

# 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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jewishberkshires.org



Lara, Levi, Noah, and Jonathan Denmark with their dog, Kodi

## Super Tzedakah Week – Plant the Seeds that Make Our Community Bloom!

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires kicks off its 2023 Community Campaign on Super Tzedakah Week, starting May 21. Join us in building a safer and stronger Jewish community through your investment and participation in our work. This year, as we focus on sustainability, we invite you to plant the seeds that will help our Jewish community and our world bloom.

As part of the campaign kickoff, the Federation hosts Jewish Community Day on Sunday, May 21 at High Lawn Farm in Lee from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Last year, more than 350 people attended – can we top that in 2023?

Throughout the month of May and coinciding with Shavuot, our Granola for Good! Drive will collect donations of packaged whole-grain granola and granola

**SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK,**  
continued on page 8

## Jewish Community Day . . . Sustain Enthusiasm for the Jewish Berkshires – May 21

LEE – On Sunday, May 21 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., join Federation in kicking off our Super Tzedakah Week at High Lawn Farm with fun for ages 0-99!

Last June, more than 350 happy revelers showed up to celebrate our Jewish community and enjoy being together with old and new friends. It was one of the highlights of the year, and we are certain that enthusiasm for community can be sustained in 2023!

Plant the seed for a successful year ahead by joining us at the farm! Enjoy free ice cream (while supplies last), music, tours behind the scenes, cows, raffles, mitzvah opportunities, and so much more.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Rain date is June 11. To register, visit



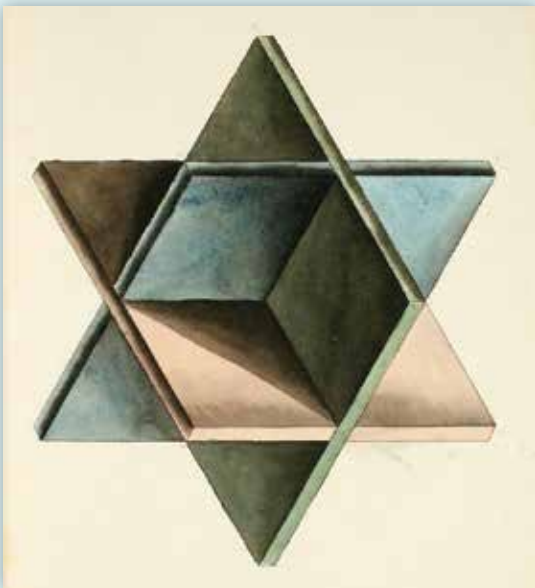
our Calendar of Events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

### About High Lawn Farm

High Lawn Farm is a historic landmark farm with some of the most idyllic views in all of the Berkshires. Enjoy a tour to see how their Jersey cows sleep on waterbeds and are milked on demand by a high-tech personal robotic milking machines. Visit the renovated museum and check out their on-site farm store, the Farmstead Creamery, which offers homemade ice cream, artisanal cheese, and dairy products, as well as a variety of other locally produced goods. Open 7 days a week from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

High Lawn Farm is located at 535 Summer Street in Lee.

## As Above, So Below

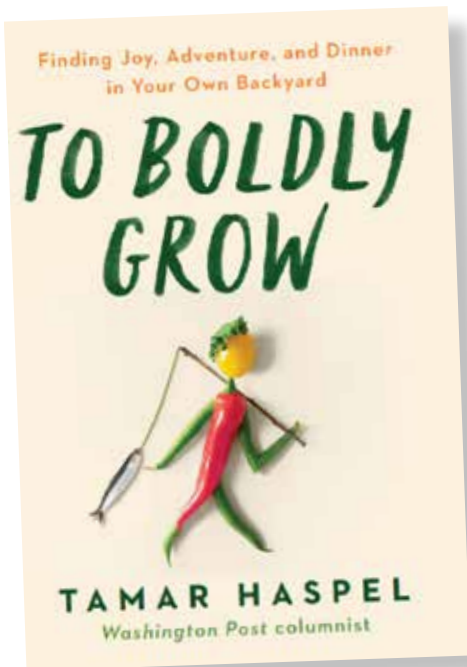


### An alchemist symbol ‘strange and wondrous’ is also somehow familiar

As The Public Domain Review ([publicdomainreview.org](http://publicdomainreview.org)) explains: ‘Derived from the Arabic root “kimia”, from the Coptic “khem” (referring to the fertile black soil of the Nile delta), the word “alchemy” alludes to the dark mystery of the primordial or First Matter (the Khem). The discovery of this elusive original matter, from which all others are deemed simply polluted variants (the purist being Gold), is considered the alchemist’s central goal – along with the discovery of the Stone of Knowledge (The Philosophers’ Stone) and the key to Eternal Youth. As you can imagine, not the simplest of day jobs. As well as reams of text, the ins and outs of the alchemist’s task, steeped as it is in a dizzyingly complex symbology, has given birth to a whole host of strange and wondrous imagery over the centuries.’ This hexagram is from Italy circa 1600 and is taken from the Manly Palmer Hall collection of alchemical manuscripts, 1500-1825, which can be found at Internet Archive ([archive.org](http://archive.org)). For more on how the hexagram ultimately became the Star of David, please see page 28.

## To Boldly Grow: Judaism, Food, and Sustainability

**Washington Post columnist Tamar Haspel in conversation with environmentalists and educators from the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center**



PITTSFIELD – On Wednesday, May 31 at 7:30 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents “To Boldly Grow: Judaism, Food, and Sustainability,” an inspirational and timely discussion with journalist and author Tamar Haspel.

She will be in conversation with environmentalists and educators from the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center, Shamu Sadeh and Janna Siller, on the vital Jewish themes of sustainability in your backyard, community, and the planet. The panel will be moderated by Elisa Spungen Bildner, a journalist, author (*Berkshire Farm to Table Cookbook*, with Robert Bildner), and Federation vice president.

This free event, part of Super Tzedakah Week focusing on Federation’s commitment to sustaining our community and our world, will take place at Hancock

**TO BOLDLY GROW,**  
continued on page 12

### Inside

<b>Celebrate Sephardic Summer!</b> .....	2
<b>Lessons from Anatevka</b> .....	3
<b>Your Federation Presents</b> .....	5-16
<b>2023 Community Campaign</b> .....	14-15
<b>Local News</b> .....	17-20
<b>Rabbi Liz Hirsch's New Job</b> .....	19
<b>Rabbi Michael Strassfeld on the Holiness of Building Communities</b> .....	23
<b>Culture &amp; Arts</b> .....	25-28



OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

Get Ready for a Celebration of Sephardic Culture

Federation to host interactive cultural programs throughout the summer months

By Rabbi Daveen Litwin / Director of Community Engagement and Programming



Growing up in Topeka, Kansas, where I was often the only Jewish kid in my school or program, I was often called upon to represent or explain Judaism. For me, one of the remarkable things about my tiny Jewish community was that it included Jews from all over the world who came from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. With so many variations of Jews and Judaism, how could I begin to explain this beauty and complexity to my childhood peers?

The multiplicity of Jewish expression and identification provides endless opportunities to explore and amplify the diversity of the Jewish experience. Federation aims to reflect this joyful variation and intersectionality in

our programming and community engagement throughout the year. This summer, we will be exploring a range of Sephardic and Crypto-Jewish literature, history, storytelling, music, digital art, and cuisine rising out of the rich and flavorful cultures in Spain, Macedonia, Greece, the Iberian Peninsula, and across the Ottoman empire. We will examine how those traditions have been absorbed and passed along through generations of Jews who now live in the Berkshires (and around the globe). Through these programs, we hope to understand more deeply the courage and resilience of those Jews forced to hide, convert, or flee to many different parts of the world.

Novelist and former North County resident Elizabeth Graver and South County musician Sarah Aroeste will convene at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire for an extraordinary dialogue on Friday, June 2, at 10:45am. They will discuss Elizabeth's just-published novel, *Kantika* – meaning song in Ladino, the language of the Sephardic Jews – and Sarah's newest book, *Mazal Bueno!*, a celebration of Sephardic language and culture for all ages. In words and melodies, they will share how the traditions of song and storytelling have nourished their work and allowed them to play a small role in keeping alive a vanishing culture. (See the stories on page 5 and page 26 for more.)

On Thursday, June 8 at 10:45 a.m. at Knesset Israel, Ellen Kanner, a scholar and teacher who grew up in the Berkshires, and illustrator Annie Zeybekoglu will present the story of a complex chapter of Spanish history through an intimate lens: the testimony of Teresa de Lucena, a woman who faced the Spanish Inquisition twice. Teresa was seventeen in 1485 when she and other conversos in Toledo faced the Inquisition for the first time. She was sixty-two in 1530 when she was arrested and held for eighteen months in an Inquisition jail. After a lengthy trial, meticulously recorded by the official scribes, she was found guilty of heresy for practicing Judaism in secret. Saved by her wits, she survived. (See the story on page 7 for more.)

Digital technology provides a new lens to investigate the possibility that the original Tarot de Marseille created in the 1600s was a tool of clandestine Jewish education for Spain's Crypto-Jews. This program on exploring 'Torah in the Tarot' was developed in partnership with the Boston based Jewish Arts Collaborative (JAarts), Torah scholar Stav Appel and artist Jonathan Prince of Berkshire House. Moderated by JAarts Executive Director, Laura Mandel, the presentation will bring

together history, art, spirituality, and augmented reality to reveal the Jewish lore and legends embedded in the Tarot cards of Jean Noblet de Marseille. (More about this August 11 program at Hevreh in a future edition of the BJV.)

Finally, as Elul and the preparations for the Days of Awe begin, Chef Susan Barocas, founder of the Jewish Food Experience, will lead an interactive cooking demo and food tasting based on the 2000-year-old Sephardic Rosh Hashanah Seder. This tradition features seven blessings with seven symbolic foods, deepening the experience of the holiday. All participants will receive a handout of the blessings and recipes to create your own delicious Rosh Hashanah Seder for an *anyada buena, dulce i alegre* – a good and sweet new year! (More about this August 18 program at Hevreh in a future edition of the BJV.)

**Rabbi Daveen Litwin** is director of Community Engagement and Programming for the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Berkshire

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**Paid advertisements do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires or its members.**

**Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Colin Ovitsky and Roman Rozenblyum.**



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



We need your help at Jewish Community Day!  
Sunday, May 21, 2023

Volunteer shifts start at approximately 1 p.m.

Jewish Community Day 2023 is shaping up to be a fun filled day but we need lots of extra hands from volunteers to help this event run smoothly. Volunteers need to help with setup, parking, registration desk, barn tours, activities tables, raffle table, museum, photography, and more!

VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Contact Molly Meador at  
(413) 442-4360, ext. 14  
mmeador@jewishberkshires.org



Shabbat

Across

The Berkshires

Shabbat Across the Berkshires

Join with the Berkshire Jewish Community as we come together to celebrate a joyous Kabbalat Shabbat with a musical family-friendly service led by our local Rabbis, followed by a festive oneg.

Friday, June 16 at 6:00 p.m.

Hosted by

Congregation Beth Israel,  
53 Lois Street, North Adams, MA

Sponsored by:

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires  
Berkshire Minyan  
Congregation Ahavath Sholom  
Congregation Beth Israel  
Hevreh of Southern Berkshire  
Knesset Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim  
Berkshire Hills Hadassah



Jewish Federation  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

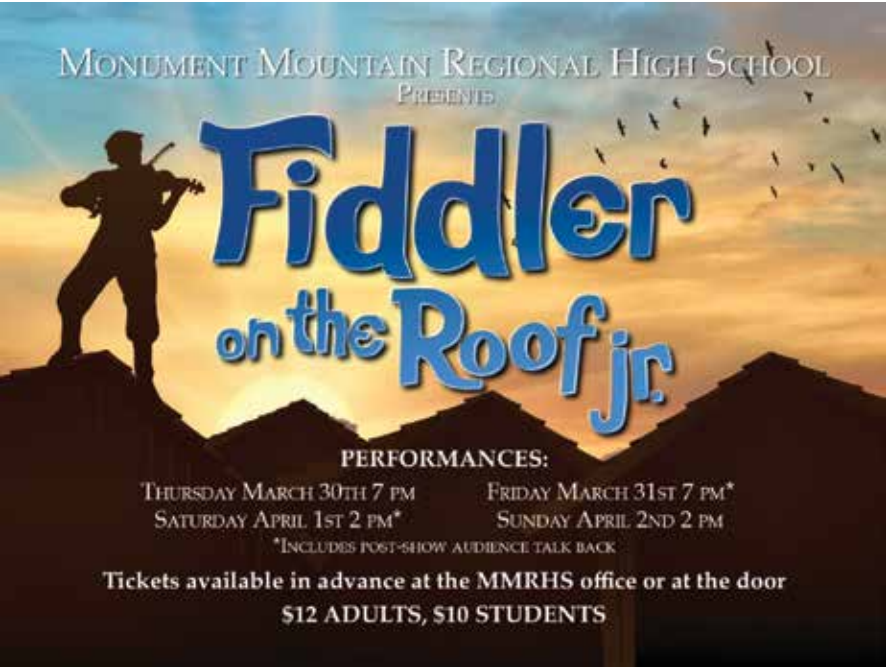


OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

Lessons from Anatevka

By Rabbi Jodie Gordon / Hevreh of Southern Berkshire



“A fiddler on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But here, in our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking his neck. It isn’t easy. You may ask ‘Why do we stay up there if it’s so dangerous?’ Well, we stay because Anatevka is our home. And how do we keep our balance? That I can tell you in one word: Tradition!”

Of all of my favorite springtime traditions, the high school spring musical is amongst my favorites. Don’t worry – Passover still holds the number one spot, but the time-honored tradition of the transformation that can happen on the stage of a high school auditorium stage is a close second. Growing up, being a part of my own high school’s annual production was sacred: a ritual in itself, from the first audition to the final bow on closing night. Looking back now, I can see how each show was itself a lesson in community building and storytelling, both on and off stage. How fortunate I felt then to be invited to support this year’s spring musical at the Monument Mountain Regional High School in Great Barrington as they began the rehearsal process for *Fiddler on the Roof*.

The story of *Fiddler on the Roof* is iconic and layered, based on the stories “Tevye the Dairyman” written in the late 19th century by the great Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem, and then transformed into the famous Broadway musical by Jerry Bock and Joseph Stein in 1964. The story of Tevye, his wife Golde, and their five daughters living in Anatevka is a timeless meditation on the themes of tradition and modernity, and joy amidst suffering. The fictional village of Anatevka is a composite sketch of Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement in 1905, inviting us into the life of this family living during times of great upheaval and threat when Russia was still an empire ruled by Tsar Nicholas II, head of the dictatorial Romanov dynasty. The administration of Tsar Nicholas was instrumental in releasing a great deal of anti-Jewish propaganda. This propaganda incited fear and hatred of Jews among many non-Jewish citizens, and often led to violence. The three-year period from 1903 to 1906 was a particularly terrifying time for Russian Jews, as one pogrom after another raged in Western Russia. In 1905, the year in which *Fiddler on the Roof* begins, there were at least six pogroms in Imperial Russia, occurring in such major cities as Kishinev (capital of present-day Moldova), Odessa (in present-day Ukraine and the site of a catastrophically huge massacre of Jews in World War II), and Minsk (capital of present-day Belarus). In all, these pogroms claimed the lives of no less than 1,500 Jewish citizens, a total of four for each day of that year. Most of these pogroms occurred within an area referred to as the Pale of Settlement, the area of Russia in which Jews could legally settle. Shtetls such as Anatevka, the fictitious village in *Fiddler on the Roof*, began to disappear as discriminatory laws against Jewish citizens forbade them from living in rural areas, or in towns of less than 10,000 people. Indeed, as *Fiddler* begins, the people of Anatevka have just received word of the Tsar’s edict, which will shortly evict them from their homes. By the musical’s end, the people of Anatevka are packed up, some moving to America, many others to Krakow (in modern-day Poland), for what they hope will be a new and better life.\*

To travel from 1905 Pale of Settlement Russia to Great Barrington in 2023 would take some work, and I was grateful to be invited by director Dave Edson to spend time with the cast as a dramaturg of sorts: to share more of the story, to create a thicker understanding of the historical, social, religious and literary context out of which this beloved musical emerges.

In thinking about how to best support the cast and crew of *Fiddler* at MMRHS, I spoke to my friend and teacher Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, who served as the rabbinic advisor for the 2016 Broadway cast of *Fiddler on the Roof*, which starred Danny Burstein as Tevye. His advice “Illuminate the details for them [the students]. That’s what will bring the story to life, that’s where the beauty of the story is.” Truly, the details of the story that unfolds as soon as we hear those infamous opening notes lilting on the fiddle are where the beauty is: and in sharing those details with the teen actors and crew, I was reminded of how powerful those lessons can be for us all.

And so, a few lessons from Anatevka.

“God would like us to be joyful, even when our hearts lie panting on the floor”

First, the lesson of joy. It’s a mitzvah to be joyful, even amidst suffering. Evident especially in the original Sholem Aleichem stories is the influence of Hasidism, a movement within Judaism founded in the late 18th century that emphasized joy as crucial to Jewish practice. Tevye would have been affected by this kind of Jewish belief and practice. When Tevye sings “Be happy, be healthy, long life. And if our good fortune never comes, here’s to whatever comes. Drink, *U’chaim*, to life!” – he really means it! Tevye believes God wants him to be joyful – it’s a mitzvah! The

human condition is about learning how to live with suffering: this spiritual posture saves generations of Jews from despair.

“Times are changing, Reb Tevye”

The very first song in *Fiddler on the Roof* sets the stage for the core tension in the show: tradition is central to their way of life in Anatevka.

*Because of our traditions, we’ve kept our balance for many, many years. Here in Anatevka, we have traditions for everything... How to sleep, how to eat... how to work... how to wear clothes. For instance, we always keep our heads covered and always wear a little prayer shawl. This shows our constant devotion to God. You may ask, “How did this tradition get started?” I’ll tell you.*

Before the Enlightenment, Jewish life looked very different for Jews across Europe and Russia. Before the impact of modernity, Jews are beholden only to the social and cultural norms of their Jewish community, and to the legal ones as well. You need legal advice? Go talk to the rabbi! But with the Enlightenment comes change: suddenly Jews become citizens of a nation-state, first in France. Now, we’ve got paperwork that now makes us question: are we Jewish Frenchmen, or French Jews? Enlightenment means rather than staying close to home and studying in the *Beit Midrash* all day, young Jews want to go to the cities and study in universities and sit in cafes. In the specific context of Eastern Europe and Russia, modernity means revolution, as Jews become politically active in national movements, as well. *Fiddler* reflects a story of Jewish life that was already changing by 1905: Tevye and his family are hanging on tightly to something that has begun to slip away even before Tsar Nicholas’ regime and the pogroms.

The changes taking place in society are reflected on a micro-scale in Tevye’s family. Traditions around marriage and family are suddenly slipping away as each of his three eldest daughters make choices that would have been unimaginable to Tevye and Golde. Each of the changes that we see reflected through the three daughters is one more step away from tradition. And yet, as a modern reader of the text, I can’t help but cheer Tzeitel, Hodel, and Chava on: each daughter forces us to wrestle with our sense of autonomy.

The cast and crew of Monument Mountain’s production really took these ideas to heart as they brought the story to life on stage. As I sat in the audience on opening night with many members of our community, I was once again reminded of the power of the stage. Suddenly, the group of students I met back in February had transformed into a family, and into the community of Anatevka, as they brought these themes to life with heartfelt storytelling and song. Midway through the first act, the stage became a home on the eve of Shabbat, with a table beautifully set with candles and challah and wine. Actors lined the theater, holding their own Shabbat candles, and they offered us this blessing: “May the Lord protect and defend you. May the Lord preserve you from pain. Favor them, Oh Lord, with happiness and peace. Oh, hear our Sabbath prayer. Amen.”

Amen.



**Rabbi Jodie Gordon** is a rabbi at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington. She cohosts (with Rabbi Jen Gubitz) the OMFG Podcast: *Jewish Wisdom for Unprecedented Times* (episodes available at [omfgpodcast.com](http://omfgpodcast.com), and Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other platforms that host podcasts).

\*Gratitude to the Gertrude C. Ford Center for Performing Arts for this concise explanation as accessed on <http://fordcenter.blogspot.com/2010/10/history-in-fiddler-on-roof.html>.

Monument Mountain Regional High School staged the musical in late March and early April

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Letters to the Editor

Historic Berkshire Jewish Cemetery Preserved with Your Campaign Dollars



Pittsfield’s Ahavath Sholem Cemetery (not connected with Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington)

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you for your meaningful allocation to Ahavath Sholem Cemetery in Pittsfield. It has been a challenge to maintain this cemetery that no longer has a congregation to support it. To restore and take care of the property has been financially difficult.

Many people in our Berkshire Jewish community have connections to the cemetery and are grateful for the support. Thank you for understanding the historical significance of the Ahavath Sholem Cemetery and helping to preserve the dignity of the site with the care it deserves.

Sincerely,  
Judith M. Cook  
Pittsfield

Delivering Meals to as Many People as Possible for as Long as It Takes – Thanks to Your Campaign Contribution

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you so much for your increased support to American Friends of Meir Panim for our Jerusalem

Restaurant-Style Soup Kitchen. Your donation could not have come at a better time, as Israel still copes with the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Many have been set back due to the lack of income in the last two years and the economic ramifications are horrifying. Since the start of the pandemic, Israel’s poverty rate has risen from 14 percent to 27.8 percent. The middle class shrank from 58 percent to 48 percent of the population. Also, one person in five experiences food insecurity.

Now, over 2.6 million Israelis live below the poverty line, and a whopping 31 percent are children. In essence, much of the middle class has fallen into poverty.

Meir Panim is committed to providing uninterrupted delivery of meals for as many people as possible and for as long as it takes. With more than half of our clients being elderly, Meir Panim is making sure that they, along with the homebound, disabled, and newly unemployed are able to receive hot, nutritious meals on a regular basis.

Through meaningful gifts like yours, we are taking care of Israel’s most vulnerable citizens during this time of crisis. Your partnership means the world to us and makes all the difference in the life of Israel’s needy.

Sincerely,  
Rena Ben-Ezra, Director of Special Projects  
American Friends of Meir Panim

A Shared History of Journeying in Search of Freedom

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you so much for the recent grant in support of our work resettling Afghan refugees in Berkshire County.

During the past year, the Berkshire community has led the way in resettling over a dozen Afghan families through Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts. This work is supported by a dedicated staff team in the Berkshire office, and dozens of volunteers who have dedicated time, energy, and resources. We could not have done that work, and could not continue to do it, without much-needed financial support.

As Jews, we remember that our shared history is one of journeying in search of freedom. We use that lesson to help build a better community today.

B'Shalom,  
Rabbi James Greene, CEO  
Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts  
Springfield

I Went to Israel!

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

I went to Israel and just recently came back. It was an amazing trip, which I’m forever grateful for. My 7th grade class (from Lubavitcher Yeshiva Academy – Longmeadow) and I visited many different educational and fun sites. Here are some of the places we visited:

- The Kotel, which was really special
- The Chizkiyahu water tunnels, which were a blast, especially while singing songs with my classmates
- Masada – I climbed the whole thing (!!)
- The Dead Sea – fun floating in
- Ein Bokek – a beautiful hike
- The Blind Experience – Dialogue in the Dark, which made me super-thankful for my eyesight

And there were many other great places. This trip was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I am so thankful to all the donors who helped make it happen. Thank you, Jewish Federation, for supporting my trip.

Sincerely,  
Chana Volovik  
Pittsfield



Chana Volovik

ALWAYS

“Always have my needs met and questions answered. Always easy to get my concerns handled in a timely manner. Always trying to make each experience meaningful.”

- Joseph M.

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# Your Federation Presents

## Kantikas / Songs from Our Grandparents: Storytelling & Music in the Sephardic Tradition

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, June 2 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge returns with a free program, part of Federation’s summer-long Celebration of Sephardic Culture – “*Kantikas*/Songs from Our Grandparents: Storytelling & Music in the Sephardic Tradition,” with novelist Elizabeth Graver, a Williamstown native, and the Berkshire-based musical artist and author Sarah Aroeste.

This program will take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

Sephardic culture has long been steeped in rich traditions filled with music and song. Sarah Aroeste and Elizabeth Graver are both artists whose work pays homage to the culture of their Sephardic grandparents (Sarah’s from Macedonia and Elizabeth’s from Turkey) in an effort to preserve the culture and share its gifts with contemporary audiences.

Elizabeth’s just-published novel, *Kantika* – the word means song in Ladino, the language of the Sephardic Jews – grew out of recordings she made of her grandmother Rebecca telling her life story, which took her on a winding journey from Turkey to Spain, Cuba, and finally New York. Sarah’s music and children’s books are inspired by the rich stories passed down by her relatives who brought the Ottoman Empire straight into the kitchens, living rooms, and family gatherings of her youth. Her newest book, *Mazal Bueno!*, is a celebration of Sephardic language and culture for all ages.

Together, Sarah and Elizabeth will present their new books and have a lively discussion about how traditions of song and storytelling have nourished their work and allowed them to play a small role in keeping alive a vanishing culture. Elizabeth will read a lyrical passage from her novel, and Sarah will sing a few songs, enacting the message of the old Ladino saying, “*boka dulce avre puertas de fierro*” – a sweet mouth opens doors of iron.

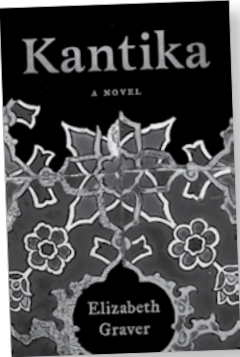
Books will be available for purchase at the book signing after the program. Purchase *Kantika* and *Mazal Bueno!* at bookshop.org and a portion of the proceeds will be donated back to the local bookstores.

### Our Presenters



Elizabeth Graver  
National Book Award in Fiction and selected as a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. Her other

**Elizabeth Graver’s** fifth novel, *Kantika*, was inspired by her grandmother, Rebecca née Cohen Baruch Levy, who was born into a Sephardic Jewish family in Istanbul and whose tumultuous and shape-shifting life journey took her to Spain, Cuba and finally New York. Elizabeth’s fourth novel, *The End of the Point*, was long-listed for the 2013



County. The mother of two young adult daughters, she teaches at Boston College.



**Sarah Aroeste** including the first-ever all-original Ladino children’s album, *Ora de Despertar*, the first bilingual Ladino/English holiday album *Together/Endjuntos*, and the award-winning *Monastir*, an international musical tribute to a once thriving Balkan Jewish community. In 2014 she won the Sephardic prize at the International Jewish Music Festival in Amsterdam, and in 2015 she represented the USA in the International Sephardic Music Festival in Cordoba, Spain. Sarah is currently co-directing her newest initiative, “*Savor: A Sephardic Music & Food Experience*,” which unites Sephardic song and cuisine in multi-sensory platforms – she’ll be presenting for Federation on that theme later in the summer.

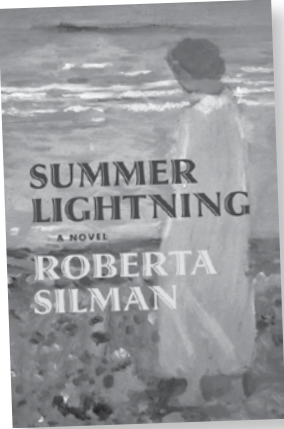


released *Mazal Bueno!* (Kar-Ben 2023). Visit her website: saraharoeste.com.

Inspired by her family’s roots in N. Macedonia and Greece, **Sarah Aroeste** has spent two decades bringing Sephardic culture to new audiences. Since 2001, Aroeste has toured the globe presenting traditional and original Ladino songs with her unique blend of Balkan sounds, pop, and jazz. She has recorded eight albums,

In addition to composing songs, Sarah has published numerous articles and essays about Sephardic cultural preservation and writes Sephardic themed books for children, including *Buen Shabat*, *Shabbat Shalom* (Kar-Ben 2020), and the newly

## Summer Lightning, with novelist Roberta Silman



PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, May 11 at 10:45 a.m., we welcome local author, Roberta Silman, for a discussion of her newest book, *Summer Lightning*, a sweeping multi-generational novel that explores the journey of a Jewish family of immigrants in mid-20th-century America through the lens of Alexander Herzen’s observation: “Art, and the summer lightning of individual happiness,

these are the only real goods we have.”

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting with Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 24 for the lunch menu.

Set between 1927 and 1966, Silman’s story follows two New Yorkers, Belle and Isaac, as they navigate the Depression, the Second World War, McCarthyism, and Civil Rights while starting a family and trying to find their place. Compared to *Ragtime*, *Summer Lightning*’s themes resonate with the challenges of today and focus on the important questions of how to hang onto our values as we negotiate the world around us.

**Roberta Silman** of Great Barrington is the author of the story collection *Blood Relations* and of four novels: *Boundaries*, *The Dream Dredger*, *Beginning the World Again*, and *Secrets and Shadows* (name one of the Best Indie Books of 2018 by Kirkus Reviews).

Silman was brought up on Long Island and received her BA with Honors in English literature from Cornell University in 1956. Three days after graduation she married Robert Silman, a structural engineer, and they went on to have three children and several grandchildren.

Her first published story, “A Bad Baby,” appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1973 and won the National Magazine Award in 1974. Silman has been a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and an NEA Fellowship, and has won the National Magazine Award twice. Her reviews and op-ed pieces have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The New York Observer*, *World Books PRI*, and *The Boston Globe*, and she is a senior contributor for the online magazine *The ArtsFuse*, where her book reviews appear regularly.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.



### 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](http://jewishberkshires.org) or pick one up at the Federation’s office  
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A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

Marty Greenstein and Natalie Jacobson  
Stuart Weitzman  
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# Your Federation Presents

Current Events Seminar with Dr. Steven Rubin

The Art of Paper Making, with Dennis Croughwell from The Crane Museum



Dr. Steve Rubin

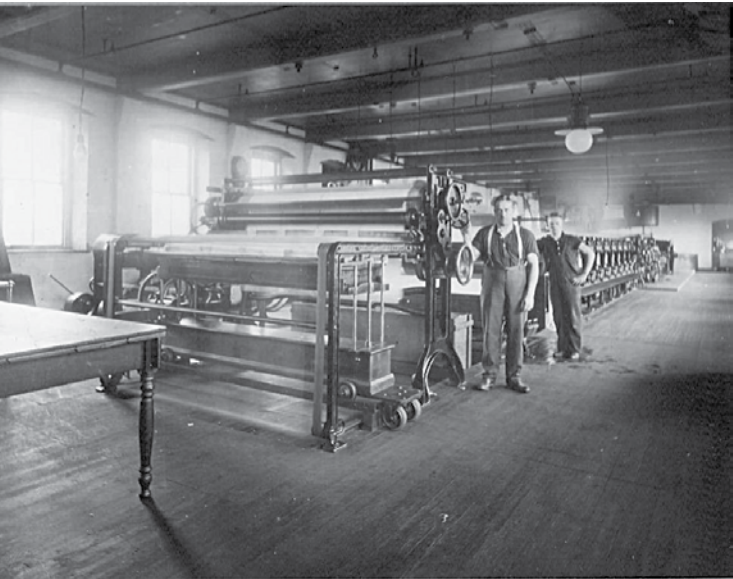
PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, May 4 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes back Dr. Steven Rubin for another in his summer-long series of current events seminars.

The current events seminar allows participants to examine and discuss topical and newsworthy national and international issues. The moderator will suggest readings for each session, introduce topics, and offer discussion questions. The seminar will be collaborative and collegial, with all participants encouraged to voice their opinions.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation's Connecting with Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 24 for the lunch menu.

**Steve Rubin, Ph.D.** (moderator) is professor emeritus and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. His op-eds and opinion essays have appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Berkshire Eagle, Tampa Bay Times, The South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Palm Beach Post, and The Hartford Courant, among others. He is the editor of several anthologies, including *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays* (Brandeis University Press), *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poets* (Beacon Press), and *Writing Our Lives: Autobiographies of American Jews* (Jewish Publication Society). He lives in Tyringham and can be reached at [atsjr@adelphi.edu](mailto:atsjr@adelphi.edu).

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org). Dr. Rubin's seminars continue on June 15, July 20, and August 17.



PITTSFIELD – The Festival of Shavuot (May 24-26) is often associated with the art of paper cutting. On Thursday, May 18 at 10:45 a.m., explore the art and science of papermaking with Dennis Croughwell, a papermaker for more than 40 years with Crane and a docent with the Crane Museum of Papermaking. He will review papermaking history from 1770 to the present, including Crane's ties to the American Revolution, the development of paper for banknotes, and anti-counterfeiting technologies from the 1800s to the future.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation's Connecting with Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 24 for the lunch menu.

**Dennis Croughwell** has been a Crane Museum docent since 2019. Prior to coming to the museum, he worked at Crane for 40 years as a papermaker (i.e., machine tender) at the Bay State Mill, in the

Engineering Group as an electrical project manager, and as manager of Central Maintenance and Facilities Services, both with company-wide responsibilities. He is a third generation Crane employee, following his father and paternal grandfather.

### About the Crane Museum

The Crane Museum of Papermaking is located in what was the rag room of Crane's Old Stone Mill, dating back to 1844. This was the first mill built by the second generation of Crane papermakers in Dalton, Zenas Marshall and James Brewer Crane, following the retirement of the pioneer papermaker Zenas Crane.

The Museum opened in 1930 after an extensive renovation, making it one of the oldest corporate museums in the country. The grounds were designed by the F.L and J.C Olmsted firm. Exhibits in the Museum trace the 250-year history of Crane paper-

making from The Liberty Paper Mill in Milton, MA, which operated from 1770 to 1793, to the present. The Liberty Mill was indeed a cradle of the American Revolution, serving such revolutionary luminaries as Paul Revere, Henry Knox, John Hancock and a host of others responsible for today's freedom.

Since 1879, Crane has continuously supplied banknote paper for United States currency. Anti-counterfeiting technologies have been developed, updated, and implemented by Crane since 1844. The Museum was expanded in 2001 as part of the company's bicentennial celebration, and again in 2014 to accommodate corporate archives and create an area for hands

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

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# Your Federation Presents

## Jewish Veg: What’s Jewish about a Plant-Based Lifestyle?



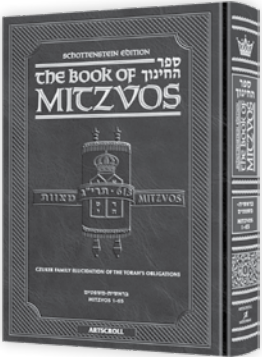
Jodi Krizer Graber

PITTSFIELD - As we prepare for Shavuot and engage in a community-wide conversation on sustainability, join Jodi Krizer Graber, Berkshires resident and staff member of Jewish Veg, to learn what each of us can do for a healthy environment inside and outside our homes. Jewish Veg is a national organization that educates and builds community to encourage plant-based lifestyles through celebration and conversations about Jewish values.

This free program on Thursday, May 25 at 10:45 a.m., is part of Super Tzedakah Week focusing on the Jewish Federation’s commitment to sustaining our community and our world. The program is also part of the Federation’s Connecting with Community Series at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield, and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Advance reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 24 for the lunch menu.

Writes Jodi:

In this era of climate crisis, it’s more essential than ever before to be conscious of the impact of our choices. Caring for the Earth and our physical well-being are among our most fundamental values, as a people attuned to the cycle of time and seasons, as well as the health of our bodies. How do we integrate that with the food we eat?



As the *Sefer HaChinukh* (“Book of Education,” an anonymous work written in 13th-century Spain that details the 613 commandments and explains the reasons behind them) holds, “the body is the instrument of the soul.” And it could not be clearer than in our

present moment how much the health of one impacts the health of the community as a whole. From food as medicine to the dangers of zoonotic disease, Jewish text and wisdom point us toward care and mindfulness around what we eat.

**Jodi Krizer Graber** (she/her) develops and maintains relationships with the valued and respected donors who support Jewish Veg. She is a certified health coach and values the health and wellness of all living beings. She lives in New York City and Pittsfield with her husband, Keith.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

## Protecting Nature in the Berkshires for the Benefit of People and Wildlife

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 1 at 10:45 a.m., join Becky Cushing Gop, an award-winning environmental educator and director of Mass Audubon West, for “Protecting Nature in the Berkshires for the Benefit of People and Wildlife.”

This free program, part of Federation’s summer-long focus on Sustainability, will be presented as part of the Connecting with Community series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 24 for the lunch menu.

Mass Audubon West encompasses 18 wildlife sanctuaries, conservation partnerships, and widespread community and school programming. Mass Audubon’s work in the Berkshires focuses on land protection and habitat restoration, inclusive and equitable access to nature, and advocating for climate smart policies. Join Becky Cushing Gop in a timely conversation on how and why this work is important for environmental and personal sustainability.



Becky Cushing Gop

professionals, educators, and the general public throughout the Northeast. She is also the author of a book for children, *What Goes on Inside a Beaver Pond?*

Before her current position, Becky was sanctuary director for Mass Audubon’s Berkshire Wildlife Sanctuaries. During the past six years, she has worked with Tanglewood, The Mount, Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, and other regional organizations. In 2015, in concert with Kripalu, she developed Birding and Mindfulness, and has offered presentations and workshops for conservation professionals, educators and the public throughout the Northeast.

Recently, Becky has worked to increase access to nature for all through Opening Doors to Nature, hallmarked by a \$1.2 million campaign for a new accessible and welcoming facility at Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

### Becky Cushing Gop

is based at the 1,400-acre Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Lenox, home to a healthy population of *Castor canadensis* – aka, the North American beaver. In addition to her work at Mass Audubon, she shares nature and mindfulness practices through presentations and workshops for conservation

## I, Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Conversa

PITTSFIELD - How do you make a complex story of a 16th century Jewish conversa in Spain accessible and beautiful? On Thursday, June 8 at 10:45 a.m., join translator Ellen Kanner and illustrator Annie Zeybekoglu to learn more about how they created *I, Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Conversa*, intimate portrait of one woman’s survival and framed it with the religious, political, and social changes that shaped her life.

This free program, part of Federation’s summer-long Celebration of Sephardic Culture, will be presented as part of the Connecting with Community series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 24 for the lunch menu.



From I, Teresa de Lucena

*I, Teresa de Lucena* tells the story of a complex chapter of Spanish history through an intimate lens: the testimony of a woman who faced the Spanish Inquisition twice. Teresa was seventeen in 1485 when she and other conversos in Toledo faced the Inquisition for the first time; she was sixty-two in 1530 when she was arrested and held for eighteen months in an Inquisition jail. After a lengthy trial, meticulously recorded by the official scribes, she was found guilty of heresy for practicing Judaism in secret. Saved by her wits, she survived.

**Ellen Kanner** is an independent scholar and teacher who lived and studied in Spain for many years. In 1988, she obtained a copy of the Spanish Inquisition dossier concerning Teresa de Lucena (1467-1545). In *I, Teresa de Lucena*, Ellen presents the translation she made of the archival materials accompanied by her research notes and personal reflections.

**Annie Zeybekoglu** is an artist and book designer with extensive commercial and teaching experience. Her work appears in collections in the United States and abroad. Annie designed the book format for *I, Teresa de Lucena*; her line drawings and art appear throughout the book.

Ellen and Annie are both graduates of Smith College and hold M.A.T. degrees from Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University, respectively.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

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# Your Federation Presents

## SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK,

continued from page 1



Levi, Noah, and Lara Denmark

bars for donation to local food pantries. Drop-off sites are: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire and The Berkshire Food Co-op (Great Barrington), Concepts of Art (Lenox), Federation offices (Pittsfield), and Williams College Bookstore (Williamstown).  
On Wednesday, May 31 at 7 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents “To Boldly Grow: Judaism, Food, and Sustainability,” an inspirational and timely discussion with journalist and author Tamar Haspel. She will be in conversation at Hancock Shaker Village with environmentalists and educators from the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center. See the BJV Interview with Tamar on page 25.

### This year, we may not be calling, but we are asking – PLEASE DONATE!

For over 80 years, the Federation’s annual campaign has sustained our Jewish Berkshires and provided the resources to care for those in need and ensure a safe and strong Jewish community. Never was that more evident than over these past few years of changing needs.  
Through your gift to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

- **YOU save lives in a time of crisis** through Federation’s immediate SOS response, as we saw when the pandemic hit and as we are seeing right now in Ukraine.
- **YOU create a safer community** through security grants and training for local congregations.
- **YOU transform Jewish identity for young people** through PJ Library, family programming, Jewish education, volunteer opportunities, and camp and Israel scholarships.
- **YOU bring hope and dignity to the elderly** with warm meals, holiday care packages, companionship, and emotional support.
- **YOU empower Berkshire students and teachers** with the tools to address and respond to anti-Semitism, racism, and other biases they encounter.
- **YOU care for the fragile and vulnerable** by providing much-needed food, medicine, medical care, and social services.
- **YOU unite our community in Jewish learning and celebration** through educational, holiday, and cultural programs.
- **YOU strengthen our relationship with Israel** and the Jewish people through our partnership with the Afula-Gilboa region.

Everything we do in the Berkshire Jewish community and beyond is fueled by the generosity and commitment of people like you.  
Federation’s 2023 campaign goal is \$1.2 million. Your gift will help bring dignity and care to the vulnerable, build and strengthen the Jewish identity

of our children and young adults, support vital community programs, and create meaningful Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.  
“Super Tzedakah Week gives our donors, volunteers, and community members the powerful opportunity to come together to make a real and lasting difference,” says Federation president Elisa Schindler Frankel. “Your collective generosity will help us to take care of our entire community, ensuring that those who are at their most vulnerable can live with dignity and keeping our Jewish community strong, safe, and vibrant. Every gift counts!”  
**Meet Our Super Tzedakah Week Co-Chairs – Lara and Jonathan Denmark**

As locals who grew up and are now raising a family in Pittsfield, Lara Denmark and Jonathan Denmark have had a front-row seat to the evolution of the Jewish Berkshires over several decades. Both remember a time when the now-closed Jewish Community Center on East Street was central to Jewish life in the Berkshires, a place where Lara (from a Knesset Israel family) and Jonathan (from Temple Anshe Amunim) attended Hebrew school at a time when the two congregations offered a joint program.  
“Judaism and the Berkshire Jewish community were always central themes in our house,” recalls Jonathan. “It was something you participated in that was very vibrant, very robust and its importance, the importance of Federation, were instilled in us.”  
The Berkshires of their childhood, however, was different from the Berkshires in which the Denmarks are today raising their two sons, Levi (age 12) and Noah (age 10) – major industries departed, the local demographics changed, and the Jewish community is no longer able to support an institution like the JCC. But Federation remains the key source of Jewish connection in the Berkshires, one that is providing avenues of Jewish development for the Denmark children just as it did for their parents.  
That continuity is one of the main reasons that Lara and Jonathan have stepped up this year as our 2023 campaign chairs, and will be spreading Federation’s message as we kick off our fundraising efforts around Super Tzedakah week.

Says Jonathan: “When I was going to college, there were Federation scholarships and things of that nature, but I didn’t know the regional and global significance of Federation until I moved back the Berkshires and saw the impact of our Federation and the dollars being spent in this community. I realized the importance of partnership with Israeli organizations, with national Federations, and with the

*[Federation is] building such a great foundation of Jewish values for these kids to be good people as they grow up. That’s the most important thing for us.”*  
Jonathan Denmark

money that’s raised here that serves our community’s Jewish children. Federation is the connective tissue that holds our congregations together and provides a voice for the Jewish community in the Berkshires.”  
Both Lara and Jonathan received Federation support to go on Birthright Israel trips while in their twenties, and later participated in Federation-sponsored leadership seminars for young adults. Both have given back to the Jewish community as leaders at Knesset Israel, with Jonathan having served as that congregation’s president. Professionally, Lara is a licensed mental health counselor/therapist and Jonathan is president and COO of MountainOne Insurance, as well as a board member for 1Berkshire and the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority.  
Recalling his time as a leader at KI, Jonathan says “one of the things that really surprised me was the rabbis and presidents’ meetings, where we found

opportunities for volunteerism or collaborative events. Federation reported on its initiatives so that a common message was spread throughout the congregations. There’s never been the ‘us-versus-them’ attitude that you often see in different organizations. It’s always ‘we.’ And Federation is our community’s spokesperson of the ‘we.’”  
One of the important ways he and other congregational leaders worked with Federation was on security. When, in the wake of synagogue shootings, local congregations focused on implementing heightened security, “immediately the Federation provided a conduit for training, for updates, and eventually for grants. The help was tremendous. Our congregation has been able to do a number of security upgrades that were significant, and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is the primary reason that we were able to get those things done.”  
As parents, the Denmarks’ efforts to raise their sons Jewishly have been supported by Federation first through PJ Library (which sends free books that celebrate Jewish values and culture to families with children from birth through 12 years old), then through Jewish Education Grants to the Hebrew school their sons attend, and also with day and overnight camp scholarships to Camp Eisner in Great Barrington. “We attend all of Federation’s family programming,” says Lara. “Our sons take advantage of those opportunities to engage with other Jewish kids besides the ones they know from Hebrew school.” Both Lara and Jonathan have fond memories of the way their adolescent participation in USY and NFTY through their congregations broadened their Jewish horizons. Part of their message when they visit our local congregations will be the importance of Jewish involvement for local youth after their b’nai mitzvah experiences.  
“Once kids are past their bar mitzvah ages,” says Lara, “it’s challenging to keep them involved and invested in Jewish education. Federation provides ways to get together to sustain that social piece that keeps Judaism alive in their lives outside of what we as parents do in the family religiously and during holidays.”  
“If our kids stick with camp, Federation will help them get a chance to go to Israel for the first time when they’re 16 or so, which would be incredible,” says Jonathan. “They are supported with such a nurturing Jewish environment here in the Berkshires, with such small numbers. It’s the collaboration and the involvement through Federation, and all the families that are engaged in different ways here. It prepares them for their summer camp experience so they get the most out of it. We’re building such a great foundation of Jewish values for these kids to be good people as they grow up. That’s the most important thing for us.”  
Adds Lara: “And that’s the biggest Jewish value there is.”  
In particular, the Denmarks love the top-flite Jewish entertainers and musicians the Federation brings to the Berkshires for its annual summer concert, Shabbat Across the Berkshires, Community Day, and other events. A co-founder (with Colin Ovitsky) of the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective, Jonathan says: “In the last 15 years I’ve had the most rewarding musical experiences of my life playing for the Jewish community in the Berkshires. Federation brings in incredible artists like Sam Glaser, Rick Recht, and Jacob ‘Spike’ Kraus – the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective was able to sit in with all of them. Even when it’s 30 degrees outside, like it was last Chanukah at The Mount, and our fingers are falling off, we’re having a great time. We were even able to play at Harold Grinspoon’s 90th birthday party! The Federation is just so supportive of music and involving local musicians.”  
Summing up the message the Demarks will be sharing as campaign chairs, Jonathan says: “The Jewish community needs to continue to adapt and meet people where they are. Federation does an excellent job of that. They make events that are not religiously based. There may be some component of education, but it’s more collaboration and it’s networking, and it’s getting to know people and

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# Your Federation Presents

building a foundation. And that is a very difficult thing to do, to meet people where they are. So as there are new people coming into this area, it's an important focus for Federation to continue its outreach, continue to market, continue to advertise, be on social media, get the word out, and provide opportunities for volunteerism. Federation needs to continue to have ambassadors of young families to tell people that these things are happening."

"We need to continue to invest in Federation because we can actually see our dollars at work in the Berkshires – more so than in some of these larger communities. For some of our Berkshire snowbirds who may be going back and forth between different parts of the country, perhaps it's harder to see their dollars at work in their larger communities. And so we'll tell the story, at least for our family, of how this Federation's dollars have gone to work and what we've seen throughout our lifetime and, most importantly, where we're involved now because of Federation's role in our lives."

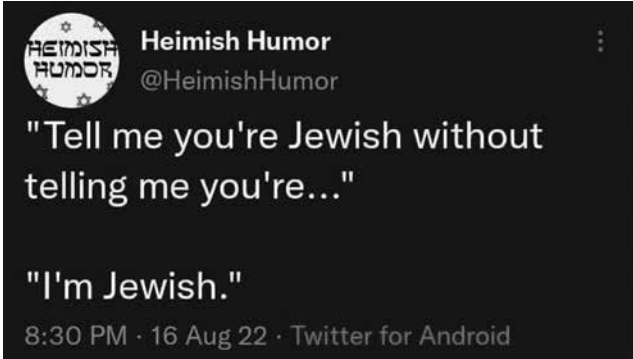
Says Lara: "I think it'll be fun for our kids to get involved in this, too – to know we're doing this kind of work for Federation and to watch us do it. Jonathan remembers seeing his parents being part of this Federation and I remember seeing my parents being so active. I think it'll be nice for our kids to see to us doing this work, as well."

## Volunteers Are Vital!



Feeling grateful for the wonderful staff and volunteers who made our community Passover Seder 5783 happen! Thank you to volunteers Alan and Rosalind Kopfstein, Steve and Ruth Rosenthal, Gayle Rotenberg, and Gary and Bernice Turetsky, with Federation's Liz Irwin (not pictured), who helped set up.

## As seen around the Internets...



## One Story

### Your Federation Dollars at Work

Unlike many federations, we keep most of the funds donated to our annual campaign right here in the Berkshires. But we also contribute to the efforts of our overseas partners like The Jewish Agency For Israel (JAFI) to strengthen the connection between Israel and young Jews in the United States and other countries through Masa Israel Journey. Here is one story about your campaign dollars at work.



Maya in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem

### A Gap Year Experience To Remember

*Maya has been taking classes, completing an internship and exploring Israel during her memorable Aardvark Israel gap year program, and even participated in a two-month Israeli army add-on experience, too.*

Maya, 19, from Los Angeles, California, has been living in Israel since August 2022. As a participant in the Aardvark Israel gap year program, she first lived in the Florentin neighborhood in Tel Aviv, but moved in December to the Nachlaot neighborhood in Jerusalem where she will stay until late May.

Aardvark Israel operates in conjunction with Masa Israel Journey, which is a joint project of the Government of Israel and The Jewish Agency for Israel. Aardvark's mission is to bring together a diverse group of students from all over the world for meaningful, life-changing experiences in Israel that strengthen their Jewish identity, deepen their commitment to Israel and foster their personal growth.

Through Aardvark, Maya is taking part in classes and completing an internship each semester too. She also chose to do the Marva track add-on, which is an army simulation program that gives participants the opportunity to gain a firsthand understanding of the Israeli military from within.

"I had always wanted to join the military and the Marva track gave me the opportunity to try it out without fully committing to making Aliyah and doing the full service," explained Maya. "I spent two months in the fall living on an army base in Sde Boker, which is an experience that I will remember forever."

While only her second time in Israel, Maya fell in love with the country upon her first visit, deeply

connecting to the culture, landscape, and history. So when she had the chance to live abroad before going to university, she thought Israel was the obvious choice and Aardvark seemed a perfect fit.

"I picked Aardvark because they were one of the programs where we have the autonomy to live like local Israelis. We are able to take Ulpan (Hebrew learning classes) and mini-courses, as well as classes for credit that you can transfer to your university," shared Maya. "Another appeal was the weekly trips that we take to visit and learn about places all over the country, and the international trips Aardvark offers too."

Upon her return to the U.S., Maya will begin her freshman year at the University of Iowa in August – she is enrolled as a double major in Journalism & Mass Communications and Sports Management – and her time in Israel with Aardvark has made her even more excited to join the Hillel at her school. And to others considering doing a gap year in the Jewish State, Maya would encourage them to go for it.

"Living in Israel has been one of the best experiences I've ever had and made me feel more connected to my people and my homeland. Regardless of any ups or downs I had, I couldn't imagine myself doing any other program," Maya said. "It's given me the opportunity to learn independence and responsibility and live on my own and connect with my Jewish identity while exploring the country."



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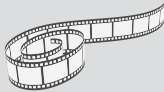


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# Arts & Entertainment




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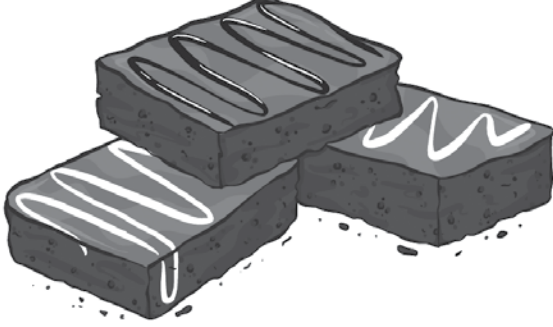
<p>Sponsored by  Berkshire Food Co-op</p>  <p><b>PEDRITO MARTINEZ</b> AFRO-CUBAN PERCUSSIONIST SAT MAY 13 AT 8PM</p>	<p>Sponsored by </p>  <p><b>RYAN HAMILTON</b> ONE-OF-A-KIND STAND-UP COMEDIAN SAT JUN 17 AT 8PM</p>
 <p><b>CHRIS BOTTI</b> MASTER TRUMPETER AND COMPOSER THU JUL 13 AT 8PM</p>	 <p><b>2023 GALA</b> <b>BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL</b> TONY AWARD WINNING BROADWAY SINGER SAT JUL 15 AT 8PM</p>
 <p><b>CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT</b> ECLECTIC JAZZ VOCALIST AND VISUAL ARTIST THU JUL 20 AT 8PM</p>	 <p><b>JESSE COOK</b> AWARD-WINNING CANADIAN GUITARIST SAT JUL 29 AT 8PM</p>

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Tuesday, May 30 at 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
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Admission - \$10 cash at the door




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- an evening of socializing with old friends and new

A bake-off with local judges - Prizes Awarded!!!

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berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com. 413-443-4386.







Arts & Entertainment

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BOYD-QUINSON STAGE  
JULY 18-AUG 5

BY PEARL CLEAGE  
DIRECTED BY CANDIS C. JONES

BLUES  
FOR AN  
ALABAMA SKY

BOYD-QUINSON STAGE  
AUG 16-SEPT 9

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BOOK BY WILLIAM FINN AND JAMES LAPINE  
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# Your Federation Presents

## TO BOLDLY GROW, *continued from page 1*

Shaker Village, 1843 West Housatonic Street in Pittsfield. For more on this program – which is also part of “Jewish Literary Voices,” a Jewish Federation of the Berkshires Series in collaboration with Jewish Book Council – and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

Tamar Haspel writes the James Beard Award-winning Washington Post column “Unearthed,” which tackles food from every angle: agriculture, nutrition, obesity, the food environment and DIY. In her book *To Boldly Grow: Finding Joy, Adventure, And Dinner in Your Own Backyard*, Haspel, a self-proclaimed “crappy gardener,” shows that raising or gathering our own food is not as hard as it seems. When she and her husband moved to Cape Cod, they decided to adopt an active approach to their diet: raising chickens, foraging for mushroom, and hunting their own meat. They had more ambition than know-how, but that did not stop them from trying.

With “first-hand food” as her guiding principle, Haspel embarked on an experiment to stop relying on experts to teach her the ropes and to start using her own ingenuity and creativity. Some of her experiments are a success (refining her own sea salt). Others are a failure (the turkey plucker engineered

from an old washing machine). Filled with practical tips and hard-won wisdom, *To Boldly Grow* follows Haspel from cluelessness to competence, learning to scrounge dinner from her surroundings and discovering that a connection to what we eat can change the way we think about food and ourselves.

Elisa Spungen Bildner will lead a panel discussion with Haspel and two members of the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, CT: Shamu Sadeh (managing director of education) and Janna Siller (Adamah farm director, who leads apprentices, residential fellows, and volunteers in growing organic vegetables).

Books will be available for purchase at the event or bring your own copy for signing by the author. Purchase the book at [bookstore.org](http://bookstore.org) and support our local bookstore in Lenox.



Cape Cod. She co-hosts, with journalist Mike Grunwald, the Climavores podcast, which takes

**About Our Panelists**

**Tamar Haspel** writes the *Washington Post* column “Unearthed,” which looks at how our diet affects us and our planet. She’s also written for *Discover*, *Vox*, *Slate*, *Fortune*, *Eater*, and *Edible*

a good, hard, entertaining look at food’s impact on climate and environment.

**Elisa Spungen Bildner** currently serves as a vice president on the board of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. In her earlier career, Elisa was CEO of FreshPro and worked as a journalism professor at Rutgers University and New York University, and as a reporter/editor for the *Star-Ledger* in Newark, NJ. She has practiced law at both New York City and New Jersey law firms. In addition, Elisa is a professionally trained chef and a yoga instructor. Elisa serves on the boards of many noted organizations including JTA, the Jewish Book Council, and is co-founder of the Foundation for Jewish Camp where she is currently co-chair of the Board of Trustees.



**Shamu Fenyvesi Sadeh** is the managing director of education at Isabella Freedman. He is the co-founder and former director of Adamah, and prior to that he worked as the director of Teva. He teaches Judaism and ecology, turns the compost piles, maintains the orchards, and supervises and mentors staff and Adamah Fellows.



**Janna Siller** is the farm director and advocacy coordinator at Adamah teaching about growing food, climate change, policy, food systems, and Jewish tradition. As advocacy coordinator, Janna leads grassroots efforts to raise Jewish voices on behalf of a more just and regenerative food system.

### Arts & Entertainment

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BERKSHIRE

THEATRE GROUP

May 18–June 3

at The Unicorn Theatre

The Larry Vaber Stage

WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME

written by Heidi Schreck

directed by Kristen van Ginhoven

featuring Kate Baldwin and Jay Sefton

A Co-Production with WAM Theatre

May 21 • 2PM

at The Colonial Theatre

TOM RUSH

ACCOMPANIED BY MATT NAKOA

June 15–July 1

at The Unicorn Theatre

The Larry Vaber Stage

PHOTOGRAPH 51

by Anna Ziegler

directed by David Auburn

featuring David Adkins and Rebecca Brooksher

June 27–July 16

at The Colonial Theatre

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET

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direction and choreography by Greg Santos

music direction by Colin Summers

The Colonial Theatre

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Your Federation Presents

No Joke – Ha! Ha! Havdalah was a Hoot

By Molly Meador / Director of Volunteers and PJ Library

What household appliance gossips the most?  
Your **vacuum cleaner** – it picks up all the dirt!

What's the difference between Hanukkah and dragons?  
One is **eight nights** while the other **ate knights**.

What do you call a Jewish Crustacean?  
A **crabbi**!

What kind of melon do they serve at synagogue?  
**Cantor**-lope.

What do you get when families come together for some pizza, some laughs, and a special Havdalah celebration? PJ Library's Ha! Ha! Havdalah on April 1st!

Using glow sticks and scented markers for our Havdalah, we separated the holiness of Shabbat from the rest of the week, just like we separated the funny jokes from the unfunny. We also read a picture book version of "Who's on First?" by Abbott and Costello, perfect for celebrating humor and the start of baseball season! Families left with whoopee cushions, copies of the book *Best Kids' Jewish Holiday Jokes Ever!*, and smiles on their faces.



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# WHEN OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

Fewer Jews say they are attached to Judaism. Yet 97% of American Jews state that they are “proud to be Jewish.” Our critical challenge is to transform Jewish pride into true participation in Jewish life. And we are already on our way.

Locally, Federation helps children and teens live their Jewishness at school and summer camp. Birthright trips transform young adults’ relationship to Israel. Around the world, in places where the Holocaust and Communism almost wiped out Jewish life, we’re nurturing the efforts of a core of inspiring young people who are reinventing Jewish life.



Younger people feel detached from Judaism

We build connection.



Millions of Jews find every day a struggle.

We are a lifeline.

People just like us, our children, our parents or grandparents, desperately need our help. Fragile Holocaust survivors can't handle basic daily tasks. Families reel from job loss. Widows and widowers face loneliness. Forgotten Jews, young and old, live in poverty and lack basic necessities.

Federation removes obstacles. We bridge gaps. A hot meal is delivered to a homebound person. An emergency loan covers the rent for a struggling family. Health aides bring food and medicine to an elderly survivor. A social worker helps an older adult find a safer living situation.

In the US and around the world, Jewish people and institutions are being threatened. Security is posted at synagogues. At Jewish schools in France, five-year-olds file past armed guards to get to the playground. Jewish students arriving at college encounter toxic anti-Israel and anti-Semitic slogans.

Federation is helping to restore a sense of security by sharing resources, expertise and training to keep our communities safe. Standing up against hatred and combating BDS. So that Jews everywhere can walk without fear, into a synagogue, a Jewish school—or simply down the street.



The world is an unstable place

We bring security.



# DS US, FEDERATION IS THERE

## HELP US BE THERE! DONATE TODAY!

Your gift to the Jewish Federation’s 2023 Campaign – whatever it is you can give – will help bring dignity and care to the vulnerable and elderly, build and strengthen the Jewish identity of our children and young adults, support vital community programs, and create meaningful Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.



**JEWISH LIFE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES**  
You help young families in the Berkshires embrace Jewish values and traditions while building a supportive community with Jewish peers through family programming, PJ Library, and volunteer opportunities.



**RESOURCES TO FIGHT ANTISEMITISM**  
You help young people stand up against hate through anti-bias education in our public schools. You also combat antisemitism movement through community programming, local advocacy, security trainings and grants.

**DIGNITY & COMPASSION**  
You provide older adults and homebound individuals with nutritious meals and stimulating programming served up with a side of companionship and compassion through our *Connecting with Community* program and Kosher Meals on Wheels.



**JEWISH EDUCATION & VALUES**  
You nurture a strong Jewish future by providing a high-quality, meaningful, and affordable Jewish education for hundreds of children through critical grants to all of our local Jewish religious schools.



**A SENSE OF COMMUNITY**  
You strengthen, sustain, and connect our community through hundreds of educational programs, holiday celebrations, and the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, which bring people together and engage them in meaningful Jewish life.



**A STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY**  
You help young people across the Berkshires and at UMASS Hillel build strong Jewish identities and become future leaders through scholarships for Jewish camp and Israel experiences, as well as leadership development and holiday meals on campus.

**EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**  
You help individuals facing unexpected challenges and life transitions receive the support they need through the Federation's social worker. You also provide a safety net of emergency assistance due to COVID-19.



**COMMUNITY RELATIONS & ADVOCACY**  
You help provide a proactive voice in our community, public schools, media, and government, addressing antisemitism, security, social justice, Israel and other issues important to our community.



**A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME**  
You help tens of thousands of new immigrants, who are fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe and fighting in the Ukraine, build better lives for themselves and their families in Israel through job training and support services that ease their transition.



**CARING IN TIMES OF CRISIS**  
When crisis hits, in the Berkshires or around the world, you help mobilize local resources to respond with immediate relief and longer-term recovery. From support through COVID-19 to whatever the future holds, you help deliver an SOS response.

**A CLOSE & CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL**  
You help connect the Berkshire Jewish Community with Israel and you also help provide programs for at-risk students, shelter for abused women, and support services for disabled youth.



**FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHCARE, & WINTER RELIEF**  
Winters are long and cold in the Ukraine, but you help the most vulnerable prepare with warm clothes, blankets, and heaters. You can bring food cards, home health aides, and medicine to those who need it most.



Donate or Pledge Online at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org). Thank You for Making a Difference.



# Your Federation Presents

## Yom Hashoah-Holocaust Remembrance

On April 16, our community gathered at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield for *Yom HaShoah v'HaGevurah*, somberly remembering the millions of lives brutally lost and recognizing those whose actions made a difference in large and small ways, as illuminated in the screened documentary *Passage to Sweden*.

Thanks to Agi Sardi for sharing the story of how her family was saved by the Swedish legation and to Rabbi Liz Hirsch of Temple Anshe Amunim for leading the concluding prayers of remembrance, drawing everyone together with moving song, silence, and flickering candles.



## How Jewish Federations Address Antisemitism

**Jewish Federations are the central Jewish address in nearly every Jewish community across North America.**

- We are community builders and connectors in roughly 400 cities across North America.
- It is our mission to ensure that Jewish life can flourish in every community.
- Antisemitism is a direct threat not only to the safety and security of our communities but to the promise of the flourishing Jewish life we work towards every day.

**Jewish Federations, as a system, secure and protect every Jewish community against antisemitism and violent hatred.**

*Jewish Federation of the Berkshires builds and maintains a robust communal infrastructure so that we are prepared to respond to and address antisemitism wherever it appears. We respond to antisemitic incidents in local public housing and schools, and also provide victim support,*

**There are 4 pillars of our strategy:**

**Security:** The bedrock of our work against antisemitism is keeping our community safe and secure against violent attacks so that everyone can participate meaningfully and safely in our Jewish community.



*security of all Jewish institutions in Berkshire County and has sponsored security training for members of the community.*

**Convening and Coordination:** We uniquely build the powerful relationships and resources that convene decision-makers, industry heads, law enforcement, Jewish organizations, and the most influential people in our city. When Jewish lives are at stake, we have the responsibility to use these relationships to protect the Jewish community.

*Jewish Federation of the Berkshires executive director Dara Kaufman is one of 12 members of the Massachusetts governor's Task Force on Hate Crimes. We engage with Berkshire County law enforcement to coordinate security protocols and participate in security planning with our affiliates.*

Jewish Federations are investing in comprehensive security infrastructures in every community across North America through LiveSecure.

*Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has directed funds to hardening the*

**Advocacy:** We proactively engage decision-makers, thought leaders, and major community influencers to help advance some of our community's most pressing priorities, pass laws, and shape policies that protect the Jewish community.

*Jewish Federation of the Berkshires advocates to increase government funding for such measures through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program and the Genocide Education Trust.*

**Training:** We work with our top leaders (lay and professional) to train and mentor their leadership skills in addressing antisemitism.

*Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has partnered with ADL to bring A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE anti-bias training to students and faculty at middle and high schools throughout Berkshire County. We also participate in the Peer Leaders program of the Berkshire County District Attorney's office.*

Today, and every day, Jewish Federations of North America and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires stand against antisemitism. Although Jews make up 2.4% of the American population, they are the victims of 55% of religious-based hate crimes. Let's stop the hate.

Visit [StandUpToJewishHate.org](https://StandUpToJewishHate.org) for more information about this Federation campaign.



LOCAL NEWS

Celebrate Shabbat and Study with Temple Anshe Amunim

**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.

**Young Families Program**

Temple Anshe Amunim Young Families services are geared for children ages kindergarten through Grade 5. Please join Rabbi Liz Hirsch for a Young Families Shabbat on Friday, May 17 and May 24 at 5 p.m. Pizza will be served. All are welcome to join in person.

**Messiah, Messianism and the Messianic Age: Biblical through Modern Times**

Please join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch for a lively discussion in-person and via Zoom on May 17 and May 24 at noon. Pre-registration is required. To register: tinyurl.com/TAAMay2023Class.

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 or visit www.ansheamunim.org.

Temple Anshe Amunim Presents: The Wolfe Cantorial Concert



*Cantorial student Beth Reinstein*

PITTSFIELD – On Saturday, May 20 at 7 p.m., beginning with Havdalah, Temple Anshe Amunim hosts The Wolfe Cantorial Concert, this year celebrating 75 years of Jewish statehood.

Join cantorial student Beth Reinstein along with her musical collaborators, Julian Chin and Diana Lawrence, to explore the connections between Israeli secular music and music used in worship today.

The performers will ask the question “Is the Sacred Secular and the Secular Sacred?” and provide some answers in song.

To register, call the Temple Office at (413) 442-5910.

Holiday of Shavuot Gaining Popularity in the Berkshires

Reading of the Ten Commandments, plus a delicious dairy luncheon and ice cream party at Chabad

PITTSFIELD – On Friday, May 26, come celebrate the beautiful holiday of Shavuot with Chabad of the Berkshires by hearing the Ten Commandments and enjoying a festive luncheon and grand ice cream party. Services begin at 10 a.m.; the Ten Commandments will be read at noon followed by festivities.

At a unique crossroads between religion and cuisine, the Holiday of Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai some 3325 years ago and has become a celebration of fine dairy cuisine, as well.

“As the Torah was given and the laws of kosher dining were first received,” writes Chabad co-director Rabbi Levi Volovik, “the Jewish People were not yet capable of properly preparing beef and poultry and as such ate dairy. The rest is history.”

Exquisite cheesecakes, pesto pastas, lasagna, and, of course, cheese blintzes all take center stage during this ancient celebration.

“When thinking Jewish Holidays, Passover, Chanukah, and Yom Kippur come to mind,” writes Chabad co-director Sara Volovik. “Nevertheless, Shavuot is considered one of Judaism’s major holidays and was in fact a ‘pilgrimage when all of Israel would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate in the Temple.’”

“No, it isn’t all about the food,” she adds. “What is important is that the community is joining together, hearing the Ten Commandments, and celebrating the Torah. But the good food certainly helps!”

All are invited regardless of background or affiliation. Chabad of the Berkshires is at 450 South Street in Pittsfield.

Her salon attracted cultural leaders – painters, poets, writers, and critics – fleeing World War I and inspired by the freedom-loving, adventurous Stettheimer.



Each of her works is a doorway into the Jazz Age and New York City from the 1910s to World War II. Playful and satirical, sweeping and intimate, her paintings are truly painted poetry. Join CAS for a virtual visit to the Jewish Museum and Florine Stettheimer’s world.

Cost is \$20 for members of CAS, and \$25 for non-members. Reservations are required. For information visit ahavathsholom.com.

For more information visit jewishberkshires.com or call (413) 499-9899.

Walk the Labyrinth Towards Shavuot



STOCKBRIDGE – On Friday, May 19 at 10:15 a.m., join Rabbi Pam Wax at Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health for an exploration of the labyrinth, an ancient spiritual tool designed to foster contemplation and spiritual transformation. This event is sponsored by Knesset Israel.

After a short study about labyrinths and the Jewish connection, participants will walk the outdoor labyrinth at Kripalu, integrating it into the Omer journey towards Mount Sinai and the Shavuot holiday. No knowledge of Judaism, meditation, or labyrinths is necessary to join this exploration.

Rabbi Pamela Wax has been walking labyrinths as a meditative practice for almost twenty years. Please join her outside the front entrance of Kripalu, 57 Interlaken Road in Stockbridge. The program will conclude by noon. Bring a bagged lunch for an optional picnic following the labyrinth walk. The event is free, but please pre-register in order to receive a printed handout: knesetisrael.org/event/walk-the-labyrinth-towards-shavuot.html

The rain date, if necessary, will be Sunday, May 21, at 5:30 p.m.

“Florine Stettheimer Painting Poetry”

A Jewish Museum virtual tour with Congregation Ahavath Sholom



On Sunday, June 4 at 1 p.m., join Congregation Ahavath Sholom for “Florine Stettheimer Painting Poetry,” the fifth in a series of museum tours conducted by renowned lecturer Rena Toby.

Bold and truly original, Florine Stettheimer led European modern art into America with her distinctive paintings and avant-garde gatherings.

Let’s Discuss “My So-Called Selfish Life”

PITTSFIELD – On Monday, June 5 at 7 p.m., join Rabbi Pam Wax in a discussion of Therese Schecter’s documentary film *My So-Called Selfish Life*. This event takes place at Knesset Israel

In the film, Schecter challenges the social taboo of a childless life and



SAVE THE DATE  
MAJOR DONORS CELEBRATION  
Sunday, July 23, 2023  
9:30-11:30 a.m.

NEW LOCATION  
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500 Benedict Road, Pittsfield, MA

Featuring a sneak preview performance of *Golda’s Balcony* by acclaimed actor Annette Miller.

2023 Major Donor Chairs:  
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or call (413) 442-4360, ext. 16 or ktodd@jewishberkshires.org

This event is open to leadership donors who make a minimum gift of \$1,000 or more to the Federation’s 2023 annual campaign.



THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE  
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.





LOCAL NEWS

the expectation that female identity be equated with motherhood. Schechter places this decision firmly in the context of the larger conversation about reproductive choice.



The film will be streamed during the month of May, in honor of Mother's Day. Rabbi Wax will convene a follow-up conversation and text study of both secular and Jewish sources. This will be a hybrid session (online and in-person). All are welcome.

When you register, you will receive information about how to stream the film. Registration link: [knesetisrael.org/event/lets-discuss-my-so-called-selfish-life.html](https://knesetisrael.org/event/lets-discuss-my-so-called-selfish-life.html).

## Ramblin' with the Rav 2023: Kibitzing and Talking Torah on the Trail

### Hike these hills with Rabbi David Weiner of Kneset Israel

ADAMS & PITTSFIELD – Ramblin' with the Rav returns this spring and summer, with Kneset Israel's Rabbi David Weiner leading a series of hikes to some of the Berkshires' loveliest locations. These hikes are a great chance to spend a morning enjoying our beautiful neighborhood – with exercise, a beautiful view, good company, a bit of Torah, and fantastic conversation on the trail.

The hikes vary in their intensity. All are potentially family-friendly, depending on participants' fitness and experience, but the easier one is scheduled for August.

Please register in advance for each hike at [knesetisrael.org/rsvp](https://knesetisrael.org/rsvp) to participate and receive more information.

#### Mt. Greylock Summit via Gould Trail, Adams



*Lift up your eyes to the mountains*  
On Sunday, May 28, celebrate Shavuot early by ascending the mountain!

Rabbi Weiner will lead a group up and down the curvy, heavily wooded Gould Trail. This is a steep and relentless ascent – It's shorter than climbing the mountain from the Williamstown side, but still demanding. It is only suitable for people with strong knees, ankles, and hearts, and some confidence on the trail. Leashed dogs are welcome. Bring snacks, water, and a warm layer for the summit – the summit facilities may not be open yet.

Meet at KI at 10 to carpool or at the trailhead on West Mountain Road in Adams (not Greylock Glen) around 10:40. Rain date – Sunday, May 28. This hike is

strenuous, 6.3 miles long with an elevation gain 2152 feet. It will last 4-5 hours.

#### Azaleas in Pittsfield State Forest, Pittsfield

On Sunday, June 4, enjoy a steady but manageable climb alongside Lulu Brook, then up the Park Loop Road to the State Forest's treasure – a grove of wild azaleas. Timing is everything - maybe this year participants will actually see them in bloom!

After enjoying the view over New York, hikers will rest by Berry Pond before finding their way back down the hill. Be prepared for very muddy trail conditions and a few steep sections. Leashed dogs are welcome. Rain date (but definitely no azalea flowers) will be Sunday, June 11.

Meet at the Lulu Brook parking area in Pittsfield State Forest at 10 a.m. This hike is moderately strenuous, 5.2 miles long, with an elevation gain of 935 feet. It will last 2.5-3 hours.

## Celebrate Shavuot at Kneset Israel

PITTSFIELD – All are invited to celebrate the Festival of Weeks at Kneset Israel.

#### Tikkun Leil Shavuot

On Thursday, May 25, at 7 p.m., join KI for a *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* with teachings by Rabbi David Weiner and Rabbi Pamela Wax, a Ma'ariv service, and dairy desserts in honor of the holiday.

While the 16th-century mystics created a tradition of all-night study to honor this holiday of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, KI's commemoration will conclude by 9:30 p.m. Rabbi Wax will open with a teaching entitled "If God had brought us to Mount Sinai but not given us the Torah: *Dayenu*" followed by Ma'ariv and dessert. The evening will conclude with Rabbi Weiner's teaching, "So, What Did Happen at Sinai?"

**Shavuot Festival Service, including the reading of the Ten Commandments** – Friday, May 26, 9:30 a.m.

**Shavuot Festival Service, including Yizkor memorial service** – Saturday, May 27, 9:30 a.m.

## Music, Food, and Friends to Start Shabbat at Kneset Israel

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

#### Shirei Shabbat with Community Dinner: Friday, May 19 at 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 are irresistible, encouraging all to raise their voices in song and prayer.

Register in advance for the community dinner following the services: [knesetisrael.org/rsvp](https://knesetisrael.org/rsvp). Dinner is \$20 for adults, and free for <18. Supported by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation Rekindle Shabbat Grant.

#### Musical Minyan: Friday, June 2, 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.

#### Traditional Kabbalat Shabbat Services: Friday, May 5 and May 12 at 5:45 p.m.

## KI Families Together Commemorates Lag Ba'Omer: Loving Our Neighbor as Ourselves

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, May 7 from 10 a.m. to noon, join Kneset Israel's Families Together group for Lag Ba'Omer, a unique observance commemorating at least three different historical occurrences.

In honor of the holiday, the group will gather for a social brunch with learning opportunities. After the brunch, there will be parents and children's discussion groups, both developed in collaboration with ServiceNet. Participants will have the chance to learn more about how homelessness and poverty are affecting families and children in the Berkshires, and what we can do to help our neighbors.

After the discussions, the event will conclude with some fun outdoor activities in celebration of Lag Ba'Omer.

Brunch is included. Please be sure to RSVP at [knesetisrael.org/rsvp](https://knesetisrael.org/rsvp).

## Shabbat Services and More at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Spring has sprung, and Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires keeps on celebrating Shabbat services with friendly, welcoming services.

#### Shabbat Services

Saturday morning services are scheduled on May 6, May 27, and June 3 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.

On Friday, May 21 at 7 p.m., join CBI for a beautiful, musical Kabbalat Shabbat service led by music director and pianist Adam Green, accompanied by the CBI Choir. 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.

Please use the CBI calendar to RSVP for all services and events - [chiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events/](https://chiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events/). Masks are required indoors.

## Young Family Fun at Congregation Beth Israel

NORTH ADAMS – Families with young children can experience and enjoy Lag B'Omer with Congregation Beth Israel's Young Families Program.

**Family Lag B'Omer Picnic and Hike on Sunday, May 7 from noon-1:30 p.m.** on the grounds of the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown. Bring your own picnic and blanket – eat first and then take a walk on the beautiful grounds, learning about the holiday of Lag B'Omer and enjoying the signs of spring. Rain plan: Picnic and Lag B'Omer crafts at Congregation Beth Israel, 53 Lois Street, North Adams.

**Families Celebrate Shabbat** on Saturday, May 13 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 the scheduled family programs at [chiberkshires.com/upcoming-family-events/](https://chiberkshires.com/upcoming-family-events/). Masks are required indoors.

## Mindful Drawing Workshop at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – On Sunday, May 7 from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires hosts a "Mindful Drawing Workshop" led by Corry Buchwalter, artist and art educator.

Learn how to draw meditatively and to draw what you see. The workshop format includes warm-up exercises, drawing from life, and tips for relaxing while drawing. Surprise yourself with some wonderful drawings and perhaps a newfound artistic interest in drawing from life and your imagination!

Beginners and experienced artists are welcome. Free to attend; supplies will be included, so please RSVP in advance to [chiberkshires.com/event/mindful-drawing-workshop/](https://chiberkshires.com/event/mindful-drawing-workshop/).

Masks are required when indoors at CBI.

## Celebrate Shavuot with CBI and Zoom with Poet Rodger Kamenetz (*The Jew in the Lotus*)



NORTH ADAMS – On Thursday, May 25 at 8 p.m., join Congregation Beth Israel to celebrate the revelation of Torah with learning, song, poetry, and more! The evening will include Festival

Ma'ariv (evening prayer) and the joyful psalms of Hallel.

Participants will also enjoy a *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot* (evening of late-night learning), anchored by an intimate Zoom poetry reading and Q&A conversation with poet Rodger Kamenetz, author of *The Jew in the Lotus* and of *The Missing Jew: Poems 1976-2022*, among many other books.

The evening will feature a combination of onsite and online opportunities; check [chiberkshires.com](https://chiberkshires.com) where the schedule will be updated over time.



LOCAL NEWS

Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch of Temple Anshe Amunim Appointed Incoming Executive Director of Women of Reform Judaism



In March, Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) announced that Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch was selected to be its next executive director beginning July 5. Rabbi Hirsch will begin this new role following the retirement of the current executive director, Rabbi Marla J. Feldman, who served the organization for over eleven years. Hirsch currently serves as rabbi of Temple Anshe Amunim, a Reform synagogue in Pittsfield, where she has worked for five years. Previously, Hirsch was the rabbi and a director at URJ Eisner Camp in Great Barrington for three years. She is the founding co-chair of RAC Massachusetts, a statewide synagogue-based community organizing project of Reform Judaism, and she serves on the

National Council of Jewish Women’s Rabbinic Advisory Council. She was a key leader in the 2020 campaign to pass the ROE Act, safeguarding reproductive rights in Massachusetts. Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), responded to the news: “The URJ is thrilled that Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch will lead WRJ on the next phase of its journey of transformation. Rabbi Hirsch has been shaped by our Reform Movement and will now bring her passion, brilliance, and imagination to WRJ.” WRJ is the woman’s affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the central body of Reform Judaism in North America. Founded in 1913, WRJ is a global organization with hundreds of affiliated women’s groups (“sisterhoods”) in North America and around the world, embracing tens of thousands of women. Hirsch was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York and, in recognition of her academic and leadership achievements, she was honored as a Wexner Graduate Fellow, a Tisch Fellow, and a WRJ Scholar during rabbinical school. She completed her undergraduate education at Brown University with a degree in Environmental Studies. Rabbi Hirsch will continue to be based in Western Massachusetts, where she lives with her husband, Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington, and their two children. Hirsch writes frequently on social justice, spiritual practice, and trends in Jewish life, with recent chapters included in *The Social Justice Torah Commentary* (CCAR Press, 2021) and *Prophetic Voices: Renewing and Reimagining Haftarah* (CCAR Press 2023).

The BJV Interview: Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch

In March, we spoke with Rabbi Hirsch about her new position and the years she spent as a congregational rabbi in the Berkshires. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

**How did you get in the pipeline for this job?**

Well, I’m a proud product of the Reform Movement. I grew up outside of Boston. My family was active in our synagogue and I attended Camp Eisner as a camper and then as a summer staff member, participating in the Reform Movements youth movement in NFTY. I attended high school in Israel, a semester program through the Reform Movement, and I was active in our Reform Movement group on campus as an undergrad. And then after college, I worked as a legislative assistant at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism’s, Washington, DC office. And then I attended Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, spending one year in Israel and four years in New York. Those are all core institutions of the Reform Movement. So I’ve been engaged throughout my life, and as I learned more about the role of the WRJ, I learned that the common denominator among all those institutions is that they were all either founded, supported, or both by the WRJ.

**Had you been involved with the WRJ directly over the years?**

There are about 300 Sisterhoods, which is often the name used for a local WRJ chapter. Some have undergone change over time as Rosh Chodesh groups, a women’s group that observes the cycle of the new Jewish months. That’s what happened at Anshe Amunim. And when I was a Hebrew rabbinical student, I received a generous scholarship from WRJ.

**Talk a little about your local activism during your time in the Berkshires? What did you learn in those experience that you’re going to take with you to the national job?**

The connection between Judaism and social justice has always been at my core, a driving piece of why I do my social justice work and why I’m connected to Judaism. Environmental justice and climate change are among those issues for me. When I became a parent, I became more acutely and personally aware of some of the challenges that are faced by women and people who can become pregnant. So I got engaged with a paid family medical leave campaign several years back in Massachusetts. And when the ROE Act campaign was coming up, I knew it was something that I personally wanted to be involved in, understanding the position that many of the people seeking out abortion access and care find themselves in. As a person who has been through two thankfully healthy pregnancies, I started talking with members of the Anshe Amunim Social Justice Social Action Committee who said, “We’ve been here before. We’ve fought this fight, and we don’t want to go back.” This was before, of course, the fall of Roe v. Wade – we saw the need to safeguard what was going on in Massachusetts. We had a lobby visit to talk about the legislation with Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier that Anshe hosted, and we were invited by the coalition to be the host site in Western Massachusetts for a public town hall. This was pre pandemic. More than 150 or so people from the faith communities attended, not just from the Jewish community, but from our Christian friends and partners, advocates who came at it from different angles, and by people who wanted to learn to raise awareness about this issue. We were so proud to be a house of faith that was hosting it; it was important to our values to do that.

I also brought a few members of the Anshe community to a lobby day [at the state legislature] in Boston and I was honored to give some opening remarks to draw the connection between Torah and text and what we were doing there that day. We then went around with those Temple members and every member of the Berkshire delegation said, “Wow, we can’t believe you’re here. We never see folks coming out for this.” And we thought, oh, maybe reproductive rights isn’t the

issue that people come out for. And they said, “No, no one ever comes to lobby in our offices in Boston all the way from the Berkshires. We meet you in the district. But we’re so amazed and impressed that you’re here.” I think for me, it’s been incredible to see how valuable it is to show up as folks from the Berkshires, Western Massachusetts, to be a part of those important statewide issues.

And that campaign was really the test case in many ways for us to show that we had interest in establishing the RAC Massachusetts. We engaged over half of the Reform Synagogues through my leadership and in close partnership with other leaders to participate meaningfully in that campaign, which really laid the groundwork for all that we’re doing now, the synagogue-based community organizing to make a big difference in Massachusetts.

**The first of the three parts of the WRJ mission statement is about the idea of sisterhood and community. You’re obviously going to be expanding to a much wider scope of connection nationally. So for that aspect of Sisterhood, what is your vision?**

I think that what Sisterhoods represent is a meaningful, deep, powerful, personal avenue for relationships and community and also to engage in leadership development. So for me, that starts with just getting to know people, getting to talk with people and meet as many people as possible and also to continue the strong support of our more than 300 Sisterhoods throughout North America so that they can thrive on an individual basis. This is a 110-year-old organization. It’s amazing over the decades and years and iterations of Jewish life and waves of feminism, what WRJ, which was formerly called the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, has been through.

**How about the WRJ’s second pillar, spiritual growth?**

It’s a pillar of WRJ that really resonates with me on a lot of levels – as a rabbi, spirituality and connecting with spiritual life is core for me personally and also something that is my everyday work and delight to help others connect, as well. When WRJ was founded, women were not only not able to be rabbis, but they also weren’t really able to take on any kind of spiritual leadership role within a congregation or a community. So Sisterhoods at that time kind of provided an alternate avenue for engagement, for leadership and also for religious leadership. Once a year as an example, and many sisterhoods still do this, the WRJ would be given the pulpit by the, of course, male clergy and able to lead a “Sisterhood Shabbat.” Decades before women were able to be rabbis or cantors, these women were leading their congregation in prayer.

And now, I am a Reform woman rabbi who is taking the helm of this national organization that is defining what it means to connect and engage with spirituality today. One of the amazing more recent creations in the spiritual realm of WRJ is the *Women’s Torah Commentary*. It is a green book that provides high level commentary, interpretation, essays and poetry on all of the *parshiyot* for the weekly Torah reading. It’s meant to represent a way of hearing women’s voices in the texts that we study every week. So I’m excited to see what it will mean now for us going forward and how we can continue to engage with spirituality and Torah and learning and also to set the tone and to develop new projects and initiatives that will uplift that pillar.

**And then the third pillar, “mobilizing collective action”? What is your vision for that?**

I think that we spoke a little bit about my coming in with experience with leading on reproductive rights and abortion access, and these are going to continue to be huge issues for us. As a national and North American organization, we know that the situation varies dramatically state to state. So while we’re lucky here in Massachusetts and some of the other neighboring states that we have a relatively high level of access to abortion care; that’s not true in every state. So I’m going to be looking closely and carefully at how we can be working on this issue with WRJ, doing good and strong collaborative work with our partners at the Reform Movement and also the other partners that we engage with throughout the country who do this work.

**Tell me a little bit about the RAC D.C. Day Of Action on May 10-11 and what your role is going to be in that?**

There’s a wonderful legacy of the RAC leading and partnering and being a voice on Capitol Hill. And for many years, conferences brought Reform Jews from around the country together to learn about issues and to lobby on them. So this is sort of the post-pandemic reboot of this conference, and it will be an intensive 36 hours of folks being together to learn about important issues and then doing some lobbying on the Hill. The Reform Movement nationally recently selected climate change as its national advocacy campaign for 2023. That’s very exciting to me because my background is environmental studies. So I’m looking forward to seeing both the ways that our movement is going to be able to speak up for this crucial issue of our time and to ensure that we have a future and a home and a planet to give to our children and grandchildren. And I’m also very excited going forward to think about the ways that WRJ will be able to provide the unique and important feminist angle on climate change as we continue to advocate in collaboration and support of the broader Reform Movement effort.

**Was becoming a congregational rabbi surprising to you when you first took on the Anshe Amunim position?**

Leadership at congregations are at the core of the Reform Movement, so while I’ve been closely connected to the “movement,” I have done that through being part of congregations and communities. It’s been an incredible blessing to serve Anshe Amunim and to get to know members of the congregation, to walk with them, to be with them, to be creative with them, to imagine and think about what it means to be in a congregation that has seen over 150 years of presence and life and growth and existence in central Berkshires. I have particularly loved getting to know so many of the wonderful leaders who have worked closely with me and are so dedicated to Temple and who have many generations of their families who have been a part of it, and also to those who are more newcomers to the Berkshires who have made it their home at any point in life. I wish them all strength to strength as we go forward.

**What was your experience working with your colleagues and with Federation?**

Through the pandemic in particular, we began to meet more regularly as clergy as convened by Federation and then continued to keep up strong connections, partnership, and communication. And I think that’s a really great example of how, in difficult times and challenging times, we’ve come together and support each other and to be greater than the sum of our parts. Fortunately, I will still get to be here to be with all of them.



LOCAL NEWS

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is One of the First Two Federations Joining the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition

Major Jewish organizations release climate action plans to mobilize collective Jewish climate action in year ahead



(among them Jewish Federation of the Berkshires) that have signed onto the Coalition, all of whom are working on developing their own organizational climate action plans, to be released next year.

Says Richard Slutzky, vice president of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, who is past chair of Hazon and also serves on Adamah’s board:

It’s not coincidental that this Federation was the second federation to join Adamah’s Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition. We are uniquely positioned to witness firsthand the joys of being surrounded by nature. We want those who follow us to enjoy the pristine environment that we often take for granted. There are steps we can take as individuals and as a community to preserve our planet and our collaboration with Adamah will connect us to a myriad of other Jewish organizations with similar goals.

Participating organizations jointly signed a founding statement confronting the moral urgency of the climate crisis and jointly committing to climate action. They state, “Our coalition represents Jewish organizations engaging millions of people of all ages and backgrounds, across the world. Together, we recognize the urgency of the climate crisis and our obligation to do more. We commit to climate action.”

Over the past year, Adamah has convened liaisons from these umbrella Jewish organizations and worked with them to craft organizational climate action plans. This collective coalition release of climate action plans is a major milestone, representing unprecedented commitments from mainstream Jewish institutions to undertake meaningful climate action. And it is just the beginning.

These climate action plans summarize actions taken to-date and set the

strategic priorities for the coming year, both in reducing organizational greenhouse gas emissions and in mobilizing Jewish communities around climate action.

Examples of commitments made in founding partners’ climate action plans include:

**Jewish Agency for Israel** recently partnered with the Jewish Youth Climate Movement to send a delegation of young Jewish climate leaders in the U.S. and Israel to the UN’s global climate conference, and plans to expand that delegation in the coming year.

**Reconstructing Judaism** and the **Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association** published a joint climate action plan, including visions of a net-zero campus by 2035, increased electric vehicle charging stations, and climate-smart mostly vegetarian food choices (which the organizations have already been doing for more than a decade). Reconstructing Judaism has adopted an investment policy that includes ESG criteria – their investment committee will consider fossil fuels in the organization’s ESG screens.

**The Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies** is adding climate to their federal advocacy agenda on behalf of vulnerable populations.

**Adamah** is launching a Climate Action Fund for Coalition members that includes \$1,000,000 in interest-free loans, as well as pools of matching grant money for specific regions, like Orange County, CA.

Many of the climate action plans highlight commitments from umbrella organizations to encourage their network agencies towards robust climate action. They are doing so through promoting the Coalition to their constituents and weaving climate-related content into their annual conferences (as Jewish Funders Network and a number of other organizations have already begun doing). As well, many founding partners (such as Jewish Federations of North America, JCC Association of North America and Foundation for Jewish Camp) are working with Adamah to convene Coalition communities of practice, which support organizations across the Jewish landscape to share resources, best practices, and workshop obstacles on the path to climate action.

“We are so grateful to all our founding partners for leaning into this partnership and engaging in this process over the past year,” says . Jakir Manela, CEO of Adamah. “Climate and sustainability have not been on the list of priorities for the vast majority of Jewish organizations; this coalition and these climate action plans reflect a deep paradigm shift and culture change moving forward. By supporting each other and convening communities of practice to engage hundreds of member organizations across the Jewish world, this coalition is poised to have a transformative impact on Jewish life – for people and planet

Visit [adamah.org/coalition](http://adamah.org/coalition) (click the Coalition Members tab) to see the climate action plans of all Coalition founding partners.



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OBITUARIES

Phyllis Schuman Curran, 86, filled a room with great conversation and optimism

PITTSFIELD – Phyllis Schuman Curran, 86, died on Wednesday, March 15, at her home.

Born in Fall River, MA, on January 25, 1937, daughter of Charles and Esther (Kavolsky) Schuman, she graduated from Fall River High School and attended Simmons College. Phyllis received her bachelor’s degree from Washington University in St. Louis and her master’s degree from American International College.

Phyllis was an exquisite wife, mother, and grandmother. She filled a room with great conversation and optimism. Her health presented many challenges, which she managed gracefully.

Phyllis was a well-respected teacher in the Pittsfield Public Schools Adult Learning Center and then the Teen Parent Program until her retirement. She was a member of Knesset Israel and enjoyed swimming, reading, mahjongg, and friends.

Phyllis is survived by her husband, Dr. Joel D. Curran, whom she married on August 29, 1957; daughters, Deborah (Daniel) Fradkin of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, and Judith (Brian) O’Keefe of Natick, MA; son, Mark (Brenda) Curran of Needham, MA.; seven grandchildren, Alexandra (Sunil Konaiyagarri) Fradkin, Jamie Fradkin, Haley Fradkin, Maxwell Curran, Spencer Curran, Thomas O’Keefe, and Jason O’Keefe; one great-granddaughter, Alia Konaiyagarri.

Funeral services were held Sunday, March 19, at Knesset Israel, Pittsfield, with Rabbi David Weiner officiating. Burial followed in Knesset Israel Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to Congregation Knesset Israel Endowment or HospiceCare in the Berkshires in care of Flynn & Dagnoli-Bencivenga Funeral Home, 5 Elm Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Melvin (Mel) Zuckerman, 94, founder of Canyon Ranch, supported countless philanthropic causes

TUCSON, AZ AND LENOX, MA – Melvin (Mel) Zuckerman, 94, passed away. Born May 23, 1928 in Hackensack, NJ, the only child of Shirley and

Norman Zuckerman, Mel attended New York University and upon graduation entered the job market as an accountant. In November 1952, he met Enid Slotkin, and they were married seven months later.

In 1958, Enid and Mel left the East Coast and relocated to Tucson, AZ where Mel launched a career as a home builder. He was energized and ambitious and quickly garnered respect in the community as a savvy businessman. Mel’s physical health, though, suffered with the stresses of his career. He was overweight, inactive, and in poor health. Enid also suffered a health challenge during this time, and after her recovery, she began reading about the benefits of healthy eating and exercise. When she suggested to Mel the idea of opening a “fat farm” to help others get and stay healthy, he laughed.

The death of Mel’s father in 1977 changed Mel’s life. A lifelong smoker, Norman was diagnosed with lung cancer. By the time he quit the habit, it was too late; Norman died six months later. To honor his father, Mel was determined to make the second half of his life better than the first, resolving to improve his health before his 50th birthday. With Enid’s encouragement, Mel checked into a spa in California, where he spent four weeks. During his stay, Mel transformed his life by learning to eat right and exercise. This was his “A-Ha” moment.” On the drive home from California, Mel shared with Enid his desire to help motivate others to change their lives this same way. Enid’s earlier idea of opening a fat farm no longer seemed absurd – they now had a shared vision, and the idea of Canyon Ranch was born.

Enid and Mel first set foot on the Double U Ranch in Tucson on a sunny spring morning in 1978. It was dilapidated and in disrepair, but they felt the magic. They purchased the property and just 18 months later Enid and Mel opened the doors to Canyon Ranch. It was truly a mom-and-pop business; Mel proudly wore a name tag that read: “President and Bell Captain.” The business slowly gained momentum and eventually proved highly successful. Expanding first to Lenox, where Mel and Enid built a second residence, and then opening

multiple health spas, Canyon Ranch came to define excellence in the wellness industry.

Mel built a sanctuary to empower people to change their lives, and he committed his life to the philosophies he preached. He exercised daily in the Canyon Ranch gym and enjoyed healthy meals prepared in the resort’s dining room. At age 54, he ran his first marathon. He regularly enjoyed quiet hikes in Sabino Canyon and Mt. Lemmon, his sacred time for reflection.

Mel’s wish to share the principles of health promotion and disease prevention inspired the establishment of the University of Arizona’s Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, which opened in 2000. Mel and his family have supported countless philanthropic causes, focusing on preventive health, education, food sustainability, arts, youth, and poverty.

Mel is survived by his true love and soul mate, Enid; children, Amy and Jay (Stephanie); grandchildren Nicole (Ken), Talia, Colton, and Riley; great-grandchildren, Chloe and Asher; sister-in-law and brother-in-law Paula and Arthur Molk; many nieces and nephews; and countless friends.

A public memorial honoring Mel’s life and legacy was held on April 17 at the University of Arizona’s Health Sciences Innovation Building in Tucson. A memorial fund has been established with Pima County Joint Technical Education District (JTED). This fund will go directly to support the new Mel and Enid Zuckerman Health and Medical High School at Pima JTED for students and young adults pursuing careers in the medical field. Donations can be made to JTED by contacting Thomas Bogart at tbogart@pimajted.com.

Millicent Jessica Masur Blum, 76, active on boards of many Berkshire organizations

LENOX – Millicent Jessica Masur Blum, 76, died on Wednesday, February 15, while undergoing aortic heart-valve replacement surgery in Brantenton, FL.

Born in New York on March 26, 1946, the only daughter of Bertram and Dorothy Layton Masur, Millie grew up in Belmar and Wall Township on the Jersey Shore. She

graduated from City College of New York with a degree in Industrial Psychology and lived and worked in New York as a human resources executive for several banks, including Republic National and Philadelphia International. She came to Lenox in 1987 and was employed as Human Resources Director for several well-known area institutions, including First Agricultural Bank, Taconic Telephone, Storey Publishing, and Kripalu.

Millie was active in or on the board of several Berkshire organizations, including the Berkshire Music School, the Lennox Heights Condominium Trust, and ZONTA. She was a skier, a softball player, and an avid tennis player, and she played in three local golf leagues. Her athletic ability often earned her top finishes in local golf tournaments, but she was very gracious and was always encouraging to others. She was determined to get in her daily 10,000 steps.

Millie is survived by her husband of 41 years, Arthur Blum; stepsons Brian Blum (Jennifer) and Jonathan Blum (Merrily); four adoring grandchildren, Pinchas Blum (Chaya), Fradel Blum Levy (Shlomi), Gittel Blum, and Yisruel Blum; great-grandchildren Chana and Asher Blum; younger brother, David Masur; nephew, Max Masur (Morium); and nieces Julia Masur Furoa (Steve) and Kayla. Millie’s two older brothers, William and Phillip Masur, predeceased her.

Millie was a warm, loving woman with many snowbird friends in Florida. A heart-warming Celebration of Life was recently held for her in Brantenton. Her relatives and her many northern friends will be invited to another Celebration of Life for her in the Berkshires, probably in late May.

Irving Marks, 94, one of a kind who lit up every room he entered

GREAT BARRINGTON – Irving Marks, 94 years young, passed away peacefully at Berkshire Medical Center on Monday, February 27.

Born in Brooklyn, NY, on December 10, 1928, to Julius and Adele Markowitz, Irving worked as a young man with his father in the Fulton Fish Market. He convinced a customer in the textile industry to hire him for free for a year to learn the business. He did so well that he founded I. Marks Textiles on his own, where he had great success for over 60 years.

Irving was one of a kind who lit up every room he entered. He attended college at age 42, graduating cum laude. He played all sports, but tennis was his main sport, and he was a ferocious player. He fell in love with the Berkshires when visiting his two sons at camp. He weekendend there for over 40 years until he and Alice settled permanently in Lee.


OBITUARIES, continued on page 22



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OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES, continued from page 21

He adored classical music, Tanglewood, Gilbert and Sullivan, searching for antiques, auctions, all jokes, and was a brilliant bridge player. At the end of his life, he was confined to a wheelchair as a result of contracting Guillain-Barré. He hardly complained and maintained a great disposition and outlook. He was blessed with a long, happy life, a loving family, and many close friends. If you met him, you never forgot him, and he will be greatly missed.

Irving is survived by his wife, Alice Nathan; her children, Russ and Lisa; her grandchildren, Emilia and Ben; his first wife, Mindy; and their children, Dan, Anna, and Alexis. He was preceded in death by his son, Paul.

A private family service was held in early March, and a memorial service will take place this summer. Donations in Irving's memory may be made to Ventfort Hall Mansion and Gilded Age Museum, 104 Walker Street, Lenox, MA 01240.

**Edith Velmans, 97, Holocaust survivor, bestselling author, psychologist**

SHEFFIELD – Edith Velmans, 97, died peacefully on Friday morning, March 10, ending a remarkable life.

Born in The Hague, the Netherlands, in 1925, Edith had a happy, carefree childhood. When the Germans invaded Holland in 1942, she went into hiding, living with a courageous gentile family in the south of Holland and using a forged identity. Although her mother, father, grandmother, and brother all perished in the Holocaust, she managed to survive the war.

Against the wishes of her parents, both real and adopted, because of the dangers involved, Edith

bravely kept a diary. Forty years later she turned those wartime diaries recording her years as a hidden child into a bestselling memoir, *Edith's Story*. Hailed as "the story of the Anne Frank who lived," it was translated into more than a dozen languages and won several literary prizes.

After the war, Edith studied at the University of Amsterdam and earned a graduate degree at Columbia University before marrying Loet Velmans in 1949. She became a psychologist specializing in gerontology. Her husband's job moved the family from Holland to Baltimore, Paris, Geneva, and London before returning to New York.

Edith and Loet discovered the beauty of the Berkshires in 1976, spending weekends and summers here, and eventually taking up permanent residence in their home in Sheffield, where Edith became an active and popular member of the local community. Her life here was full, overflowing with friends, philanthropic work, and being a welcoming and loving 'Oma' to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She always had time for everybody, there was never a family adventure that she passed up, never a letter she didn't answer, never a friendship she didn't cherish.

In 1996, Edith was knighted by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

She is survived by her three daughters, Marianne, Hester, and Jessica, five grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Her friends and family will gather for a celebration of her life later this summer. She will be missed by many, but we are all blessed to have been part of her extraordinary life.

Please consider a donation to Fairview Hospital, Berkshire

Grown, or Construct, Inc.

**Robert Bennett Tabakin, 67, generous spirit, was loved by many**

PITTSFIELD – Bob Tabakin, MD, 67, of Pittsfield, died Tuesday, March 21, surrounded by his family. Despite a nearly 20-year battle with Parkinson's, Bob fully embraced life with courage, grace, denial, and his gentle and wry sense of humor.

Born March 20, 1956, in South Burlington, VT, Bob was the middle of five sons of Burt and Ruth Tabakin, a family that loved sailing on Lake Champlain and skiing on Mount Mansfield. He earned his BS in engineering from MIT, where he was a member of the blackjack team. After several years of ski bumming and management consulting, he began a career in medicine, first attending UMASS Medical School and then completing a Psychiatry residency at Harvard Longwood, where he met and married his co-resident, Liza Donlon.

Bob and Liza moved from Boston to the Berkshires in 2000, where they raised their two sons, Max and Isaac. Bob loved life in the Berkshires. He practiced Psychiatry at the Brien Center for a decade and skied in the Bousquet adult race league, both of which he continued for many years despite the progression of his illness. Bob had a generous spirit. He loved and was loved by many.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held later this spring.

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Traveling Home(Land)  
An Israel trip three years in the making

By Jodi and Keith Graber / Special to the BJV

*This story is an excerpt from the Grabers' full account of their Israel journey, which appears in full on the Berkshire Jewish Voice Highlights page at jewishberkshires.org.*

The summer of 2019 was uneventful for us, yet very special. We put a deposit down on a trip to Israel. We were going to celebrate our 18th wedding anniversary in our homeland!



The Berkshire contingent of The Land & The Spirit Israel Experience at the Western Wall in March: Rabbi Levi Volovik, his mother Sara Volovik, Arnie Stark, Dr. Jonathan Kramer, Marco Greenberg, Jodi & Keith Graber with Joan Stark standing in front, Myla Blum, Bob & Teddy Rubin, and Sonia Beker and Steve Zucker.

As the months went by and we observed the High Holidays, Hanukkah, and Purim, the excitement was building. Next stop, Israel. We bought new luggage and other travel necessities. We stocked up on some American food requested by our Israeli cousins. Our passports were prepared and we were ready to go.

And then time stopped. The world shut down. There would be no trip to Israel in 2020, nor in 2021 or 2022.

The year is now 2023. Even after a three-year wait, it felt like we had no time to get ready for the trip. What should we pack? What do we need? Are we really going? It got very real when the gate agent made the boarding announcement in English and then Hebrew. This was really happening!

We landed at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv at the beginning of our journey of experiencing the birthplace of our Jewish heritage. The Land & The Spirit Israel Experience is sponsored by the Jewish Learning Institute in partnership with Israel Maven. It is no ordinary tour. You don't get the itinerary; you plan your itinerary. We chose the "classic" route since Keith was a first-timer and Jodi hadn't been to Israel in nearly 30 years.

We toured Israel with 13 people from the Berkshires, plus over 800 other Jews from the United States and around the world. Our group was led by Rabbi Levi Volovik of Chabad of the Berkshires. Our friends from the Berkshires now feel like family. Our guides were a mix of Israelis and individuals who had made Aliyah, and they provided an illuminating exploration of the Holy Land's sites, history, geography and spirit that unearthed our innate connection to the Land and its vibrant soul.

On Friday, it was time to get ready for Shabbat in Jerusalem. Is there a better experience? We think not. There were no bus tours on this day as the Jerusalem Marathon took over the streets. Later, we walked to the Kotel, the Western Wall, and welcomed the Sabbath with not only our Berkshire traveling companions, but also the over 800 people on our trip as well as hundreds, if not thousands, from around the world. There's really nothing that can be compared to this experience. Once you do it, your soul is forever changed.

Shabbat was peaceful and restful in the early part of the day. We again walked through the Jewish Quarter of the Old City in the afternoon, marveling at each street, corner, building, and wall. As our guide said, "you don't go to Jerusalem and then check it off your list. You return to Jerusalem again and again and see and feel something new each time." Havdalah on this Shabbat was also unlike anything we've ever experienced. Dancing and singing, smiling ear to ear at Jaffa Gate.

After this soulful, invigorating day, we attended a banquet to celebrate this extraordinary trip. Sure, we expected great food and nice entertainment. We didn't know what was coming: a reunion between an IDF soldier and the Magen David Adom paramedic who saved his life during the 2006 Second Lebanon War. Captain (ret.) Noam Gershony, an IDF pilot (and wheelchair tennis gold medal winner at the Paralympics), spoke to us about his service, the helicopter crash in which he was severely wounded, and his life since that moment. Gershony talked about his ordeal to overcome his life-threatening injuries and how grateful he is to be alive. All of us in attendance, as well as Gershony, were surprised by what came next: the introduction of Shimon Eliyah Abitbul, the paramedic who rushed to the wreckage and saved Gershony's life. A reunion 17 years in the making. There was not a dry eye in the house.

Jodi and Keith Graber received an Israel Travel Grant from The Harold Grinspoon Foundation to cover some of the costs of this trip. Visit [hgjf.org/grants-awards/israel-travel-and-study](http://hgjf.org/grants-awards/israel-travel-and-study) for more information. Jodi will be presenting "Jewish Veg" for Federation on May 25 – please turn to page 7 for details.



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**WE'RE HIRING!**

**Food Service Director for Kosher Lunch Program (part-time)**

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires seeks a part-time Food Services Director to run the daily operations of our kosher lunch and kosher meals on wheels program in a welcoming environment that meets the nutritional needs of the Jewish older adult population.

The Food Service Director develops, plans, coordinates, and executes the preparation of 20-40 kosher meals, three days a week for most of the year and two days a week during the summer. Full training on kosher dietary laws and ongoing support for compliance is provided.

25-28 hours a week. This position offers an opportunity to work with caring individuals who share a commitment to helping those in need and strengthening the Jewish community.

**For a full job description visit**  
[jewishberkshires.org/news-announcements/food-service-director](http://jewishberkshires.org/news-announcements/food-service-director)

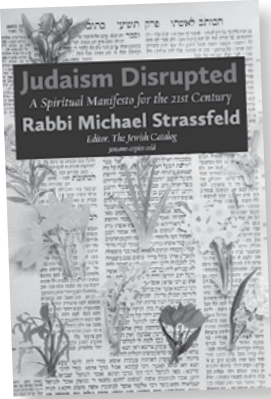


BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

# The Holiness of Building Communities

## Book Excerpt: Judaism Disrupted: A Spiritual Manifesto for the 21st Century

By Rabbi Michael Strassfeld



The Torah describes the creation of the world in thirty-four verses. The second half of the book of Exodus has over 450 verses describing in great detail the building of the *mishkan*—the portable sanctuary and the making of the priestly garments for those who will officiate there. Why? What is the purpose of all this detail? It is not as though we are commanded to rebuild the sanctuary in each generation!

I think the building of the *mishkan*/sanctuary is a lesson on how to move from the extraordinary moment of the revelation at Sinai to living in the real world with its everyday challenges. Our life is not lived in extraordinary moments such as Sinai or the special celebrations of life cycle moments like a wedding.

Certainly, we should cherish such moments. However, life is lived in the everyday. We need to build the structure of our lives. Each of us is asked to build a *mishkan*. Our lives are shaped and realized by the details. Small acts, the kind word, the expression of sympathy, and the friendly smile build the *mishkan* of our lives. We hope that in that sanctuary godliness and good will dwell more often than not.

Many commentators point out a striking feature in the verse when God commands the building of the sanctuary. God says: Make for me a *mishkan*/sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.” (Ex. 25:8). God doesn’t say make for

Judaism isn’t about your own religious experience.  
Judaism is about building a life whose wisdom  
helps us interact with the people around us, in our  
community and across the globe.

me a *mishkan* and I will dwell in it. The *mishkan* isn’t really God’s house. The building of it will lead to God dwelling amidst the builders, the people of Israel. The verse doesn’t even instruct the Israelites to build God a *mishkan* so that God can dwell within you (singular). Judaism isn’t about your own religious experience. Judaism is about building a life whose wisdom helps us interact with the people around us, in our community and across the globe.

God dwells in the *mishkan* created by a community because ultimately God dwells in community, not in buildings or sacred spaces. The Book of Exodus ends with the building of the *mishkan*. Its language echoes the first chapters of Genesis, which describe the creation of the world. In Genesis, we are told that God completed (*va-yikhal*) the work of creation. At the end of Exodus, we learn that Moses completed (*va-yikhal*) the work of building the sanctuary (Ex. 40:33). When we build the *mishkan* of our lives, we fulfill a vision of holiness and wholeness. As the co-creators of the world, we carry forward the work of creation begun by God during the first week of creation. The real answer to the Israelites who clamor for a God they can see is found in the experience of living a religious life. God is revealed when we fully live our lives.

The other point of building the sanctuary is that the people take on this task. Until that moment, the Israelites have experienced their lives through the deeds of other. As slaves, they were dependent on Pharaoh. Their liberation is achieved by God and Moses, not by themselves. At this moment the people finally step forward to actively make the sanctuary a reality. They have become builders, not just in completing the project but in the way it is done. It is the only building campaign in history where they raised more than was needed to complete the project. Moses tells them to stop giving! What is remarkable is not the quantity of the gifts, but how they were given. God tells Moses to accept gifts from every person whose heart so moves him (*asher yidvenu libo*, Ex. 25:2). The gifts come from a place of generosity rather than obligation. Everyone contributes what they can. Everyone contributes whatever skill they have to participate in the actual building.

Even more than a structure, it is this process that creates a community. While the tradition values the worth of each individual created in the image of the Divine, the practice of Judaism takes place in community.

### Building the Tower of Babel

This building project at the end of the Book of Exodus stands in contrast to the building of the Tower of Babel, which is recounted earlier in the book of Genesis. The Tower of Babel story suggests the danger of unity. Following the flood in Noah’s time, the people of the Babel story must have been worried about another flood, despite God’s promise. A tower that would rise to heaven will surely save them from a flood, no matter how catastrophic. The problem is that in response to the chaos of the generation of the flood, they wanted absolute unity, where everyone spoke one language and worked on one project. Their hope was to prevent people from scattering. As bad as the chaos that led to the flood, so too was the uniformity of the tower generation. When there is only one language and one vision, there is no room for other ways of looking at things. There is no outside critic. Leon Kass, the contemporary scientist and educator, writes on this story: “Awareness of the multiplicity of human ways is also the necessary precondition for the active search for the better or best way. Discovering the partiality of one’s own truths and standards invites the active search for truths and standards beyond one’s making.” (From *The Beginning of Wisdom*, p.238).

People often understand religion as being about eternal truths, but its purpose is actually the opposite. Religion reminds us that we, humans, do not have the truth—only God does. We live in a world of partial truths and of conflicting subjective truths. The response to the chaos of the world of the flood is not to have a world of lockstep unity. It is not only that lockstep can too easily become goose step. Diversity encourages criticism and challenges the way things are. While it would be easier to live in a world where everyone spoke the same language, it would also create a sameness to life. Imagine the nuances of different languages that would be lost if there was only one language in the world. Different languages, different races, and different countries all lead to notions of multiple truths. Diversity allows individuals to be individuals rather than be forced to

conform to one collective vision of the world. The answer to the challenges of life isn’t that we should all be the same, but that we all be fully our unique selves, while able to appreciate all the human beings that inhabit this planet. How? When we accept that each of us is an image of God, we acknowledge the essential sameness of every human being and that we all are connected to the underlying unity of the world called God.

Indeed, unity is realized when we embrace the diversity of the world. Genocide comes about when we reject that diversity. Here is the point. Judaism doesn’t want the whole world to be Jewish. The whole world is God’s creation. That world is filled with endless species, reminding us that diversity is the basic paradigm of our world not sameness. The building of the *mishkan* brings people together – in such a place God dwells.

Creating the world, the *mishkan*, or your life is an act of generosity. You build by giving away. You give love and you offer caring and support. It is not a matter of self-interest – I’ll help you today so you will help me tomorrow. Hasidism taught that God created the world as an act of *hesed*/generosity, based on the verse *olam hesed yibaneh* – the world was built through lovingkindness (Ps. 89:3). We want to live in a place of open heartedness. Too often we are afraid, and live in a place of clutching, of anxiety, or even with a sense of deprivation. The heart is limitless in its capacity to love and to give. It is one of the ways that we are created in the image of God – the ability to love. The well of love does not run dry. Even if God is not in the details, redemption certainly is. It is small acts that help make the redemption of the everyday and the rarer moments of societal redemption come to pass.

The portable sanctuary that accompanied the Israelites during their wanderings in the desert reminds us that wherever we go, God is there. The whole world is the house of God. Wherever we go we are to continue the work of creation. We are the ones who are responsible for what happens in this world.

When the Israelites camped in the wilderness, the *mishkan* was at the center of the encampment. There were three tribes on each side. At the center of a people’s journey are the history, the values, and the vision that connects them to the past and carries them into the future. Without that they will only be aimless wanderers in the desert, a place of shifting mirages that can deceive people into drinking sand.

*Excerpted from the new book, Judaism Disrupted: A Spiritual Manifesto for the 21st Century, which has been published on the 50th anniversary of Rabbi Michael Strassfeld’s 1973 breakthrough best-seller The Jewish Catalog. Rabbi Strassfeld and his wife, Rabbi Joy Levitt, have a home in the Berkshires.*



**Rabbi Michael Strassfeld** will speak about his book at Federation’s Knosh & Knowledge program on October 13. More info to come in a future issue of the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

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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 Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.* All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

*Please note: Starting in June and continuing through the summer months, lunch will not be prepared on Tuesdays. Tuesday lunches will resume in the autumn.*

**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.



Jewish Federation  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

## What’s for Lunch?

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

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

### 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.
- THURSDAY, 4**..... Vegetable enchilada casserole, salad, yellow rice with pimento, hearty white bread, and churros.
- MONDAY, 8**..... Roasted chicken\*\*#, celery rice soup, green beans almandine, noodles & onions, salad, pumpernickel bread, and apricots.
- TUESDAY, 9**..... Spaghetti & “sausage” sauce#, Italian blend vegetables, salad, garlic bread, and grapes.
- THURSDAY, 11** ..... Fresh fish\*\*, rice pilaf, oven roasted cauliflower & broccoli, salad, challah, and cookies.
- MONDAY, 15**..... Salisbury steak with mushrooms\*\*#, hash browns, mixed vegetables, rye bread, and applesauce.
- TUESDAY, 16**..... Poultry piccata\*\*#, mango juice, rice pilaf with mushrooms, mixed vegetables, oat bread, and tropical fruit salad.
- THURSDAY, 18**..... Macaroni & cheese, zucchini & tomato medley, salad, farmer’s loaf, and Mandarin oranges.

**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.

- MONDAY, 22**..... Hot dogs & hamburgers\*\*#, coleslaw, three bean salad, potato chips, hot dog or hamburger roll, and pears.
- TUESDAY, 23**..... Fish sticks#, French fries, salad, beets, wheat bread, and peaches.
- THURSDAY, 25**..... Shavuot luncheon: Blintze souffle, fresh fruit salad, asparagus cuts n tips, salad, challah, and chocolate chip cookies.
- MONDAY, 29**..... Closed for Memorial Day
- TUESDAY, 30**..... Breaded chicken cutlets#, mini egg roll & duck sauce, Tuscan blend vegetables, sandwich roll, and fruit cocktail.
- JUNE**
- THURSDAY, 1**..... Tuna salad & cottage cheese platters\*\*, salad, rye bread, and cookies.
- MONDAY, 5**..... Meat loaf, gazpacho, French fries, green beans, whole wheat bread, and tea biscuits.
- THURSDAY, 8**..... Maudeh (Sephardic chicken & potatoes)\*\*#, salad, crusty white bread, and parve rice pudding.
- MONDAY, 12**..... Stir fried chicken, rice, Oriental blend vegetables, pumpernickel bread, and pineapple.

## MAZEL TOV!

**Lisa Pincus Hamroff**, who is relocating to Boca Raton, FL, to serve as the vice president of Community Engagement at the Adolph and Rose Levis Jewish Community Center.

**Julia Kaplan** on the marriage of her daughter **Sasha Lynn Shulman** to **Patrick O’Keefe**.

### Knesset Israel 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

#### ONGOING MINYANS

Saturday, ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Sunday, ..... 8:45 a.m.  
Tuesday, ..... 7 p.m. Zoom only  
Thursday, ..... 7 p.m., Zoom only  
Friday, ..... 5:45 p.m.



#### CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Friday, May 5 ..... 7:38 p.m.  
Friday, May 12 ..... 7:46 p.m.  
Friday, May 19 ..... 7:53 p.m.  
Thursday, May 25  
(Erev Shavuot) ..... 7:59 p.m.  
Friday, May 26  
(Shavuot) ..... 8 p.m.  
Friday, June 2 ..... 8:06 p.m.



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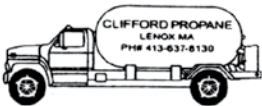
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CULTURE & ARTS

“In a perfect world, every day is Tu Bishvat”

**BJV Interview: Tamar Haspel, author of To Boldly Grow: Finding Joy, Adventure, and Dinner in Your Own Backyard**

On Wednesday, May 31 at 7 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents “*To Boldly Grow: Judaism, Food, and Sustainability*,” an inspirational and timely discussion with journalist and author Tamar Haspel.

**Richard Slutzky** is vice president of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, past chair of Hazon, and current member of the board of Adamah. In April, Richard interviewed Tamar about her book and environmental issues for the Berkshires Jewish Voice. For more on Adamah and our Federation’s membership in the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, please see page 20.

**As we approach Earth Day, and having recently celebrated Tu BiShvat (when it is traditional for Jews to plant a tree), from your perspective, why is it important for us individually and as a community to reflect on our connection with the land? What’s wrong with the status quo?**

Tu Bishvat is my kind of holiday, because trees are amazing – something I never fully realized until I lived among them. The fruit and nuts that come from trees are some of the most sustainable foods we can eat, and the sheer size of trees means they can sequester carbon better than almost anything going. As deforestation continues to be one of the main drivers of climate change, appreciation for trees becomes almost existentially important. So, I guess in a perfect world, every day is Tu Bishvat.

**As described in your book, To Boldly Grow, you and your husband Kevin went all out, trying different ways to live off the land and eat “off the grid” for all of your food needs, including gardening in sandy Cape Cod, chicken raising, fishing, foraging, turkey raising, and hunting. If we want to educate our readers on some easy steps they can take to lower their carbon footprint from food consumption and to eat less packaged foods, what would be some of your recommendations? What can we do with our food consumption to reduce the specter of global warming and climate change?**

First, I think it’s important to be clear: food you grow yourself isn’t necessarily a climate win. If you can grow a head of lettuce from seed, without too many trips to the garden store, that probably is a win, but I can pretty much guarantee that supermarket eggs, from birds grown super-efficiently and kept in cages, have a lower carbon footprint than my backyard eggs. The nature of efficiency is that it uses fewer resources, but it has other downsides. Birds in cages, for example.

Working first-hand with plants and animals connects us to the foods humans thrive on. Hang out with chickens, forage for mushrooms,



grow a tomato, and the stuff in the boxes and bags with the bright colors and exciting punctuation starts to look a lot less like food.

**I never thought that growing your own food would involve so many adventures, and your book, inasmuch as it is about food, is also about adapting and living creatively to feed yourself, much like our ancestors had to be creative in hunting and gathering their food sources. Do you have a favorite food-gathering adventure or misadventure that still reverberates for you, even after completing the book?**

It’s hard to pick! But I think what has affected me most has been what was also the most difficult thing I did – killing an animal for food. I know I should be pushing the fun stuff here, but the truth is that the part of the book that’s probably hardest to read (don’t worry – it’s not that hard and there are still fun parts!) was also the most meaningful and compelling. Raising and killing a turkey, or shooting a deer in the wild, means you never eat meat without thinking about the animal it once was. And you’ll never waste any, ever again.

**Here in the Berkshires, there are many CSAs (community supported agricultural farms), food stalls at farms, and farmers markets where we can get true farm-to-table food. And then there is, on the other hand, large corporate industrial agriculture that generates most of the country’s food. It seems that there is often polarization about these two extremes. When you look at our parallel need to farm in an environmentally responsible way but also raise enough food to feed our population and have some food to export to needy countries, is there a happy medium, or is this discussion always going to be a polarizing one?**

Now that’s a great question! And there are so many issues wrapped up in it. I’m a huge fan of local food. I love that farmers’ markets can become community touchstones, and that there’s a place to take a kid to meet a pig. Local farms keep open spaces and contribute to the local economy. But local food is usually not a climate win, for the same reasons that home-grown often isn’t. And, as you note, we have to feed 8 billion people, and to do it we have to grow food at scale. And we have to do it in a way that’s environmentally responsible as possible.

I think we need both small local farmers keeping communities connected to the idea that food has to come from somewhere, and large farms growing huge amounts of the food that feeds the world.



**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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CULTURE & ARTS

Book Review: Elizabeth Graver’s *Kantika* – A Vibrant Portrait of Bravery

By Roberta Silman via The Arts Fuse (artsfuse.org)

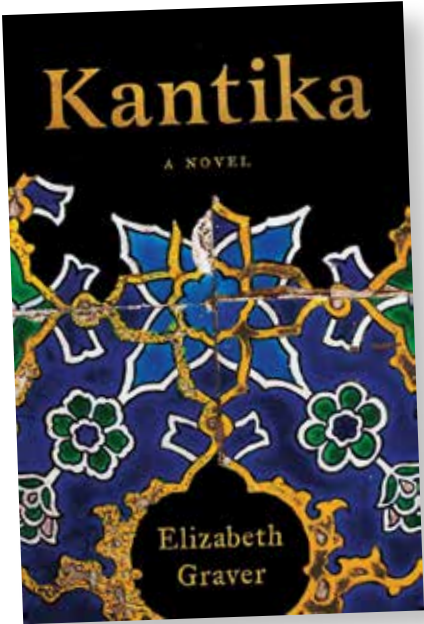
For info on Elizabeth Graver’s *Knosh & Knowledge* program (with Sarah Aroeste) on Friday, June 2, please see page 5. On Thursday, May 11, Federation hosts Roberta Silman for a discussion about her newest book, *Summer Lightning* – please see page 5 for details.

*Kantika* is Elizabeth Graver’s poignant homage to her grandmother, but it is also a testament to her talent as a storyteller, to make a narrative so believable and compelling and, indeed, sometimes funny, just as it is in life.

“*Kantika*” means song in Ladino, the language of the Sephardic Jews, and in this sweeping epic based on the life of her grandmother, Rebecca Cohen Baruch Levy, Elizabeth Graver has created a fascinating mixture of novel and memoir, complete with photographs, that is its own unique song of a Turkish family journeying through the first half of the 20th century. Very different from the usual rags-to-riches narratives of the Ashkenazic Jews who came from Eastern Europe, *Kantika* is about privileged proud people who suffer loss after loss, but whose hold on their traditions, their unswerving belief in *El Dyo*, and their innate sense of self-worth sustain them again and again.

As I read I was reminded of the eerie feelings I experienced whenever we traveled to the Middle East – to Jerusalem and Egypt and later to Turkey – that there, in the place where civilization began, there is a sense that the past is somehow still mingled with the present in ways that one does not feel in other parts of the world. It may come from the street noises in the bazaar, or the Muslim call to prayer five times a day, or just the echo of footsteps on those ancient streets. I don’t know. But it is palpable, and somehow, with authentic details and a mixture of Ladino phrases, Graver conveys the exotic allure of that culture, plunging the reader into the world of Constantinople in the early 1900s.

The novel starts off with the comings and goings of the second daughter Rebecca and her best friend Rahelika, whom they call Lika, and who lives in the very apartment house where the witch-like figure of Rebecca’s father’s first wife



of a great-grandfather consigned to a role he never imagined. His defeat is emblematic of the loss of power occurring all over the world; these once commanding Jewish men, heads of families and prosperous businesses, lose their identity. Because Fascism, with one of its main components, anti-Semitism, is becoming rife everywhere.

At this juncture so many of the women, until now subervient, have to take things into their hands. Sultana gathers strength, and by watching the dynamic shift in her family, Rebecca acquires the knowledge and insight she will need as she goes forward. In Barcelona, she relinquishes her plans for a higher education and manages to get a job as a seamstress. Though only after she obscures her Jewish heritage and takes a pseudonym. Soon she has her own shop but no husband. She marries badly, to a man who is not quite right and who has “docked in too many ports” according to those who know him best. She decides, after two sons, there will be no more sex, and soon he disappears. There’s an almost hilarious, if it weren’t so tragic, attempt to join him back in Turkey – Adrianople – where Rebecca is told that he has died and returns with her two sons to her parents in Barcelona.

There is an interlude, which may be intended as some comic relief, but was the least convincing part of the book. The family becomes involved with a filmmaker who is making documentaries about the Jewish diaspora. But then we are plunged into the politics of the time: Spain in the ‘30s is a place of enormous turmoil and the future is bleak. This is where *Kantika* makes an interesting turn, and we are reminded of the amazing risks that our ancestors took for the reason that there were so few choices.

A letter arrives from her older sister Corinne who has emigrated to New York. Unexpected yet sensible, it proposes marriage to the man Lika married in New York. They were childhood sweethearts and Rebecca knew him casually; then Lika died in childbirth with the second child. There is a daughter Luna who has some health issues, but, as Corinne says:

*Sam needs a wife and you need a husband, and your sons need a father and Luna a mother. Being married to a United States citizen, which Sam already is, would be a sure way to get you to America. Our efforts to bring the whole family over at once are going nowhere. . . . How to bring you over is increasingly on our minds when we read about what is happening in Europe. . . I don’t know what you’ve seen, Rebecca, but [my husband] showed me an article about a Spanish poster, widely distributed over there, that called Jews a sinister force, along with Bolsheviks and Freemasons. In short, it seems like the tide is turning and could really turn. . . You would marry in Cuba so you could gain entrance as Sam’s wife, but that’s simple to do, and the perfect place for a honeymoon. . . . If you’ll consider this idea. . . .*

After Rebecca absorbs the fact that her father was the propelling force behind the letter – in the end Alberto had more agency than anyone gave him credit for – she agrees and a new life starts with Sam Levy. But there is one more surprise in store: Sam and Lika’s daughter Luna is more damaged than anyone has indicated thus far. Although it is never stated in the novel, she has cerebral palsy; she is highly intelligent but her condition and care have tyrannized the family – Sam and his widowed mother and his sisters – and she is viewed by a panicked Rebecca as “an animal,” still wearing diapers at seven years old. But by a twist of fate she is now Rebecca’s child. So begins the struggle between these two as Rebecca insists on the kind of hard work that will make Luna self-sufficient. Some of this is told from Rebecca’s point of view, some from Luna’s – she has named Rebecca “Newmother”

Graver portrays the pain of a great-grandfather consigned to a role he never imagined. His defeat is emblematic of the loss of power occurring all over the world; these once commanding Jewish men . . . lose their identity.

reigns. A woman who could not have children and is thus consigned to a spinster’s life caring for her ancient mother. Her name is *Tiya* (Aunt) Djentil and soon the girls are spending time with her, listening to her stories, comforting her when she is lonely.

Her plight begins to haunt Rebecca and her very existence answers many of Rebecca’s questions: Why her father Alberto is so much older than her mother Sultana. Why he continues to live above their means, even after it becomes clear that times are getting harder and harder for his once-thriving textile business. Why he retreats so often to his beloved garden. And also why the children – six in all – are so cherished. After *Tiya* Djentil is long dead, her sad fate will serve as a reminder of what not to become as Rebecca navigates her own fears and desires and becomes the linchpin of the story.

With the onset of World War I everything changes. “So it is that Rebecca’s childhood – the beautiful time, she will also think so – ends in a matter of hours.” Her beloved school closes, her favorite teacher leaves for France, her friend Lika’s father loses his job and that family emigrates to America, she and her sister end up in a terrible German school, and finances tighten. Those magical family times of peace and relaxation so prized by Jewish families, especially on the Sabbath and holidays, become relics of a fast-disappearing past.

By 1924 it is clear that this once hospitable city for Jews has changed. People are leaving for Palestine or other parts of Europe, especially England, or America. Alberto is desperate and finally agrees to take a job with a small synagogue in Barcelona as the *shammash* (caretaker), although he lies to his family and tells them he will be the cantor. In moving, simple language, Graver portrays the pain



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CULTURE & ARTS

in her mind – and their story is simultaneously heart-breaking and triumphant as they first circle around each other, then establish a connection as important as anything either of them will ever know as Luna matures.

*Kantika* is a novel about bravery. It is not only the courage necessary for exile and readjustment and making a new family – Sam and Rebecca will eventually have three children of their own, bringing the number to six after Rebecca's two boys David and Alberto come from Barcelona to New York – but the bravery of dealing with a handicapped child whose enormous potential has not yet been tapped. Here Graver does a wonderful job, never descending into sentimentality but presenting the situation with great understanding and empathy: how “Newmother” becomes Mother; how this family endures the hurts and humiliations that come with having Luna in their midst; and how Rebecca's steady determination propels them all in the right direction. *Kantika* is Graver's poignant homage to her grandmother, but it is also a testament to her talent as a storyteller, to make this part of the narrative so believable and compelling and, indeed, sometimes funny, just as it is in life.

In delving into Luna's life and thoughts, Graver also explores the role of our bodies in our lives. She dramatizes how a body like Luna's can rebel but ultimately be controlled, how physical intimacy can comfort us in difficult times, and how our knowledge of our bodies can lead to unsuspected truths. It is one of the central themes in this novel: surprises that start with efforts to tame the body often lead to unexpected pleasures, to what the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky called “delicate joy.”

By 1950, when the book ends and they have their own home and Sam owns his own candy store, Rebecca thinks about her life as she enters middle age:

Rebecca is fine, even lucky, but while she would never say it to her siblings, whose struggles in Spain dwarfed her own, her disappointments are many. She is not rich or even well-to-do, though she was born to be, and spends too much time clipping coupons, stretching meals (more lentils, more onions) and scrounging for bargains, which depresses her despite her knack for it. She is not surrounded by family and has a perpetual sense of being not quite at home, no matter how many bulbs she plants and her pear tree growing bigger every year. English has never become her language, even as her Ladino and French have dimmed, and she often feels thick-tongued (in this, she shares something with Luna), without recourse to the present or the past. More than anything, she is often lonely, wanting more

chatter, more cuddling, more laughter and especially – is it odd for a woman her age, a mother of six? – more play.

What saves her in mid-life is that, in addition to all her responsibilities as a wife and mother, she sings a repertoire of Spanish, Hebrew and Ladino songs at the Cambria Heights Jewish Center where she has “a small but devoted following.” Her beautiful voice brings to life those haunting melodies that hold all her memories of that enchanted childhood when she and her siblings and their beloved parents would stroll – so carefree before the world changed utterly – on the shores of the Bosphorus.

*Kantika* by Elizabeth Graver. Metropolitan Books, 304 pages, \$27.99.

**This review first appeared in The Arts Fuse ([artsfuse.org/](http://artsfuse.org/)) Boston's premier online arts magazine.**



Roberta Silman  
Roberta Silman is the author of five novels, a short story collection, and two children's books. Her latest, Summer Lightning, has been released as a paperback, an ebook, and an audiobook. Secrets and Shadows (Arts Fuse review), is in its second printing and is available on Amazon. It was chosen as one of the best Indie Books of 2018 by Kirkus and it is now available as an audiobook from Alison Larkin Presents. A recipient of Fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, she has reviewed for the New York Times and Boston Globe, and writes regularly for the Arts Fuse. More about her can be found at [robertasilman.com](http://robertasilman.com) and she can also be reached at [rsilman@verizon.net](mailto:rsilman@verizon.net).

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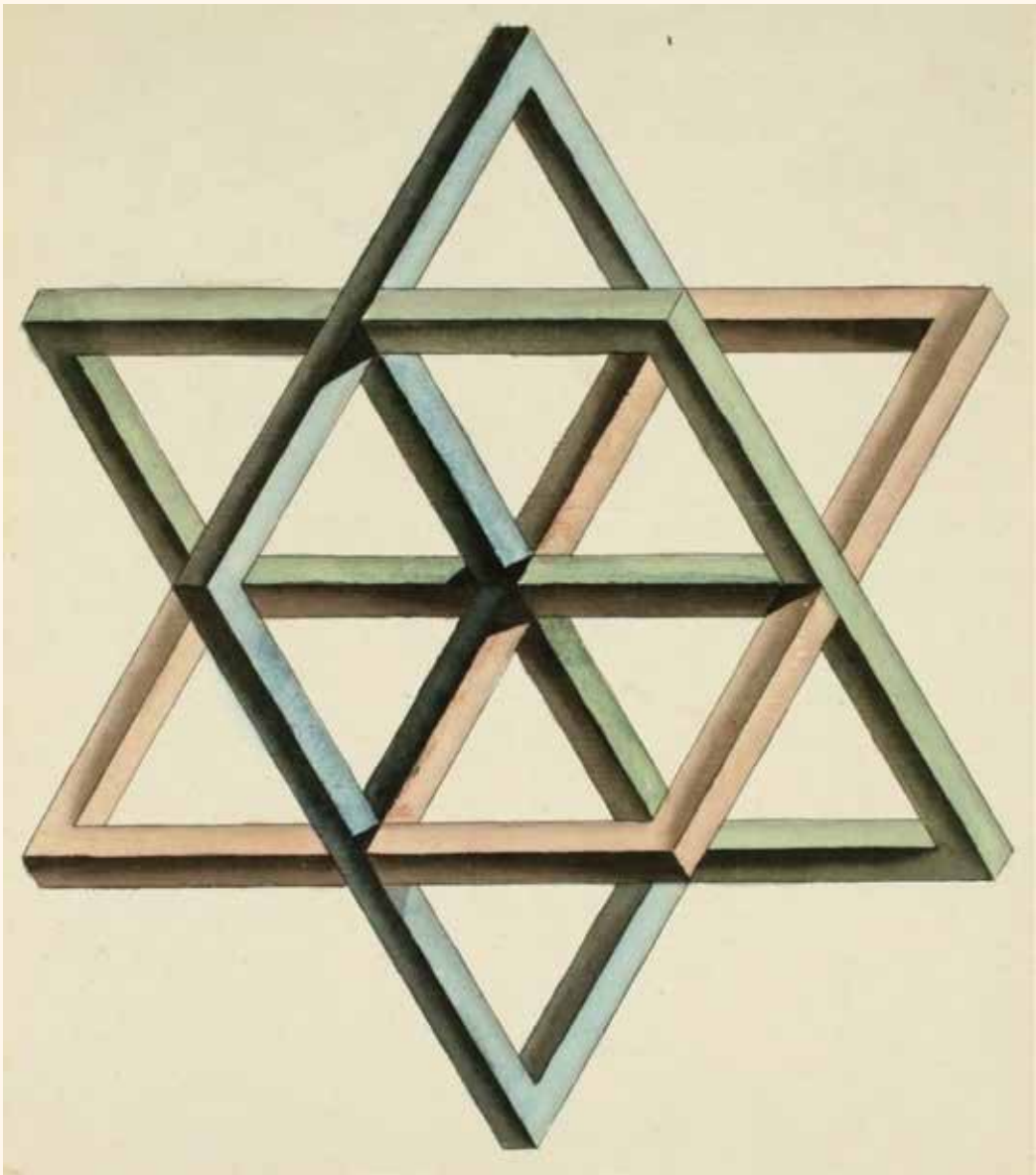


CULTURE & ARTS

What is the Star of David?

*This common symbol for Judaism and Israel is newer than one might think.*

By My Jewish Learning



Another alchemist take on the complexities of the hexagram from the Manly Palmer Hall collection of alchemical manuscripts, 1500-1825

The six-pointed Star of David is a common symbol for both Judaism and Israel. Known in Hebrew as a Magen David (shield of David), geometrically it is two triangles superimposed on each other, forming the shape of a hexagram.

Though today the symbol popularly communicates Jewishness, its associations with Judaism are newer than one might think. Some historians trace it to Jewish communities in the Middle Ages, but these claims are neither fully substantiated nor widely accepted.

What we do know is that in the 17th century, the Jewish quarter of Vienna was marked with a hexagram, to distinguish it from the rest of the city. Around this time, the star also became part of synagogue architecture both in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa.

After the Dreyfus Affair in the 19th century, the star was adopted by the Zionist movement at its 1897 Congress, and this gave the symbol more international prominence. In the 20th century, the star became even more evocative of Judaism when it was used by the Nazis to mark Jews for persecution. And after the Holocaust, the same star became part of the flag of the nascent State of Israel.

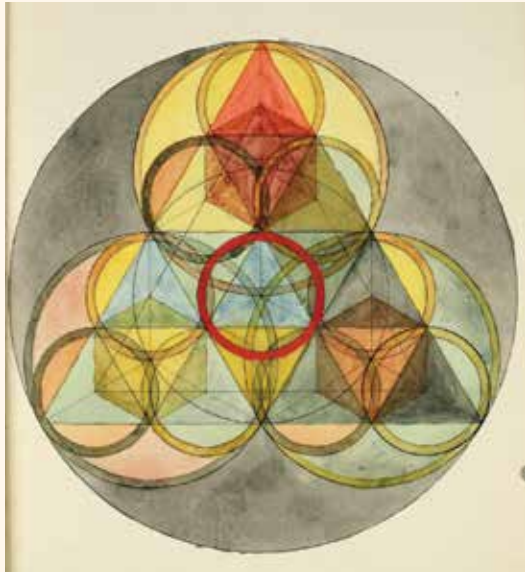
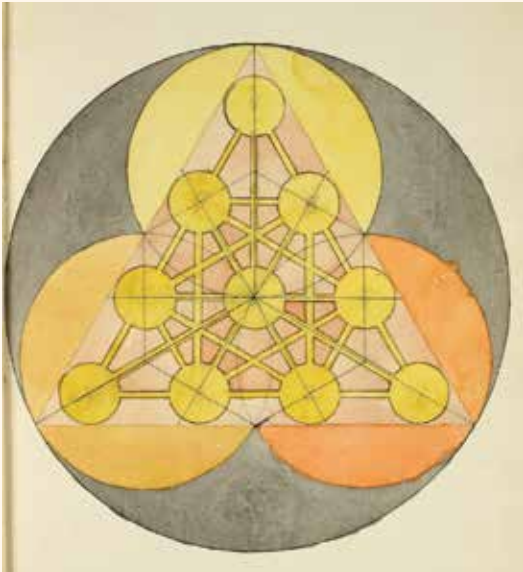
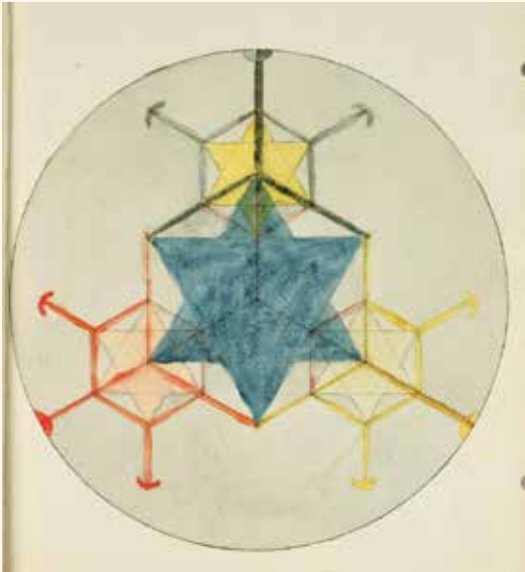
What exactly does it symbolize? Many explanations have been suggested, but none is universally accepted. According

to the Zohar, a medieval book of Jewish mysticism, the six points of the star represent the six male *sefirot* (attributes of God), in union with the seventh *sefirah* of the female (the center of the shape).

A more modern, existentialist commentary on the Star of David was advanced by the philosopher Franz Rosenzweig in the *Star of Redemption*, which he wrote on postcards during World War I. Rosenzweig described two interlocking triangles – the corners of one representing creation, revelation, and redemption; the corners of the other representing Man, the World and God.

Today, the Star of David is incorporated into Jewish jewelry design, and it is also commonly found on Judaica objects – from Kiddush cups, to mezuzahs and kippot (and in some Jewish communities, it is engraved on coffins). In Israel, the equivalent of the Red Cross is call Magen David Adom – the “red Star of David.”

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More hexagrams from the Manly Palmer Hall collection of alchemical manuscripts, 1500-1825