

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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Mobile Museum of Tolerance to Visit the Berkshires in November



PITTSFIELD – Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, in collaboration with Berk12, is partnering with the Simon Wiesenthal Center to bring the Mobile Museum of Tolerance (MMOT) to Berkshire County, making its powerful educational experience available to all middle and high schools across the Berkshires.

The Mobile Museum of Tolerance is a dynamic, state-of-the-art educational initiative developed by the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. Designed to promote human dignity, confront hate, and inspire positive social change, the MMOT uses immersive multimedia exhibits to engage students on pressing topics such as antisemitism, racism, digital literacy, and the power of civic responsibility.

This 32-seat, wheelchair-accessible vehicle serves as both a museum and a self-contained classroom, delivering a powerful field trip experience directly to schools and communities. Guided by experienced educators, the MMOT combines cutting-edge technology with facilitated dialogue to create meaningful learning opportunities.

As part of the Berkshire County launch:

- On **Tuesday, November 4**, Berk12 will host the Mobile Museum of Tolerance for a workshop on *The Roots of Hate* during its countywide professional development day for educators.
- MOBILE MUSEUM,**
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Middle East Update with Ambassador Dennis Ross



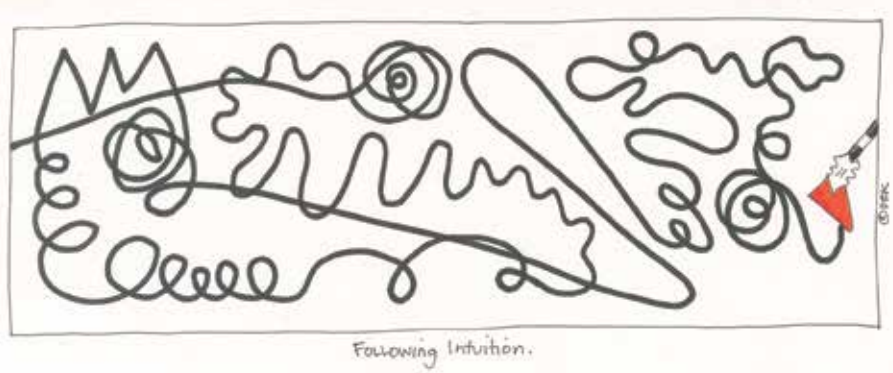
On Thursday, November 6 at 7 p.m., Federation's Middle East Update returns with Ambassador Dennis Ross presenting. This free program will be streamed online – please visit our calendar of events page to register and receive a link via email.

Ambassador Dennis Ross, one of America's foremost Middle East diplomats and policy experts, offers insights and perspective on Israel's war with Hamas, the evolving strategies shaping the conflict, and the shifting geopolitics of the region. Drawing on decades of experience advising multiple U.S. administrations, Ross will help us make sense of the fast-moving events that are impacting Israel, the broader Middle East, and the global stage.

Dennis Ross is an American diplomat and author. He has served as the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department under President George H.W. Bush, the special Middle East coordinator under President Bill Clinton, and was a special adviser for the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia to the former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Ambassador Ross has published extensively on the former Soviet Union, arms control, and the greater Middle East, including *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, October 2015). He has authored many op-eds in the New York Times, Washington Post, and other papers and magazines.

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Deb Koffman Remembered at Norman Rockwell Museum



Opening November 8, Norman Rockwell Museum presents “Shine a Light: The Art and Life of Deb Koffman,” a featured installation celebrating the artistry, life, and mindful spirit of Berkshire-based artist and author Deb Koffman (1956–2021). In addition to her art, Koffman fostered creativity and connection through her Housatonic gallery, Art Space. It became a hub for mindfulness workshops, creativity circles, performances, and community dialogue.

For more, please see page 23.

Deb Koffman, (1956–2021), On my way/Standing (Following intuition.), n.d. Marker, 4.75x11". Norman Rockwell Museum collection, Gift of the Koffman Family, NRM.2021.22.223



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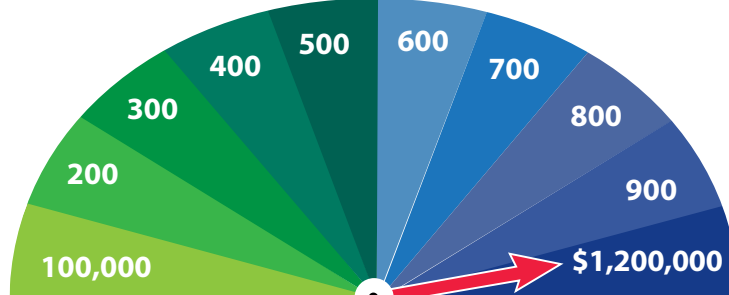
If you have not yet made your gift to the 2024 Annual Campaign there is still time to do so.

Your gift will help us engage the next generation, support the elderly and vulnerable, and sustain Jewish life all year round.

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Jewish Federation of the Berkshires 2025 Annual Campaign GOAL \$1,300,000



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Letters to the Editor

Wishes for Hope and Happiness

To Our Partners at Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

These artworks were made by 4-6th graders from Kibbutz Ein Harod at the Mishkan Museum of Art this summer to express wishes for hope and

happiness and a connection to Jewish communities in the US. They were excited that through art they can reach all the way overseas and impact someone far away.

Wishing all our friends in the Berkshires a good and sweet 5786!

Sincerely,

Tanya Fredman
Education Department, Mishkan Museum of Art
Ein Harod, Israel



There Are Snapping Turtles

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

My name is Saul. I am 10 years old and I was in Bonim 2 last summer. One of my favorite activities at Eisner Camp is fishing in the lake. I like fishing in the lake because there's big bass, sunfish, and perch. All the counselors are so nice to me and they always look out for me and make sure I'm safe. Fishing in the lake is fun also because the whole

dock is surrounded by big fish. I feel great when I'm fishing at camp but I also feel scared because there are snapping turtles. I like services on Friday and Saturday at Eisner because people read Torah and there are Parsha Plays. I am so excited for next summer and Jewish Life at Eisner Camp. Thank you very much for the scholarship.

Saul Warren
East Otis



Common snapping turtle (Chelydra serpentina)

To Your Health

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They Liked Their Chugs

Dear Federation,

I was excited for Camp Ramah because I had seen videos of campers saying how much they liked their *chugs*, the fun dancing and singing, and being part of such an amazing community. When I went to camp I experienced that and so much more. That included learning more Jewish history, meeting so many people, and most of all making memories I will never forget.

While I was at Camp Ramah, Tisha B'av happened, a holiday my family never observed. Learning about it and observing it was an amazing but sad experience. During my time at Camp Ramah lots of my friends read Torah. I decided that next year I will too.

Sincerely,
Shira Palmer, Chatham, NY

Being Jewish Means Being Part of a Community

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you for your help and support, which funded my camp scholarship. I am very grateful and had an amazing summer at URJ Eisner Camp.

One of my most memorable and favorite experiences this year was spending time with all of my friends. I also loved the opening day, where I got to see lots of familiar faces from last year at camp and meet new ones. One activity I enjoyed was pottery class. I got to use a pottery wheel for the first time and I came home with some really cool pots and mugs. Another really fun event is the yearly Cabaret. As a participant in the Cabaret, I can say that it was very fun. I loved when I just received my script and found out that I had earned myself a solo!

At Eisner this summer, I learned more about Judaism. To me, being Jewish means being part of a community. Eisner is also a community, everyone is working together, celebrating Jewish holidays like Shabbat together, and learning more about Judaism together.

As a Chalutzim camper, I can conclude that Eisner is such a wonderful place. I love Camp Eisner. Thank you again for funding my camp scholarship.

Gemma Tanner (age 11)
Lenox

LETTERS,
continued on page 5

OP-ED

GUEST EDITORIAL

My Divine Kiss by an Angel in the Berkshires

By Ruth Kaplan



Have you ever gone mini-golfing and received a kiss from a perfect stranger for being one of God’s chosen people? Not your everyday occurrence, right? Especially in an era of spiking antisemitism and anti-Israel hostility. Yet, it happened to me recently and restored my faith – at least for the moment – in my fellow Americans and their solidarity with us Jews.

Let me explain.

In the post-October 7 era, Jews have been experiencing a range of conflicting emotions and reactions: pride, fear, anger, confusion and uncertainty, to name a few. Israel’s ongoing war against Hamas, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the cruel treatment of innocent Israeli hostages is a pervasive concern and impacts the Jewish community in myriad ways. Since they became available, I have religiously worn the dog tag showing solidarity with the Israeli hostages.

I continue to wear my dog tag even as I wonder whether this small daily act matters. And I have recently added an

old Jewish star that had been lying around for years that I have to confess did not interest me too much in the past. But things changed on October 7, and the Jewish star is now hanging conspicuously around my neck.

I took both items off recently during my trip to Central Europe but afterwards regretted that decision. There was no need to fear antisemitism and even anti-Zionism in Hungary or the Czech Republic. But I didn’t realize that ahead of time.

So back to the Berkshires, a lovely resort region in western Massachusetts. My husband and I traveled to the quaint town of Lenox in August to enjoy the exquisite end-of-season rendition of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in the gorgeous setting of Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In the midst of the onslaught of devastating news both international and domestic, it was a pleasure to bask in the utopian vision of unity written by the world’s great master composer. This classic and universalistic musical experience was followed the next night by an uplifting performance of a local Klezmer band in a Pittsfield synagogue. Ironically, I learned of that performance due to a chance encounter with a Jewish woman at Tanglewood who I only approached because she also wore a hostage pendant. Had I not been wearing my “Jewish jewelry,” our meeting would never have happened.

Had I not been wearing my “Jewish jewelry,” our meeting would never have happened.

On the third and final day of our short getaway, we decided to play miniature golf at the only available venue, Baker’s Golf Center, in the small rural town of Lanesborough, five miles north of Pittsfield.

As always, it’s one of life’s simple pleasures to play mini golf – a genuine throwback to the 1950s, on a course containing odd decor and a healthy mix of young and old players just having fun. At the conclusion of our game, we decided to take a photo. A gentleman who was playing right behind us overheard and offered his assistance.

This man and his female partner were eager to engage us in friendly conversation. He was clearly a military veteran – a leg amputee wearing a Marine Corps baseball hat. I was wearing my late father’s UMass hat, to which his partner shared that she too was a proud graduate of the school. It was the next part of our conversation that got interesting. No doubt taking note of my Jewish star (and maybe the dog tag), he asked me if by any chance I was Jewish. I immediately clutched my pendants and replied that yes indeed this was the case, at which point I was bracing for a provocative Israel-related comment.

That’s not at all what happened, however. He proceeded to tell me how much he appreciated the Jewish people and that he wanted to wear an outward symbol to show his support, but had been unsuccessful in acquiring what he described as a blue ribbon. He had even gone to the local synagogue to find a blue ribbon, but to no avail. I then explained that following October 7, supporters of Israel first wore blue ribbons which had subsequently led to yellow ribbons, and that in addition there is a “Stand Up to Jewish Hate” blue square lapel pin created by the Kraft Foundation to Combat Antisemitism that he might have seen. I offered to help him get what he needed.

He was overjoyed to hear this and proceeded to give me a warm hug and a kiss on the cheek! He also told me that he loved me because the Jews are God’s chosen people and he believes in God. I was speechless and replied something like “that’s great. I believe in God too.” Never mind getting into any philosophical discussion about the somewhat problematic concept of chosenness that most Jews I know would typically engage in. It was a pure declaration of faith and love and in these troubled times for the Jewish people, I was more than happy to receive his kind sentiments.

So what was the ultimate irony? My newfound friend is Angel. Yes, that’s actually his name. How fitting, no? In just two days I went from hearing the angelic music of Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” proclaiming the utopian vision of a brotherhood of man, to being kissed by a real Angel, a Vietnam war vet who loves me because I’m a part of God’s chosen people.

I sent a packet of Jewish jewelry to Angel in September and I’m certain he will wear it. I’m thrilled because we need all the friends we can get these days, and for a moment my own faith in the goodness of my fellow Americans was reaffirmed in the tiny village of Lanesborough, Massachusetts.

Ruth Kaplan is a writer and consultant with a varied career including academic pursuits in Jewish history, social services and governmental work, private practice as an attorney, and public service as an elected and appointed official dealing with public education. For the past 15 years, she has served the Jewish and Israeli communities in a variety of leadership roles, including Director of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies Boston-Haifa Connection and Director of Community Relations for the Consulate General of Israel to New England.

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Your Federation Presents

Oct. 7 Commemoration Brought Us Together in Community

Against a backdrop of hope that peace for Israel would soon be achieved, hundreds of members of our Jewish community came together in Pittsfield on October 9 to grieve those lost on October 7, 2023. We heard Israeli singer-songwriter Micah Biton's harrowing tale of escaping the attack with his family at their home in Moshav Netiv Ha'asara, as well as his moving account of its aftermath, when he both buried his close friends and celebrated his son's bar mitzvah on the same day. He sang several of his own post-Oct. 7 compositions and led the gathered in familiar songs and the Israeli national anthem. Our local rabbis joined together to deliver the convocation and led prayers of mourning for the departed. Thank you to Kneset Israel for hosting this powerful evening of sadness and faith that better days are ahead.



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

*Seek advice from a financial advisor, attorney, or tax professional to discuss your personal situation.
Graphics provided by HGF's Life & Legacy Program

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



THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

Letters to the Editor

LETTERS,
continued from page 2

Last, But Not Least, How to Have Lots of Fun

Dear Federation,

Ramah was really fun. I learned a lot of stuff from my *chugs* (activities) including: how to make really good Israeli pastries, how to paint with light, how to do landscaping, how to recognize edible plants in the wild, and last but not least how to have lots of fun.

There are a lot of bunk activities also. There is a *yom tzrifi* where the whole day is just bunk activities and every day there is a *menucha* (rest time) where you can relax or play a card game with your bunkmates.

Sincerely,
Lev Palmer, Chatham, NY

A Beautiful Flowering of Jewish Community That Your Support Makes Possible

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires,
The second evening of Rosh Hashanah isn't generally when congregations see most of their members, but at a college, an evening after class is prime time for Hillel. As twilight settled, dozens of freshmen made their way to the Old Chapel in the heart of the UMass campus. Soon, the historic stone walls echoed with the sound of voices singing, accompanied by the gentle melody of a guitar. The chapel, which has witnessed generations of students, was alive with a new kind of sacred energy as our students celebrated together at our High Holidays musical service.



At the end of the evening, a group of ten freshmen – some who had participated in our FreshFest orientation program for Freshmen, others we had met for the first time that night – gathered around us with bright eyes and eager voices. They expressed their enthusiasm for more programs like this: experiences that channel joy, hope, and gratitude alongside their peers. In that moment, surrounded by the lingering notes of closing songs, we witnessed the beautiful flowering of Jewish community that your support makes possible.

We couldn't offer this transformative experience or any of our other engagement opportunities for students without your generous partnership. Thank you for enhancing Jewish student life at UMass Hillel and for believing in the power of Jewish community on campus.

This year, we are focusing on expanding Jewish presence and pride throughout the UMass community. This means you'll find us in the dining halls celebrating Jewish holidays with festive meals, in classrooms piloting our new House of Study educational programs, and across campus supporting our ten student groups as they grow and engage new leaders.

We continue to offer wide-ranging educational, social, and cultural programming that is driven by students and their lived experiences. They bring enthusiasm, energy, and thoughtful perspectives on how they engage with the world, navigate antisemitism, and envision their futures. When they come to us with bold ideas and meaningful initiatives, we want to be able to say yes. As a Jewish community, we need to say yes to their leadership and dreams.

As the demands on Hillel continue to increase, financial support from the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires ensures we can continue empowering Jewish community for every Jewish student at our flagship state school. Your investment doesn't just fund programs – it creates moments of connection, builds lasting friendships, and helps young Jews discover the richness of their heritage in a supportive environment.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in this sacred work!

Meredith Lewis
Managing Director, UMass Hillel
Amherst

Your Federation Presents

When Art, Culture and Politics Collide: Fashion and Forbidden Style in the Holocaust

On Thursday, October 30 at 7 p.m., join Dr. Linda Burghardt, Scholar-in-Residence at the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center in New York, whose topic will be "When Art, Culture and Politics Collide: Fashion and Forbidden Style in the Holocaust."

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

Berlin in the early 1930s was second only to Paris as the undisputed capital of the European fashion world, run by Jews and recognized the world over as a major center for style and innovation in the clothing trade. But Hitler had different ideas. With his swift, brutal takeover of all facets of life in Germany, the new Nazi culture not only stole the industry from the Jews, it forced its ideology onto the fashion of the day.

Join Dr. Burghardt to explore how concepts of fashion changed during this explosive period in history and the critical role it played in the Holocaust.



German fashion designs on display at a 1928 polo match

Dr. Linda Burghardt is a journalist and author of three non-fiction books, two on Jewish topics. She wrote for *The New York Times* for 20 years and has contributed numerous essays and articles to the *Berkshire Eagle*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, and other major publications. Based on Long Island, N.Y. she is a part-time resident of the Berkshires and spends summers here plus weekends year round. She holds a Ph.D. from Long Island University and has lectured to both national and international audiences on a variety of Holocaust topics. Most recently, articles of hers have appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* and the *Times of Israel*. She is the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Vienna.

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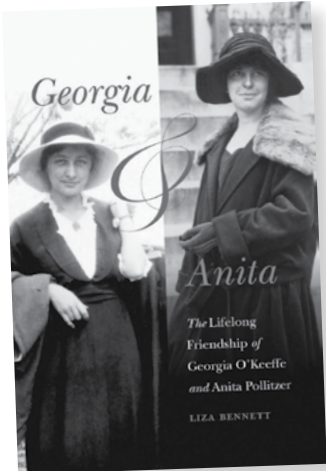
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Liza Bennett is a full-time writer and former advertising executive. Georgia & Anita is her first work of nonfiction. She has published ten novels, including Local Knowledge, So Near, A Place for Us, and Bleeding Heart under her maiden name Liza Gyllenhaal. She is the past Board Chair and long-time board member of the Academy of American Poets, currently serving on the Emeritus board, and is the secretary of the West Stockbridge Historical Society. She divides her time between New York City and the Berkshire Hills. Her blog is lizagyllenhaal.com – “a writer in the garden offers musings on writing, gardening, reading, poetry, and life in the Berkshires.”



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Antisemitism threatens us all.
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Your Federation Presents

One Story

A portion of your gift to Federation’s annual campaign is directed to those doing vital work in Israel and across the Jewish world. Here is one story of how Federation funds puts your generosity to good use.

Federation Support at Work: How Herzog Medical Center is Responding to Israel’s Mental Health Tsunami

By David Bar-El / Herzog Medical Center



A physical therapist at Herzog Medical Center carries her child on her back while caring for a patient.

In the aftermath of the October 7th Hamas attacks and the subsequent Iran–Israel war, Israel has faced not only the physical toll of conflict but what many are now calling a “mental health tsunami.” Families displaced, children waking to sirens, and young adults returning repeatedly to reserve duty have created an unprecedented demand for trauma care.

Thanks to the generosity of Jewish Federations of North America, Herzog Medical Center in Jerusalem – Israel’s foremost facility for trauma-related mental health and chronic respiratory care – has been able to respond at scale. Funding from JFNA’s Israel Crisis Fund, which raised more than \$800 million to support emergency initiatives through partners including JDC, World ORT, and the Jewish Agency for Israel, has enabled Herzog to strengthen and expand its life-saving work.

Expanding Psychotrauma Services

With Federation support, Herzog’s Metiv Psychotrauma Center has expanded outreach to families nationwide. Its PANDA program, which offers both in-person and Zoom therapy for parents and children, has been scaled up to meet surging demand. By equipping parents to act as “safe spaces” during crisis, PANDA is helping children manage fear and anxiety in a time of national upheaval.

In addition, Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston (CJP) awarded Herzog a \$50,000 grant to help scale Metiv trainings for art

therapists in Israel’s North, in partnership with the Ministry of Health. This initiative is giving frontline therapists new tools to treat children and families living under rocket fire and displacement.

Meeting the Needs of Young Adults at Risk

Herzog’s Young Adults at Risk Mental Health Clinic – already a national referral center – saw demand skyrocket in 2025. In just the first six months, the clinic treated more than 450 young adults aged 18–25, surpassing the 319 individuals served in all of 2024. Many of these young people are grappling with resurfaced trauma, repeated reserve duty, social isolation, or loss of livelihood. Federation funding allowed Herzog to redesign intake systems and expand clinical hours, ensuring urgent cases receive immediate attention.

Emergency Care Underground

When missiles struck Jerusalem, Federation-backed resources also enabled Herzog to activate its state-of-the-art Sheltered Underground Emergency Hospital, transferring more than 250 of its most vulnerable patients – including 60 ventilated children – within 20 hours. The ability to protect patients physically while simultaneously expanding trauma care for the wider population is a testament to the resilience made possible through Federation support.

A Partnership for Israel’s Future

“Federation support has been instrumental,” said Dr. Yehezkel Caine, President of Herzog Medical Center. “Our teams didn’t wait for funding to expand care – but thanks to JFNA’s Israel Crisis Fund and to CJP, we’ve had the resources to sustain and scale our work for survivors, veterans, children, and families who need us most.”

As Herzog marks its 130th anniversary this year, its mission of compassionate service in the face of crisis continues – now strengthened immeasurably by the solidarity of Jewish Federations of North America.

For more information about Herzog Medical Center or to schedule a visit the next time you are in Israel, please contact David Bar-El Colbert, Director of Special Projects at davidbar@herzoghospital.org. Website: herzoghospital.org.

PJ Library After Dark

PJ Library

pj pizza party & havdalah

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15

5-6:30 PM

LENOX COMMUNITY CENTER

PJ LIBRARY AFTER DARK

LENOX – Join PJ Library for a cozy End-of-Shabbat Pizza Party at the Lenox Community Center in downtown Lenox! Come in your coziest pajamas and enjoy a yummy pizza party with friends. We’ll say goodbye to Shabbat with Havdalah and end the evening with a sweet bedtime story.

Register at tinyurl.com/PJPizzaLenox so we have enough pizza for everyone! Questions? Email Paige Wright at pwright@jewishberkshires.org.

MOBILE MUSEUM,

- continued from cover*
- On **Wednesday, November 5, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.**, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will host the MMOT for an **Open House** at Federation’s office, located at 196 South Street, Pittsfield. Community members, educators, administrators, and civic leaders are invited to explore the mobile museum and learn more.
 - **Beginning this winter**, the MMOT will be available – at no cost – for scheduled visits to middle and high schools across Berkshire County.

Within the mobile museum, teachers across disciplines can select from four interactive learning modules designed to fit within a scheduled class period. These offerings include *The Anne Frank Story* (grades 5–8), *The Power of Ordinary People* (grades 7–12), *Civil Rights Workshop* (grades 5–12), and *Combat Hate! A Digital Media Literacy Workshop* (grades 5–12).

Funding for the MMOT’s Massachusetts programs was provided by the Massachusetts state legislature in its FY2026 budget.

Registration for educators to schedule school visits in Berkshire county will be opening shortly. To learn more, about the Mobile Museum of Tolerance, visit mmot.com.

Is a loved one, or a dear friend finding living alone a little difficult? At Geer Village Senior Community we can help.

Geer Village is the perfect place for assisted living and memory care. We offer a unique approach to the many stages of memory care. Our services are designed to meet the special needs of residents diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia.



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LOCAL NEWS

Embracing Community and Renewal at Congregation Ahavath Sholom

By Linda Geffen / Congregation Ahavath Sholom



Rabbi Jennifer Rudin

Rudin will be held Friday, October 31 and Saturday, November 1.

For a schedule of services, classes, and events, visit ahavathsholom.com. CAS is located at 15 North Street in Great Barrington.

Friday Night Transformations

Friday nights at CAS have taken on a new spirit. Kabbalat Shabbat services are now filled with music, often accompanied by guitar, and include *niggunim* – soulful wordless melodies inspired by the Hadar Institute of New York City. This infusion of music has created a joyous and uplifting entry into Shabbat.

Shabbat Morning Offerings

On Shabbat mornings, services alternate between traditional prayer with Torah readings and thoughtful Torah study sessions. This balance offers opportunities for worshippers to engage with tradition in multiple ways – through ritual, text, and conversation.

Learning as a Pillar of Community Life

Learning has become a central pillar of community life. Rabbi Rudin has launched an ongoing book group that has explored titles such as *Who Wrote the Bible?* by Richard Friedman, *The Year of Living Biblically* by A.J. Jacobs, *Judaism as a Civilization* by Mordecai M. Kaplan, and *Who by Fire, Who by Water* by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman. In addition, the ongoing “Journey through the Siddur” series has invited congregants to deepen their understanding of Jewish prayer and practice. “Every discussion brings the texts to life in new and unexpected ways – I look forward to each meeting,” says participant Susan Weinstein.

Looking Forward

Through these initiatives, CAS is truly on a journey – building upon its cherished traditions while embracing new possibilities. The community is thriving, drawing strength from the legacy of Rabbi Barbara Cohen and looking ahead with excitement under Rabbi Rudin’s leadership. As Rabbi Rudin begins her second year, CAS continues to shine as a strong, vibrant congregation, rooted in tradition and open to growth. With music, learning, and a spirit of togetherness, the synagogue is writing its next chapter – one filled with meaning, connection, and hope for the future.

GREAT BARRINGTON – It has been a year since Rabbi Jennifer Rudin first joined Congregation Ahavath Sholom (CAS) as interim part-time rabbi. She now serves as the congregation’s permanent rabbi, bringing warmth, energy, and a renewed sense of purpose to this vibrant community.

A formal installation and celebration for Rabbi

“Israel: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, Part 1,” with Rabbi Valerie Lieber

PITTSFIELD – Rabbi Valerie Lieber of Temple Anshe Amunim will lead a six-part class featuring a thorough examination of the history and politics of modern Israel from 1890 to 1955. Starting on Wednesday, October 29 at noon, classes will be conducted in-person at the Temple (26 Broad Street) and online. This series continues on Wednesdays through December 10, with no class on November 26.

Writes Rabbi Val:

We will explore the historical forces which brought about the return of Jews to Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine. We will consider the triumphs, the tragedies, the clashing visions of founders, and friction with the Arab population.

Many controversial topics divide the Jewish community and fuel anti-Israel sentiment worldwide. Many of them have roots in this early period. We will investigate several, including:

- Land acquisition from non-Jewish owners and whether or not mass immigration of Jews comprised settler colonialism
- Were Arabs forced to leave their homes in 1947-48, or did they choose to leave and why?
- Racial disparities and racism by European Jews to Jewish immigrants from the Middle East
- Would Arab Muslims ever have embraced Israel even without occupation from 1967 onward?

This class is free for members of TAA and \$120 for non-members. Registration is required: ansheamunim.org/form/gateways25-26.

Part 2 of the course will be held in the late winter and spring and will cover 1955 to the present.

Shabbat, “Soul Spa” Torah Study, and Community Social Hour Autumn at Congregation Beth Israel

NORTH ADAMS – This fall, Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires offers ways to connect through services, study, and socializing.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services – Friday, October 24 and November 14 at 7 p.m.

All are welcome as to celebrate Shabbat together with prayer, song, poetry, and heart. Some weeks the CBI choir and musicians will join Rabbi Rachel Barenblat in leading prayer. Expect music, poetry, Torah teaching, and an opportunity to ritually let go of the week and move together into sacred time.

Regular Shabbat Morning Services continue on Saturday, November 22 at 9:30 a.m.

Hear some words of Torah (and some words about Torah) and bask in Shabbat’s sweetness. This service will be led by Rabbi Pam Wax, and will

include traditional liturgy, contemporary poetry, chant, Torah study, and song, as well as spectacular views from the sanctuary, which connect participants with the natural world and with our Source.

“Soul Spa” Torah Study: Saturday, November 1, November 8, and November 29 at 10 a.m. via Zoom

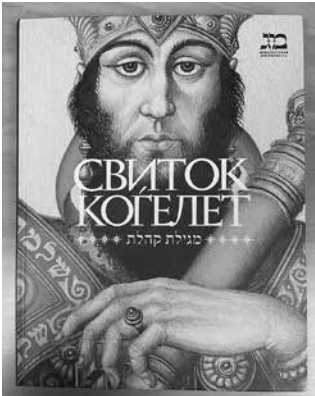
Join CBI for a new Shabbat morning Zoom Torah study on Saturdays! Jointly led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat (CBI) and by Rabbi David Markus (Congregation Shir Ami), participants will explore the weekly *parsha* through the lens of women’s commentaries and midrash. Mourner’s Kaddish will be recited at the end of each session. All sessions will also be archived on Shir Ami’s website.

RSVP for all services and programs at ciberkshires.com/calendar-of-events. Some Shabbat services dates may be subject to change, so please RSVP or check the calendar for updates.

Community Social Hour: Sunday, November 9 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Fostering community is a key goal for the year ahead. Please join the CBI board, Rabbi Rachel, and other members and friends for the first in a series of community gatherings intended to enhance community and connection. Enjoy coffee, bagels, and fruit, and conversation about hopes and dreams for the coming year. Kindly RSVP at ciberkshires.com/event/csh-nov-2025/

To Everything There is a Season: The Wisdom of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes)–



PITTSFIELD – On the Wednesdays of October 22 & 29 and November 5 & 12 from 10:45 a.m. to noon, Dr. Hal M. Lewis will teach a class at Knesset Israel titled “To Everything There is a Season: The Wisdom of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes)”

Some say that *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) is the most cynical book of the Tanakh (Jewish

Bible) while others see in the book’s wisdom some of the most realistic and pragmatic insights that Scripture has to offer. In four sessions, this course will examine the historical context, philosophy, literary style, values, and theology of this “wacky and wonderful” biblical book. Participants are encouraged to bring their own English translation of the book to each class. HL Ginsberg’s, *The Five Megilloth and Ruth* is recommended.

Dr. Hal Lewis is the Principal Consultant at Leadership for Impact LLC, a leadership consulting firm serving the needs of nonprofit organizations. He served for a decade as the President and CEO of Spertus Institute in Chicago, where he continues as Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies. He has been Visiting Professor at universities around the world and has served as a member of the on-call faculty of the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, NC.

Free for members of Knesset Israel and Anshe Amunim; \$50 course fee for others. Please pre-register at knessetisrael.org/rsvp.

Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.





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LOCAL NEWS

Rabbi Valerie Stessin, First Ordained Female Conservative Rabbi in Israel, to Visit Knesset Israel

PITTSFIELD – In honor of the 40-year anniversary of women rabbis in the Conservative movement, Knesset Israel is pleased to host Rabbi Valerie Stessin, the first woman ordained by the Masorti/Conservative movement in Israel and a pioneer of spiritual care in Israel. Rabbi Stessin will visit the congregation during the weekend of Friday, November 7 through Sunday, November 9.

After Shabbat dinner on Friday evening, Rabbi Valerie Stessin will speak to the topic of “Can Judaism and Feminism Live Together in Israel?”, focusing on these two values at play in Israeli society today and how the modern egalitarian approach changed the Israeli religious landscape. Is the work done or do we still have a role to fill?

Kabbalat Shabbat services will begin at 5:45 p.m., with dinner available by advance registration for \$25 per adult at knessetisrael.org/rsvp. Rabbi Stessin’s talk at approximately 8 p.m. is free of charge.

Shabbat morning services begin at 9:30 a.m., during which Rabbi Stessin will offer the d’var Torah. After a kiddush lunch, she will speak on the topic, “The Challenge of Importing American Spiritual Care to Israel.” She will help attendees understand the difficulties in dealing with spirituality in Israeli society in comparison to American society and share the journey of her career in spiritual care. What is the place of spirituality in hospital hallways? All are welcome to the service, the kiddush lunch, and Rabbi Stessin’s talk.

On Sunday morning, Rabbi Stessin will engage the parents of the joint Knesset Israel-Temple Anshe Amunim Families Together program on the topic of “How do I call You? Let me count the ways,” exploring how the multitude of God’s names can influence one’s spiritual life, inviting participants to develop their personal relationship with the Divine.



Rabbi Valerie Stessin

Rabbi Valerie Stessin was born in France in 1964, made aliyah when she was 17, and currently lives in Jerusalem. She studied Special Education and Jewish Thought at Hebrew University. When she began to study at the Schechter Institute, the rabbinical track wasn’t yet open to women. She had the honor to be the first woman ordained by the Masorti movement in Israel in 1993. She first worked at Midreshet Yerushalaim as director of informal education in the FSU. Then from 1996 to 2009, she served as vice-director at the TALi Education Fund, responsible for in-service training and of the new TALi school rabbinic program. She studied Spiritual Care in Israel and in the USA and was certified as a chaplain. In 2011, she founded the non-profit organization Kashouvot, now the largest training center of Spiritual Care in Israel, with Rabbi Miriam Berkowitz. They have trained over 150 spiritual caregivers, and have 15 chaplains on staff.

Contemplative Shabbat Service at KI on Nov. 1

Join Rabbi Pam Wax from 9:15 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the Knesset Israel library on Saturday, November 1 for an innovative service that will include contemplative prayer, meditation, time for reflection, poetry, chanting, and contemplative text study. This service will conclude in time for those who wish to join the congregation in the sanctuary for the Torah service. Be curious, try something new! You are encouraged to arrive early enough to settle in before all begin at 9:15 a.m. Please pre-register by Monday, October 27 at knessetisrael.org/rsvp.

Chevra Kadisha in the Berkshires

The past decade has seen a resurgence of exploration and education in Jewish end-of-life traditions. More Jews are choosing to use Jewish end-of-life practices for themselves and their loved ones.

One way that Jewish volunteers are taking active roles to provide comfort and care for the dying and the dead is through the Chevra Kadisha, sacred communities that come together to care for the deceased and comfort the living through Jewish rituals and traditions. The Chevra Kadisha supports community members in ways that match the ritual needs and values of the local community.

Kavod v’Nichum (Honor & Comfort) (kavodvnychum.org) – a flourishing non-profit organization that strives to empower, educate, and train Chevrei Kadisha – offers an opportunity for all who are interested to learn more deeply about this work and connect with other volunteers nationally at the Gather and Grow conference in Ojai, CA, from November 9 to 11 (kavodvnychum.org/conference/). More than a conference, it is a space for learning, renewal, and belonging.

In the Berkshires, several congregations are home to a Chevra Kadisha. Questions about the work of the Chevra Kadisha in the local Jewish community? Please contact Heidi Katz, director of the South Berkshire County Chevra Kadisha, at sbchevrakadisha@gmail.com.

Thank you volunteers

Ellen Rosenblatt

and the BJV delivery team,

Dave Halley, Colin Ovitsky,

and Roman Rozenblyum.

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Kosher Meals to Go—Meals on Wheels

ALL ARE WELCOME: Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays (starting October 21), and Thursdays. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon. 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

OCTOBER

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20

Noon, Lunch...Spinach pie, roasted potatoes, stewed tomatoes, cream of mushroom soup, rye bread, and chocolate pudding.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21

Noon, Lunch...Spaghetti and meatballs (DF), green beans, steamed carrots, salad, whole wheat bread, and peaches.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23

Noon, Lunch...Baked fish (GF)(DF), asparagus, rice pilaf, corn bisque, multi-grain bread, and pineapple.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27

Noon, Lunch...Cheese pizza, salad, vegetable soup, and brownie.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

Noon, Lunch...Chicken with sundried tomatoes and artichokes, Italian green beans, couscous, cabbage soup, baguette, and Mandarin oranges.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

Noon, Lunch...Pumpkin risotto, roasted Brussels sprouts, yellow squash, salad, pumpernickel bread, and Halloween cupcakes.

NOVEMBER

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), peas and carrots, garlic mashed potatoes, salad, white bread, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Noon, Lunch...Eggplant parmesan, spaghetti, meadow blend vegetables, zucchini soup, roll, and peach crisp.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Noon, Lunch...Vegetarian chili (GF)(DF), cauliflower, rice, salad, sourdough bread, and tropical fruit salad.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10

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

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Noon, Lunch...Vegetable frittata (GF), balsamic glazed carrots, potato puffs, tomato soup, whole wheat bread, and vanilla pudding.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Noon, Lunch...Hot dogs (DF), coleslaw, baked beans, corn soup, hot dog bun, and pears.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Noon, Lunch...Hearty lentil stew (GF)(DF), Brussels sprouts, quinoa, salad, sourdough bread, and fresh apple.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Noon, Lunch...Stuffed cabbage casserole (GF)(DF), California blend vegetables, rice, split pea soup, hearty white bread, and apricots.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Noon, in-person lunch...Pre-Thanksgiving meal: Roast turkey with stuffing and gravy (DF), sweet potato casserole, green beans, cranberry sauce, salad, roll, and pumpkin loaf.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Noon, Lunch...Tuna noodle casserole, broccoli, carrots, black bean soup, whole wheat bread, and chocolate pudding.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Noon, Lunch...Vegetarian jambalaya (GF)(DF), brown rice, salad, pita bread, and fruit compote.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Closed for Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1

Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), French fries, peas and carrots, salad, white bread, and applesauce.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Noon, Lunch...Salmon croquettes (DF), meadow blend vegetables, couscous, butternut squash soup, roll, and snickerdoodle cookie.

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



KOSHER MEALS ON WHEELS:

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

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

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

Knesset Israel – 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield



ONGOING MINYANS

Saturday, 9:30 a.m.
Sunday, 8:45 a.m.
Friday, 5:45 p.m.

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Friday, October 24 5:39 p.m.
Friday, October 31 5:29 p.m.
Friday, November 7 4:21 p.m.
Friday, November, 14 4:13 p.m.
Friday, November 21 4:08 p.m.
Friday, November 28 4:04 p.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Berkshire Magazine's Berkshire 25 2025 honorees: **Jonathan Denmark** (president and COO of MountainOne Insurance Agency and executive vice president of MountainOne Bank), **Jennifer Glockner** (director of the Office of Cultural Development for the city of Pittsfield), **Lesley Herzberg** (director Berkshire County Historical Society), **Julia Kaplan** (founder of Concierge Gardener custom medicinal gardens and BJV photographer), **Maud Mandel** (president, Williams College), and **Pam and Tom Rich** (Paul Rich & Sons Home Furnishings + DESIGN).

Tzivia and Rabbi Mendel Volovik on the birth of their son, **Yosef Tzvi**. Proud grandparents are Chabad of the Berkshires co-directors **Rabbi Levi and Sara Volovik** and **Rabbi Itchy and Zeldie Treitel** of The Torah Center in Montreal.

Zoe Hoffman, creator of the Kindness Box Project in Great Barrington, on being profiled in the Berkshire Eagle. Zoe created the box as her bat mitzvah project at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Carol Goodman Kaufman on having a short story included in the mystery anthology *Crimeucopia: What the Butler Didn't See*.

Deborah Gallant and Jonathan Lieber on the marriage of their daughter, **Amy Lieber** to **Reuben Siegman**.

Ben Gundersheimer (aka Mister G) on the publication of his new bilingual (Spanish/English) children's book *Baby Ballena*.

Yefim Kogan on the publication of his book, *Jewish Families in Shtetl Kaushany, Bessarabia* by Jewish Gen Press (jewishgen.org).

Ros Kopfstein on being featured as an "expert volunteer" in the Berkshire United Way's 2024-2025 Impact Report.

Your Federation Presents

Applesolutely a Great Time Was Had by All!

By Paige Wright / Coordinator of PJ Library

What fun – on September 7, 12 families and 22 PJ Library of Berkshire County kids had a great time at our pre-Rosh Hashanah outing at Hilltop Orchards in Richmond. We picked apples, toured the cidery to see how apple cider is made, made holiday crafts, and enjoyed apple cider, cider donuts, and apples fresh off the trees.

Thank you to our hosts at Hilltop and to everyone who made it such a fantastic day! We'd be thrilled to see you at our next event – to find out more about PJ Library, email me at pwright@jewishberkshires.org.

PJ Library, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, is funded locally by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires with support from the Spitz Tuchman Family Fund. The program provides free monthly books and music with Jewish content to children ages 6 months through 8 years of age.



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MIDDLE EAST UPDATE 2025

Ambassador
Dennis Ross

Thursday, November 6
7 p.m. via Zoom

Ambassador Dennis Ross, one of America's foremost Middle East diplomats and policy experts, will offer insights and perspective on Israel's current war with Hamas, the evolving strategies shaping the conflict, and the shifting geopolitics of the region. Drawing on decades of experience advising multiple U.S. administrations, Ross will help us make sense of the fast-moving events that are impacting Israel, the broader Middle East, and the global stage.

Register: tinyurl.com/MiddleEastUpdate2025

Your Federation Presents

Rosh Hashanah Gift Bags Reached 300 Recipients in Berkshire County!

By Heidi Katz / Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

Federation thanks the 36 deliverers and 17 packers who volunteered to make our Rosh Hashanah care package project a meaningful success. Each bag contained a local apple, small jar of honey and freshly baked Challah roll (thank you, Susan Gordon, for overseeing the baking). 300 recipients across Berkshire County received these bags – 50 more than last year.

What a mitzvah it is to be able to bring a smile to the faces of our neighbors and friends! Volunteers are vital to all we do – if you would like to learn more about the many ways you can help out your local Jewish community, please contact me at federation@jewishberkshires.org.



LOCAL NEWS

The Jewish Women’s Foundation of the Berkshires – Rising to the Challenges of the New Non-Profit Landscape

By Susan Friedman, JWF Board Member



For the past 16 years, the Jewish Women’s Foundation of the Berkshires (JWF) has pooled resources from its members, now totaling nearly 200 women, to assist local efforts that improve the lives of Berkshire County’s most vulnerable. Through grant funding and social action, JWF members support local nonprofits in their efforts to address basic needs, promote self-sufficiency, and youth empowerment.

May 30 was the deadline for JWF’s 2025/26 grant applications. Even before the shift in national funding policies came into effect, the number of requests to JWF increased by 20%, with 40 applications received, in contrast to 32 grant requests for the year prior.

Linda Noonan, co-chair of the JWF Grants Committee noted “Our members were challenged by the wide range of needs our applicants address, and impressed by the commitment and expertise of these organizations. We were pleased to be able to fund more grants than ever before, but still recognize the needs are greater than our capacity.”

To get a better understanding of the impact of the current climate on Berkshire nonprofits, in June 9 the JWF hosted 30 of its 2024/25 grantees for a day of recognition and dialogue. More than 100 JWF members attended the event and heard from local nonprofit grantees about the challenges and financial shortfalls that they were experiencing in the face of the new public funding environment.

Summarizing the current climate local that agencies face, Jessica Vecchia, executive director and co-founder of Roots Rising noted: “In today’s challenging funding environment, private philanthropy is more critical than ever...it is what allows Roots Rising to sustain and grow programs that empower youth and strengthen our regional food system – work that is urgently needed and only possible with community support.”

Brennah, a Roots Rising Youth Crew alum, added that she and so many other Roots Rising volunteers,

whose work is supported by grants from the agency’s local funders such as JWF, have been inspired to strengthen their community through the local food system. “I believe that when we are well-nourished, feel held by our community, and are in the right relationship with the Earth, we can show up as our best selves. At the end of the day, food accessibility and a strong local food economy builds the strongest sense of home.”

In response to the deep cuts to basic services here in the Berkshires, and the compelling data and client stories shared by its grantee agencies, JWF has increased its grant funding to local Berkshire community organizations more than twofold in the past two years – from \$70,000 in 2023/24 to \$100,000 in 2024/25 and up an additional 40% for 2025/26- from \$100,000 to \$145,000. Many JWF members stepped up in response to the budget cuts that are devastating the delivery of critically-needed local services by providing additional financial resources beyond their JWF membership fee.

The JWF grants committee, open to all members and this year comprised of more than 40 women, carefully reviewed all the requests. As a result, a total of \$145,000 in grant funding will be provided to the following 28 local agencies this fall:

Berkshire Bounty, Berkshire Center for Justice, Berkshire Community Diaper Project, Berkshire County Head Start, Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative, Berkshire Grown, Berkshire Horsecworks, Berkshire Immigrant Center, Berkshire Music School, Berkshire South Regional Community Center, Blue Rider Stables, Inc., Community Legal Aid, Inc., Construct Inc., 18 Degrees, Elizabeth Freeman Center, Inc., Flying Cloud Institute, Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center, Greenagers Inc., Literacy Volunteers of Berkshire County, Pediatric Development Center, Railroad Street Youth Project, Roots & Dreams & Mustard Seeds, Roots Rising, South Community Food Pantry, The Guthrie Center, The People’s Pantry, UCP of Western Massachusetts, Volunteers in Medicine.

Along with its support to local Berkshire nonprofits, JWF provides additional funds



Local grantee organizations shared their stories at JWF’s June open house in Great Barrington

through Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for local, national, and international Jewish organizations and programs. For 2025/26 JWF is supporting the following organizations, including: **Changemakers, UMASS Hillel, Williams College Jewish Association, Haifa Women’s Crises Shelter, the Ethiopian National Project; World Central Kitchen, Jewish Federation of Los Angeles** (to assist the fire victims), and **Project Hope/ Camp Kimama** (to help the Israeli children who were impacted by the events of October 7 spend time at Camp Half Moon in Monterey for much-needed healing).

A feature of each JWF local grant, which is unusual in the world of philanthropy, is that each new grantee agency is assigned a JWF member as a volunteer Grant Liaison. Grant Liaisons work to strengthen the relationship between the grantee and JWF and assist in broadening connections and accessing technical assistance for their nonprofit.

Unfortunately, despite the significant increase in funding, not every grant request could be supported. JWF additionally provides its local communities grantees with assistance through a number of

JEWISH WOMEN’S FOUNDATION,
continued on page 18

Celebrate Chanukah at NightWood

A FANTASTICAL JOURNEY THROUGH SOUND & LIGHT

SAVE THE DATE: CHANUKAH AT THE MOUNT

Sunday, December 14 from 5-7 pm

The Mount, 2 Plunkett Street, Lenox, MA

Immerse Yourself in NightWood

Stroll through an ethereal winter landscape and immerse yourself in sound, light, and color. NightWood combines music, lighting, and theatrical elements to create unique scenes of wonder, mystery, and magic!

Menorah Lighting and Live Music

After your NightWood tour, join us at **6:30 pm at the Mansion Forecourt** as we kindle the menorah lights and celebrate with live music, Chanukah songs, holiday treats, and heaters to keep you warm.

Online Purchase of Timed Entry Tickets Required

Federation Group Tickets: Adults \$15, Kids 0-18 free. Timed entry tickets available on a first come, first served basis. Ticket registration will be opening soon!

This Event is Exclusively Outdoors. Dress Warmly!

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

My Life as an American Soldier

By Alex Rosenblum / Special to the BJV



One of the greatest experiences in my 75 years of existence was my six years of service in the New York Army National Guard. According to my father, I was the first of our Rosenblum clan to ever serve in any army. Our group of Rosenblums resided in south-central Poland prior to World War II in a provincial town named Piotrków Trybunalski. Our Polish family records go well past World War I, and

can even be traced on the internet to the time of our early flight in America. Our family history can also be traced on the internet – but only if one is lucky in spelling Piotrków Trybunalski correctly, and also has a working knowledge of the Polish language.

My father did, in fact, almost serve in the Polish army just after the German invasion of Poland in early September 1939, when he was called to nearby Lodz by the Polish army for military service. According to my father, the Polish nation believed that the Polish army had already developed a unique and masterful strategy to counter the anticipated invasion. The plan envisioned the calling up and mustering of all Polish men in their late teens and early twenties. These men would be trained to fight within 60 days. Meanwhile, the Polish air force, which consisted of 22-year-old military biplanes, would hold off and destroy German

fighters and bombers. Moreover, the Polish army had prepared and trained several Polish horse cavalry divisions to crush German Panzer tank attacks. In the 1930s, my family owned a horse that made deliveries from the family's bakery. The horse was friendly and well-trained. I think that many in Poland reasoned that having several cavalry divisions of thousands and thousands of such horses against a mere few hundred tanks sounded quite reasonable.

After much discussion with his parents and friends, my father decided that in Piotrków Trybunalski Jews had three choices: a) stay put and pray for the best; b) pack up bags immediately and try to escape over the eastern border into Russia; or c) support Poland with the belief that Polish Christians and Jews can live together (see Jewish Bundist Movement). And therefore, he decided to report to the Polish army in Lodz.

I'm not sure why my father chose option C – to report to the Polish army and serve in the military. He omitted the reasoning from this logic, but I assume one or several facts about him were influential. He was, after all, a tough young man with excellent boxing credentials in town clubs and organizations; he had a 5th-grade education; and he was no fan of Russian communism.

My Tattch was unlucky in his choice to not attempt to escape to Russia, but he did survive Auschwitz. His luck continued to improve after that. Following the war, he remarried, and this poor tailor with a tattooed number on his forearm and 5th grade education had three great sons – my youngest brother Saul with his M.D. degree, I with my J.D. from law school, and my middle brother Joe, with his master's degree in a very interesting and bankable field from some school named Harvard.

When I was contemplating some form of military service at the height of the Vietnam War in the early seventies, my father revealed new information. After making his decision to serve in the Polish army, he and a few other misguided or unlucky young men boarded a rickety bus for the several hours trip to Lodz. As the bus approached Lodz just after sunrise, the passengers could see in the distance trenches filled with Polish soldiers.

Suddenly, there was noise in the sky. My father and passengers could see Stuka dive bombers approaching at high speed. As they neared the trenches filled with Polish soldiers, the planes dove down firing a barrage of machine gun bullets and then released their bombs. At their lowest point, these Stukas were no more than 30 to 40 feet above the Polish soldiers. The airplanes climbed back into the sky, turned and again dove down in attack. Again, one or two soldiers returned fire with their outdated rifles.

Again, the planes went up, turned, and prepared to dive down. At this point, a fellow passenger on the bus asked my father, "What can the poor soldiers do?" An unbelievable scene developed. As the dive bombers approach their lowest point, Polish soldiers jumped out of the trenches and started throwing rocks at the bombers. The passengers looked incredulously at each other.

My father was shocked. He vividly recalled that at that very moment, then and there, he had an epiphany, a revelation. At that moment, he knew Poland in general and Jews in particular were in deep trouble – "oyf groisseh tsuress"!

Passengers unanimously and quickly had the bus turned around and raced back home to Piotrków Trybunalski. There, my father worked in the ghetto (the first Nazi ghetto in occupied Europe, in fact), then was sent to a work camp as slave labor, and was later shipped to infamous Auschwitz.

And some 30 years later, I, too, made the decision to join the military. Going back almost a hundred years, my family background of military service in any armed force consisted of only one member – my father – almost serving in the Polish army. And so, I've made the important, reasonable decision to set down for posterity the highlights of my service as an American soldier in a book. Although I concede that my book may not be serialized into a Netflix series,

I hope that someday my grandchildren will be curious or bored enough to delve into this record of our family's martial history.

I submit the following chapter outline of a book I intend to write about my military service from 1971 through 1976. I verify under oath that most of the history is truthful and barely distorted.

CHAPTER 1 – Why falsely declaring myself a homosexual or moving to Canada were not options to avoid the draft. Why taking some powerful drugs before the medical physical was not an option. Why I finally opted for the National Guard.

CHAPTER 2 – Getting shipped off to basic training in the Army. I am nervous. A general passes me and I salute him with my left hand. I am scared. He is pissed.

CHAPTER 3 – I enlisted in a NY State National Guard transport (small truck) battalion. When our group returns from basic training, our sergeant major asks us if there is anyone among us who can drive a "stick shift." I inform our sergeant major that I once drove a small car with a stick shift while on vacation. I am told that I qualify to drive a 5,000-gallon gasoline, 18-wheel tractor trailer for six years without EVER getting any lessons or instruction.

CHAPTER 4 – Steve Burrell, a fellow basic trainee assigned to our barracks, was originally from some small swamp town in Louisiana. He introduces himself to me and informs me that he never met a Jew before. He would like to know if it's true that Jews have horns. I inform him it's probably not true. He becomes a buddy.

CHAPTER 5 – My future wife visits me on our first Sunday off. She brings a bagel, cream cheese, and lox. Steve Burrell comes by and asks what I'm eating. I tell him cream cheese and lox. He is fascinated and asks if my girlfriend could bring him one LOCK, so he could taste it. I check to see if my horns are showing.

CHAPTER 6 – I am back in the National Guard. We are sent to Camp Smith near West Point to requalify on gas masks. We have to go into a brick building



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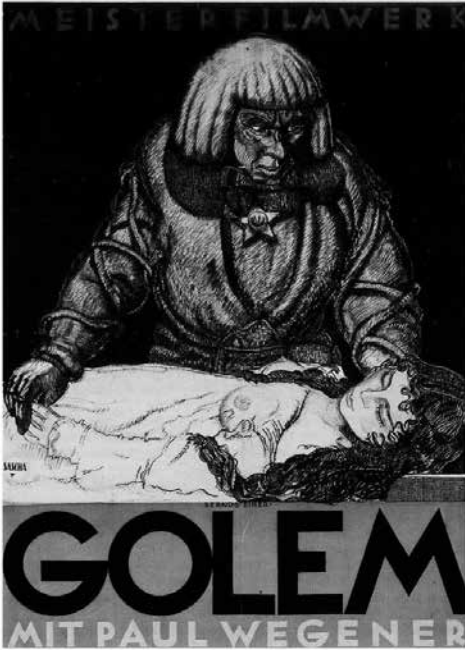
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The community is invited to explore the interactive exhibits and experience this powerful educational resource, soon to be available to middle and high schools across the Berkshires.



CULTURE & ARTS

Closely Encounter “The Golem – A Vision in Sound and Cinema”



GREAT BARRINGTON – On Sunday, November 2 at 4 p.m., Close Encounters With Music (CEWM) presents “The Golem – A Vision in Sound and Cinema,” a screening of the 1920 silent film with a live version of the 1987 musical score conceived by Israeli composer Betty Olivero. The music will be performed by the Avalon Quartet and clarinetist Saerom Kim, with Jonathan Yates conducting.

The performance will take place at The Mahaiwe Theater, 14 Castle Street in Great Barrington.

This screening is another adventurous program for CEWM’s artistic director, Yehuda Hanani, who has collaborated several times with the acclaimed Chicago-based Avalon Quartet on Jewish-themed pieces despite none of its members being Jewish. Composer Olivero “weaves in Hasidic and Sephardi tunes” into

the score, Hanani explains. “Growing up in Israel, after a while you stop distinguishing between them because you grow up in a culture that mixes both. She was a student of [experimental and electronic composer Luciano] Berio and is very much a contemporary composer. But this time, she uses a lot of klezmer tunes people will recognize and also a famous song with words by the poet Bialik about lost love, a very tender melody that resembles the chant for *Eicha* (Lamentations) a little bit. The clarinetist will be using all five different clarinets, from piccolo to bass, for different colors and that will be interesting in itself.”

The Golem story, with its themes of man overstepping the proper boundaries of his powers to create a force he cannot control, has all kinds of timeless and contemporary resonances, but Hanani also recognizes its darker themes. “The original story of the Golem, though not in the movie, is of a plot to destroy the Jewish community with a blood libel,” he says. “And what I see these days coming from the fake propaganda of the Palestinians is really a blood libel against Jewish people worldwide. We never, never thought that when we planned a year ago to have this movie, that it would come to this. But we need a golem today. We need some supernatural miracle to happen, to actually counter this wave of falsehood against the Jewish people. It’s unbelievable what’s going on. Never, never believed that in America this would happen. But it is, of course, just a coincidence that we’re showing the movie at this time.”

He adds: “Also, Israeli movies are now being canceled in Portugal, in festivals, in Italy. So we are saying, ‘No, no, not here.’ We’re celebrating an Israeli composer who wrote a fantastic score.”

Tickets for this performance are available at cewm.org.

Some thoughts on *The Golem*

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

The story of the Golem is the archetypal cautionary tale about what can go wrong when human beings summon, ostensibly for useful or beneficent purposes, powerful forces beyond their control. The narrative has been reconstituted in countless ways to illustrate the pitfalls of misapplied human ingenuity, be it magical (as in the Golem myths), scientific (*Frankenstein* most famously), or technological (Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* comes to mind). The story assumes that its overarching lesson – that something will inevitably go awry when man attempts to master a creation to which he has given a kind of life and a sort of consciousness – is one that will perennially need to be relearned the hard way. Just the other day as I was preparing this story, I encountered two headlines on a Web search – “Researchers say robot companions can improve senior citizens quality of life” and “OpenAI’s ‘smartest’ model explicitly told to shut down – and it refused” – and thought “what could possibly go wrong?” Every age gets the Golem it deserves, I suppose.

A derivation of the word “golem” appears once in the Tanakh, in Psalm 139:16, and means “unformed” (*Galmi re’u einecha* – ‘Your eyes saw my unformed

limbs’). The Mishna (Avot 5:9) uses the word insultingly, as it is in Modern Hebrew: “[There are] seven things [characteristic] in a clod (*golem*), and seven in a wise man.” In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 38b), Rabbi Yohanan bar Hanina describes God’s creation of Adam as a 12-hour process beginning with the gathering of the first man’s dust; in the second hour, “an undefined figure (*golem*) was fashioned.” Medieval Kabbalists studied *Sefer Yezirah* (“Book of Creation”) for instructions on how to create a DYI golem by fashioning a human figure and animating it in some fashion with God’s name (*shem* in Hebrew).

The first tales of the Golem featured a rabbi from Chelm, while the most famous version of the narrative involved the Maharal (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel) of Prague, who lived in in the 16th century and who created the Golem to protect the Jewish community from antisemitic attacks. On Friday evenings, the Maharal would remove the *shem* animating the Golem so it could rest on the Sabbath. One *erev Shabbos*, he neglects to do so, resulting in a whole *balagan*. Versions of this story were collected by Jewish German folklorists in the mid-19th century. In 1915, Gustav Meyrink (the decidedly not Jewish illegitimate son of Baron Karl von Varnbüler und zu Hemmingen, a Württembergian minister, and actress Maria Wilhelmina Adelheid Meier) published his novel, *Der Golem*, upon which the director Paul Wegener based three Golem films released between 1915 and 1920.

The Golem: How He Came into the World, which will be screened by CEWM on November 2, is the last of the three films and the only one to still exist. The film is considered by film historians as having created the visual template for horror movies – certainly, one recognizes its influences from the classic Universal monster movies of the 1930s right through to 2024’s spooky vampire story, *Nosferatu*. Wegener’s film (with groundbreaking cinematography by Karl Freund, a Jew who later fled to Hollywood and directed *The Mummy*, filmed Bela Lugosi’s *Dracula*, and was cinematographer for six seasons of *I Love Lucy*) has it all: the occult, a hideous out-of-control monster with a heart that can be broken (a dangerous combination that), violence (lots of that), sordid sexual intrigue, and over-the-top scenes with a wildly gesticulating and emoting cast-of-hundreds exuding raw energy that still blasts out of the screen. This frenetic century-old action remains eye-popping even for a viewer accustomed to contemporary CGI effects.

The Golem story has gripped the imagination of composer Betty Olivero since her adolescence, when she toured Europe with an Israeli theater dance group that performed a version of the story. “When you have such extensive emotional experiences,” she says, the material “is something that stays with you for the rest of your life.” Years later on the streets of Munich, she by chance met Giora Feidman, “a very famous [Argentine-Israeli] clarinetist who dedicated almost his entire career to Jewish soul music, let’s call it. He was a great collector of archives, music that almost disappeared, like klezmer.” Olivero and Feidman discussed *Der Golem*, which about to be restored by the Munich National Film Museum. They approached the museum to propose that Olivero write a new score that could be used in place of the orchestral music that originally accompanied the film, and the museum commissioned the project.

Watching the silent film again and again on videotape, Olivero created three versions of the music, one for clarinet and string quartet that will be presented live at CEWM and that premiered in 1987 at the Silent Film Festival in Vienna, played by Feidman and the Arditi Quartet. She also developed a concert version of the music for clarinet and string orchestra, and collected some of the klezmer, folk songs and dances, and traditional *niggunim* (Chasidic melodies) she incorporated into the score.

‘How about I write music imagining that the so-called ‘dancers,’ the actors in the film, would be listening to the music and would react to the music with their ‘choreography.’

Composer Betty Olivero

Understanding Olivero’s quirky thought process in scoring *Der Golem* will add to one’s appreciation of the program. “When there was some narrative, the music was purely contemporary and original,” she explains. For the many “atmospheric scenes” that weren’t telling a story – crowds parading through the streets and the Rose Festival bacchanal at the Emperor’s palace – she decided to weave in traditional melodies. And as she worked on it, something strange happened.

“Watching the film for a long time with total silence at home,” she remembers, “I got into this mental state of mind [where] I started seeing choreography. The style of acting in silent films was so exaggerated. Our eyes, even back in the 20th century, were not used to it. So, I really started looking at the hands and the movement of the heads and all kinds of abrupt motion. I thought, ‘How about I write music imagining that the so-called ‘dancers,’ the actors in the film, would be listening to the music and would react to the music with their ‘choreography.’”

She adds: “When you compose, you look at the situation from a total, absolutely new perspective and point of view, upside down. The whole thing I was trying to imagine was that I’m writing music that afterwards will be choreographed by the actors. I was working with time code and everything was synchronized and incredibly precise – unlike what happens in real silent movies, where you had musicians on stage that either looked at the film and improvised, or the other way around, when they had prepared music that they just played.”

While the musicians at the Mahaiwe will be challenged to stay in synch, they will also have several minutes in which they can lay out. When composing the score, Olivero asked herself, “How about I pay an homage to the silent movie as a concept? The concept is that there’s silence. That the movement, the acting, the story, would be immersed in a world of silence.” She chose the climactic moment of the Golem’s creation, when he comes to life, approximately 30 minutes from the beginning of the film. “Just before this particular silence, the Rabbi and his assistant are immersed in smoke and fire coming from all directions. The Rabbi is crying out: ‘Ashtaroth! Ashtaroth, appear! Appear! Name the word!’ The clarinet plays a kind of screaming high melody like a shofar, then suddenly – the silence, while in the film there is a close-up on the Rabbi’s face holding the Star of David. In there, I left five to seven minutes of total silence. I was hoping that we, as spectators, would become immersed in this silent world where we see dramatic, vocal screaming, but it’s not heard. And that was my little tribute, a concert concept of a silent movie.”

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CULTURE & ARTS

Imagining Early American Jews
Explores the Enduring Traces of
Colonial Era Jews



Michael Hoberman explains that *Imagining Early American Jews* started out as a Covid-19 lockdown project when he could not go anywhere and had the time to think about research he had done and books he had read. “Even if I couldn’t actually go out into the field, go to an archive and look at new material,” says the Fitchburg State University professor of literature. “I could reinterpret material that we’ve seen already in a new light.”

Imagination is a necessary tool, because, as Hoberman writes, “Jews with early American roots [are] a breed apart – a minority within a minority within a minority.” Most of the early Jewish families assimilated into the mainstream long ago and lost their direct connection to Judaism. Nevertheless, traces of their presence remain in buildings and artefacts they left behind; in historical and genea-

logical documentation; and in the minds of Jewish American artists who, like Ben Katchor in *A Jew of New York* (a graphic novel Hoberman examines), try to imagine what it must have felt like to possess a Jewish sensibility in America’s pioneering era.

Genealogical research, he writes, has offered Jews and “members of all manner of minority groups a means of asserting their historical importance within the framework of American life.” The uncomfortable issue Hoberman raises is that while “possessing such a long history in America may seem to confer a form of entitlement and legitimacy to American Jews...it also implicates them in a series of sometimes troubling alignments. As the nation faces its distant past with an eye toward racial reckoning, Jews are no longer eligible, if they ever were, to claim the mantle of innocent and detached newcomers.”

In July, Professor Hoberman spoke to the BJV about his work and the questions it raises. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

How did you get started on this approach to the subject of early American Jews?

I think some of my background in thinking along those lines goes back to a time in my career when I wasn’t actually doing Jewish history at all, but when I was in grad school getting my Ph.D. The first book that I wrote was a book on folklore and oral history. When you study oral traditions, of course, you learn very quickly that the historical accuracy of stories that you hear is of less importance than the interpretations of the stories, the implications of the stories, how widely the stories spread, who tells them, why they tell them, when they tell them. I think I was applying a similar way of thinking to early Jewish American history.

Most American Jews, when they think of historical narratives, might think of the German Jews that came here in the 19th century, and then, of course, of the mass migration later from Eastern Europe. You write about the shtetl myths and the Holocaust as being foundational to that contemporary consciousness rather than the early American component. At some point, there developed a post-Holocaust imperative to make Jews part of the founding narrative. Can you explain your ideas on why that occurred?

In the realm of these legends and these mythologies, I think the starting point for many American Jews, is the Eastern European Jewish experience, the experience of the Lower East Side, and so on. And that makes sense from a purely genealogical standpoint – the majority of American Jews, myself included, have at least some ancestry that connects to those, let’s say, post-1882 migrations. That’s when my father’s parents came from Russia. However, I think eventually what happens is that people get attached to these, I guess I want to call them exotic stories, right? Whether it is, on a much darker side of things, to attach and derive meaning from your Jewish identity based on the experience of the Holocaust is something that, I don’t have to tell you, many people do. When I teach Jewish literature to my students (who are overwhelmingly non-Jewish), when I first broach the subject of Jewish culture, their automatic assumption is that Jewish means the Holocaust. I think it’s important to question that, to problematize that, particularly if you think about some of the people I write about who are 10th generation American Jews.

When are Jews going to start to think about themselves as Americans and let go of the attachment? It doesn’t mean that the connections to the old country aren’t important. But if we want to understand how we fit into American society, I think it’s important to let go of the idea that somehow we came from somewhere else, because as the book explains, Jews in some number, have been here as far back as the 17th century. Another complicating factor that I talk about in the book is that since the 1980s, people have started to think in terms of multiculturalism. There’s a tendency, I think, among at least some members of American minorities, to attach meaning and authenticity and significance to some suffering or persecution. Now, in many instances, this is completely understandable. But the reality that I perceive around me is that the Jewish experience has not been one of suffering or deprivation. Maybe in certain phases, yes, but by and large, it’s a success story. To the extent that it’s a success story, to the extent that Jews have, with varying degrees of completion, assimilated, participated in, and have been, even when not welcomed into American society, have certainly played an active role in shaping American culture.

It’s time to start thinking about Jews as part and parcel of the American experience. Looking at these earlier stories as a fount of meaning for the American Jewish experience seems to me to be a useful way to push back against the exoticization and the assumption that you can only be a legitimate participant in American multiculturalism if you could point to a particular situation where your ancestors were persecuted. Jews were persecuted overseas, but not here.

Earlier generations of Jews – let’s say, late 19th century, early 20th century – very much wanted to take possession of the narrative of [Colonial era Jews], and point to that with pride. It’s not so alluring to want to do that today – it means something different from what it once meant. One of the most salient points here is a humorous illustration, the Larry David story that I mention in the introduction. [On the *Finding Your Roots* program], he’s shocked to hear that his great, great whatever was a slave owner because Jews have been so accustomed to thinking of themselves as on the right side of history in America. There’s certainly an argument to be made for that, in certain instances. The Civil Rights movement is a very famous illustration of that, at least in some communities. But when you want to embrace the American narrative, you’ve got to embrace every part of it, including the parts that are embarrassing or discomfiting.

Part of the colonial story is of Jews assimilating and then disappearing. They don’t stay Jews, and that’s anathema to the way a lot of Jews think. A Jew not being a Jew anymore is necessarily a bad thing, and that the forces that would cause a Jew not to stay Jewish are somehow suspect. That’s a lot of anxiety that parents feel – our kids are going to lose their Jewish identity. In a few generations, they won’t be Jews. Do you think that’s another reason why the colonial part of the story is not investigated by many Jews?

I’m certain that it is. It’s an illustration of the allurements of American culture, which is in some way anathema to the idea of Jewish identity. But I would say, some of these members of these families that I interviewed, whose families are no longer Jewish, still retained the memory of those connections. I’m not sure that those connections are entirely severed at all. Secondly, I think that, on a psychological level, is how it works. The reason people are uncomfortable with that story of Jews disappearing is because, in a way, it is symbolic of the bigger picture, which is that Jews, even Jews who didn’t assimilate, assimilated, right? Every American Jew on a certain level has bought into and participated in a mainstream American culture that is not a Jewish culture.

And so even if they’ve retained their Jewish identity, whether through going to a synagogue or donating to Jewish causes, on a certain level, they have elected to participate in the bigger picture in American society. That fact in and of itself causes some discomfort, some misgivings. And so not wanting to look at the colonial story is a way to avoid thinking about a very symbolic illustration of that.

And you point out, one can have a Jewish identity without being connected religiously.

Personally, that’s certainly been my experience. I was raised by two very Jewish people who were both extremely secular for different reasons. My mother grew up on a kibbutz in Israel and was told from her earliest childhood that the Torah was a bunch of stories and that you shouldn’t believe anything they tell you in a synagogue. And my father, who was American-born, was a scientist, a research scientist, and extremely dismissive of religiosity in any way. But both of my parents were fully committed and thought of themselves as Jewish, and raised me to think of myself as Jewish.

Another interesting chapter is about the Native Americans and the Jews – not only in relationship to each other, but also the way that the Puritans and the Mormons connected the Jews and the Native American experiences. Again, when Jews tell the story of the pioneer story, it’s like they weren’t the colonizers. We Jews didn’t bring guns, we brought stores and goods and helped Indians assimilate. How real is that story that the Jews were on the right side of the pioneer story?

If the object is to gain absolution and not be accused of massacring Indians, I guess you can say, yeah, I guess the Jews, for the most part, they weren’t going out there and mowing down villages in the vein of the US Cavalry. But why was the US Cavalry called out there in the first place? It was so that people could build towns and railroads and develop the West. To have participated in Westward expansion, as Jewish retailers and merchants did, just like all the other merchants and retailers did, is to have aided and abetted the conquest. My intention with this book is not to point the finger of accusation. I’m not interested in that. It’s just I think what matters to me is why do we tell these stories? What do the stories mean to us? And how do we use these stories to try to make sense of where we are today. And so, if Jews want to tell themselves that they were not active participants in the conquest of the West because they want to be thinking of themselves as innocent bystanders, okay. But I think that it’s an inaccurate version of American history for anybody who’s reaped the benefits of westward expansion to then say, ‘Well, it was wrong, and I want to wash my hands of it.’

Maybe a growing number of American Jews are coming to grips with that reality. But I think it’s an emergent change. It’s a recent thing.

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CULTURE & ARTS

Jewish Book Month 100

A Century of Jewish Books



This year, Jewish Book Council – Federation’s partner in our annual Jewish Literary Voices series of author talks – is celebrating the 100th anniversary of Jewish Book Month. As a community, we will come together to highlight the books that make us who we are by showcasing our own Jewish bookshelves.

In 1925, Fanny Goldstein, a librarian at the Boston Public Library, decided Jewish books and Jewish pride were worth celebrating. Fanny set up a display of Jewish

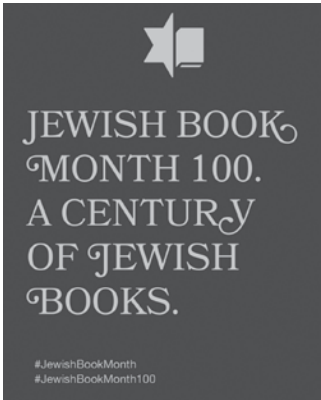
books and initiated the first Jewish Book Week.

In honor of Fanny Goldstein’s original book display, the Council is rolling out a community-wide messaging campaign of “Share Your Shelf. Share Your Story.” Together, let’s celebrate our Jewish identity and celebrate a century of Jewish stories.

Access the Council’s Jewish Book Month page at tinyurl.com/37j573kk.

Ways to Celebrate

- Ask your local library to stock Jewish books that you love.
- Ask your local book store to stock Jewish books that you love.
- Attend an author event at a local synagogue, JCC, or Jewish Federation.
- Buy a book by a Jewish author.
- Create a bulletin board dedicated to Jewish Book Month in a public community space.
- Display a table of Jewish books in your library or synagogue.
- Find a new book to love on Jewish Book Council’s website.
- Find your next read on a Jewish Book Council reading list (jewish-bookcouncil.org/books/reading-lists).
- If you will be in Jerusalem, visit the beautiful new National Library of Israel.
- Invite an author to speak in your community.
- Join or start a book club.
- Listen to a podcast, like the newest one that’s all about Jewish books, “The Five Books,” or the Jewish kidlit podcast, “The Book of Life.”
- Sign up to get weekly book reviews and news from Jewish Book Council (tinyurl.com/pvj5rj2h).



AMERICAN SOLDIER,
continued from page 14

and take off our masks while tear gas is being released. I tell Lieutenant Maloney that Jewish soldiers do not have to endure gas mask tasks because of what happened during the Holocaust with gas chambers. He believes me but when our commanding officer is told – he happens to be Jewish – I have to give back one stripe and go from corporal back to private first class.

CHAPTER 7 – I am back in Camp Smith one year later. We have to prepare for the colonel’s inspection. Lieut. Maloney throws me an old, torn face towel and tells me to wipe down my 30-foot tractor trailer with it. I am caught sleeping under the trailer by the officers and again have to donate a stripe back down to private.

CHAPTER 8 – I am offered a training slot to become an officer. Me? An officer? I couldn’t even hold on to corporal. I laugh when I say no. Maybe I should have been more respectful. I am sent to Camp Smith for training to become company bazookaman. I train all day with a 30-year-old World War II bazooka.

CHAPTER 9 – I am now qualified to fire M-16 rifles and World War II vintage (and no longer used) bazookas; throw grenades; engage in hand-to-hand combat with gigantic knives bigger than any knives that my mother used to gut pike carp to make gefilte fish; and to drive an 18-wheel, 30-plus-foot tractor trailer hauling 5,000 gallons of gasoline. Has this Jewish kid from Brooklyn come a long way? My family is evenly split.

CHAPTER 10 – I spend a total of 6 years wearing a uniform – almost 6 months on active duty in the US Army and five-and-a-half years in the New York National Guard. I survived it all, maybe barely, but survived it all.

I decide to go to law school. I survived it all, just barely.

Author’s Note: *If you found my story exciting and at least partly believable, or if your story in the military was as interesting as mine, feel free to contact me. I am especially looking for your stories in the Spanish American War and World War I. I will probably read it. Contact me at asr4749@aol.com.*

POETRY CORNER

Immigrant

By Richard Berlin
– for Maurice O. Emhoff, DDS, 1898-1992

*When the Jews were slaves in Egypt,
Pharaoh’s molars crumbled from a diet
seasoned with desert sand. Two thousand
years later, the Jews are enslaved again,
this time in Galicia, my grandfather fleeing
to America, his earliest memory being down
on his five-year-old knees to kiss Liberty
Island’s earth and thank God for the USA.
Flash forward and “Doc” Emhoff is the first
Jew to graduate Columbia Dental School.
With a Jersey City office next door to Mayor
Hague’s, he drilled molars for crooked pols
and pulled teeth from tough guys
who fixed my driver’s license road test.
A bear-hugging bulldozer of a man
decked out in pinstriped suits and a star
sapphire pinky ring, he’d peel off dollar bills
from a wad held by a sterling silver clip
and stuff them into my pocket. Master
of the quick extraction, his power-grip
fingers crushed my loosened milk teeth
into gravel when he ripped them, bloody
from my seven-year-old mouth.
Grandpa Murray, rags to riches, American
big shot, the man who dreamt even bigger
for his first grandson when he placed a doctor’s bag
in my crib, gave me stone skulls for bookends,
taught me to polish dentures in his cluttered lab,
and let me examine ten thousand extracted teeth
he kept in a stack of drawers. The proudest man
at my med school graduation, an immigrant
who spent his life staring into America’s mouth,
the stains and decay, bridges and crowns, the jolt
of his booming voice commanding every citizen
to bite down, grind, smile and open wide,
the way America’s jaws had opened for him.*



A retired Berkshire County physician and award-winning poet, **Richard M. Berlin** is the author of five poetry collections, two chapbooks, and a monthly poetry column in *Psychiatric Times*. Booklist has called him, “A twenty first century William Carlos Williams.” “Immigrant” appears in his 2024 collection, *Tender Fences* published by Dos Madres Press.

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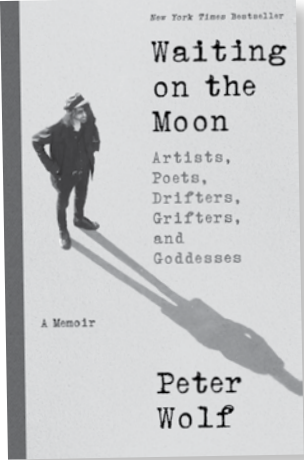
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CULTURE & ARTS

The World’s Luckiest Shlimazel

Rock star Peter Wolf’s irresistible autobiography

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



It is basically impossible to write about Peter Wolf’s wildly entertaining memoir, *Waiting On the Moon*, without using the description ‘Zelig-like’ to describe the life and career of the former lead singer of The J. Geils Band. Derived from the title character of Woody Allen’s comedy classic from 1983, ‘Zelig-like’ connotes (per The Collins Dictionary) “a person, typically an ordinary, unimportant person, who seems to turn up with surprising or unaccountable frequency in a variety of settings.”

While Wolf is neither ordinary nor unimportant, the part about turning up with surprising or unaccountable frequency certainly applies. But what is perhaps even more uncanny about Wolf’s life is the cavalcade of kismets that parachute extraordinary and important people into his story – there is simply no accounting for the sheer number of such coincidences, which occurred both before and after he became famous and started living in the fast lane.

For example, an ordinary art student living in Boston might meet an aspiring filmmaker near Harvard University and end up rooming with him for a time; in Wolf’s story, the aspiring filmmaker he randomly connects with (and later stiffs for the rent) turns out to be David Lynch. An ordinary person might find himself living across the hall from a noted literary scholar; in Wolf’s story, that scholar also happens to be friendly with Andy Warhol, and so Wolf gets to hang out with The Factory crowd at the height of their 1960s notoriety. An ordinary person might be rehearsing with his band in an empty dive bar one afternoon and be interrupted from their practice session by a stranger looking for the establishment’s owner; in Wolf’s story, that random stranger turns out to be Van Morrison. And this is just scratching the surface.

The table of contents alone is a pileup of stellar names – Eleanor Roosevelt, Bob Dylan, Muddy Waters, Julia Child, John Lee Hooker, Alfred Hitchcock, The Rolling Stones, Tennessee Williams, Sly Stone, Robert Lowell, Merle Haggard, and George Cukor, to name but a few of the luminaries whose lives intersect with Wolf’s. That he develops deep, enduring friendships with many of them will not be surprising to readers of *Waiting On the Moon* – as you’ll apprehend from his storytelling, Peter Wolf is a charming raconteur, erudite, thoughtful, artistic, and curious, no doubt a dream highbrow/lowbrow drinking buddy (and there’s a lot of drinking involved).

But as remarkable as these chance encounters and relationships are, as a narrator and a human being, Peter Wolf remains grounded by the fact that he is also a shlimazel – a chronically unlucky person. Wolf might be the luckiest shlimazel in history, but, in the end, *shlimazeldik* is as *shlimazeldik* does, or perhaps as is done to him.

For example, a talented performer might rise to fame as the lead singer of one of the most popular rock bands in the world; in Peter Wolf’s story, that band makes virtually no money in their first ten years or so of stardom (in large part due to lousy contracts entered into by Peter Wolf). That rock band might reverse its fortunes and finally break through with massively popular and remunerative hit songs; in Peter Wolf’s story, immediately on the heels of achieving rock superstardom, The J. Geils Band summarily fires its lead singer and primary songwriter, Peter Wolf. Along this wild ride, such a man might marry one of the most beautiful women in the world; in Peter Wolf’s story, that stunning goddess is Faye Dunaway, a difficult sort.

Although Wolf does not explicitly frame his life story as a Jewish tale, a Jewish sensibility (bemused outsider perspective, never self-serious) permeates the narrative. Some of the most moving and entertaining parts of the book are about his boyhood in working class Bronx of the 1950s.

His parents were both intelligent and artistic spirits of the thwarted variety. His mother, Pinkie, was so nicknamed because she was “highly political and had great sympathies for the progressive movement of the far left.” Her activism attracted the notice of the FBI, whose agents repeatedly come to knock on the family’s front door, only to have Peter lie that his mother is not at home. His father was well-read and a fine singer, but “lacked the confidence to pursue these talents...[and] the ambition needed to succeed in the business world.” The elder Wolf was something of schlemiel, as well, as his son relates in two hilarious, poignant anecdotes that are among the highlights of the memoir. I won’t give too much away, only to say that one story ends with Wolf hearing Merv Griffin calling his father “a schmuck,” while the other ends with he and his father sitting in expensive front row tickets at a sold out Louis Armstrong concert (so that young Peter would be able “to witness one of the greatest musicians in history doing what he does best”) and still being unable to lay eyes upon Satchmo while he played.

And a bit of that schlemielishness rubs off on Peter the Shlimazel, as well – the story of his experience being in charge of operating the sound system when Eleanor Roosevelt comes to speak in a packed auditorium at his middle school is a scream, as funny an episode of teenaged bumbling as you’ll ever read.

Which leads me to confess that I didn’t actually read *Waiting On the Moon* – I listened to the audiobook, which Wolf voices himself. To my mind, the gold standard of audiobook autobiographies is *The Kid Stays in the Picture*, read by its

author, Hollywood producer Robert Evans. I had a hunch that Wolf’s audiobook might be the ideal way to experience *Waiting On the Moon*, and boy, was I right – it’s almost as good as the Evans. Even if you choose the print version, I highly recommend that you at least stream the audio chapter about Bob Dylan, which winds up with the story of young Peter ambuscading the Bard of Hibbing at a Greenwich Village café and schlemielishly asking him: “I don’t want to interrupt you, but I wonder if you can tell me...uh...tell me...what is truth?” Bob Dylan’s choleric response (which begins “You mean you want ME to tell YOU what truth is? You want ME to explain to YOU what is TRUTH?”) delivered by Wolf in character on the audiobook, is alone worth the price of admission.

Despite his extraordinary adventures, Peter Wolf never loses his winning Everyman quality. Perhaps the reason he has been able to make friends among the luminaries with whom he has crossed paths is that they respond not only to his charm, but recognize that he is an artist in his own right, a peer. As such, Wolf gains access to unguarded aspects of their personalities that might be closed to journalists and biographers approaching them as subject matter. Not only do you get to know Wolf, you get to find out about aspects of other performers you admire, as well.

JEWSH WOMEN'S FOUNDATION,

continued from page 13

volunteer efforts. Particularly throughout its grant process, JWF reaches out to its grant applicants with requests to identify their volunteer needs which JWF’s volunteer coordinator then seeks to match to members’ interests and abilities, both on an individual and group basis. Two such recent volunteer initiatives included sponsoring local food packing events to address food insecurity where JWF members packed 175 bags of fresh food that were delivered to several food pantries. The reusable bags contained enough food to create a hearty soup, a recipe card, and a \$20 gift card. In addition, JWF members formed into volunteer work teams that for two days fully staffed the Designer Showhouse event sponsored by Construct, the leading nonprofit provider of affordable housing in Southern Berkshire County.

The JWF recently became a member of the Non-Profit Center of the Berkshires. JWF is looking for partnerships with other area funders to maximize the impact of its grants and volunteer initiatives and to extend its reach to more fully support its local grantees and the communities they serve.

Summing up the JWF experience and engagement, Carol Striker, JWF co-president noted, “JWF stands out in its membership and unique philanthropic approach. Our diverse membership includes both full-time and seasonal Berkshire residents. Through grantmaking, social and volunteer activities, we have created a collective sisterhood of women who have formed lasting friendships while engaging in activities that build bridges into the community, addressing the unmet needs in our county.”

JWF brings the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* to life in the work that it does and the support it provides to the broader Berkshire community. Its tagline “Moving forward by giving back” is integrated into every aspect of its work. The connections that JWF has built with its local nonprofit partners and through them to their clients, tangibly demonstrates the value the Jewish community adds to the local Berkshires community, and promotes mutual respect and understanding.

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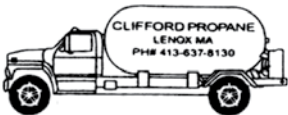
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CULTURE & ARTS

Susan Bronson to Lead Yiddish Book Center in its Next Chapter

Founded by Aaron Lansky in 1980, the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst has served as a vital repository of Jewish literature and culture by collecting approximately 1.5 million Yiddish language volumes.

The books, as Andrew Silow-Carroll wrote in a JTA published last June are “only the foundation of an institution that now includes Yiddish classes, academic fellowships, a training program for translators, scholarly conferences, a publisher of books in translation, an oral history archive, a podcast and [a] digitized library of both classic and obscure Yiddish books. ‘This is not just a matter of collecting books,’ said Lansky, 69, recalling that he always had a vision beyond warehousing unread books. ‘It’s really a whole culture, it’s a whole civilization, it’s a whole historical epoch that needs representation, that wants to tell its story.’”

Two years ago, the Center unveiled its landmark exhibition, “Yiddish: A Global Culture,” realizing Lansky’s vision by transforming its building’s public spaces into an engaging museum of the Yiddish culture that flourished in Europe, and also worldwide, from the 1860s until the catastrophe of World War II. A virtual version of the exhibit and a new book by curator David Mazower will provide further entry points to the story of Yiddish, as will the Center’s continuing outreach and extensive educational programming.

This year, Lansky is retiring as the Center’s president – he and his wife, Gail, now live primarily in the Berkshires. His successor, Susan Bronson, also has history in Berkshires, having lived here while working in development and management of local cultural institutions before going to work at the Center fifteen years ago. She says that taking that job was a marriage of her personal background growing up in the heavily Jewish Upper West Side of New York City, her graduate studies in Russian and Jewish history, and her experience working in higher education and cultural organizations, including as president of the board of the Council of American Jewish Museums. In her years as the Center’s executive director, she worked closely with Lansky to bring the institution to the place it is now.

“I think it’s been a very organic transition,” says Bronson about her new role. “Aaron’s role has changed a lot in recent years, and mine has grown, so it just feels like another natural step.”

Bronson spoke to the BJV in September about her new role at the Yiddish Book Center. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

The BJV Interview: Susan Bronson

You’ve been with the Yiddish Book Center for 15 years. In light of its original mission as a repository of Yiddish books, did this evolution into a museum of Yiddish culture seem inevitable?



Susan Bronson

When I arrived, I think we had 21 people on staff. We now have 40. When I arrived, Aaron and maybe one other person were the only two Yiddish speakers, and there wasn’t a lot of content expertise on the staff. I worked alongside Aaron in building the center over the last 15 years to expand the extent of our programming. Our educational programs have grown dramatically. We have a translation initiative now, which has trained more than 100 translators. We launched a publishing imprint to publish Yiddish books in translation. The Oral History Project started tiny in the first year I got here, and we’ve now recorded more than 1,500 oral histories from all over the world. There’s Yidstock, the music festival, and now the big new exhibition. A decade ago, most Jewish museum professionals didn’t know what the Yiddish Book Center was, and

now we’re considered among one of the leading institutions. I launched a public library program, which just got a major \$2.5 million dollar grant from the Lily Endowment to expand. Over the next three years, we’re going to be partnering with 120 public libraries around the country, working with librarians to bring Yiddish literature in translation to their libraries.

My vision is very much, in terms of the next phase of the Center, about thinking about how we build awareness of what the center is and what it does, both within and outside the Jewish world, as well as how we think about leveraging a small organization. The content that we represent is sadly absent from most Jewish settings. One of our goals has been to figure out ways to bring Yiddish literature and culture into more mainstream Jewish spaces and non-Jewish spaces, and how to build partnerships both within and outside the Jewish world. While we’re not a tiny

organization, we’re here in Amherst, Massachusetts. We have a beautiful building, but we’re a little off the beaten track. Training translators is a way of leveraging our work. We work with teachers to do similar kinds of things.

When I first covered the transformation of the Center two years ago, I spoke with curator David Mazower about the curatorial challenges of transforming the institution. As an administrator, how did you guide this big change for the Center?

The Yiddish Book Center always had exhibitions. I just felt like we needed to tell a more coherent story and to better use the space. We started talking about how five years before the exhibit actually opened. Before I knew it, we were basically talking about the entire public area of the Yiddish Book Center. The board was always excited about it. The toughest part was figuring out how to raise the money to make it happen.

Obviously, there was a lot of work in figuring out how to tell the story we wanted to tell. We always knew it wasn’t going to be a chronological story, and we had to figure out how to create some coherent exhibition. David obviously deserves the lion’s share of credit for that. But I was really anxious that we create a bigger visitor experience. For me, it goes beyond the people who come to the Center to see the exhibition here. We’re about to launch a virtual version of the exhibit for our friends and supporters and people all over the world who may never experience the exhibit in person. We’re about to publish an incredible exhibition catalog that David has written that will be another way for people to connect to the content, a jumping off point for public programs and education programs. Because so much thought went into each section of the exhibit, we can do more around women writers, we can do more around Yiddish theater – we can do *more*.

Yiddish is never going to be the Jewish lingua franca like it was in the past. How do you foresee Yiddish culture going forward? There seem to be two tracks. One is the preservation of this world that existed and that was lost. But within the Haredi community, Yiddish is still a living language getting 21st century additions and changes. How does the Center, going forward, look to manage both tracks?

Well, I would say there are three tracks. There’s the preservation, which is the foundational work. None of this would have happened had Aaron not started rescuing the books that, both physically and metaphorically, are the foundation. There’s a big scholarly audience – the field of Yiddish within Jewish studies has expanded dramatically within a generation. Then, of course, you have the Haredi community, which is the living Yiddish-speaking community; whether there will be more connection in the future, I can’t say. The fact of the matter is we represent a form of secular Yiddish culture that is not their culture – it’s actually *treyf*. It’s been very interesting to meet people who’ve left that community. We recently had Ricky Rose, who’s a music phenomenon who sings in Yiddish. She left the community. She came here for the first time, and her mind was blown. She loved it, because, of course, it was her language, but in a context she never could have imagined.

Another track that I think is important and interesting is for a younger generation that is not part of the Haredi community that is engaging with Yiddish language and culture and doing all kinds of new things with it. We see it in art, in music, in theater. It has become a way for a subset of young Jews to find an entry point into a Jewish connection and to Jewish identity. We’re training Yiddish teachers. We’re creating new textbooks and new learning materials. But we know that most Jews who are not in the Haredi community will not learn Yiddish, but that doesn’t stop us from opening up the culture and everything that it represents. Most people who go to shul don’t know Hebrew either. They think of going to shul or going to a Holocaust museum as ways we create connections to our own identity and culture. You think about when kids go to Hebrew school, of course, they’re going to learn to read Torah so they can do their bar or bat mitzvah. But since, 80 percent of American Jews are of Ashkenazi background, maybe they should also learn a little bit about that history and culture.

You’ve got these different subsets of people who are engaging with Yiddish in new and different ways that we couldn’t have imagined 20 years ago, and we probably can’t imagine where it’s going in 20 years. The Center has played

BRONSON,
continued on page 21



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OBITUARIES

Dr. Joel Louis Colker, 89, caring and compassionate physician, active member of the Jewish community
LENOX - Dr. Joel Colker passed away on Thursday, August 21, at his home at Kimball Farms.

Born December 22, 1935 in Pittsburgh, PA, the beloved only child of Maurice and Ann (Goldberg) Colker, Joel graduated from Shady Side Academy in Pittsburgh, obtained his bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1957, and earned his Doctor of Medicine degree from Cornell Medical School.

Joel was a longtime health care provider in Berkshire County with the Central Berkshire Gastroenterology Group. He is remembered as a caring and compassionate physician who formed lifelong relationships with his patients and their families.

An active member of the Jewish community, he was a board member and former board president of Temple Anshe Amunim and a long-time supporter of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Joel had a very active mind and was always learning. He loved all genres of music, especially classical. He read voraciously and closely followed the news and, although he was not naturally loquacious, he was a skilled listener and therefore a master of conversation. He was an endlessly curious person who maintained his curiosity and personal engagement until the very last days of his life.

Most precious of all was his family. Even after falling gravely ill, he never stopped wanting to know the latest from his children and grandchildren, and he was quick to lend a listening ear and encouragement to all, no matter how he was feeling. He was a doting husband to Sue, as well as a loving father, stepfather, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He was the carer and friend to many dogs and cats over the years. Joel loved life and caring for all living things, and anyone who crossed his path was the better for it.

Joel is survived by his wife Sue Paley Feakes Colker, whom he married on November 27, 1988; children Elizabeth Colker-Brown and husband, Ted Brown, of Los Angeles, Brian Colker and wife, Susan Sheu, of Santa Monica, Kate Lee and husband, Bill Lee, of Guilford, CT, Laura Feakes of Pittsfield, and David Feakes and wife, Paula Feakes, of Stow, MA; ten grandchildren, Susannah, William, Alexa, Hannah, Sadie, Pailey, Camille, Calvin, Felix, and Nate; and five great-grandchildren, Avery,

Benjamin, Flint, Cyrus, and Levi.
For the excellent care in recent years, the family thanks the staff at Kimball Farms Life Care Community, Berkshire Medical Center, Albany Medical Center and home health aides Gryzyna, Kelly, and Terry.

A private graveside funeral was held on August 26. Donations may be made to the Berkshire Humane Society, 214 Barker Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Amely Helen Baer Smith, 98, active member of Congregation Beth Israel and local community
PEABODY, MA - Amely Helen Baer Smith, 98, passed away.

Born in Koenigsberg, Germany on October 11, 1926, she lived in Germany during Nazi rule from 1933 to 1939. She emigrated to London, England in the spring of 1939 and was in London during the German bombings. She then emigrated to the United States in late 1940. She lived for 20 years in Woburn, MA, graduated from Woburn High School and from Northeastern University in 1949.

Amely married Warner L. Smith in 1950 and had three sons, Edward, Joel, and Allen. Warner was born in Nuremberg, Germany, on February 23, 1927. He and his family left Germany to come to the United States in 1939 and he was raised in New York City. Amely, Warner and her parents moved to Williamstown in 1961. While there, she was president of Beth Israel Hadassah, active in the interfaith group and with the Congregation, and was a volunteer at North Adams Regional Hospital.

Amely and Warner moved to Brooksby Village in Peabody in 2004. They both were quite active in Brooksby, with Amely serving as president of Hadassah and the Jewish Council. She had many chairmanships of Brooksby organizations. Warner passed away in 2017 and Amely continued living at Brooksby until her passing.

Amely had a wide circle of friends wherever she lived and was loved by many, especially in Williamstown, neighboring North Adams, and at Brooksby.

Her legacy continues with her family. She leaves her children Edward and Joanne Smith, Joel Smith and Sarah Larson, and Allen Smith and Denise DuChaine; seven grandchildren, Caroline Smith and Evan Rutkowski, Abby and Andrew Petrsoric, Connor and Adrienne Afflerbach, Ian Smith, Rachel Smith, Rebecca Smith, and Timothy Smith; and three great-children.

Graveside services took place on Monday August 25

at Congregation Beth Israel Cemetery, Clarksburg.

Louis Mark Yarmosky, 78, well-known local pediatric dentist, kind and gentle soul, numerous hobbies
SOUTH ORLEANS, MA – Dr. Louis Mark Yarmosky, 78, one of the world's kindest and gentlest souls, passed away suddenly at home in South Orleans, MA on Saturday, August 30.

Formerly of Pittsfield, Louis brought joy and laughter to countless family members, friends, patients, and parents, and virtually anyone he encountered during his day, whether grocery shopping, engaging in community events, or walking his beloved dog, Luna. Louis was dearly loved by his wife of 40 years, Mary Ann (McCartney) Yarmosky, to whom he was consummately devoted, and by his children, grandchildren, patients, staff, and a multitude of other friends and relatives.

A native of Baltimore, Louis was a dedicated Orioles fan and a proud Maryland Terp. Louis entered the University of Maryland in 1964 and received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the University of Maryland Dental School in 1971. Louis went on to Boston University, where he completed his pediatric dental specialty training and received his Master of Dental Science degree in 1973.

Realizing that the Berkshire County region did not have a pediatric dental specialist, Louis founded Yarmosky Pediatric Dentistry, a first of its kind, destination practice providing access to specialized, expert care for children and those with special needs from Western MA, NY State, VT, and CT for over 45 years.

Yarmosky Pediatric Dentistry eventually grew into a family practice. In 1980, Louis' brother, Steven Yarmosky, joined the practice. Later, in 2009, Lauren (Yarmosky) Ballinger came on board to work alongside her father until his retirement in 2020.

Louis and Mary Ann made their Orleans home a welcoming "retreat" for their extended family and their many friends. Louis loved to entertain guests with boat tours of Pleasant Bay and endless one-liners, which he repeated so often listeners knew the punch-lines in advance. Louis loved comedy and was known to give talks at dental conferences accompanied by a handheld sound effects device, which he used to embellish his jokes with rim shots and laugh tracks.

He enjoyed many hobbies and creative outlets, including stained glass, photography, music, singing, travel, gardening, and boating. He was also admired for his cogent political observations, which, like his mother before him, he was not shy about sharing. Most of all, Louis cherished Mary Ann, the love of his life, for whom he would do anything and with whom he set an incredible example of love, devotion, and generosity.

Louis and Mary Ann had four children; Brian K. French and wife, Maya, of Brookline, MA, Kevin M. French and wife, Kelly, of Red Hook, NY, Lauren (Yarmosky) Ballinger and husband, Matthew, of Richmond, MA, and Jeffrey R. French, who predeceased Louis in 2013; seven grandchildren, Ethan, Ava, Jack, Libby, Stella, Lucy, and Aiden, all of whom Louis cherished beyond words; three brothers, with whom he shared a special bond, including a love of laughter and family, Michael and wife, Amy, Steven and wife, Mary, and David and wife, Sally; eight nieces and nephews, Sarah, Jason, Scott, Mathew, Alena, Alex, Elyse, and Jessica.

Louis was predeceased by his parents, Jack and Shoshanah (Levy) Yarmosky, whose example of love and kindness helped shape Louis into the incredible person he was.

A memorial celebration was held at the Town Cove Tap House, Orleans on Sunday, September 14. Tax deductible donations may be made to Behavioral Health Innovators, P.O. Box 583, South Chatham, MA 02659.

Robert "Bob" Marvin Rosen, 85, deep commitment to justice and equality, lifelong learner, devoted family man

OTIS - Robert "Bob" Marvin Rosen, 85, passed away at Berkshire Medical Center on Monday, September 8.

Born September 20, 1939, in Brooklyn, NY, Bob was a lifelong learner, devoted family man, and involved member of his Otis community. Although Bob admittedly did not thrive in a traditional school environment, he always had a thirst for knowledge. He drove a cab in NYC to earn money while attending Brooklyn Law School, and had a successful, well-respected law practice based on Long Island, NY. He spent the later decades in his career focused on plaintiff's side employment law. Known for his sharp intellect and even sharper wit, Bob inspired all who crossed his path, whether in the courtroom

or over a game of pool at the Pittsfield Senior Center.

An adventurer at heart, Bob took flying lessons obtaining his pilot's license in 1976, and became part-owner of a single-engine plane with a group of men. Later in life, he resumed flying lessons in his 80s. He enjoyed playing pool, biking, snowshoeing, hiking, kayaking, world travel (particularly to developing countries), and was a member of most Berkshire County museums. He passed on many of these hobbies to his children and grandchildren who spent many weekends skiing, biking, hiking, and enjoying Berkshire culture with he and his wife Diane.

Bob had a particular passion for biking, awakening early to watch the live broadcast of the Tour de France. His commitment to the Tour was rivaled only by his devotion to biking with his "Tuesday Play Group." Bob wrote about sports, contributing to the Berkshire Eagle. However, he would only write the articles after he engaged in the sport himself. He served on the board of Berkshire OLLI, where his love of learning found a true home.

Bob and his wife, Diane Saunders, were married at their weekend home in Otis Woodlands (OWL) on May 23, 1981. It was a second marriage for both of them. Bob had two children from his first marriage.

In 2007, Bob and Diane moved from NYC permanently to Otis, where he poured his energy into the betterment of the community. He worked tirelessly on the Otis Citizens for Connectivity (OCFC) committee, formed to bring broadband to the area, chaired the Otis Recreation Center, was the OWL Liaison to the Town of Otis, and was dedicated to the Otis Food Bank. With a deep commitment to justice and equality, Bob was a steadfast supporter of the ACLU and Planned Parenthood.

Above all, family was at the heart of Bob's world. Bob is survived by his loving wife Diane; cherished daughter, Robin Rosen Spector; sister, Marilyn Negretti; and two grandchildren who brought him endless joy, Ellie and Avi Spector. Bob was predeceased by his son, Adam Rosen.

Whether connecting with people he just met, such as the hospital staff, or sharing his zest for life with his friends, Bob's generosity and joy were infectious. His enduring credo was: "Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it." He always reacted with gusto!

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OBITUARIES

Sydney Klein, passionate in pursuit of knowledge, deeply devoted to family
STOCKBRIDGE – Sydney Klein of Stockbridge and New York City died peacefully at home on Saturday, September 13, surrounded by his family and his books.

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1932, he graduated from the Bronx High School of Science in 1950 and MIT in 1955. He was passionate in his pursuit of knowledge and deeply devoted to his family.

Sydney leaves behind his wife of over 70 years, Mathilde; five children; nine grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Services were held on Wednesday September 17 at Congregation Kol Ami, White Plains, NY.

Marcia Lawrence Soltes, 90, voice for compassion, fairness, and dignity
GREAT BARRINGTON - Marcia Lawrence Soltes, 90, beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, educator, and advocate, passed away on Friday, September 19.

Born September 17, 1935, in Pittsfield, to Herman and Jeanette Fink, Marcia was a lifelong learner and teacher. She built her career as a professional educator and author, publishing multiple books and articles that reflected her passion for ideas, knowledge, and the written word. Her curiosity, wisdom, and commitment to education inspired students, colleagues, and readers alike.

Beyond her professional work, she devoted her time

and energy to serving her community. She was a volunteer board member for Berkshire County for Justice, an organization dedicated to providing legal, social, and community justice to the most vulnerable populations in Berkshire County. She also served on the board of Construct in Great Barrington, working tirelessly to support residents of South Berkshire County in need of housing and stability. Through these roles, she touched countless lives and stood as a voice for compassion, fairness, and dignity.

Marcia was the widow of Rabbi Avraham Soltes and later shared her life with her loving companion, Rabbi Balfour Brickner. She is survived by her daughter Suzanne Walker and son-in-law Edward Walker; cherished grandchildren Samuel Pratt, Hannah Pratt, Connor Mandalla, and Jessica Levy; and beloved great-granddaughters Eliza Frogameni and Taylor Levy Frogameni.

She was predeceased by her son, Dr. Douglas Levy; grandson, Benjamin Levy; and sister, Diana Freed.

Donations may be made to the 529 education fund of Stacy Carvalho and sent to 14 Jackson Road, Belmont, MA 02478. This fund will be administered by Marcia's son-in-law, Edward Walker.



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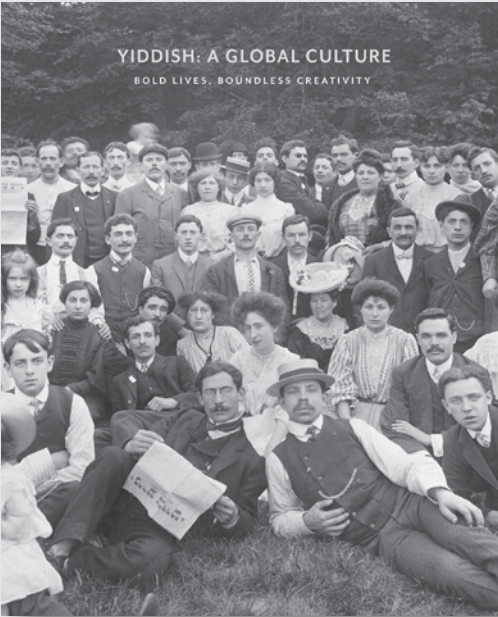
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CULTURE & ARTS

BRONSON,
continued from page 19



Yiddish: A Global Culture: Bold Lives, Boundless Creativity

This new exhibition catalog brings the museum's landmark permanent exhibition to a general readership, situating the sweeping story of Yiddish culture within broader world history. The catalog covers literature, theater, art, music, journalism and politics, and includes incredible individual stories, and features an eight-page gatefold of "Yiddishland," the exhibition's 60-foot mural, along with hundreds of reproductions of artworks, rare artifacts, and other key elements of the exhibition. The exhibition itself was curated and developed over five years by the catalog's author, David Mazower, a former BBC journalist and great-grandson of Yiddish writer Sholem Asch.

an important role in a new generation engaging with Yiddish language culture in ways that wouldn't have seemed possible when Aaron started his work. [Jews were] moving on from a time when assimilation was the main objective and moving into a time when people were ready and eager to embrace their cultural identities in different ways and celebrate them in ways that one wouldn't have when my grandparents came to this country – then one wanted to basically push that aside so that you'd seem more American. Now, well, I'm perfectly American. I can become immersed in my cultural and ethnic background without it threatening my American identity.

Obviously, the last two years have been very difficult for the Jewish people. I remember David Mazower saying that, in his opinion, Yiddish culture was really a counterculture. Jews now seem to be also seeking their own spaces in which they don't feel harassed, in which they don't feel judged, they don't feel politicized. In your opinion, might Yiddish form a new counterculture for Jews?

Well, I don't disagree with David, but I guess I don't think it's necessarily a counterculture. I think a lot of young people, at various points have come to Yiddish because it pushed back against the main ways that they were being told to be Jewish, like going to Hebrew school or going to a Holocaust museum. These things are valid and important, but I think people are often looking for something else, and we've represented that. Yiddish culture has represented that. It's certainly true that it's a difficult time in the Jewish world. There's a lot of contention and division. We had a program for teachers this summer, and one of them commented in their review of the program that it was a relief to come to this space where she didn't feel like she had to defend herself as a Jew, and she could just learn and exist.

In our high school program, we have kids coming from all kinds of backgrounds, some deeply connected to Jewish life in various ways, some religious, some completely secular, some from mixed backgrounds, Zionist families, anti-Zionist. Here they're all sitting in a room together discussing Yiddish and Jewish literature. I think there are ways in which we can provide opportunities for dialogue in the Jewish world that takes people outside of the very fraught debates of the headlines. It's important for the Yiddish Book Center to stay focused on what it is that we do and what we're here to do, which is, as our mission says, to preserve, teach, and celebrate Yiddish language and culture. That takes many, many forms. You can find all different perspectives in Yiddish. Yiddish wasn't only progressive politics. It was many things. We will be best served, and we can best serve the community and the broader world by focusing on that mission and not getting too drawn into the swirl that is going on all around us.



Create a Jewish Legacy Campaign

Please remember the Jewish Community in your will.





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

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

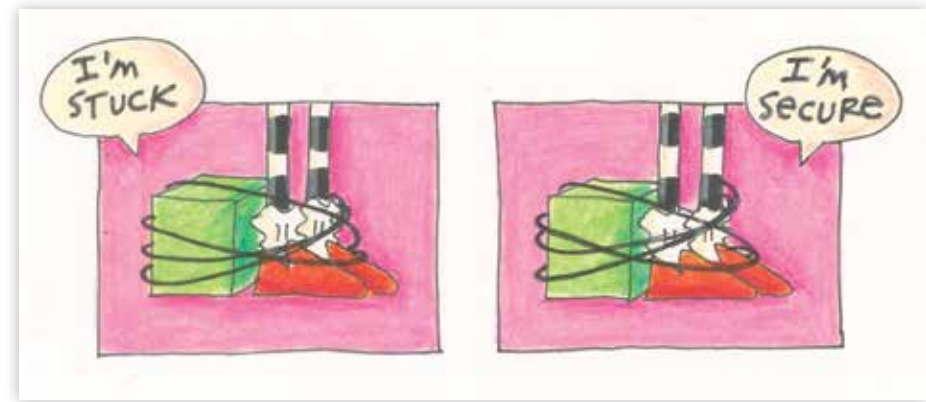
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CULTURE & ARTS

Norman Rockwell Museum Presents “Shine a Light: The Art and Life of Deb Koffman”



Deb Koffman, *I'm stuck/ I'm secure*, n.d. Marker, 3.375x7.25". Norman Rockwell Museum collection, Gift of the Koffman Family, NRM.2021.22.334

STOCKBRIDGE – Opening November 8, Norman Rockwell Museum presents “Shine a Light: The Art and Life of Deb Koffman,” a featured installation celebrating the artistry, life, and mindful spirit of Berkshire-based artist and author Deb Koffman (1956–2021). Known for her bold, text-infused paintings, illustrations, and books, Koffman created vibrant works that blend humor, hope, and honesty – providing practical tools for self-kindness, resilience, and reflection.

The installation includes a selection of her colorful works on paper, text-based installation pieces, finished, stand-alone works of art, and studies for Koffman’s popular books like *Soul Support*, *The Magic Lamp*, and *The Blank Space*. Her books tell metaphorical stories about belief, self-support, and positivity in an accessible style that borrows from cartoon and illustration history. Koffman’s art invites viewers to slow down, take a deep breath, and reconnect with their own inner voice.

“A champion of creativity and compassion, Deb Koffman created art that speaks to the heart,” said Laurie Norton Moffatt, Director/CEO of Norman Rockwell Museum. “The abundance of love expressed in Deb’s work, her message of radical self-acceptance, and her art of reframing any situation to see hope and opportunity live on in her art and books.”

Koffman’s artistic journey was deeply shaped by her move to the Berkshires in 1988. “When I moved here, I didn’t know a thing about spirituality or feelings or healing or art,” she once reflected. “I was deeply unhappy and confused about life. By chance, and grace, I discovered Kripalu, Gurudev, yoga, and an amazing community of body-centered healers. My whole world changed. Making art has saved my life and kept me sane, by helping me literally to SEE what goes on in my mind.”

In addition to her art, Koffman fostered creativity and connection through her Housatonic gallery. It became a hub for mindfulness workshops, creativity circles, performances, and community dialogue.

“Shine a Light: The Art and Life of Deb Koffman,” will be on view through June 8, 2026.

A World Tour of Jewish Literary and Artistic Creativity



Seder Birkat ha-Mazon (Grace after Meals). Scribe and artist: Aaron Wolff Herlingen of Gewitch. Vienna, 1724. Courtesy of JTS Library.

NEW YORK CITY – Jewish Worlds Illuminated features over 100 manuscripts and books offering a world tour of Jewish literary creativity across many centuries and thousands of miles. The exhibition explores the diversity of cultures in the lands in which Jews resided, including Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, Yemen, Iraq and Iran, Italy, France, Spain, and Germany and is drawn from the important rare book collection of The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary. The exhibition highlights include a fund-raising letter signed by the great rabbi and philosopher, Moses Maimonides; a monumental decorated prayer book for the Jewish High Holidays, created in Germany in 1290, which opens with an elaborate Gothic portal inviting the reader to enter and engage in the prayers; a richly illustrated Passover Haggadah from Renaissance Italy by the master scribe-artist Joel Ben Simeon; and a 1875 Haggadah from Baghdad, written in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. At the Grolier Club, 47 E 60th St. in New York through December 27.

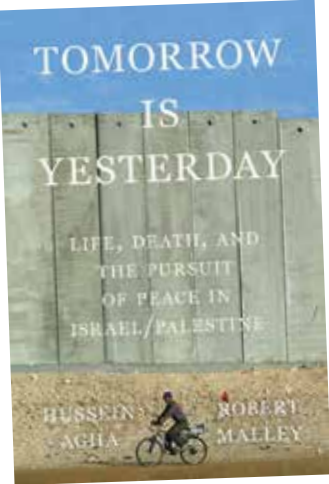
Dr. Steve Recommends...

By Dr. Steve Rubin / Special to the BJV

A column about Jewish books and authors

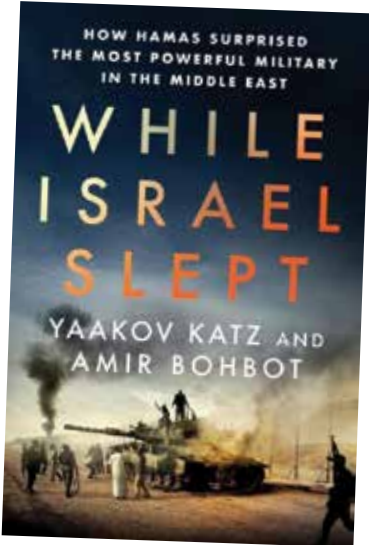
Dear Readers,

As I am writing this, sadly the war in Gaza continues unabated with little possibility for a resolution in the near future. It is difficult to witness the continued atrocities; difficult to read about the ongoing tragedy. Nevertheless, I recommend two works of nonfiction on the subject, both recently published.



Tomorrow is Yesterday: Life, Death, and the Pursuit of Peace in Israel/Palestine by Hussein Agha and Robert Malloy was published this past September. (An excerpt appeared in *The New Yorker* in August.) Agha, a fellow at Oxford University and Malloy, a senior fellow at Yale, offer a clear-sighted, if pessimistic analysis of the present conflict. They offer little hope for peace (and virtually none for a two-state solution), arguing that the present conflict does not stem only from the events of October 7, 2023 but is rooted in ancient divisions, long-held grievances, and irreconcilable differences. And yet they are able to conclude with a mild note of optimism acknowledging that no one can predict the future: new rulers may emerge, regimes may change, animosities may in time soften.

While Israel Slept: How Hamas Surprised the Most Powerful Military in the Middle East by Yaakov Katz and Amir Bohbot (two leading Israeli journalists) was also published in September 2025. As the title indicates this is the latest and one of the most comprehensive indictments of the failures that led to the October 7 attacks by Hamas: a combination of negligence, complacency, and arrogance. The story is well-known and well-documented by now, but Katz and Bohbot are experienced writers and the book reads like a novel: fast paced and compelling, making the tragedy that much more real and that much more personal. The book’s concluding chapter, “Preventing another October 7,” while instructive, seems to this reader to come a bit too late.



As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions. I can be reached at sjr@adelphi.edu

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CULTURE & ARTS

The Posthumous Landscape:
Remnants of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe



Cultural center of Vyzhnytsia, formerly the town's largest synagogue, Ukraine, 2016
(PHOTO © DAVID KAUFMAN)

On Thursday, November 13 at 7 p.m., we welcome photographer David Kaufman, whose book, *The Posthumous Landscape: Remnants of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe*, is a photographic tribute that highlights the stories behind the remnants of Jewish communal life in post-war Poland, western Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia.

This free program will be presented via Zoom and is part of Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council. Register on the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org.

Canadian documentary filmmaker and photographer David Kaufman was deeply moved by the quality of Jewish material culture – the physical remnants of Jewish life – that he saw on his work trips to Poland. He set out to record images of tenements, factories, synagogues, and cemeteries that were part of everyday Jewish life in pre-Holocaust eastern Europe, as well as the places of despair and death where Jews were killed during the war. The images tell stories of the afterlives of those places, many repurposed, some lovingly cared for by non-Jews who remember, and others slowly returning to the earth.

About David Kaufman

David Kaufman writes that his work has been inspired by the early 20th century photographs of Paris taken by Eugene Atget and painter Edward Hopper's "beautiful renderings of 19th century urban structures in clear, raking, morning and evening light." Since the 1980s, he has worked exclusively in color, photographing in full sunlight which "gives a chiaroscuro effect on the building and helps delineate what is unique about the architecture," he says.

About his project, he adds. "I'm 77 years old. I think that part of my impulse for doing this project was similar to the impulse of people of my generation to reconnect with the Europe that existed prior to the establishment of the State of Israel and prior to the Holocaust. Almost all Canadian Jews are first generation. All of us in my generation, where I grew up in Montreal, were the children of immigrants. So there was a very strong desire as the Soviet Union collapsed and it was possible to travel more freely to Eastern Europe, to go there and to seek out the places where our parents and grandparents came from."

In September, Kaufman spoke to the BJV about his work.

Let me start with a quote from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, curator at the POLIN Museum in Warsaw, about your photographs. "They record at this precise moment what can and cannot be recovered from a world destroyed with the disappearance of those who created it." So I want to turn that quote into a question – what can and cannot be recovered from a world destroyed with the disappearance of those who created it?

We only have the bare, bare, bare remnants of a very rich civilization that lasted more than 850, some say 1,000 years in Poland, in Belarus, in Ukraine, and in other countries in the area. When you go to these places and you see a remnant of a synagogue, often in ruins, sometimes restored, or you see Jewish cemeteries, sometimes preserved and much more often heavily destroyed, where there are only a few monuments left, you get an inkling of the vast size and reach of Jewish civilization in Eastern Europe. And at the same time, you also get a clearer understanding of the huge enterprise that the Holocaust was and the fact that to destroy so many Jewish communities in so many countries required the cooperation of people in each of those communities, not only direction at the hands of the Nazis from Berlin. You see the vastness of once what was. At the same time, you also see the extent of the destruction. It's a very bittersweet journey to visit these places that have remnants of Jewish life.

Your cemetery pictures are so arresting. The carving is magnificent and intricate. Can you shed any light about the Jewish tradition of creating tombstones like that? Is that intricacy something that's reflected in Christian cemeteries of the region, or is this a distinctly Jewish form of expression?

Late-nineteenth-century gravestones in the Jewish cemetery of Vyzhnytsia, Ukraine, 2016
(PHOTO © DAVID KAUFMAN)

From what I've seen, elaborate carvings on tombstones are very much the case for both Christian and Jewish cemeteries of the 19th century. In particular, after World War I, it basically starts fading out. And before, I'd say the mid-18th century, it really doesn't exist very much. It seems to be a particular feature of tombstones for about 150 to 200 years. Of course, the themes and motifs in Christian and Jewish cemeteries of the 18th and 19th century are completely different. I do not know historically if whether there were Masons who worked both in Christian and Jewish cemeteries at the same time.

Clearly the artistic motifs in Jewish cemeteries are very distinctive, and most of them hark back to the Bible for inspiration. You see a lot of use of animal imagery which comes from the Bible. Deer, lions, eagles on male graves in particular. You also see the use of fanciful animals, griffins, even dragons on some tombstones. And on women's graves, you see candelabras, charity boxes, birds, flowers, sometimes griffins as well. The other interesting thing I can say about gravestones is that you do not have the use of the Star of David on any Jewish gravestones until the late 19th century in the advent of the Zionist movement.

Earlier in the interview you said that by being there you understood that there had to be complicity of the local populations beyond just the Germans who came in and did what they did. How did you feel as a Jew in these places among the descendants of the people who were part of this, the catastrophe that, in a sense, you're documenting?

There were sharp differences between Poland and Western Ukraine. In Poland, everywhere we went, you could always find, even in the smallest town, where the local synagogue or cemetery or yeshiva had been prior to the war simply by asking someone in the street. And if the person you encountered in the street didn't know, they would get on their cell phone and gladly call someone who they knew would know.

Contrast this to Ukraine, where in Lviv, we were trying to photograph the entrance to the outdoor marketplace, which is built on the ruins of the old Jewish cemetery. There, a woman who had something to do with public relations for the market and two rather intimidating men came out and told me I could not photograph the entrance because they were involved in litigation with Jewish activists in Lviv who were trying to reclaim the land. There's a difference in atmosphere between Poland and Western Ukraine, which historically was a hotbed of right-wing nationalism. And even today in independent Ukraine, there's a lot of very strong nationalism in western Ukraine. Historically, right wing nationalists collaborated with the Nazis in murdering Jews immediately after the occupation in June and July 1941. In Poland, many individuals may have betrayed Jews, but many individuals also rescued Jews. And there was no organized paramilitary or militia in Poland that collaborated with the Nazis. So, there's a big difference historically. And you felt that even as a tourist at the time when I was there, which was about 10 years ago.

