

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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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Pittsfield, MA
Permit No. 19

Volume 32, No. 3

Adar 2 / Nisan 5784

April 1 to May 3, 2024

jewishberkshires.org

Songs of the Lost Communities Concert

Sephardic and Ashkenazi music celebrating the vitality of prewar Jewish life to commemorate Yom HaShoah



PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, May 5 at 2 p.m., join us for a community commemoration of Yom HaShoah-Holocaust Remembrance Day with a concert featuring “Songs of the Lost Communities” with Laura Wetzler, singer, songwriter, guitarist, recording artist, and lecturer.

The music will include songs from both Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities celebrating the vitality of prewar Jewish life to commemorate the Holocaust. Laura’s father Rudi was a Nazi-era survivor from Frankfurt, Germany.

This free event will take place at the Berkshire Museum’s Little Cinema, 39 South Street in Pittsfield.

Following the concert will be a candle lighting, prayers and a moment of silence in memory of those murdered in the Holocaust.

Laura Wetzler tours in over 100 concerts and lectures each year across the US and Europe. She has devoted years of study and performance to diverse, multi-cultural World musics, as well as to the history of American popular entertainment and European art music. Her specialty is Jewish music from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

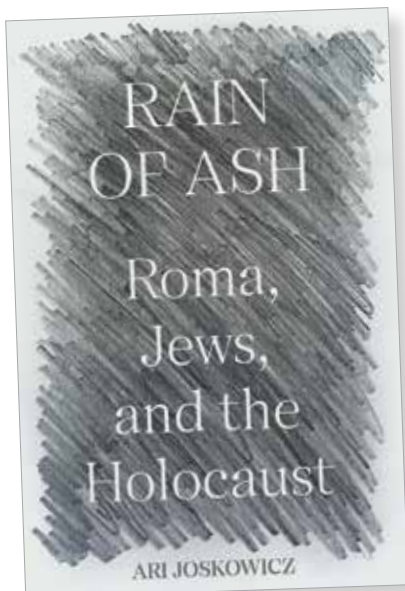
LOST COMMUNITIES CONCERT,
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Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust with Ari Joskowicz

On Monday, April 8 at 7 p.m., we are pleased to host Ari Joskowicz, associate professor of Jewish studies, history, and European studies at Vanderbilt University, who will discuss his new book, *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust*.

This Zoom presentation is part of “Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.” Register via the calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Jews and Roma died side by side in the Holocaust, yet the world did not recognize their destruction equally. In the years and decades following the war, the Jewish experience of genocide increasingly occupied the attention of legal experts, scholars, educators, curators, and politicians, while the genocide of Europe’s Roma went largely ignored.



Rain of Ash is the untold story of how Roma turned to Jewish institutions, funding sources, and professional networks as they sought to gain recognition and compensation for their wartime suffering.

Rain of Ash is a revelatory account of the unequal yet necessary entanglement of Jewish and Romani quests for historical justice and self-representation that challenges us to radically rethink the way we remember the Holocaust.

RAIN OF ASH,
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Happy Passover 5784

“Without a Choir? Come, Let’s Sing!”

So reads the Hebrew in this vintage gouache on cardboard image executed by Gidon Gidi Kaich in the 1940s. Were it merely nostalgia rather than a reminder of the ongoing need for a secure State of Israel – a close look at the singers shows one wearing a hat of the Palmach, with an automatic weapon slung over his shoulder. In this difficult moment in our history, may we come together as we always do in *Zman Cherutenu* (the time of our freedom) to celebrate our release from bondage and to pray for the freedom of our sisters and brothers now in captivity.



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Sunday, May 19 at 2 p.m.

Jewish Community Day at High Lawn Farm

Join for a fun-filled day of ice cream, animals, crafts, music, and more as we celebrate our faith and culture with Jewish pride and joy. We will also celebrate PJ Library’s 18th birthday and enjoy tasty treats at the Milk Bar. L’ Chayim!

DO A MITZVAH

Throughout the Month of May

Help Federation respond to the urgent food insecurity crisis by donating pasta and rice for distribution to food pantries across the Berkshires.



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OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

Redemption Takes Much More than a Heartbeat

Thoughts on the message of Seder in a troubled time

By Rabbi David Weiner / Knesset Israel



Rabbi David Weiner

“The more we embellish the telling of the story of the Exodus, the better.” With this phrase, the authors of the Haggadah set the tone for the Seder – the night of song and conversation, questions and narrative, symbolic foods and a sumptuous feast – that kicks off our celebration of Passover. Participants turn the story from different angles, connect with ancestors who celebrated Seder in different times and circumstances, and reflect on its contemporary meaning. The more elaborate our retelling, the more relevant our interpretations, the better.

Using the Exodus story as a paradigm for understanding the Jewish experience is an ancient practice. We even find the story

in other parts of scripture, including the Book of Esther. At times, Esther plays Passover for laughs: Why doesn't the queen serve food at the drinking party she prepares for Ahashverosh and Haman? Because the party takes place in the middle of Passover, and Esther didn't want to explain why she's serving matza balls. Why does Esther hold two drinking parties, on two consecutive nights, when one would suffice? Surely that question resonates with anyone who typically attends a second Seder. Like most humorous books, however, Esther is not only written for laughs, and its juxtaposition to Passover yields depths of meaning. A close reading shows us that Esther asks the Jews of Shushan to fast for three days not on just any day but over what would be that year's Seder eve. Theologically, this was a gutsy protest of divine silence in the face of persecution. For one year, a fast replaced the annual feast, transforming the celebration of redemption into a desperate plea for relief.

The Book of Esther and the Haggadah also share a common fantasy: that redemption can come as quickly as destruction. The theme emerges in the Haggadah, especially in the hymns of praise later in the book, poems that imagine God transforming our lives overnight “from slavery to freedom, mourning to festival, despair to joy.” That our ancestors left Egypt at midnight and crossed the sea in the dark hours before dawn intensifies the Haggadah's message of hope for instantaneous redemption at the darkest times. Similarly, the inspiring refrain of the Megillah is “V'na'hafoch hu – Everything turned upside down.” Everything changes in an instant. Haman the king's vizier swings from a tree. Mordecai, a pariah and a foreigner, becomes a prosperous royal

advisor. Esther, moments after begging for her life, suddenly attains great power. The condemned Jews of Persia take a deep breath, defend themselves, then throw a party. Redemption seems effortless, sudden, and instantaneous.

But this year I find myself wondering: Is the Book of Esther preaching that God redeems the faithful overnight, just like God took us out of Egypt? Or is it slyly satirizing the cherished and somewhat absurd Jewish fantasy of instantaneous, effortless salvation? In my experience, devastation is quick, but building and rebuilding take time. An accident, a hurricane, or a bomb strikes instantaneously, yet recovery may require a decade of sustained investment. A town that can be leveled in hours will take years to build. A saboteur can quickly tear down even entrenched norms of civil society, institutions that can be created only over generations. Trust betrayed in an instant can only be restored through years of deliberate, focused effort. Light turns to darkness quickly, but darkness has a way of lingering, and it takes a long time for light to reemerge.

This year as I prepare to sit at the Seder table, my hopes are tempered by my understanding that redemption takes much more than a heartbeat. As I retell the Exodus, I will celebrate God's strong and outstretched arm that brought about the end of slavery and the crossing of the sea. I will also be

Light turns to darkness quickly, but darkness has a way of lingering, and it takes a long time for light to reemerge.

reflecting humbly on the journey that followed it – forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Over two generations, our ancestors journeyed, changed, confronted foes, reckoned with loss, and developed before they could even contemplate entering the Promised Land.

I will join in the 3000-year chorus of our ancestors who prayed for effortless, sudden, instantaneous redemption not because I believe in the impossible but instead to establish a hopeful vision for the future. I intend for the song, food, story, and the vision it represents, to inspire everyone at my Seder table for the long, slow work ahead of us. We cannot despair or desist. With faith and perseverance, we might just build a more just, secure, prosperous, and peaceful society.

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

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OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

Federation – A Community Worth Engaging With

By Arlene D. Schiff / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

“Experiencing a sense of belonging is vital for our psychological well-being. Being part of a healthy community can help us feel connected to others, as well as feel we’re part of something larger than ourselves”

– Samantha Stein Psy.D., Psychology Today



Arlene D. Schiff

Can you think of a time when you did not want to be part of a community? I cannot.

Among my most cherished memories from my youth are the times I spent in community. I attended Girl Scout meetings, ran a Big Brothers, Big Sisters program for underprivileged youth at my JCC, went to summer camp, participated in BBYO, was a member of an Israeli dance troupe, and walked to raise money to address hunger.

BBYO, in particular, played a significant role in shaping my sense of belonging and connection to the Jewish community. Whether I was playing volleyball, attending Shabbatons, serving on my local board, or implementing programs, BBYO provided a space where I could be myself, instantly connect with others because of our shared Jewish heritage, and confidently put my leadership skills to work.

When I started college, I joined a sorority.

It was a great opportunity for me to meet people who shared similar interests and values. I found a supportive community of like-minded individuals who were invested in my personal and academic growth. Even after forty years, I am still in touch with many of these women. And when we reunite, it feels like we just saw each other yesterday. The bond we share is instant and strong.

Graduate school can be a daunting experience, but I was fortunate to have formed a tight-knit community with my classmates. Together, we provided each other with the necessary support to navigate the rigorous curriculum. It was through this community that we not only succeeded academically but also formed lifelong friendships and valuable professional connections.

When I moved to the Berkshires, I found it challenging to find a community. I would visit a local gym every day, but I never seemed to connect with anyone there. When I shared my concerns with a colleague, they explained that the reason for this was that most people at the gym already had their community. They had grown up in the area and had known each other for their entire lives.

After living here for a while, my husband and I received an invitation to take part in a program organized by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Now we had a platform upon which to create community. We attended events with other residents of Berkshire County who were of a similar age and demographic. We would gather once a month to socialize and discuss various Jewish topics. This helped us build deeper relationships and connections with others with similar values.

Throughout my professional career, I have focused on community building. As an active volunteer for both secular and Jewish organizations, my passion for creating and strengthening community has been a driving force. As the current president of Federation, my top priority is to continue to build community amongst our diverse Jewish population.

Community building is at the heart of what our Federation does every day. We bring young parents and children together through PJ Library; provide scholarships for youth to attend Jewish summer camp or participate in trips to Israel;

My passion for creating and strengthening community has been a driving force. As the current president of Federation, my top priority is to continue to build community amongst our diverse Jewish population.

convene community members for kosher meals; and offer engaging programming and community events; both in-person and online, wanting to offer something for everyone. We support a collaboration with the Clark Art Institute to connect Berkshire County youth with their peers in Israel through the Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod program. Following October 7, we have increased our efforts to stand together to support our community in Israel and to fight against antisemitism here in Berkshire County.

Federation’s mission is to engage and connect all who desire Jewish interaction. Every individual plays a crucial role in building a strong and thriving Berkshire Jewish community. As a Berkshire Jewish Voice reader, I hope you feel a deep connection and sense of belonging.

If you are already a program participant, volunteer, or donor, thank you for prioritizing community engagement. I hope the benefits you experience exceed your investment. If you are currently not connected, I encourage you to explore these pages and find something that inspires you to do so.

Reflecting on my experience, I appreciate the importance of community in our lives and the journey we take to find it. This experience has shown me that finding a community where we feel accepted and supported can be a challenging journey, but it is a journey worth taking.

Arlene D. Schiff began her term as president of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in January 2024. A longtime resident of Lenox, she is the former national director of Life & Legacy, a flagship program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, where she remains a senior advisor.

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Next issue publication date: **May 4, 2024 – June 14, 2024**

Press deadline: **March 18, 2024** • Advertising deadline: **April 17, 2024**

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Your Federation Presents

Haroset Around the World: Virtual Cooking Demo with Chef Susan Barocas



Chef Barocas's haroset balls, part of the Moroccan Passover tradition. They are scooped up with romaine lettuce at the Seder.

On Thursday, April 4 at 7 p.m., join Chef Susan Barocas for an interactive virtual cooking demo and teaching on haroset varieties that reflect the mosaic of Judaism around the world.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented on Zoom. Register for this program via the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org.

Haroset, one of Passover's favorite symbolic foods, is also one of the holiday's most diverse dishes, varying greatly by cultures and cuisines, not to

mention the influences of each family and individual cook. From haroset pyramids and balls to cooked haroset, join Chef Susan Barocas to explore some of the many special traditions from Turkey, Persia, Morocco and beyond along with ideas for fun, delicious haroset-related activities at the Seder.

Writer, chef and cooking instructor **Susan Barocas** is passionate about healthy, no-waste cooking and Jewish food, especially Sephardic history, cultures and cuisines. Founding director of the innovative Jewish Food Experience, she served as guest chef for three of President Obama's White House Seders.

The Gospel of Seltzer: An Interactive Journey

Take the trip with seltzer maven **Barry Joseph**, "The Effervescent Jew"

On Thursday, April 18 at 7 p.m., Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes back Barry Joseph, author of *Seltzertopia*, whose topic will be: The Gospel of Seltzer: An Interactive Journey.

Throughout history, and across America today, seltzer's fizzy flavor has attracted a loyalty and passion that often defies logic. Seltzer is more popular now than at any time in the past, reflecting the desires and cultural expectations of those who partake of its bubbles. How did such an ordinary drink become so extraordinary?

This free Federation program will be presented via Zoom. Register via the calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Join Barry Joseph, co-founder of the new Brooklyn Seltzer Museum, on an energetic journey exploring the story of seltzer past and present. From health to refreshment, identity, and even comedy, he will discuss the opening of the new Museum and the ways we infuse this unassuming beverage with meaning.

Barry Joseph's career has included positions at prominent educational and cultural organizations. His effervescent expertise has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *NPR's All Things Considered*, *CBS Morning News*, *Boston Magazine*, *The New York Post*, and more. He became interested in the history and cultural impact of seltzer after writing an article about SodaStream for *The Forward* in 2004 and receiving an outpouring of responses from readers demonstrating their passion for the fizzy.

He is currently an adjunct professor at New York University in their Learning Technology and Experience Design graduate program. His most recent book – *Making Dinosaurs Dance: A Toolkit for Digital Design in Museums* – came out earlier this year and his next, coming in 2025, is about Stephen Sondheim.



'Es macht mir tsu greptsen'

Images of Contemporary Holocaust Representation



Audrey Flack's dye-transfer photograph "World War II (Vanitas)," 1975

On Thursday, May 2 at 7 p.m., Federation will mark Yom HaShoah with a program featuring Dr. Carol Salus, art historian. Dr. Salus will present a program titled, "Images of Contemporary Holocaust Representation."

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented on Zoom. Register for this program via the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org.

Dr. Salus will present different visual responses from a variety of artists including Marc Chagall and the contemporary photographer Shimon Attie whose images of residents of a religious neighborhood in Berlin on the cusp of the Holocaust are superimposed over modern

images of the same sites today.

Other responses to the atrocities are wall-size sculptures by Louise Nevelson, architectural sculptures by Frank Stella, and Audrey Flack's image of hope and devastation. Lastly, Dr. Salus will look briefly at Salvador Dali's Holocaust imagery.

Carol Salus, PhD, recently retired after an accomplished career as a professor at Kent State University's School of Art. She has published on multiple artists, including Picasso, Degas, R. B. Kitaj, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein and she has taught Art History and American Art and Architecture. Her work has been recognized by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Your Federation Presents

Our PJ Purim Superhero LEGO Builders Had a Great Time

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

On March 10, seven families with kids ranging from 4 to 12 joined us at Bottomless Bricks in Pittsfield to celebrate Purim with PJ Library.

We built special spherical groggers out of LEGOs, built and raced vehicles, and each kid got to create and take home a customized LEGO mini-figure.

We munched on hamentaschen, read the book *Purim Superhero*, and talked about how it can take bravery to stand up and stand out, just like Queen Esther did.

A fun time was had by all LEGO builders of all ages, parents included!



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Your Federation Presents

Federation Announces Its 2024 Allocations

In February, the Allocations Committee of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires announced its recommended allocations for 2024. In all, \$452,200 will be distributed to worthy organizations in the Berkshires and beyond.

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

With the war in Israel and the pressures on college campuses, the Federation decided to simplify their grant process this year, asking Israel and College grantees two questions regarding what services and supports they have been providing in Israel or on campus in response to the war, as well as what was their greatest need for funding.

The funding allocated is drawn from the Federation’s annual campaign, endowment funds, donor-directed gifts, and other sources. They are separate from the \$329,000 Federation raised and allocated as part of its Israel crisis relief campaign launched after October 7.



Identity-building Jewish summer camp

Additionally, the committee allocated funds for financial assistance for full-time Berkshire families sending children to URJ Camp Eisner day camp in Great Barrington – families can receive up to \$100 per week in assistance per child.

The committee also allocated funds for young adults aged 18 to 26 who participate in Birthright Israel, a 10-day immersive journey exploring

their Jewish heritage alongside a diverse community of Jewish and Israeli peers.

BERKSHIRE YOUTH: Jewish Education, Jewish Camp, and Israel Experience Scholarships (\$158,395)

In 2022, a Federation education task force created a new grant application to promote innovation in Jewish education. The committee funded Jewish education grants for the four Jewish religious schools in Berkshire County – Congregation Beth Israel, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim – to support the 121 students enrolled for the 2024-2025 school year.

The committee allocated funds for overnight Jewish camp scholarships to provide a joyous identity-building experience for Jewish youth. Federation received requests from 40 prospective campers, a 35 percent increase in the number of kids attending camp compared to 2023. The committee recommended an allocation to fully fund overnight camp scholarships this year, supplemented by contributions from the Maislen Fund and Jewish Women’s Foundation of the Berkshires.

REGIONAL: College Campus Engagement, and Honoring Our Past (\$28,900)

During this hostile and challenging time on college campuses, the committee awarded UMASS Hillel in Amherst a grant to support the work of their Campus Israel Fellow and support increased security and food costs due to many more students seeking a community connection. The Williams College Jewish Association also received an allocation to support increased student attendance at Shabbat dinners and open these dinners up to invite the broader Jewish community and craft balanced discussions and programming to build connection and support for Jewish students on campus.

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



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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GLOBAL: Strengthening Our Global Jewish Community (\$192,405)

As they do every year, our Israel and overseas partner agencies, **The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and World ORT** each received meaningful contributions to implement programs that save lives, build resiliency, and support Jewish life in Israel and in fragile Jewish communities around the world.

The war in Israel, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and rising antisemitism across the globe have required a significant mobilization of resources by Jewish Federations. In an effort to provide the greatest flexibility in maintaining existing programs while allowing our partners to respond to the rapidly changing needs in Israel and across the globe, the committee allocated unrestricted funds to our partners to help them meet these needs.

Many of our partner's traditional programs are ongoing and have been re-structured to address the immediate needs of Israelis at this moment and the challenging impact the war is having on Jews across the globe. **We encourage you to visit their websites to learn more about their life-saving work: jewishagency.org, jdc.org, and ort.org.**



Seniors at Yad L'Kashish in Jerusalem

- *Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter* – Federation's allocation will support the increased number of women coming into the shelter and to support transitional housing.
- *Ethiopian National Project* – Federation funds will enable students to participate in the SPACE Scholastic Assistance program in Afula.
- *Neve Michael Children's Village* – Therapy and counseling for youth arriving at this multi-disciplinary therapeutic facility for children/youth at risk will be funded in part by Federation dollars.
- *Meir Panim* – Its six restaurant-style soup kitchens serve Israel's poor and hungry of all backgrounds with dignity, as does its extensive meal delivery program – more than 1 million meals annually. Federation's allocation will provide meals for some of the 2,000 families displaced since Oct.7 and an additional 6,000 meals prepared daily for IDF soldiers.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: iRep – The Israel Religious Expression Platform (\$10,000)

The committee provided funding for iRep, a program for the Jewish Federations of North America. iRep is a coalition of Jewish Federations and foundations that work together to advance legitimacy and provide funding support to organizations supporting Jewish religious diversity in Israel. Priority areas include marriage freedom, pluralistic options for celebrating Bar/Bar mitzvahs, meaningful options to celebrate Jewish holidays for all Israelis, and working with decision-makers on promoting Jewish diversity.

LIVING BRIDGES WITH ISRAEL: Afula-Gilboa Partnership, Arts Collaboration (\$23,000)

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

Funds will be directed to the collaboration between the Mishkan Museum of Art in Ein Harod and the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown. "Art Pen Pals" is a program that brings together high school students from Israel and the Berkshires to communicate through continuous collaborative drawings to allow students to see beyond the media stereotypes and get to know one another on a human level. Federation funds will enable Israeli students to participate with their Berkshire peers.

ISRAELI SOCIAL SERVICES: Other Israel-directed allocations will benefit small nonprofits (\$39,500)

- *Yad L'Kashish* – A Jerusalem workshop supporting senior artisans, providing a sense of empowerment and essential services. Federation funds will cover the cost of breakfasts and lunches for one week for 125 elderly participants.
- *Israel Association for Child Protection (ELI)* – Provider of prevention and treatment services for children suffering emotional and sexual abuse, as well as support for their families. Federation's allocation will fund more therapists needed as a result of the trauma inflicted during the October 7th attack.

Thank You, Committee Members!

Many thanks to the members of our Allocations Committee:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Judy Usow (Chair) | Liz Miller |
| Arlene Schiff | Scott Hochfelder |
| Elisa Schindler Frankel | Ann Falchuk |
| Gail Orenstein | Audrey Weiner |
| Aviva Wichler | Ken Fishman |
| Stephanie Ilberg-Lamm | Josh Cutler |
| Ellen Masters | Judy Cook |
| Tom Sawyer | Executive Director Dara Kaufman |

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COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

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

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

Deadline: April 22

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



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LOST COMMUNITIES CONCERT,

continued from cover

Laura has released 6 CDs (itunes or laurawetzler.com) including *Kabbalah Music: Songs of the Jewish Mystics*, which was praised by Robert Sherman of the New York Times for its "superb performances." Laura sings in seven languages and was featured recently at the International Limmud Festival in Germany and in performances of Ladino songs in the Azores. She has lectured and appeared in concert at Yale, NYU, Brandeis, Merkin Hall, Cami Hall, Brooklyn Museum, and at the International Music Conference in Italy

Laura is also the writer, director, producer, and composer of the award-winning new film, *What Happened at the Veterans Home?* When not singing and lecturing, Laura has done extensive volunteer work with the Jewish community of Uganda on over 50 different projects including creating the Kulanu.org Deaf Education Program for children.

About the Cover Image

Pictured is Belf's Romanian Orchestra, aka "Rumynski Orkestr Belfa" aka "Rumanian Orchestra under the Direction of Kapellmeister V. Belf". From The Klezmer Shack (klezmershack.com): "About all we know about this is that they now appear to have been Ukrainian, and recorded some wonderfully florid klezmer tunes that continue to be prized. The 30-some sides also comprise the largest block of early recorded European Klezmer." Recordings available on YouTube!



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Jewish Federation
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To learn more about leaving a legacy, contact Dara Kaufman at dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org, (413) 442-4360 ext. 12

Graphics provided by HGF's Life & Legacy Program



Kosher Community Seder 5784

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

PITTSFIELD – Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will host a kosher community Passover Seder at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 22 at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road.

Participants will enjoy a traditional kosher Seder experience with plenty of explanation, insight, song, and inspiration. Enjoy all the ritual foods, ceremonial wine, and a delicious four-course Passover meal. Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available upon advance request. Attendees are invited to bring their own kosher for Passover table wine.

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

The cost is \$45 for adults and \$22 for children ages 6 through 17. Children 5 years and under are free of charge, but need to be registered. **Advance reservations and payment are required by April 14.**

Financial assistance is available to all who might need it – please contact Dara Kaufman at Federation at dkaufman@jewishberkshires.org or by calling (413) 442-4360, ext. 12.

Reservations can be made by calling Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 or online at jewishberkshires.org.

The Seder is sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

IN HONOR OF YOM HASHOAH HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY



Songs of the Lost Communities Concert and Memorial Candle Lighting

May 5 at 2 pm

The Berkshire Museum, 39 South Street, Pittsfield, MA

Performing artist and lecturer Laura Wetzler will share the music and history of Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities celebrating the vitality of prewar Jewish life. Laura's father Rudi was a Nazi era survivor from Frankfurt, Germany.

AFTER THE CONCERT

A candle lighting, prayers, and a moment of reflection in memory of the victims of the Holocaust will follow.



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Part-Time Development Officer

The Development officer works to plan and implement the annual campaign and major gifts fundraising effort. This key position requires passion for Federation's mission, enthusiasm, excellent fundraising and organizational abilities, creativity, good humor and a goal-focused outlook. Exceptional interpersonal communication abilities and the ability to successfully cultivate and nurture donor relationships is a must.

This flexible, 20 hour a week position offers an opportunity to use your talents to benefit a greater good and work with caring individuals who share a commitment to helping those in need and strengthening Jewish community.

For full job description visit

jewishberkshires.org/news-announcements/development

Your Federation Presents

Federation Families Got Up on the Down Slope with PJ Library

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of PJ Library

On Sunday, February 11, thirteen families joined PJ Library for Tubing and Treats at Bousquet Mountain in Pittsfield. Between runs on the mountain, folks warmed up by the fire with snacks and hot cocoa, making new friends and fun memories. An activity truly for all ages, as some parents even tried tubing for the first time!

Thanks for the photos, Stuart and Ellen Masters!

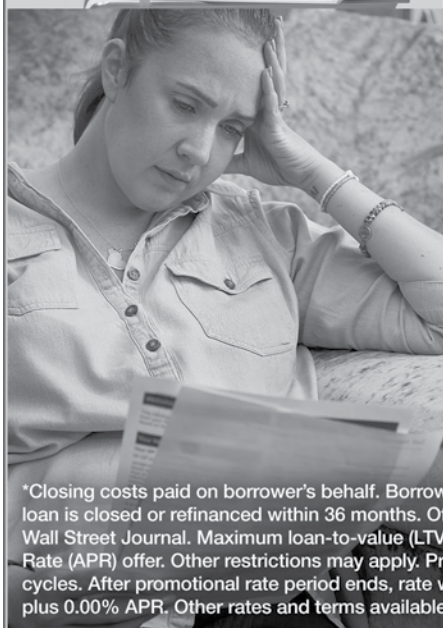


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OBITUARIES

Barbara Bashevkin, 90, Judaism an integral part of her life, champion of countless organizations

NORTH ADAMS – Barbara Bashevkin (née Cremer), 90, beloved wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend, passed away on Thursday, February 8.

Born in Lynn, MA, on December 21, 1933, to Harry and Edith Cremer, Barbara married her late husband Robert “Bob” Bashevkin in 1955 and moved with him to his hometown of North Adams. She remained a proud, devoted, and active member of the northern Berkshires community until 2017, when she moved with Bob to Sarasota, FL, to spend her last years at Kobernick House. The family is deeply appreciative to the phenomenal team of aides who made her last years as comfortable as possible and to the entire Aviva community in Sarasota.

Barbara will be remembered, among many admirable qualities, for her prodigious intellect and deep commitment to the community. First in her family to attend college, Barbara graduated summa cum laude from Tufts University in 1955, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and was the institution's first woman to receive a degree in Chemistry.

While raising three children and making a home in North Adams, Barbara embarked on an illustrious career of civic service when she joined the North Adams Planning Board in 1965, ultimately serving for 15 years, including four terms as chair and four as clerk. She went on to serve as Community Development Specialist in the North Adams Office of the Mayor, Planning Coordinator in the North Adams Office of Development, Director of Development of the Economic Development Corporation of Northern Berkshire (which included supervising the rehabilitation of the historic

Beaver Mill), and Town Planner of Williamstown from 1986-1991.

She served on the Massachusetts State Senate Special Commission on Historic Preservation in 1994 and was appointed by Governor Michael Dukakis to the Massachusetts Designer Selection Board from 1983-1987, serving as chair in her final year. A recipient of numerous honors, Barbara was awarded the Carol Hess Memorial Award for “significant contributions, through volunteer efforts, to the people of North Adams” in 1976 and the Built Environment Award from the Massachusetts Council of the American Institute of Architects in 1990.

A lifelong champion of countless organizations and causes in the Berkshires, Barbara was a dedicated member of the North Adams Regional Hospital Board of Trustees from 1983-1999, serving as chair from 1996-1999. From 1999-2003, Barbara served on the Board of Trustees of Northern Berkshire Healthcare. She was chair of the Berkshire Land Use Commission from 1989-1996, and from 1997-2003 she served on the board of Elder Services of Berkshire County, a committee she chaired from 2002-2003. With her husband Bob, Barbara was a founding donor to the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) and a longtime supporter of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA).

Judaism was an integral part of Barbara's life, personally and communally. She proudly served as Chair of the Education Committee, Vice President, and member of the Board of Trustees at Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, a synagogue her husband Bob's family helped to build. There she was a devoted attendee of Shabbat services and could occasionally be found teaching Hebrew to adults. She and Bob often hosted guests for Shabbat dinners, providing a first welcome to Jewish visitors to

the Berkshires, Williams students, and new members of the local Jewish community.

A music aficionado with a particular love of jazz, and a premier patron of the arts, Barbara was a fixture at The Clark, Tanglewood, Williamstown Theater Festival, MASS MoCA, and wherever else culture could be found thriving in the Berkshires. With her husband Bob, Barbara could be found sitting courtside at countless Williams Ephs Basketball home games. And while she loved to travel, Barbara was firmly rooted in the northern Berkshires. She paid deep care and attention to the home she shared with Bob on Bulkley Street in Williamstown, making it a place where the whole family would look forward to gathering year after year and where countless beautiful memories were formed. Her family will always remember her as unafraid to act or speak up for what she felt was right or necessary. Yet, for all of her deeply-held convictions, her acceptance and love were self-evident. She was truly one-of-a-kind, and her loss is felt profoundly.

Barbara is survived by her younger brother Stephen Cremer of Sharon, MA; her three children, Sharon Bashevkin Perry of Tel Aviv, Israel, Martin Bashevkin of Oslo, Norway, and Joel Bashevkin of Berkeley, CA. She is remembered as a loving grandmother to Maayan, Avital, Isaak, Noah, Tobias, Omer, and Hannah; mother-in-law to Simon Perry, Elin Bashevkin, and Sarah Herman; sister-in-law to Sandy Cremer; and great-grandmother to Ilai, Eitan, Barak, Emmanuel, Guy, and, most recently, Juni, born this January.

A funeral service took place at Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams on Thursday, February 15. Burial followed at Beth Israel Cemetery in Clarksburg.

Please consider a donation to Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams (cbiweb.org), Jewish Federation of the Berkshires (jewishberkshires.org), Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Carol Hess Fund (mcla.edu), the Yiddish Book Center (yiddishbook-center.org), MASS MoCA (massmoca.org), or, in her memory, contribute to a cause of your choice that supports the health and spirit of your community.

Sharon (Sandrew) Feltser, 82, cherished teaching, family, and friends

LEE – Sharon (Sandrew) Feltser, 82, passed peacefully on Wednesday, February 7.

Born in Pittsfield on May 5, 1941, to Paul and Rose Sandrew, Sharon graduated from Longmeadow High School and attended Mitchell College in New London, CT, where she was later honored as a Distinguished Alumna. Sharon earned an academic scholarship to New York University and received a Bachelor of Science in English and Literature.

While living in New London, Sharon met Michael Sherb. After graduating college, Sharon married Michael, residing in Waterford, CT. Together they shared three children and seven grandchildren.

After college, Sharon taught English at New London High School, a profession she cherished. To this day, Sharon's students reminisce about their time spent in her classroom. Over the course of her life, she held administrative and management positions in the insurance and medical fields.

Sharon always had a fun project in the works. Whether it be a business idea, a novel, a garden, or a new design for her home, she was always immersed in her ventures. She participated in a variety of sports throughout her adult life, including tennis, running, skeet shooting, and croquet at the Lenox Croquet Club. Sharon also enjoyed attending races at Saratoga Springs, where she would bet on her favorite

horses and wear one of her elegant hats. She relished spending time with family and friends and hosting fabulous dinner parties. Sharon will be remembered for her energy, intelligence, creativity, style, and quick wit.

Sharon is survived by her three children, Matt Sherb, Shelley Lawrence, and Gaby Evers; proud grandmother of Oliver, Edward, and Arlo Sherb, Olivia and Jake Lawrence, and Cooper and Madeleine Evers; sister of Stuart Sandrew and Barry Sandrew; honorary sister of Phyllis Sandrew; partner of many years, Joseph Furgal. She is also survived by Michael Sherb, with whom she remained very close. Sharon was predeceased by her husband, Michael Feltser of Monterey. To Sharon's beloved family and friends, her memory will live on in her spirit and her humor.

A funeral service was held on Friday, February 9, at Ahavath Sholom Cemetery, Pittsfield. Sharon's family would like to express their sincere appreciation to the staff of Sugar Hill Assisted Living and Hospice Care in the Berkshires for the love and care they provided to our mother and our family.

The family requests donations be made to Dementia Society of America, P.O. Box 600, Doylestown, PA 18901, or online at <https://dementiasociety.charityproud.org/donate>.

Philip Alan Freedman, 88, devoted his career to medicine and his family

BOYNTON BEACH, FL – Philip Alan Freedman, 88, passed away on the morning of Sunday, December 24, 2023, after a brief illness.

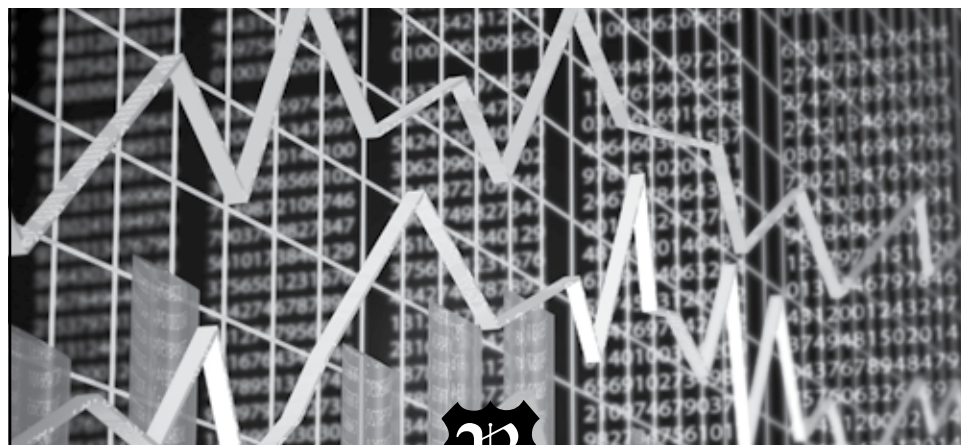
Born in Brooklyn on February 9, 1935, to Harry and Laurie Freedman, Phil devoted his career to medicine and his family. After graduating from Union College in 1956, Phil attended NYU Medical School and completed his internship and residency at NYU-Bellevue Hospital in New York. Phil entered the army in 1965 as a captain in the medical corps and, after a stint in Fort Campbell, KY, headed to Vietnam for a tour, serving as the head of a Mobile Army Surgical Unit (MASH).

Once back from Vietnam, Phil put down roots at Hudson Valley Hospital in Cortlandt Manor, NY, where he built a practice focused on general and vascular surgery. During his tenure there, from 1967 to 1994, Phil played a key role on the medical board and held the chief of surgery post. In the capstone to his career, Phil was Chief of Surgery at the VA Hospital in West Palm Beach, FL, from 1994 to 1997.

Always a perfectionist, Phil honed his skills in retirement, trying to elevate his golf and tennis games, obsessively playing online and in-person duplicate bridge, and spending time with family. Phil and his wife JoAnne began volunteering at Tanglewood in 2005, working in the gift shop, and taking emeritus status in 2020. They both were a constant at the shops and on the lawn at Tanglewood. Travel was always a big passion. Phil and JoAnne took dozens of trips over the years taking them to every continent with the exception of Antarctica. Phil's one regret was that he never made it to India.

He is survived by his loving wife of 65 years, JoAnne Freedman; children and their spouses, Beth and Peter Stackpole of West Newbury, MA, Bill and Caroline Freedman of Emerson, NJ, Jon and Doris Freedman, of North Salem, NY; and eight precious grandchildren, Kyle, Sara, Jake, Max, Carrie, Samie, Alyssa, and Daniella.

Funeral services were held on Thursday, December 28, at the Joseph Rubin Memorial Chapel, Boynton Beach, FL. Donations can be made to Trustbridge Hospice Care of Palm Beach County, 5300 East Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33407.



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OBITUARIES

Andrew Flint, 40, infectious laughter, genuine empathy, lasting close friendships

LENOX – Andrew Flint, 40, passed away on Sunday, January 21, due to complications from a long-term illness.

Born in Pittsfield on October 3, 1983, to Charles and Laura Flint, Andrew received his education in the Lenox public school system, where he excelled academically and performed in plays by Shakespeare and Moliere. On stage, Andrew was electric, bold, and unpredictable; often displaying a gift for improv that frequently made his scene partners laugh just as hard as the audience. Off stage, he was exactly the same.

Andrew graduated from Wesleyan University in 2006, treasuring the friendships he made and reveling in the enriching academic environment. He possessed a remarkable aptitude for languages and found joy in listening to and composing music and lively political discussions with others. After college, Andrew worked on several films, including "Glory at Sea" (actor and art department) in New Orleans right after Katrina.

From a young age, Andrew and his sister Sydney explored museums, frequented antique shops, tag sales, flea markets, and embarked on treasure hunts deep in the woods with their father. Andrew had an insatiable curiosity and a keen eye for various subjects, especially antiques, art, collectibles, and the modernist movement. Andrew had a sharp wit which manifested itself in his writing, and his love of wordplay was a pleasure he shared with his mother throughout life. He was a prolific contributor to publications such as The Berkshire Eagle and The Berkshire Edge, showcasing his talent and passion for storytelling.

Andrew will be remembered for his infectious laughter, genuine empathy, and ability to make people feel welcome and valued. He leaves behind a legacy of cherished memories and lasting close friendships, a testament to the impact he had on those around him. The Flint family is planning a gathering in the spring. Andrew liked warm weather.

Andrew is survived by his loving family, mother, Laura Flint, and partner, Michael Pelle, of Stockbridge; father, Charles Flint, and stepmother, Joy Flint, of Lenox; siblings Sydney Flint, Jodie Flint Blanchette, Jason and Paige Flint, Rachel and Michael DiGiacomo, and Samantha Tejada; and two beloved cats, Lindsay and Blaire.

Memorial donations in Andrew's memory may be made to Berkshire Bounty or a charity of your choice, in care of Roche Funeral Home, 120 Main Street, Lenox, MA 01240.

Gerald (Gerry) Lublin, 78, attorney, volunteer, involved in community

DURHAM, NC - Gerald (Gerry) Lublin, 78, died on Saturday, February 3, at his home in Durham, NC, surrounded by his family.

Born in Hartford, CT, on June 4, 1945, Gerry spent his school years in West Hartford, CT, before graduating from Case-Western Reserve University with a B.A. in 1966 and a J.D. degree in 1969. While in school in Cleveland, he met Sheri (Husten), who attended CWRU at the same time. They married in 1968.

After becoming a founding partner of a large law firm in East Hartford, Gerry shifted gears and became a sole practitioner. During his professional years, Gerry was at various times an Adjunct Professor of Business Law at the University of Hartford, a Special Master in Superior Court, and a frequent lecturer in the Hartford area school systems on the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the United States. Participating in the Big Brothers program in Hartford, and volunteering as a public defender in the Hartford Juvenile Court, he rounded

out his personal dedication to the importance of giving in the community. Gerry proudly served on the board of directors of the Barancik Foundation in Sarasota, FL, from 2017 until 2023.

Known among his buddies for his sometimes sardonic wit, Gerry enjoyed the company of his friends on the golf course and at the poker or bridge tables while in Hartford, Sarasota, and Lenox, where the couple spent summers.

Gerry is survived by his wife of 55 years, Sheri (Husten); daughters Nancy Lublin and son-in-law Jason Diaz of New York City, Abby Lublin and son-in-law Tolu Fashoro of Durham, NC; beloved grandchildren, Sydney and Houston Diaz, Kayode and Yemi Fashoro-Lublin.

The Lublin family requests donations in Gerry's memory be made to the Community News Collaborative via the Gulf Coast Community Foundation in Venice, FL.

Irwin Kenneth "Ken" Mahler, 91, involved in local Jewish community, loved family and friends

BOCA RATON, FL – Irwin Kenneth "Ken" Mahler, 91, of Boca Raton and Lenox, passed away peacefully on Monday, February 19, at Hospice by the Sea in Boca Raton.

Born in Waterbury, CT on December 6, 1932, son of Philip and Rose (Holzer) Mahler, Ken graduated from Crosby High School in Waterbury and the Wharton School of Business at The University of Pennsylvania.

Ken was the owner and operator of Mahler Financial Services, Inc. and BSM Properties for several decades until his retirement. He was a member and former president of Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield and former President of the Falls Country Club in Lake Worth, FL. Ken was also a member of the Country Club of Pittsfield and Boca West Country Club.

An avid golfer, tennis player, and runner, Ken couldn't sit still. After a run, round of golf, or tennis match, he would find himself taking his kayak with buddies to go to The Stockbridge Bowl, taking a ride on his road bike, or reading a novel. He loved to share his time with family and friends and found great joy playing a round of golf or fishing with his kids and grandkids, or just enjoying a home-cooked meal with family.

Ken is survived by his beloved wife of 55 years, Barbara (Saunders) Mahler; son Keith (Jane) Mahler of Waterbury, CT; daughter Lisa (Arthur) Ajzenman of Hollis Hills, NY; son Philip (Danielle) Mahler of Watertown, CT. He will be greatly missed by his grandchildren, Brad and Seth Mahler, Matthew (Jessica) and Sara Ajzenman, Ben, Jake, and Sydney Mahler; one great-grandchild, Ava Rose Arce Ajzenman; and devoted sister and brother-in-law, Lynn and Kiou Jalayer of Delray Beach, FL.

A graveside service was held on Sunday, February 25 at Farband Cemetery, Morris, CT. Donations can be made to Hospice by the Sea, trust-bridge.com or FIDF (Friends of the Israel Defense Forces), fidf.org.

Arthur G. Molk, 88, funny, generous, kind, and always curious about others

LEE – Arthur G. Molk, 88, known as "Mr. A" to many, peacefully passed away on Friday, February 23, at his home, surrounded by his loving family after a long and courageous battle with Lewy body dementia.

Arthur was the youngest of three sons born to Florence and Herman Molk of Passaic, NJ, on July 11, 1935. He graduated from Upsala College with a bachelor's degree in business administration, laying the foundation for a successful career. Arthur's first venture was with his brothers, Marvin and Ted, at the well-known Molk Bros emporium, which thrived for 40 years in Elmwood Park, NJ.

Arthur and Paula (Slotkin) met as teenagers, and their love continued for the next 72 years. They married on June 2, 1957, at the Slotkin summer home in Esopus, NY. Paula was the love of his life and life partner in every sense of the word. Arthur was a devoted and generous husband, father, and grandfather, and together they had three children and were blessed with seven fantastic grandchildren. He served six years in the NJ National Guard and was a member of the Masonic fraternity.

In 1979, Arthur and Paula had the opportunity to open a boutique at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, AZ, naming it the Showcase at Canyon Ranch. This resort, a new venture developed by Paula's sister Enid Zuckerman, and her late husband, Mel Zuckerman, became the model for the wellness spa industry. The initial success led to the subsequent opening of a second Canyon Ranch location in Lenox in 1989, where Arthur and Paula ran their second boutique.

The Molk family expresses gratitude to the Kimball Farms staff at LEP for the loving and dedicated care given to Arthur, the amazing nurses and doctors at BMC for their care and compassion, as well as HospiceCare of the Berkshires for giving comfort to him, and the family, in his final days.

Arthur is survived by his devoted and loving wife of 66 years, Paula Molk; children Peter (Robyn) Molk, Elizabeth (Lawrence) Bodenstein, and Jonathan (Lauren) Molk; seven adoring grandchildren, Amanda, Adam, and Nathan Bodenstein, Zachary and his fiancée Jessica, his sister Lindsey Molk, Joseph and Sarah Molk; brother Ted Molk; sister-in-law Enid Zuckerman; and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brother Marvin Molk and brother-in-law Mel Zuckerman.

His sense of humor was boundless. He was funny, generous, kind, and always curious about others. He leaves a hole in our hearts and will be missed and remembered by many.

The family requests donations be made to St. Jude Hospital for Children's Research at www.stjude.org or Chabad of the Berkshires at www.jewishberkshires.com, organizations that Arthur felt strongly about.

Myrna Ruth Katz, 95, beloved teacher, outgoing, warm, and friendly

NEW PORT RICHEY, FL – Myrna Ruth Katz, 95, passed away on Tuesday, February 27, surrounded by her loving family.

Born May 16, 1928 in Adams, Myrna taught at the junior high in Adams. She was an excellent teacher, cared very much for her students, and was liked by everyone. Outgoing, warm, and friendly, Myrna was highly respected by both the students and faculty. She taught for over 25 years and her students love her to this day. She will be sadly missed by all. During the summer, she looked forward to and organized a group of friends to attend Tanglewood On Parade in Lenox.

Myrna was predeceased by her husband Larry. She leaves her daughter, Risa Demers (Bill); son Steve Katz (Patty); five grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Donations may be made to HPH Hospice at chaptershealth.org or Shriners Hospital in Tampa at lovetotherescue.org

Jesse Seth Waldinger, 77, eternal optimism, kind heart, generosity of spirit

CANAAN, NY – Jesse Seth Waldinger, 77, brilliant attorney, talented playwright, and devoted husband and father, passed away on Saturday, March 16, surrounded by his beloved family.

Born March 2, 1947, Jesse graduated from Jamaica High School, where he met his wife Barbara, and went on to achieve

a BA and MA at Columbia University. While teaching English at Jamaica High School, Jesse attended Brooklyn Law School at night. Over a span of 40 years, he pursued a successful career representing medical malpractice plaintiffs, becoming a partner at the New York law firm Kramer, Dillof, Livingston, & Moore. Respected by both plaintiff and defense attorneys, he served as head of the Medical Malpractice Committee of the New York City Bar Association and started two malpractice firms, one in New York City and the other on Long Island. Since retiring to the Berkshires ten years ago, he has lived full-time with Barbara in a "country house" built by his parents in Canaan, NY.

Always interested in writing, Jesse has penned novels, full-length as well as short historical plays, screenplays, and meticulously metered poems and songs for every occasion. He has written about his passions including Plimoth Plantation and the Pilgrims, the trial of Leo Frank, and other marginalized populations. In 2023, four of his plays received productions, including a double bill in New York City, one dramatizing the Triangle Factory trial and the other depicting the fate of Ethel Rosenberg. As co-leader of playwrighting group Plays in Progress, he traded wise counsel with his peers.

A performer, Jesse had the opportunity to sing for several years with a Long Island Gilbert and Sullivan troupe, fulfilling a childhood dream. As a pianist, Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" was his signature piece.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara, with whom he recently celebrated their 55th anniversary; daughter Debi; son James; and brother Richard. Those who knew him will never forget his eternal optimism, his kind heart, his generosity of spirit, his gratitude for every new day, and his unlimited capacity for love.

Funeral services were held at Temple Anshe Amunim, Pittsfield, on Tuesday March 19. Burial followed in Pittsfield Cemetery. Donations may be made to Melanoma Research Foundation/CURE OM at donate.melanoma.org. Please direct your gift to Ocular Melanoma or MSKCC/Ophthalmic Oncology Service. Checks may be sent to MSKCC/Ophthalmic Oncology Service, c/o Jasmine H. Francis, 60 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022.

Morton (Morty) Josel, 87, loved being outdoors, very active in the community

ALFORD – The family of Morton (Morty) Josel, 87, is saddened to announce his passing on Sunday, March 17.

Morty loved being outdoors. He hiked on a regular basis with the wonderful Monday Mountain Boys. He enjoyed tennis, skiing, and tending to his garden. He was a greeter at Butternut during the winter ski season.

As a long-time member of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Morty was a trustee and the treasurer for four years. He and his wife, Sandra, were volunteers at Tanglewood for over 20 years. They also volunteered for the Literacy Network of South Berkshire and the Berkshire Community Diaper Project.

He was an assessor and served on the planning and finance committees of the Town of Alford.

Morty is survived by Sandra, his beloved wife of 64 years; children, Seth, Wayne and Leslie, Jana and Jason; grandchildren, Madelyn, Eli and Noah; and sister, Elayne.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, March 19, at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Great Barrington. Burial was held at New Montifore Cemetery in West Babylon, NY.

Donations can be made to Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Hospice of the Berkshires, and the Berkshire Community Diaper Project directly to the charity or c/o Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Your Federation Presents

ADL Director Shared Antisemitism Updates with Berkshire Community

On Sunday, March 17, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires hosted two important community meetings led by Rabbi Ron Fish, ADL Northeast Division Director of Antisemitism Advocacy and Education. At Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, he spoke about "Antisemitism in Schools and Academia," about the climate in schools and on campuses and how young people and their families can respond. In the afternoon at Kneset Israel, his topic was "The State of Jewish Hate 2024," which provided an ADL overview of local, regional, and national developments post-Oct. 7.



JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, April 11, at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust with Vanderbilt University Associate Professor Ari Joskowicz.

Thursday, May 9 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Under Jerusalem: The Buried History of the World's Most Contested City with author and journalist Andrew Lawler.

Friday, July 7 at 10:45 a.m.
In-person at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
Muppets in Moscow: The Unexpected Crazy True Story of Making Sesame Street in Moscow with author, producer, and filmmaker Natasha Lance Rogoff.

REGISTER AT JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG



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Your Federation Presents

Purim Gift Bags, Mitzvot, and Community

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of Volunteers & PJ Library

With the help of 35 volunteers, Purim care packages were assembled and delivered to over 225 recipients across Berkshire County. Just before the holiday, we came together for a festive Purim lunch cooked by Federation's Susan Levine in the kitchen at Knesset Israel.

Filled with hamantaschen and Purim cheer from PJ Library kids, these care packages let our community members know we are thinking about them.

We are so appreciative of the time and effort our volunteers have given us. We truly could not do this alone! Special shout out to Susan Frisch Lehrer and Julia Kaplan for their help, and Cindy Helitzer, Susan Gordon, and their team of bakers for making the delicious hamantaschen!




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Your Federation Presents

We Sprang Forward toward Spring in Song

Community Havdalah a harbinger of the bright months ahead in the Jewish Berkshires

On March 9, the last day of early evening darkness before the clocks moved ahead with the start of daylight savings time, our Jewish community filled the sanctuary of Temple Anshe Amunim for a bright Havdalah service and spirited performance by The Cantilena Chamber Choir, under the direction of Andrea Goodman. In all, 152 people joined us in person and online. Thanks to TAA and Rabbi Scott Saulson for being such gracious hosts and to Federation's other event co-sponsors: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, the Berkshire Minyan, Williams College Jewish Association, and Berkshire Hills Hadassah. Thanks, too, to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation for its support. Much more to come in the warm months ahead!



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LOCAL NEWS

TAA Offers Opportunity to Respectfully Dispose of Sacred Texts

By Rabbi Scott B. Saulson / Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – In keeping with customary practice honoring the men and women dedicated to the publication of liturgical and toraitic texts throughout the centuries, Temple Anshe Amunim will gather at its section of the Pittsfield Cemetery for the burial of these worn and dated materials.

Join the congregation on Sunday, April 28 at 11 a.m. at Pittsfield Cemetery, 203 Wahconah Street. Should you have such texts of your own, you are welcome to bring them with you directly to the cemetery to include in this special interment. This event will take place rain or shine.

To prepare for this event, here is a bit of background excerpted from the My Jewish Learning website:

The Talmud (Shabbat 115a) stipulates that all sacred writings (scrolls of Torah, Prophets, and Writings), should be preserved in a place where they cannot be destroyed. Though this idea was originally closely tied to a prohibition from ever erasing God's name, Maimonides ruled that holy books, such as the Talmud and midrash, should be retired to the genizah (meaning hidden place) as well, even though they do not contain God's name. (Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Yesodei HaTorah 6:8)

For a long time, Jewish communities set aside a room in each synagogue exclusively for this

purpose and called that space the genizah. Anything from a worn-out siddur to a contract written in Hebrew would be put in the genizah when it was no longer useful, and often ritual objects, such as a tallit or a lulav, were added as well. Today, most synagogues have a closet or a box where they collect used papers and ritual objects that are considered sacred. The general rule is that anything dealing with sacred subjects should be placed in a genizah, rather than thrown out. Most synagogues clean out their genizot every few years, by burying the contents in a Jewish cemetery as a sign of reverence and respect. Some communities even have cemetery plots that have been donated expressly for the purpose of burying the genizah. It is considered a great sign of respect to bury a Torah scroll or other sacred work near a prestigious Torah scholar. However, one may bury such items in one's own backyard, as long as it is done respectfully.

local caterer, will include matzah ball soup, gefilte fish, beef brisket, roast turkey, a vegetarian option, and a dessert table. Your haggadah will be TAA's gift to you.

Please register in advance: ansheamunim.org
Members: Adult \$36, Child to 18 Free.
Non-members: Adult \$54, Child 5-18 \$10,
Child under 5, free.

All are welcome to join in person.

For more information, please contact the temple office at: templeoffice@ansheamunim.org or (413) 422-5910. TAA is at 26 Broad Street.

Congregational Passover Seder with Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim will host a second night Seder on Tuesday, April 23, at 5:30 p.m. The Seder will be led by Rabbi Dr. Scott Saulson. The meal, prepared by Temple members and a

Chabad of the Berkshires to Host Joyous and Inspirational Passover Seder Celebration

PITTSFIELD – Chabad of the Berkshires is thrilled to announce that it will be hosting a magnificent Passover Seder on Monday, April 22, inviting all members of the community to join in this festive occasion. Regardless of background or affiliation, everyone is warmly welcomed to partake in this special holiday celebration.

CHABAD,
continued on page 18

MAZEL TOV!

Bernie and Elaine Roberts...

...on the wedding of their grandson **Samm Stein-Azen to Grace Bosley**

...on the birth of their new great-granddaughter **Emanuelle Stein**

...and on Elaine's very special 90th birthday!

Alan and Margie Metzger on the engagement of their daughter **Shana to Jason Benko**.

Steve Miller, featured in The Berkshire Eagle on the 75 years of Miller Art Supply in Pittsfield.

Rose May, recently inducted into the Alpha Honor Medical Society at UMASS Chan Medical School, where she is a fourth-year student. The honor recognizes high academic achievement, the ideals of humanism and service to others, and dedication to the profession and the art of healing. Rose is the daughter of **Kara Thornton and Jeff May (z"l)**.

Aaron Lansky on retiring from the Yiddish Book Center that he founded in Amherst in 1980. Mazel tov to **Susan Bronson** as she assumes the role of president.

Allan Lipton, MD, on his big birthday.

Elaine Shindler on her 95th birthday.

Beth Radsken on her recent special birthday.

Miriam Udel, a scholar of Yiddish language at Emory University, on being named the 2024-25 Chronos Fellow. She plans on expanding her research to uncover how 20th century Yiddish writings might offer guidance for a peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. Proud family in Pittsfield are **Ed and Lisa Udel**.

Lev Dresner, who celebrated his bar mitzvah at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire on March 9. His proud family includes parents, **Natasha and Avi**, younger brother **Sasha**, and two chinchillas.

Berkshire Bounty (founded by **Jay Weintraub** and **Mark Lefenfeld** in 2016) in collaboration with **Berkshire Grown** on "winning a \$750,000 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources," as reported in The Berkshire Eagle. "All but \$6,000 of that grant goes to buying food and distributing it to 27 food pantries and other emergency food sites and programs across Berkshire County...The grant will allow Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Bounty to serve more than 11,000 people per week."

Shira Weiner on her April 27 bat mitzvah at Knesset Israel. Proud family members are parents **Judith and Rabbi David Weiner**, and brothers **Joseph** and **Ari**.

Cellist **Maya Beiser** on the April 5 release of her new recording, *Maya Beiser x Terry Riley, In C*, recorded at The Art at Foothill Farm right here in the Berkshires.



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LOCAL NEWS

CHABAD,

continued from page 17

On the evening of April 22, come and experience the exuberance of Passover while gathering together to commemorate the liberation of the Jewish People from Egyptian slavery. The Seder will take place at Chabad of the Berkshires, where guests will not only enjoy a delicious Seder dinner but also witness the rich Passover traditions.

The Passover Seder will feature a delectable feast that will include brisket, vegetarian options and traditional Passover foods that will delight your taste buds, including the Seder plate which holds symbolic items representing different elements of the Passover story. Indulge in the flavors of the season while reveling in the company of your family, friends, and fellow community members.

As the gathered retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, Rabbi Levi Volovik will share insights and reflections to enhance one's understanding and appreciation of this significant event. Prepare to be moved by the power of the narrative while coming together in unity and celebration.

"The Passover Seder is a time for us to connect with our roots, express gratitude, and rejoice in our freedom," said Rabbi Volovik, Chabad's co-director. "We invite everyone, regardless of their background or affiliation, to be a part of this meaningful experience. We believe that by uniting as a diverse community, we can foster understanding and harmony."

Guests are encouraged to invite their friends, neighbors, and coworkers to join in this momentous occasion. "Together, let us embrace the spirit of Passover and cherish the memories we create," says Sara Volovik, Chabad's co-director. "Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to commemorate Passover in a joyous and inspiring atmosphere."

Cost: \$45 per person. To reserve your spot for the Passover Seder, please contact Chabad of the Berkshires at (413) 499-9899, or at jewishberkshires.com.

Jewish Journeys Shabbat at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – On Saturday, May 4 at 10 a.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites the community for a special family Shabbat service to celebrate Shabbat together as the morning service will interweave with opportunities for Jewish Journeys students to share what they have learned.

Ways to Celebrate Shabbat at CBI

Kabbalat Shabbat Services – Friday, April 12 and April 26 at 7 p.m.: All are welcome to celebrate Shabbat with prayer, song, poetry, and heart. The CBI band and choir bring beautiful harmonies to Kabbalat Shabbat.

Shabbat Morning Services continue on Saturday, April 6 and April 20 at 9:30 a.m. Join CBI on Shabbat morning to hear some words of Torah (and some words about Torah) and bask in Shabbat's sweetness. Spiritual tools include traditional liturgy, contemporary poetry, chant, and song... as well as spectacular views from the sanctuary, which connect with the natural world and with our Source.

CBI's Community Passover Seder

NORTH ADAMS – On Tuesday, April 23 at 6 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites the community to join its family-friendly Second Night Community Passover Seder!

Relive the Exodus through ritual, poetry, song, and story. Savor familiar melodies, stirring poetry, an impromptu Exodus play put on by community kids, and more. A full kosher-for-Pesach meal will be provided (with vegetarian option); bring your own kosher for Passover table wine if you would like (something other than Manischewitz).

Tickets are \$45/adult and \$10/child (ages 6-18); children ages 5 & under are free. Tickets must be paid for in full prior to the day of the event. If you would like to attend but the cost makes you hesitate, please email Rabbi Rachel Barenblat at rabbi@cbiberkshires.com.

Kindly RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/passover-2024 by no later than Monday, April 8.

Two Ways to Celebrate Passover Seder with Hevreh!

GREAT BARRINGTON – This year Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is celebrating Passover with two Seders, a Women's Seder and a second night Passover Seder.

This is the second annual Intergenerational Women's Seder at Hevreh. It will be held at Hevreh on Sunday, April 7 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Through music, reflection, and storytelling, this Women's Seder will be a memorable afternoon of connection across the generations. Truly, all are welcome to this unique space: mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends. All are invited to join for a meaningful experience with Seder rituals and light Passover inspired nosh.

Cost is \$18 per person. Hevreh will include young people in this event at no additional cost, with thanks to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for underwriting youth participation. Hevreh hopes attendees consider bringing daughters, granddaughters, and young people who are ages 10 and over. Visit the Hevreh website for sponsorship and volunteer opportunities.

Later in the month, Hevreh's second night Seder is back! For the first time since 2019, Hevreh is hosting a traditional Seder on the second night of Passover. The Seder will be led by Rabbi Neil Hirsch and Rabbi Jodie Gordon. Dinner will be catered by The Marketplace. Pre-paid reservations are required: \$50 for adults; \$25 for children 6-12; and children under 6 are free. Friends and family are welcome. Space is limited. Registration closes on April 16.

For more information on Hevreh events and activities, and to register for these events, visit hevreh.org.

Join Families Together for a Unique Family Program

Plus more Tot Shabbats this spring at KI

PITTSFIELD – Families Together invites both kids and adults to a special program on Sunday, April 7, from 10 a.m. to noon at Knesset Israel. Children will enjoy Passover crafts and learn to bake matzah, while parents engage with visiting rabbinical student Ariel Dunat on "Trans Halakha: How Queer Theory and the Transgender Experience are Revolutionizing Halakha." Ariel is a contributing expert in this field. There will also be time for schmoozing and food.

To RSVP and learn more, visit knessetisrael.org/RSVP.

Families Together is made possible through the generous support of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

About Families Together

Families Together is a community initiative at Knesset Israel for adults and their school-aged and younger kids. Families Together events are a mix of social, educational and experiential. All Families Together events are free and open to members and non-members alike!

Tot Shabbats continue at KI

Knesset Israel invites families to Tot Shabbat with Mike Duffy, a dedicated song-leader and Jewish educator. This monthly event promises singing and a fun way to enjoy Shabbat for children in grades K-1 and younger, along with their parents, grandparents, or guardians. Over the course of this year, kids have learned Hebrew songs and connected to prayers while having fun, and there are still opportunities to join in on this program.

The next Tot Shabbats will be on April 6 and May 4, both Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

All are welcome to join; members and non-members alike! We look forward to celebrating Shabbat with you!

Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

Rabbinical Student Ariel Dunat to Share Torah and Insight on Trans Halakha and Theology at Knesset Israel

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel will welcome Ariel Ya'akov Dunat, a fourth-year rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York City, for JTS Ambassadors Weekend from Friday, April 5 through Sunday, April 7. While visiting, Ariel will lead a series of sessions exploring Torah, theology, and the intersection of queer theory with *halakha*, all of which are open to the community.

Ariel Dunat, brings a wealth of experience and passion to their teachings. As an impassioned student, Ariel is deeply engaged in *halakha* and its intersections with the multifaceted identities we hold as individuals. They are also pursuing the study of *hilkhot shechita* (the laws of kosher slaughter) with the goal of certification in the summer of 2024, driven by concerns for ethical standards and sustainability in the kosher world.

Ariel has played a significant role in Svara's Trans Halakha Project, serving on the Steering Committee and authoring a *teshuva* (legal responsum) on the topic of transness, circumcision, and conversion. With their diverse background in Comparative Religious Studies and French, Ariel brings a unique perspective to their teachings.



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LOCAL NEWS



Ariel Ya'akov Dunat

Throughout the weekend Student Rabbi Ariel Dunat will be sharing their Torah and learnings. They will teach a Friday night class following services and Shabbat dinner, along with giving the sermon on Shabbat morning and a talk on Sunday. Community members are more than welcome to attend.

Friday Evening Class: Torah and Theology: How We Can Find Meaning in the Torah and Our World

Using the text of the Torah, how can we understand

theory, both historic and contemporary? By looking at a specific account, we will develop an understanding of classic rabbinic theology, as well as explore modern views. This class aims to serve as a starting point for thinking more deeply about our beliefs and traditions; no background knowledge necessary. Register at: Knessetisrael.org/RSVP, Shabbat dinner is \$20, attending the talk is free.

Sunday Talk: Trans Halakha: How Queer Theory and the Transgender Experience are Revolutionizing Halakha

Throughout its history, halakha has been approached through the lens of specific theories. In our times, we have seen the unique effects of feminist theory on *halakha*, offering its own unique insight and understanding to the halakhic process. So too, does queer theory offer a new lens. This class will look at the question of conversion, circumcision, and transness, showing how this lens can offer insight in unforeseen areas. Talk begins at 10 a.m. Snacks will be served, and a special Passover activity for kids will happen concurrently. Register for Sunday at knessetisrael.org/RSVP, no cost.

About Ariel's upcoming visit, Jesse Cook-Dubin, KI President says: "One of Conservative Judaism's challenges is to be faithful to Jewish texts and traditions while ensuring that individuals of all identities and backgrounds find meaning and belonging in our congregations. Ariel is an up-and-coming scholar who is confronting that challenge head-on when it comes to trans individuals. I am grateful to JTS for giving our small congregation the opportunity to learn from Ariel and look forward to hearing from them."

For more information about Ariel Dunat's visit to Knesset Israel, please go to: knessetisrael.org/event/JTSstudentweekend

Co-Founders of Foundation for Jewish Camp Receive Distinguished Award for Excellence

Elisa Spungen Bildner and Rob Bildner bestowed with American Camping Association's Hedley S Dimock Award



Rob Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner (center)

NEW ORLEANS – Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) proudly announced that its co-founders, Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert "Rob" Bildner, have been awarded the distinguished Hedley S Dimock Award by the American Camp Association (ACA). This accolade recognizes outstanding individual contributions to the camping field. The couple were honored for their extraordinary leadership, generous philanthropy, and significant impact on the field through the establishment of FJC, which now supports over 300 nonprofit

day and overnight camps serving over 180,000 campers and young adults each summer. The award ceremony took place on Tuesday, February 6 at ACA's National Conference in New Orleans.

The Bildners have served as this Federation's Annual Campaign co-chairs and as chairs of our Major Donors Celebration. Elisa is also vice president on Federation's executive board.

The Hedley S Dimock Award holds a legacy of honoring trailblazers in camping, including Dr. Christopher Thurber, noted thought leader in positive youth development and Michael Thompson, renowned child psychologist. These individuals have set a high standard for excellence, exemplifying outstanding dedication and innovation in their respective fields.

In 1998, Elisa and Rob established the Foundation for Jewish Camp with a mission to unify and galvanize the field and transform Jewish summer experiences. FJC is the only organization dedicated solely to expanding the reach of Jewish camp and deepening its impact, leveraging more than \$15 million of philanthropic giving annually. Together, as co-founders and co-chairs of FJC's Board of Trustees, Elisa and Rob's work has been instrumental in advancing camp on the Jewish community's educational and philanthropic agendas. Their impact extends beyond camping, showcased in *The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook: 125 Homegrown Recipes from the Hills of New England*, a heartfelt tribute to local farmers and farm-to-table chefs.

"We are extremely honored that the ACA has awarded us the Hedley S Dimock Award. Elisa and I began our journey to create the Foundation for Jewish Camp 25 years ago. Despite many headwinds and challenges, we were fortunate to gain so many advocates, friends, and supporters over the years. FJC has made an enormous impact on the field of Jewish camp, campers, their families, and the Jewish community," said Robert Bildner.

"We proudly accept this special recognition of our commitment to the transformative power of camp experiences and the positive impact our work can have on shaping the lives of young Jewish individuals within the broader community."

For a related story about FJC's ongoing impact, please see page 22.



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

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

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Lay-led, Traditional, Egalitarian Minyan
South County
berkshirerminyan.org

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

B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326

Chabad of the Berkshires
450 South St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 499-9899,
jewishberkshires.com

Congregation Ahavath Sholom
Reconstructionist
North St., Great Barrington, MA
(413) 528-4197, ahavathsholom.com

Congregation Beth Israel
Reform
53 Lois St., North Adams, MA
(413) 663-5830, cbiberkshires.com

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
Reform
270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-6378, hevreh.org

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

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
196 South St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 442-4360, jewishberkshires.org

Jewish War Veterans
Commander Robert Waldheim
(413) 822-4546, sellit4@aol.com

Knesset Israel
Conservative
16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 445-4872, knessetisrael.org

Temple Anshe Amunim
Reform
26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 442-5910, ansheamunim.org



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 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.

APRIL

MONDAY, 1 Meatloaf**#, peas and carrots, mashed potatoes, salad, rye bread, and fruit cocktail.

TUESDAY, 2..... Pierogies with mushrooms and onions, Brussels sprouts, vegetable soup, multi-grain bread, and cherry pie.

THURSDAY, 4..... Gochujang chicken with stir fry vegetables**#, brown rice, salad, Chinese noodles, and pineapple.

MONDAY, 8 Spaghetti with meat sauce#, roasted cauliflower, turkey celery rice soup, garlic bread, and peaches.

TUESDAY, 9..... Closed for Passover cleaning and preparations.

THURSDAY 11..... Closed for Passover cleaning and preparations.

MONDAY, 15 Vegetable frittata**#, hash browns, salad, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, 16..... Portuguese turkey with peppers and olives**#, roasted potatoes, salad, and Mandarin oranges.

THURSDAY, 18..... Passover meal – roasted chicken**#, matza ball soup, gefilte fish, asparagus cuts n tips, potato kugel, charoset truffles, matza, and Passover dessert.

MONDAY, 22 Closed for Passover Seder preparations.

TUESDAY, 23 Closed for first day of Passover.

THURSDAY, 25 Chicken with roasted red peppers and artichokes**#, matza kugel, salad, matza, and fruit compote.

MONDAY, 29 Closed for 7th day of Passover.

TUESDAY, 30 Closed for 8th day of Passover.

MAY

THURSDAY, 2..... Spinach quiche, balsamic glazed carrots, butternut squash soup, roll, chocolate chip cookies.

MONDAY, 6 Meatloaf**#, green beans, garlic mashed potatoes, salad, roll, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, 7..... Potato knishes, cauliflower, mushroom soup, pumpernickel bread, and cookies.

THURSDAY, 9..... Honey mustard salmon**#, noodle kugel, broccoli, salad, challah, and apple dumpling.

MONDAY, 13 Sliced deli turkey sandwich#, macaroni salad, lettuce and tomato, rye bread, and peaches.

TUESDAY, 14..... Roasted vegetable pizza, mixed bean soup, salad, and brownies.

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

Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?

Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-2200.



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, April 5 7:06 p.m.
Friday, April 12 7:14 p.m.
Friday, April 19 7:22 p.m.
(Passover) Monday, April 22 ... 7:25 p.m.
(Passover) Tuesday, April 23 ... 8:27 p.m.
Friday, April 26 7:30 p.m.
(Passover) Sunday, April 28 7:32 p.m.
(Passover) Monday, April 29 ... 8:33 p.m.
Friday, May 3 7:37 p.m.

You can now read and share
Berkshire Jewish Voice feature
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Jewish Voice** for links
to highlights of current
and past issues.

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LOCAL NEWS

Aaron Lansky to Step Down from Yiddish Book Center

“Everything I dreamed of, I’ve been able to do,” said the founder of an organization that works to preserve a vital element of Jewish history.



Aaron Lansky

AMHERST (JNS) – Aaron Lansky calls himself “one of the luckiest people in the world” because he “got to sit at the kitchen table with literally thousands of Jews who were bequeathing their greatest treasure to me.”

In February, Lansky announced his retirement from the organization he had formed, the Yiddish Book Center, which has collected more than 1.5 million Yiddish language books since the late 1970s. Experts at the time believed that there were only 70,000 books available.

Lansky wrote in his memoir, *Outwitting History*, that he sought “to save the world’s Yiddish books before it was too late.” He said, “Everything I dreamed of, I’ve been able to do.”

His retirement date is set for June 2025. He plans to stay for another two years in an advisory role.

Susan Bronson, the center’s executive director, has been tapped to take over Lansky’s position.

The center is based at a 10-acre complex at Hampshire College in Amherst, which includes a replica shtetl, museum, library, bookstore and storehouse. The organization has been working at digitizing its collection and making books available for download.

“Running the Center is the only job I’ve had since graduating college. For years, I worked twelve hours a day, six days a week. I hoisted so many boxes of books onto my shoulder I required surgery to repair the damage,” Lansky wrote in announcing his retirement. “I can no longer lay claim to the extravagant energy of my younger years when Yiddish speakers used to refer to me as ‘der yungerman,’ the young man.”

He added that “as proud as I am of what we’ve achieved, I recognize that the time has come to pass the torch to new leaders with vision, talent and dreams of their own.”

Williams College to Host 3 Roundtables in April on the Israel/Gaza War

WILLIAMSTOWN – This April, Williams College invites scholars to its campus for three roundtable discussions on the background to the war between Israel and Hamas and the America’s role in the conflict. These events are free and open to the public.

Per the school’s Lecture Committee: “We are hoping that a conversation on the possibility of a peaceful agreement, and the implications of various views on the issue, would allow two figures of prominence and experience to address the issue that looms over the conflict. Thus, the Lecture Committee has invited two guests who represent distinct intellectual and political traditions and are willing to engage with a counterpart who might see the issue differently.”



iBerkshires.com 2024

Roundtable 1 – Tuesday, April 2 at 7:30 p.m. @ Bernhard Music Center

This event will feature **Noam Pianko**, chair of Jewish Studies and professor in the Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington (author of *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken: Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn and Jewish Peoplehood: An American Innovation*) and **Bernard Avishai**, visiting professor of Government at Dartmouth College and adjunct professor of Business at the Hebrew University (author of *The Tragedy of Zionism* and regular contributor to *The New Yorker* and other publications).

Roundtable 2 – Thursday, April 18 at 4:30 p.m. @ Griffin Hall, Room 3

This event will feature **Dr. Dana El Kurd**, an assistant professor of Political Science at the University of Richmond and a senior nonresident fellow at the Arab Center Washington (author of *Polarized and Demobilized: Legacies of Authoritarianism in Palestine*) and **Dr. Ilana Feldman**, professor of Anthropology, History, and International Affairs at The George Washington University (author of *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*).

Roundtable 3 – Thursday, April 25 at 7:30 p.m. @ '62 Center for Theatre & Dance

This event will feature **Andrew J. Bacevich**, professor emeritus of International Relations and History at Boston University (author of *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* and *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War*), and **Aaron David Miller**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (formerly of the US State Department and author of *The Much Too Promised Land: America’s Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*).

Check out our website!
www.jewishberkshires.org
 For calendar listings and events

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APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 30

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

Funding for this program is made possible by donors to Federation’s annual campaign. Donate Today!

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ISRAEL/PARTNERS

The Jewish Agency and Mosaic United to Bring 1,500 Israeli Teens to Camps for a Summer of Healing and Connection

“Campers2Gether” initiative responds to today’s stark realities for Jewish youth worldwide, including displacement and loss for Israelis, and antisemitism on the other side of the ocean

JERUSALEM — The Jewish Agency for Israel, Mosaic United, and the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism in February announced “Campers2Gether,” an initiative that will bring more than 1,500 Israeli teenagers who have been displaced or otherwise affected by the Swords of Iron War to Jewish camps in North America and across the Jewish world in the summer of 2024.

Launched by The Jewish Agency and Mosaic Teens, a division of Mosaic United, in partnership with the Foundation for Jewish Camp and Jewish Federations of North America, Campers2Gether responds to today’s stark realities for Jewish youth both in Israel and in Jewish communities across the globe. Teenagers in Israel, particularly youth evacuated from the Gaza Envelope and northern Israel, are dealing with loss and uncertainty. On the other side of the ocean, world Jewry is dealing with antisemitism and disinformation campaigns about the situation in Israel.

“Campers2Gether now takes the transformative power of the Jewish summer camp setting to the next level at a time of unprecedented need for the Jewish people,” said Mark Wilf, Chairman of The Jewish Agency’s Board of Governors. “The



“We have long believed in the transformational power of *mifgashim* between Israeli and Diaspora teens,” shares Alana Ebin, Director of Mosaic Teens. “Amidst a summer fraught with challenges, Campers2gether offers a unique solution: if teens can’t travel to Israel, then Israel will travel to them.”

This endeavor is just the latest in the space of summer camp and teens for Mosaic United, a joint partnership between the Israeli Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism and global Jewry.

Camp staff, including camp directors in North America and educational leaders in Israel, are receiving trauma-informed care training to help attune them to Campers2Gether participants’ backgrounds post-October 7. Renowned trauma expert, Prof. Mooli Lahad, founder of the International Community Stress Prevention Center, is working with Campers2Gether to assess participants’ mental health and provide staff guidance on meeting the teens’ emotional needs. Israeli staff being recruited to accompany the campers on their journey will receive extensive training and also prepare for the summer with training that expands their understanding of North American Jewry, including insights on antisemitism. In many cases, campers from Israel will be accompanied by staff members who are from their home communities, providing a sense of comfort and familiarity.

Further, The Jewish Agency is developing a communication and preparation process for the campers’ parents in collaboration with trauma experts, covering all phases of the experience before, during, and after camp.

Campers2Gether marks The Jewish Agency’s latest major initiative that utilizes the Jewish camping experience, along with the Partnership2Gether Global Network, as a vehicle for bridging the distance between the people of Israel and world Jewry. For more than 50 years, The Jewish Agency has specialized in training and sending thousands of Shlichim (Israeli emissaries) to Jewish summer camps in North America and across the world. As a result, The Jewish Agency holds longstanding relationships with hundreds of Jewish camps and has the unique ability to successfully recruit, train, and immerse Israeli participants within Jewish summer camps. Partnership2Gether (P2G) connects over 300 Jewish communities around the world through meaningful, hands-on engagement that builds lasting relationships, providing the organization with strong roots in Jewish communities throughout the world. In response to October 7, P2G has formed additional partnerships so that each Gaza border community is paired with a Jewish community that will help support their rehabilitation. Recognizing this, The Jewish Agency aims to strengthen Israeli youth and inspire global Jewish youth through impactful educational camping experiences.

A portion of our Federation’s \$329,000 contribution to the Israel Crisis Fund is directed to JAFI. Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is a member of Partnership2Gether’s Southern New England Consortium of 12 communities connected to Israel’s Afula-Gilboa region.

program will generate positive experiences for affected Israeli teens, utilizing the camp community to convey a healing sense of unity, while simultaneously providing a platform for global Jewish youth to understand Israel on a personal level.”

Campers2Gether will provide Israeli campers with a respite from the current upheaval in their lives, enabling them to reinforce their resilience, revive their social connections, and regain confidence and self-esteem. They will also immerse themselves in the Jewish values, culture, and traditions that are hallmarks of the Jewish summer camp setting, helping them connect to their own identities and the larger Jewish community. Moreover, campers from both Israel and North America will forge meaningful connections that foster their sense of Jewish peoplehood.

Avi Cohen-Scali, Director-General of the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, stated, “The future of the Jewish people depends on the investment we make in the next generation. Campers2Gether not only provides a reprieve for Israeli teens who experienced a terrible tragedy on October 7th and need to heal, but also nurtures the bonds that unite us as a people.”

Campers ages 14-16 will be grouped in cohorts of up to 20. Campers2Gether begins with pre-camp cohort activities and concludes with post-camp cohort meetings. Supplementing the experience are therapeutic activities and counseling sessions facilitated by professionals.



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

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

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



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ISRAEL TRAVEL & STUDY GRANTS FOR YOUTH

The Michael Nathaniel Shute Endowment Fund

provides grants to Berkshire area youth for educational travel or study in Israel.

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

Download an application at jewishberkshires.org

or pick one up at the Federation’s office
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VOICES FROM ISRAEL

“Zeh Mitchamchem et Ha’lev” (It Warms My Heart)

A Berkshire doctor shares his experiences in post-Oct. 7 Israel

Last autumn, **Dr. Fred Landes** and his wife **Brenda** of Pittsfield had plans to visit Amsterdam; but after Oct. 7, he perceived that “the environment there seemed really hostile to Jewish people, and we decided that’s not such a great idea.” After conversation at dinner with friends whose son-in-law was looking into working in Israel as a physician, Fred explored possibilities for himself. An emergency room doctor by training who currently performs wound care procedures for diabetic patients and others with skin problems, he thought he might be able to provide similar services for Israeli patients.

He spoke to an old friend from the Berkshires, Shira Moskowitz, who now lives in Israel and works as a fundraiser for Wolfson Hospital in Holon, one of Israel’s largest medical centers. “She said, ‘Fred, I don’t know if you’re going to come here or not,’” he remembers, “but even the fact that you’re thinking about it – *zeh mitchamchem et ha’lev* – it warms my heart because we feel so isolated here right now. We feel really alone and kind of forgotten.’ When she said that, I realized, I may not be able to work as a doctor, but I can do *something* over there, even if I have to package sandwiches for troops or who knows what.”

He eventually secured short-term positions with Wolfson Hospital and with the Kupat Cholim clinic system in Tel Aviv. He left on the Sunday following Thanksgiving and returned 15 days later. Since his return, he has been speaking about his experiences with different congregations and local groups – here are some of the impressions he shared with the BJV, edited for length and clarity.



Before I left, I read a news story that after October 7, 12,000 healthcare professionals – 7,000 of them doctors – wrote to the Israeli government saying they would volunteer. But when I was there, the Times of Israel reported that some 150 foreign doctors were actually working in Israel. The need for assistance was extreme initially, but it became less extreme as they increasingly found ways to deal with the problems that arose, like problems with agriculture. In addition to the non-Israelis who were killed on October 7, a lot of people left. Subsequently, a lot of people have come from overseas to Israel just to get those jobs.

Another thing that is so interesting is the involvement of Israeli Arabs in Israeli society. At Hadassah hospital, there were very few Jewish doctors that weren’t called up somewhere, and so the jewel in the crown of Israeli medicine was basically being run by Arab Israelis.



This was an experience I had at the house of people who had kids in the army. You would eat dinner and then you would watch the news. Then, you would watch another version of the news. And then you would watch a third version of the news.

These were all in Hebrew, and I understood maybe 60 percent of it. After the news, we watched a satirical program about what’s going on in the world – comedy routines that were totally on par with *Saturday Night Live*, except that what they’re talking about is not some theoretical political argument in Washington. They’re talking about how the Gaza war is being managed.

One comedy routine about a guy who goes to his first visit with a psychologist. It’s a *hamish* office and the psychologist is wearing the psychology sweater, which seems to be internationally mandated. He says, ‘What brings you here?’ The patient says, ‘Well, I’m here because of anxiety.’ The psychologist asks why? ‘Well, I don’t know,’ the patient answers. ‘The Lebanese hate us, the Jordanians hate us, the Saudis hate us, the Egyptians hate us, and on and on and on and on.’

And as he’s talking, you can see that the psychologist is getting a little edgy. Ironically, the patient, as he’s dumping all of this baggage, he’s actually beginning to sound more rational. Finally, the psychologist says, ‘Okay, enough already.’ And the patient says, ‘What do you mean enough already? I haven’t even mentioned Iran. They have 150,000 missiles aimed at Israel.’ And the psychologist says, ‘Come on, don’t exaggerate. Things are bad enough. You don’t have to exaggerate.’

The patient says, ‘No, they really have 150,000 missiles aimed at Israel.’ Then, the psychologist takes up his cell phone and says: ‘Alexa, how many missiles does Iran have aimed at Israel?’ Alexa’s answer is *meya-v’chmishim-elef*, which means 150,000. Now you see the psychologist starting to have a panic anxiety attack as the patient leaves the office, doing much better.



There is the new National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. It is a magnificent structure, and you have ready access to unbelievable stuff. But they also had a huge photo montage of all of the hostages in one enormous room. They also had seats in the library, one for each hostage. On the seats, they tried to find out what book that particular hostage would be reading, if they could find out. What was very moving is that they also had seats for the kids who were hostages, and they set up had the kids’ books that the kids would have been reading.

In the days after October 7, Israeli troops were recovering the kibbutzim – going into safe rooms and finding whatever they found. And they found living people. So, these were soldiers who were, what, 18 or 19? And they would go into the safe rooms, and when they found living people, before they were allowed out, they told the people, ‘Listen, I’m going to take you outside, but I want you to close your eyes and not see what’s here.’ And many of them were let out by these kids so as to make it less traumatic for the survivors. But you have to wonder, what about those kids? What are they going to be dealing with from all this?



When you go to Israel, it’s relatively easy to have intense conversations with Israelis. They’re not shy. There’s an old joke that there are only two tones of conversation in Israel – one of them is screaming and the other is fraught screaming. But there was third voice that I encountered, more so in artistic settings or other types of representations, that was a response to the horror of what took place on October 7.

What I’m going to tell you is going to sound really crazy, okay? The people in Israel are much more upbeat than the Jews in America. When I came back home, people were morose and weeping, whereas there, people are, to a large extent, leading, believe it or not, relatively normal lives. The resilience of that society is interesting. There’s an understanding that Israel truly f***ed up. Okay. They f***ed up so many different ways. I don’t know how closely you’ve been following stories about the intelligence failures that took place before October 7. What are the big issues that have taken place in our lifetimes? This one dwarfs them all. And yet people are shelving it because they can’t deal with that reality. Ultimately, there’s no way that you *cannot* deal with that reality. But now, they have this war going.

Israelis are really looking at the world. When I was there, the subject that captivated Israelis about America was the House of Representatives hearing with those three university presidents. It absolutely captivated them. I had a bunch of people stop and talk to me about this. ‘Explain this to me. What’s going on?’ If I said I wasn’t entirely sure what to make of it, they’d ask ‘What part of the United States are you from?’ Western Massachusetts. And they’d want to know: ‘Is there a lot of antisemitism there?’

Back in the day when you talked about antisemitism with secular Israeli Jews, the response was often, ‘Well, that’s antisemitism. I’m Israeli. I’m not Jewish.’ After October 7, we are all Jews now. That thing about ‘we’re Israelis, not Jews’ – those people who died, they didn’t die because they were Israelis. They died because they were Jews. And I think there’s a fairly universal feeling about that.

A pollster was asking people all kinds of questions, including whether, if one had the opportunity to live in the United States or some other Western country, would he or she leave Israel and go there now? I think one of the things that Israel very legitimately was afraid of is, after the absolute failure on October 7 to protect its Jewish citizens, would they want to leave?

Yet 90% of the Israelis said they would not leave. They still felt confident enough to stay.



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VOICES FROM ISRAEL

Ada Sagi: Former Hostage Shares her Ordeal With an American Jew from Boston

By Ruth Kaplan



Ada Sagi

Last October, I first wrote about Ada Sagi, one of the 240 hostages captured by Hamas terrorists in their surprise massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7.

In late November, I learned—to my great excitement and relief—that Ada was released in a hostage deal. After trying unsuccessfully to contact her through her family, I chose not to pursue it further because, after all, Ada did not know me, and she was surely contending with so much.

But then, in typical Israeli fashion, I managed to connect! My Israeli friend Rina, who only now read my original article, thought it was worth another effort. She thought Ada might appreciate knowing that a world away in Boston, a nice Jewish lady like me, who cares deeply about Israelis and the Jewish state, actually took a special interest in her, was praying for her safe return and in fact rejoiced when she was released.

So, through the modern miracle of FaceTime, Ada and I “met” and talked. Ada lived her entire adult life on Kibbutz Nir Oz, located less than two miles from the Gaza border. She has been a lifelong “peacenik” who speaks fluent Arabic, which she studied at university in order to promote coexistence with her Gazan neighbors. Ada was 75-years-old when violently abducted from her kibbutz home and thrust onto a motorcycle between two Hamas captors. There she was driven to Khan Yunis in Gaza, a short ride from the kibbutz but clearly a world away.

Ada had been a dedicated high school teacher at Nir Oz, and also served as headmaster of the school. Eligible to retire at age 62, she chose to remain in her job another eight years and retired at age 70.

On the morning of October 7, Ada was alone in her home desperately texting with her family and other kibbutz members. She was captured at 9:27 a.m., about 3 hours into the Hamas onslaught. As she was being taken away, Ada remembers seeing the graveyard where her beloved husband, Danny, had been buried the year before, and saying to him that this was probably the end.

Ada spent 53 days in captivity alongside Meirav, a woman she had never met before.

The two were taken to an apartment building where they learned they were being held by members of Islamic Jihad. Their captors told them not to worry because they were “diamonds” to Hamas – in other words, they were so valuable that no harm would befall them. Small comfort under the circumstances. Ada believes that her Arabic language skills helped her throughout her captivity.

The two women were confined to a small children’s bedroom and only left the room to use the toilet. Guards were present at all times. They were only allowed to rinse off with water once a week. Regarding the food, Ada reported that at the outset, they had some vegetables but over time, their rations consisted of an afternoon meal and small portions of pita bread in the morning and evening. Ada’s leg was burned by the exhaust of the motorcycle in transport to Gaza. She did get treated for the burn and she was also provided with an inhaler for her asthma.

So how did Ada and Meirav spend their time in captivity cooped up in a small room with windows shielded to the outside?

Meirav, who comes from the large city of Rishon LeTsiyon, knew very little about kibbutzim, so Ada described her way of life at Nir Oz. They also talked about their families and cried a lot. Since they had no books or writing utensils, they played many games and did crossword puzzles in their heads. They were, of course, very frightened throughout, although their captors repeatedly reassured them not to worry since, as “diamonds,” they would be traded for Hamas prisoners in Israel. Every time there was a knock on the door, they were terrified that this might be their end.

Surprisingly, they were provided with a radio toward the end of their captivity and were allowed to hear the news broadcast from Israel every night at 8 p.m. on Kol Yisrael. This was how they first heard about how many other innocent Israelis and other nationalities had either been taken hostage or been murdered.

The total losses for Kibbutz Nir Oz are staggering. Approximately 100 out of 400 kibbutz members were either killed or taken captive. A total of 74 were hostages. Among the most well-known are the Bibas family: Shiri and her redheaded baby Kfir and 4-year-old son Ariel whose fates are still tragically unknown.

This is a community that has been utterly devastated.

Ada and Meirav were eventually released from captivity, a process that took several grueling days. At first, they were dressed in burkas typically donned by Muslim women and taken to the basement of a hospital. But then they were sent back to their apartment. The following day they were released again and held in a location where, for several days, they were told they would be released “tomorrow.” Every tomorrow turned into another tomorrow, until they were actually delivered into the custody of the International Red Cross. That experience was particularly terrifying, since hundreds of Gazans surrounded their transport vehicle banging on it and yelling. They did not feel secure until they crossed into Israel and saw IDF soldiers. They had been transported by the Red Cross to the Rafah crossing, then into Egypt, and finally into Israel at the Keren Shalom border crossing. From there, they were taken by helicopter to Sheba Hospital. Ada noted that all the while she had trouble walking since she had no exercise during her lengthy captivity.

After a reunion with her family and three days of a hospital stay, Ada was released to Kfar Maccabiah, where 1000 apartments were made available both for released hostages and internal Israeli evacuees. The number of displaced Israelis from both the northern and southern borders is staggering.

About Kibbutz Nir Oz: this is one of the most tragic aspects of the October 7 massacre, in my opinion. The Israeli government has provided comfortable shelter for the survivors of Nir Oz in a new high-rise apartment complex located in Carmey Gat, a new neighborhood in the working-class city of Kiryat Gat in central Israel.

ADA SAGI, continued on page 25

CULTURE & ARTS

The First Murder, She Wrote**The BJV's own Carol Goodman Kaufman has a new Berkshires mystery novel now on the shelves**

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

If you've read the bio at the end of the Traveling With Jewish Taste articles that Carol Goodman Kaufman has contributed to the BJV for 17 years, you know that our columnist's resume is incredibly diverse – but let me tell you that the accomplishments she doesn't usually include are as impressive as those she does.

She earned a Ph.D. in industrial and organizational psychology; worked as a university lecturer; done post-graduate work in criminology; authored a non-fiction study, *Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence*; served as the Hadassah National Co-Chair of Youth Aliyah; published three children's books under the pen name of Carolinda Goodman; contributed stories on food history to national magazines; hosts the "Murder We Write" crime fiction podcast; and interviewed renowned Jewish authors for the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

Now – after experiencing just about all of the twists and turns a first-time author might have to face on the road to publication – she can add novelist to that overstuffed curriculum vitae. *The First Murder* is a mystery set in the Berkshires that revolves around a tight-knit group of friends whose (mostly) peaceful lives are upended when one meets an untimely, and seemingly rather sordid end. At the center of this circle of friends is Boston brahmin and former New York City cop Caleb Crane, police chief of the town of Queensbridge – a fictionalized version of a town famously known for its three stop signs, two police officers, and one police car. More accustomed perhaps to solving mysteries such as finding out who might have thrown the garbage to the bottom of the 15-foot cliff, Chief Crane not only must find out who killed his close friend, but navigate the emotional landmines amidst his community, circle of friends, and beloved wife – any of whom might have had either a plausible or lunatic reason to have committed the murder. And, it should go without saying, Caleb Crane carries some dark baggage of his own.

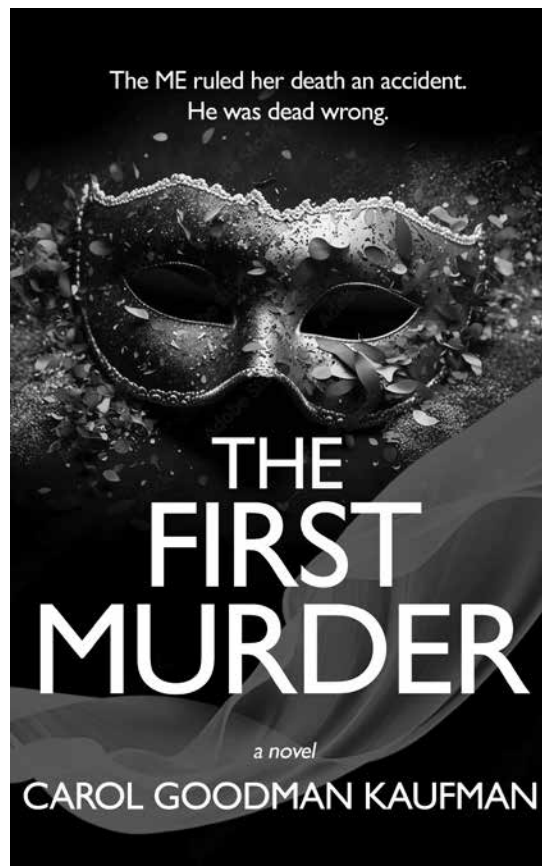
One of the things that works best about *The First Murder* is the way Carol captures the tensions between the locals who have been here forever and newcomers of various stripes. As a Pittsfield native who now lives more of a second-homeowner life in the Berkshires, she is able to capture both the insider and outsider points of view. Throughout the novel, twists are provided when Chief Crane stumbles upon connections among the suspects that, depending on whether one was a townie or an interloper, would either be common knowledge or dark secrets. Not only that, there are many of Carol's other interests and areas of expertise – food, gardening, psychology, and Jewish life – interwoven into the plot.

It's a fun mystery that fans of both the genre and the Berkshires will enjoy. And the early reviews have been glowing: "An engrossing, thorny whodunit," according to Kirkus Reviews, "set in a small town with big secrets." It's now available through online retailers and should be on the shelves of all our bookstores – check the BJV and the BJV online for author talks that were still being scheduled at press time.

In March, I spoke with Carol about *The First Murder*. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

Now you're a published mystery writer and, as your podcast attests, you're also a mystery aficionado. In my experience, while many crime novels follow similar formulas, what differentiates them is the setting. So what would you say are the Berkshires' unique or specific characteristics that make it an interesting setting for a book like *The First Murder*?

Well, I think there are a couple things that make the Berkshires interesting. Number one is they're so gorgeous. And because I use Purim a theme in the book, a holiday where nothing is as it seems to be, I think that makes for a good setting. I mean, the natural beauty of the Berkshires, the cultural level with the music and the dance and the theater – we have everything. And yet, behind closed doors, who knows what's really happening?



What do you consider yourself now – a second-homeowner or perhaps a part-time resident? Do you think this is really a place of deep, dark secrets? I only say that because I don't.

First of all, I grew up in Pittsfield, so to me, right, so it's sort of like...I wouldn't exactly call it making *aliyah* back. I'm a returnee. They say you can't go home again, but frankly, I'm trying my hardest to make myself go home again. I love it out in the Berkshires. It's my happy place.

I talk to myself a lot. I like a story. I love mysteries. I've loved mystery stories ever since I started reading the Happy Hollisters as a child and then went to Nancy Drew and then went to Agatha Christie on and on and on. I love a mystery, and part of it may be because I love puzzles. I like to see if we can solve something. Can I guess who the evil person is? And also, I like to see justice. And in the genre, there are certain formulas you have to follow, and for the most part, you have to bring about justice. At the end, you have to have a solution. You can't just leave it hanging.

And do I really think that there's deep, dark secrets here? Oh, yeah. Every place.

So what kind of miscreant do you think the Berkshires will attract? What are the advantages here for a criminal?

Oh, wealthy second-homeowners, for one. It would be good for a financial fraud. I can see a con man coming in and doing a scam – you're giving me ideas for a new story. Well, we've had horrible crimes. We've had people gone missing, right? I know two women who have gone missing and one woman who was killed right near us. No one knows what happened. I mean, there can be evil working within the native population, and there can be evil coming in from outside.

Here you hear people say, well, you're not really a local till you've been here for four generations. As Crane moves through the story, he stumbles upon nuggets of information that would be common knowledge to people who are from here, such as the motorcycle accident that left one character in a wheelchair, but that he didn't know about even though he works with her. I thought it was very interesting to have a character in that position. Was that a very conscious decision on your part rather than making him a native of the Berkshires?

You know, I don't think it was a conscious decision. I like the idea that he comes in. People coming in from outside can see it with fresh eyes, without the baggage of multiple generations. That's why he has to be a good detective. As an author you have to throw some clues here and there, but Caleb has to figure things out himself, and that's what propels the narrative. If he knew everything all along, he would just say, oh, well, this and this, A,B,C, and D, this must be the killer.

What role does the Berkshires play in the story?

I wanted a setting that I was familiar with that I would be able to write about knowledgeably. And there are certain natural, physical features of the Berkshires that cry out to me – the change of the seasons. I mean, I lived in Colorado, where there's brown and there's green. That's it. If there's white, the white is there for 30 minutes, and it melts.

Here, the way the trees are bare in the winter I saw as a metaphor for baring souls. The hills are like mother's breasts – very comforting, very welcoming. I needed to set my story in a place that I was familiar with. I can't imagine writing a story about a place like India that I'd never been to. I mean, I could look at Google Earth. I could read online. I could make things up, but it wouldn't have that flavor. It wouldn't have the fragrance of the Berkshires. What the earth smells like in April when things are thawing out. There's a certain fragrance to it. And there's a feel going over potholes, too.

ADA SAGI,*continued from page 24*

When I face-timed with Ada, she gave me a quick virtual tour of her bright and cheery apartment on the 12th floor. All the furnishings are new, and the setting seems very comfortable. But Ada is a kibbutznik. Since age 18, she has lived in a collectivist community in nature where you walk out your door into a garden. Choosing to live on a kibbutz is an ideological choice. A high-rise is not a kibbutz and Ada is 75 years old.

Most of the remaining kibbutz members are likewise housed temporarily in Carmey Gat. When asked if she has been back to see Nir Oz, or whether she has any desire to do so, I received an emphatic "no." The devastation and destruction there is too painful. Half the village was destroyed by fire on October 7. Her family retrieved some books, but that's it. But Ada is not alone: Kibbutz Nir Oz has been decimated and no one is currently planning to return. Apparently, a group of 36 families are seeking to find a new home on an already established kibbutz. Integrating into a new kibbutz also presents challenges. But as for the elders of Kibbutz Nir Oz, this is not an option.

Ada is a very strong and resilient woman. She attended several therapy sessions addressing post-traumatic stress, but felt that they were no longer needed. She is putting her teaching skills to good use by working with students on remedial education.

She mentioned that recently a group of about ten kibbutz members gathered in a new community room for an activity, and one of the women bemoaned the fact that more people didn't attend. Sadly, Ada reminded her fellow kibbutznik that this was not due to lack of interest, but rather that they have lost the others perhaps forever.

The destruction of this kibbutz community is a profound loss that can't really be adequately fixed. Honestly, it makes me want to scream. Does the world yet comprehend this? With all the criticism of Israel's military response in Gaza, do people still not understand that no nation in the world can tolerate a threat of this magnitude to its residents living within their recognized borders? And Hamas has made it clear, that given the chance, they'll do it again, since their goal is the eradication of Jewish Israel.

Ada is trying to keep hope alive for the return of the remaining hostages, but admits that that hope is dimming as more and more days pass. She is surrounded by loving family: two sons and a daughter and six grandchildren. As terrible as her ordeal was, she survived and is doing the best she can and is living a purposeful life. When I asked her to describe how this ordeal has changed her, she replied: "It's too soon to say. But all my life has changed...my home, my kibbutz, and my Israel."

Hearing her first-hand account was so meaningful, and I hope she has the strength to continue to share it. Hers is a story of heroism and resilience in the face of unspeakable and cruel terror. Who kidnaps an elderly widow? It's a question with no answer but there is simply no "context" to excuse such a morally reprehensible act. None.

Ruth Kaplan is a writer and consultant with a varied career including academic pursuits in Jewish history, social services and governmental work, private practice as an attorney, and public service as an elected and appointed official dealing with public education. For the past 15 years, she has served the Jewish and Israeli communities in a variety of leadership roles. This story originally appeared on her Times of Israel blog.

CULTURE & ARTS

RAIN OF ASH,

continued from cover

In March, Professor Joskowicz spoke to the BJV about *Rain of Ash* and some of the contemporary issues with which it resonates. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

The BJV Interview: Ari Joskowicz

The subject of the book, as you put it, is the “relational history” of the Roma and the Jews, a complex and heavy subject. For people who don’t have any familiarity with this history, what would be a good thing for them to understand going to your talk?

A good chunk of it deals with a group that people know very little about, Roma, and how striking that should be to us, because they are actually Europe’s largest ethnic minority. Somewhere between 10 to 12 million Roma live worldwide. Still, they will not show up in textbooks, in museums. One thing that I will discuss also is what happens to them during the Holocaust. But really, it’s also useful to just pause and reflect on the fact that much of the rest of their history is even less known.

When I introduce people to who the Romani people are and their diversity, I will discuss how much more overlap there is [with Jews] in where they were persecuted than we might be aware of. Roma who are not just in concentration camps next to Jews, but Roma were deported to the Lodz ghetto and the Warsaw ghetto. [Roma and Jews] are shot next to each other in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union. One thing that I think especially a Jewish audience should know is precisely, there is a history of suffering next to each other – not necessarily *with* each other and not necessarily with an awareness of each other – but suffering in proximity to each other.

You examine how different the two cultures are, certainly in their engagement with the wider European culture. Jews were authors and historians, they had positions in universities, and were definitely much more embedded in the culture – and that’s why we know more about one people’s experience than the other’s. You write that *Rain of Ash* is not about memory, but rather about the production of knowledge and the resources it takes in order to produce that knowledge. Can you explain what you mean?

The term “memory” is metaphor because we’re speaking not about simply individuals remembering things, but societies remembering things – but societies don’t have brains. “Memory” is really in a culture, it’s really about the sort of things people write, the sort of things we can see on video clips these days or in the movies. When we use the word “memory” for what ultimately are references to the past, we get some confusion. One such idea is that memory is something that comes for free, that all you have to do to remember something is to focus [better on a subject]. It gives the impression that what we’re missing with the Roma is the idea that if we only knew to ask the [right] question, now we’ll learn about [them].

Ultimately, the challenge with groups that have been forgotten in some ways is often that they don’t have forces to produce this type of culture. It’s about creating the massive infrastructure that one actually needs to remember. Jewish communities had already been building these infrastructures before World War II and had

been studying themselves very systematically. They stand out among minorities in the way they build institutions to document their past and create their own non state archive to record and document what happened to Jews. What I’m trying to highlight is moving beyond the idea that we just need to be aware of things, and then we can fix them – a question of representation, one might say.

What I’m instead arguing in this book is that this is also where our responsibility comes in, the ethics of it all. If the ethics of it all is just to nod and say [to the Romani], yes, join us in our commemoration [of this shared history], that’s one thing. But really [the ethics] are about how we allocate resources to study the past, to document the past, to teach the past. All of this takes much more than we are usually aware of, and I think it’s gotten worse in the age of the Internet, because it feels like information is for free. There’s much less awareness that information has to be produced in some way, and that it takes immense resources even to keep up websites. When we compare Jewish and Roma experiences, you see a stark difference between one group that had built up that infrastructure and another group that was pretty much lacking it completely before World War II and that it took decades for that group to build up anything that is remotely similar to what Jewish institutions already had set up.

And so, Romani history, especially the World War II era, is thus filtered through the Jewish experience.

Right. First of all, it makes for very peculiar relations. [Both sides have an] understanding that they’re being misunderstood. Let me just give you one example of how this would feel to a Romani survivor. So the Shoah Foundation is this massive institution that started collecting interviews in the 1990s, that has amassed over 50,000 interviews with Jewish survivors, usually conducted by volunteers who get a single weekend training going out to interview people they know. Especially in the US, it would be Jewish volunteers interviewing other Jews. In the earliest form that they would give people to fill out, because it was made for Jews, it would ask ‘What denomination were you? What type of Jew were you?’ And this would also be handed to Roma because that’s the form they had. That immediately sets up a particular framework. There are other assumptions – for example, the first thing that was asked was for someone to say their name, and the interviewer would ask how to spell it. Now, this may be challenging for some older Jewish survivors, and it’s particularly hard on people who perhaps learn to write very late or had historically been, might even be illiterate. You’re basically embarrassing those people on the first five minutes of the interview – it’s an infrastructure simply not built for them. It also creates a sense that while the Romani were also victims, they were “a different type of victim.”

These experiences transform over time. In the 1990s, there was a lot of competition for access to resources and access to who controlled who would be represented in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. There were conflicts over whether there would be shared monuments in a place like Berlin, or would the two groups have separate monuments. And these types of conflicts are not really fully going away, but they’ve become less, and in part because of generational changes, and the way Jewish communities have started to build fences with other groups.

So now a subject with a more contemporary resonance. The word “genocide” is being used a lot now in relation to what Israel is doing in Gaza. Think about the progression of how Zionism has been looked at. In the 1970s, it was that Zionism equaled racism. Then, it became that Zionism was apartheid. More recently, Zionism has become part of the settler/colonialist project. And now, the Zionists are committing a genocide in Gaza. In your opinion, is this a way of normalizing the term “genocide,” casting the Holocaust of the Jews as just one genocide amongst many other genocides?

Genocide as a concept was invented during the war, but really popularized after the war. The first time it was used was at the Nuremberg trials and actually, several of the most crucial new terms used there came from Jewish lawyers. One is ‘war of aggression,’ which comes from a Soviet side Jewish lawyer, and then ‘crimes against humanity,’ [by a British Jewish lawyer]. They entered international law in slightly different ways, but from the very beginning, the whole intention was to generalize them. When these Jewish lawyers were inventing the term, the whole point was that it wouldn’t be a category that would only have the Holocaust in it, because that would not be a useful legal category if there’s only one case study.

I would say the contention is about the word ‘holocaust.’ Already in the 1980s, where there’s a sense of, well, the Jewish Holocaust is a Jewish Holocaust, and for everybody else, we need a different term. I actually use the word Romani Holocaust. The Holocaust Museum had its own negotiation of these sort of things, and came to the idea that there were ultimately 6 million victims of the Holocaust and then others who were caught in the net of the Nazis.

The past is always filtered through our current political concerns. It’s why the past matters and otherwise [the study of history] becomes a hobby where you’re interested in things that don’t matter anymore. There’s a reality that people will appropriate these things and will draw parallels. Like saying the state of Israel is now like the Nazis. That would be one thing that would be considered antisemitism according to many of the definitions of antisemitism. As a historian, for me, it’s also interesting to step back and rather than say whether it’s right or wrong, it’s to analyze when did people start doing that and what did it mean for people to do that.

One reason the US did not ratify the Genocide Convention until 1986, among others, is because our National Lawyers Association said, well, based on these definitions as committing genocide, maybe this would mean we could be sued for lynchings. I don’t think that was a particularly accurate interpretation. But genocide has a legal context there. And it has a context – and I don’t know where it becomes just an accusation for a really bad situation rather than anything that has to do with the legal context.

That is a problem for people who want to use terms precisely, because people are also deeply offended if you say something *isn’t* a genocide, but rather, say, *only* a crime against humanity. There’s basically two politics around the world. One is the politics that surround legal obligations, which is where state politics comes in. A state has to be extremely careful and is overly cautious, perhaps, in its use of the term. And then we have the exact opposite when it comes to public opinion, where people are very quick with calling any atrocities, calling any violence, or calling anything they disapprove of genocide.



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CULTURE & ARTS

I, Teresa de Lucena: How We Built the Book
 With translator Ellen Kanner and artist Annie Zeybekoglu



Ellen Kanner and Annie Zeybekoglu

A Jewish Double Life: Ellen Kanner on Teresa

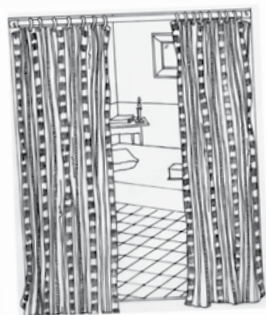
To understand the times in which Teresa de Lucena lived, Ellen Kanner says one must understand that the Spanish Inquisition, begun in 1478, “was not launched against Jews. It was launched against Catholics whom the Inquisition suspected of observing either Jewish practices or Muslim practices.” The peak of Spanish anti-Semitic violence had occurred in 1391, after which Jews converted to Catholicism by the hundreds of thousands to save their lives. Teresa, born in 1467, was a third-generation Catholic whose grandparents had converted to the faith. Kanner explains that the unintended outcome of this mass coerced conversion was to create a social stratum of “newcomers” comprising Spain’s conversos, which led to class tensions that dovetailed with the Spanish Church’s religious preoccupations.

Still, Jews lived as Jews in Spain until their expulsion in 1492 and, Kanner says conversos would have interacted with them. Judaism among the conversos was observed along a spectrum – some who converted became devout Catholics, others were Catholic in name only, and some took things from both religious cultures. During Teresa’s childhood, she could and did interact with the Jewish community and visit its synagogues – but after 1478, doing so invited danger. “Secrecy in Teresa’s time became a matter of life or death,” Kanner explains.

Teresa’s father fled the Iberian Peninsula in 1480 or so. Teresa remained in Spain and, in 1485, she traveled to Toledo to face the Inquisition and voluntarily confess that she had learned Jewish practices as a child from family members. She was then seventeen years old, and vowed never to practice Judaism again. Her confession was accepted and she rejoined the Catholic fold without punishment or penalty.

But as I, *Teresa de Lucena* documents – and the volume is a historical document, consisting of Kanner’s translation of records from Teresa’s 1485 and 1530 trials – she practiced some aspects of Judaism throughout her long life. Four years after the twice-acquitted Teresa passed, a servant delivered testimony to the Inquisition about Teresa’s strange ways. The excerpt reprinted here affords contemporary readers a glimpse into how conversas like Teresa sustained their Jewish connection in secret, at risk to their lives, for years.

As has been pointed out by rabbis and sages, Judaism is not so much about what one believes, but rather about what one does. While no one will ever know exactly what Teresa believed, Kanner and Zeybekoglu offer tantalizing hints of how she acted, in private and at risk to her life. Even the small gesture described here suggests a complex inner life of a Jewish woman separated from us by centuries.



From Kanner’s commentary on the testimony: “Furniture was spare in Teresa’s time. Following centuries of Muslim custom, people sat on the floor or on raised platforms propped up on pillows. Curtains are still hung in Castilian doorways to keep rooms warm.

The last scene described in Teresa’s dossier is what Inés saw between the curtain and the floor: an aged Teresa, propped up on pillows, continuing to pretend she was working on the Sabbath.”

Post Mortem/Spring 1549

Four years after Teresa’s death in 1545, two women who knew her at the end of her life described the Jewish rituals she continued to practice in secret until she died.

CATALINA NUNEZ

Excerpt of notes recorded by the notary

14 April 1549 / Toledo

In the chambers of Licentiate Fernández el Toledano, Catalina Núñez, daughter of the silversmith Hernán Núñez and wife of the silversmith [illegible] Jiménez, silversmith...was ordered to appear. She was sworn in and said she was nineteen years old.

She was asked if she saw or knew anyone who did anything that seemed strange for Christians to do.

She said about seven or eight years before, Teresa de Lucena had lived in her father’s house. She had been a prisoner of the Inquisition and the witness said she had heard Inés, the servant at the time, say that Teresa de Lucena did not make nets on Saturdays. Instead, she rested on a pillow making random stitches just to make a show of it.

Inés told her that when she passed Teresa’s door on Saturdays, even though a floor-length curtain blocked her view, she could still see Teresa de Lucena resting on a pillow holding her craftwork. She moved her hands back and forth as if she were making nets but she wasn’t.

She also said that Inés told her several times that Teresa de Lucena got annoyed when she brought bacon into the house from different places and that Teresa de Lucena didn’t eat it. Inés would tell her boss that if she wasn’t going to eat the bacon that she should give it to her...

This happened in the witness’s father’s house. She said Teresa de Lucena died in Orgaz about four years ago and that she doesn’t hate her. She was ordered to maintain her silence.

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GREAT BARRINGTON – On Sunday, April 28 at 2 p.m., join author Ellen Kanner, illustrator Annie Zeybekoglu, and Rabbi Barbara Cohen of Congregation Ahavath Sholom for a conversation about I, *Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Conversa*. Using examples from the book, they will illustrate the interplay between text, interpretation and design and lead what promises to be a lively conversation about the creative process, book arts, and Jewish tradition.

This event will be held at the Quaker Meeting House, 280 State Road in Great Barrington. There is no charge to attend, but donations to the congregation will be appreciated.

I, *Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Conversa* is the result of a unique collaboration between a translator, an artist, and a rabbi

who joined forces and their respective talents to tell the story of Teresa de Lucena (1467-1545), a woman who faced the Spanish Inquisition twice. It is a work of microhistory, a nonfiction genre that places an individual at the center of the narrative and then zooms out to create the larger context of her life and times. Where did she live? How old was she when her father fled from Spain? Who were the witnesses against her? The book, based on Kanner’s translations of the original Inquisition transcripts, Zeybekoglu’s evocative illustrations, and Rabbi Cohen’s insights into Jewish culture, creates an intimate portrait of a conversa in tumultuous times.

“This is an astonishing work, historically rigorous and profoundly affecting” according to Kirkus Reviews.

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