

# 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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## One Night Only! “Jewish It Girl” Michelle Citrin and Her Band to Headline Federation’s Summer Concert



### About Michelle Citrin

There is a reason why Time.com recently listed Michelle Citrin in their Top Ten list of Jewish rock stars and the Jerusalem Post calls Michelle “The Jewish IT girl”. Michelle is an award-winning Brooklyn-based singer/songwriter and producer best known as a pioneer of celebrating Jewish culture on YouTube with viral videos including, “20 Things to do with Matzah”, “Rosh Hashanah Girl,” and “Hanukkah Lovin”. In total, these videos have received millions of hits from around the world and has led to the press referring to Michelle as, “A YouTube Sensation”.

LENOX – Get ready for an electrifying night of soul-stirring vocals, infectious, high-energy, foot-stomping world grooves, and heart-opening moments as Michelle Citrin and her dynamic band take the stage!

The concert will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 10 at the Duffin Theater at Lenox Memorial High School. This year, all concert proceeds will benefit Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Hate Has No Home Here campaign.

This concert is funded in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and generous underwriters.



MICHELLE CITRIN,  
continued on page 11

## Arlene D. Schiff Appointed to Board of Trustees of Jewish Federations of North America



Arlene D. Schiff speaking at Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ 85th annual meeting

In her decades of service, Schiff has made a lasting impact on Jewish communal life in both professional and volunteer capacities. She served as executive director of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for ten years, guiding the community through periods of growth, challenge, and increasing complexity.

Most recently, she served as the national director of LIFE & LEGACY, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation that has transformed legacy giving in Jewish communities across North America.

Schiff currently serves as president of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, where she continues to offer visionary leadership as a lay volunteer, supporting initiatives that strengthen community, foster Jewish continuity, and promote resilience.

ARLENE SCHIFF,  
continued on page 6

## איזה פִּיף – What Fun!

A Summer of Healing, Hope, and Connection at Camp Halfmoon



MONTEREY – Last summer, 33 Israeli children and teens from hostage families found something extraordinary in the quiet, pine-scented air of the Berkshires: hope. At Camp Halfmoon, nestled on the shores of Lake Buel, they experienced joy, freedom, and healing through Kimama’s transformative “Summer of Hope” program – turning trauma into resilience, and strangers into life-long friends.

Operated by Israel’s Kimama Group for the past four years, Camp Halfmoon is more than just a summer camp – it’s a sanctuary. In winter 2024, Kimama CEO Avishay Nachon received a heartfelt call from the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, asking: could children from hostage families find a place in one of Kimama’s camps? Together with the Combined Jewish

CAMP HALFMOON,  
continued on page 4

## A Magen David Adom EMT with Berkshire Roots

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

Ori Lazarovich is a 26-year-old Magen David Adom (MDA) paramedic who spent part of his childhood here in the Berkshires, in Lanesborough. His parents were both Israelis seeking opportunity in the United States, and his mother, Liat, found a teaching job at Sinai Academy, the now-defunct Jewish day school in Pittsfield. When Ori was in the 6th grade, he moved to Katzir, a community settlement (Yishuv Kehilati) in north-central Israel near Hadera and close to the Green Line border with Samaria; his maternal grandparents were Katzir’s founders, who “built the town up from nothing,” he says.

Lazarovich fondly remembers the Berkshires, particularly the “family feeling” of our small Jewish community where “everyone knows each other.” His transition to Israeli life, he says, was “pretty seamless. My Hebrew was good and the Judaic studies were great in Pittsfield, even better than some of the Israelis have here.” He discovered his calling as a paramedic in high school, where young Israelis are obliged to do volunteer work reflecting a commitment to give back to society. He received basic life support training from MDA, advancing through higher levels of training to where he was supporting critical emergency care units while still in high school.

Lazarovich continued his paramedic journey in the IDF, where he served as a combat medic “with the EOD – the Bomb Squad as you guys call it in the States.”



Ori Lazarovich

ORI LAZAROVICH,  
continued on page 20

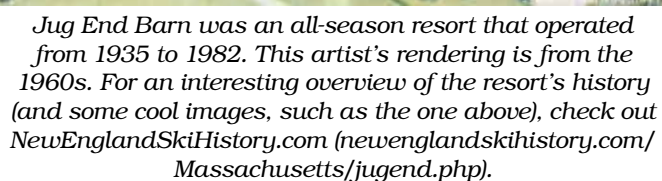
### Inside

Jug End Jive.....	2
Coincidence or “Coincidence”?.....	3
Your Federation Presents .....	4-13
Thank You, Major Donors! .....	14-15
Local News.....	17-23
Religious Schools.....	24-25
Culture & Arts .....	27-28



**By Harman Grossman / The Berkshire Minyan**

The story my friend told me appears to be a mangled misappropriation of an event that actually did occur in Southbury, CT. According to [connecticuthistory.org](http://connecticuthistory.org),



It's easy to believe stories such as this when times are tense – and these are tense times, indeed. Whether in Kfar Azza or at the Capitol Jewish Museum, we Jews are on edge – understandably. Social media exacerbates the problem, seducing us to think the worst of those who disagree with us – they're not just mistaken; they don't just see things differently; they're evil. But the real story of Jug End Road teaches us that though it's true that we have enemies, and it's true that there are those who wish to do us harm, it's not everyone, everywhere, all the time. There are good people, allies, in our midst as well, like the Southbury residents who united to drive the Nazis out of their town. Truth is, sometimes a Jug End is not a nest of Nazis. Sometimes a Jug End is just a road.

**Harman Grossman**, a member of The Berkshire Minyan, is a retired lawyer. He currently teaches 12th graders at the Golda Och Academy in New Jersey, and adults at Central Synagogue in New York, and at Metrowest Federation in New Jersey. He lives in Teaneck, NJ and Great Barrington.

Due to a scheduling oversight, we neglected to publish the lineup of books being discussed in the 20th summer of the Hadassah Book Club in our last issue. The remaining meeting on August 29 will be about *On Her Own* by Lihi Lapid, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award for 2024. For information about attending the book discussions, please contact Carol Goodman Kaufman at [ckaufman@hadassah.org](mailto:ckaufman@hadassah.org). We regret the error.





OP-ED

This Notion of Coincidences

Become a Voluntary Subscriber to the Berkshire Jewish Voice

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

I've always thought that this notion of coincidences needs to be examined more closely.

I write 'always' because I come from a long line of nonbelievers in coincidence. Foremost among them was my Bubbie Ida, who would have thought you deluded if you believed that the world's goings-on were not controlled by mysterious and powerful invisible forces. Moreover, I was raised in a Jewish community that believed in a supreme being who not only operates as an almighty Lord of Hosts, but also as Micromanager of Worldly Affairs. *Im yirtzeh Hashem*, if it be God's will, was not so much an expression as it was a worldview, one that also comes (at least for those familiar with the Yiddish saying about how *Gott* responds when *der mensch tracht*) with a cautionary message embedded within.

For personal reasons we will not get into here, I find the idea of a world where outcomes are determined by happenstance consoling – but alas, ultimately unconvincing. So I stew over such matters.



The fallen tree at Stevens Glen, with Monty the Poodle

The next day, a BNRC staffer thanked me for the information and asked that I send her my pictures. *That* made me think that I must have been the first person to have reported the fallen tree, because if someone else had already reported it, surely in this era of ubiquitous smart phones BNRC would already have some images. And *that* made me think, 'what a coincidence' – you see, several years earlier I had also been the first person to inform BNRC that a flash flood had wiped out two of the other bridges at Stevens Glen, along with a substantial section of the trail leading to the ravine. This was a major problem – sections of the property had to be closed for months as BNRC built new stairs and bridges, refurbished the walking paths, and cleared out debris from the streams. And *that* made me think, 'Was it a coincidence or *yirtzeh Hashem* that I be the one to have made both discoveries?'. If the latter, what might *Ha Kadosh Baruch Hu's* game plan for me and/or Stevens Glen be in all this?

When I experience this kind of coincidence, I'm reminded of an anecdote about Franz Kafka.

One night in Prague, Kafka was taking a walk with Gustav Janouch when a dog crossed the street in the distance.

"What was that?" said Kafka.

"A dog," said Janouch.

"It could be a dog, or it could be a sign," Kafka said. "We Jews often make tragic mistakes."

That led me to realize that "coincidence" was going to be my way into writing this annual appeal for voluntary subscribers to the Berkshire Jewish Voice, as the most meaningful moment I had this year working as the editor of your Jewish community newspaper hinged upon a synchronicity. I'll explain momentarily, but first some business:

**This publication's revenues do not cover all its costs. Your financial help as voluntary subscribers is essential in our efforts to bring you meaningful, positive, and entertaining stories both by and about your neighbors, as well as about Jews around the world. Your generosity as voluntary subscribers last year was phenomenal, and your support remains vital to sustaining this publication. Please see the insert in this paper for more on how you can support the Berkshire Jewish Voice.**

The most powerful piece of writing we published in the last 12 months was the transcript of the remarks delivered by **Shimi Roches** at our community commemoration of the first anniversary of the Oct. 7 2023 attack on Israel. He described the ordeal of losing three generations of his family – his brother-in-law Ohad Cohen, Ohad's mother Yona, and his 9-month-old niece, Mila – on that terrible morning in Kibbutz Be'eri, vividly conveying how those events unfurled in real time for loved ones of the victims. In an article I wrote to accompany Shimi's testimony, I shared how, when I was given his remarks to review before the event, I was interrupted from reading journalist **Lee Yaron's** devastating *10/7: 100 Human Stories*. As I put down Shimi's remarks and returned to the book, the first paragraph I happened to read was about the Cohen family. "This unsettling coincidence," I wrote, "reaffirmed what I believe has been an overarching lesson of Oct. 7 and its aftermath: We live in a small Jewish world and we are all connected by fewer degrees of separation than we ordinarily comprehend."

I also wrote about what was immediately apparent about Yaron's narrative: "10/7 is more than 'journalism as a first draft of history' – it is a work of literature that contains multitudes." Thanks to the work of my esteemed colleague **Rabbi Daveen Litwin**, Federation's director of programming and community engagement, we were fortunate to hear Lee Yaron present a program for our community. I was able to interview her via e-mail, as well. *10/7* received the accolades it richly deserved, winning the 2024 National Jewish Book Award Book of the Year – but, as Yaron shared with us, it was also passed over by reviewers and booksellers who had begun to shy away from Jewish-themed books.

This reality was affirmed by nearly all the Jewish authors I spoke to this year, who added that their publishing houses were not making much effort to

promote their books. And so, in 2024/2025, I focused many of the BJV's Culture pages on Jewish books and writers, many of whom were also featured Federation presenters. **Leah Lax** described her journey out of the Chabad Lubavitch community and engagement with immigrant communities. In our packed spring BJV, **Katka Retzke** talked to me about the Jewish revival in Poland; **Hasia R. Diner**, a preeminent scholar of American Jewish history and immigration, shared the story of the relationship of the Jews and the Irish in America; and I had **Jehuda Reinharz** to myself for more than an hour to discuss his epic biography of Chaim Weizmann. I cannot tell you how fulfilling it is to be able to stretch my understanding of disparate subjects about which I may have no real awareness, and learn directly from these writers and scholars. We also featured interviews with writers living and working in the Berkshires like poet/essayist **Karen Chase** (*Two Tales: Jamali Kamali & ZundelState*) and **Galina Vromen** (*Hill of Secrets*), as well as playwright **Lawrence Goodman** (*The Victim*).

Community members pitched in when I issued an invitation for book reviews. **Howie Stier** shared an appreciation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's *The Penitent*; **Linda Davis** interviewed cartoonist **Amy Kurzweil**; and **Linda Burghardt** (journalist and scholar-in-residence at the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center, as well as Federation presenter) wrote about the Holocaust fiction that "enhanced [her] world and deepened [her] grasp of history." **Dr. Steve Rubin**, professor emeritus and former dean at Adelphi University and moderator of Federation's Current Events Seminar at Connecting With Community, really stepped up by contributing a regular column about Jewish books. Steve possesses that quality I value most in a reviewer – if he thinks a book is worthwhile, you probably will, too.

And where would we be without **Carol Goodman Kaufman**, who in each issue shares a fascinating column about Jewish life and dining? She keeps writing for us despite her ever-increasing success and workload as a novelist, mystery writer, children's book author, and podcaster. Carol, thank you!

I also had the chance to review more books by local authors than I've been accustomed to, including **Seth Rogovoy's** George Harrison bio and **Roberta Silman's** most recent short story collection. The volume that cut the deepest was *Cold Crematorium*, the rediscovered Holocaust memoir by József Debreczeni. I tried to assign the review, but no one would agree to take it on – "too much, too much right now" was their refrain. I had the book on my BJV lineup for three issues before I could bring myself to write about it, though I recognized that *Cold Crematorium* was destined to be counted among the very greatest books ever written about life and death in German concentration camps. The experience of reading it was simply too devastating, not only for what the memoir conveyed, but also because I knew the translator, Paul Olchvary, who died suddenly at his home in Williamstown just as the book was set to be released. When I finally steeled myself to write my appreciation, Paul's dear friend **Jenny Gitlitz** added a reminiscence that captured the heartbreak of her loss. Paul produced his masterful translation right here in the Berkshires, and to know that it will endure as the way English language readers apprehend Debreczeni's masterpiece absolutely blows me away. Last year, *Cold Crematorium* was chosen by the New York Times as one of the 10 Best Books of 2024. Amazing things are accomplished in the Berkshires.

But last year was not all books. As usual, **our local rabbis** delivered insightful and meaty Rabbi Reflection columns that deepened our understanding of Torah and Jewish thought. This year, we were pleased to add new contributors, **Rabbi Jennifer Rudin** (Congregation Ahavath Sholom), **Rabbi Eric Gurvis**, and lay contributor **Harman Grossman**, and one of our regular columnists, **Rabbi Neal Borovitz**, mixed things up a bit by sharing his experiences visiting Israel last year (as did **Rabbi David Weiner**). It was a year where our local clergy

VOLUNTARY SUBSCRIBERS,  
continued on page 6

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



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# Your Federation Presents

## CAMP HALFMOON, continued from cover

Philanthropies of Greater Boston, Kimama said yes – and delivered an experience filled with laughter, community, and purpose.

“It wasn’t a grief camp,” emphasized Kimama COO Alon Parnas. “It was a real summer camp – just as it should be.”



Daria and Gali

This summer, that mission grew. Thanks to support from Jewish Federation of the Berkshires (\$10,000), the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County (\$5,000), and generous local donors, Camp Halfmoon is welcoming 55 Israeli campers from hostage families. They join campers from around the U.S. and the world – most of them Jewish, many with close ties to Israel – to take a much-needed breath from the intensity of life back home, where even this summer was marked by the 12-day war with Iran.

As the situation in Israel continues to evolve, so too has the tone of the summer. With a hopeful resolution to the hostage crisis possibly near, Camp Halfmoon has become not only a place of refuge, but a space of empowerment. Camp Director Yael Skikne reflects on last year: “We had kids who hadn’t left their homes, who hadn’t seen friends in months. Three weeks later, they were smiling, playing, breathing. Parents told us their children were going back to school with renewed energy and peace of mind.”

Still, many campers remain in limbo. “Some are still living in hotels,” says CEO Nachon. “Is the state doing enough? It depends on who you ask. But what’s clear is that Israelis are helping each other.” Skikne adds, “Time heals – but spaces like this accelerate that healing.”

Camp is healing for everyone involved – including the staff. “About 40 percent of our counselors are Israeli,” says Nachon, “and many have recently served in combat zones. Being here, making a difference for these kids – it gives deep meaning to what they do.”

Twelve-year-old Gali Horn from Kfar Saba returned to Halfmoon this summer, although delayed by events in Israel. Her family’s story is one of heartbreak: two of her uncles were kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz. One, Yair, was released in February 2025. The other, Eitan, remains in captivity. Gali calls camp a “bubble,”

or *b’ua* in Hebrew. “It’s hard for people to understand my story, even Israelis,” she says. “I want to stay in the bubble – but I also want to know what’s happening.”

At camp, kids disconnect from their phones, relying on staff to provide important news. “Some ask for updates daily, some never ask,” says Ella Shahar, a counselor from the Hostages and Missing Families Forum. “Gali asks twice a day.”

Unlike last year, many families are now deeply involved in the movement to bring the hostages home. Gali has found solidarity in new friendships, especially during visits to Hostages Square in Tel Aviv. “I met other kids like me. There were people everywhere who wanted to help.”

First-time camper Daria Peri, 12, from Tel Aviv, called arriving at camp *hi’tragshut* – pure excitement. The granddaughter of peace activist Chaim Peri, who was kidnapped and murdered after October 7, Daria brings both grief and grace with her. “It was hard to disconnect from everything,” she says. “But here, I could learn how to focus on friendship and fun again. I could talk.”



For many American and international campers, the experience has opened eyes and hearts. “I didn’t want to force anyone to talk,” says Micah, 12. “I just wanted them to feel good. Once we became friends, we talked more.” Another camper, Ori, remembered one boy arriving with a stress-related skin condition. “By the end of camp,” he says, “he was doing much better. You could see it helped.”

Adds Amit, 11: “I’m just friends with everyone. What I learned is that we’re all family. We’re all part of what happened.”

Yael Skikne emphasizes that Kimama’s commitment is long-term. “We’re building an alumni network, just like American camps. These connections won’t end with the summer.” Kimama stays in touch with families year-round, ensuring that the healing doesn’t stop when the suitcases are packed.

But the most powerful impact, she adds, happens quietly – through a changed perspective. “Even a few weeks here has helped kids return to Israel with stronger identities, a deeper sense of self, and a belief that they can face whatever comes next. Because at Camp Halfmoon, a ‘Summer of Hope isn’t just a season – it’s a lifeline.”

## Jewish Pluralism in Modern Israel

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



PHOTO: IRAC.ORG

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.

Featured panelists are:

**Rabbi Mori Lidar** of Israel, who will also be in residence at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire 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 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.

## 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*.

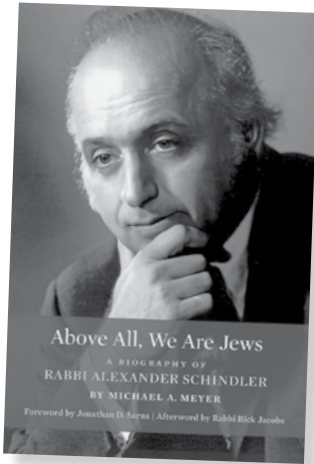
Federation’s free monthly Knosh & Knowledge programs are held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Register at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. This program is in collaboration with Hebrew Union College in the Berkshires.

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**, 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.



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# Your Federation Presents

## Noah’s Wine vs. Pharaoh’s Beer, the Barroom Brawl and Culture War that Shaped Jewish History

With Biblical and Talmudic Ethnobotanist  
Dr. Jon Greenberg



Representation of a Syrian mercenary drinking Egyptian beer through a long rod, one of the typical filter rods for drinking beer.

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, August 21 at 10:45 a.m., TorahFlora botanist, author, and teacher Jon Greenberg, Ph.D., returns to Connecting With Community with “Noah’s Wine vs. Pharaoh’s Beer, the Barroom Brawl and Culture War that Shaped Jewish History.”

Beer was revered as sacred in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, but for Jews, wine has always been the preferred beverage. Why is that? This presentation Jon Greenberg will explore how civilization may have begun as a way to get a beer, how Moses instigated the downfall of the Egyptian beer goddess, the roots of

Jewish ambivalence about alcohol in the Garden of Eden, and the deep meaning of red and white wines at the Passover Seder.

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. the day BEFORE the program (Wednesday). Suggested donation of \$3 for adults over age 60. \$7 for all others.

**Dr. Jon Greenberg** is devoted to biblical ethnobotany to better understand the Torah. He received his doctorate in agronomy from Cornell University, and has studied with Rabbi Chaim Brovender at Israel’s Yeshivat Hamivtar and conducted research on corn, alfalfa, and soybeans at Cornell, the US Dept of Agriculture, and University of PA Institute for Cancer Research.

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

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](http://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). Donation of \$3 for adults over age 60, \$7 for all others.

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“The Feast of the Rejoicing of the Law at the Synagogue in Leghorn, Italy,” a work by Jewish British painter Solomon Alexander Hart (1850).

## Seniors Acting Up – A Look at Life from a Different Perspective



Seniors Acting Up

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, August 28 at 10:45 a.m., Connecting With Community welcomes back Seniors Acting Up for another of their popular staged readings of comedic theater.

With so many challenges facing the world daily, a little laughter is always welcomed. “Seniors Acting Up”, a group of talented local amateur actors ranging in age from sixties to eighties was formed by Milton Lestz z”l with short comedic staged readings as their specialty.

The group this year includes: Sylvia Allan, Linda Cantoni, Tom and Laura Gardner, Peter McCallion, Peter Podol, and Denise Roller. All in the group share

a love of community theater and that makes the performances special.

The troupe was originally called “Milton’s Gang” and was formed and directed by Milton Lestz, who sadly passed away in January 2025. He is dearly missed and all performances are dedicated to him.

This free program is part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Advance reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 by 9 a.m. Wednesday, the day BEFORE the program.

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

## “Music of the Jews of Italy,” with Laura Wetzler

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, August 14 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 music of the Jews of Italy.

Jews have lived in Italy since ancient times, encompassing indigenous local, Ashkenazi, and Sephardi Jewish traditions.



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## Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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# Your Federation Presents

## ARLENE SCHIFF,

*continued from cover*

“We are thrilled to welcome Arlene Schiff to the Board of Trustees,” said **Eric Fingerhut**, President and CEO of Jewish Federations of North America. “Arlene brings a unique and deeply informed perspective, having served as both a Federation executive and a dedicated lay leader. Her leadership in legacy giving, combined with her decades of hands-on experience in a small but vibrant Jewish community, makes her a powerful advocate for the full diversity of Jewish life across North America.”

Schiff shared thoughts about to this national leadership role:

It is an honor to accept the opportunity to serve on the JFNA Board of Trustees as one of ten representatives from small federation communities. As we collaborate to cultivate thriving Jewish communities of all sizes across North America and address global Jewish priorities, it is essential to incorporate the perspectives of individuals residing in smaller, non-metropolitan areas.

Whether our discussions center on enhancing engagement in Jewish life, advocating for our communities, forming coalitions, or strengthening relations with governmental and community entities, the viewpoints and experience

of residents of smaller communities are indispensable. Additionally, meeting both the immediate and long-term needs in Israel, Ukraine, and across the globe, as well as securing the resources necessary to sustain a vibrant world-wide Jewish community, are vital aspects of our mission, where a diversity of viewpoints holds significant value.

I look forward to collaborating meaningfully with my fellow trustees on these critical issues.

**Dara Kaufman**, executive director of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, added, “Arlene’s leadership has been a driving force in shaping a caring, inclusive, and forward-thinking Jewish community here in the Berkshires. Her appointment to the Board is not only a recognition of her extraordinary contributions, but also a testament to the strength and impact of small Jewish communities like ours.”

In addition to her work in the Berkshires, Schiff is a recognized national leader in Jewish philanthropy and nonprofit capacity-building. Her appointment underscores Jewish Federations of North America’s commitment to ensuring that communities of all sizes – and leaders with varied experiences – have a voice in shaping the future of Jewish communal life.

## VOLUNTARY SUBSCRIBERS,

*continued from page 3*

experienced a change of the guard. **Rabbi Barbara Cohen** stepped down from the pulpit at Congregation Ahavath Sholom; **Rabbi Jodie Gordon** assumed the role of senior rabbi at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire; and Temple Anshe Amunim welcomed **Rabbi Valerie Lieber** as its new spiritual leader. I had the pleasure of talking to all three about their accomplishments and ambitions. I think these columns and conversations are valuable in that they provide a window for our readers into the diversity and depth of Jewish practice in the Berkshires, and the distinction of our spiritual leaders.

And I also enjoyed **Lisa Green**’s reporting on another huge local development – the opening of Chabad of the Berkshires’ Jewish Center in Lenox. She captured the vision of co-directors **Sara and Rabbi Levi Volovik** in building this ambitious new touchpoint of Jewish life in the region. And, in the story we published last year that I found most moving, we shared the correspondence between the Voloviks’ daughter **Chana** and **Rachel Goldberg Polin**, who exchanged messages of support and consolation on the very morning that Hersch Goldberg Polin was laid to rest in Jerusalem. We hope to feature an in-depth BJV Interview with Rachel in the months ahead.

Our volunteers and community leaders are the engines of Federation’s success, and this year I was able to share stories about how and why these contributors engage with this organization and believe in its mission. Super Tzedakah Week co-chairs **Leslie and Roy Kozupsky** described their thoughts on how the Berkshires might become not only a destination for Jews to visit, but also a place Jews will visit to engage more deeply with Jewish life. Legacy Circle participants **Richard and Alyson Slutzky** eloquently conveyed the reasons why leaving a Jewish legacy was so important in a smaller community like ours, where ensuring Jewish continuity is much more precarious than it might be in a place with a larger Jewish population.

Our Major Donors Celebration co-chairs **Judy and Mark Usow** talked about what it was like to build careers and raise a family while trying to live Jewishly in a place where there aren’t that many Jews. They conveyed something important about the Jewish Berkshires to folks who might not understand what living here full-time is like, such as younger readers with families who are new arrivals and second-homeowners and retirees in the Berkshires. Mark and Judy are exemplars of stepping up to create the Jewish community one wants to live in – *yasher koach* to them for all they do.

And I also want to acknowledge the colleagues who help make the BJV a source of pride for this community. Thank you to graphic designer **Mary Herrmann**, who puts up with me, and to her colleague, **Regina Burgio**, as well. Thank you, too, to **Jenny Greenfeld**, who has done a good job of increasing our profile among **our cherished advertisers**, whose support helps us bring you a quality publication month in and month out. And finally, big thanks to **Heidi Katz**, Federation’s new coordinator of volunteers, who generously allowed us to use her arresting Old Testament-inspired artwork on the cover of our early summer issue. I hope to share more of her excellent creations.

This BJV also features the first story we have ever published that was written by the Artificial Intelligence program ChatGPT. I won’t divulge which one – see if you can figure it out. It did a dishearteningly capable job rapidly and cost-effectively, and while I’m not saying that this voluntary subscriber column will be the last one written by me rather than AI, a nice show of financial support from our readers this go-around will meaningfully make the case for keeping an actual salaried human being on the Federation payroll to produce your local Jewish community newspaper.

**Please see the insert in this newspaper for the different funding levels available. An honorary publisher gift of \$360 allows us to provide four pages of color. Due to popular demand, we are printing more copies of each issue and printing costs have escalated in recent years. Your support will allow us to reach more people wishing to connect with all our Jewish community offers to full-time residents, part-time residents, and the tens of thousands of Jewish vacationers who visit the Berkshires each year.**

As a writer, sometimes you find your way into a topic – as I did when I hit upon this notion of coincidence – without a clear idea of how (or even if) you’re going to be able use it to get out. An idea I wished to convey is how, in the Jewish realm at least, what seems like mere coincidence often unveils a deep connection that, once exposed, should have been obvious all along. In asking for your continued financial support for the Berkshire Jewish Voice, I wanted to show how this Federation and its newspaper exist to demonstrate and strengthen connection within our community and to the wider Jewish world.

But how was I going to land it? As I wrapped up for the evening, before I really started writing this column, I thought about an anecdote that my pal, the aforementioned Howie Stier, related soon after he returned from a recent one-month program of yeshiva study in Israel (which he’ll be writing about in an upcoming issue of the BJV).

Howie told me how he was wandering around Jerusalem when he found himself negotiating some obscure, narrow, twisting streets in a rundown neighborhood in the middle of God-knows-where when he happened to look up. Standing a few stories up was a man with a familiar face. Howie called up to him and asked if he was Rabbi So-and-So. The man said he was and asked how Howie knew that, to which Howie responded: “I watch your YouTube videos every day.” Long story short, Howie was invited upstairs and ended up getting to know this rabbi who he had been following on the internet.

When Howie recounted the story, he marveled at the chance meeting. Could I believe something like that just happened?

I said that of course I did. That’s why you go to Israel, because that’s where things like that are supposed to happen to Jews. The coincidences are part of the magic.

As I shut down my computer for the night, I considered that maybe there was something in Howie’s anecdote I could mine for the story I wanted to write about unseen connections suddenly and uncannily revealed by coincidence, perhaps for a higher purpose reflecting *yirtzeh Hashem*. I started turning over the possibilities in my mind, didn’t get very far, and resolved to mull it all over the next day.

I exited the Federation building and was heading toward my car when I recognized a familiar figure walking down Pittsfield’s South Street.

“Howie!” I called out. “HOWIE! Turn around!”

When Howie saw it was me, he smiled and greeted me with his usual greeting: “Well hello, Mr. Editor.”

And just like that, *baruch Hashem*, I had my ending. This notion of coincidences needs to be examined more closely.

# HATE HAS NO HOME HERE



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### 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

[Jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here](http://Jewishberkshires.org/Hate-Has-No-Home-Here)



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# Your Federation Presents

## Jewish Food Series with Local Chefs, Culinary Historians, and Cookbook Authors

### Special in-person Connecting With Community lunches this September

PITTSFIELD – This September, Connecting With Community will host four special Thursday lunches in person at Knesset Israel at noon. We'll be joined by local chefs, culinary historians, and authors, who will create special pre-High Holy Day menus for the occasion.

Enjoy lunch and take home the recipes! At press time, the following meals had been planned.

#### Tina Wasserman on September 4

Join Tina Wasserman, Jewish culinary historian and award-winning cooking instructor and 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*, for conversation over a home-cooked kosher lunch featuring two of her favorite recipes to Break-the-Fast on Yom Kippur (Kugel Deluxe and Almond Poppyseed Pound Cake). Enjoy lunch and take home the recipes!

Tina is an award-winning cooking instructor specializing in historical and contemporary Jewish cuisine. She 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. You may have seen her food column in Reform Judaism Magazine for ten years or her contributions to the URJ's Ten Minutes of Torah.

Copies of Tina's cookbooks will be available for purchase (cash and check only) and signing by the author. Tina's website is [cookingandmore.com](http://cookingandmore.com).

Full lunch menu: Tuna Salad Platter, Sweet Kugel Deluxe, Coleslaw, Zucchini Soup, Rye Bread, Almond Poppyseed Pound Cake.

#### Naomi Ross on September 11



We welcome Naomi Ross, Kosher chef, food writer and author of *The Giving Table* around our community table for conversation and enjoy a home-cooked kosher lunch featuring two of Naomi's favorite recipes for the pre-fast meal on Yom Kippur (Apricot Citrus Chicken and Rum-Cherry-Apple Cake).

Naomi writes articles and web content connecting the fun of good cooking with Jewish inspiration. She is a regular contributor to Fleishigs Magazine, OU Jewish Action, Kosher.com and Aish.com. Her website is [naomiross-cooks.com](http://naomiross-cooks.com).

Full lunch menu: Apricot Citrus Chicken, Quinoa, Meadow Blend Vegetables, Salad, Multigrain Bread, Rum Cherry Apple Cake.

**If You Go**

Advance reservations required by 9 a.m. the day BEFORE the program (Wednesday).

Call (413) 442-2200 to register.

Sorry, no walk-ins. If you need to cancel, please let us know in advance, as we are preparing food based on the number of reservations.

All are welcome. Lunch is a suggested donation of \$3 for adults over 60 years of age. \$7 for all others.

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

For more information on additional lunches in our September Jewish food series, check out the next Berkshire Jewish Voice or visit our calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).

## Speaking Out and Making Change: Jewish Women's Legacy of Protest

### Knosh & Knowledge with Judith Rosenbaum

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, August 15 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge hosts Judith Rosenbaum, CEO of the Boston-based Jewish Women's Archives to learn about the protests of Jewish women, who throughout history have fought for change – from communal kitchens to synagogue pews to the halls of Congress. Explore how Jewish women's voices and actions reshaped our cultural and political landscape and can guide us today.

We are excited to offer this Knosh & Knowledge program in collaboration with the Boston-area Jewish Women's Archives, a pioneering digital archive that documents Jewish women's stories, elevates their voices, and inspires them to be agents of change.

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](http://jewishberkshires.org).

**Judith Rosenbaum** earned a PhD in American Studies from Brown University, with a focus on women, gender, and social movements. As a Fulbright Fellow, she studied women's collective communities in Israel. An educator, historian, and writer, she teaches, lectures, and publishes widely on Jewish studies and women's studies.

August 28–30

at The Colonial Theatre

Berkshire Theatre Group in Collaboration

with the Jewish Plays Project and plays2gather Present

Festival of

NEW

JEWISH

PLAYS

Thursday, 8/28 • 7PM

**Reading: Provenance**  
written by Jennifer Maisel  
Winner of the 14th National Jewish Playwriting Contest

Friday, 8/29 • 10:45AM

**Panel: Knosh & Knowledge:**  
Making Jewish Theater in the 21st Century  
Co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Friday, 8/29 • 7PM

**Ritual: OOF! On One Foot:**  
10-Minute Play Festival

Saturday, 8/30 • 12PM

**Participation: Wondering Jews:**  
An Interactive plays2gather Salon

Saturday, 8/30 at 3PM

**Study: Jewish Dramaturgy:**  
Study and Discussion

Saturday, 8/30 at 7PM

**Vote: The Berkshire Jewish Playwriting Contest**

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# Your Federation Presents

## Federation’s 85th Annual Meeting Accomplishments, Star Students, and Our Overseas Partners at JAFI

Thank you so much to all who attended Federation’s 85th annual meeting on June 23 and to our hosts, Shakespeare & Company.

Rabbi Jodie Gordon of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire opened with a *d’var Torah* focused on Parshat Korach, which recounts the misguided rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, “an ancient story that speaks directly to the present.” Rabbi Gordon explained: “The deeper message of Korach is this: sacred community isn’t something we inherit – it’s something we build. And the building requires humility, curiosity, and shared responsibility. Not perfection – but connection. And that is the very work this Federation embodies. When others retreat into division, Federation leans into community. When the world feels overwhelming, Federation becomes a gathering place for action, learning, giving, and hope.”

Attendees heard Federation’s president Arlene D. Schiff share a remarkable communal accomplishment: “Over the past five years, Federation’s campaign has grown by more than 45% – a testament to the deep trust our donors place in our leadership and the impact you see of our work here in the Berkshires, in Israel, and around the world.”

Last year, Federation raised a record \$1.37 million, which allowed us to:

- Re-envision local Jewish education with a significant \$87,000 investment in the Jewish future
- Forge new partnerships with local cultural institutions to introduce new audiences to the Federation’s work and help create dynamic, inclusive programs that reflect the diversity of our Jewish community

- Broaden our outreach with joyful celebrations, like Jewish Community Day and Chanukah at Hancock Shaker Village, that attract hundreds of participants
  - Facilitate engagement with Jewish peers based on common interests and experiences, such as ‘Newish & Jewish’ and informal gatherings for young adults
  - Fund LiveSecure initiatives to ensure the safety of our local Jewish institutions, including the Berkshires’ Jewish summer camps.
- Executive Director Dara Kaufman congratulated Arlene on her appointment to the Board of Trustees of Jewish Federations of North America – “a tremendous honor and recognition of Arlene’s exceptional leadership and commitment to Jewish life. In this role, Arlene will represent the voices and needs of smaller Jewish communities across the country.” (See the related story on page 1)
- Dara summed up Federation’s efforts over the last challenging year for the Jewish community: “Joy. Connection. Identity. Caring. These are the values at the heart of our work – and from this foundation, we continue to draw the strength to confront today’s profound challenges: The ongoing war in Israel, the rising antisemitism it has fueled, and the resulting communal security concerns.” She cited how, since October 7, 2023, this community has deepened its ties to Israel’s Afula-Gilboa region and how our Hate Has No Home here campaign has enlisted local institutions and businesses in the effort to combat antisemitism and bias in the Berkshires.
- Judy Usow, our treasurer, thanked outgoing board members Stuart Masters and Michael Wasserman and led the vote that installed a new slate of directors and board members. Rabbi Daveen Litwin shared a blessing for the community and those who devote themselves to communal work: “The mandate of the leaders of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires – to focus on the humanity we share and our responsibility to respond to one another with humility,



### Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

Anonymous – 1  
Larry Frankel & Elisa Schindler Frankel  
Helaine Rose  
Natalie Jacobson & Martin Greenstein  
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37 Households have given in 2025

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## High Holy Days 5786 Zochreinu L’Chayim Remember Us for Life

These High Holy Days call us to reflect on what matters most:  
**life, dignity, memory, and meaning.**

We’re called to live with integrity, to care for the vulnerable, and to hold onto hope. Through prayer, song, learning, and connection, we seek renewal, purpose, and courage.

Whether you are a lifelong member or joining us for the first time, we invite you to be part of these holy days with us.

All are welcome.

Visit [hevreh.org/holidays](https://hevreh.org/holidays) for service times, ticketing, childcare, and more.

L’shanah tovah—may we be written and remembered for life.

**Hevreh of Southern Berkshire Great Barrington, MA**



# Your Federation Presents

accountability, respect and, most of all, kindness. Is that not what we all need?” Our guest speaker, Yuval Seri of the Jewish Agency for Israel, then provided a recap of our global partners’ work to strengthen Israel through aliyah; anchor large-scale projects and support small businesses in Israel; build connection and resilience in Jewish communities; and implement sustainable security worldwide.

### Star Students

Judith Cook introduced the recipients of the Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and Dr. Stanley and Faye Simkin Scholarship, given to Jewish high school seniors who have demonstrated high academic achievement and leadership in the Jewish and broader communities.

This year’s recipients are:

**Levi Citrin:** “Growing up,” writes Levi Citrin, “Judaism was a large part of my life. I learned the Aleph Bet at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Jewish jokes from my grandfather, and to never toast a Brooklyn bagel. More importantly, Judaism taught me moral decency, gave me a sturdy community, and helped shape me into the person I want to be.”

Levi, a graduate of Monument Mountain Regional High School in Great Barrington, has given back by teaching the Aleph Bet to young pupils at Hevreh’s religious school, and “coaxing them toward Jewish discovery,” as well. A National Honor Society member and standout multisport varsity athlete at his high school, Levi volunteered for such worthy local causes as Charley’s Fund, The People’s Pantry, and the Great Barrington Land Conservancy. He credits his mentor at Hevreh, Daniel Munch, with showing him that “a Jewish education was more than learning prayers and Hebrew vowels, but understanding how to carry yourself in the world, to care for the elderly and the sick, and to be proud of who you are.”

As he progressed through high school, Levi discovered a love of the humanities, and will pursue a liberal arts program next fall at University of Vermont

with the goal of attending law school or perhaps “lunge headlong into my passion for writing.”

**Dylan Deane:** Dylan Deane’s search for Jewish engagement was not one that was easy or linear – “I grew up in a mixed family,” he writes, “and lived in a community [Canaan, CT] where I was one of the only Jewish children and that did not have a synagogue.” And so he would travel, sometimes as long as two hours to his grandparents’ synagogue in Orange, CT. He took bar mitzvah lessons over the internet, and became the first male in his family in 50 years to become a bar mitzvah in synagogue. “This was a great event for my family,” he writes. “I even made sure to involve my bubbe who had passed by having the event on her birthday.”

Dylan became involved with Scouting America at an early age, and although “even though my troop is not Jewish, I stood in for over two years as the troop chaplain’s aide to make sure my troop kept up the 12th point of scout law, reverence.” Dylan eventually became an Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable in Scouting America – one that only four percent of Scouts have earned. The date he chose for this honor was the anniversary of his bar mitzvah (and bubbe’s birthday). He continues to return to his pack every year to encourage others to help out with their “Duty to God” requirements and educate them on other religions. Although the only Jewish student at Housatonic Valley Regional High School when he attended, he sustained his engagement with his faith by becoming chaplain of his chapter of the Future Farmers of America.

Dylan chose to attend college next fall at University of New Haven, “a college within a strong Jewish community. I can’t wait to be around people who share my faith.” He’ll pursue a degree in business, with a focus on sports management and e-sports and gaming. “I will never be a rabbi,” asserts Dylan, “but my faith will always be with me like it has been my entire life.”



Levi Citrin



Dylan Deane



## Live in Concert MICHELLE CITRIN AND BAND

SUN, AUG 10 | 7:30 PM

Duffin Theater, Lenox Memorial High School

GENERAL ADMISSION: \$25

Young adults under 30, \$20.

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Proceeds to benefit Federation’s Initiatives  
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# Your Federation Presents

## Ancient Roots. New Voices. Bold Stories.

### Berkshire Theatre Group hosts second annual Festival of New Jewish Plays, with a special Knosh & Knowledge panel discussion

PITTSFIELD – Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG), in collaboration with the Jewish Plays Project (JPP) and plays2gather (p2g), proudly announces the return of the Festival of New Jewish Plays, running Thursday, August 28 through Saturday, August 30 at The Colonial Theatre and The Garage, 111 South Street in Pittsfield.

Following the success of last year's sold-out debut, the Festival returns this Labor Day weekend with a vibrant, three-day lineup of readings, rituals, artist conversations and interactive events that highlight the richness, diversity and urgency of Jewish storytelling today.

Rooted in JPP's acclaimed Artistic Democracy model, the Festival is unlike any other in American theater: audiences are not just spectators, but essential collaborators in shaping the future of Jewish drama. Through voting, dialogue and engagement, community members play a direct role in elevating the plays that most resonate with their values and lived experiences.

"Last year, something extraordinary happened – audiences connected deeply with the work and with one another," shares BTG Artistic Director Kate Maguire. "There was laughter, reflection, joy and a sense of discovery. This year, we're expanding the experience – with more stories, more dialogue and more ways to be part of it."

The Festival is generously sponsored by Diane Troderman and Harold Grinspoon. Select events will also feature original poetry by Harold Grinspoon integrated throughout the weekend as a lyrical and reflective complement to the performances.

#### Schedule of Events

##### Reading on Thursday, August 28 at 7 p.m.: Provenance, written by Jennifer Maisel

Winner of the 14th National Jewish Playwriting Contest. A stolen portrait remains lost for decades. How can one piece of art tear at the hearts of generations? Chosen by over 1,500 audience members across 11 cities, this new play receives the JPP's signature Reading+ format–script-in-hand with targeted design support and an all-star cast–followed by a talkback with the artists and JPP Artistic Director David Winitsky. Tickets: \$18, General Admission.

##### Panel Discussion on Friday, August 29 at 10:45 a.m.: Knosh & Knowledge: "Making Jewish Theater in the 21st Century"

A spirited panel of contemporary Jewish theatre makers moderated by David Winitsky, in partnership with Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Explore the pleasures and pitfalls of making Jewish work today and the urgent questions artists are facing. Free – order tickets via the BTG website, not the Federation website.

##### Ritual on Friday, August 29 at 7 p.m.: OOF! On One Foot: 10-Minute Play Festival

Six brand-new 10-minute plays inspired by Hillel the Sage and dedicated to "Moving Forward at the Edge of the Unknown."

This magical evening is part new-play showcase, part Shabbat ritual, and 100% healing theatrical experience. Curated and presented by JPP and plays2gather. Tickets: \$36, General Admission

##### Participation on Saturday, August 30 at noon: Wondering Jews: An Interactive plays2gather Salon

Join playwright Wayne Firestone and director Illana Stein in a participatory reading of short works from Jewish voices across the globe. Audience members step into the roles of actors and thinkers in this unique salon-style theatre-making experience. Tickets: \$18, General Admission

##### Study on Saturday, August 30 at 3 p.m.: Jewish Dramaturgy: Study and Discussion

Clergy, scholars and lay leaders come together for a deep dive into the themes of Provenance and other Festival plays. How does Jewish thought frame art, memory and resilience? What makes a play "Jewish?" A dynamic discussion for the intellectually curious. Tickets: \$18, General Admission

##### Vote on Saturday, August 30 at 7 p.m.: The Berkshire Jewish Playwriting Contest

The JPP's signature event comes to the Berkshires for the very first time! Three of the most exciting, brand-new Jewish comedies and dramas – read by a stellar cast – compete for the Festival's first-ever Audience Award, and YOU are the judge. Help choose the most important new Jewish play of the summer. Followed by the Festival wrap-up party! Tickets: \$36.

#### The Jewish Plays Project (JPP)

The Jewish Plays Project, founded in 2011, identifies, develops and presents new works of theater via one-of-a-kind explorations of contemporary Jewish identity between audiences, artists and patrons. The JPP's innovative and competitive development process engages Jewish communities in the vetting, selecting and championing of new voices and secures mainstream production opportunities for the best new plays.

The JPP has featured some of the best artists working in New York, including writers David Hein and Irene Sankoff (Come from Away), Robert Askins (Hand to God) and Lauren Yee (Cambodian Rock Band); directors Marc Bruni (Beautiful), Daniella Topol (Artistic Director, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre) and Tamilla

Woodard (WP Theater, 3LD); and actors Andrew Polk (The Band's Visit), Ronald Guttman (Mad Men, Homeland), Kirilee Berger (Amazon's Just Add Magic) and Obie and Drama Desk nominee Marcia Jean Kurtz.

#### plays2gather (p2g)

plays2gather incubates plays at homes, stages and unusual places that are inspired by a vision of both ancient and inclusive Jewish culture. Founded in 2018 in the DMV (District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia region) as a volunteer grassroots play makers network, it has evolved around the Jewish World and virtually to curate theater readings and the OOF! Short play competition.

#### Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG)

The Colonial Theatre, founded in 1903, and Berkshire Theatre Festival, founded in 1928, are two of the oldest cultural organizations in the Berkshires. In 2010, under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Kate Maguire, the two organizations merged to form Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG). Berkshire Theatre Group's mission is to support wide ranging artistic exploration and acclaimed performances in theatre, dance, music and entertainment. Every year, BTG produces and presents performances to over 68,000 attendees and, through our Educational Program, serves over 10,000 Berkshire County school children annually.

## Calling All Jewish 20s, 30s, & 40s Living in the Berkshires

### Help build vibrant Jewish life through grassroots, meaningful programming shaped by YOU

It's happening. For the past few months, members of our Jewish community in their 20s, 30s, and 40s have been gathering in laid-back meetups across Berkshire County, getting to know one another and starting to build a community with their Jewish peers.



And now, with support from Federation and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, over 75 participants have kicked off a year-long pilot initiative to create vibrant Jewish life through a grassroots effort to create meaningful programming that reflects their interests and identity.

Sarah Singer grew up in the Berkshires and moved back with her husband in 2024. She reconnected with the community via a Federation "Newish & Jewish" event. Sarah, whose professional background includes nonprofit management and coaching, was asked by our executive director, Dara Kaufman, if she might be interested in organizing a Shabbat dinner for younger adults in her home.

"Through the Shabbat dinner we hosted last December," says Sarah, "it became clear that there are a lot of people in their 20s, 30s and 40s living here who are looking for connection." The conversation between Sarah and Federation continued, and a pilot project grant was secured.

Sarah writes: Last year, when my husband and I moved back to the Berkshires, we were seeking Jewish community," says Sarah. "We live in Becket, which, it goes without saying... is a little more rural. One day, I noticed someone had posted in the Becket community Facebook forum asking if anyone had a ladder. She looked about our age, which surprised me.

Then, when I looked a little closer, I saw Hebrew on her profile photo. I was shocked there could be a potential young Jewish friend nearby! So I responded and said we actually have a ladder if she wanted to come over and borrow it. Turns out she had a ladder already but was so glad I reached out.

Since then, we've become great friends. She and her husband have watched our family dog, we've shared Shabbats, had deep conversations, and she is now part of the steering committee for this initiative. Up until then, she and her partner had met almost no young Jewish people here and had struggled to feel connected to the Berkshires Jewish community. But it shouldn't take a random Facebook post to make that happen.

Sarah says the group will host five flagship events throughout the year, and there will be monthly touchpoints at which people can get together informally. Activities will include Shabbat dinners, outdoor experiences, holiday gatherings, outings to local eateries and entertainment venues, and spiritual and cultural experiences that take advantage of the best the Berkshires has to offer.

The group's July meetup at the Barrington Brewery was a success and more events are being planned. Sarah emphasized that above all, this is an opportunity for younger adults to provide input – for example through a steering committee – and provide regular feedback. Together, they are creating the kinds of programming and community engagement from the ground up.

Check out future issues of the Berkshire Jewish Voice for news on what the group comes up with. To find out more and get involved, contact Sarah Singer at sarah@lifesyouradventure.com or join the WhatsApp group by using the QR code on this page.





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# Your Federation Presents

## We Joined Together in Song on Shabbat Across the Berkshires

Our congregations came together on June 20 for Shabbat Across the Berkshires. This special Kabbalat Shabbat service brought together celebrants from all corners of the Berkshires for a special musical welcoming of the Sabbath!

Thanks so much to Hevreh of Southern Berkshire for hosting the service and the festive oneg that followed.



PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLLE (dr@aplcom.com)

## Federation’s Special Grant to Rising Lion Fund

In July, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Executive Committee voted to send \$10,000 to The Jewish Agency for Israel’s Rising Lion Fund.

The Rising Lion Fund aims to address the needs of Israelis whose lives have been drastically affected by the war with Iran. Approximately 30,000 homes were destroyed or damaged by Iranian missiles, leaving over 15,000 Israelis homeless.

The Rising Lion Fund is providing emergency grants of \$1,150 directly to families who have lost loved ones in the attacks, those injured, and individuals whose homes have been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. In addition to immediate financial assistance, the fund offers long-term support and resilience programs for victims and their families.

In July, Jewish Federations of North America allocated \$10 million in Israel Emergency Funds to 19 partner organizations for post-war rehabilitation efforts.

The Jewish Agency for Israel received a fifth of these funds. JFNA’s other funds will supply essential equipment for hospitals, including Soroka Hospital in Be’er Sheva, which sustained a direct hit. At the end of 2024, our Federation leveraged a surplus of \$47,000 as an allocation to Federation’s reserve fund. This was done so that funds would be available for additional contributions to the Israel Emergency Campaign or other unexpected needs. The \$10,000 contribution to the Rising Lion Fund will come from this reserve.

Our Federation’s allocation to the Rising Lion Fund was made with the understanding that Jewish Federations of North America plans to launch a multi-year Rebuild Israel campaign soon, and we want to participate in that initiative as well.

Donate at: [jewishberkshires.org/israel-crisis-2023](https://jewishberkshires.org/israel-crisis-2023)

### MICHELLE CITRIN, *continued from cover*

Inspired by Rav Kook’s wisdom of, “What is old make new, what is new make holy,” Michelle sets out to find connection points to our tradition’s wisdom and culture in an easily accessible way. Currently, Michelle is traveling the world with her artist-in-residence program, “Eat. Pray. Sing” – a spiritually uplifting and soul nourishing Shabbat experience that weaves together the three tribal components that have united us for thousands of years – food, prayer and song.

Michelle delivers insightful lyrics with her soulful voice and brings an angelic quality to worship services while offering a unique opportunity to engage with liturgical texts in a thoughtful and holistic manner.

Whether playing in front of a sold-out crowd of thousands on the beach of Tel Aviv at a Birthright Mega Event, or an intimate set at a coffeehouse in Melbourne, Australia, Michelle’s engaging live performances and talent for writing catchy and meaningful songs have garnered rave reviews and numerous accolades including: being named one of The Jewish Week’s “36 Under 36 Next Wave of Jewish Innovators,” Billboard Music’s “Top Songwriters”, VH1 Song of the Year finalist, and recipient of a Great American Songwriting Honor.

Currently, Michelle is in the studio working on her newest album!

### Hate Has No Home Here

Every Berkshire resident has the right to live, work, love, and worship with freedom and dignity and without fear.

Antisemitism has been escalating across our community, our country, and the world. Historically, surges in antisemitism have served as a harbinger for broader waves of discrimination against marginalized communities of all kinds, often fueling a dangerous escalation of hate and violence in society. We all share the responsibility to directly confront bigotry and hate in all forms. Now is the time to join together and declare that **HATE HAS NO HOME HERE** in Berkshire County.

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is partnering with local chambers, businesses, cultural organizations, houses of worship, and schools to amplify the message through posters, social media, and lawn signs. In addition, there will be billboards across the Berkshires with the message “Antisemitism threatens us all – Hate Has No Home Here.”

Visit [jewishberkshires.org/hate-has-no-home-here](https://jewishberkshires.org/hate-has-no-home-here) for more information on how to get involved.

### If You Go

Tickets for this concert must be ordered in advance, and are priced at \$25, with \$20 tickets available for young adults under the age of 30. Children under 13 will be admitted free of charge. Please inquire about the variety of underwriting opportunities also being offered.

For more information, please call the Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10. Purchase tickets through the calendar of events page at [jewishberkshires.org](https://jewishberkshires.org).

All tickets will be held at the door. The Duffin Theater is located at Lenox Memorial High School, 197 East Street in Lenox.

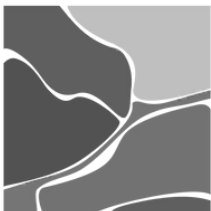
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# Kosher Meals to Go—Meals on Wheels

**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

### JULY

#### 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 vegetables, and almond cookie.

### AUGUST

#### MONDAY, AUGUST 4

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

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 7

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

**Noon, Lunch...**Salmon with cucumber sauce (GF), cous-cous, California blend vegetables, gazpacho, croissant, and tapioca pudding.

#### MONDAY, AUGUST 11

**Noon, Lunch...**Open-faced turkey sandwich with stuffing and gravy (DF), sweet potato casserole, string beans, salad, hearty white bread, and grapes.

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 14

**10:30 a.m. program:** Music of the Jews of Italy with Laura Wetzler.

**Noon, Lunch...**Roasted red pepper and artichoke quiche, potato puff, salad greens, butternut squash soup, sour-dough bread, and rice pudding.

#### MONDAY, AUGUST 18

**Noon, Lunch...**Ratatouille (GF)(DF), rice pilaf, carrots, salad, multi-grain bread, and pineapple.

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 21

**10:45 a.m. program:** Noah's Wine vs. Pharaoh's Beer, the Barroom Brawl, and Culture War that Shaped Jewish History with Jon Greenberg.

**Noon, Lunch...**Moo Shu chicken casserole (GF)(DF), brown rice, steamed broccoli, egg drop soup, Chinese noodles, and Mandarin oranges.

#### MONDAY, AUGUST 25

**Noon, Lunch...**Vegetable souffle, Italian green beans, tomato soup, roll, and sugar cookie.

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

**10:45 a.m. program:** Seniors Acting Up.

**Noon, Lunch...**Beef hamburger (GF)(DF), potato salad, three bean salad, lettuce and tomato, hamburger bun, and brownie.

### SEPTEMBER

#### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Closed for Labor Day

#### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

**Noon, in-person lunch...**Tuna salad platter (GF)(DF), sweet kugel, coleslaw, zucchini soup, rye bread, and almond poppyseed pound cake.

**Special theme:** Jewish Food Series with local Chefs, Culinary Historians, and Cookbook Authors with Tina Wasserman. Break-the-Fast on Yom Kippur (Kugel Deluxe and Almond Poppyseed Pound Cake). Enjoy lunch and take home the recipes!

#### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

**Noon, Lunch...**Meatloaf (GF)(DF), sweet potato fries, peas and carrots, salad, white bread, and peaches.

#### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

**Noon, in-person lunch...**Apricot citrus chicken (GF)(DF), quinoa, meadow blend vegetables, salad, multi-grain bread, and rum-cherry-apple cake.

**Special theme:** Jewish Food Series with local Chefs, Culinary Historians, and Cookbook Authors with Naomi Ross. Pre-fast meal on Yom Kippur (Apricot Citrus Chicken and Rum-Cherry-Apple Cake). Enjoy lunch and take home the recipes!

#### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

**Noon, Lunch...**Pierogies with mushrooms and onions, broccoli kugel, baby carrots, borscht, whole wheat bread, and raspberry bars.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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, August 1 ..... 7:55 p.m.  
Friday, August 8 ..... 7:46 p.m.  
Friday, August 15 ..... 7:36 p.m.  
Friday, August 22 ..... 7:25 p.m.  
Friday, August 29 ..... 7:14 p.m.  
Friday, September 5 ..... 7:02 p.m.

## MAZEL TOV!

**Dr. Michael Kaplan**, a board-certified family physician from Lenox, on being honored by the Berkshire District Medical Society with its 2025 Community Clinician of the Year award.

**Doug Mishkin** on the release of his 3rd album, "Tip of the Spear." You can find it on Spotify and Apple Music and at [doug mishkin.com](http://doug mishkin.com).

**Bob Lezberg** on his 60th birthday.

**Ellen and Stuart Masters** on the bat mitzvah of their granddaughter, **Lilah Mosedale**.

**Lisa Hochman and Marc Rudoltz** on the birth of their new grandson.

**Nan and Allen Lipton** on their 60th wedding anniversary.

**Judy Stolzberg** on her award as the 2025 Member of the Year at Temple Anshe Amunim.

**Rachel Alemany** on her retirement from the Pittsfield Public Schools.

**Ilse Browner** on celebrating her 100th birthday.

**Robyn L. Rosen and Vincent Higuera** on the marriage of their son **Louis Higuera** to **Teresa Gaitan Aleman**.

**Michael and Briana Duffy** on their first wedding anniversary.

**Glenn Duffy and Jeannette Benham** on their tenth wedding anniversary.

**Deb Cole-Duffy and Jim Duffy** on their 45th wedding anniversary.

**Barbara Viniar**, on the August publication of her debut historical novel, *Little Bird*, the story of a young immigrant Jewish girl in early 20th century New York. Barbara will talk about the book at Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield on August 29.





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**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

## Thank You, Major Donors!

*You help us bring comfort, care, and connection to the Jewish community*

On July 20, over 300 of our major donors gathered at Berkshire Hills Country Club in Pittsfield to celebrate another year of Federation's work and their vital support of all we accomplish.

Many thanks to event co-chairs Judy and Mark Usow, who shared the realities of raising a Jewish family in the Berkshires and how Federation has, for decades, supported them and their fellow community members in providing opportunities for Jewish engagement.

We also thank Sarah Singer for speaking eloquently and passionately about the importance of creating Jewish engagement opportunities for younger adults in the Berkshires. For more on Sarah and the group for adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, please see the related story on page 10.

And a special thanks to State Senator John Velis, who shared his powerful story of serving with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan

and having his eyes opened to the true nature of hatred and the horrors its expression can ultimately provoke. His leadership on the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism is making a difference in combatting Jew hatred and bias in the Commonwealth.

Yasher koach to all the members of our Host Committee, whose support for Federation is unwavering. Their collective enthusiasm for our work, and their willingness to share their commitment to Federation, made all in attendance feel that they were among friends, as well as supporting an important cause.

Federation has launched Tzedakah Challenge 2025, an \$18,000 matching grant that will double the impact of all gifts received through the High Holy Days.



Judy & Mark Usow, event co-chairs



Thank You Host Committee!



Senator John C. Velis



Arlene Schiff, Federation President



Sarah Singer



Dara Kaufman, Senator Paul Mark



State Rep. Leigh Davis





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LOCAL NEWS

## Ramblin' with the Rav Hikes Continue



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

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 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.

On Thursday, August 7, the group will explore the **Kinderhook Creek Preserve, in East Nassau, NY** with a moderate, 3+ mile hike that includes some short steep slopes – no more than 400' of ascent, no more than 1.5-2 hours. Many trails criss-cross this small preserve that protects a series of wooded ridges parallel to scenic Kinderhook Creek. Hikers will wander the ridges, enjoy the overlooks, and, depending on the preferences of participants, climb and descend the short, steep ridges by a variety of routes. Uniquely for the region, one of the climbs is rope-assisted! Leashed dogs are welcome. Participants should register in advance at [www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp) and plan on meeting at KI at 9 a.m. to carpool.

On Wednesday, August 20, the group returns for its annual wander and optional swim at the **Keystone Arch Bridges, Chester**. This easy stroll totals about 3 miles and is mostly flat – 300' of climbing over 1.5 hours on the trail, plus time for wading and Torah study. Participants are encouraged to bring sure-footed children and grandchildren for an easy hike along a scenic section of the Westfield River that is crossed by several early 20th century keystone arch bridges. At the midpoint of the hike, walkers will pause for a rest on one of those bridges, or scramble down the side to a swimming hole under the bridge. This pond might just be the Fountain of Youth! Leashed dogs are welcome. Participants should register in advance at [www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp) and plan to meet at KI at 9 a.m. to carpool or at the trailhead around 9:40.

On Sunday, September 7, Ramblin' With the Rav takes on **Mt. Greylock via the Bellows Pipe**

**& Gould Trails.** This strenuous climb and descent total 7+ miles, 2200 vertical feet, and will take about five hours. Participants will climb up Thoreau's favorite Bellows Pipe Trail, enjoy the summit, then descend the curvy, heavily wooded Gould Trail. This is a steep, relentless, and rewarding ascent – shorter than climbing the mountain from the Williamstown side but still demanding. It is only suitable for people with strong knees, ankles, and hearts and some confidence on the trail. Leashed dogs accustomed to long hikes are welcome. Participants should register in advance at [www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp) and plan to meet at KI at 10 a.m. to carpool or at the trailhead at Greylock Glen around 10:40 a.m.

## Chabad Presents a Lively Summer of Films and Music

LENOX – Chabad of the Berkshires has relocated to its new Jewish Center at 17 West Street, and will host a robust lineup of cultural programming through the end of summer. For more information and to RSVP, visit [jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com).

### Screening of *Blind Spot* and Tisha B'Av Break-the-Fast

On Sunday, August 3, at 7 p.m., Chabad and StandWithUs co-sponsor a screening of *Blind Spot*. See story on this page.

### *CENTERED: Joe Lieberman*

On Thursday, August 7 at 7:30 p.m., Chabad screens the documentary film *CENTERED: Joe Lieberman*. the remarkable journey of the late Senator who made history as the first Jewish vice-presidential candidate – and nearly changed the course of American politics. The film explores his life and career in ways that challenge us to think about the future of democracy and how we can find ways to work together, no matter our differences. Cost: \$18. Refreshments will be served.

### Dinner & A Show: Hester Street Troupe

On Sunday, August 17, enjoy dinner at 5 p.m. followed by a 6 p.m. concert with the Hester Street Troupe, a group that specializes in Klezmer and Jewish music and has been electrifying audiences for the past 21 years. RSVP required. Cost: \$50.

### Upheaval: The Journey of Menachem Begin

On Thursday, August 21 at 7:30 p.m., watch a documentary about the incredible life story of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, a proud yet scarred leader haunted by the Holocaust and decades of war who struggled to balance history and heroism to make peace with his greatest enemy and cement a legacy long misunderstood. Cost: \$18.

### Dinner & A Show: Bonnie & Mark Parsons

On Sunday, August 24, enjoy dinner at 5 p.m. followed by a 6 p.m. concert by Bonnie and Mark Parsons, an acoustic duo based in the Berkshires. Cost: \$50.

### Shabbat in Anatevka

On Friday, August 29 at 6 p.m., Cantor Aryeh Leib Hurwitz performs as Tevye on a *Fiddler on the Roof*-inspired program preceding Shabbat dinner. Cantor Hurwitz has performed with the Berlin Philharmonic and was named one of The Forward's 'Jewish Voices that Move Us.' RSVP required. Cost: \$50.

### Dinner & Concert with Yevgeny Kutik and David Kaplan

On Sunday, August 24, enjoy dinner at 5 p.m. followed by a 6 p.m. concert featuring the artistry and chemistry of violinist Yevgeny Kutik and pianist David Kaplan. RSVP required. Cost: \$50.

## Tisha B'Av Program at Chabad Of Berkshires on August 3 -



LENOX – As part of Chabad of the Berkshires' summer opening, StandWithUs (SWU) is proud to host a powerful and timely Tisha B'Av program featuring the documentary *Blind Spot*. The event will take place Sunday, August 3 at 7 p.m. at the Jewish Center (17 West Street) and is chaired by Herman & Mina Kotler and Joan & Larry Kleinman.

Rabbi Levi Volovik of Chabad of the Berkshires has partnered with StandWithUs to present this impactful program, inviting the community to an evening of reflection, education, and meaningful conversation. Light bites will be served as a break-the-fast. After the screening, insights will be shared from Executive Producer Leonard Gold, followed by a Q&A with Sara Gold Rafel, executive director of StandWithUs Southeast.

*Blind Spot* is the first documentary to expose the wave of antisemitism on U.S. college campuses prior to October 7 and the explosive rise that followed. Told through the voices of dozens of Jewish students, it reveals their challenges and courage in facing hate. Carly Gammill, SWU's director of Legal Policy, is also featured in the film.

**StandWithUs** is a 24-year-old international nonpartisan education organization that supports Israel and fights antisemitism through education, student leadership training, and legal advocacy.

Sara Gold Rafel encourages all to "watch this eye-opening film. It will enlighten you to the tragedy, but also lift your spirits at the resiliency of our students and their love for Judaism and Israel. Learn more about the work of StandWithUs and how you can help your children and grandchildren as they overcome these very difficult times."

This event is free, but registration is required at [jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com).

## CBI's High Holiday Band is Getting in Tune

LANESBOROUGH – Calling all musical children and parents!

Bring your instruments and learn a few musical pieces to play together in the upcoming High Holiday Family Services with Congregation Beth Israel and Nefesh. Instrument players ages 7 and older who are able to follow musical notation or chords are invited to gather with their parents for all three rehearsals. Younger children who do not study an instrument are welcome to join in for the third rehearsal where we'll integrate rhythm instruments.

Rehearsal gatherings take place at a private home in Lanesborough and High Holiday services will take place at CBI in North Adams. For further details, please contact [learning@cbiberkshires.com](mailto:learning@cbiberkshires.com). 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.

Thank you volunteers

Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Dave Halley, Colin Ovitsky, and Roman Rozenblyum.

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LOCAL NEWS

Chabad of the Berkshires' Grand Opening Celebrated by Hundreds in Lenox

On July 6, hundreds were on hand in downtown Lenox to celebrate the opening of the new Chabad Jewish Center. Co-directors Rabbi Levi and Sara Volovik, Chabad supporters, and local elected officials cut the ribbon and officially opened the new facility.



PHOTO BY EDWARD ACKER

Bagels and Conversation

GREAT BARRINGTON – There's no better time than summer to dive into a great book. This season at Congregation Ahavath Sholom, the book club reads a selection of diverse and thought-provoking titles. In August, explore *Who By Fire, Who By Water: Un'taneh Tokef*, by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, part of the Prayers of Awe series.

Join the group for bagels and a lively discussion led by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin on Sunday, August 24 at 11 a.m.

RSVP required: rabbirudinahavathsholom@gmail.com. For more information about CAS, visit ahavathsholom.com or call (413) 528-4197. Congregation Ahavath Sholom is at 15 North Street in Great Barrington.

Shabbat and Tisha B'Av at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires continues to offer ways to connect through Shabbat celebrations. In August, the congregation marks Tisha B'Av with a special motzei Shabbat service. CBI is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

**Shabbat**  
Kabbalat Shabbat Services on the Fridays of August 22 and September 5 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 Saturday, August 9, 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.

**Havdalah and Tisha b'Av 5785**  
The havdalah that leads into Tisha b'Av is a spiritual hinge-point in the year, beginning the seven-week journey toward Rosh Hashanah. Join CBI on Saturday, August 2 at 8 p.m. to sanctify the transition out of Shabbat and into Tisha b'Av with song, prayer, poetry, and remembrance. This service will launch the ascent toward the Days of Awe, and will include this weekend's opportunity for communal Mourner's Kaddish. Please RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/tisha-bav-5785.

Acharei Kiddush at Knesset Israel



Maud Mandel

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

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."

CBI Picnic & Concert at Tanglewood

LENOX – On Sunday, August 24 at 12:30 p.m., join Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires at Tanglewood for an afternoon of music and fun!

Join for a pre-concert potluck picnic on the lawn starting at 12:30 p.m. – bring your own seating, as well as food and drink to share during the potluck. Young family activities, including a kid-friendly craft and family Shabbat song circle, will be held in a designated tent canopy on the back lawn pre-concert. After the picnic, enjoy a live concert together at 2:30 p.m. featuring the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus.

Each person will need to purchase their own ticket in order to attend. Lawn seats for this event are \$46 per adult (children under 18 are free); tickets can be purchased online on Tanglewood's website or by phone at (617) 266-1200.

Please RSVP via the CBI website at cbiberkshires.com/event/tanglewood2025 by no later than Friday, August 22 so they know who to expect. More information about the meeting place will be provided to those who RSVP as the date approaches.



BREWS & SCHMOOZE

SUMMER KICKOFF EVENT FOR JEWISH 20s, 30s, and 40s



Join us for a fun, community-building event, including:

- Local beer, non-alcoholic options, and snacks
- Cornhole, board games, picnic tables, and community games table

Bring a friend, make new ones, grab a drink, and connect with an amazing crew of Jewish young adults.

SUNDAY, JULY 27, 2025, 2-4 PM  
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**No cover. Just show up as you are!**  
We're launching a new grassroots initiative to build vibrant, inclusive, and meaningful Jewish community for adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. Help shape the community we're building! Everyone who attends can vote on the name of this new initiative.

**First 40 people to RSVP get a free drink token!**

RSVP: [tinyurl.com/BrewsSchmooze](https://tinyurl.com/BrewsSchmooze)



A new initiative of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires with support from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

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LOCAL NEWS

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.

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

Tisha B’Av Study Session with Rabbi Rudin of CAS

GREAT BARRINGTON – Congregation Ahavath Sholom (CAS) welcomes the community to a meaningful summer of reflection, study, and connection, from commemorating sacred traditions to engaging in thought-provoking conversations. CAS offers enriching opportunities for people of all ages.

On Sunday, August 3, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., CAS will host a special study session led by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin in observance of Tisha B’Av, a solemn day of mourning in the Jewish calendar. Known as the Ninth of Av, Tisha B’Av commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem and invites reflection on tragedies throughout Jewish history. Explore the deeply spiritual question: Where is God when tragedy strikes?

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

Contact: Rabbi Jennifer Rudin:  
rabbirudinahavathsholom@gmail.com.

A Class, A Group, and a Special Service at KI

PITTSFIELD – Kneset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

**Contemplative Shabbat Service**

On Saturday, August 9, join Rabbi Pam Wax from 9:15 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the Kneset Israel library for an innovative service that will include contemplative prayer, meditation, time for reflection, poetry,

and chanting. The service will conclude in time for those who wish to join the congregation in the sanctuary for the Torah service. All are welcome. Please try to arrive early enough to settle in before 9:15. Be curious, try something new! Pre-registration is encouraged at [www.knesetisrael.org](http://www.knesetisrael.org).

**Elul/Tishrei Study: Martin Buber**

Rabbi Pam Wax, Director of Adult Education and Programming at Kneset Israel, will teach Martin Buber’s book *The Way of Humanity* for six sessions as spiritual preparation for the Days of Awe. Each chapter begins with a Chasidic story that Buber unpacks, offering his deep spiritual insights on topics such as Self-Awareness, Resolution, and Preoccupation with Self. Come prepared to think deeply and reflect on your own spiritual lives through the questions raised by Buber’s guidance. The book is available in a new, accessible translation by Rabbi Bernard Mehlman and Gabriel Padawer, but any translation will be fine. All classes will take place on Zoom only, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., on the Tuesdays of August 26, September 2, 9, 16, & 30, and October 21.) Please pre-register at [knesetisrael.org/RSVP](http://knesetisrael.org/RSVP) to receive the Zoom link and the reflection questions for each week. \$36 for non-members of KI and Temple Anshe Amunim. Come to any or all the sessions.

**Yiddish, Anyone?**

A small, but enthusiastic group of Kneset Israel members has been meeting periodically to sing Yiddish songs, tell Yiddish stories and jokes, and learn the history of the language. This is a mixed-level group. If you are interested, contact Rabbi Pam Wax at [rabbipwax@knesetisrael.org](mailto:rabbipwax@knesetisrael.org).

Chabad to Host a Compelling Lineup of Speakers this Summer

LENOX – Chabad of the Berkshires has relocated to its new Jewish Center at 17 West Street, and will host a compelling lineup of speakers after Shabbat services at approximately noon through the summer months. For more information and to RSVP, visit [jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com).

**Ofir Akunis, Consul General of Israel in New York**

On Saturday, August 2, Chabad’s speaker will be **Ofir Akunis**, who has served in his post since May 2024. The topic will be “Tensions in the Middle East: Israel, Iran, and the Future of Regional Stability.”

Akunis was first elected to the Kneset in 2009. He served as Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology from 2015 to 2020, and from 2022 to 2024. During his first term, he led significant reforms aimed at expanding technology access to all Israeli citizens, especially in underserved communities and the periphery. Throughout his tenure, he signed 30 international agreements to strengthen cooperation between Israel and other states, including the US, the UK, India, Japan, China, Argentina and many others.

Weekend with Rabbi Simon Jacobson

**Rabbi Simon Jacobson** is a pioneering speaker, educator, mentor to thousands. He is the author of the best-selling book *Toward a Meaningful Life*, which has sold over 400,000 copies and the founder of The Meaningful Life Center, which the New York Times termed a “Spiritual Starbucks.” He addresses psycho-social spiritual topics and brings timeless Torah teachings to modern life with relevance and originality.

On Friday, August 8, Rabbi Jacobson will speak following dinner at the Jewish Center at 7:30 p.m. Cost: \$50 for dinner and talk (children under 12 free – RSVP at [jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com). Rabbi Jacobson will speak again the following morning after Shabbat services.



Rabbi Simon Jacobson



Jonathan Ornstein

**Jonathan Ornstein, Chief Executive Officer, JCC Krakow**

On Saturday, August 16, Chabad welcomes **Jonathan Ornstein**, a primary architect of Poland’s contemporary Jewish rebirth, a frequent international speaker

**SPEAKERS,**  
continued on page 20

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LOCAL NEWS

SPEAKERS,  
continued from page 19

and media contributor on topics including Jewish Poland and global antisemitism, as well as an activist for Holocaust survivors.

Ornstein has served as chief executive officer of JCC Krakow since King Charles III opened the center in 2008 with the mission of rebuilding Jewish life in Krakow. The JCC has grown exponentially to include 1,100 Jewish members; it also welcomes 10,000 visitors each month and is one of the most visible signs of Poland's Jewish revival. He created Ride For The Living and Holocaust Survivor Day, global initiatives that engage tens of thousands of people. After the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Jonathan initiated and directs JCC Krakow's humanitarian aid operation, having assisted almost 400,000 refugees and counting. A native of New York City, Jonathan moved to Israel in 1994, lived for 7 years on a kibbutz in the Negev desert, and, as a Lone Soldier, served in an IDF combat unit before moving to Poland in 2001.



**M. Gary Neuman:**  
“Wisdom & Expert Insights from Oprah’s Top Psychotherapist”

On Wenesday, August 20, join New York Times best-selling author **M. Gary Neuman**, a psychotherapist, and author of seven books on marriage, divorce and child psychology. There are over one million copies of his books in print. Oprah Winfrey referred to Neuman as, “One of the best psychotherapists in the world,” when she had him on her fifth-to-last episode: “Oprah’s Most Memorable Guests.” A prolific guest on national talk shows, Neuman and his work have been featured in People, Time, Parents, Parenting, Cosmo, Redbook, O Magazine, as well as in newspapers including Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, and Wall Street Journal. Gary developed the Sandcastles Program, a group experience for children of divorce mandated in many divorce courts. Over 300,000 children have completed the Sandcastles program internationally.



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JTS in the Berkshires,  
with Rabbi Gordon  
Tucker

LENOX – Join Knesset Israel and Jewish Theological Seminary for the second of two lectures as part of the annual JTS in the Berkshires series.

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

The lecture takes 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 \$25 tickets online ahead of time at [www.jtsa.edu/event/jts-berkshires-summer-2025](http://www.jtsa.edu/event/jts-berkshires-summer-2025).

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



**About Rabbi Tucker**

Rabbi Gordon Tucker serves as vice chancellor for Religious Life and Engagement at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Rabbi Tucker's current role brings him back to JTS, where he served as dean of The Rabbinical School from 1984 to 1992 and as assistant professor of Jewish Thought from 1979 to 1994. He was ordained at JTS in 1975 after receiving his A.B. at Harvard College. He also earned a PhD in Philosophy from Princeton University.

From 1994 to 2018, Rabbi Tucker served as senior rabbi of Temple Israel Center in White Plains, NY. Today Rabbi Tucker is Temple Israel Center's senior rabbi emeritus and a senior fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. He previously served as board chair of the Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel and was a member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly.

His interests are in modern Jewish thought, religious ethics, and philosophy of *halakhah*. He has published a translation and commentary on Abraham Joshua Heschel's magnum opus on

rabbinic theology, with the English title *Heavenly Torah*, as well as many articles and essays in his fields of interest. His commentary on *Pirkei Avot* appeared more recently in *Pirkei Avot Lev Shalem*, published by the Rabbinical Assembly. He was a member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly from 1982 to 2007. And currently, he is also a Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America.

From 1979-90, Rabbi Tucker was a White House Fellow, and served as assistant and chief speech-writer to the United States Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti.

The Poetry of Yehuda  
Amichai,” with Rabbi  
Pam Wax



PITTSFIELD – 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 through 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 [knessetisrael.org/rsvp](http://knessetisrael.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)*.



# Newish & Jewish in the Berkshires

**Are you a newcomer to the Berkshires?**

Welcome! Join us at one of these casual gatherings to meet others who are also “Newish and Jewish” in the region, enjoy a glass of wine, and learn more about the Berkshire Jewish community. We look forward to connecting with you.

**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](http://bit.ly/NewishJewish2025) or [ktodd@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:ktodd@jewishberkshires.org), (413) 442-4360, ext. 16



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ORI LAZAROVICH,  
continued from cover

After his IDF service was complete, he worked as a field paramedic and then as a station manager and instructor in the region where he grew up. More recently, he started work with MDA's international unit, doing outreach and fundraising with communities around the world.

Lazarovich spoke to the BJV in early July, while a ceasefire between Israel and Iran was still holding following weeks of hostilities and the US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. Just weeks earlier, he was among the initial first responders to arrive on the scene following the devastating June 13 missile strike on civilians in Bat Yam. Nine lives were lost, including those of three children, and hundreds of people were injured. Lazarovich spoke about that terrifying night and MDA's challenges in these recent years of COVID and conflict in Israel. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

**The BJV Interview – Ori Lazarovich**

**What was your job like before October 7?**

We Israelis get used to what we call here in Israel “*balagan*” – havoc and mayhem all the time. We’ve been going since COVID, since 2019, from one thing to another, always something new, especially in my region which is very, very close to the Judea and Samaria border region. But we got to the point where there was nothing new, no added chaos. We got into a routine. Yes, there is this action over there with the IDF, you don’t enter this village and so on. Just before October 7, we were on the Tishrei holidays, so we were a little bit more laid back, a little bit less alert, although in MDA, we have different levels of preparedness up to 100 percent. So just before the holidays, we were in the middle level, not fully prepared like we were after October 7 until pretty much today.

We have shifts where we have weekends on and weekends off. The seventh of October happened to be my weekend off, so I wasn’t on call. I always have my radio on with me, even when I’m at home. The region dispatch came on the radio. It was around 6:30, 6:45 a.m. Red alerts, sirens throughout the country. I happened to be at my mom’s house that Saturday because I wasn’t at work. She hears me around 7 a.m. and says, “Hey, what are you doing up on your Saturday off?” I was like, yeah, a war started. There’s something about it where we knew that so quickly, within ten or fifteen minutes.

I called all my team members at my different stations. I said, “Hey, we’ve got to get fully prepared. We have to get to the highest alert level, even before MDA’s

**ORI LAZAROVICH,**  
continued on next page



LOCAL NEWS

ORI LAZAROVICH,

continued from page 20

general director says we have to.” By 8 a.m., my region was in the highest level of preparedness. We just went from there.

And we haven't stopped. Maybe civilians or Jews in the diaspora can feel that maybe the war stopped or was maybe a little bit less at times, but in MDA, we don't feel it. We always have something going on. We always have, sadly, civilian casualties or army personnel casualties. We're also Israel's National EMS service. We take care of funerals for soldiers. That's where we were when the war with Iran started – another weekend, Friday in the middle of the night. We woke up to sirens. You don't even have to give out the orders. Everyone already knows what's going to happen. Everyone knows what they have to do. And the switch from 80 percent preparedness to 100 percent preparedness was seamless. I found myself at 3 a.m. heading out to our national dispatch, where we meet with the high-ranking officers of MDA. We make sure all of the regions are set to their level of preparedness and then we start transforming our EMS service into a national database for everything that's happening.

MDA is literally in every corner of every street with ambulances and regular volunteers with their own vehicles. Police, Homefront Command, and fire departments all rely on our dispatch and our local personnel to say exactly what's going on and give the fastest updates. Through those 12 days, we had massive missile strikes, massive, massive scenes with many casualties. Maybe the civilians were surprised, but MDA is always prepared for the next level of threat. We knew exactly what was going to happen. It's sad to say, but we were expecting even more severe scenes with bigger numbers of casualties.

And gladly, we saw that we have such great citizens here in Israel that are so prepared and that listen to what the Homefront Command tells them. We saw that it saved hundreds of lives. We treated over a thousand patients within those 12 days of war with Iran, but we are fully aware that it could have been way more. Thanks to our first responders and the citizens of Israel being so connected with the TV and the news outlets and Homefront Command, they do as they're told. They wait. Even if you have to sit in a bomb shelter in a safe room for 45 minutes, an hour and a half, they do it. They don't leave before they're told to. And it simply saves lives. There's no other way to say it.

Tell me about Bat Yam.

I had just gotten back from our national dispatch. I had been there for 24 hours, from 3 a.m. the night before until 1:30, 2 a.m. that night. I get home. We immediately get the red alert sirens. I run back down to our safe room. I have an MDA vehicle with me 24/7 with lights and sirens so I can get the scenes as fast as possible. We head into the safe room. We hear an enormous, enormous blast sound. And you understand that it's very close to you. We're not used to the size of these impacts and this size of missiles yet. We're talking about hundreds of tons of TNT within these missiles. Until that strike, we were used to having maybe 200 pounds of TNT as the biggest threats we've seen in the past 30, 40 years. Now, we're talking about 500 to 1,000 pounds of explosives. The explosions were gigantic.

At MDA, we tell the citizens to stay inside, but we leave, although it's not safe yet to leave. We understand that there's going to be another incident, another barrage of missiles, but we leave the safe rooms. This Bat Yam scene happened to be less than two miles away from where I live, but on my way there, we have another red alert. So, I stop my car on the side of the road. I enter a random apartment building that I see next to me. I knock on the door. They greet me and another two police personnel that were on their way with me to the scene. We get inside very quickly. We hear the booms. After, you have a few seconds where there is shrapnel coming down. But we don't even wait for the shrapnel to stop because we know there's a giant scene just around the corner.

When we got there, the Bat Yam station manager was on scene. He was very close to the incident. We start doing what we call triage. Triage is



Response teams at a missile impact site on residential buildings in central Israel during the war with Iran

understanding exactly where the patients are, understanding exactly how big the scene is, how many patients we're expecting to get. I see a whole block of buildings just completely demolished. So, we're used to seeing a missile hit a building. You'll see one floor that is damaged, and the rest of the building is fine, the rest of the area is fine. Here we have a building complex of four buildings that were hit. They're all completely demolished. At that point of time, we can't even understand how big the scene is because we see the two buildings in the front of the street which are demolished, and you have the two buildings behind them which are completely on fire.

The paramedics automatically start getting the patients out. Some of them are easier to extract, and we can just give them a hand and get them out of the rubble. Some need extraction out of the rubble itself. Those patients, sadly, we can't extract by ourselves. So, we do the best we can. Even the buildings that are on fire within the perimeter, we enter, put a rag, put on something, enter the building, and extract as many patients as you see and get out of there. Within a few minutes, the police, military, Homefront Command, and the fire brigade arrive, as well. At that point, we start working together, all of us, and we start making sure the fire gets put out, so it doesn't spread to other buildings.

This scene is new to us, because we're not used to having patients from missile strikes being pinned underneath a building, or with crush injuries, or whom we can't extract. With other mass casualty incidents, we're used to understanding exactly what's being hit, exactly how many patients are in a building or a bus. In this scene, we don't even know how many buildings were hit! I said to the MDA dispatch to send the amount of ambulances we'll need for 100 patients.

Within 15 minutes, we have all the teams in the area and teams from other regions, as well – dozens of intensive care unit teams and dozens of basic life support teams, with first responders on scene with their own vehicles or with our small rapid response vehicles. We start treating those patients trapped in the rubble. Even though they can't be transported, we can still access them, maybe administer an IV, give them some medication, some pain management, some fluids, and we go from there.

At the end of the scene, within maybe three hours, we reached the 100-patient mark. I was like, wow, I thought I was exaggerating when I asked for so many ambulances, but yeah, we've transported over 100 patients, treated even more, and we still weren't finished evacuating all of them. I think at that point, it hit me – we're in a completely different game. It's not what we're used to. It's not what we've seen. We've trained for it. We understood. We knew it was coming. But being on scene in the first scene of that size and that severity just hits you differently. I've managed many scenes as a station manager – very complex motor vehicle accidents and terror attacks and everything in between. But the first time you're on scene as a lead paramedic and you say, wow, I'm not sure how long I'm going to be here, how many ambulances I need, and how many patients I'm going to treat here – you have to switch. You have to change the way you work, the way you perceive a scene.

And what we do at Magen David Adom is we always learn from everything. Everyone who treats the scene, everyone who was on dispatch, we come

together to understand what we did, what we could do better. We understand that, maybe within the next 24 hours, there can be another scene, or maybe 15 more scenes that are all the same. There's no time to waste. We have to learn. We have to adjust. We have to adapt. And we do that.

**Tell me a little bit about the victims of the attack. What's it like managing people in that chaos?**

In addition to the chaos, you have to understand that there are levels of patients. We've spoken about the most severe patients that are pinned underneath the buildings and all of that. Other patients within that scene – you have a patient who's looking for his medication, a patient looking for their dog, a patient looking for their relatives. We have to understand that with these kinds of blasts, we're seeing patients coming in from hundreds of yards away. No patient within that radius is a non-injured patient. Everyone is suspected to have some injury – a blast injury, minor shrapnel injuries, cuts and bruises, or acute stress reactions to the incidents. We have to take that into consideration.

You see a bunch of people carrying their children and their dogs and their cats and everything in between. Everyone is very confused. You see some of the people with real fear in their eyes. Some people are injured, and seeking help. Our job as EMS is to make sure that we attend to every one of those different levels of patients, and not only run towards where the patients can't scream anymore and can't call us. We have to figure out who is the 15-year-old kid looking for their iPad and who are the adults looking for their children or the elderly who are looking for their caregivers.

Currently, there is a ceasefire that everyone hopes will last. What state of readiness are you in now?

At Magen David Adom, we are always prepared for the next event. We're preparing for the next, bigger event. We also have to take into consideration that personnel can't last that long. We have 35,000 personnel, and 90 percent are volunteers. We have to refresh our units, our teams, our equipment, our personal protection gear. Just in the past year, we went from 24,000 volunteers to 35,000 volunteers. We have a project called the Magen Project, the Shield Project, in which we train and utilize medical personnel who aren't volunteers at MDA that live and work inside cities and towns. We use the physician next door, the nurse who lives across the street, and maybe the medical clinic we have across town. We make sure the MDA teams and civilians know how and where they are needed. We have to be prepared for the multi-front threat that's been imminent since October 7.

How does Magen David Adom manage the psychological needs and aftercare for responders like yourself?

We understand that we need the teams to be resilient. A scene can take place over 15 minutes, it can be three hours, and a scene can last a few days, as well. We see catastrophic incidents and people in their worst hour. We don't want to overtreat our people, but we do have interventional teams within each station. Each station manager goes over the teams and looks for signs of a huge stress reaction in the first few days. Our volunteers have phenomenal people who reach out and speak with the patients and the teams. The easiest and most important part is to look at the teams that are with you on scene, and just simply ask, "How are you doing?" We figured out that 90 percent of the problems are fixed and are treated with that simple question.

When we get to the hospital, after we finish treating patients, the first thing we do is summarize what happened. We validate the concerns and whatever we're feeling, and we make sure everyone's okay. And if someone isn't okay with what's happening, we continue from there.

To support the lifesaving work of Magen David Adom, visit the American Friends of Magen David Adom at [afmda.org](http://afmda.org).

Magen David Adom is one of the worthy organizations supported by contributions to the Israel Emergency Fund made by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and its generous donors. Donate at: [jewishberkshires.org/israel-crisis-2023](http://jewishberkshires.org/israel-crisis-2023).

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LOCAL NEWS

Adamah Working to Combat Food Insecurity in the Berkshires Region



FALLS VILLAGE, CT – Adamah, the largest Jewish environmental organization in North America, operates its Isabella Freedman Retreat Center on 400 acres in the Connecticut Berkshires, hosting retreats year-round focused on Jewish holidays, farm-to-table food, music, meditation, yoga, and more.

Young Jewish farmers in the Adamah Fellowship Program learn more about how our food system works and become empowered to participate in productive ways as a Jewish community by working with the Food Access Fund.

The Adamah Food Access Fund helps bridge hundreds of families in the Berkshire region who are experiencing food insecurity. Jewish young adults are growing fresh produce on the farm and distributing it through food pantries and directly to individuals through its Community Supported Agriculture Program.

Farming is expensive, but Adamah is able to continue growing fresh food even for those who can't afford the cost thanks to the generous support of individuals and foundations including Tricorner

FEED, Jewish Federation of Western Connecticut, the Falls Village Community Development Corporation, and Berkshire Taconic.

In 2024, Adamah delivered over \$16,000 worth of freshly-harvested organic produce to hunger relief organizations that otherwise would not have been able to offer fresh food, including the Corner Food Pantry in Lakeville, the Falls Village Senior Center, and Friendly Hands Food Pantry in Torrington. In 2025, Adamah plans to deliver a similar quantity of fresh produce.

Adamah is still accepting applications for its fall fellowship session, which runs August 21 through November 23 – see the advertisement on page 16 for more information, or visit [adamah.org/for-teens-youth-adults/adamah-farming-fellowship](http://adamah.org/for-teens-youth-adults/adamah-farming-fellowship).

Adamah writes:

We see the Food Access Fund as a critical part of building a more resilient regional food economy. Our approach to growing food is regenerative, community-based, accountable for the health of our soil and ecosystem, and nutrient-dense. Until food system reforms including policies and consumer choice make regenerative farming more economically viable, our farming techniques simply yield higher-priced food than that harvested on farms who are not paying for externalities like polluted rivers and wells, worker exposure to toxins, and soil erosion. Creative solutions like Adamah's Food Access Fund make the harvests from regenerative, community-based, ecologically-friendly farms accessible to everyone while maintaining farm economic viability.

**Adamah Receives \$16k for Climate Resiliency**

The Northwest Connecticut Land Conservatory has awarded Adamah Farm a significant grant to adapt to the challenges presented to farmers by the changing climate. The grant award will allow Adamah to make needed improvements to its greenhouses, irrigation measures, and farming techniques including no-till farming and shading innovations. Covering this story would offer an opportunity to explain the climate resiliency issues facing farmers including extreme heat and storms, while also giving a window into how our Jewish farm works and the ways in which Jewish young adults are finding home and purpose on land in the Berkshires.

Anti-Jewish Hate Crimes Increased by 20.5% in Massachusetts in 2024

(JNS) – For the first time in nearly 35 years, there were more recorded anti-Jewish than anti-black hate crimes in Massachusetts in 2024, the commonwealth stated on Wednesday.

Overall, hate crimes were down last year, but there was what the commonwealth called a “troubling” 20.5% increase in antisemitic hate crimes in 2024. The commonwealth said that this was the first time since 1991, when it began tracking hate crimes, that reported instances of Jew-hatred outpaced racist incidents.

Of the 456 hate crime incidents in the state in 2024, 153 (35%) reflected religious bias, according to the state. Of the religious bias incidents, 130 (85%) were antisemitism, according to the state's data. There were also 10 incidents (6.5%) of anti-Muslim bias, which four known offenders committed against nine people. Per the state data, 33 known offenders committed anti-Jewish hate crimes against 97 victims.

Per state data, there were 107 incidents of anti-black hate, or about 31% fewer than antisemitic hate crimes. The state recorded 70 hate crime incidents based on sexual orientation.

The Massachusetts government stated that the 4.4% to 6.5% drop in reported hate crimes in 2024 compared to 2023 was “supported by targeted investments in youth programs, community-based prevention strategies, and robust partnerships between law enforcement agencies and local organizations.”

The state invested “more than \$45 million in targeted public safety initiatives that have contributed to a measurable decline in crime in communities statewide,” it added.

It wasn't clear why those things wouldn't also lower anti-Jewish hate crimes.

“This new data is encouraging and reflects the important work that law enforcement and community partners do day in and day out to keep the people of Massachusetts safe,” stated Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, a Democrat.

“We know there is always more work to be done, and we remain committed to bringing people together to continue to enhance public safety in communities across the state,” she said.

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LOCAL NEWS

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. 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.

Proceeds benefit the Hebrew School at Knesset Israel. Information at [berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org](http://berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org) or (413) 445-4872, ext. 10.

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.



*Midas Man*: This is a well-crafted biopic of Brian Epstein, the inspired music entrepreneur who discovered the Beatles. **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.



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. **Talkback with film-maker 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.

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HERE THERE ARE BLUEBERRIES  
by Moisés Kaufman & Amanda Gronich  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 7 PM  
Tina Packer Playhouse

THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG  
by Wendy Wasserstein  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2 PM  
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

ROZ & RAY  
by Karen Hartman  
Directed by Daniela Varon  
Featuring John Douglas Thompson  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2 PM  
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

OCTOBER 10 – 12

Tina Packer Playhouse & Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre



JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE BERKSHIRES

Jewish Education in the Berkshires – 2025/2026

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has a strong commitment to Jewish youth, helping to provide a high-quality Jewish education for 137 children and young adults through \$87,000 in grants to congregational religious schools across the Berkshires, a meaningful investment in a Jewish future.

Berkshire County is fortunate to have a diverse Jewish community that offers educational opportunities encompassing a wide range of approaches and family preferences. This section offers an overview of local Jewish schools.

**Please note** that owing to the BJV’s publishing schedule, some key dates and events for local religious schools may not have been finalized at press time. Please contact the congregations for complete details.

Kneset Israel & Temple Anshe Amunim  
Pittsfield

Kneset Israel, a Conservative congregation, and Temple Anshe Amunim, a Reform congregation, have a combined Hebrew School program that takes place at Kneset Israel. Both Rabbi David Weiner (KI) and Rabbi Valerie Lieber (TAA) teach during the weekday sessions.

The Kneset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim Hebrew School welcomes students from preschool through twelfth grade to dynamic classes where they learn Hebrew, Torah, Jewish studies, history, and culture. The school prides itself on its intimate classes and extraordinary faculty. In addition to teaching skills for meaningful Jewish living, the school also incorporates a ‘hidden curriculum’ helping students learn to value and prioritize their own involvement in Jewish community life.

Kneset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim are committed to ensuring the accessibility of its programming to families of diverse backgrounds seeking Jewish education – including single parent and blended families, LGBTQ parents and students, people with special needs, Jews of Color, and interfaith families. Because the synagogues are passionately egalitarian and committed to the future of the Jewish people, no student or family is ever turned away for financial reasons. For both congregations, Hebrew School is a benefit of membership, and there are no school fees. The Hebrew School is supported by the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, and contributions by both congregations and their members.

**Family Programming**

In addition to the Hebrew School program, KI receives a generous grant from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation to fund its Families Together programming for families of both congregations. These exciting programs for the whole family linking themes of the Jewish holidays and year with contemporary social issues take place on select Sundays and Wednesday afternoons throughout the year. Open to non-members as well as members, these programs are a great way for families to experience community, Jewish education, and connection. Many sessions incorporate activities for everyone together; others separate the groups by age to enable targeted classes for adults and children. A back-to-school barbecue takes place on Labor Day weekend, this year on September 1 – you may register at knesetisrael.org/rsvp.

**Primary School**

Children age 5 and below are invited to attend the Tot Shabbat program, offered monthly. This exciting opportunity will incorporate music, games, stories, and an introduction to the Jewish worship experience. Preschool and kindergarten students enjoy programming on Shabbat mornings. Highly qualified teachers facilitate classes that feature song, movement, and Shabbat-friendly crafts. Students in first and second grade also meet on Shabbat mornings to begin their studies of Hebrew, prayer, mitzvot and Jewish holidays. Purposeful Play gives the youngest pupils a chance to learn creatively and experientially. A team of experienced primary school educators infuses this program with joy.

**Elementary School**

Grades 3 through 6 meet twice a week, on Shabbat mornings and on Wednesday afternoons. Over the course of their elementary school years, students study stories from the Torah, lifecycle, holidays and Jewish values. Grades 6 and 7 explore facets of ancient and modern Jewish history. All students at this age level also participate in Junior

Congregation on a weekly basis. Wednesday afternoon classes use formal and informal techniques to help students learn to read Hebrew fluently and accurately; by the end of 5th grade students are chanting from the Torah scroll.

**B’nai Mitzvah**

The two congregations prepare students separately for Bnai Mitzvah. Students from Temple Anshe Amunim study with the congregation’s rabbi to prepare to lead the service and teach Torah to the community at their bar and bat mitzvah. They participate in services throughout the year. The crown jewel of KI’s education programs, the congregation’s intensive b’nai mitzvah program engages students deeply in developing the skills and enthusiasm they will need for lifelong leadership of Jewish religious life. Instruction includes chanting Torah and Haftarah and leading all Shabbat services. Students also complete a mitzvah project, prepare a short sermon for the morning of the celebration. Graduates of this program report feeling comfortable in all sorts of synagogue services. Many have emerged as leaders in their campus communities and in congregations across the globe.

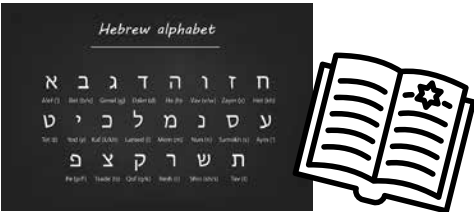
**High School**

Students convene weekly to study with expert educators. High school students also have the opportunity to serve as teaching assistants in our Hebrew School, especially in Junior Congregation, the bar/bat mitzvah program, and Purposeful Play programs.

Registration for the Hebrew School takes place during the summer months. Hebrew School education is a benefit of membership at Kneset Israel, and new members are always welcome. Non-members are also welcome to enroll their children in exchange for a tuition payment. Either way, Hebrew School can be an excellent gateway to becoming more involved in the community. Interested families are invited to contact Rabbi David Weiner at (413) 445-4872 or rabbiweiner@outlook.com.

**Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires**  
North Adams

Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires is a welcoming, inclusive, and innovative congregation with a long history and deep roots, now a part of the Reform movement.



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)

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JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE BERKSHIRES

Discover the Jewish Journeys After-School Program

Jewish Journeys is an after-school educational program for ages 5-13 in which children explore Jewish culture, religion, and identity through exuberant, creative learning. The goal is to inspire joy in being Jewish so that children experience Jewish life, learning and community as vibrant and meaningful parts of who they are. Classes take place at CBI on Monday afternoons, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., beginning Monday, September 8.

Students learn about Jewish culture, holidays, rituals, values, prayers, texts and Hebrew language in a fun and inclusive environment through art, drama, music, cooking and other hands-on activities. CBI offers two semesters (September-December and January-May). Students may enroll for one or both semesters.

- Program Highlights:
- Afternoons begin with free time and snacks, allowing children to decompress from the school day and gear up for learning.
  - Younger children (grades K-2) explore Judaism through acting out stories, making art projects, creative movement and games to gain familiarity with Hebrew letters, vowels, words as well as Jewish holidays and values. Class time ends at 5:15 p.m. for grades K-2.
  - Older students (grades 3-7) choose from Hebrew classes suited to their level as well as Jewish Studies elective classes geared to their interests. Previous elective offerings have included Cooking Jewish Cultures, Jewish Ceramic Art, Living Jewish Civilizations and a *Tikkun Olam* Workshop.
  - Between classes, students gather for Tefilah Time, during which all ages enjoy spirited singing and prayer, building a strong sense of community.
  - Each semester culminates in a special Shabbat service during which students lead prayers and proudly share their projects with family, friends and community.
  - Jewish Journeys families gather on holidays and Shabbat in various locations throughout the region, in private homes and community

venues, for activities such as a Shabbat by a lake, a backyard music jam, a Hanukkah bonfire, or cooking a meal for the hungry in a community kitchen.

Jewish Journeys is a partnership between Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires, a welcoming and inclusive congregation affiliated with the Reform movement, and Nefesh, a family-centered Jewish community that celebrates culture, traditions, and values together. The Jewish Journeys program is funded in part by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Our program warmly welcomes children and families of all backgrounds – Jewish, interfaith, secular, or simply curious. Everyone is invited to join our growing, supportive community.

Enroll now to give your child a joyful journey into Jewish life, learning, and belonging!

For more information and to register, visit [cbiberkshires.com/education](http://cbiberkshires.com/education) or contact Rabbi Jarah Greenfield at [learning@cbiberkshires.com](mailto:learning@cbiberkshires.com). Registration is open through August 20.

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Great Barrington

Religious School at Hevreh

Hevreh means a circle of friends. And that's what Hevreh of Southern Berkshire strives to be – a community of friends who learn and pray and play together. Arriving on a Sunday morning, you will be welcomed by music and laughter, and an enthusiastic greeting of “*Boker tov*, Hevreh!”

The Religious School day begins in song and prayer, accompanied by the Boker Tov Hevreh Band. Director of Education Beth Robbins works closely with Rabbi Jodie Gordon and experienced faculty to offer a religious education program built on the value of Jewish joy and *tikkun olam*, moving through the Jewish calendar as part of an engaged and inclusive community at this Reform congregation. Teachers are creative and gifted educators, dedicated to sparking a love of Jewish learning in each student.

The curriculum highlights Jewish holidays, ethics and values, text, lifecycle and ritual, and includes developmentally appropriate methods of learning for each class. The school welcomes

students from pre-kindergarten through high school. This year, Hevreh looks forward to welcoming all returning students on Sunday, September 14.

Programs

**Kindergarten – 7th grade:** Religious School meets weekly on Sunday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Hebrew Skills meets weekly on Wednesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m. for grades 3 through 7. There are limited options available for 1:1 remote Hebrew instruction. Hevreh welcomes interfaith families, LGBTQ+ families, new members, first timers, neighbors, and friends to explore all the education programs have to offer.

**Preschool Age Children:** Tiny Talmidim is Hevreh's signature monthly program for caregivers and children. Together, caregivers and their pre-school aged children explore the Jewish calendar through movement, music, cooking, and crafts related to Jewish holidays and Jewish values.

**Teen Programs:** Hevreh offers multiple points of entry for post-B'nai Mitzvah students. Students in 8th-12th grade will have the chance to study with the rabbi, travel together, and take on new leadership roles in the community as part of the Madrikh program where teens assist in religious school classrooms. In addition to the Pre-Confirmation (8th grade) and Confirmation Class (9th-12th grade) programs co-taught by Rabbi Gordon and Rabbinic Intern Jamie Gottlieb, students will also have opportunities to relax, explore the Berkshires, and socialize together in activities led by the teen program leader.

To learn more or to schedule a one-on-one appointment and tour, please contact: Beth Robbins at [info@hevreh.org](mailto:info@hevreh.org). To register, visit [hevreh.org/religiouschool](http://hevreh.org/religiouschool).





# BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

## Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

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

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

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

**JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG**

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

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

**B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326**

**Chabad of the Berkshires**  
17 West Street, Lenox MA  
(413) 499-9899,  
[jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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OBITUARIES

**Bernard “Bernie” Roberts, 95, a dedicated educator by both profession and nature**

BOCA RATON, FL – Bernard “Bernie” Roberts passed away peacefully at home on June 21, at the age of 95. Born December 27, 1929, in New York City, son of Jacob and Dora Eisenberg, he was predeceased by his first wife, Diana; sister, Helen Graubard (Mickey); and his brother, Robert, who died in the line of duty during World War II.

He is survived by his beloved wife Elaine, daughters Reisa and Debra, son-in-law James Grodd, sister-in-law Roberta Karasch (Marty), and his stepchildren: Sharon, Margot (Myriam), and Eric Stein (Loren). He is also survived by his grandchildren: Alex (Molly), Aviva, Jonah, Lena, Levi, Raffi, Samm (Grace), great-grandchildren Naomi and Emmanuelle, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins, all of whom filled his life with joy.

To those who knew him, he was a special light. He captivated everyone with his warm heart, caring personality, irresistible hugs, intelligence, and sense of humor that lasted throughout his life. A dedicated educator by both profession and nature, he taught history and social studies at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx for 28 years. Continuing his commitment to youth education, he founded the Diana Roberts Scholarship Fund in memory of his first wife, Diana, who passed away in 1990.

In 1994, he joined the board of the Berkshire Hills Eisenberg Camp to further his work with children. He served for 31 years, including seven as president.

Bernie fulfilled a lifelong dream in the summer of 2001 when he conducted the Boston Pops in performance at Tanglewood. Approximately 20,000 people were in attendance and that experience was one of Bernie’s most cherished memories.

Bernie and Elaine had a home in the Berkshires for 32 years, where they formed deep and lasting friendships and enjoyed the best of summers, immersed in the region’s rich cultural offerings. The Berkshires held a special place in their hearts, and they deeply missed being there in recent years.

He will be missed by the family he so loved and all the friends he so cherished.

Donations can be made to Berkshire Hills Eisenberg Camp, PO Box 16, Copake, NY 12516.

**Andrew L. Pincus, 94, renowned classical music critic, authority on Tanglewood**

LENOX – Andrew L. Pincus, 94, a writer on classical music, died on Thursday, May 29 at Berkshire Medical Center after a brief illness.

Born in Atlanta, GA, on July 12, 1930, Mr. Pincus graduated from Dartmouth College and received a master’s degree from Rutgers University. He served in the Army from 1951-1953. In 1953, he married Katharine Clark in Hanau-am-Main,

Germany, while stationed there with the Army. After two years in Richmond, they moved to Lenox in 1969. She died in 2019.

Mr. Pincus began his writing career as a journalist. He worked as a reporter and editor on newspapers in New Jersey from 1955 until 1967, when he joined The Berkshire Eagle as an editor. In 1974, he took on the additional duties of classical music critic.

In 1985, he left the Eagle’s staff to become a freelance critic and teacher. He was the Eagle’s classical music critic until retirement in 2022, becoming an authority on Tanglewood, and meanwhile wrote for other publications such as The New York Times. He taught occasional courses at Williams College and Simon’s Rock Colleges.

Mr. Pincus twice won the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award for excellence in music criticism. He served on the boards of the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and the Literacy Network of South Berkshire, and was an on-site evaluator for the National Foundation for the Arts. For many years he was a Literacy Network tutor.

Mr. Pincus’s books are *Scenes from Tanglewood*, *Tanglewood: The Clash Between Tradition and Change*, and *Musicians with a Mission*, as well as two novels, *A Loving Son* and *Night Work*.

Mr. Pincus leaves no immediate survivors. At his request, there will be no services. Memorial gifts may be made to the Boston Symphony Orchestra or the Literacy Network of South Berkshire.

**Diana (Pines) Geller, 95, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, active member of Jewish community**

PITTSFIELD – Diana (Pines) Geller, 95, passed away on Wednesday, June 4.

Born in Philadelphia to Nathan and Reba (Cohen) Pines on February 28, 1930, Diana married Jerry Geller in 1953. She was employed by the Pittsfield School Department for 46 years.

She was an active member of Congregation Kneset Israel.

Diana is survived by her son, Andy Geller of Pittsfield; daughter-in-law Lyn Light Geller (Nate Geller); grandchildren, Aliza, Koby, and Ariana; four great-grandchildren; and brother, Simon Pines (Barbara) of Roswell, GA. Diana was predeceased by her husband, Jerry and her son, Nate.

Funeral services were held at Kneset Israel, Pittsfield on Sunday, June 8. Burial followed at Kneset Israel Cemetery.

Donations may be made to the Kneset Israel Shirei Shabbat Music Fund, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201 or a fund of your choosing.

**Beverly S. Kaplan, 95, activist for peace and civil rights, lifelong advocate for social justice**

GREAT BARRINGTON – Beverly S. Kaplan, 95, died on Wednesday, May 28.

Born September 12, 1929, to Irving Smith and Jennie (Shulock) Smith, Beverly

was raised in the Bronx and Brooklyn with her sister, the late Gladys Knobel, and her brother, the late Harold Smith. The family overcame Depression-era challenges, reinforcing Beverly’s ability to always see the bright side, propelled by a positive outlook and a generous spirit.

Her caring spirit informed her politics. She was an activist for peace and civil rights in her youth, and a lifelong advocate for social justice. In 1949, at the age of 19, she attended a benefit concert for civil rights featuring Paul Robeson that was attacked by mobs, an event later known as the “Peekskill Riots.” She lived in Greenwich Village in the early 1950s, where she had many good friends including the author, Lorraine Hansberry, who introduced Beverly to the civil rights advocate and Great Barrington native, W.E.B. DuBois.

Beverly married the late Eli Kaplan in 1956 and together they raised a family in New York City with son Ira Kaplan (Sarah Robotham) and daughter Amy Morgano (Edward). In 1989, she and Eli moved to the Berkshires. She lived in Great Barrington for her last 33 years.

For 25 years, Beverly led tours at The Norman Rockwell Museum, retiring at the age of 90, due to COVID. She enjoyed sharing the story of Rockwell’s iconic “Four Freedoms,” interlacing the description of the paintings with reference to their inspiration, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech advocating universal human rights. Her rendition brought many letters of appreciation.

Beverly was the loving grandmother of John Morgano (Amanda Katz), Rebecca Pines (Daniel), James Morgano (Caroline Towbin), and Wilson Kaplan; great-grandmother of Jack, Owen, and Charlotte Pines; aunt to Brett Knobel, Lance Knobel, Dana Welch, Donna Budoff and Jane Spinner.

**Gilbert F. Asher, 85, loved skiing, photography, traveling, sushi, and ice cream**

PEABODY, MA - Gilbert F. Asher, 85, died on Monday, June 9.

Born February 16, 1940 in Chicago, Gil went to the University of Michigan and University of Chicago Law School. He was a lawyer and investor in Chicago and then Santa Fe, NM.

He loved skiing, photography, traveling, sushi, and ice cream (but not all at once).

Gil is survived by his children; Jamie Asher Berg (Ethan Berg), Whitney Asher (Laura Wentzel); grandsons, Arden Berg and Josh Berg; brother, Robert Asher (Maureen); many friends and relatives. He was predeceased by his father, Norman, mother, Helen, and brother, Donald.

A memorial service was held at Temple Emanu-el in Marblehead on Friday, June 13. Donations may be made in Gil’s honor to Peace Corps Kenya Country Fund. Letters to family may be sent to P.O. Box 2, Lenox, MA 01240.

**Elizabeth Heller Rosenberg, 76, library director, member and leader on many boards**

NEW MARLBOROUGH – Elizabeth Heller Rosenberg, 76, of New Marlborough and New York City, passed away peacefully on Sunday, June 1, surrounded by her family.

Elizabeth was the director of the Haworth, NJ Public Library for 23 years. She served as board president of Northern Valley Regional High School and as a Board of Trustees member for the ALS Association. Most recently, Elizabeth served as president of Construct, a nonprofit focused on affordable housing in the Berkshires, and as a member of the Board of Trustees at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire..

She is survived by her husband of 53 years, Eugene; children Adam (Alexandra) Rosenberg, Paige (Scott) Cohen, and Michael (Maggie) Rosenberg; and five grandchildren, Ollie, Nate, Elinor, Matty, and James.

Donations can be made to Construct, constructberkshires.org. A memorial service took place on Wednesday, June 4, at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Great Barrington.

**Jeffrey Kramer, 74, Special Education educator, ten trips to Israel as a volunteer**

ALBANY, NY – Jeffrey Kramer, 74, passed away on Monday, June 23. He was one of two children to Shirley and Ubbby (Abraham) Kramer. Jeff’s sister, Judy, 3 years older, passed away suddenly in 2024.

Jeff met his future wife, Ethel, at the JCC in Brockton, MA. Jeff and Ethel both graduated from Randolph (MA) High School in 1969, with Jeff saying he knew Ethel but Ethel had no idea who he was. Jeff graduated from Bridgewater State College in 1978 with a BA in Special Education.

Jeff and Ethel started seeing each other during the Blizzard of ‘78, were married that summer, and Jeff insisted on adopting Ethel’s daughters, Cheryl and Rachel, right away. He was the best father, always trying to give and do for them even when they couldn’t afford to do so.

Shortly thereafter, the family moved from the suburbs of Boston to the Berkshires in December, where Jeff was a Special Ed teacher at the Kolburne School. Two years later, he took a SPED position in the public school district that was short lived. He then took a position at BD (aka Becton Dickinson) in Connecticut for over 29 years.

Over the years, Jeff was proud to watch both of his girls grow and thrive. One went overseas during high school and the other was very musical in several orchestras.

Shortly after they got married, Jeff promised that someday the family would travel to Israel. He fulfilled that promise and took ten trips volunteering, only stopping when his disease started to overcome him.

Jeff is survived by his wife of 46 years, Ethel; daughters Cheryl (Andrew) Salem and Rachel Kramer; granddaughters Elana Kramer and Susan Lord.

The family would like to thank the nursing and activities staff of the Gold Unit of Daughters of Sarah Nursing home for their kindness and devotion during his stay.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, June 24 at the Levine Memorial Chapel, Albany. Burial followed at Cedar Park Cemetery in Paramus, NJ.

**Jan L. Smith, 65, loved classical music, extreme record collection, creative thinker**

ELMIRA, NY – Jan L. Smith, passed away on Monday, June 16, just a few days before his 66th birthday.

Jan was raised in Pittsfield and graduated from Taconic High School in 1977 with High Honors. He was a member of the Taconic High School ski team and was a ski instructor at Bousquet Mountain and Jiminy Peak ski area. Jan had a classic rock radio show at WTBR-FM located at the high school. He was the president of the Medical Explorers Club, which exposed students to careers in science and medicine.

Jan briefly lived in Medford, MA where he recommended specific audio equipment to each client and then facilitated the purchase between the supplier and his customers. He was a very intelligent and creative thinker.

Jan loved classical music and attended many concerts at Tanglewood. He had an extensive record collection from The Beatles to Beethoven and introduced many people to different musical genres.

He settled in Binghamton, NY, and adored his cousins Willow Sullivan and her mother, the late Joan Schumacher, who were instrumental in welcoming him to the area and guiding him.

He was preceded in death by his beloved mother, Irma (Benjamin) Smith, and sister Anita Regina Etscovitz.

Jan is survived by his father Marvin A. Smith; sister Heidi (Smith) Ferren, her husband Richard and their son Robert; brother-in-law David Etscovitz and wife Carol; uncle Malcolm Benjamin and wife Tink; niece Lisa Shaw, her husband Bob, and their daughter Lilly; cousin Willow “Sissy” Sullivan; and dear friend Celia Alpern, her husband Ken, and their children Nate and Becca.

The family received condolences and shared stories at Kneset Israel, Pittsfield, on Monday, June 30. Jan’s burial was planned privately at the convenience of the family.

The family welcomes memorial donations to Willow’s Wings Animal Sanctuary, Inc., 30 Kay Road, Endicott, NY 13740 or the Kneset Israel Shirei Shabbat Music Fund, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.



CULTURE & ARTS

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Down the Rabbi Hole

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

About ten years ago, while doing research for an article on the Jewish history of Pittsfield, I happened upon an article detailing a most unusual find that has connected two places I've called home for the majority of my life: Pittsfield and Worcester.



The tefillin, with scrolls removed, at the Peabody Museum. The writing on the case reads: "A Jewish frontlet found in a farmer's yard in Pittsfield, May 1815," and lists the biblical passages written on the parchment.

Back in 1815, it was reported that a boy, clearing his employer's Fort Hill yard of rubbish, dug up a set of tefillin. Ensuing press coverage about the find caused quite a stir across the country, and clergy and scholars flocked to Pittsfield to examine the parchment scrolls enclosed in their leather boxes. At that time, many people believed that Indians were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The next "logical" step in their thought process was that the tefillin had been dropped by an ancient Israelite who had traveled across the Bering Strait or by boat across the Atlantic and thus establishing the Native American nations. (How they got all the way to the Bering Strait from the Land of Israel nobody explains.) But we were ten tribes, after all, and knowing how we Jews love to argue...er, discuss...expanding from ten Jewish tribes to 574 federally-recognized Native American tribes wouldn't be a stretch, right? (The old joke about the desert island and the two synagogues comes to mind here.)

An article with the Agatha Christie-ish title "The Case of the Missing Philactery" by William N. Goetzmann reports that among the many clergymen who flocked to Merrick's home was Sylvester Larned, a young and not-yet-ordained Presbyterian minister. Larned was not trained in Hebrew, so he brought them to Pastor William Allen at the Congregational Church on Park Square. Allen confirmed that these were indeed Hebrew scrolls containing four passages from the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy.

Larned then obtained permission from Allen to send the tefillin to one Dr. Abiel Holmes in Cambridge, a scholar of ancient Hebrew. Goetzmann writes that there is no evidence that Holmes ever commented on the find, but Holmes then brought the tefillin to the American Antiquarian Society\* in Worcester, founded by Revolutionary War newspaper publisher, Isaiah Thomas – on condition that the scholars there publish an article about them in their annual report. The AAS failed to produce one, so Goetzmann reports that Larned then sent them to a New Jersey scholar and supporter of Indian causes, Elias Boudinot. Upon Boudinot's death, his heirs donated his papers to the Pennsylvania Historical Society, but according to historian Lee Friedman, the tefillin were not among them.

Goetzmann writes that the tefillin have not been seen since. And then one day, while burrowing down another rabbit hole, I found them. The tefillin sit in a display case at Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, complete with descriptive labels written in Isaiah Thomas's own hand.

How did the tefillin get from the AAS to the Peabody? I decided to go old-school and picked up the telephone to call to our friend Scott Casper, the AAS President (and member of our Hadassah book club). Scott had a perfectly logical explanation. Toward the end of the 19th century, the AAS decided to deaccession artifacts to focus entirely on the printed word. Because the tefillin were considered Indian relics, they were sent along with all other Native American pieces in the collection to the Peabody.

Thomas Melvill, Jr., Herman's uncle, whose wife, the magnificently named Francoise Marie Des Douleurs Eulogie Lame (Fleury) Melvill, died in Pittsfield at age 33 giving birth to their sixth child, Pierre (who died in infancy).



Mystery solved! Well, not really. No Jews lived in Pittsfield until decades later. So, how did the tefillin come to end up in a trash pile on Fort Hill? While researching the history of my hometown, I discovered that Pittsfield was the site of the largest prisoner of war camp during the War of 1812 – situated on the Common where I grew up ice skating. The camp's commandant was Thomas Melvill (uncle of Herman, and yes, there was no "e" on the name at the time). Melvill was an extraordinarily enlightened man who allowed internees to work



Ice skating in the Pittsfield Common

outside the camp on the condition that they would return at night, trusting them to keep their word. Now, the British army did not allow Jews to serve, but the Royal Navy did and even promoted some of them.

I am not alone in believing that the tefillin belonged to a Jewish POW, but how they ended up in a trash pile has impelled me to start writing a new book, a work of historical fiction. I can't wait to finish it and see how it ends!

\* Since its founding in 1812 by Revolutionary War patriot and printer Isaiah Thomas, AAS has assembled what is today the world's largest and most accessible collection of books, pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers, periodicals, children's literature, music, and graphic arts material printed before the twentieth century in what is now the United States. The library of over four million items also includes a substantial collection of secondary texts, bibliographies, digital resources, and reference works. AAS is also a learned society with over 1,200 members, who are elected based on distinctive achievement in academic or public life. The Society was presented with the 2013 National Humanities Medal by President Obama in a White House ceremony. (from the AAS website)

The AAS has a significant collection of Jewish materials related to American Jewish history and culture, from the early days of Jewish settlement in the United States to the mid-19th century. Come to Worcester and we'll have lunch!



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.



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CULTURE & ARTS

Harold Grinspoon on Making Art



Harold Grinspoon with BJV Editor Albert Stern at the July 12 opening of “Hidden Worlds and Wonders” exhibition at the Norman Rockwell Museum. They are standing in front of “Dinosaur.”

This summer, Harold Grinspoon’s sculptures will appear at prominent venues throughout the Berkshires, including Sculpture at The Mount in Lenox and at Chesterwood’s *Global Warming/Global Warning!* in Stockbridge. There, his sculpture “Olympus” will remain on view for the next two years. The sculpture that appears here, “Dinosaur,” is at the Norman Rockwell Museum through October as part of its *Hidden Worlds and Wonders* exhibit. Grinspoon is a late-blooming creative force, able to go big and bold as a sculptor and also intimate and subtle as a poet, another way he expresses his artistic vision. The BJV asked him a few questions about his recent endeavors via email.

**You’ve described your artistic awakening as having taken place in 2014, when a fallen tree in your yard shifted your “whole perception of life, mortality, immortality, beauty, and form.” You transformed that cherry tree into your first sculpture, ‘The Beauty of Nature,’ and in the years since, you have produced more than 140 works of art. How has working as a visual artist for these past 11 years further shifted your perceptions?**

It’s great to have a creative outlet – that you can take a thought or idea and build it into something physical and beautiful. I have a vivid imagination that keeps on moving. It’s wonderful to have an outlet to be able to express that with. I do the same thing with poetry.

**What would you like people to consider when they encounter your sculptures currently on view at The Mount, Chesterwood, and the Norman Rockwell Museum?**

I would like people to experience joy and happiness, and to smile, and feel uplift. That’s the way I feel when I make the sculptures. I love the creativity of putting it together from the barest materials. And I hope they enjoy the beauty.

**While your artwork is abstract, your poetry can be concrete and direct. I admire your lines: “Perhaps you have a chance to look back over your shoulder / And see how you spent your life. / Does that bring tears to your eyes? / Hold on. Not so quick.” Most anyone reading that line, if they’re being honest, will find it relatable and possibly (necessarily?) a little wounding. What does it mean to you in the context of your own life experience?**

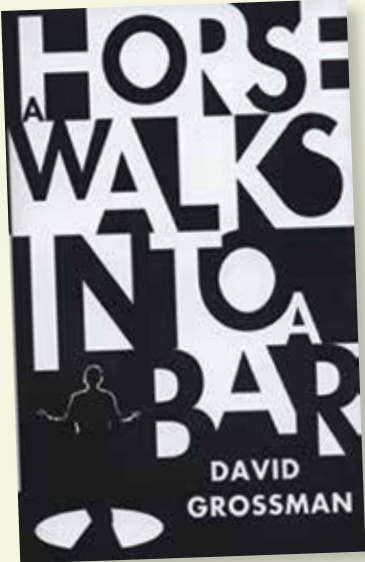
That line is a very personal line because as I stop and reflect, there are many years when I was not cognizant or aware of the essence of life. I feel so blessed today that I am very significantly aware of who I am, and my ability to sort out my thoughts and move into a very positive experience.

Dr. Steve Recommends...

A column about Jewish books and authors

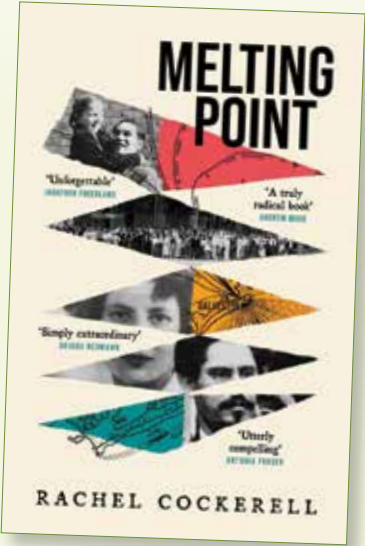
By Dr. Steve Rubin / Special to the BJV

Summer passes quickly in the Berkshires, but fall has its own unique beauty. There is still time for outdoor reading should you so choose. But whether you’re indoors or sitting on the back porch, here are two (very different) recommendations. The first is a novel oddly titled, *A Horse Walked into a Bar* by one of my favorite Israeli novelists, David Grossman – arguably that country’s preeminent contemporary author. The second is the recently published, *Melting Point: Family, Memory, and the Search for a Promised Land*, by Rachel Cockerell.



*A Horse Walked into a Bar* was first published in Israel in Hebrew in 2014 and in English (translated by Jessica Cohen) in 2017. Grossman’s short novel is often funny, but just as often sad and touching – and always compelling. Winner of the 2017 Man Booker International Prize, the novel takes the form of a stand-up comic’s monologue (hence the title), but delves into the personal history of the narrator, revealing past abuses, regrets, and present insecurities. Grossman also has something to say (subtly) about the state of Israel in the 21st century. NPR described *A Horse Walked into a Bar* as a novel “as beautiful as it is unusual, and it’s nearly impossible to put down.” I couldn’t agree more. Read this intense, beautifully written short novel. See if you agree.

*Melting Point* is the first work by Rachel Cockerell, a young (thirty-year-old) London-based British writer. It is a work of nonfiction that cleverly blends family memoir with news reports and commentary of the day. The first section – through speeches, letters, and news reports – delineates the period of early Zionism and the key figures of that movement: Theodor Herzl, Stefan Zweig, Israel Zangwill, among others. The second part contains the written memoirs of Cockerell’s own family before and after the Jewish state came into existence. The final section chronicles the founding of Israel in 1948 and the reactions of journalists, columnists, and politicians throughout the world. What is apparent, and perhaps the most moving part of this impressive volume, is how quickly most observers understood the looming problems associated with establishing a nation on land already inhabited by a people with a national identity of their own.



**Steve Rubin, Ph.D.** has written and lectured extensively both here and abroad on issues relating to Jewish culture and literature. He also moderates Federation’s popular Current Events seminar, which continues at Connecting With Community at Knesset Israel on Thursday, August 7.