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DAVID HARRIS,
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OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

Summertime’s “Reverse Omer”

Take another seven-week journey to realign with our highest values

By Rabbi Rachel Barenblat / Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires



Summer is the season when I feel most out-of-sync with the Jewish calendar. After the spiritual high of receiving Torah anew on Shavuot, this Jewish season takes a deep dive into sorrow.

First comes the 17th of Tammuz (this year, July 13), when we remember a long-ago first breach in Jerusalem’s walls. The 17th of Tammuz is also understood as the anniversary of the date when Moshe broke the first set of tablets in sorrow and fury. Then come the Three Weeks, a period of mourning and remembrance. And then we reach Tisha b’Av (this year, beginning on August 2). Tisha b’Av is the saddest day of the Jewish communal year, when we remember the fall of both Temples and a long list of other catastrophes that have befallen our people.

Jewishly speaking, summer is kind of a downer. And that’s a challenge for me. I’m one of those people who looks forward to summer all year. The moment we reach the solstice in December, I breathe a sigh of relief. At last the days are getting longer! I remind myself that the plants and trees aren’t dead, they’re merely dormant, and soon the world will be green and alive again.

Tisha b’Av isn’t just the low point of our collective spiritual year. It’s also the springboard into what comes next.

Now that summer is finally here, I want to cherish every moment of daylight. I want to bask in the long light of evening, to feast my eyes on our gorgeous verdant hills, to pick strawberries and snap peas. I want to picnic on the lawn at Tanglewood, rock gently on a porch swing, close my eyes and soak up sun. I don’t want to mourn right now; do you?

It doesn’t help that the Three Weeks and Tisha b’Av are unfamiliar to a lot of liberal American Jews. In my family of origin, “that’s gonna happen right after tishabuv” was a way of saying that something was never going to happen, a kind of kosher variant on “when pigs fly.” If my father (of blessed memory) knew what Tisha b’Av was or when in the year it might fall, he never let on.

As a rabbi, I’ve struggled to figure out how to open up the meaning of this Jewish season to those whom I serve. Most liberal American Jews don’t observe



Almond Blossom (1890) by Vincent van Gogh, from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam

the Three Weeks or Tisha b’Av. And this year in particular, “let’s sit with the world’s brokenness” feels like a tough sell. Amidst climate crisis and global upheaval, who among us needs more reminders of tragedy and grief?

Here’s another way to understand the Three Weeks. This comes from Rabbi Shmuel Eidels, also known as the Maharsha, who lived in Poland around the turn of the 16th century C.E. The Maharsha teaches that this summer period of semi-mourning is a period of growth toward fruition. Just as it takes 21 days for an almond tree to blossom, he says, we can understand the 21 days between the fast of 17 Tammuz and the fast of Tisha b’Av as a period of inner preparation for flowering.

I love this teaching because it completely recasts what this season is for. It’s not (just) for mourning what’s broken; it’s also for nurturing the seeds of something new.

And that, in turn, reminds me that Tisha b’Av isn’t just the low point of our collective spiritual year. It’s also the springboard into what comes next. After Tisha b’Av we reach the “seven weeks of consolation,” marked by haftarah readings that are meant to comfort and uplift.

Following in the footsteps of my teacher Reb Zalman z”l, I understand that corridor of time as the “reverse Omer.” In the spring we count 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot, between liberation and revelation. Many of us have the custom during the Omer of reflecting on inner qualities that our tradition teaches we share with God, such as lovingkindness, strength, and balance. Starting at Tisha b’Av, we can count 49 days to Rosh Hashanah. It’s another seven-week journey of preparing for new beginnings, reflecting on those same human-and-holy qualities. During the reverse Omer we refine our character and realign with our highest values.

I’ve always liked the tradition that teaches that the messiah will be born on Tisha b’Av. Even if we aren’t sure we believe in a messiah, we can understand that as a teaching about finding the spark of hope in life’s darkest times. It’s like the Greek myth about Pandora opening a box of famine and disease and war, and finally unearthing hope, tucked away at the bottom of the box.

If the traditional practices of the Three Weeks and Tisha b’Av don’t speak to us, or if we can’t bear the thought of marinating in more grief this year, I invite us to try thinking like an almond tree that’s slowly getting ready to bloom. (I know that the Maharsha didn’t mean his teaching as an alternative to traditional practices, but I think it can serve that way for those of us who don’t resonate with our tradition’s summer mourning customs.)

Jewishly, we can choose to experience the height of summer as a time of sweetness and self-nurturing, preparation for a future blossoming that maybe we can’t even yet imagine. Amidst American summer rituals like barbecues and beach visits and baseball games, we can make space for spiritual curiosity about who we’re becoming and what inner qualities we want to uplift.

The Three Weeks and Tisha b’Av are reminders of what’s broken in our history and in our hearts. The question I’m bringing to this season is: what seeds might be planted in life’s broken places, that over this season could be silently preparing themselves (preparing us) to flower into something new?

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires in North Adams. She blogs as The Velveteen Rabbi at velveteenrabbi.blogs.com.

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OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

Helping People Connect with What Matters Most to Them

By Rebekah Steinfeld / Senior Development Officer, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires



Rebekah Steinfeld

offering rich cultural programming and publishing the Berkshire Jewish Voice, Federation provides the essential infrastructure that allows Jewish life to flourish in our region.

Throughout my life, I've been guided by the Jewish values of *chesed*, *tzedakah*, and *tikkun olam*. I studied theatre in college and later completed a master's in Performance Studies at NYU, where I focused on theatre for social change. After graduate school, I worked for several years in arts education nonprofits in New York City. A summer at Seeds of Peace International Camp teaching theatre – and a budding interest in Jewish text – led me to leave New York to study at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

From that point forward, I worked in the Jewish professional world – from Jewish environmental education with Teva, to classroom education at Lander

In mid-March, I began my journey as the new full-time Senior Development Officer at Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. I'm honored to step into this role and thrilled to join such a vibrant and dedicated community.

I grew up in Tacoma, Washington, in a small Jewish community with just one synagogue and few Jewish peers. That experience taught me never to take Jewish life for granted and gave me a deep appreciation for the opportunities I found through my temple and BBYO. Thriving Jewish life shouldn't be limited to major cities – and that's one of the many reasons I'm so inspired by this Federation's work. From supporting innovative religious education, to combating antisemitism, to

Grinspoon Academy in Northampton, to UMass Hillel. Choosing a career of service to the Jewish people has been transformative for me and a way to express my personal Jewish values. I see that same alignment in my new role. Federation's commitment to supporting the most vulnerable – both here in the Berkshires and in Israel – is a powerful expression of our community's values.

I came to Federation after more than a decade as the assistant director at UMass Amherst Hillel, where I had the privilege of mentoring hundreds of students and supervising over 20 young professionals. I cultivated relationships with countless alumni, parents, community partners, and nationwide colleagues. Midway through my time there, I discovered a passion for development work when a colleague taught me that fundraising is essentially about building meaningful relationships. That insight resonated deeply with me, as authentic connection has always been at the heart of what I do.

I see fundraising as a powerful way to help people connect with what matters most to them, to contribute to something greater, and to make a real and lasting impact. What drew me to Federation is how deeply it connects people to what they care about, empowers them to make a difference, and helps Jewish life thrive. From my very first interview, I was inspired by the strength of this community and how much this small but mighty Federation accomplishes with limited resources.

I live in Northampton with my husband, my two teenage stepchildren, and my four-year-old son, Simon. We signed Simon up for PJ Library books as soon as we could. While Simon and I attend synagogue weekly and our family celebrates Shabbat and holidays at home, PJ Library has given my husband – who isn't Jewish – a special way to connect with our son around Jewish values, culture, and traditions. I love that Federation makes this kind of access and connection possible for families across the Berkshires.

Everyone I've met so far has been incredibly warm, welcoming, and dedicated to the Federation in a way that is deeply moving. I look forward to meeting you and working together to build a vibrant, compassionate, and connected Jewish future.

I invite you to be a part of that future. Please consider making a meaningful gift to our Annual Campaign. Every contribution – no matter the size – helps ensure that Jewish life in the Berkshires continues to flourish for generations to come.

Please reach out if you'd like to talk more. I can be reached at (413) 442-4360, ext. 19 or at rsteinfeld@jewishberkshires.org.

Letters to the Editor

Thank You For Standing With Israel's Most Vulnerable

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

I want to express my heartfelt thanks for your generous grant to Meir Panim. Your support is a powerful expression of solidarity during one of Israel's most challenging times. Since October 7, 2023, the demand for our services has soared. Thanks to your compassion and generosity, Meir Panim has been able to respond swiftly and effectively to the urgent needs on the ground. Your grant helped us:

- Provide approximately 1,428 hot meals to displaced families, elderly Holocaust survivors, and vulnerable individuals across Israel
- Distribute nourishing food packages at Passover, so every family can celebrate with dignity

- Deliver meals and essentials to IDF soldiers serving on the front lines
- Offer emergency relief supplies – including care packages, hygiene kits, and other vital items – to those most affected by the war.

Families like Rina's – a mother of three who fled with nothing but the clothes on her back – now have a warm meal and a reason to hope. She told us: "The support we receive from Meir Panim has kept us going. Now, we just want to give our children a moment of joy around the holiday table."

On Passover, because of you, they were able to. We are so grateful to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for your partnership. Your compassion brings light to those living in the shadow of crisis – and helps us ensure that no one is left behind.

With sincere appreciation,
Ali DeLambo
Senior Development Manager
American Friends of Meir Panim

Deepening the Ties between Israeli and Berkshire Youth



Finding stability, openness, and acceptance, women from the Neve Malkishua Rehabilitation Center in the current exhibit "Tish: Shabbat Tablescapes"

Dear Friends at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

We are so grateful for your continued support of our educational programs at the Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod. Thank you for being our partner as we continue to serve as a beating heart for the community, where young people encounter diverse perspectives, explore their own and others' identities and discover mutual respect.

With your help we will continue to deepen the connection between Israeli and American youth and expand opportunities for youth leadership among the local Jewish and Arab population fostering self-awareness, inclusiveness, and the courage to dream of a shared reality.

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has become a treasured partner of the Mishkan Museum of Art over the past several years, and we are deeply grateful to you. We will continue this vital work for our greater community, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being with us.

With best regards and deep appreciation,
Orit Lev Segev, Director
Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Israel

Jewish Care Services

Berkshire Jewish Communal Safety Net

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has provided a safety net for our Jewish community for nearly 85 years. During these uncertain times, we would like to remind you of the services available to help if unexpected challenges arise.

- ♥ **Kosher Meals and Meals on Wheels:** Meals are available for delivery (for qualified individuals) or pickup for older adults aged 60 and above.
- ♥ **Community Social Worker:** Jill Goldstein, MSW, LICSW is available to assist community members in navigating local care services, accessing transitional assistance, and providing ongoing case management.
- ♥ **Hebrew Free Loans:** The Federation offers interest-free loans to help with unexpected expenses and other needs.
- ♥ **Specific Assistance Grants:** Federation offers one-time emergency financial assistance for community members struggling with essential needs and can facilitate additional services to get a person back in a more sustainable situation.

To inquire about assistance, please contact
Jill Goldstein, MSW, LICSW
(413) 442-4360, ext.17 or j.goldstein@jfswm.org



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

Your Federation Presents

MAJOR DONORS,

continued from cover

possible meaningful and life-changing experiences at Jewish summer camps, and transformative trips to Israel for our teens and young adults. It strengthens the safety and resilience of our congregations through vital security upgrades, assessments, and training. It empowers us to stand strong against antisemitism and advocate for our values. And it brings people of all ages together through programs that inspire Jewish identity, connection, and belonging.

We are honored to welcome **State Senator John C. Velis**, Co-Chair of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism, as our guest speaker. Senator Velis will share insights into the Commission's vital work and speak to the pressing need for a coordinated, statewide response to the alarming rise in antisemitism.

This event is open to Leadership Donors who make a gift of \$1,000 or more to Federation's 2025 annual campaign. Register by July 11 online at jewishberkshires.org/celebration, call (413) 442-4360, ext.16 or email Kathi Todd at ktodd@jewishberkshires.org.

Berkshire Hills Country Club is located at 500 Benedict Road in Pittsfield.

Our Major Donors Celebration Co-Chairs – Mark and Judy Usow

In recent years, the chairs of the Major Donors Celebration have been drawn from the community of second-homeowners and retirees who contribute so generously to Jewish life in the Berkshires.

This year's co-chairs, Judy and Dr. Mark Usow, bring a different perspective. As full-time residents, they raised their family and pursued their careers in the Berkshires while remaining deeply invested in the local Jewish community. As they put it, "Federation has been with us every step of the way." In turn, Judy has stayed with Federation every step of the way as well.

Over the past two decades, Judy has distinguished herself as a true Federation leader. She has served as president, interim president, treasurer, secretary, board member, and currently as one of three vice presidents on our Executive Board. Her leadership has helped shape the character and guide the direction of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. As the daughter of Israeli parents, Judy honors her heritage through an unwavering commitment to Federation and to Jewish life.

Mark and Judy's investment in the Berkshire Jewish community has remained unwavering as the area's demographics and institutions have evolved. They chose to settle here after Mark completed his radiology training in New York City and their eldest daughter, Sophie, was just a toddler. Both Midwesterners – Mark from Milwaukee and Judy from Cleveland – they were deliberate in their search for a Jewishly engaged small-town community. "When you're Jewish and from the Midwest," Judy reflects, "if you think about moving to a small town, the first question you ask is, 'Are there any Jews there?' Because we heard that small, midwestern towns were not always welcoming to Jewish families."

Encouraged by a friend who owned a second home here, the Usows explored the Berkshires and were heartened to find both a Jewish community center and a thriving day school in Pittsfield, which then served students through 5th grade. "We visited Sinai Academy and stayed to watch the Shabbat program" Judy remembers, "A room full of kids sat on the floor, watching and laughing at a

Hebrew play. We were so impressed that the kids were so engaged and that they understood the Hebrew dialogue."

Mark credits the day school and Knesset Israel Synagogue with creating the kind of deep bonds that defined their family's Jewish life. "These were opportunities for kids – and parents – to really connect," he says. Many of their closest friendships were forged during this time with other families raising Jewish children, all supported by Federation's programs, including school, camp, and Israel experience scholarships.

As the community shifted and fewer young families remained, Judy's continued involvement with Federation gave her a front-row seat to the organization's remarkable ability to evolve and meet changing needs.

"What Federation has done exceptionally well in recent years," says Judy, "is meet people where they are at in their lives – on their own Jewish journeys and in their stages of life. Federation is central to Jewish life in the Berkshires. Seniors benefit from kosher meals and communal lunches. Young families connect through PJ Library programs and can get to know one another at gatherings like Jewish Community Day, the summer concert, and the Chanukah menorah lighting. Children, teens, and young adults living in the Berkshires benefit from Federation's support of their foundational Jewish learning and later their introduction to the wider Jewish world at summer camp and in Israel. And our whole community benefits from the high-quality programming that brings thought leaders, authors, artists, and so much more to our community year-round, both in-person and online."

Mark underscores the critical role major donors play in sustaining this work, "In a small community like ours, where so many resources have been whittled away, Federation's role becomes even more important and major donors have an outsized impact." He adds that in uncertain times like these, Federation's LiveSecure initiative with the Secure Community Network (SCN) is vital in ensuring the ongoing safety of this community and its institutions – and supporting it is essential."

In a small community like ours, where so many resources have been whittled away, Federation's role becomes even more important and major donors have an outsized impact.

Mark Usow

Judy adds that being a major donor isn't just about financial contributions. "Our major donors are an incredible resource to this Federation. They contribute time, expertise, and leadership as volunteers and Board and committee members. Many come from larger Jewish communities and bring fresh ideas. I've had inciteful conversations with donors about what worked in their synagogues and their Federations. Their input has elevated our work and brought a level of professionalism that helps us do more with limited resources."

As full-time residents, the Usows have seen both the joys and challenges of Jewish life in the Berkshires. At a recent Major Donors Celebration a few years back, Executive Director Dara Kaufman asked attendees to raise their hands if their summertime social lives in the Berkshires brought them in contact with many other Jews. A large majority of hands shot up. But, as she noted, the response would look very different if the question were asked of year-round Berkshire residents. Mark and Judy agree. As an example of what the reality of Jewish life can be like for families in the Berkshires, they point to the fact that their daughter Sophie was the only Jewish teen in her graduating class at Lenox Memorial High School.

As Mark and Judy begin to plan for their retirement in the Berkshires, their outlooks remain shaped by their experiences raising a family and pursuing careers. They hope younger families and professionals will find the same kinds of shared Jewish experiences that were so meaningful to them. They're encouraged by the ways Federation continues to adapt, listen, and nurture new leaders who will become part of Federation's future.

"I want Jewish kids to find each other and feel connected so they don't feel alone," says Judy. "Especially now, our kids need to know they have safe spaces to be Jewish and Federation provides that, both here in the Berkshires and by connecting them to the wider Jewish world."

Mark concludes by saying that "our major donors make all this possible and Federation is indispensable to Jewish life in the Berkshires. We need to keep evolving so we can meet our community's needs and respond to the challenges facing the Jewish world today."

Thank You, Host Committee!

Federation extends heartfelt thanks to the dedicated members of our Major Donors Celebration Host Committee. Their leadership and partnership help bring our mission to life.

As event co-chair Judy Usow reflects, *"I admire the way our past event chairs and current Host Committee members have come to truly understand the challenges facing the Jewish community – and Federation's role in meeting those challenges. These leaders don't just show up for our annual celebration – they are deeply committed to building Jewish joy, connection, and resilience all year long."*

With gratitude, we recognize:

- Marjorie and Barry Berg

Helene Berger

Cindy Chazan and Jay Leipzig

Phyllis Cohen and Jeffrey Lazarus

Ada Beth and Charles Cutler

Terry and Melvin Drucker

Marsha and David Edell

Marion Gardner-Saxe and Len Saxe

Jane Glaser

Marilyn and Elihu Katzman

Pommy and Gerald Levy

Ellen and Stuart Masters
- Penny and Claudio Pincus

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Elisa Schindler Frankel and Larry Frankel

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First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

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Temple Anshe Amunim

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Knesset Israel

About the Campaign

Jewish Federation is partnering with local chambers, businesses, cultural organizations, houses of worship, and schools to amplify the message that "Hate Has No Home Here" through posters and social media. In addition, billboards across the Berkshires featured the expanded message: "Antisemitism threatens us all – Hate Has No Home Here."

Download Poster, Social Media, and Educational Resources at

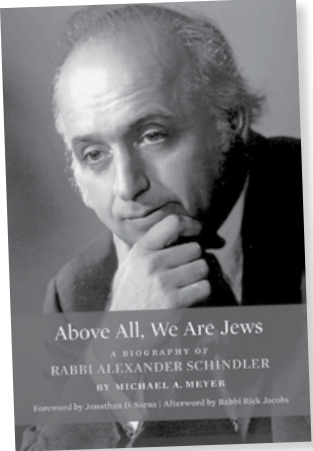
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Your Federation Presents

Alexander Schindler: The Person, The Politician, The Rabbi (in his own words)

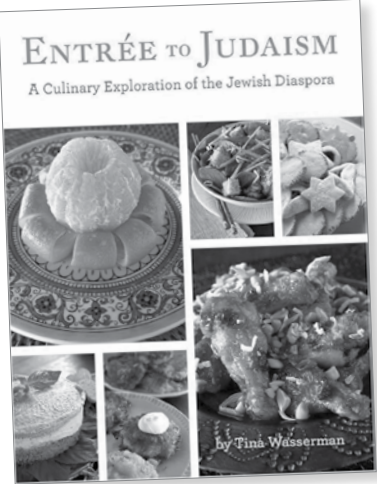
Michael Meyer on one of Reform Judaism leading lights



GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, August 1 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge welcomes Michael A. Meyer, PhD, Adolph S. Ochs Professor of Jewish History Emeritus at Hebrew Union College, to talk about his latest book, *Above All, We Are Jews: A Biography of Rabbi Alexander Schindler*. Federation's free monthly Knosh & Knowledge programs are held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Register at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. This program is in collaboration with Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires (for more, see page 23). In his book, Dr. Meyer chronicles the life of one of the most influential leaders of American Reform Judaism including strong advocacy for civil rights, gender equality, and a more inclusive Reform Movement. Rabbi Schindler was also highly controversial, taking positions on subjects that are still relevant for Reform Judaism today, including patrilineal descent, outreach, and relations with the State of Israel. Drawing upon the new volume, this session will interpret key texts from his speeches and writings as well as probe his complex personality. And there is a local connection – Rabbi Schindler's daughter, Elisa Schindler Frankel, is the immediate past president of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Dr. Michael Meyer has been a member of Hebrew Union College's faculty since 1964, has won three Jewish Book Awards as the author of *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824 (1967)*; *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (1988)*; *Jewish Identity in the Modern World (1990)*; and *Rabbi Leo Baeck: Living a Religious Imperative in Troubled Times (2021)*. Among books he has edited are *Ideas of Jewish History (1974)*; the four-volume *German-Jewish History in Modern Times (1996-1998)*; *Volume six of The Collected Writings of Leo Baeck (2003)*; and *Joachim Prinz, Rebellious Rabbi: An Autobiography – the German and Early American Years (2007)*. He has also published more than two hundred articles and longer reviews. In 2023, Dr. Meyer received The Cross of Merit from the German government.

“Our Stories are Recipes, Our Recipes are Stories,” with food historian and URJ columnist Tina Wasserman



GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, June 27 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge hosts Jewish culinary historian and URJ food columnist Tina Wasserman as she explores our culinary history since the forced expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. She will discuss the real reason we eat latkes for Hanukkah, why we eat gefilte fish and its transformative cooking techniques over the last 800 years, and more stories from the Jewish Diaspora. Federation's free monthly Knosh & Knowledge programs are held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Register at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Tina Wasserman is the best-selling author of *Entree to Judaism: A Culinary Exploration of the Jewish Diaspora* and *Entrée to Judaism for Families: Cooking and Kitchen Conversations with Children*, the latter a finalist in the prestigious International Association of Culinary Professionals Cookbook Awards. You may have seen her food column in Reform Judaism Magazine or her contributions to the URJ's Ten Minutes of Torah.

An award-winning cooking instructor specializing in historical and contemporary Jewish cuisine, Wasserman holds degrees from Syracuse University and New York University, and is a popular food educator in her own cooking school and as a scholar-in-residence in communities across North America. In 1994, she was elected to Les Dames d'Escoffier, an international culinary society that honors women in the food and beverage industry. She is one of only five women throughout the organization that specializes in Jewish cuisine. Wasserman is currently the food columnist for the Texas Jewish Post and is president of the Southwest regional AJC. When she is not enjoying her happy place in Lenox, she resides in Dallas, TX, with her husband, Richard.

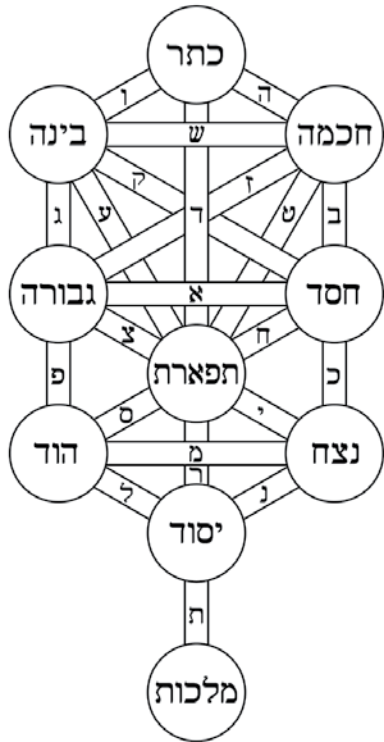
Tai Chi and Kabbalah: Agile Aging In Pursuit of Methuselah,' led by Dr. Joel Friedman

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 3 at 10:45 a.m., join Dr. Joel Friedman for mind body exercises centered on the following key concepts: i) expansion and contraction; ii) coupling breath and intent with movement; iii) the constant breath-driven interplay of yin and yang energies (*mem* and *shin* energies respectively in Kabbalah); iv) the use of spirals to generate powerful flow of energy; and v) wholeness/balance (*shleymut*). Writes Dr. Friedman:

The goal of creative aging is not just a long life but longevity coupled with the capacity for continued physical and mental activity. On a daily basis we are inundated with the latest exercise routines and/or supplements that promise a robust long life. We will explore what the combination of the Jewish mystical Kabbalistic tradition and the Chinese healing arts including tai chi teach us regarding longevity and health.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation's Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome! Advance lunch reservations are required on the day before the program (Wednesday) and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60. \$7 for all others. Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community.

Dr. Joel Friedman is a research scientist at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine who has also been studying the theological and mystical underpinnings of Judaism. His lens is uniquely influenced by the synergy of his science/medical background, his 40 years of training and teaching Taoist based Chinese internal martial/healing arts, and a passion for Jewish learning.



The Kabbalistic Tree of Life with the names of the Sephiroth and paths in Hebrew. Based on The Bahir, attributed to Rabbi Nehuniah ben HaKana, first century CE.

We Beg Your Pardon

In the previous BJV, we neglected to credit Larry Frankel for his photographic capture of the Heidi Katz collage on the cover. We apologize for the omission.

Berkshire

JEWISH VOICE

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- Albert Stern: Editor
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Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Dave Halley, Colin Ovitsky, and Roman Rozenblyum.

Your Federation Presents

Current Events Seminar, with Dr. Steven Rubin

In person and followed by kosher community lunch



Dr. Steven Rubin

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 10 at 10:45 a.m., Federation presents the second of Dr. Steven Rubin’s summer-long current events seminars focusing on the latest world happenings. Participants will have an opportunity to examine and discuss topical and newsworthy national and international issues and problems, as well as possible solutions.

For each session, Dr. Steve Rubin will suggest readings, introduce relevant topics, and offer discussion questions. The seminar will be conducted throughout in a collaborative and collegial manner, with all participants encouraged to voice their opinions.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome! Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day BEFORE the program (Wednesday). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60, \$7 for all others.

Steve Rubin, Ph.D. (moderator) is professor emeritus and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. His op-eds and opinion essays have appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Berkshire Eagle*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *The South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, *Palm Beach Post*, and *The Hartford Courant*, among others. He also contributes a book column to the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, “Dr. Steve Recommends...”.

He is the editor of several anthologies, including *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays* (Brandeis University Press), *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poets* (Beacon Press), and *Writing Our Lives: Autobiographies of American Jews* (Jewish Publication Society). He lives in Tyngham and can be reached at sjr@adelphi.edu.

Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community.

“Somewhere Over the Rainbow: The Music of Yip Harburg, Harold Arlen & Judy Garland,” with Laura Wetzler



(Clockwise from top left) Ray Bolger (*Scarecrow*), Bert Lahr (*Cowardly Lion*), Harry Link (MGM executive), Jack Haley (*Tin Man*), lyricist Yip Harburg, composer Harold Arlen, and Judy Garland.

On Thursday, July 17 at a special early time of 10:30 a.m., join Laura Wetzler, singer, songwriter, guitarist, recording artist and lecturer in a multimedia presentation that one of America’s greatest musical collaborations featuring the lyricist and the composer that put the rainbow in *The Wizard of Oz*, rescued that iconic film, and gave the magnificent Judy Garland some of her greatest hits.

Wetzler has devoted years of study and performance to diverse, multicultural World music, as well as to the history of American popular entertainment and European Art Music. She

takes particular joy in sharing the fascinating and beautiful contributions of Jewish-American and African-American artists to our musical cultural heritage. For more, visit laurawetzler.com.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome!

Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day BEFORE the program (Wednesday). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60, \$7 for all others. Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community.

“A Helluva Town! The Choreography, Musicals, & Drama of Jerome Robbins,” with Laura Wetzler

On Thursday, June 26 at a special early time of 10:30 a.m., join Laura Wetzler, singer, songwriter, guitarist, recording artist and lecturer in a multimedia presentation that explores the life, dance, theater, and film career of Jerome Robbins, one of America’s most influential artists.

Wetzler has devoted years of study and performance to diverse, multicultural World music, as well as to the history of American popular entertainment and European Art Music. She takes particular joy in sharing the fascinating and beautiful contributions of Jewish-American and African-American artists to our musical cultural heritage. For more, visit laurawetzler.com.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome!

Advance lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day BEFORE the program (Wednesday). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60, \$7 for all others. Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community.



Allegra Kent and Jerome Robbins rehearsing his ballet, *Dances at a Gathering*, (1969)

“The World to Begin Again:” Jews and the American Revolution, with Michael Hoberman



Gershom Mendes Seixas, c. 1784, the first native-born Jewish religious leader in the United States. He served as the hazzan of Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City’s first Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, for about five decades.

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 24, at 10:45 a.m., we welcome back Fitchburg State Professor Michael Hoberman to learn about Gershom Mendes Seixas and other important Jews of the Revolutionary War period – the topic of his upcoming book.

Writes Professor Hoberman:

Fewer than two thousand Jews lived in North America during the American Revolution. Some were Tories, some sided with the rebellion, and a significant number couldn’t make up their minds whose side they were on. Whether they took part in the fighting, held down the home front, or tried to steer clear of all the trouble, they couldn’t help but be implicated by the war’s turmoil and outcome.

Find out more about this fascinating subject from one of the leading researchers in the field.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome! Advance

lunch reservations are required and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day BEFORE the program (Wednesday). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60, \$7 for all others.

Federation makes these programs possible through the generous support of our community.

Michael Hoberman teaches American literature at Fitchburg State University. His latest book, *Imagining Early American Jews*, is due out from Oxford University Press in late 2025. For the 2025/2026 academic year, he has been awarded a fellowship at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where he will be completing a book on Theodore Seixas Solomons, the Jewish founder of California’s John Muir Trail.

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Your Federation Presents

Young B’nai Tzedek Changemakers Making a Local Impact with Your Campaign Dollars

By Dara Kaufman / Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

On May 18, I had the privilege of joining the inspiring teen participants of the Berkshire B’nai Tzedek Youth Foundation as they presented a grant from Jewish Federation of the Berkshires to the Berkshire Immigrant Center. This moving moment was the culmination of weeks of dedicated work by these young leaders as part of a biannual youth philanthropy initiative created by the Federation and implemented in partnership with Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Guided by Rabbi Jodie Gordon, the students explored the Jewish values of *tzedakah* and communal responsibility, while gaining a deeper understanding of the vital role nonprofits play in creating meaningful social change. Through the program, they developed a mission statement, researched local organizations, issued a request for proposals, and engaged in a thoughtful, consensus-driven process to determine how best to allocate \$3,000 in community funds provided from Federation’s annual campaign.

In their request for proposals, the teens identified their priorities:

We believe in the Jewish values of *B’Tzelem Elohim*, which reminds us that each and every human being is created in the Divine Image, and *Lo Ta’amod Al Dam Re’echa*, which tells us not to stand idly by while our neighbor suffers.

We are living through a time when many people’s rights are under attack. Our understanding of these Jewish values directs us to state clearly that we believe in:

- Reproductive justice and the right to bodily autonomy
- LGBTQIA+ Rights and we affirm our love and support for trans people
- Public Education and the need to support young people
- Gun violence prevention
- Preventing discrimination of any kind
- Affordable housing
- Food security
- Healthcare access
- Immigration rights and preventing discrimination based on immigration status
- Substance abuse awareness and support
- Education about bullying and domestic violence

The mission of the Berkshire B’nai Tzedek Youth Philanthropy Program is to support the dignity of human beings and to be upstanders by funding organizations and projects that address the issues above.

This year’s cohort of changemakers included: Lev Dresner, Lila Flax, Mollye Goldstein, Noa Honig-Briggs, Noah Minkoff, Jonah Sanabria, Boaz Slater Lee, and Shiva Tantri. Their dedication, insight, and compassion are a powerful



Rabbi Jodie Gordon (left) with members of the Berkshire B’nai Tzedek Youth Foundation

an amazing opportunity – and it was. I learned about how to reach a consensus, how to make important decisions in a large group, and how to think critically about *tzedakah*.

Earlier this year, we talked about what it means to be a Jewish teenager in America. Something that I think is part of the Jewish teen experience is feeling a need to stand up for what you think is right. So, when deciding where to donate, it makes sense that we chose the Berkshire Immigrant Center. In our country right now, immigration is one of, if not the, most prominent issues. As ICE begins to move into the Berkshires, it is paramount that we pay attention to this.

I am so grateful for all the work the Berkshire Immigrant Center does and that we can help to support it. When I think of this project overall, I think of the Jewish value *tikkun olam* – making the world a better place. This is truly what the Berkshire Immigrant Center does – well, making the Berkshires a better place, I guess.

In conclusion, this whole experience has been so amazing, and I just wanted to take a minute to thank Rabbi Gordon. (To Rabbi Gordon) You have been such a patient and fun teacher; I am so grateful for getting to learn from you. I also wanted to thank the Jewish Federation for giving us this opportunity. Thank you for all you do. Finally, thank you all so much for being here to celebrate with us.

Lev Dresner

Throughout this philanthropic venture, I’ve learned many a thing – that it’s strenuous, rewarding, and shouldn’t be done in groups. Being a philanthropist is a fairly simple concept. Whatever is most relevant to today’s problems gets money. The hardest part about the entire process was listening to a dozen others. It took far too long to get to this point and I got pretty philanthro-pissed. Still, I’m glad we got here, and I believe we’ve selected a noble cause.

One of the things in Judaism that’s repeated over and over again is, “Remember the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” In these trying times, where strangers are more estranged than ever, this

B'NAI TZEDEK YOUTH,
continued on page 10

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Your Federation Presents

Shabbat Across the Berkshires 2025

Congregations join together in celebrating local Jewish life



Last year's Shabbat across the Berkshires hosted by Knesset Israel

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, June 20, at 6 p.m., join with friends from across the Berkshire Jewish community as we come together for a musical, family-friendly Shabbat service led by rabbis from across Berkshire County. Stay after the service for a delicious, festive oneg.

Hosting this year will be Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. All are welcome! Register for the event and free oneg at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org

This service will also be available via livestream – visit the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org for the link.

This event is co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, the Berkshire Minyan, Williams College Jewish Association, and Berkshire Hills Hadassah.

Jewish Pluralism in Modern Israel

A panel discussion with Rabbi Jodie Gordon, Rabbi Mori Lidar, and Rabbi David Weiner

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 31 at 10:45 a.m., Federation will host what promises to be a provocative exploration of “Jewish Pluralism in Modern Israel.”

What does Jewish pluralism mean in modern Israel today? Join us for a fascinating and upfront conversation around current issues related to religion and state, such as civil marriage, freedom of worship at the Kotel, military service, rabbinical courts, and more.



PHOTO: IRAC.ORG

Featured panelists are:

Rabbi Mori Lidar of Israel, who will also be in residence at Hevreh of Southern Berkshires this summer as the HUC Golden HaNassi Fellow, a program which brings Israeli rabbis ordained at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem to American congregations. Rabbi Lidar served at Beit HaShita in the Afula-Gilboa region which is Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ partner region in Israel.

Rabbi Jodie Gordon, the spiritual leader of the Reform congregation Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington.

Rabbi David Weiner, the spiritual leader of the Conservative congregation Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield). Following the program, we will continue the conversation with a home-cooked lunch around our community table. All are welcome! Advance lunch reservations are required on the day before the program (Wednesday) and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60. \$7 for all others.

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Your Federation Presents



iRep Supports Religious Diversity in Israel...

...and your generous donations to Federation’s Annual Campaign support iRep

The Israel Religious Expression Platform (iRep) advances religious pluralism in Israel. iRep, which was launched in 2016 by the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), empowers Israeli Jews to express their own ways of being Jewish.

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will support iRep with an allocation of \$11,500 in 2025.

Over the past several years, iRep has allocated ~\$3 million to fund more than 30 Israeli civil society organizations that promote pluralism and religious diversity. High on iRep’s agenda is widening the freedom of choice in marriage. 1,000 Israeli couples are married each year by iRep grantees, with the numbers continuing to rise each year. Hillel Israel’s “Soon By You” program empowers young Israeli couples seeking marriage outside the Orthodox Rabbinate. In 2024, events in major cities reached over 700 participants. One couple, Daniel and Yael (not their real names) attended a “Soon By You” event that exposed them to diverse Jewish wedding options, leading them to create their own ceremony with the guidance of Hillel Israel Director, Rabbi Noga Brenner-Samia.

Also in 2024, Tmura – Israeli Judaism brought together Israeli organizations like Havaya, Hiddush, and Chuppot for the first time to sponsor a free pluralistic wedding to ensure Israelis are aware of their options. The campaign garnered over 30,000 online views to normalize



non-Orthodox ceremonies. Tmura also dramatically expanded its online reach, establishing a Facebook network of over 100 groups that drew more than 155,000 viewers in three months. One couple, despite the groom’s Orthodox background and family, opted for a Reform ceremony where they wrote their own ketubah, exchanged personalized vows, and then both broke the glass.

Beyond advocating for more inclusive wedding ceremonies, iRep is active on many other fronts. Ido Attias, a Reform-leaning city council member in Be’er Sheva, leveraged the Shalom Hartman Institute’s Center for Judaism and State Policy program, which works with iRep, to launch a pilot program for Shabbat public transportation in the summer of 2024.

Similarly, an iRep-supported collaboration last year between the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) helped Reform communities in Jerusalem, Ramat Gan, Herzliya, Haifa, Givatayim, and Kiryat Ono to access public resources, deepen relationships with local officials, and establish liberal synagogues.

iRep strengthens the ties between Israeli and North American Jewry by empowering Israelis to embrace diverse Jewish identities. The organization fosters religious freedom, supports local initiatives, and engages with policymakers to develop a more inclusive religious environment in the Jewish State.

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ANNUAL MEETING,
continued from cover

This event is free and open to all members of the Jewish community. The Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre is at Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble Street in Lenox. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for further details about this event.

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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Jewish Federation
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LOCAL NEWS

“Welcome Home” Concert to Celebrate Jewish Life in the Berkshires

All-star event marks 50th anniversaries of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire and Kol B’Seder



Doug Mishkin

LENOX – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire and Kol B’Seder, the legendary musical duo of Jeff Klepper and Dan Frelander, will mark their 50th anniversaries this summer at “Welcome Home: A Concert Celebration of Jewish Life in the Berkshires!” on stage Sunday, June 29 at 3 p.m. at the Duffin Theater at Lenox Memorial High School.

The Berkshires are Reform Judaism’s summer home away from home, and Welcome Home jump-starts the season with a musical program that embraces the evolution of Jewish community and culture in this pocket of Western Massachusetts. In addition to Klepper and Frelander, the all-star lineup includes contemporary Jewish artists and activists Julie Silver, Peri Smilow (Hevreh’s



Peri Smilow

artist-in-residence), Doug Mishkin, Merri Lovinger Arian, and Ramie Arian, interpreted for the hard-of-hearing by EJ Cohen and Jody Steiner, and backed by a house band of talented area musicians.

The concert is one of the major highlights on Hevreh’s summer calendar, which includes the third annual HUC-JIR “Weekend in the Berkshires,” August 1 and August 2 (see article p. 23). That weekend, the congregation will welcome Rabbi Mori Lidar, a Reform rabbi from Israel who was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. Rabbi Lidar is a Golden HaNassi Fellow, a program that matches Israeli Reform rabbis with American colleagues and congregations.

Later this summer, Hevreh will also host its annual Tanglewood Shabbat, and new this year, an all-congregation read of the new book *Sons and Daughters* by Chaim Grade.

“Welcome Home is an invitation to celebrate the very best of Reform Jewish identity as it has emerged in the Berkshires over the past half century,” said Hevreh Senior Rabbi Jodie Gordon. “It’s a joyful reminder of where we started, how far we’ve come, and the even brighter horizons ahead as we chart our course forward for the next 50 years.”

From the moment a small group first gathered in

1975 to practice their Jewish faith at 15 North Street in Great Barrington (now home to Reconstructionist Congregation Ahavath Sholom), Hevreh has grown to become the hub of Reform Judaism in South County, serving a congregation of nearly 400 members that reflects the diversity of our Jewish community.

“So much of who we are as a community is about music. One of the first things I learned about Hevreh when I arrived in 2012 is that we are a ‘singing congregation’ which is true because of the incredible leadership of our rabbi emerita, Rabbi Deborah Zecher,” said Gordon. “She was instrumental in creating a community that sees itself as a spiritual laboratory, which is a legacy we continue today. This concert celebrates not only the sounds, but the places and people that changed how we worship and how we gather.”

At the same time Hevreh was coming into being, the seeds of Kol B’Seder, rooted in Klepper and Frelander’s experiences in the 1970’s at UAHC (now URJ) Joseph Eisner Camp, were beginning to bear fruit.

“The Berkshires were a total immersion arts environment. Tanglewood and popular artists at the Music Inn, clubs, and the creative environment of camp all inspired us to want to be musicians,” Frelander recalled. “We’d stay up until three in the morning writing a new song and present it to 400 campers at lunch the next day!”

Klepper founded Kol B’Seder (which translates as “Everything’s OK”), in New York City in 1974, where he began his first year of cantorial school at the Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music. Working with fellow Eisner song leader Loui Dobin, he organized a musical collective of HUC and college students. Frelander joined the band in 1975 after returning from his first year of rabbinic school in Israel.

By the time the group recorded its first album, *Shalom Rav: Kol B’Seder in Concert* at Kutz Camp in 1981, Klepper and Frelander were the sole members. “Shalom Rav,” set to a comforting folk



Jeff Klepper and Dan Frelander

melody, would go on to become one of the most widely sung pieces of contemporary Jewish liturgy in North America.

“From the time we first met in 1971 – we were in college and teaching religious school – we enjoyed singing together, but we never imagined that our music would come to define a new Jewish sound of spirit and joy,” said Klepper.

It was a natural, organic phenomenon, Frelander said. “The campers of the 1970s and ‘80s became the synagogue members and leaders of the ‘90s and 21st century. And they brought their favorite Jewish camp melodies to their congregations.”

Indeed, Kol B’Seder’s origins in the Berkshires helped shape what is now known as the “American nusach” – a distinctly North American Jewish musical vocabulary born of camps, congregations, and community gatherings. In addition to performing, to commemorate their milestone anniversary Klepper and Frelander have released the *Kol B’Seder Anthology* (Transcontinental Music

Publications) with print music and recordings of more than 100 of their compositions. “It’s not just nostalgia,” said Klepper. “It’s continuity. People are looking for connection, and they’re finding it here – in song, in community, in shared memory.” “We are definitely part of a larger story,” said Gordon. “The Berkshires have always been a place of spiritual retreat and creative expression. But importantly, it has become a place where Jewish life is rooted year-round.” For tickets and information about “Welcome Home: A Concert Celebration of Jewish Life in the Berkshires!” visit www.hevreh.org/welcomehome. The Duffin Theater is located at Lenox Memorial High School, 197 East Street.

Summertime with Berkshire Hills Hadassah Do lunch and catch up!



GREAT BARRINGTON – Berkshire Hills Hadassah will host a summertime lunch get-together on Wednesday, June 25 at 11:30 a.m., on the patio of the Aegean Breeze Restaurant.

Catch up with old friends and make some new friends. Members are encouraged to bring others who might be interested in joining Hadassah. Donations are always welcome.

Please RSVP by June 21 to: Pattie Lipman at plipman@fairpoint.net. The Aegean Breeze is located at 327 Stockbridge Road in Great Barrington.

B'NAI TZEDEK YOUTH, continued from page 7

value is all the more pertinent. I've learned that during days when your voice is not heard, money can speak for you. Three thousand dollars may not be much in the grand scheme of things, but a whisper is better than silence. May our whisper in the ear of a stranger be one of comfort and support, may the warmth of our breath be the heat that melts the ICE encroaching upon them, and may the wind of our lungs be the gale that topples injustice. But I'm never doing this again.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the remarkable students of the Berkshire B'nai Tzedek Youth Foundation for their thoughtful, values-driven decision-making and for lending their voices to the urgent priorities of our community. Their commitment to social justice and collective responsibility exemplifies the very best of what it means to be young Jewish leaders. We are deeply grateful to Rabbi Jodie Gordon and our partners at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire for their ongoing dedication and guidance in shaping this meaningful program. We also thank the generous donors who make youth philanthropy initiatives like this one possible through their support of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. It is especially fitting that this year's grant was awarded to the Berkshire Immigrant Center – an organization originally founded by the Federation – bringing the story full circle and continuing our shared mission of building a more just and compassionate community.

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LOCAL NEWS

Summer at Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – As the congregation welcomes its new spiritual leader, Rabbi Valerie Lieber (see page 23), Temple Anshe Amunim has a busy summer of programs planned.

Blessing of the Animals – Saturday, July 12 from 10:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

This Shabbat’s Torah reading is Parashat Balak which includes the character of Balaam the prophet. He rides a donkey on the way to curse the Israelites, but his donkey has other ideas. In honor of the donkey, we turn to our animal friends and share our love and blessings. Bring your animals to the TAA yard for a *bracha*, plus a couple of special silly competitions with prizes.

The Sexiest Section of the Bible: Song of Songs – Wednesday, July 16, noon to 1:30 p.m. & 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

At noon enjoy mocktails and at 7 p.m., enjoy cocktails and mocktails. Rabbi Val Lieber will lead an exploration of sections of *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs). You may be familiar with some passages like “I am my beloved, and my beloved is mine,” but many parts are less known. Participants will try to answer, why was it originally written and why did the Bible editors include this racy text in the Holy Scriptures canon?

The Anniversary & Imperiled Legacy of Seneca Falls: Dinner, Presentation & Discussion – Wednesday, July 23, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Join Dr. Robyn L. Rosen, Professor of History at Marist University, to learn about the first women’s rights convention in US history. Engage in conversation about the current state of women’s rights. Registration required at tinyurl.com/SenecaFallsDinner.

Shabbat Hikes with TAA

Join Temple Anshe Amunim for a Shabbat hike. Meet at the Temple at 10:45 am. Open to all levels. Pre-registration is required. You can register via the Web at tinyurl.com/ShabbatHikes2025, by email templeoffice@ansheamunim.org, or by calling the office at (413) 442-5910.

- June 14: Canoe Meadows, Pittsfield
- June 28: Bullard Woods, Stockbridge
- July 19: Kennedy Park, Lenox
- July 26: Olivia’s Overlook, West Stockbridge
- August 9: Old Mill Trail, Hinsdale
- August 23: Burbank Trail, West Stockbridge

Chabad to Host a Compelling Lineup of Speakers this Summer

LENOX –Chabad of the Berkshires relocates this summer to its new Jewish Center at 17 West Street, and will host a weekly series of distinguished speakers following Shabbat services at approximately noon through the summer months.



Asaf Romirowsky: “Israel, Hamas, and the Future of Gaza: A Regional Reckoning”

On Saturday, July 12, the speaker will be Asaf Romirowsky, historian of the Middle East and political commentator. His topic will be the volatile situation in Gaza and how

current events will shape the future of the region. Romirowsky is the executive director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME) and the executive director of the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA). His commentary has been featured in scholarship has been featured in The Wall Street Journal, The National Interest, The American Interest, The New Republic, The Times of Israel, Jerusalem Post, Ynet, and Tablet, and he is also one of the featured commentators in the film *October H8TE – The Fight for the Soul of America*, which will be screened at the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival on July 28 (see story on page 26).

Gidi Grinstein: “Is Peace Possible in Gaza After October 7?”

On Saturday, July 19, the speaker will be Israeli societal entrepreneur Gidi Grinstein, founder of the Reut Group, a non-partisan not-for-profit research, strategy and leadership group. He helped to found TOM: Tikkun Olam Makers, a global nonprofit that aids the disabled, elderly and poor. Grinstein served as secretary and coordinator of the Israeli delegation for the negotiations with the PLO in 1999–2001, including the 2000 Camp David summit. He was on the team that established Taglit-Birthright Israel, and is the co-author of the ISRAEL 15 Vision, a plan for Israel’s long-term economic development.

David Kaufman: “Why Jewish Timidity Must End”

On Saturday, July 26, the speaker will be journalist David Christopher Kaufman, a columnist for the New York Post focusing on politics, business, and culture and an Adjunct Fellow at the Tel Aviv Institute. He has written for the Financial Times, The New York Times, Details, New York, and Time International. Kaufman’s background is Ashkenazi Jewish and African-American. He has written about his identity as a gay Black Jew, and authored a chapter of *PRIDE: Fifty Years of Parades and Protests*. Kaufman received undergraduate degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and Sociology from Brandeis University and an MA in Journalism at New York University.

Register at jewishberkshires.com.

Bagels, Coffee, and a Journey Through the Siddur



GREAT BARRINGTON – On Sunday, July 20 at 11 a.m., Congregation Ahavath Sholom invites you to “Bagels, Coffee & A Journey Through The Siddur,” facilitated by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin.

Writes Rabbi Rudin:

The siddur (Jewish prayer book) is more

than a collection of prayers – it’s a window into centuries of Jewish thought, gratitude, and connection with the self, the community, and the Divine. In this Sunday morning bagels and coffee, we will explore the origins, evolution, and deeper meanings of key prayers found in the siddur. From the ancient words of the Shema and Amidah to lesser-known but powerful liturgical poems, we will uncover the historical context, theological themes, and linguistic beauty behind the prayers we recite.

We’ll blend text study with historical insight and spiritual reflection, inviting participants to not only understand the prayers intellectually but to connect with them on a personal and communal level. Whether you’re a seasoned davener or just beginning to explore Jewish prayer, this course offers a meaningful journey through the living tapestry of Jewish liturgy.

Rabbi Jennifer Rudin began serving Congregation Ahavath Sholom in 2024. She is the founding rabbi of Simcha-Services, Congregation Derech HaShalom, a Progressive Jewish community without walls in MetroWest Boston. An educator and spiritual leader, she believes in a Judaism that is authentic and meaningful, one that honors each person’s unique religious practices, and is supportive of each individual’s personal Jewish journey.

Congregation Ahavath Sholom is at 15 North Street in Great Barrington. For more information, visit ahavathsholom.com or call (413) 528 4197.

Acharei Kiddush at Knesset Israel

PITTSFIELD – Knesset Israel will be offering learning sessions every Shabbat from July 5 to August 16 at approximately 1 p.m. following Shabbat morning services and kiddush. All are welcome, free of charge.

On July 5 in honor of the July 4th weekend, Rabbi Pam Wax, Director of Adult Education and Programming at Congregation Knesset Israel will discuss various versions of the “Prayer for the Country” that have evolved since the 15th century in Europe.

On July 12, Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz will hold a Q & A session about JTS and the Conservative movement, moderated by Rabbi David Weiner, as the conclusion to her scholar-in-residence weekend at Knesset Israel. Dr. Schwartz is Chancellor and Irving Lehrman Research Professor of American Jewish History at the Jewish Theological Seminary in NYC. (See story below.)

On July 19, Dr. Joel Policzer, will speak on the topic of “Jewish Medical Ethics and Modern Medical Technology,” distinguishing Jewish medical ethics from secular medical ethics and exploring the more common medical decisions that may need to be made and how to think about them. Dr. Policzer, a summer resident of the Berkshires, is a practicing hospice and palliative physician in Florida. (See separate article on page 12.)

On July 26, Dr. Carol Gould will discuss “Democracy in Dark Times.” Dr. Gould is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where she also directs the Center for Global Ethics and Politics. (See separate article on page 12.)

On August 2, Rabbi Jan Kaufman, will speak about “Messages of Hope and Comfort for the Jewish People on Tisha B’Av.” Rabbi Kaufman, the founding principal of the Solomon Schechter High School at the Jewish Theological Seminary, later served for two decades as the director of special projects at the Rabbinical Assembly.

On August 9, Rabbi Seth Wax, Jewish Chaplain at Williams College, will speak about “The Image of the Divine Mother in Zohar.”

On August 16, Dr. Maud Mandel, will discuss “Inclusion/Exclusion: What the Field of Jewish History can Teach Us about American Higher Education Today.” Dr. Mandel is President of Williams College. (See separate article in the next issue of the BJV.)

Knesset Israel is located at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. No pre-registration required, but feel free to contact Rabbi Pam Wax at rabbipwax@knessetisrael.org if you have questions about any of these programs.

JTS in the Berkshires and Scholar-in-Residence Program at KI, with Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz



Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz

Jewish Theological Seminary in NYC, will present the first lecture on “Jews and American Politics: The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly.” Dr. Schwartz writes: “Jews have participated in American politics as voters since its inception – a source of pride and distinction. Jews have also been identified as a coveted voting bloc, an important source of financial support, and a target of veiled antisemitic rhetoric. What can we learn from our history about Jews and American politics as we contemplate an uncertain future?”

The second JTS in the Berkshires lecture, on Friday, August 8, will be offered by Rabbi Gordon Tucker, PhD, Vice Chancellor of Religious Life and Engagement at JTS, on the topic “Finding Truth (and God) Without a Doubt.” He will lead us in an exploration of the many aspects of the quest for certainty in a world that is structured to make that goal elusive.

Both lectures take place from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre at Shakespeare and Company, 70 Kemble Street, Lenox. It is highly recommended to purchase tickets online ahead of time at www.jtsa.edu/event/jts-berkshires-summer-2025, \$40 for both talks, or \$25 for one.

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The JTS in the Berkshires program is generously co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Scholar-in-Residence Weekend

PITTSFIELD – In addition to her lecture on Friday morning, July 11, Dr. Schwartz will serve as the scholar-in-residence at Knesset Israel over Shabbat, offering three other opportunities to learn with her.

Following an energizing, musical Friday evening service that evening, stay for a delicious kosher Shabbat dinner, followed by Dr. Schwartz’s presentation, “Understanding the Secret Sauce of 20th Century Conservative Judaism.” Conservative Judaism provided a captivating vision for a Judaism – traditional in orientation and embracing of evolutionary change – that captured the hearts and minds of so many 20th century American Jews. What made it so compelling – and what can we learn from this as we strive to meet the religious needs of North American Jews in the current moment?

Please pre-register for the communal Shabbat dinner (\$25 for adults, free for children) at www.knessetisrael.org/RSVP. The service and lecture are free to attend.

On Shabbat morning during the service, Dr. Schwartz will offer a sermon entitled, “Shattering the Glass Ceiling: Women and the Reimagining of American Judaism” in honor of the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Conservative movement. How did the 20th century movement for women’s equality in Judaism end up serving as a catalyst for a reimagined Judaism in our own times? Explore the ways in which new opportunities for American Jewish women paved the way for broader, creative changes in Jewish ritual, scholarship, and inclusion.

Following the Shabbat morning service and kiddush lunch, Dr. Schwartz will conclude her scholar-in-residence shabbaton at Knesset Israel with a Q&A session on JTS and the Conservative Movement, moderated by KI’s Rabbi David Weiner.

No pre-registration is necessary for the Shabbat morning service, kiddush, or afternoon programming. Knesset Israel is located at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

Dr. Joel Policzer on Jewish Medical Ethics at KI

PITTSFIELD – Following Knesset Israel’s Shabbat morning services and kiddush on Saturday, July 19, Dr. Joel Policzer, will speak on the topic of “Jewish Medical Ethics and Modern Medical Technology.”

While traditional Jewish medical ethics are relatively straightforward in what is permitted and not permitted, and how to approach life and death decisions, modern medical technology has blurred the line between life and death, between prolonging a life and prolonging the dying process, and has often made it difficult for a practicing Jew to choose among treatment options to decide what is permitted or not. This session will review Jewish medical ethics, distinguish them from secular medical ethics, and will explore the more common medical decisions that may need to be made and how to think about them, such as discontinuing a ventilator or dialysis, declining to start potentially curative chemotherapy, and the issue of medical aid in dying.

Joel S. Policzer, MD, FACP, FAAHPM is a practicing hospice and palliative physician in South Florida. After 20 years of private oncology practice in South Florida, Dr. Policzer transitioned to a medical director position with VITAS Healthcare, the nation’s largest hospice and palliative medicine provider and served as Chief Medical Officer for 10 years. Currently he is full professor of Palliative and Internal Medicine at the Wertheim College of Medicine at Florida International University, Miami, and Associate Professor of Palliative Medicine at the Miller School of Medicine of the University of Miami and the Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton. He is also core faculty of Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowships at the University of Miami and the Broward Health North Hospital.

He is co-editor of the textbook End-of-Life Care: A Practical Guide. Dr. Policzer is a summer resident of the Berkshires and a member at Knesset Israel.

Knesset Israel is located at 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. No pre-registration necessary.

“Democracy in Dark Times,” with Dr. Carol Gould



Carol Gould

PITTSFIELD – Following Knesset Israel’s Shabbat morning services and kiddush on Saturday, July 26, Dr. Carol Gould will address the topic of “Democracy in Dark Times,” in light of the rise of authoritarian forms of government and attacks on the foundations of democracy, at home

and abroad, in addition to curtailment of the hard-won rights of women and of racial and other minorities.

After briefly considering the causes of our present predicament, along with the weakness of proposed remedies, Dr. Gould will suggest the need for a more fundamental reconstruction of our very understanding of democracy itself. As John Dewey recognized a hundred years ago, we need a democratic society beyond politics, what he called “democracy as a way of life.” The talk will sketch the outline of such an approach, including a new role for human rights, and will also discuss some shorter-term methods for countering the rising authoritarianism, by way of new forms of solidarity among our fellow Americans and across borders.

Carol C. Gould is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where she is also Director of the Center for Global Ethics and Politics. She is the author of Rethinking Democracy: Freedom and Social Cooperation in Politics, Economy, and Society; Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights, which won the David Easton Award from the American Political Science Association; and Interactive Democracy: The Social Roots of Global Justice, which won the Joseph B. Gittler Award from the American Philosophical Association, along with eight edited books and over 100 academic articles. Gould has held awards and grants from the Fulbright

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Create a Jewish Legacy Campaign

Please remember the Jewish Community in your will.

Shabbat Across The Berkshires

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

Friday, June 20 at 6:00 p.m.

Hosted by
Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
270 State Road, Great Barrington, MA

Sponsored by:
Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Berkshire Minyan
Congregation Ahavath Sholom
Congregation Beth Israel
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All Levels Welcome

10 AM	Tennis Clinic
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FOR MORE DETAILS:
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YONI ERLICH: Former
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Australian Open Doubles
Champion, Israel Davis Cup
Captain and ITEC Graduate

ANDY RAM: Former Doubles
World No. 5, 3-Time Doubles
Grand Slam Champion
(Australian Open, French
Open, Wimbledon), Israel
Davis Cup Player and ITEC
Graduate



Through education and social services, **ITEC fosters a community where every child in Israel is welcomed & empowered** with life skills both on and off the court.

LOCAL NEWS

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Foundation, the National Endowment of the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Science Foundation, and she was a Member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ. She has been a part time resident of the Berkshires since 1986 and is a member at Knesset Israel.

“The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai,” with Rabbi Pam Wax

PITTSFIELD – Over the course of six sessions at Knesset Israel, Rabbi Pam Wax (a poet) will introduce students to the great Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai. Each session will be thematic, covering topics such as war and peace, love, memory, the use of Biblical and Jewish religious imagery, and Jerusalem. The poems will be taught in English, though the difficulty of translation from the Hebrew will be addressed. Hebrew readers who would benefit from the poems in the original Hebrew should request them a week ahead of time. Optional

take-home exercises will be offered for those who would like to write their own poetry. Classes will take place on Wednesdays, July 9 to August 13 from 10 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. The course is being offered in person at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, with a Zoom option. \$36 for the series, or \$10 per session. Please pre-register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp. Rabbi Pam Wax is the director of Adult Education and Programming at Congregation Knesset Israel and the author of two poetry collections, Walking the Labyrinth (Main Street Rag, 2022) and Starter Mothers (Finishing Line Press, 2023), as well as the forthcoming Chewing the Remembrances (Sheila-Na-Gig, 2026).

Ramblin’ with the Rav Hikes Continue Into Mid-Summer

Ramblin’ with the Rav hikes feature a morning of enjoying the Berkshires – exercise, a beautiful view, good company, a bit of Torah, and fantastic conversation on the trail. This is a wonderful



Ramblers with Rav Weiner (third from left) and the azaleas in Pittsfield State Forest

opportunity to build relationships and community while enjoying the outdoors. Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader of Knesset Israel in Pittsfield, leads the hikes, which typically take place on weekday and Sunday mornings in the warmer months of the year. Prospective participants must register in advance for each hike at knesetisrael.org/rsvp. Registrants will receive information about the demands of the route, what to wear, what to bring, where to meet, etc., and be added to an email list for communication before the hike. Poor weather may lead to a postponement to the rain date, usually communicated the day before, and low RSVP numbers may cause a cancellation a day or two in advance. Occasionally, there may be itinerary changes because of trail conditions. Each route is unique, with its own difficulty, distance, total elevation gain and approximate duration. Driving time is not included in the time estimate. Participants must be responsible and realistic regarding their fitness and stamina. Members and non-members of Knesset Israel are welcome, and there is no charge for the program. Questions? Please contact Rabbi Weiner by email at rabbiweiner@outlook.com.

Hand Hollow

On Thursday, July 10, Rabbi Weiner will lead an exploration of Hand Hollow in East Chatham, NY. This easy 1.5 hour hike climbs only 328’ as it wanders through a nature preserve with meadows, woods, a stream, and scenic ponds. Prepare for uneven surfaces. Leashed dogs are welcome. Participants should register in advance at www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp and plan to meet at KI at 9 a.m. to carpool or at the trailhead around 9:30.

Benedict Pond

On Thursday July 24, the group will ramble around Benedict Pond and up to the Ledge at Beartown State Forest, Great Barrington. This is an easy to moderate hike, depending on how people choose to participate – at most 374’ and up a rough staircase, but it is possible to hike a mostly level, one hour route instead. This walk combines a quick, steep climb up to a pond and overlook with a wide circuit of pristine Benedict Pond. Wonderful views, a proper trail, a pretty lake. Hikers might consider leaving some time to cool off in the pond at the end of the hike. Leashed dogs are welcome, and this is an excellent hike for kids. Participants should register in advance at www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp and plan to meet at KI at 9 a.m. to carpool or at the trailhead at Benedict Pond around 9:30 a.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Fred and Brenda Landes on the birth of their grandson, **Elijah Hersch** (Eliyahu Tsvi), to parents **Michael and Lisa Englander Landes**. **Myla Blum**, who as ‘Myla Jill’ will be holding a presentation of her work – “Woven” – at 3 p.m. on July 6 at St. Francis Gallery, 1370 Pleasant Street in South Lee. Cellist **Maya Beiser** on the August release of her new recording, *Salt*, a collection of music that centers around the biblical figure of Lot's Wife.

Community Celebration
and 85th Annual Meeting

Celebrating Our Work Together

85th Annual Meeting

Monday, June 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Elayne P Bernstein Theatre

Shakespeare & Co, 70 Kemble Street, Lenox

Free and Open To All in the Jewish Community

All are welcome to join a celebratory reception and schmoozing followed by highlights of this year’s accomplishments, elections, the Simkin Schiller college scholarship award, and our speaker.

Guest Speaker Yuval Seri
Regional Director Northeast
Jewish Agency For Israel

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Your gift to Federation’s 2025 Community Campaign will bring dignity and care to the vulnerable, build and strengthen the Jewish identity of our youth and young adults, support vital community programs, confront rising antisemitism, and create meaningful and secure Jewish life across the Berkshires, in Israel, and around the world.



JEWISH LIFE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

You help young families embrace Jewish values and traditions while building a supportive community with Jewish peers through family programming, PJ Library, and volunteer opportunities.



RESOURCES TO FIGHT ANTISEMITISM

You help young people stand up against hate through anti-bias education in our public schools. You also combat antisemitism and the BDS movement through community programming, local advocacy, and security resources.

DIGNITY & COMPASSION

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



JEWISH EDUCATION & VALUES

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



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

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



A STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY

You help young people build strong Jewish identities and become future leaders through scholarships for Jewish camp and Israel experiences, as well as leadership development and holiday meals on campus.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

You help individuals facing unexpected challenges and life transitions receive the support and resources they need. You also provide a safety net of emergency assistance in our local community.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY

You help provide a proactive voice in our community, schools, government, and media, as well as advocacy to address and respond to antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in our community.



A SECURE JEWISH COMMUNITY

You help keep our community and our institutions safe through ongoing security trainings, building assessments, security grants, a community alert system, and the sharing of best practices to ensure we can freely and securely celebrate Jewish life.



ISRAEL IN TIMES OF CRISIS

When crisis hits in Israel or around the world, you help mobilize local resources to respond with immediate relief, advocacy, and longer-term recovery. From the Israel Crisis to the war in Ukraine, you help deliver an SOS response.

A CLOSE & CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

You help connect the Berkshire Jewish Community with Israel through our Afula-Gilboa partnership. You also provide programs for at-risk students, shelter for abused women, and support services for disabled youth in Israel.



FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHCARE, & WINTER RELIEF

The war in Ukraine and safe resettlement of Jews fleeing the region has been difficult, but you help provide shelter, transportation, blankets, and heaters. You also bring food, home health aides, and medicine to those who need it most.



DONATE ONLINE AT JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG. THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Your Federation Presents

A Little Rain Could Not Dampen the Joy on Jewish Community Day

Hundreds gathered to celebrate Jewish life in the Berkshires and kick off Super Tzedakah Week!

On a blustery June 1, it didn't exactly feel like summer at 535 Summer Street, High Lawn Farm's address in Lee – but the sun managed to peek through and the Berkshire Jewish community brought its warmth to another joyful day of celebration. Hundreds enjoyed the kickoff of Super Tzedakah Week 2025 – if you haven't already made your contribution to Federation's Annual Campaign, please consider doing so.

Special thanks to Super Tzedakah Week chairs Lesley and Roy Kozupsky, and all our amazing volunteers, as well as to the folks at High Lawn Farm for the hospitality and delicious ice cream and Great Barrington's Naji's Restaurant for the Middle Eastern treats. It's summer in the Jewish Berkshires – check out the Jewish Summer Guide insert in this paper for all that's going on. We hope to see much more of you!



Your Federation Presents



PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLLE (dr@aplcom.com), CAROL SMOKLER, & THE BJV STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LOCAL NEWS

Shabbats at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires continues to offer ways to connect through Shabbat celebrations. CBI is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services on the Fridays of June 27 and July 25 at 7 p.m.

All are welcome to celebrate Shabbat together with prayer, song, poetry, and heart. The CBI band and choir bring beautiful harmonies to Kabbalat Shabbat.

Regular Shabbat Morning Services continue on the Saturdays of July 5 and July 12. at 9:30 a.m.

RSVP for all services and programs at cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events. Summer service dates may be subject to change.

Making Art About Torah

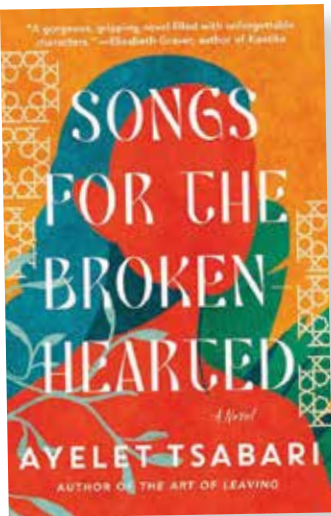
NORTH ADAMS – On Sunday, June 22 at 2 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites you to join Rabbi Rachel Barenblat to creatively “respond” to Torah through art!

Writes Rabbi Barenblat: “The Jewish Studio Project’s four-step process of inquiry, intention, creative exploration, and reflection is based on the idea that anyone can make art as a way of engaging with Torah, and that when we do, our understanding of Torah (and also of ourselves) can deepen. We will gather, read part of a Torah portion together in English (and those who want can also delve into the Hebrew), and then go through the Jewish Studio Project’s four step process for making collage art in relationship with the Torah portion.”

Tea and light refreshments will be provided. Participants do not need to self-identify as an artist (or a Torah scholar) to take part – all are welcome! “This is a low-pressure, high-reward experience,” Rabbi Barenblat adds, “an opportunity to engage with Torah, awaken our innate creativity, and spend time connecting with members of our community.”

To attend this or any of our upcoming sessions, please RSVP via the website at cbiberkshires.com/series/maat.

CBI Book Club – Ayelet Tsabari’s Songs for the Brokenhearted



On Wednesday, June 25 at 7:30 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires invites all to join via Zoom for its next Book Club, facilitated by Dr. Suzanne Levy Graver, Professor Emerita at Williams College.

Participants will discuss *Songs for the Brokenhearted* by Ayelet Tsabari, winner of the 2025 National Jewish Book Award for Fiction. A young Yemeni Israeli woman learns of her mother’s secret romance in a dramatic journey through lost family stories, revealing the unbreakable bond between a mother and a daughter in the debut novel of an award-winning literary voice. To receive the Zoom link, please RSVP via the website at cbiberkshires.com/event/book-club-june-2025.

All are welcome! This book is available to purchase online in multiple formats. Those who plan on joining us should RSVP via the website; Zoom information will be sent to all who RSVP once the date gets closer. cbiberkshires.com/event/book-club-june-2025/.



Windsor Lake

Family Fun with CBI
Potluck Shabbat by the Pool and a Lakeside Celebration

SHAFTSBURY, VT – On Friday, June 20 at 5 p.m., families will enjoy “Potluck Shabbat by the Pool” with Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires at a private home.

Rabbi Jarah Greenfield will lead a short family-friendly Shabbat service, followed by swimming and a community potluck. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share. For location and more information, please contact learning@cbiberkshires.com. Please RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/pool-shabbat-june-2025/

NORTH ADAMS – Shabbat at Windsor Lake will take place on Friday, July 18 at 5 p.m. Enjoy summer vibes and a catered vegetarian Shabbat dinner at Windsor Lake.

For more information, contact learning@cbiberkshires.com. All are welcome to participate in this free community event; please RSVP via our website if your family plans to attend. <https://cbiberkshires.com/event/shabbat-at-windsor-lake-2025/>

Family events are a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel & NEFESH, with major financial support from Sally Gottesman and The Harold Grinspoon Foundation, as well as funding from other private donors.

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LOCAL NEWS

Chabad of the Berkshires Moves to a New Home

New Jewish Center in Lenox

By Lisa Green / Special to the BJV



Sara and Rabbi Levi Volovik

Theodore Herzl famously said, “If you will it, it is no dream.” Hollywood repurposed the sentiment as “Build it and they will come.” Herzl, of course, was willing a Jewish homeland into existence while in the film *Field of Dreams*, the goal was a baseball destination in Iowa. With similar intentions and sheer persistence, Rabbi Levi Volovik and Sara Volovik, the co-directors of the Chabad of the Berkshires, have also made their dream come true as they prepare for the grand opening of the new 22,000-square foot Chabad Center in Lenox on July 6. The event is free and open to all, although advance reservations are required.

“It’s not only an Orthodox center,” says Volovik. “It’s a center for all denominations, or the unaffiliated, whether they’re residents, second homeowners or visitors – a Jewish center for all people.” Indeed, the campus on West Street will have something for everyone: besides religious services and educational opportunities, there will be a large, airy social hall/sanctuary, a kosher kitchen (plus a Passover kitchen), a library, a children’s play center and a teen center, art and music rooms, women’s and men’s mikvahs, guest quarters with private bathrooms and a guest lounge. The Volovik family residence is planned for the second floor.

The sprawling campus offers outdoor features, as well: basketball and pickleball courts, a children’s playground, a garden, and an expansive patio/meditation terrace with space for a sukkah. Parking will be available in front of the building.

The rabbi is fond of saying that Chabad is one big family, and he is excited about the Jewish people having a second home in the community. “I want you to feel that this is your home,” he says. Need a place to play mah jongg? There’s space at Chabad. Attend a lecture or concert. Take art and music lessons. Plans are to open a pre-school and daycare center, and a summer camp. Take advantage of the first (and only) local mikvah. Let Chabad be your kosher caterer or come for Friday night dinner and get the full Shabbat experience. Those who don’t drive on Shabbos can reserve a guest room and stay for the weekend.

The top floor will eventually be the living quarters for the Voloviks and their children, but the funds aren’t available yet to finish it, so the family will continue to live at the original South Street Chabad house for now.

“I wanted to build a gym and a swimming pool,” Volovik says. “But we had to prioritize.”

A Long-Term Project

The Voloviks moved to Pittsfield in 2003 to open the county’s first Chabad house on South Street. They almost immediately began holding summer services at the Lenox Community Center for the burgeoning summer Jewish population; the South Street location (the Voloviks’ home) could not handle the numbers of summer Shabbat observers.

They began searching for a property to build their dream and knew that Lenox was the place to be.

“We chose Lenox for many reasons,” Volovik says. “Many thousands of Jews come to the Berkshires in the summer, and Lenox is the heart of the Berkshires.” It doesn’t hurt that it’s also home to Canyon Ranch, Shakespeare & Company, Miraval, Kripalu, and, of course, Tanglewood.

“We wanted a property in downtown Lenox with grass,” says Volovik. They found it on 17 West Street, formerly “Cozy Nook,” an 1862 mansion that was determined, after purchase, to be in such a state of deterioration that its rehabilitation would be costlier than building new. It was demolished, and now, the property is home to the largest Jewish center – and the largest capital investment in the Jewish community – in the Berkshires.

The needs of a kosher building, though, are unfamiliar to most builders. Working with Saloomey Construction in Westfield and Caolo & Bieniek Architects in Chicopee, the Voloviks spent countless hours describing and explaining the ancient rules and regulations surrounding the construction of the mikvahs, and educating them on the necessities of the handwashing stations and the kosher kitchens.

“They’d never done a synagogue,” the rabbi says. “It was very complicated, trying to explain what a mikvah is – it has so many details.” Sara Volovik notes with a smile that the contractor kept mispronouncing the word mikvah as ‘mivkah.’

“It was constantly making decisions every single day,” she says. They initially worked with a designer whose renderings didn’t hew to Sara’s vision, which was to create a building that reflected Berkshire style. She made alterations to the plan.

“So much of the Berkshires is outdoors and a celebration of the seasons,” she says. “I wanted people standing in the social hall to feel the connection with nature. We added large windows, so that in the winter you can actually see the snow on the trees, and the beautiful blossoms in the summer-time. I wanted it to be elegant and elevated, a combination of the traditional and contemporary.”

During a tour of the building in mid-May, bulldozers were rearranging the grounds and echoes of the work being done rang out among the long corridors, but the interior was still largely unfinished. What left an impression, though, was the sunlight spilling into the spacious social hall. And if the room’s chandeliers and sconces are indicative of the style that will be filling the rest of the interior – most of which the Voloviks hand-picked – it promises to be a facility that all will find welcoming and comfortable.

The Community Pitches In

The new Jewish center, originally projected to cost \$6.5 million, could not have been attempted without the support of the Jewish community. Part-time resident Bruce Auerbach, a retired emergency room physician and former president and CEO of Study Memorial Hospital in Attleboro, MA, answered the rabbi’s call to serve on the project’s construction and fundraising committee, using his executive experience to offer guidance in facilitating the process.

“Levi and Sara’s inclusiveness and welcoming nature make them very effective fundraisers,” he says. “We’re fortunate that within our small [Jewish] community there are some people of very significant means. We might be small in number, but the community is large in their largesse and charitable nature.”

He notes that 103 families or individuals have made pledges of around \$4.5 million, with over 90% of the pledges already paid. But it’s been a broad-based community effort. “There’s a very long list of people who have donated as little as \$180 up to many hundreds of thousands of dollars. It’s wonderful to see the community step up and participate,” Auerbach says. In the works are opportunities to make smaller donations dedicated to specific furnishings, such as bedding for the guest rooms and kitchen equipment.

A glance at campaign’s website highlighting the naming opportunities and dedications for everything from the entire building to the *tallis* rack– and how much has already been pledged – reveals the support this Chabad can claim. The goal, now, is to raise the final \$2-3 million, intended to pay down the mortgage.

And when they arrive, Chabad visitors can expect to find hospitality from the town of Lenox.

“Lenox is a very open and welcoming community, and people are excited about the new Chabad center,” says Town Manager Jay Green. “It’s complementary to Lenox and what it stands for, and the portfolio we already have. In the summer, We’re the welcome mat for the Berkshires, so Chabad is in an appropriate location on West Street.” Some of the community programming will make it a destination, he says, and that will have a positive impact on Lenox businesses.

Making Things Happen

While the South Street Chabad House, located in the Volovik home, was run entirely by the couple, the new center will clearly need to staff up. The rabbi says they plan to hire up to ten people to oversee building management, the kosher kitchen, programming, and other activities.

Volunteers, too, will be crucial to accomplishing Chabad’s goals. There will be a signup sheet at the July 6 opening for those who are interested in volunteering their time, especially for food preparation and delivery and setting up for events.

Chabad of the Berkshires Grand Opening Event
Sunday, July 6 at 10:30 a.m.
17 West Street, Lenox, MA
RSVP is required

Rabbi Marc Katz on Jewish Pragmatism



Katz and Hevreh member Rabbi Rex Perlmeter, offering deep insight into the moral and ethical wisdom of the Talmudic tradition.

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is delighted to welcome Rabbi Marc Katz, spiritual leader of Temple Ner Tamid in Montclair, NJ, and author of the acclaimed book *Yochanan’s Gamble: Judaism’s Pragmatic Approach to Life* for a Lunch n’ Learn at noon on Wednesday, July 9. The event will feature a dynamic conversation between Rabbi

Together, Rabbis Katz and Perlmeter will explore themes from *Yochanan’s Gamble*, including the role of pragmatism as a deeply rooted and authentic Jewish method for addressing moral complexity. Drawing on the example of the rabbis of the Talmud, Katz illustrates how Jewish law (*halakha*) has long been shaped by a process that considers both ethical ideals and real-world challenges–asking not only “What is right?” but also “What will work?”

A 2025 PROSE Award finalist in the Humanities category, *Yochanan’s Gamble* delves into how ancient rabbis wrestled with questions of truth, compromise, and communal harmony, often making difficult decisions in service of the greater good. Their approach offers a compelling framework for contemporary ethical discourse, especially in a time of growing polarization and moral uncertainty.

Books will be available for purchase at the event. All are welcome. Hevreh is at 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

Hevreh Welcomes Rabbi Mori Lidar as Golden Hanassi Fellow for Summer 2025



Rabbi Mori Lidar

during the last two weeks of July. His visit will culminate with the annual HUC in the Berkshires weekend (August 1-2, 2025).

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LOCAL NEWS

RABBI LIDAR,
continued from page 19

Rabbi Lidar is a graduate of HUC-JIR's Israeli Rabbinic Program in Jerusalem and currently resides in Misgav, in northern Israel. As part of the fellowship, he will spend his time in the Berkshires embedded in the life of the Hevreh community, observing and learning from the rhythms of American Reform Jewish life while sharing his own unique perspectives as an Israeli rabbi.

During his time at Hevreh, Rabbi Lidar will work closely with Rabbi Jodie Gordon, shadowing her in a variety of rabbinic roles, from spiritual leadership and education to pastoral care and community engagement. His presence offers a valuable opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and deeper connection between American and Israeli expressions of progressive Judaism.

"We are honored to host Rabbi Lidar through the Golden Hanassi Fellowship," said Rabbi Gordon. "His experience, curiosity, and insight as an Israeli rabbi will enrich our community's understanding of

Jewish life in Israel and broaden our shared conversations about Jewish peoplehood."

Hevreh Presents: *Shir v'Shirim* – A Summer Exploration of Israeli Poetry and Song

GREAT BARRINGTON – This summer, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire invites the community to *Shir v'Shirim*: Exploring the Poetry and Songs of Israel, a three-part lunchtime series led by Rabbi Jodie Gordon. Sessions will take place in person on the Wednesdays of July 23 & 30, and August 6, from noon to 1:30 p.m.

From the moment Moses, Aaron, and Miriam lifted their voices in song at the shores of the Red Sea, poetry and music have been essential modes of Jewish expression. In *Shir v'Shirim*, participants will

journey through the rich poetic and musical landscape of Israel – from the early years of statehood to the present day.

The series will spotlight an array of influential and diverse voices, including Yehuda Amichai, Lea Goldberg, Sami Shalom Chetrit, and Ayat Abou Shmeiss. With a particular focus on poetry and song that have emerged since October 7, 2023, the final session will consider how Israeli artists are responding to this moment in history through creative expression. Special attention will be paid to works by women, Mizrahi, and Israeli Arab poets and songwriters, expanding the traditional canon and broadening the conversation.

All materials will be provided in English translation. This series is open to all and offered as an in-person experience only.

This promises to be a moving and thought-provoking opportunity to engage with the soul of Israeli society through its most heartfelt art forms. Hevreh is at 270 State Road in Great Barrington.



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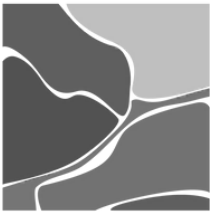
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BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

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

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

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

JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

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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



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LOCAL NEWS

Temple Anshe Amunim Welcomes Rabbi Valerie Lieber as its New Spiritual Leader

On July 1, Rabbi Valerie Lieber will assume the pulpit of Pittsfield’s venerable Temple Anshe Amunim, a congregation that has been central to Jewish life in the Berkshires since 1869.

Founded by 25 German Jewish families as an Orthodox synagogue, TAA adopted Reform practice in 1879 and in 1904 joined the precursor to today’s Union for Reform Judaism, making it the movement’s second-oldest congregation in the United States. Its 1964 building on Broad Street is a gem of mid-century modern architecture, with a domed sanctuary and a striking ark designed by the building’s architect, Henry Blatner. The bold metal Hebrew lettering that adorns the façade was created by a Williams College professor of sculpture.

In recent years, however, membership rolls at TAA have reflected the declining number of Jewish families in Berkshire County, and the congregation has entered a period of retrenchment and reinvention. Its building is in the process of being sold – per a 2024 article in the Berkshire Eagle “Board President Robyn Rosen said the vote [to sell the building] was made with ‘trepidation and emotion,’ but ultimately, she believed it was ‘the right thing to do for the congregation.’” The congregation will remain at its current location as other possibilities are explored.

Enter Rabbi Valerie Lieber, who in 2015 was chosen by The Forward as one of its ‘Most Inspiring Rabbis.’ Currently the Director of Education & Family Programs at the Kane Street Synagogue in Brooklyn, she and her wife, Leah Kopperman, purchased a home in Pittsfield during the pandemic. After a few years of being here part time, Rabbi Lieber will take over at TAA and help navigate the congregation’s path forward.

Rabbi Lieber spoke with the BJV about her new role in May. Our conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

The BJV Interview – Rabbi Valerie Lieber

What would you like the community to know about yourself?

I grew up in a Reform congregation in Indianapolis. Our family was very active, and it was very meaningful for me. I come from a line of Reform Jews, particularly on my mom’s side. I loved going to Sunday school. I didn’t realize it then, but it became apparent later that I really love Judaism. During college, I had thought all along that I would be a lawyer. But then I realized I wanted to be with people

at really important, meaningful moments that were not antagonistic, like in a trial. I wanted to be with people at these moments of key meaning in their lives. Anyway, right after college I went to Hebrew Union College and was in Israel three weeks after graduation. It was a really immersive and wonderful experience. Then I moved to New York for an additional four years at HUC. I met my now wife during that time, and we’ve been together for 31 years.

You were a Berkshire second-homeowner – what has been your impression of the Berkshires and what made you decide you wanted to work as a rabbi here?

The first time I really spent time in the Berkshires was when I was a rabbi at one of my previous congregations and I came up to Camp Eisner in 1990. I didn’t see very much. I came back to work on the faculty at Camp Eisner, which involves two weeks of working as a rabbi and leading and teaching kids. My wife also came up for part of that time and we both really liked the Berkshires. We came back maybe in 2018, really just for a vacation to see whether this was a place where we might want to retire. We thought about different places and decided against anything in the Southern United States because of politics, largely – they don’t collect taxes or do anything. In the Berkshire, there is a similar political perspective that we can share with the vast majority of people who live there, and they do collect taxes. And the services in Pittsfield are fantastic, in my opinion. I think it’s a great town, a great city. It has certain things that a larger city might have, but it’s also calm and it’s beautiful.

When we came during COVID in the summer of 2020, we were a little bit out of our minds being in a New York apartment with no outdoor space. We looked for homes, and we made an offer. By November, we moved in. And it’s wonderful. We love it. I love having a garden and looking out on trees. I love that when I ride my bike, it takes three minutes to get to just gorgeous beauty, which in New York takes about an hour and 15 minutes for me to get to a place of stunning beauty.

The people are all incredibly nice. I also connected with Dara at Federation and I ended up a volunteer on the Education committee. All the people I worked with were just incredible, really wonderful people. When this job came up, I knew I wanted to apply. People are incredibly warm, and I feel like they’re my people. It feels very comfortable. So that’s how it came to be a Berkshireian. I don’t know if that’s the right word.

No one does. This isn’t a slide-into-retirement job, though – you’re going to have to be creative and lead a congregation that is in the process of change. How did that challenge register when you decided to take on the job?

I’ve been a head rabbi at a congregation in similar circumstances where they had to pivot because of lower and aging membership. So, I understand what that’s like and the really great feelings of loss. I feel I have something to offer this wonderful community and help them grieve a certain loss – certainly the loss of the building, but I hope not the loss of the wonderful memories that they have from the events that they celebrated and observed there. I hope to help people feel community in a new space.

I also am very positive about the Berkshires and about Pittsfield in particular. My wife and I talk a lot about how many hipster young people we see there, which is always a great sign. The hipsters come first, then the gay people come, then the artists come, and then the Jews come. There are a lot of people who are Jewish in the Berkshires who can come to us and find meaning and relevance and joy and fun. And that’s what I intend to do. I intend to, for sure, minister to the people who are members and have sustained the congregation for many, many years, but also try to find new people who are not active. And I know that’s hard and doesn’t just happen automatically. That takes a lot of work and sometimes a lot of time. But it’s something that I’m interested in doing. And if that part doesn’t work out, the growth, I will be there for these people as we diminish in number and be with them in that sorrow and that difficulty.

In the short term, what can folks expect if they want to engage with Temple Anshe Amunim?

Well, I think they’re going to see a new Temple Anshe Amunim, something different from what they’ve seen over the last many, many years. I am really committed to creating a vibrant and warm and joyous atmosphere. Not that that wasn’t there before, but I think they will feel a difference and feel a great sense of hope and community. Plus, we also have some great events planned. I’ve done a lot of work over the last two or three months with the leadership of TAA to come up with an array of events and special celebrations on different Shabbatot. And I think people are going to find that there are opportunities to learn and to do social action work and outreach. I plan to connect with people. I really also just plan to get to know everybody and hopefully have them get to know me.

Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires

This summer’s Shabbaton explores “Living Legacies”

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, August 1 and Saturday, August 2, Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires hosts a Shabbaton with College faculty, leadership, and alumni. Events all take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

Friday, August 1 at 10:45 a.m.: “Alexander Schindler: The Person, The Politician, The Rabbi (in his own words),” with Michael Meyer, Ph.D., Adolph S. Ochs Emeritus Professor of Jewish History at Hebrew Union College – see page 5 for more on this

Knosh & Knowledge collaboration with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Friday, August 1 at 6 p.m.: Erev Shabbat Services and Oneg with Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires – Welcome Shabbat at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire with an uplifting and musical Friday night service led by Rabbi Jodie Gordon (HUC ’14), featuring guests from Hebrew Union College, including President Andrew Rehfeld, PhD, Golden Hanassi Fellow Rabbi Mori Lidar, and the music of the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College.

Saturday, August 2 at 10 a.m.: Shabbat Morning Services and Kiddush Luncheon in honor of the legacy of Rabbi Alexander Schindler – Join Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires for a special Shabbat morning service celebrating the memory of Rabbi Alexander Schindler, featuring reflections

on his living legacy. A kiddush luncheon and panel discussion will follow, generously sponsored by the Schindler family.

Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires is generously funded in part by the Goldner-Panken Symposium Fund at HUC, and is produced in collaboration with the American Jewish Archives, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Temple Anshe Amunim, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, and the Schindler Family.



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OBITUARIES

Irma Greene, 94, teacher, avid reader, loved to travel
LENOX – Irma Greene, 94, passed away on Saturday, April 19.

Irma aka, “Snoopy Grandma,” thanks to a unique Snoopy toy that delighted her grandchildren, was born in the Bronx in 1931 to Jewish parents at the nadir of the Great Depression. She used to joke that her parents were so poor they couldn’t afford to give her a middle name.

Back when there were few career opportunities for women, Irma graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Oswego Teachers College at the age of 20. Four years later she earned a master’s degree in education from New York University and went on to teach 4th grade for many years, primarily in the Greenburgh Central School District.

Later, she became an associate professor at Manhattanville University in Purchase, NY; a rewarding highlight of her career where she brought her deep expertise and passion for teaching to the next generation of elementary school teachers. Still later, she became the assistant director of the Union Child Day Care Center in Greenburgh, NY.

Irma was an avid reader all her life. She was also a lover of theater, classical music, opera, and crosswords, which she was astoundingly good at. In the mid-1960s, Irma and her then husband Ronald built a modest summer home in the Berkshires and for many years they spent summers and weekends here, availing themselves of its many cultural offerings,

especially Tanglewood. With the help of her son, Paul, she designed and built three more houses in the Berkshires and for a time she ran a small antique shop in West Stockbridge. Multiple generations of people directly and indirectly connected to Irma now call the Berkshires home because of her.

In 2004, Irma married her second husband, Sid Shulman, and they enjoyed trips to many countries in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East, including China. Together, Irma and Sid saw nearly every opera ever composed. He predeceased her in 2014.

In the last seven years of her life, she returned to her beloved Berkshires and remained active in her senior living community at Devonshire Estates. Irma delighted in her friends and family, and took pleasure in relating stories from her long and richly lived life.

She is survived by her two sons, Jon Greene (Kathleen Larkin) and Paul Greene (Melissa Henney); seven grandchildren, Anna, Will, Matt, Nick, Zach, Zoe, Danny; and ten great-grandchildren, Lucca, Adrianna, Juniper, Isaac, Spruce, Oscar, Hunter, Hyacinth, Baby M, and Autumn.

A memorial service was held at Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, Great Barrington, on Sunday, April 27.

Roberta A. Nussbaum, 90, received citation from the Commonwealth of MA for outstanding community service

EGREMONT – Roberta A. Nussbaum, 90, passed away peacefully on Monday, May 12.

Better known as Bobbie, she was born March 3, 1935, in Bronx, NY, to Leo and Jeanette Nussbaum, graduating from Walton High School in The Bronx. Her family spent summers in the Berkshires until they eventually moved full-time in 1962.

Bobbie lived a wonderful life, enjoying her home in Egremont with all her neighbors for whom she cared deeply. She enjoyed volunteering for Fairview Hospital, raising money for the Cancer Society by selling daffodils every March on Daffodil Day. She was a long-time member of the Thursday Morning Club, where she had many friends. She always looked forward to getting together with them. When not volunteering, she could be found at the Senior Center or enjoying concerts during the summer at the Town Bandstand in Great Barrington.

Recently, Bobbie was recognized for over 50 years of volunteer service and received a citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for her outstanding service to the community.

Bobbie worked as a receptionist for Dr. Stephen Moore and had been a secretary for the town of Great Barrington. She also worked at the Cornwall Academy, where she enjoyed traveling to Europe with the students. She held a special place in her heart for these trips and her students, becoming quite close with many.

Bobbie was known for her love of flowers and word search puzzles. She also loved it when visitors came to see

her. She enjoyed the simplest things, like watching the birds fly around her yard.

She leaves behind many friends and her favorite politician, “The One and Only Smitty Pignatelli,” whom she enjoyed seeing as he did her.

Bobbie was predeceased by her parents, Leo and Jeanette Nussbaum.

A funeral service was held on Friday, May 16, at Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, Great Barrington, conducted by Rabbi Barbara Cohen. Burial followed at Ahavath Sholom Cemetery.

Donations may be made to the American Cancer Society c/o Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Marvin Lieberman, 87, founded Great Barrington Bagel Co. & Deli, known for warmth and generous spirit
GREAT BARRINGTON - Marvin Lieberman, 87, passed away peacefully on Sunday, May 11.

A gifted and accomplished artist, Marvin began his career designing magazine covers before launching his own multimedia studio in New York City. There, he pioneered a groundbreaking method for transitioning multimedia slideshows into film - an innovation that earned him a prestigious award. His artistic talents were widely recognized, including multiple honors at the Greenwich Village Art Show.

Later in life, Marvin and his wife Judy moved to the Berkshires, where they opened the Great Barrington Bagel Co. & Deli. It quickly became a local institution, not

just for its fresh, homemade food, but for Marvin’s warmth, humor, and generous spirit. The deli was a true gathering place for locals, weekenders, and tourists alike, drawn in by his welcoming nature and infectious personality.

Marvin had a magnetic, larger-than-life presence and left an unforgettable impression on everyone he met. He had an innate ability to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds and a particular joy in spending time with younger generations. Creative to his core, Marvin was endlessly inspired and always brimming with new ideas.

One of his greatest passions was fishing, especially fly fishing. He loved not only the serenity of the sport but also teaching others. He was often found searching for the perfect stream in the Berkshires, Oreo cookies in tow.

Marvin is survived by his devoted wife Judy; beloved daughter Rachel and husband John Bachman; and cherished grandsons, Noah and Jake, who were the light of his life.

Marvin’s vibrant spirit, creativity, and kindness touched the lives of many, and he will be deeply missed. A celebration of his remarkable life will be held later this year.



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.

Anonymous (10)
Ed Abrahams
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Barbara Bashevkin*
Robert Bashevkin*
Linda J. L. Becker
Robert Berend*
Shelley Berend
Helene Berke
Lawrence Berke*
Lee & Sydelle Blatt
Betty Braun*
Cipora Brown
Barbara Cohen
Mark Cohen*
Mimi Cohen
C. Jeffrey & Judith Cook
Gerry & Lynn Denmark

Jonathan & Lara Denmark
Sheila K. Donath
Melva Eidelberg
Monroe England,* in memory of Monroe B. & Isabel England
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Dr. Donald S. Feigenbaum*
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Roger & Natalie Matus
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Wendy Robbins
Ken* & Fran* Rubenstein
Stella Schecter*
Arlene D. Schiff
Gary Schiff

Stephen & Deborah Schreier
Ellen Schwaitzberg*
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Kosher Meals to Go—Meals on Wheels

ALL ARE WELCOME: Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays through the end of May. Starting in June and through the summer months, lunches will only be prepared on Mondays and Thursdays. In-person Thursday lunches at noon begin in May, and Thursday morning Connecting With Community programs resume in June. Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60; \$7 for all others.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED BY 9 A.M. THE DAY BEFORE THE LUNCH: Call Federation’s kitchen at (413) 442-2200 the day before to reserve a meal for pick-up or to arrange delivery.

What's for Lunch?

(GF) Gluten-Free entree • (DF) Dairy-Free entree

JUNE

MONDAY, JUNE 16

Noon, Lunch...Greek turkey meatballs (GF)(DF), lemon potatoes, garlic spinach, salad, pita bread, and apricots.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

Closed for Juneteenth

MONDAY, JUNE 23

Noon, Lunch...Roasted vegetable pizza, chilled asparagus soup, salad, and blonde.

THURSDAY, JUNE 26

10:30 a.m. program: A Helluva Town! The Choreography, Musicals, and Drama of Jerome Robbins with Laura Wetzler.

Noon, Lunch...Chicken fajitas (GF)(DF), corn, rice, black bean soup, tortillas, and tropical fruit salad.

MONDAY, JUNE 30

Noon, Lunch...Veggie burger, lettuce and tomato, sweet potato fries, baked bean soup, hamburger bun, and mixed berries.

JULY

THURSDAY, JULY 3

10:45 a.m. program: Tai Chi and Kabbalah: Agile Aging in Pursuit of Methuselah with Joel Friedman.

Noon, Lunch...Salad trio with tuna, macaroni, and coleslaw, chilled cucumber soup, rye bread, and watermelon.

MONDAY, JULY 7

Noon, Lunch...Meat loaf (GF)(DF), garlic mashed potatoes, broccoli, salad, white bread, and applesauce.

THURSDAY, JULY 10

10:45 a.m. program: Current Events Seminar with Professor Steve Rubin.

Noon, Lunch...Baked cod with tomatoes, olives, and capers (GF)(DF), green beans, orzo, salad, sour-dough bread, and pineapple.

MONDAY, JULY 14

Noon, Lunch...Eggplant parmesan, meadow blend vegetables, spaghetti, salad, garlic bread, and vanilla pudding.

THURSDAY, JULY 17

10:30 a.m. program: Somewhere Over The Rainbow: The Music of Yip Harburg, Harold Arlen, and Judy Garland with Laura Wetzler.

Noon, Lunch...Chicken with sundried tomatoes and artichokes (GF)(DF), roasted cauliflower, rice, salad, roll, and pears.

MONDAY, JULY 21

Noon, Lunch...Veal “sausage” and peppers (GF)(DF), roasted Brussels sprouts, salad, sub roll, and orange.

THURSDAY, JULY 24

10:45 a.m. program: Jews and the American Revolution with Michael Hoberman.

Noon, Lunch...Nicoise pasta salad (GF)(DF), chilled avocado soup, baguette, and peach crisp.

MONDAY, JULY 28

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable lasagna, baby carrots, lentil soup, pumpernickel bread, and chocolate chip cookie.

THURSDAY, JULY 31

10:45 a.m. program: Jewish Pluralism in Modern Israel with Israeli Rabbi Mori Lidar, Rabbi Jodie Gordon, and Rabbi David Weiner.

Noon, Lunch...Sesame ginger chicken (GF)(DF), Oriental blend vegetables, brown rice, miso soup, Chinese noodles, and almond cookie.

AUGUST

MONDAY, AUGUST 4

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), hash brown potatoes, peas and carrots, salad, hearty white bread, and applesauce.

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



KOSHER MEALS ON WHEELS:

Meals are available for delivery to qualified individuals to help extend their home independence and health. There is no income requirement, just a simple assessment through Elder Services will get your meal deliveries started, if you qualify.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Jill Goldstein at (413) 442-4360, Ext 17, j.goldstein@jfswm.org.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Meals-on-wheels drivers are always appreciated. Contact Heidi Katz, (413) 442-4360, ext. 10, federation@jewishberkshires.org to inquire.

Meals and programs are made possible by the generous support of our community. The kosher lunch and meals on wheels program is in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire county.

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, June 20 8:15 p.m.
Friday, June 27 8:16 p.m.
Friday, July 4 8:15 p.m.
Friday, July 11 8:12 p.m.
Friday, July 18 8:08 p.m.
Friday, July 25 8:02 p.m.

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OUT OF CHARACTER

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July 24–August 17

at The Colonial Theatre



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World Premiere

August 7–30

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written and performed by Renée Taylor
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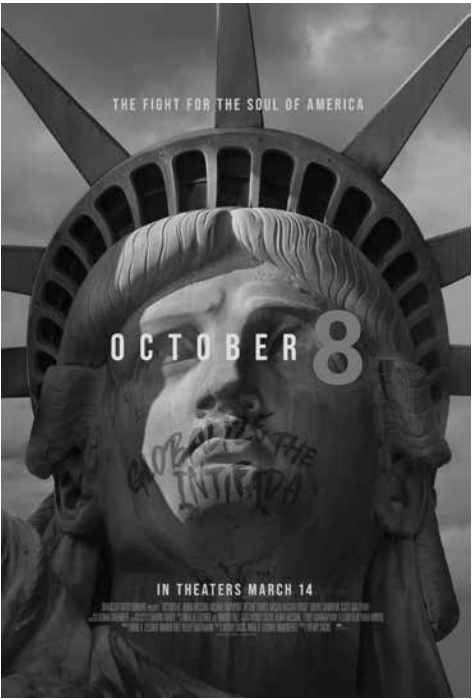
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CULTURE & ARTS

Featured at the BJFF – October H8TE – The Fight for the Soul of America

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



October H8TE – The Fight for the Soul of America (October 8), a 2025 documentary directed by Wendy Sachs and co-produced by Sachs and the actress Debra Messing, will be screened on Monday, July 28 at 8 p.m. as part of the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival. Following the film, Kenneth S. Stern (director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate and an attorney and award-winning author) will present a talkback discussion about the issues the film raises about the academic milieu from which much of the post-Oct. 7 2023 antisemitism emanated, a subject he explored in his 2020 book *The Conflict Over the Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate*.

October 8 is a valuable film, as it not only focuses on the protests (ongoing and continuing to morph more explicitly into rank antisemitism), but also describes the cultural and institutional ecosystem from which it emerged. “If you want to look at the dynamic over Israel and Palestine, and how it has affected institutions on campus,” says Stern, “you could even go back to the political statement of the Weather Underground in 1974. Their take on what was happening in Israel and with the Palestinians was not all that different than the Students for Justice in Palestine’s position now.” Stern stresses the importance of recognizing that “it’s not just this outside group that’s somehow infiltrated [the universities]. There’s a larger history.”

An ominous part of that larger history that *October 8* portrays is a 1993 meet-up of 25 pro-Hamas operatives at a hotel in Philadelphia to discuss the development of a messaging strategy that will advance their goals. Captured by an FBI wiretap, one operative says: “In order to strengthen the Islamic activism for Palestine in North America, we must do two things – widen the Muslims’ circle of influence and reducing the Jews’ circle of influence. This can be achieved by infiltrating the American media outlets, universities, and research centers.” Another opines: “[For] the Americans...we must address them from a position of rights and justice and, at the same time, choose our words well.” Hamas had, by then, understood the value of participating in what has been termed “the long march through the institutions,” a neo-Marxist strategy from the 1960s to win over key institutions in order to influence the direction of the larger culture. Though I’m well-versed in the history, that pro-Hamas forces were so savvy and well-organized over 30 years ago still came as a surprise.

One of the film’s talking heads, Lorenzo Vidino of George Washington University, observes that the pro-Hamas elements were able to accomplish some of their goals by couching the Palestinian cause in terms of apartheid and racial oppression. The film shows how the Boycott, Divestment, & Sanctions (BDS) movement modeled its tactics on the global, righteous, and ultimately successful protests against South African apartheid, while the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) frameworks developed in the 21st century provided ready-made hierarchies

of oppressors and victims based on race, economic status, gender, sexual preference, and other characteristics. As Vidino puts it, “What we are seeing today is the realization and implementation of that strategy” outlined by the Hamas operatives in 1993.

Kenneth Stern, however, does not see things quite that way. “One of the things that I find problematic is that people presume that all of the protesters are somehow dupes or Hamas operatives or Arabian-backed and Qatari-funded,” he says. “That’s not, in fact, the case. There are a lot of students who are very concerned with the number of Palestinians that have been killed in the aftermath of October 7, and they may not be experts on the history of the Middle East, and some of them may not be chanting ‘from the river to the sea’ and don’t even know which river and which sea it is. But that doesn’t change the fact that there are a lot of students who are very concerned with the contemporary moment. And to add to the complexity, there are a lot of Jewish students who are in the pro-Palestinian camp, too.”

Stern says his study of behavioral psychology leads him to believe that the disputes on campus stem as much, if not more, from fundamental human nature as they do from the political issues at hand. Both people on the left and right desire “to see things in very binary terms, good and evil, right and wrong, taking complicated things and making them simple. It gets supercharged when identity is tethered to an issue of perceived social justice or injustice...and so the other side is not just wrong, but potentially evil. The same human capacity to want to take complicated things and blend them into something simple also happens to be on the side that wants to fight what [a person] perceive[s] as hateful.” He adds his view that the larger Israeli vs. Palestinian conflict is at, its core, a clash between irreconcilable national narratives, and that “each group – not just Israelis and Palestinians, but people that have their identities tied to them – have this view of history and identity that sees the other side as a secondary aspect of the story, and mostly as an impediment to their trying to achieve control over their lives.”

Each group...sees the other side as a secondary aspect of the story, and mostly as an impediment to their trying to achieve control over their lives.

Kenneth Stern

One of the most effective segments comprises expressions of the betrayal felt by Jewish women at weak or nonexistent condemnations coming from women’s groups after the gruesome details of the sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas became known. One is a young student is shocked into understanding the true nature of antisemitism by what she terms the “failure of [her] Barnard sisterhood to support the women who had been raped.” Another is former Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg’s palpable disgust at UN Women’s refusal to do “their core job” – it took eight weeks (and the forceful lobbying efforts that Sandberg and her allies were able to bring to bear) before the group issued a statement condemning the sexual violence that did not take a “both sides” approach to the situation. It’s also hard not to notice that, in the footage presented by *October 8*, women seem to be overrepresented among the seething protestors. Stern says the data he is familiar with don’t generally bear out that disparity, however.

However. For me, the most disturbing scenes captured by *October 8* were from the encampment on the campus of my alma mater, Columbia University. Wearing a surgical mask and keffiyeh, student activist Khymani James – who was suspended by the school after footage surfaced of him saying “Zionists don’t deserve to live” – stands on a platform in front of a throng of similarly adorned protesters. “We have Zionists,” shouts James. “WE HAVE ZIONISTS,” the crowd chants in unison. “Who have entered the camp,” James continues. “WHO HAVE ENTERED THE CAMP,” the protesters all repeat. “We are going to create a human chain...” “WE ARE GOING TO CREATE A HUMAN CHAIN...”

And so on. It reminded me of the memorable scene from Monty Python’s *Life of Brian*, in which the reluctant messiah confronts a huge crowd of ardent would-be followers by telling them: “You have to think for yourselves. You are all individuals!” “YES,” the crowd intones as one, “WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS!”

While that scene was played for laughs, the events portrayed in *October 8* are no laughing matter, essentially for the concern voiced by journalist Bari Weiss near the end of the film. “What does it mean,” she asks, “that the future leaders of the most important democracy in the world are chanting for revolution and intifada? What is the country going to look like a decade from now?” To judge by the behavior of the young Ivy League students – combined with the “it depends on the context” attitude on display in the infamous congressional testimony given by the presidents of Columbia, MIT, and University of Pennsylvania (which the film also shows) – the future does not seem promising. Simply put, there does not seem to be a differently-minded cohort of mid-career academics sandwiched between the feckless upper echelon and the indoctrinated infantile Intifadaist Jew-hating whip-persnappers that might have the will or ability to sweep out the stables.

Kenneth Stern is more sanguine on the power of education to right the ship, though. When he speaks to college administrators, among the things he stresses “is that the university is an ideal place to actually navigate issues like this. You don’t want to have people disrupting classes and so forth, but I focus rather on ‘How are we going to educate at this moment? How do we educate around difficult decisions?...What do we do to get the other side to use education better?’ That’s what I want to encourage people to discuss in the aftermath of the film.”

DAVID HARRIS,
continued from cover

Jeff Robbins, litigator and former US Delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland is a weekly columnist for the Boston Herald, writing about politics, foreign policy and national security issues. He is the former Chairman of the New England Board of the Anti-Defamation League, and the former President of the World Affairs Council of Boston.



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CULTURE & ARTS

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival Returns for its 39th Season

LENOX – The Berkshire Jewish Film Festival (BJFF) will be held this July and August at the Duffin Theater at Lenox Memorial Middle and High School, 197 East Street in Lenox. Films will be screened on Mondays at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. from July 14 to August 18.

All presentations are open to the public. Tickets are \$15 per person. All seating is general admission. Single tickets are only available on the day of the show. Season passes are available at knesetisrael.org/filmfestival. For information on filmmaker talkbacks and other related events, please visit the BJFF web page at berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org. Proceeds benefit the Hebrew School at Knesset Israel. Information at berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org or (413) 445-4872, ext. 10.

July 14



4 p.m. – *Art Spiegelman: Disaster is my Muse*: This documentary celebrates the work of the iconic cartoonist and creator of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Through interviews and archives, we learn how Spiegelman, raised by Holocaust survivors, turns his family trauma into art. *Maus*, shocked the world with its irreverent treatment of the Shoah. It garnered a special citation by the Pulitzer Prize and has been banned in some school districts. The film also looks at Spiegelman's other work, including his notable covers for The New Yorker over the years.



8 p.m. – *Sabbath Queen*: This film shows how life and self-understanding unfold for Amichai Lau-Lavie, an heir to a rabbinic dynasty and a queer activist. We see Lau-Lavie's quest for authenticity and a vital Jewish spirituality. He has a drag alter ego. He co-founds Lab/shul, an experimental congregation that uses "StorahTelling" to make Torah text more accessible. He becomes a father and a rabbi. He struggles to reconcile the contradictions between his leadership at Lab/shul and his commitments to a more traditional Judaism. **Talkback with director Sandy DuBowski.**

July 21



4 p.m. – *Soda*: A taut psychological drama about Holocaust survivors rebuilding their lives in a small Israeli community in the '50s. When a glamorous seamstress moves into the neighborhood, they must confront their tormented past. The woman catches the eye of her neighbor, a former Partisan fighter. This poses a threat to the community, as all hell breaks loose when she is identified as a former Kapo in the camps. This is a poignant look at loyalty, family, memory and love.

8 p.m. – *Elie Wiesel: Soul on Fire*: This film documents the remarkable life of author, teacher, human rights activist and Nobel Laureate, Elie Wiesel. The film shows Wiesel's infamous White House visit in 1985 where he called on President Reagan to cancel a planned

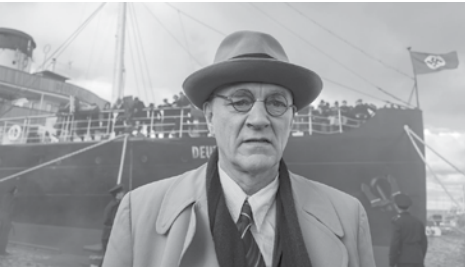


visit to a German cemetery in which Nazis were buried. The plea was heralded as a classic case of speaking truth to power, and was widely seen as a reflection of Wiesel's singular moral courage. **Talkback with director Oren Rudavsky.**

July 28



4 p.m. – *Fiddler on the Moon*: This documentary short explores the intriguing question of how to practice Judaism in space. If a space shuttle takes 90 minutes to orbit the earth, when do you mark Shabbat? If matzoh has too many crumbs to be in a zero-gravity space, how do you observe Passover? Does Jewish law even support the idea of Jews leaving this planet? These dilemmas and more are explored in interviews with astronauts, rabbis and an astrophysicist, Neil DeGrasse Tyson.



4 p.m. – *Never Alone*: This drama brings to life the true story of a Finnish businessman and philanthropist who refused to remain idle in the face of growing Gestapo threats to Jews fleeing persecution and seeking refuge in Finland. As Finland is growing more and more dangerous, Alexander Stiller repeatedly defies the authorities and assumes great risk to help protect the refugees.



8 p.m. – *October 8*: A hard-hitting look at how anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism exploded after October 7, particularly on U.S. college campuses. Through gripping film footage and wide-ranging interviews critical questions are presented. Director Wendy Sachs carefully documents the long-term planning, strategizing and funding that unleashed the vicious campaign against Israel and the Jews beginning on Oct. 8, even

as the onslaught in Israel was still unfolding. This searing portrait of a systematic campaign of hatred and delegitimization is a must-see movie. **Talkback with Kenneth S. Stern, director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate and an attorney and award-winning author.** See related story on page 26.

August 4



4 p.m. – *The Soldier on Smithdown Road*: In 1947, anti-Semitic riots broke out across the UK after two British soldiers were kidnapped and murdered in Mandate Palestine. This short and dynamic film captures Louis Scholnick, a Jewish World War II veteran and resident of Liverpool, as he defends his family business in the face of a violent mob that includes friends and neighbors.



4 p.m. – *Midas Man*: This is a well-crafted biopic of Brian Epstein, the inspired music entrepreneur who discovered the Beatles. The film traces his life, beginning as the son of Jewish furniture store owners in Liverpool. He joins the family business, branches out to sell records and yearns for more. With no experience in popular music, he spots the Beatles at a local club, sells himself as their manager and fights hard to land them a recording deal. The rest is history. **Talkback with Seth Rogovoy, author of Within You Without You: Listening to George Harrison.**



8 p.m. – *Blond Boy from Casbah*: Director Alexandre Arcady takes us on a beautifully shot, nostalgic journey through his boyhood in French Algeria. In the film, Antoine, as part of a film project, takes his own son back to the Casbah. He revisits the experiences and memories that shaped him before he and his family fled the country after the bloody war for independence.

August 11



4 p.m. – *Pink Lady*: A poignant story of an ultra-Orthodox couple who are terrorized by a blackmailer's threat to reveal that the husband is gay. The film shows how the prospect of public shame undoes the life of a loving

family, in a community where rituals and rules must be observed. This crisis helps Bati come to understand her own needs. The film portrays the couple with sensitivity as they try to navigate this painful challenge to their marriage and reputation.



8 p.m. – *Bad Shabbos*: A rollicking, irreverent comedy, bordering on farce, about an interfaith family's Shabbat dinner where an accidental death causes things to spiral into chaos. The acting is good – Kyra Sedgwick plays the befuddled Jewish mother – and good writing makes this a fun watch. **Talkback with director Daniel Robbins.**

August 18



4 p.m. – *Ain't No Back to a Merry-Go-Round*: This is a compelling documentary about a campaign to desegregate a merry-go-round at a big amusement park near Washington DC in the early part of the Civil Rights Movement. Archival photos, interviews and film footage flesh out the story whose centerpiece really is the relationships that were built between Jews, African Americans, and labor organizers who strategized and protested day after day through the summer of 1960. The group was met with Nazi protests and many activists were arrested. **Talkback with filmmaker and award-winning writer Avi Dresner, son of Rabbi Israel Dresner, an ally and friend of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**



8 p.m. – *Running on Sand*: In this award-winning comedy-drama, Omari is a refugee from Eritrea who works as a dishwasher in Tel Aviv. He gets tagged as an illegal and is slated for deportation. After he runs from the authorities, he gets mistaken for a Nigerian soccer star who is arriving in Israel to play on a Maccabi team in Netanya. While he doesn't know much about winning in soccer, he wins over fans and the team owner's daughter.

CULTURE & ARTS

Klezmetics, Eleanor Reissa, Joanne Borts, and Michael Winograd
Headline Yidstock 2025

AMHERST – The Klezmetics, Eleanor Reissa, Joanne Borts and Michael Winograd are just a few of the world-renowned Yiddish and klezmer artists who will be performing at Yidstock: The Festival of New Yiddish Music, at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, from Thursday, July 10, through Sunday, July 13.

Now in its 13th year, Yidstock is a celebration of klezmer and new Yiddish music, featuring luminaries and rising stars in the genre. In addition to seven concerts, the four-day festival includes four workshops and nine talks, all in celebration of Yiddish music, language, and culture.

This year’s lineup, curated by Yidstock’s founding artistic director Seth Rogovoy, includes favorites such as Hankus Netsky alongside veterans and rising stars making their Yidstock debut, including acclaimed Broadway performer Joanne Borts and singer-musician R. Deborah Sacks Mintz, who performed with New Moon Rising at Federation’s 2023 summer concert is making her Yidstock debut in a new duo with vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Yoshie Fruchter.

The festival will culminate on Sunday, July 13, at 7:30 p.m., with “The Great Yiddish-American Songbook,” with Frank London’s Yinglish Orchestra & Singers, a tribute to the Joys of Yinglish, with English songs in Yiddish and Yiddish songs in English, featuring five of the best Yiddish vocalists singing the greatest hits (and the not-so-great hits) of the 20th century, from Ziggy Elman’s hit adaptation of a klezmer tune “And the Angels Sing” to Mickey Katz’s deranged deconstructions of Nat King Cole’s “Nature Boy” to Lipa Schmeltzer’s Hasidic adaptation of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.” Featuring vocalists Joanne Borts, Judy Bressler, Sarah Gordon, Eleanor Reissa, and Lorin Sklamberg, with a house band directed by Frank London.

“We are thrilled to be bringing old favorites, new performers, and familiar artists with new programs and new collaborations,” said Seth Rogovoy. “We look forward to the magic and surprises that can only happen at a live event, which often provides a platform for spontaneous cross-pollination and jamming between performers.”

YIDSTOCK,
continued on page 29



Out of Character

Tony Award-winner Ari’el Stachel brings his one-man show about Jewish identity and generalized anxiety to the Berkshires



STOCKBRIDGE – Some readers may have had the chance to catch Ari’el Stachel’s one-person show *Out of Character* last summer at the Berkshire Theater Group’s Jewish Plays Project showcase. Those who missed it won’t want to do so again when BTG brings the Tony Award-winning (2018’s best featured actor in a musical, *The Band’s Visit*) performer back to the Unicorn Theatre for most of the month of July.

When Stachel first embarked on this creative project, his path through the autobiographical material seemed fairly straightforward: child of divorced Jewish parents (Israeli Mizrahi father, Ashkenazi mother) trying to sort out his cultural identity as a Jew and as an American. Dark-skinned like his father, Stachel says he was made to think of himself as too dark to be accepted as Jewish by his predominantly light-skinned Ashkenazi peers, “which gave me a chip on my shoulder about what it meant to be Jewish. Skin color is something you can’t hide, although my DNA did give me access to different social identities.” He says he always felt closer to his father’s background than to his mother’s, but that he was able to inhabit both Mizrahi and Ashkenazi realms – if not easily than at least with an equal degree of unease.

Stachel’s outlook was transformed when he was 10-years-old and in the 5th grade, after the 9/11 attacks on New York City and Washington, DC. “There was a change in brown reality in the USA,” he says, that felt more like divorce than integration. He felt pressure at school and was made uneasy by the way his friends behaved when they met his dark-complexioned Yemenite father, to the point that Stachel avoided being seen with him publicly, even at his high school graduation.

His response was to reinvent himself by passing as black when he enrolled in a high school with a sizeable African American population. Having always found himself too dark for Jews to easily accept, to his new classmates “I was light-skinned with ‘good hair,’” he remembers, “and that gives you quite a bit of status in that community.” Stachel played with that identity until his college years, when the masquerade began to feel “inauthentic.”

“Anxiety has gripped me since I was born.
My anxiety latched onto things in the world,
and the world found extreme ways to latch
on to my anxiety.”
Ari’el Stachel

In his breakthrough stage role in *The Band’s Visit*, Stachel played an Egyptian musician, a role that he says “was a way to finally embrace my Middle Eastern identity in a public way.” The show was a massive hit, sweeping the six major Tony Awards for cast, production, and score – one of only four musicals to have achieved that distinction. At the glittering afterparty following the ceremony, Stachel found himself alone in a bathroom paralyzed by a panic attack and recklessly self-medicating. And that is the opening of *Out of Character*.

“Anxiety has gripped me since I was born,” says Stachel, who was first diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder at age five. For as long as he can remember, “my anxiety latched onto things in the world, and the world found extreme ways to latch on to my anxiety.”

Early in the development of *Out of Character*, Stachel found himself stymied as he grappled with themes relating to Jewish identity. Fortuitously, he enlisted the help of director Tony Taccone, who early on provided notes about the writing. After Stachel labored on the script for two more years, Taccone came through with a query that proved decisive – Taccone said simply that he just didn’t understand what this character wanted. Stachel answered that he wanted to be less anxious. Taccone told Stachel to explore that.

Something immediately clicked for Stachel. “I started asking questions about why I was doing certain actions,” Stachel says, “and that folded into the myriad issues I had been trying to write about. Now the issues came out naturally, not intentionally, and I started writing about anxiety, which I have been in a relationship with for most of my life and that I thought I could extinguish.” Rather than exorcise his demon, in *Out of Character* he enters into conversation with it, giving it the persona of Meredith, named after the wicked step-mother from the film *The Parent Trap*.

Nothing, however, “is wrapped up in a bow” by the end of *Out of Character*. *Tikkun olam* is a Jewish value that has a long way to go before in catches up with anxiety as a motivator of Jewish behavior – but still, Stachel asserts that his show is also a comedy, adding that “I see this as part of a long line of Jewish storytelling that I hope will add to the canon of Jewish theater. Expect as many laughs as tears.”

Berkshire Theatre Group presents *The Berkeley Repertory Theatre Production of Out of Character*, written and performed by Ari’el Stachel and directed by Tony Taccone. It runs from July 2-29 at The Unicorn Theatre, 6 East Street in Stockbridge, with previews on June 30 and July 1. Tickets are available at berkshiretheatregroup.org.



Newish & Jewish in the Berkshires

Are you a newcomer to the Berkshires?
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Tuesday, July 15, 5:00-6:30 pm
Hosted by Nedra and Mark Oren, Lenox

Wednesday, August 6, 5:00-6:30 pm
Hosted by Paula Bernay, Bernay Gallery, Great Barrington

Wednesday, September 10, 5:00-6:30 pm
Hosted by Robin and Kenny Baer, Lee

Space is limited. Registration is limited to two events. Host address will be shared with registered guests the week before the event.
There will be no solicitation of any kind.

Advanced registration required:
bit.ly/NewishJewish2025 or
ktodd@jewishberkshires.org, (413) 442-4360, ext. 16.



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CULTURE & ARTS

Restored Railcar from Holocaust Era will Provide Interactive Experience at Holocaust Museum Boston

By Ruth Kaplan / Special to the BJV

A historic railcar from the early twentieth century, similar to those used to transport Jews from across Nazi-occupied Europe to death camps, has been donated to the Holocaust Legacy Foundation for display in the future *Holocaust Museum Boston* scheduled to open in downtown Boston across from Park Street station in November 2026.

To be located at the corner of Tremont Street and Hamilton Place near Boston's historic Freedom Trail, it will be the only museum in New England solely dedicated to Holocaust history.

Renowned Massachusetts conservator Josh Craine of Daedalus will oversee the restoration of the railcar, which will serve as a powerful and immersive experience in the museum. It will be prominently displayed in a protruding bay window, making it visible from the street. Visitors to the museum will have the opportunity to walk through the railcar as part of their journey through the exhibitions.

"We want visitors to do more than simply look at this railcar; we want them to emotionally connect with it," says Holocaust Legacy Co-founder and CEO Jody Kipnis. "Our mission is to use education to inspire action against hate."

The railcar was donated by Sonia Breslow of Scottsdale, AZ, whose father was one of fewer than 100 survivors of the 900,000 murdered at Treblinka. He traveled to the extermination camp in a railcar just like this one, making this artifact an especially powerful and personal testament to history. After surviving the Holocaust, he immigrated to Boston. The railcar was discovered in a junkyard in North Macedonia, which during World War II was part of Yugoslavia under Axis occupation. After being transported to the United States, it was stored in Arizona before it was brought to Massachusetts for conservation.

We are building a space that connects the past to the present, inspiring critical conversations about antisemitism, hatred, and the fragility of democracy.

Jody Kipnis, Holocaust Legacy CEO

The railcar, which weighs more than 12 tons, currently shows wear consistent with age and exposure, thus requiring careful conservation. Craine's meticulous, research-driven restoration will focus on preserving the artifact while maintaining its historical integrity. "We are working on something that someone else made, and our job is to ensure that the conservation remains true to the intent of the object," said Craine. "My hand shouldn't be seen."

Craine has a deep personal connection to the project. His late father, Clifford Craine, was also a respected conservator, and their family traces its roots to Eastern European Jews affected by the Holocaust. "Objects are one of our most powerful ways of understanding history," he noted. The conservation process of the railcar is expected to take at least four months.

Some may wonder when viewing this railcar as to whether it was actually used to transport people to the death camps during WWII. The answer is that unless there are photos of a particular freight car with people in them from that era, there is no way to know which cars actually transported victims and which did not. What is known about this railcar currently being restored is that given its origin and age, it is entirely possible that it was used in the deportation of Macedonian Jews during the Holocaust. In 1943, nearly the entire community of Macedonia were incarcerated and loaded into railcars owned by Bulgarian railways just like this one. A total of 7,144 Macedonian Jews were deported to the Treblinka death camp located in German-occupied Poland by the Nazis and their Bulgarian allies. Most of them perished.

Most people are more familiar with the term "cattle car" as opposed to "railcar" when referring to these freight cars originally designed for livestock that were packed primarily with Jews of all ages and often sealed, creating inhumane and deadly conditions. These railcars transported multitudes of Jewish prisoners and others to death camps in World War II. Many perished during the journey due to lack of ventilation, food, water and sanitation. According to Kipnis, the museum has made a conscious decision not to use that terminology because "the Nazis deliberately treated Jewish people and other persecuted groups as subhuman." She continued: "Using terminology that aligns with their perspective, whether intentionally or not, perpetuates that mindset." The museum has chosen to avoid using the voices of the Nazis in this regard.

The motivation for establishing a new Holocaust Museum in Boston came from the deep commitment of its founders to the need to preserve the memory and lessons of the Holocaust, especially as survivors grow older and the need for education becomes more urgent. Kipnis experienced a pivotal moment when she

YIDSTOCK,

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The Klezmatics, the Grammy Award-winning modern klezmer outfit, will kick off the festival on Thursday, July 10, at 7:30 p.m. Perennial Yidstock favorite Eleanor Reissa will perform an intimate Yiddish cabaret program on Friday, July 11, at 2 p.m., followed at 5 p.m. by ReynHartsik: Yoshie Fruchter and R. Deborah Sacks Mintz

On Saturday, July 12, at 8 p.m., clarinetist-bandleader Michael Winograd will lead his band in a program re-creating the 1956 klezmer album TANZI, which featured the vision of jazz and klezmer virtuoso clarinetist Sam Musiker along with his father-in-law, the legendary clarinetist Dave Tarras. Violinists Jake Shulman-Ment and Abigale Reisman will kick things off on the concert stage on Sunday, July 13, at noon, with their Two Strings program.

Veteran Broadway singer-performer Joanne Borts will celebrate the release of her brand-new album, *Lush & Hora*, making her Yidstock debut on Sunday, July 13, at 3 p.m., with an all-star lineup.

To purchase tickets and explore lodging recommendations, visit yiddishbook-center.org/yidstock or call (413) 256-4900.



visited Auschwitz with a Holocaust survivor who entrusted her with the responsibility to tell his story. The rise in antisemitism in recent years and particularly in the aftermath of October 7 has only made this mission more urgent for Kipnis, who currently serves as a commissioner on the state legislature's Massachusetts Special Commission Combatting Antisemitism.

Kipnis regards the museum as an important complement to the already established Holocaust Memorial on the Freedom Trail, which she describes as "an incredibly important symbol of remembrance." The new museum will provide a deeper, more immersive educational experience. Certainly, the restored railcar will provide visitors of all ages an opportunity to engage powerfully and physically with this dark chapter of history. In addition, the museum will offer survivor testimonies and educational programs that "will bring the lessons of the Holocaust to life in a more comprehensive way," noted Kipnis.

She summarizes the goals of the museum as follows: "We're not just preserving history, we are building a space that connects the past to the present, inspiring critical conversations about antisemitism, hatred and the fragility of democracy. The balance between honoring the memory of those who suffered and making sure visitors leave with a sense of responsibility to act against injustice today is both our greatest challenge and our most important mission." For more information see: www.holocaustlegacyfoundation.org/


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. You can find her blog at Times of Israel.

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CULTURE & ARTS

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

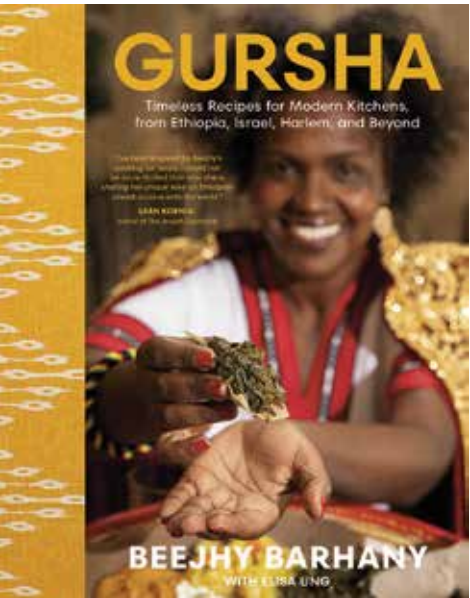
Might ‘Ye Tikil Gomen Aliche/Caulo’ Tickle Your Fancy?

A new cookbook captures the ethic of hospitality that runs through the Beta Israel culture

By Carol Goodman Kaufman/Special to the BJV

Decades ago, my father spent several winters in Israel with a program run by B’nai Brith. Centered in Netanya, participants volunteered at various facilities in the country’s north. Dad worked at an absorption center with Ethiopians who had recently arrived with Operation Moses. When one of the women gave birth to a son, her tenth child, the family asked Dad to serve as the *sandek* at the boy’s *brit milah*. Now, Dad spoke English and Yiddish, with minimal Hebrew and absolutely no Amharic, but that wasn’t going to stop him from adopting the Gezet family and keeping up a connection with them. So, he appointed me as the correspondent.

Since then, I have been fascinated with the Ethiopian Jewish culture. This people’s ancestors left the Land of Israel after the destruction of the First Temple, so they had no knowledge of the Talmud and its discussions. And although they kept fastidiously to Torah law, they didn’t know that the rabbis had ruled that chicken was so much like meat that it should not be mixed with dairy. So, you will see in the pages of *Gursha* that some chicken recipes call for butter. (That they were forced to undergo conversion upon arrival in Israel is an insult for which they have never received an apology.)



Which brings us to, *Gursha: Timeless Recipes for Modern Kitchens, from Ethiopia, Israel, Harlem, and Beyond: A Cookbook*, by Beejhy Barhany. The word *gursha* translates to “the act of feeding one another” and reflects the ethic of hospitality that runs through the Beta Israel culture. Part memoir and part cookbook, this beautifully illustrated volume tells the story of the author’s own life and that of various women in her family. She recounts walking as a child from Ethiopia to Sudan, being airlifted to Israel by the Mossad, falling in love on a visit to New York, and establishing an Ethiopian cultural center and restaurant in Harlem. At all points, she writes of how the community cared for one another.

But this is a food column, so I will review a few of the recipes in the book.

First up was Ayib/Ajibo, or cheese. I had made soft, fresh cheese many times, some with cow’s milk, some with goat’s milk, and all follow the same basic recipe: milk and an acid like vinegar or lemon juice, and sometimes salt. This particular recipe required a much larger proportion of acid than others, so it was quite sour. I wouldn’t make it again. I worried that the entire enterprise would be disappointing, but then again, I have always loved Ethiopian food so things had to look up.

And they did. Our Erev Shabbat dinner was a smashing success. The entrée was Berbere Fried Fish. Berbere is a spice blend used in much of Ethiopian cuisine. Like many spice blends such as hawaiij and baharat, its exact ingredients can vary by the cook preparing it, but ginger, cumin, coriander, cardamom, fenugreek, cayenne, and paprika are among them. The fish was not only easy to prepare, it cooked up in a flash and was stunningly delicious. It was so good that I determined to make up a large batch of berbere to have on hand. We will definitely be having it again.

As for the side dish that night, I made Ye Tikil Gomen Aliche/Caulo, translated as ‘Music-in-Your Mouth Cabbage with Potatoes and Carrots.’ This vegetable stew is certainly worthy of its name. The easy-to-make recipe fills a large pot, so it’s great for a crowd or multiple meals. As with this and other recipes I tried, one particularity of it is that onions are first cooked in a dry pan without any oil. Once their liquid has evaporated, oil and other ingredients are added.

When I saw Dubba Wot/Dubba Tsebhi (Pumpkin Stew with Date Honey), I knew I had to try it – partly because I happened to have every ingredient in the house, including the date honey. Unfortunately, the “stew” called for so much water that the result was soupy, and the squash’s flavor was washed out. Disappointing. However, unwilling either to eat the watery leftovers or throw them out, a couple of days later I decided to try a fix by adding a can of chickpeas, a half-cup of orzo, and a couple of cubed sweet potatoes to the mix. The ingredients added bulk, and more important, the tomato, berbere, and cardamom-based sauce had cured over time. The resulting stew was spectacular.

The week rolled by and it was time for another Erev Shabbat dinner. This time I made Dor Wot Aliche, or Golden Chicken Drumstick Stew. Why I attempted this recipe is beyond me because neither Joel nor I like drumsticks. The author writes that modern conveniences like food processors have made life easier, but her choice to puree rather than dice the onions that formed the base of this stew was a mistake. There wasn’t enough texture to the dish, unless you count the tough and rubbery chicken.

Because fresh kosher chicken is hard to come by locally, I had purchased a large, four-pound bag of drumsticks from the freezer case at the Price Chopper. The recipe called for two pounds. What was I to do with the rest of it? Chicken broth, of course! Somebody is bound to catch a cold and will need some Jewish penicillin.

Boiling those drumsticks until the meat fell off the bone was the perfect solution to save the day. I stripped the meat from the bones and added it to the remaining stew.

I might make the recipe again, using diced onions and a different chicken part. But probably not. There are so many other dishes to try.

All in all, this was a fascinating book, both for its insights into the Beta Israel and for its (mostly) delicious recipes.

And if I can find some friends willing to try something different (you skeptics know who you are), I will practice *gursha*.



Ye Tikil Gomen Aliche/Caulo Recipe

Music-in-Your-Mouth Cabbage with Potatoes and Carrots

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced crosswise into half-moons ½ inch thick
- 2 white potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 yellow onions, sliced into thin half-moons
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more to taste
- ¾ teaspoon black pepper, plus more to taste
- 1 head green cabbage (1½–2 pounds), cored and cut into 1-inch-wide strips
- 1 tablespoon ginger/garlic paste, or 2 teaspoons minced garlic plus 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- 1 jalapeño, trimmed and cut lengthwise into four long strips (seeded if you want less heat)
- ½ teaspoon ground roasted Korarima*

DIRECTIONS:

- Step 1: In a large bowl, cover the carrots and potatoes with cold water and soak at room temperature while you prepare the other ingredients.
- Step 2: In a large deep pot with no oil, sauté the onions over medium heat until beginning to soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the oil. Drain the carrots and potatoes and add them to the pot. Cover and cook, stirring constantly, to soften the vegetables, about 5 minutes.
- Step 3: Stir in the turmeric, salt, and pepper. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the carrots and potatoes are tender, about 5 minutes. Mix in the cabbage, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage has shrunk and softened, about 15 minutes.
- Step 4: Stir in the garlic/ginger mixture, jalapeño, and korarima. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft and fragrant, 5 to 10 minutes. Taste and add salt and pepper, if necessary.
- Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook 50 minutes.
- Cool completely.
- (These can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)
- Arrange stuffed grape leaves on platter. Garnish with lemon and parsley.

*Barhany provides the recipe for grinding and roasting the korarima, Ethiopian cardamom. If you can’t find it (I can’t imagine that you might actually have this in your spice rack), you can use regular old cardamom. You will not be disappointed in the results!



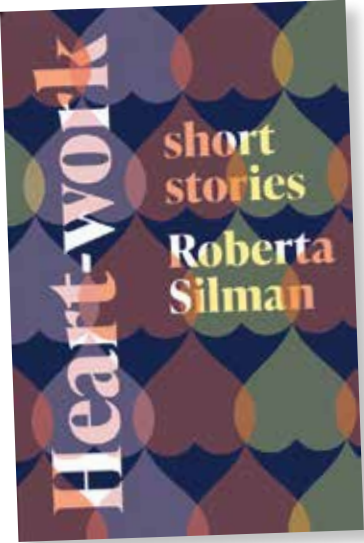
Carol Goodman Kaufman, has just published her second mystery book, *Crak, Bam, Dead: Mah Jong Mayhem* (Next Chapter Press). The collection of cozy mystery short stories features food writer/ aspiring investigative reporter Kiki Coben and her Mah Jong group as they follow clues from a “Black Widow” murder at sea to a suspicious death at a senior home charity event. Armed with a curious mind and her formidable group of friends, Kiki is ready to prove that the only thing you need to catch a killer is persistence – and maybe just a little bit of luck.

Crak, Bam, Dead is available in stores and online.

CULTURE & ARTS

Heart-work – Roberta Silman’s New Collection of Stories

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



Roberta Silman’s latest book, *Heart-work*, collects short stories that the author wrote over the past 50 years, most of them published in major magazines or winners of prestigious awards. The Great Barrington resident – who has been honored with fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts – has published six previous volumes of fiction for adults and two children’s books, and is a prolific reviewer of books, as well.

The stories are imbued with the kinds of preoccupations prevalent in the fiction published during the latter decades of the William Shawn era at *The New Yorker*, a magazine in which Silman’s stories have appeared (although none of those have been republished in *Heart-work*). The characters are almost all well-off, highly-educated, curious, insightful, credentialed, well-spoken, talented, and

cosmopolitan. Their ranks include writers, publishers of literary journals, academics who teach Jonathan Swift and the French symbolists at Stanford, theatrical directors, music critic, and other people who make a living in rarefied fields; moreover, they mostly seem to be adept and successful at what they do. They enjoy nice things and have developed tastes that can discern what things are truly nice. They read the New York Times and go to art museums and classical music concerts. They reside in impressive New York City apartments (where perhaps an original Mary Cassatt painting might hang on the wall) and fine country homes (some in the Berkshires), and have traveled the world. An aura of generational wealth hovers over the proceedings, and none of Silman’s characters seem particularly worried that somehow their pleasing lifestyles will somehow evaporate.

Yet it remains true that into each life some rain must fall. Silman’s skill as a writer is her subtlety - troubles descend upon her characters as gentle showers rather than in cascading torrents. Nevertheless, their woes accumulate. Toward the end of each story, challenges and dilemmas that might be have only been hinted at or talked around are clarified. Silman, however, usually leaves the reader with the sense that there is more to come in each story – but for the most part, the stories close before a moment comes to crisis, leaving the reader with a sense of how her protagonists might navigate those crises when they arrive.

The stories to which I responded to included “Tightrope,” about a once-promising poet, Kate, who has left New York City behind to raise a family on a hardscrabble Virginia farm. She returns to the city to provide end-of-life care for her college mentor, Professor Henry Nossiter, who she feels she may have disappointed with her life choices. Through Kate, Silman deftly captures the feelings a former city dweller who has become accustomed to rural life and its open spaces can have when returning to the metropolis – aware of the oppressiveness of the ceaseless crowding and the way “the new buildings, ‘the needles,’ the cab driver called them, rose like knives slicing off more light, and more, to create caverns of shadow that grayed and deadened the grid of broad avenues and narrower side streets.” As Henry grows progressively frail, the space in his apartment that he and Kate occupy becomes progressively more conscribed, yet she finds her imagination has room to expand. “The poems she had been carrying in her head as she bent to the myriad tasks of her life – to her husband’s and children’s and animals’ needs – all those poems were surfacing and were there, in the very air around her, to be had for the taking.” “Tightrope” rings very true in the way it captures how life can seem suspended as one waits for a loved one to pass, and all the potential that time holds for connection and self-understanding.

In “Without Wendy,” Silman perfectly captures to the at-loose-ends feelings of a divorced man in middle age. Her protagonist is Bernie, a talented but financially hapless high-end toymaker, who obsesses about his ex-wife, Wendy. She depicts the unintentional, yet piercing, slights endured by, shall we say, the less popular member of a former couple after a marriage ends – like when Bernie’s friends invite him to their long-running New Year’s Eve party, but only after mentioning that they had first invited his ex-wife, but that she couldn’t make it. “If only Bernie could get angry, first at Wendy, and then at all the rest of them. But it takes energy to get angry, energy he doesn’t have.” He pines for Wendy, but his memories mostly remind him over again that Wendy really wasn’t very kind to him. (For example, when she visited him after he moved into a new artist’s studio, “Wendy said, with a chuckle, that it held the faint smell of success. In a tone that was not wholly flattering.” I think the way Silman breaks up one idea into those two sentences demonstrates the subtlety of her prose, as well as her emotional acuity.) By the end, we see what Bernie really pines for is the structure and momentum

that marriage, even to the wrong person, can provide – as well as the pitfalls facing a divorced man who focuses too narrowly on just one star in the constellation of loneliness and defeat created by the ending of a failed marriage.

My favorite story, though, is “Requiem for a Checker,” one of several stories in *Heart-work* about the lives of an upscale family of four. Set in the Berkshires, it’s about the relationship the family develops with the eccentric local yokel Jim, who is scraggly, opinionated, omnipresent, but ultimately indispensable – he knows things about stuff, how things operate, and about the ways of country living that the citified family could in no way figure out on their own. My guess is that each one of us who has moved to the Berkshires from the city have a character like that in their lives, someone who can be a huge pain in the tuchis but who is comes to the rescue when you need him. Which is often.

The stories also feature Jewish characters, and while they are mostly very assimilated, their ethnic identity and memories provide them with a certain steel and perspective. They are perhaps a generation or two removed from their European roots, but the memory of the hard work it took to give them the good American lives they are living informs their world view. Silman did not have to give them Jewish identities for the stories to work, but it’s also clear that they would not work as they do without that touchpoint for her characters.

The stories collected in *Heart-work* are of a style that most literary magazine no longer publish very often, and it was nice to see that one of Silman’s tales, “Mooning After Rembrandt,” was recognized by the online Narrative Magazine as a finalist in its 2015 fiction contest. In this book, Silman shows how that type of storytelling can still carry emotional impact and the collection is a very worthy addition to her body of work.

Around Town

We were alerted to this flyer posted in South County by the Old Jewish Men at oldjewishmen.net, who wrote: “A Larry David look-alike contest in the Berkshires? That’s like having a hoarding contest in a Costco parking lot or a chain-smoking contest at a bowling alley. You’d be hard pressed to find a guy at Tanglewood this summer who doesn’t look like LD.” Stung at being scooped about this important development in our Jewish community by feisty out-of-towners, the BJV did some sleuthing of its own and discovered that the flyer was created by local disk jockey Michelle Kaplan, who on her Instagram (#mishmashwbc) writes: “Please let this be my pic that goes viral.” Kaplan hosts the eclectic and entertaining Mishmash radio program broadcast by local station WBCR on Thursdays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., or anytime at mixcloud.com/ mishmashwbc.



Ted Rosenthal Brings His Trio and Trumpet Legends to Tanglewood



Ted Rosenthal Trio

LENOX – On Sunday, July 20 at 7 p.m., trumpet greats Jon Faddis and Randy Brecker will share the stage at Tanglewood’s Seiji Ozawa Hall with the next generation of trumpet superstars – Benny Benack and Bria Skonberg – along with the Ted Rosenthal Trio, performing music of trumpet legends Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Louis Armstrong, and others.

In addition to amazing trumpet virtuosity and improvisational creativity, the concert will feature the vocals of Benack and Skonberg who have toured together with Jazz at Lincoln Center, and follows up on last September’s sold-out Linde Center performance of Rosenthal’s “Bernstein & Bop: A Saxophone Colossus.”

Rosenthal, who has a home in Otis and who has played solo and with his trio in the Berkshires frequently in recent years, staged his jazz opera *Dear Erich* (about his father’s immigrant experience and survivor’s guilt) at the Mahaiwe in Great Barrington in 2022.



Rabbi Valerie Lieber

WELCOME
RABBI VALERIE LIEBER

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MEET RABBI VAL
WEDNESDAY, JULY 9
4 – 6 PM

Over drinks and hors d’oeuvres, Rabbi Val will share her vision of Jewish life in the 21st century, take questions and get to know folks in the Berkshires.

Contact the temple at 413.442.5910 for information about services and events.
Our building is accessible.

CULTURE & ARTS

Federation Group Night for *The Victim*

A new play explores hot button issues about narratives and identities

LENOX – On Thursday, July 10 at 7 p.m. Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Shakespeare & Company are delighted to provide a group discount to Federation community members for one night only of *The Victim*, written by Lawrence Goodman and featuring Annette Miller. The play will be followed by a talk-back with Annette Miller, director Daniel Gidron, and local theater expert, Barbara Waldinger.

A successful New York doctor whose racial diversity training has gone horribly wrong. A health aide grappling with racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. A Holocaust survivor facing her own horror, and finding her way back to love and healing. Three women, three interconnected monologues. Who gets to call herself a victim? Who is the perpetrator? Staged at Shakespeare & Company in 2024 as a reading in the Plays in Process series, *The Victim* by Lawrence Goodman is about identity, our blindness to others, and the human capacity for cruelty and compassion.

Co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Shakespeare & Company. The play will be staged at the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre, Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble Street in Lenox. Tickets will be discounted by 20 percent for Berkshire Jewish Federation community – use the code MILLER when calling the theater box office (413.637.3353) or booking online at shakespeare.org.

About *The Victim*

“Each one of us can see ourselves as ‘the victim,’” says Annette Miller. “Things are happening to me. It’s not my fault. ‘They’ are doing me in.” What Lawrence Goodman gets right in this play, as Miller sees it, is that “each of the three characters, in some way, can also be viewed as doing someone else in.”

When Miller spoke with the BJV in May, the creative team staging *The Victim* had not yet gone into rehearsals, but the actress says that based on the show’s reception last summer as a work in progress, she has high hopes. “You could hear a pin drop when we finished,” she says. “I just loved the rhythm of the language – it tells the story. That goes so much with Shakespeare & Company – Shakespeare is all in the rhythm. When I do contemporary plays, they are all prose, but this is written very specifically – it’s not rhymed poetry, but it is written in stanzas.”

Another challenge for Miller and her collaborators will be to craft a persona for her character visually – Miller will be onstage the entire time while the other two characters convey different perspectives about events that brought them into conflict, although she will not interact with them as they speak. These monologues will be delivered sequentially, with Miller’s character speaking last about her life and her experience during the Holocaust. “Their fight is about how to take care of my character,” she explains, “by my goodness – if they understood what my character had to go through, would they really be arguing?”

Lawrence Goodman’s play touches on some of hot button issues of the day – white privilege, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), and what about the Holocaust is or is not over for the Jewish people. Goodman spoke to the BJV about *The Victim* in May. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

How did the themes of *The Victim* come together for you?

One of the things I was hearing from a number of Jews I knew was that they felt that DEI had gone too far. They would say, Jews are victims, too. I was very interested in how we evaluate or assess competing narratives of victimhood. Who gets to call themselves a victim? Why, sometimes, when one group asserts its victimhood, does another group feel that it somehow negates *their* victimhood? There’s this question of white privilege – can Jews have ‘white privilege’? How does the Holocaust affect our supposed or alleged white privilege?

Did you have a developed idea about that, or were your ways of looking at things clarified by the process of writing *The Victim*?

I think when you write a play, you just have questions, and what gets clarified are the questions, not the answers.

Artistically, how did you decide to structure the play, with each character telling her story rather than interacting with one another?

I wanted it to feel very like an intimate conversation between the characters and the audience. I wanted the characters to come up on stage, tell their stories plainly from the heart, and have the audience assess it. Sometimes there’s very good reason to do drama and to do characters interacting, but this just felt, given the issues, given who the characters were, that they should each have their moment in the spotlight to discuss their lives.

DEI has been around for some time and it has become such a part of many institutions. Now, under pressure, many are scaling it back or retreating from DEI altogether. From a Jewish perspective, what do you see as the core issue?

I think we’re going through a period as Jews right now, especially American Jews, who are trying to situate ourselves in a multiracial, multi-ethnic democracy. What is our place in it? And how do we view our status as victims compared to these other groups? That’s the central question of the play. The play is not a debate about DEI – it asks a larger question of how we understand ourselves. I think that’s part of what is going on with Israel, too – Israel is very much bounded in connection to the Holocaust. There are Jews who feel, no, the Holocaust is not relevant to what Israel is doing in Gaza, and that a colonial settler paradigm should be used. I think behind those questions are questions about victimhood and being a victim or a perpetrator.

You don’t go to a play, I don’t think, to get hit over the head with an answer to DEI. Do you know what I’m saying? You read a newspaper or you read a journal or something like that. You go to the theater because it opens up the human dimension of these questions, and that’s what I wanted to do.

Does victimhood status have a shelf life, after which you can’t say you’re a victim anymore – perhaps if you’re a member of a certain ethnic group?

It’s a question of how you use the Holocaust, how you think of yourself in the shadow of the Holocaust, and, as time passes, how that changes. The

Holocaust confers a moral status on Jews, understandably and in many ways justifiably. But it can’t be fixed in time forever. Nothing is fixed in time forever. History moves forward. So, we constantly need to assess how this event, which is so enormous, so cataclysmic, so singular, changes our sense of identity and who we are. And yet it does change. You can’t reasonably expect it to be the same. I think it’s generational, too. Older Jewish Americans have seen it as one of the defining events of Jewish history, of Jewish life, of Jewish intellectual discussion. I think there are younger Jews that I’ve had discussions with who are like, ‘I don’t want to live in the shadow of the Holocaust. I want my Judaism to be something different.’

We have to honor the event and try to make sense of an event that’s very hard to make sense of. I think that’s one of the things the play struggles with. How do you extract a moral meaning from this event and make it part of your identity and what does it mean? There’s the event itself, there’s the memory of the event, and then there’s the story you tell about the event. And those are all three different things.

How did you feel your way into writing a character, the health aide, who was coming from a non-Jewish perspective about these issues?

I approached it with a lot of humility and eagerness. I had conversations with people who are from the Dominican Republic and learned as much as I could about the country. I tried to imagine someone who knows very little about Judaism, has their own history of trauma, and ask how they might bring that to a perspective on the Holocaust, and how it might feel to work for someone who’s insistent on the primacy of the Holocaust. How do you begin to compare Jewish suffering with suffering in the DR? Do you know what I’m saying? Is it body counts? That seems crazy. Is it the innocent people killed? Is it the way they were killed? How do you even begin to make sense of them? This character has to make sense of that and is also struggling with the fact that the Jewish person is wealthier than her is her boss, so has power over her, which adds another dimension to it. To some extent, for her, Jews are white, and no different than other white people. So that changes your perspective on the Holocaust, too.

I think when you come to the theater, you’ll hear three women who’ve had rich, complicated, controversial life experiences talk about the issues that all of us are dealing with at this moment in this country and talk from the heart about them. It’s not abstract. It’s funny. Life is funny. It’s absurd. That’s part of it, too. It’s not a lecture. It’s ‘Hey, this is what I’ve been through. What do you think?’

The *Victim* will be presented from June 19 through July 20 at Shakespeare & Company’s Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre. The Federation discount will only be available for the performance on July 10.

WORLD PREMIERE

THE VICTIM

STEPHANIE CLAYMAN

YVETTE KING

ANNETTE MILLER

by Lawrence Goodman

Directed by Daniel Gidron

JUNE 19 – JULY 20

Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

Tickets 413.637.3353

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