rest, how can I find the strength to give my all to my mother? And if not now, when? Could there possibly be a more pertinent piece of advice in the face of imminent mortality? We are definitely at the “now” stage and time is of the essence.



The fifth commandment, “Honor thy father and thy mother,” is clearly relevant. “Honor,” as our rabbis explained after studying these words more than 1,000 years ago, has more to do with showing respect than with love. My mother is still my mother despite her current state of dependency. She gave me life, instilled values in me, and provided ongoing love and support. It’s important to continue to actually honor her status as my mother, as my parent, despite her weakness. And even now she continues to dispense sound motherly advice. When all is said and done, the end of life is part of life. No one prepares us how to behave in the midst of this unsettling period, but it’s inevitable and denial is not the best strategy. I’m aiming instead for acceptance of reality by pursuing a path with greater intentionality that will be meaningful both for Eleanor and her loved ones. We are endeavoring to provide maximum comfort to our remarkable and beloved mother on her final journey by continuing to choose life every day while at the same time coming to terms with the painful reality of mortality. “To everything there is a season....” **Ruth Kaplan** is the past director of community relations at the Consulate General of Israel to New England. Her last article for the BJV, “Excuse me, but are you Albert by any chance?”, appeared in the October edition of the paper. This story was originally published by JewishBoston.org, “The Vibe of the Tribe.”

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OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES, continued from page 11

MA coordinator for math and science teachers' in-service education, initially based at North Adams State College and later at Berkshire Community College.

An active volunteer with many community and cultural organizations, she worked with Berkshire Theater Festival, Barrington Stage, and Shakespeare and Company. After serving as co-vice chairperson, the Boston Symphony Orchestra Volunteer Association awarded her the Carrie L. Peace Award for her service as a Tanglewood volunteer for over 40 years.

Augusta was one of the founders of the Berkshire Community College Foundation and served on its board of trustees for many years. She was also active with Habitat for Humanity, The United Way, and Knesset Israel, where she served as co-principal of its Hebrew School.

She is survived by her husband, Dr. Eugene W. Leibowitz, whom she married in 1963; daughter Michelle Leibowitz Joseph (Michael) of Warren, VT; son Henry Leibowitz (Joelle) of Sudbury, MA; and three grandchildren, Liliana, Elijah, and Emmanuel. Her sister, Madeline Alfred, is deceased.

Funeral services were held Friday, February 24, at Congregation Knesset Israel, with Rabbi David Weiner officiating. Burial followed in Knesset Israel cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to Congregation Knesset Israel or the Berkshire United Way in care of Flynn & Dagnoli-Bencivenga Funeral Home, 5 Elm Sreet, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

**Dr. J. Roger Goldin, 79, devoted husband and father who cherished family above all else**  
PITTSFIELD - Dr. J. Roger Goldin, 79, died Friday, February 17, at his home after bravely battling lymphoma for the past year.

Born in Passaic, NJ, on May 13, 1943, the eldest son of Bernie and Madeline Ida (Wiener) Goldin, Roger grew up going to Hebrew School, playing baseball, and enjoying classical music. He graduated from the University of Rochester and earned his Ed.D from Boston University. He was a professor of psychology at Goddard College in VT until 1978, when he and his family moved to Pittsfield, where he worked as a forensic psychologist for the Department of Mental Health for the remainder of his career.

Roger directed the Adult and Juvenile Court Clinics that served all of Berkshire County's trial courts for over 36 years. The Clinic evaluated individuals' competence to stand trial and criminal responsibility, made sentencing recommendations, and evaluated people for commitment as a result of mental illness or substance abuse. He served on statewide committees tasked with training forensic clinicians throughout Massachusetts and directly trained forensic psychologists and social workers. Upon his retirement, Roger dedicated his life to caring for his family. He supported his wife Barbara in her battle with cancer and cared for his son Jason who had Angelman Syndrome, which is characterized by challenging seizures.

An avid fan of the music before Bach, his interest and experimentation with instruments ranged from recorders and stringed instruments to whimsical whistles. A real nature lover, Roger enjoyed hiking and cross-country skiing both while living in Vermont and at his long-time home in the Berkshires. Roger loved Tanglewood and sitting on the lawn with his family. In recent years, Roger enjoyed working there, searching for and returning beloved diamonds and forgotten sunglasses to visitors with a smile. Roger also enjoyed time on the Outer Cape, sunrises, walks at low tide, treats from PB Boulangerie, and long bike rides on the Cape Cod Rail Trail.

Roger was a devoted husband and father who cherished family above all else. He was a community person; he genuinely cared for everything and everyone he encountered, and he did so with gentle humor and a twinkle in his eye. Roger always looked for the good in people and had a unique way of finding gratitude even in the most trying of circumstances. His family and friends mattered most to him, and in his final days often said how much he would miss them.

Roger was predeceased by his wife, Barbara Ann Miller Goldin, who departed on December 5, 2016, and his beloved son, Jason Neil Goldin, who departed on January 25, 2021.

Roger leaves his daughter, Emmy Rachel Goldin of Pittsfield; brother Elliott Goldin and sister-in-law Debbie Goldin of Cedar Grove, NJ; three brothers-in-law, Donald Miller of York, PA, Gary Miller of NYC, and Randy Miller of Acme, PA, and their respective wives and husband Dot, Daniel, and Linda; many nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews who already miss his music and silly dances; and many friends, new and old, who supported him in the most meaningful of ways, by sharing meals, music, chocolate treats, and taking walks in the woods with dogs while sharing real-life experiences and telling stories that matter.

Donations in Roger's memory may be made to the Angelman Syndrome Foundation (angelman.org), Hospitality Homes (hosp.org/), or to a charity of your choice. Alternatively, you can simply donate your time to a special cause, a person who could use your support, or a stranger who might like a smile.

A celebration of Roger's life will be held in warmer weather.

**Iris Cohen, 87, teacher, realtor, artistic, tremendous pride in family**  
SLINGERLANDS, NY - Iris Cohen, 87, died in her home on Thursday, February 23.

Born July 21, 1935 in New York City, she was the daughter of the late Abraham and Rose Forer Sidman. Iris moved to Roxbury, MA as a young child and later to Brookline, MA, where she was a member of the Brookline High School class of 1953. She attended UMASS and later transferred to Boston University, graduating in 1957 with a Bachelor's of Education.

While at UMASS, Iris met her future husband and the love of her life, Robert S. Cohen. Iris joked that Bob was so taken with her after their first date in April that he didn't ask her for a second date until October, which she promptly accepted.

Bob and Iris were married on November 27, 1958, and she soon relocated to Pittsfield to be with Bob in his hometown. Iris found a job working as a 5th grade teacher at the Center School in Lenox. She taught there for three years, and was very proud of her time in the classroom. When she became pregnant with her first child, Jeffrey, in 1961, she tendered her resignation, as was expected during those years. As a parting gift, her students bought her a radio, which remained on her kitchen counter for decades. She would light up when she recalled its presentation and would often joyfully discuss running into former students around the Berkshires.

When her youngest child, Ruth, went to kindergarten, Iris decided to study for her real estate license examination and re-enter the workforce. In 1973, Iris began working at Isgood Realty and, later, Evergreen Realty, both in Pittsfield. In 1997, Iris found her home away from home at Roberts & Associates in Lenox. Working there



OBITUARIES

until her retirement, Iris found joy and fellowship with her colleagues, some of whom became dear and trusted friends. Iris worked hard at her job, and was scrupulously honest in her business dealings. She was a tough negotiator but also personable and warm, and she cultivated lasting business relationships. She celebrated each client's new home or sale with a gift, and her clients came back to her time after time. She worked until well after her 80th birthday, when health related issues nudged her toward retirement.

Iris loved family gatherings, whether a hostess or guest. She took tremendous pride in her kids and grandkids and would never miss any graduation, school play, pageant, ball game, or dance performance. She loved to write poems to mark special occasions, and her signature sign off was a source of much gentle teasing and laughter, as she would rhyme her name "Iris" with the word "virus." Needless to say, that sign off did change after the start of the pandemic.

Iris was creative and artistic, although she was sheepish about her abilities. She refinished antique furniture, including caning, and made many paintings hung in her and family members' homes. She was an early practitioner of yoga in the 1970s, and continued until just a few weeks before her death. She walked faithfully for decades, and was very proud of completing a 20 mile walk-a-thon in Boston to combat hunger. She did the "Walk for Hunger" ten times and tended to power walk the entire thing. Iris continued to walk as recently as just a few weeks ago.

Iris and Bob's 64-year marriage was a source of tremendous pride. Watching their adoration for one another, especially in their final years, was profoundly moving. Iris will be remembered as a loving mother, grandmother, and a "second mother" to her beloved niece Janet "Shanie" Lysy. She will be dearly missed and forever in our hearts.

In addition to her parents, Iris was predeceased by her loving husband of 64 years, Robert Cohen. Bob died only ten weeks ago, and left her with a broken heart, from which she never recovered.

Iris is survived by three children, Jeffrey Cohen (Jackie Gaffney) of Slingerlands, NY, Andrew Cohen (Laurie) of San Francisco, CA and Ruth Cohen (Bob Thistle) of Lee, MA; seven grandchildren, Hannah and Sarah Cohen, Devan (Ashleigh), Quinn and Carolyn Cohen, and John and Patricia Thistle; brother, Alan Sidman (Sharman) of Brooklyn, NY; sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Janet and Dusan Lysy of Fairport, NY; brother-in-law Stephen Cohen, of Fairport, NY; and her dear friend and "cousin," Elaine Epstein.

Funeral services were held on Sunday, February 26, at Knesset Israel, Pittsfield, with Rabbi David Weiner officiating. Interment followed at Knesset Israel Cemetery. Please consider donating to Project Bread (the sponsor of the Walk for Hunger) at [projectbread.org/the-walk-for-hunger](http://projectbread.org/the-walk-for-hunger) or to the Pittsfield Public Schools, where a need based scholarship fund will be established for a graduating senior from Pittsfield High School. Checks to the Pittsfield Public Schools should be sent directly to Flynn & Dagnoli Funeral Home, 5 Elm Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Blanche Caron (Mesiboff), 99, promoted diversity and religious tolerance, loved music and learning

GREAT BARRINGTON - Blanche Caron (Mesiboff), 99, passed away peacefully in her home on Friday, March 3, surrounded by family members, one month before her 100th birthday.

Born in Brooklyn, NY on April 8, 1923, the youngest of four, to Samuel and Fannie Mesiboff, Blanche was an honors student and a high scorer on

the NY Regents Exam and won a full college scholarship. While at Hunter College during WWII, she sought and was selected for special training to work at Bell Laboratories where she became part of a team to develop radar systems and other electronic equipment used in the war effort, including systems to detect enemy vessels in the NYC harbor and to protect the coast.

After the war, her college sweetheart Herbert Caron returned from his military service and they married. The couple began their life together in Cambridge, MA, where Herb completed his doctoral studies in psychology. The family relocated with their four young children to Arlington, VA for Herb's work and then to Parma, OH where they lived for 63 years.

Blanche did research on extending viability in premature low-weight infants, a joint project of Case Western University Medical School and Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital of University Hospitals.

She was an active member of Beth Israel – The West Temple where she volunteered in the library and helped manage a lending library for the general public. She volunteered her efforts for Cleveland Fair Housing as a tester to uncover racially discriminatory housing practices, "shopping" for apartments that were being denied to black families. Blanche also helped develop and implement programs that promoted diversity and religious tolerance in the greater Cleveland community.

Blanche was a music enthusiast. Since their earliest days together, she and her husband loved to sing and listen to music. They enjoyed an extensive and diverse record collection that spanned classical, jazz and blues, American folk and international folk traditions – now called World Music - a love of which she shared and nurtured in her children. She encouraged and supported each child in taking private instrumental lessons.

Blanche had a lifelong love of reading and learning. As an adult she took part in Hebrew Ulpan classes so that she could read and understand Hebrew, from the prayer book and the Torah as well as modern Hebrew. In her 40s, she took courses in computers alongside college aged classmates and excelled. Blanche especially took pleasure in reading to her grandchildren, and in watching her great-grandchildren and grand nephews and nieces grow and develop, knowing that she had fostered a love of reading and learning in them, too.

Blanche was predeceased by her husband of 76 years, Herbert S. Caron; sisters Rose Eigen and Evelyn Ross; and brother Milton Macy. She leaves behind her children Chaim Caron, Wendy Caron Zohar, James Caron and wife Amy Richman, and Peter Caron and wife Kelly; grandchildren Woody and wife Cathleen, Alissa and husband Kinal, Nadav and wife Alyss, Yotam and wife Natalie, Laila, Matan, Alex, Anna and David; great-grandchildren Marley, Wolf, Ara, Amelia, Conan, Kiri and Fiala.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, March 7 at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Great Barrington, followed by burial at the Ahavath Sholom Cemetery, Great Barrington.

Donations may be made to Beth

Israel - The West Temple, 14308 Triskett Road, Cleveland, OH 44111, <https://thewesttemple.com/donations/donation-form/> or to support the music programs at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230, <https://www.hevreh.org/>.

Arlene Zarchen Norman, 90, therapist, cook, dancer, gardener

MANCHESTER, CT - Arlene Zarchen Norman, 90, a beloved wife, mother, and grandmother, died peacefully on Friday, February 24, at her home, surrounded by her loving family.

Born in Providence, RI, she grew up in West Hartford and attended Hall High School. She graduated from Simmons College in Boston with a bachelor's degree in Accounting, and earned a master's degree in Psychiatric Social Work from UConn. She opened her own therapy practice in Manchester, specializing in Couples Counseling and Divorce Mediation.

Arlene had impeccable taste in clothes and was very progressive for her time, strongly believing in women's rights. She loved gardening and became a Master Gardener through the UConn Master Gardner's Program. Arlene was passionate about cooking and was featured in "From Your Neighbor's Kitchen" in the Manchester Herald, where she shared her infamous Ratatouille and Blueberry Pie recipes. She was an avid reader and belonged to a ladies book club. She also enjoyed sewing.

After retiring, Arlene took up tap dancing, a childhood passion. She performed in dance recitals well into her 80s with "The Perennials" tap group. She also carried on the Norman tradition of running in the Manchester Road Race. Arlene served as president and vice president of the Manchester Memorial Hospital Women's Auxiliary, and was a life-time member of Hadassah and the Temple Beth Shalom Sisterhood.

Arlene is predeceased by her parents, Louis and Myrtice Zarchen. She is survived by her loving husband of 70 years, Paul Stuart Norman; three children, David Norman (Joann) of Westbrook, CT, Tom Norman (MaryBeth), formerly of South Glastonbury, CT and Emily Norman Bernard, of Lenox. Family meant everything to Arlene. She reveled in spending time and traveling with her six grandchildren; Erin, Ashley, Brianna, Sarah, Olivia and Lyle. She loved being their "Grammy", and would attend their school plays, graduations, grandparents day, and sporting events. She is also survived by her brother, Robert Zarchen (Susan) of FL and nephews, Louis and Jonathan.

Arlene and Paul's marriage was a true love story. They met in junior high school, and after tying the knot in their 20s, they would go on to travel around the world, hike, ski, play tennis and bridge together. Both were huge advocates of the arts and loyal patrons of the Hartford Symphony, Hartford Stage Co., Tanglewood, Theater Works, and Playhouse on Park.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, March 1, at the Manchester Funeral Home, Manchester, CT. Burial followed at Beth Sholom Memorial Park

in Manchester. Donations may be made to West Hartford's Playhouse Theatre Group, 244 Park Road, West Hartford, CT 06119. Attn: Darlene Zoller or The Cure Alzheimer's Fund at <https://curealz.org>.

Jane Louise (Kobritz) Widitor, 91, instrumental in many community and synagogue activities

PITTSFIELD - Beloved mother and grandmother Jane Louise (Kobritz) Widitor, 91, died on Monday, March 6, at Mount Carmel Care Center.

Born in Pittsfield on April 15, 1931, daughter of Charles J. and Sadie (Zalutsky) Kobritz, Jane graduated from Pittsfield High School, class of 1948, and attended Simmons College in Boston.

Jane was a longtime devoted member of Congregation Knesset Israel. She was instrumental in many community activities, including the synagogue sisterhood. She also helped to develop the synagogue's library. Jane was a lifetime member of Hadassah.

A genuinely nurturing woman, Jane lovingly raised three sons and thereafter assisted her family in the operation of Tyler Home Supply.

She married her husband, Jack Widitor, on January 7, 1951. They remained married for 65 years until his death on February 10, 2016.


Jane is survived by her three sons Scott Widitor of Pittsfield and twins Peter E. Widitor of Pittsfield and David B. Widitor of Brooklyn, NY; nine grandchildren and four nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by brother Nathan Kobritz and sister Rose Lazerus.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, March 8, at Knesset Israel, Pittsfield, with Rabbi David Weiner officiating. Burial followed in Knesset Israel Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to Knesset Israel in care of Flynn & Dagnoli-Bencivenga Funeral Home, 5 Elm Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.




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CULTURE & ARTS

A History of Mel Brooks as a ‘Disobedient Jew’

By Andrew Silow-Carroll / JTA

Jeremy Dauber subtitles his new biography of Mel Brooks “Disobedient Jew.” It’s a phrase that captures two indivisible aspects of the 96-year-old director, actor, producer and songwriter.

The “Jew” is obvious. Born Melvin Kaminsky in Brooklyn in 1926, Brooks channeled the Yiddish accents and Jewish sensibilities of his old neighborhoods into characters like the 2000 Year Old Man – a comedy routine he worked up with

*In order to be the kind of parodist that Mel Brooks is, you have to be acutely attuned to every aspect of the cultural medium that you’re parodying. You have to know it inside and outside and backwards and forwards.*

his friend, the writer and director Carl Reiner. He worked Jewish obsessions into films like 1967’s *The Producers*, which features two scheming Jewish characters who stage a sympathetic Broadway musical about Hitler in order to bilk their investors. Brooks’ signature move is to inject Jews into every aspect of human history and culture, which can be seen in the Hulu series *History of the World*,

*Part II.* A sequel to his 1981 film, *History of the World, Part I.*

The “Disobedient” part describes Brooks’ relationship to a movie industry that he conquered starting in the early 1970s. In a series of parodies of classic movie genres – the Western in *Blazing Saddles*, the horror movie in *Young Frankenstein*, Alfred Hitchcock in *High Anxiety* – he would gently, sometimes crudely and always lovingly bite the hand that was feeding him quite nicely: In 1976, he was fifth on the list of top 10 box office attractions, just behind Clint Eastwood.

Dauber describes the parody Brooks mastered as “nothing less than the essential statement of American Jewish tension between them and us, culturally speaking; between affection for the mainstream and alienation from it.”

Dauber is professor of Jewish literature and American studies at Columbia University, whose previous books include *Jewish Comedy* and *American Comics: A History*. *Mel Brooks: Disobedient Jew* is part of the Jewish Lives series of brief interpretative biographies from Yale University Press.

Dauber and I spoke about why America fell for a self-described “spectacular Jew” from Brooklyn. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

**You write early on that “Mel Brooks, more than any other single figure, symbolizes the Jewish perspective on and contribution to American mass entertainment.” On one foot, can you expand on that?**

Jews understand that there’s a path to success and that being embraced by a culture means learning about it, immersing yourself in it, being so deeply involved in it that you understand it and master it. But simultaneously, you’re doing that as a kind of outsider. You’re always not quite in it, even though you’re of it in some deep way. In some ways, it’s the apotheosis of what Brooks does,



As my parents planted for me before I was born,  
so do I plant for those who come after me.  
– Talmud

Thank you to these individuals who through their gift to the Legacy Circle will ensure that the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thrives long into the future. May your name be a Blessing, and may the example you set inspire others to create their own Jewish Legacy.

- |                          |                           |                          |                       |                           |
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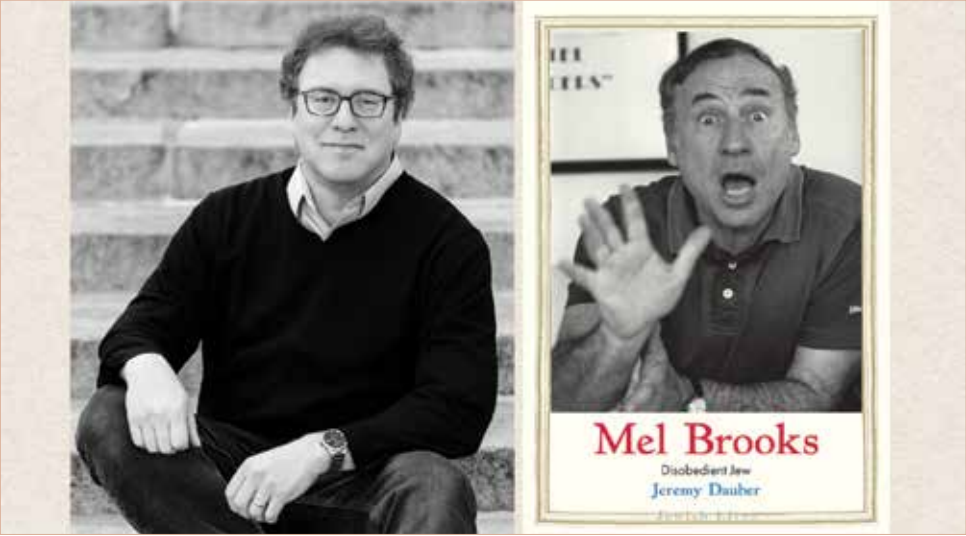
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Jeff Clifford



CULTURE & ARTS



which is being a parodist. In order to be the kind of parodist that Mel Brooks is, you have to be acutely attuned to every aspect of the cultural medium that you're parodying. You have to know it inside and outside and backwards and forwards. And Brooks certainly does, but at the same time you have to be able to sort of step outside of it and say, you know, "Well, I'm watching a Western, but come on, what's going on with these guys? Like why doesn't anyone ever, you know, pass gas after eating so many beans?"

**You have this great phrase, that to be an American Jew is to be part of the "loyal opposition."**

That's right. Brooks at his best is always kind of poking and prodding at convention, but loyally. He's not like the countercultural figures of his day. He's a studio guy. He's really within the system, but is poking at the system as well.

**For me the paradox of Brooks' career is conveyed in a phrase that appears a couple of times in the book: "too Jewish." The irony is that the more he leaned into his Jewishness, the more successful he got, starting with the "2000 Year Old Man" character, in which he channels Yiddish dialect in a series of wildly successful comedy albums with his friend Carl Reiner. How do you explain America's embrace of these extremely ethnic tropes?**

Brooks' great motion pictures of the late 1960s and 1970s sort of track with America's embrace of Jewishness. You have *The Graduate*, which came out at around the same time as *The Producers*, and which showed that someone like Dustin Hoffman can be a leading man. It doesn't have to be a Robert Redford. You have Allan Sherman and all these popular Jewish comedians. You have *Fiddler on the Roof* becoming one of Broadway's biggest hits. That gives Brooks license to kind of jump in with both feet. In the 1950s, writing on *Your Show or Shows* for Sid Caesar, the Jewishness was there but in a very kind of hidden way. Whereas, it's very hard to watch the 2000 Year Old Man and say, well, that's not a Jewish product.

**You talk about what's happening at the same time as Brooks' huge success, which is, although he's a little younger, the emergence of Woody Allen. You describe Brooks and Woody Allen as the voice of American Jewish comedy, but in very different ways. What are the major differences?**

Gene Wilder, who worked with both of them, says that working with Allen is like lighting these tiny little candles, and with Brooks, you're making big atom bombs. The critical knock against Brooks was that he was much more interested in the joke than the story. And I think with the exception maybe of *Young Frankenstein* there's a lot of truth to that. The jokes are phenomenal, so that's fine. Allen pretty quickly moved towards a much more narrative kind of film, and so began to be seen as this incredibly intellectual figure. In real life, Allen always claimed that he wasn't nearly as intellectual as everyone thought, while Brooks had many more kinds of intellectual ambitions than the movie career that he had. There is a counterfactual world in which *The 12 Chairs*, his 1970 movie based on a novel by two Russian Jewish novelists and which nobody talks about, makes a ton of money. Instead, it bombs, and he makes *Blazing Saddles*, which works out very well for everybody.

**Although he does create Brooksfilms, and produces more narrative, serious-minded films like The Elephant Man and 84 Charing Cross Road.**

Right, and decides that if he puts his name on these as a director, they're going to be rejected out of hand. There is a shelf of scholarship on Woody Allen, but if you look at who had influence on America in terms of box office and popularity, it's Brooks winning in a walk.

**The Producers is part of Brooks' lifelong gambit of mocking the Nazis, I think starting when he would sing anti-Hitler songs as a GI in Europe at the tail end of World War II. Later he would remake Jack Benny's World War II-era anti-Nazi comedy, To Be or Not to Be. And then there is the quick "Hitler on Ice" gag in History of the World, Part I. Brooks always maintains that mocking Nazis is the ultimate revenge on them, while you note that Woody Allen in Manhattan makes**

**almost the opposite argument: that the way to fight white supremacists is with bricks and baseball bats. Did you come down on one side or the other?**

I think it's fair to say that *The Producers* was really something different. You didn't have to be Jewish to be offended by *The Producers*... To add just a twinge of complication is the fact that Brooks actually fought Nazis, and also had a brother who was shot down in combat. So for me to sit in moral judgment on anybody who fought in World War II is not a place that I want to be. What's interesting is that Brooks makes a lot of these statements over the course of a career in which Nazism is done, in the past, defeated. Tragically, the events of the last number of years made white supremacy and neo-Nazism a live question again. When *The Producers* was staged as a musical in the early 21st century, people could say, "Okay, Nazism's time has passed." It's not clear to me that we would restage *The Producers* now as a musical on Broadway, when just last week you had actual neo-Nazis handing out their literature outside a Broadway show. It would certainly be a lot more laden than it was in 2001.

**What other aspects of Brooks' Jewishness have we not touched upon? For instance, he's not particularly interested in Judaism as a religion, and ritual and theology rarely come up in his films, even to be mocked.**

It's not something that he's particularly interested in. To him, being Jewish is a voice and a language. From the beginning of his career the voice is there. What he's saying in these accents is that this is Jewish history working through me. It is, admittedly, a very narrow slice of Jewish history.

**The first- and second-generation children of Jewish immigrants growing up in Brooklyn neighborhoods that were overwhelmingly Jewish.**

It was a Jewishness that was aspirational. It was intellectual. It was a musical Jewishness. It was not in the way we use this phrase now, but it was a cultural Jewishness. It was not a synagogue Jewishness or a theological Jewishness. But of course he is Jewish, deeply Jewish. He couldn't be anything else. And so he didn't, and thank God for that.



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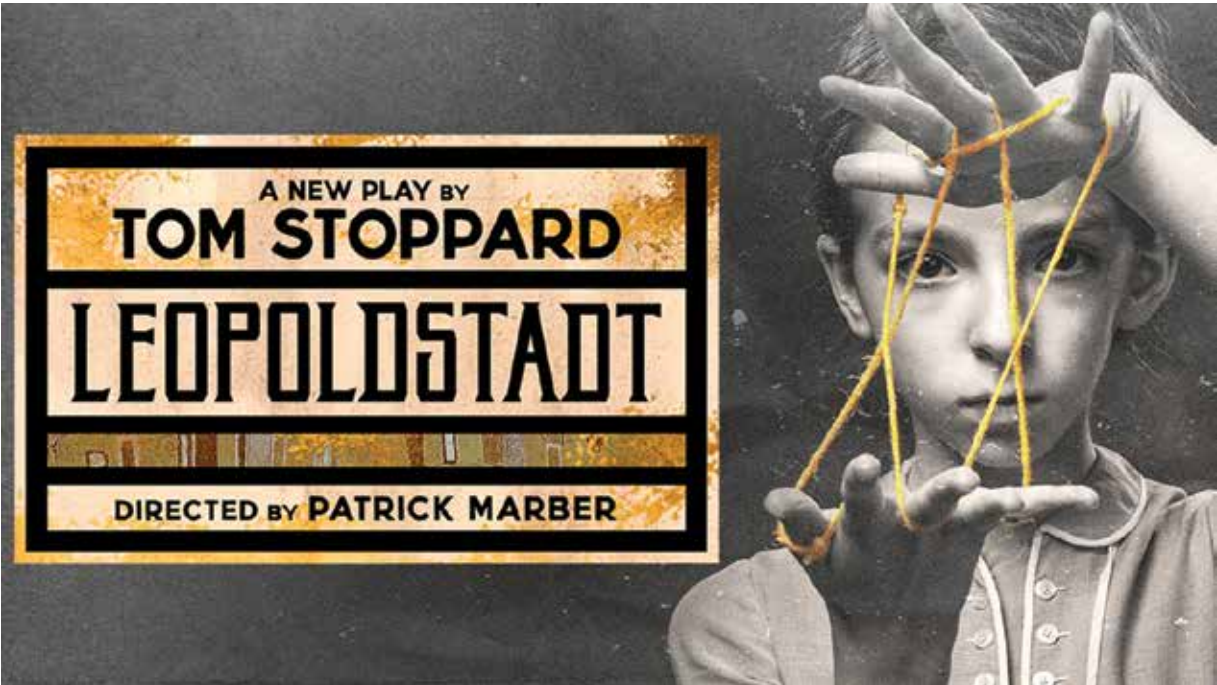
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So, Hell or Homeland?

In *Leopoldstadt*, Tom Stoppard shows how the dreams of a Jewish Viennese family broke into a thousand pieces

By Linda Burghardt / Special to the BJV

Set in Vienna in the home of an affluent Jewish family, the hit stage play *Leopoldstadt*, now breaking hearts on Broadway, tells the story of the coming catastrophe that would be called the Holocaust and the devastating effects it would have on the family members, a group of highly educated, deeply cultured people who believed they were too safely assimilated into European society to be in danger when the Nazis arrived.

“Assimilated means to carry on being a Jew, but without insult,” . . . “Episcopalians are assimilated. Zoroastrians are assimilated. I could be a druid, for all my colleagues care. It’s only the Jews! I’m an unbeliever, but to a gentile, I’m always a Jew.”

Since I grew up in a family for whom the Nazis actually did arrive, I was driven to purchase tickets, quiet my demons, and enter the Longacre Theater in New York with both a supportive companion and a fistful of tissues. Both were useful; both were soaked with tears by the time the curtain fell. But I wouldn’t have missed it for the world.

Tom Stoppard’s brilliant creation plays without an intermission, and with his inimitable wit, philosophical intellectualism, and wry bits of black humor, he leads us into a memorial to a lost world. The drama begins in 1899. It is the cusp of a new century, but it is also a year after an Austrian Jew named Theodore Herzl published a landmark study he called “*Der Judenstaat*,” which instructed all Jews to leave the country and emigrate to Palestine, because assimilation was an impossible dream and could never be achieved.

But the only positive reviews of the book, we are told by the patriarch of the family, came from gentiles. “We say no to Herzl,” he shouts from the stage. “Vienna is our Promised Land.”

And as the family frolics through holiday celebrations and gossips about one another, we learn that another Austrian Jew, Sigmund Freud, has published another landmark study: his theories about the meaning of dreams. But Stoppard

shows us as his play unfolds how the dreams of the Viennese, who thought they belonged, broke into a thousand pieces.

“We live in the culture capital of Europe,” explains the owner of the family textile business, unable to see the looming betrayal just outside the door. “We literally worship culture. Sameness is the goal. Zionism is about difference.”

Two million people lived in Vienna in 1938. A full ten percent of the population, 200,000, were Jews. Out of these 200,000, two were my parents, four were my grandparents, and another couple dozen or so were my aunts, uncles, and cousins. Nearly all felt they were safe. Accepted. Assimilated. Nearly all perished in the camps.

“Assimilated means to carry on being a Jew, but without insult,” one of Stoppard’s characters, a mathematics professor, tells his drinking companion. “Episcopalians are assimilated. Zoroastrians are assimilated. I could be a druid, for all my colleagues care. It’s only the Jews! I’m an unbeliever, but to a gentile, I’m always a Jew.”

Vienna was home to the largest German-speaking Jewish community in Europe at the time, larger than existed in any city in Germany. Judaism, in all its many forms and levels of observance flourished there, and while Jews were ten percent of the population, they were fifty percent of the lawyers, doctors and professors in the city.

After the Anschluss in March 1938, when Hitler annexed Austria to Germany, Adolph Eichmann was sent to Vienna to rid the city of Jews. Through five exquisitely crafted acts, which grab the play’s families by the seat of the pants and fling them into the stratosphere, where there is no air to sustain them and no firm place to land, *Leopoldstadt* tells this story.

So, hell or homeland? What was Vienna as it was presented to me by my immigrant parents, the last of their families to survive? What of the Merz and Jacobovicz family members who were still alive when Stoppard’s play comes to a crashing end in 1955, having swept across 56 years in two hours and ten minutes and presented us with but three of the 23 still alive?

Tom Stoppard wrote the play in his 81st year. It was a hit in 2019 when it was presented in London, but this was only a few short decades after Stoppard even found out he was Jewish. He was born Tomáš Stráussler in 1937 to two Jewish parents in Czechoslovakia. When the Nazis invaded in 1939, the family fled to Singapore; when the Japanese were poised to take that city in 1941, Stoppard, his brother, and mother escaped to India. His father, a doctor, stayed behind with the British army, and perished in 1942 as he tried to rejoin his family. Young Stoppard attended an American school in Darjeeling and then moved with his mother, who had married a British military man, to England in 1946. There, he became an honorary British boy. The Holocaust, and his relationship to it, remained safely hidden behind a curtain of silence.

But as we know, sometimes silence can scream louder than words. For my parents, who lost everything – their home, their place in society, their sense of safety, their language, their future, their families – there was never a sense of belonging after they fled Vienna and the Nazis. Stoppard’s characters in the last wrenching scene recite with no embellishment or softness each family member’s fate: Auschwitz, Dachau, death march, suicide. Each is a punch; each is a little death of a piece of us. There is no drum, but we hear one anyway.

The play is about then, of course, but also about now. Family love, confidence in our strength, the crystalline beauty of art and music, the fragile nature of our belief in the goodness of our neighbors. And yet also a firm reminder of why, when there were only four in my family as I was growing up, we had five chairs at the kitchen table, so that every night my mother could set a place for the mother the Nazis had torn away while she was unable to save her, and so keep her own heart beating for one more day.

**Linda F. Burghardt, Ph.D.,** serves as Scholar-in-Residence at the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center in New York. She writes frequently on topics of Jewish interest and has lectured widely both regionally and internationally. She is a Lenox second homeowner and this is her first article for the BJV.

*Leopoldstadt* by Tom Stoppard is currently being staged at the Longacre Theatre, 220 West 48th Street in New York City. For more information, visit [leopoldstadtplay.com](http://leopoldstadtplay.com)



Sir Tom Stoppard

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CULTURE & ARTS

Doug Mishkin Keeps the Folk Flame Burning

“Woody’s Children” composer to perform folk music favorites at Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Saturday, April 15 at 8 p.m., folk singer Doug Mishkin will be at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire to perform folk music favorites and his own compositions, including his anthem “Woody’s Children.”

All proceeds will benefit The Religious Action Center of Massachusetts and Construct, Inc.

Tickets are \$36 for adults and \$16 for students. A livestream option is available for \$36. For tickets and information, visit [Hevreh.org/Mishkin](http://Hevreh.org/Mishkin) or call (413) 528-6378.

In February, the BJV caught up with Doug, who was at home in Egremont. Here are some of his thoughts on his musical, Jewish, and Berkshire journeys, edited for length and clarity.

BJV Interview: Doug Mishkin

It may sound odd to say, but I always have thought that I was conceived the night that my mother took me to my first Pete Seeger concert. And when I heard that, I knew there was something going on. But I was born the summer of 1968 when I was 14 years old, and my parents sent me to Eisner. I grew up in Monroe, New York. It was a congregation, a small congregation, and Monroe Woodbury High School was not a hotbed of folk music. But when I got to Eisner, there were 500 kids and there must have been 250 guitars – this was the greatest. And I remember when the song leader took out his guitar at the campfire and started playing a Tom Paxton song, and I thought, wow, this song speaks to me. And all those songs spoke to me, and they still do. So I like to say I got to Eisner and I got to hear all the great contemporary Jewish music of the time: Phil Oakes, Tom Paxton, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and lots of other stuff. So I was off to the races with folk music based on that.



And then I got involved in NYFTY, and that was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. NYFTY became my life. I had the greatest job ever invented to be the national song leader at Kutz Camp in Warwick, New York. I did that for five summers, the last three of which were with my great good friend, Mary Lovinger Arian, who is a professor of practice at the Hebrew Union College at the Cantorial School. But that was where everything began, and it gave me a life in music. Music wasn’t my professional career. I’m a lawyer, but I always got to do music in the Reform movement with a social action bent to it. And I used to joke that when I was invited to sing, it meant that good people had gathered. They had gathered for a good cause, and they couldn’t get Peter Yarrow.



I learned a long time ago, and I learned it from the teacher of all of us, Pete Seeger, that songs of social justice are one thing, but people show up and they generally want to and deserve to be entertained. So I very much regard myself as an entertainer, and I have a high degree of confidence that people will leave the evening feeling entertained, among other things. When I lived in Washington, I was very proud to be involved regularly with the Religious Action Center of the Reform movement – “The RAC.” It was headed for many years by Rabbi David Saperstein, who is a close personal friend. It was not uncommon for my secretary at the law firm to get a message, “Tell Doug, get his guitar – Jesse Jackson is coming over to the RAC to commemorate Kristallnacht.” That was one memorable mess.

The other beneficiary of this concert is Construct, which is a marvelous affordable housing nonprofit here in Great Barrington. The president of Construct, Elizabeth Rosenberg, is a leading member of Hevreh, and I’m delighted that the concert will be for the benefit of Construct. as well.



I’ve been coming to the Berkshires ever since I graduated law school. [My wife] Wendy and I bought our house in Egremont 16 years ago, but I transitioned up here essentially full time in the fall of 2018 to work with this law firm doing housing work. The bulk of my music scene experience in the Berkshires has been with the Guthrie Center, which is a great music venue. The other work of the Guthrie Center, which I suppose one could regard as the primary work of



Doug Mishkin singing at service in Selma, Alabama, in 2015, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery march for civil rights.

the Guthrie Center, is to be a kind of social service center to provide things for folks who need some help. I have loved going to the Guthrie Center over many years to see the music that I love, and part of the fun for me is some of the people whose music I most enjoy have, through a strange set of wonderful circumstances, become friends of mine. When my kids were very young, I thought kids’ music was not my thing. Then I heard Tom Chapin, and I thought, wow, this guy is doing a different kind of what he calls “family music.” Tom and I got to be good friends – and when he plays the Guthrie Center, he stays with us – largely because we met and would see each other regularly on the anniversary shows of the Woody’s Children Radio Show in New York City.



My song “Woody’s Children” is one of those things that I didn’t see coming, and it became a blessing in my life. Pete Seeger said that all folk singers who came after Woody Guthrie were Woody’s children. In my house, growing up in the 60s, my father – who was not a folk music guy, but he was a justice guy – said, “Folk singers in America, they’re the conscience of the country. And that made an impression on me.” I thought, well, if folk singers are Woody’s children and the folk singers are the conscience of the country, we better all be the conscience of the country. So I thought, you know what? We’re all Woody’s children. And I wrote the song in college and then sent it to Bob Sherman, the host of The Woody’s Children Radio Show in New York.

In 2012, it was Woody’s hundredth birthday, I emailed Tom Chapin and I said, you know, I’d like to do a re-recording of the song. Would you do it with me? I want to get a bunch of people to do it, and Tom said, sure, let’s do it. Tom said, the chorus is good, but maybe you want to take a look at the lyrics. And I thought, you know what? I wrote the song when I was 18. I could probably do that now. So I rewrote them. And I’m glad that I did. We got Tom Paxton and Peter Yarrow and Christine Lavin, Aztec Two-Step, and Katie Curtis. These are people whose music I’m crazy about. And then we have a video of it on [Woodyschildren.com](http://Woodyschildren.com)



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CULTURE & ARTS

Violins and Hope: From the Holocaust to Symphony Hall,  
with Photographer Daniel Levin

Explore a heroic effort to restore violins that survived the Holocaust



Amnon Weinstein in his workshop

In commemoration of Yom HaShoah, on Thursday, April 20 at 6:45 p.m., join celebrated photographer, author, and professor Daniel Levin for an online discussion about his new book, *Violins and Hope: From the Holocaust to Symphony Hall*, which explores master violinmaker Amnon Weinstein's effort to restore violins that survived the Holocaust. Levin revisits the experience of photographing Amnon's studio and how his own identity as a Jewish-American artist is represented in the photography of an Israeli violinist, in addition to his other works from around the world.

Learn about the 86 violins that have been restored by Amnon Weinstein's Violins of Hope undertaking, which fulfills the goal of transforming tragedy into triumph by bringing violins of the Holocaust back to life.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) for links to our programs. This program is part of "Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council."

**Sonia Beker** of Lenox is the daughter of Max Beker and Fania Durmashkin, accomplished musicians in pre-war Vilna (Vilnius), Lithuania. Sonia told their harrowing story in her 2007 family history *Symphony on Fire: A Story of Music and Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust* – her father's instrument is one of those restored by Amnon Weinstein and has been played in concert since its refurbishment.

As she writes:

The violin my dad had loved had been his constant companion since he was a POW at Stalag VIIIA in Silesia, where it was acquired for him through the clandestine efforts of his Jewish bunkmates so that he could be a member of the Stalag's string, jazz, and gypsy orchestras. He had carried this violin on a German death march of the POWs, stealthily escaping the German guards, then encountering his American liberators in a farmer's field. He then went on to a DP camp in Bavaria to join a Jewish orchestra there, the Ex-Concentration Camp Orchestra, where he met other Vilna and Kovno musicians and my mother, and where Leonard Bernstein conducted them in 1948, and finally brought this violin with him to America in 1949. With the skilled expertise of Amnon and [his son] Avshi, this violin's voice would speak to audiences again, and my father's story would as well.

Beker has lectured widely about her parents' lives and her own experience with Violins of Hope. The BJV asked her to share some impressions of Daniel Levin's book and she graciously accepted our request.



Sonia Beker with her father's violin, restored by Amnon Weinstein



Holy Work that Enriches Us All

By Sonia Pauline Beker / Special to the BJV

Daniel Levin's *Violins and Hope: From the Holocaust to Symphony Hall*, is a rich, eloquent compendium of Amnon Weinstein's history and his poignant mission. Amnon's

superb skill as a luthier is driven by his strong emotional connection to pull back Holocaust violins from obscurity and the dire injuries they suffered in ghettos and concentration camps.

As a doctor examines human patients, Amnon carefully studies Holocaust violins and the stories brought to him by the violinists' family members or friends to honor a musician who may or may not have survived. Amnon's examination is lengthy and caring. He feels the suffering of the musician from the moment he lays eyes on the violin and gently touches its surface. He performs the necessary surgery, removing

the face of the instrument to examine its interior and probe its history and condition. Not until all elements of the violin have been minutely explored can Amnon make a well-informed diagnosis and begin the painstaking restoration process.

In the case of my father's violin, the process took 2.5 years. The objective was to bring this violin back to the concert hall, and this has been joyfully accomplished by Amnon using the highest level of experience, love and craftsmanship.

Daniel Levin asked Amnon how the restoration of a Holocaust violin compares to the repair and fine-tuning of an old violin that did not live through the Holocaust. Amnon's reply, as recorded in *Violins and Hope*:



"When you are holding a violin like this, I usually but not always know the story. It's as if you're holding a holy piece. You try to make no mistakes with what you're doing, but there are mistakes in your work. It's difficult, very difficult, and usually I'm thinking about the people who played on

this violin and the people who heard the music, both of them. Nothing is normal when you're doing this. It's too much weight."

Daniel Levin has created a memoir embracing a remarkable range of material — he brings together the incisive remarks of Eli Wiesel and Franz Welzer-Most, the music director of The Cleveland Orchestra, who wrote the book's forward. Levin shares his own detailed account of arriving in Tel Aviv to Amnon's studio, observing the violins and their restorations, and his conversation with Amnon's lovely wife, Assi. As a photographer, he provides a visual narrative of Amnon receiving and unpacking a klezmer violin, which had a mother-of-pearl inlaid Star of David in its backboards. Levin the lensman also captures a special concert of the violins with the Cleveland Orchestra, as well as many of the objects Amnon has collected in his studio — art, letters, documents, photographs, violin parts, breathtaking photographs of the instruments, and objects from Amnon's own life. The disparity of these subjects is brought into perfect harmony through the richness of the photos, visuals that sing almost as if they themselves were playing their stories from the pages of the book.

To read *Violins and Hope* is a life experience. One must go through it slowly, reading and viewing the contents with care, allowing the depth of Amnon's and Daniel Levin's work to do their magic. They bring us from sorrow and grief at the recognition of the loss of so much musical potential and creativity to the joy and transcendence of glimpsing the souls still residing in the violins in Amnon's studio, restored to the world once again as their violins perform in their owners' voices.

This is holy work, and we are privileged to be enriched by it.



**Daniel Levin**, is a photographer, a curator, and a conceptual artist. He is a tenured Associate Professor of photography at Tri-C, where he has taught since 2002. Levin's works include in part; Amnon Weinstein: the Luthier who Returned the Violins of the Holocaust to the Living, Perspectives Examined via the site-specific Camera Obscura, Organizational Successes and Failures of Post-Katrina Mississippi, Fatherhood, Walls as Metaphor for Divided Philosophies, and an art film exploring creative thought entitled The Root: From Dishes to Synapses. He has been commissioned to make portraits of many well-known figures around the globe, including in part; Joshua Bell, President George H. W. Bush, I.M. Pei, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Idan Raichel, First Lady Barbara Bush, Jann Wenner, Governor Mario Cuomo, Martin Sheen and Senator John Glenn.

**Sonia Beker's** last article for the Berkshire Jewish Voice was about Mark Ludwig's Our Will to Live: Art and Music In Terezín and appeared in July 2022. Her book, *Symphony on Fire*, is available through Amazon. She lives in Brooklyn and Lenox.

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