

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Pittsfield, MA
Permit No. 19

Volume 33, No. 9 Kislev / Tevet 5876 December 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025 jewishberkshires.org

Celebrate Chanukah at NightWood 2025

A Fantastical Journey Through Sound & Light



LENOX – On Sunday, December 14 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Federation returns to The Mount to celebrate Chanukah at NightWood.

Stroll through an ethereal winter landscape and immerse yourself in sound, light, and color. NightWood 2025 combines innovative and immersive music, lighting and theatrical elements to create unique scenes that evoke feelings of wonder and mystery to awaken the imagination!

Menorah Lighting and Holiday Glow Fun

After your NightWood tour, join us at 6:30 p.m. 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!

Purchase of timed entry tickets is required. Federation Group Tickets: Adults \$15, Kids 0-18 free. Timed entry tickets available on a first come, first served basis. Register at tinyurl.com/NightWoodJFB2025

If You Go

This event is exclusively outdoors, so dress warmly! Trails can be uneven and require secure footing. The self-guided route is 3/4 of a mile through the woods and gardens and includes both paved and unpaved pathways.

“The Art of Ancient Hebrew Letters: Manuscripts, Mysticism, and Monsters”

*First of series
presented by Professor
Joanna Homrighausen*

On Thursday, December 18 at 7 p.m., join Professor Joanna Homrighausen for the first of three standalone talks on the calligraphy and mysticism of the Hebrew alphabet. This program will be presented via Zoom – register at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org.

This Jewish Art Education program on “The Art of Ancient Hebrew Letters: Manuscripts, Mysticism, and Monsters” will focus on how Jews in the ancient



*Pentateuch from Yemen, 15th century.
From the collection of the Jewish
Theological Seminary and now on view
in New York City at The Grolier Club’s
“Jewish Worlds Illuminated” exhibit.
Visit grolierclub.org for more.*

and medieval worlds made the Hebrew letters go from mere vehicles of thought to being the very building-blocks of creation. Explore the earliest biblical manuscripts, ancient Hebrew carvings on synagogue walls and

ART OF ANCIENT HEBREW,
continued on page 15

HAPPY CHANUKAH 5786!

*Federation wishes all a bright
Festival of Lights*

This hanukkiah menorah from the permanent collection of The Jewish Museum in New York City was one of three loaned to the Office of the Vice President for the holiday in 2023. With a \$14.5 million renovation completed this October, The Jewish Museum has reimagined its third and fourth floors and features a new must-visit installation, “Identity, Culture and Community: Stories from the Collections of the Jewish Museum,” which spotlights 200 items of Judaica from its holdings. This graceful mid-century modern take on a hanukkiah was crafted by Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, who founded the museum’s the Tobe Pascher Workshop for contemporary Judaica in 1956. Visit thejewishmuseum.org.



Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert (American, b. Germany, 1900–1981). New York, New York, United States, 1958. Copper alloy; hand-worked. 11 1/8 × 11 1/8 × 3 1/2 in. (28.3 × 28.3 × 8.9 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York. Gift of the Tobe Pascher Foundation, JM 51–58



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

We are almost there, but we need your help!

If you have not yet made your gift to the 2025 Annual Campaign, there is still time to do so.

Your gift will help engage the next generation, support the most vulnerable, and secure and sustain Jewish life year round.

**GIVE TODAY AT
JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG**

**THANK YOU FOR
MAKING A DIFFERENCE!**



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OP-ED

IN MY VIEW

Not Just a Beautiful Place to Live,
But a Community Grounded in
Tikkun Olam

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



Dara Kaufman

As the days grow colder and darker, I find myself reflecting on the light we bring to one another through our community. The warmth we create together, in acts of compassion, generosity, and shared purpose, is what sustains us through challenging times. Looking back over the past few months, I am deeply grateful for the impact we've made together across the Berkshires and beyond. Each story of connection, each act of caring, and each community initiative reminds me of the profound difference we can make when we work side by side.

Right now, our neighbors are facing real and urgent needs. In Berkshire County, more than 22,000 children and adults rely on the SNAP program for food assistance, and because of the recent government shutdown, nearly one in five of them are experiencing a food crisis. At the same time, another 8,000 households are entering winter without adequate heating due to delays in the federally-funded HEAP program.

In response, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has approved \$11,000 in emergency funding for food support and \$10,000 for fuel assistance to help local families stay warm. Our partners at the Jewish Women's Foundation have also stepped forward with an additional \$10,000 to strengthen local food pantries across the county. Together, this represents a \$31,000 commitment from our Jewish community to help ensure that every family has food on their tables and warmth in their homes this winter, and it is a concrete reminder of what we can achieve when we act collectively.

Federation is also seeing an increase in the number of kosher meals on wheels we're delivering to older adults. These meals nourish not just the body but also the spirit, offering a reminder that our community cares. For those facing other urgent challenges, Federation continues to provide small one-time emergency grants and interest free loans. Our social worker, Jill Goldstein, is available to guide people toward local services and resources that can help them regain stability and hope.

At the same time, we are continuing to invest in the safety and security of Jewish life here in the Berkshires through our LiveSecure initiative. This year alone, Andrew Hoffman, our community security director, has trained hundreds of community members and camp counselors, completed risk assessments at multiple local Jewish facilities, strengthened relationships with law enforcement, and developed new security plans for major community events. These efforts

are helping us build a culture of preparedness and resilience, one where we can gather for holidays, celebrations, and learning with greater peace of mind. Knowing that we can come together safely allows our community to thrive. We are deeply grateful to our LiveSecure donors, whose support makes this work possible and ensures that our Jewish institutions remain secure, welcoming, and resilient.

Education has also been at the heart of Federation's efforts this fall. In November, we had the privilege of partnering with the Simon Wiesenthal Center to launch their Mobile Museum of Tolerance in Massachusetts and bring it to Berkshire County schools. This innovative, state-funded traveling education center uses technology and storytelling to help students explore issues of prejudice, bigotry, and antisemitism, and to understand their role in standing up against hate. For many schools, especially in rural communities like the Berkshires, this is a unique opportunity to engage with Holocaust and civil rights education in an immersive and personal way. The enthusiasm and engagement from teachers and school officials to bring the Mobile Museum of Tolerance to their schools brings me great hope that these lessons will empower young people to understand, speak out, and act to create more inclusive, compassionate, and safe communities. Programs like this demonstrate that education can be a powerful tool to combat hate before it takes root, shaping not only young minds but the culture of our broader community.

This work to educate and build understanding has also been central to my service on the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism, which is now concluding its work. I am incredibly proud and grateful for the hard and thoughtful efforts of my fellow commission members and for the leadership of Representative Simon Cataldo and Senator John Velis, who guided our work with dedication and care. Together, we have developed a robust set of recommendations to combat antisemitism across K-12 education, higher education, the workplace, and healthcare settings.

These are spaces where awareness, training, and clear policy can make an enormous difference. Once implemented, these recommendations will have a lasting impact, not only supporting the Jewish community here in the Berkshires but also strengthening equity, understanding, and safety for Jewish people across the Commonwealth. You can learn more about these recommendations by visiting malegislature.gov/Commissions/Detail/646/Documents.

*Every effort begins with a shared belief
in our collective responsibility to make
our community and our world a
better place for all...*

In addition, I have had the honor of working closely with Commissioner Pedro Martinez and his team at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as they develop a new rubric to guide how antisemitism is taught in our schools. I have been grateful to provide input and support to help ensure these lessons are grounded in accuracy, empathy, and the lived experiences of Jewish students and families. It is inspiring to see how seriously the Commonwealth is taking this work and how much potential it holds for shaping more inclusive, informed classrooms across Massachusetts.

Whether we're feeding families, improving security, educating the next generation, or combating hate, every effort begins with a shared belief in our collective responsibility to make our community and our world a better place for all.

Our Super Tzedakah Challenge this fall was a tremendous success. We met our match and raised more than \$204,000 for our 2025 Annual Campaign. Your generosity is the lifeblood of all we do, allowing us to respond quickly when needs arise, strengthen Jewish identity, care for the vulnerable, and continue building Jewish life in the Berkshires. Our 2025 campaign closes on December 31, and there is still time to make a gift that will enable this critical work to continue into the new year. Through all of this, what strikes me most is the power of community, the way people show up for each other, for our neighbors, and for the greater good. That is the essence of Tikkun Olam, and we are deeply grateful to all of our donors, whose generosity and commitment make everything we do possible.

Closer to home, I continue to be inspired by the growing energy of our Berkshire Jewish Collective, a vibrant group of young adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. This remarkable community has brought together dozens of young people who are finding connection with each other, exploring Jewish values, and creating meaningful Jewish life right here in the Berkshires. Whether they are gathering for a Rosh Hashanah intention circle, celebrating in the sukkah they built outside Hot Plate Brewing Company, or simply building friendships rooted in shared identity, their enthusiasm is a powerful reminder that Jewish life here is thriving across generations.

And of course, one of my favorite moments each year is when our whole community comes together to celebrate Chanukah. This year, we will gather at The Mount in Lenox for an evening that promises to be truly magical. We will shine our collective Jewish joy and light amid the beautiful artistic light installations of NightWood, enjoy uplifting live music from the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective, share in a menorah lighting, and have some glow-filled fun and treats. It is a celebration that has become a beloved tradition – festive, joyful, and welcoming for families and people of all ages.

As winter settles in, I hope you will join us to help spread even more light. Together, we are ensuring that the Berkshires remain not just a beautiful place to live, but a community grounded in Tikkun Olam – repairing our world through compassion, courage, and hope.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

A

SPRING 2025

LEAPFROG

HOSPITAL

SAFETY GRADE

Berkshire Health Systems

CORRECTION
In the last BJV, we misspelled
Linda Geffin's last name.
We regret the error.

OP-ED

RABBI REFLECTION

Encountering Mystery

By Rabbi Seth Wax / Williams College



Rabbi Seth Wax

There is something mysterious about this time of year, in the late fall and early winter. As the days dramatically shorten and the nights lengthen, we become more attuned to the dark. While I miss the long, warm days of summer, there is a certain quality to this time of year that deeply speaks to me: the growing awareness of all that we cannot see. As the shadows extend ever earlier in the day, I am reminded of how much I do not see, how much I cannot see. It is as if some kind of dark, enveloping cloud extends over parts of our days.

*It is so tempting to see things clearly.
To know something, to identify it,
and to define it. And yet, that is
not all there is.*

Hanukkah falls during just this time. It falls during the longest nights of the year, leading into the New Moon of the month of Tevet, when the light of the moon diminishes each night before slowly returning. In this way, Hanukkah falls over the darkest nights of the year. Our religious practice during this time entails kindling light – beginning with the first night of Hanukkah, adding an additional flame such that by the end of the holiday, our hanukkiyah is resplendent with light.

However, the lights of the hanukkiyah do not extinguish the dark. How can they? For as much as they shed light, and as much as they anticipate the slow return of the light, as soon as the holiday is over, we find ourselves in the selfsame darkness in which we found ourselves eight nights prior. The lights

enchant and enliven us, yet they usher us back to the mystery of the darkness. So what teachings does this mystery offer us?

Noge'a Lo Noge'a, which translates to the English *Touching Yet Not Touching: Lessons in the Zohar* (Jerusalem: Koren, 2025), is a recently-published collection of the teachings of Rabbi Menachem Froman (1945-2013) on the Zohar, the classic work of Jewish mysticism. Rabbi Froman, the chief rabbi of the town of Tekoa in the West Bank and a prominent peace activist, would host regular study sessions of the Zohar in his home. I was fortunate enough to attend some of these sessions during my year studying in Israel while I was in rabbinical school. The sessions always began in the middle of the night, around 11:30 p.m. And they would go for hours. I remember being mesmerized by the ways in which Rabbi Froman plumbed the depths of the Zoharic texts, inviting participants to sit with the mystery that the text demonstrated and embodied. This was significant because the Zohar is often classified as literature that deals with the *sod* – the mystery or inner dimension – of Torah.

Shlomo Spivak, the editor of *Noge'a Lo Noge'a*, offers an overview of some of the key aspects of Rav Froman's approach to teaching Zohar. He begins by exploring the role of *sod*, or mystery, and he writes the following:

"What is mystery? Most simply, the definition of mystery is something that you can only talk about to certain people but not to others. But that is not really the case...Mystery is what stands beyond the system..."

In other words, mystery is that which is beyond. It is not something that we can grasp, but rather, something that we can learn and be in relationship with. As to what that means, Spivak continues:

"When a person thinks that he's grasped something – exactly at that moment, everything turns upside down, and he realizes that he doesn't understand anything. Why is this important? Because 'God has chosen to abide in a thick cloud' (1 Kings 8:12). Something that is important and precious really cannot be revealed to everyone all the time. It cannot be available at all times to human consciousness. Further, someone who invests much in order to arrive at mystery and actually succeeds in arriving at that point needs to remain in the thick cloud. The thick cloud offers protection, not just for the mystery itself but also for the person to whom it is revealed. It is dangerous to enter into the Holy of Holies, and the Torah instructs the high priest who enters there explicitly to do so only when there is a cloud of incense covering everything: 'For I appear in the cloud over the cover' (Leviticus 16:2)."

It is so tempting to see things clearly. To know something, to identify it and to define it. And yet, that is not all there is. While living in the light and seeing clearly is critical for life, this time of year reminds us that there is also a time for being present with mystery, with the thick cloud, with darkness. It too has much to teach us about how we live, and how we relate to that which we do not know.

May this season offer each of us the blessings of encountering the mystery that is the dark, and may it accompany us as we slowly return to the light.

Rabbi Seth Wax is College Chaplain and Director of Jewish Life at Williams College.

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Be remembered forever with a gift to Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

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

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Your Federation Presents

“Irving Berlin: Let’s Face the Music”



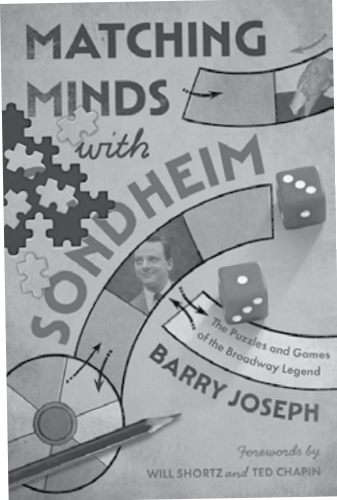
On Thursday, December 4 at 7 p.m., join entertainment historian John Kenrick for a look at the life and work of composer Irving Berlin. This program will be presented via Zoom. Register at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org.

Irving Berlin was a defining force in popular music for more than half a century. A Russian Jewish immigrant, Berlin rose from singing waiter to writing Tin Pan Alley songs for vaudeville and then conquered Broadway and Hollywood with some of the most popular songs of the 20th Century. How did Berlin compose more than 2,000 songs despite not knowing how to play the full piano keyboard?

What inspired this avowed atheist to write “White Christmas” and “God Bless America”? John Kenrick pulls back the curtain on the dazzling career and fascinating personal life of a cultural icon.

John Kenrick has worked in the theatre at every level from amateur to Broadway, eventually serving as personal assistant to six Tony Award winning producers, including the team behind the original production of Rent.

Matching Minds with Sondheim: The Puzzles and Games of the Broadway Legend, with Barry Joseph



On Thursday, December 11 at 7 p.m., Federation welcomes back author and historian of popular culture Barry Joseph for a program about his book, *Matching Minds with Sondheim: The Puzzles and Games of the Broadway Legend*, an examination of a little-known aspect of the great composer and lyricist's output.

This program will be presented via Zoom – register at the calendar of events page at jewishberkshires.org. Part of “Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.”

By near-universal consensus, Stephen Sondheim was the greatest musical theater composer of his generation – celebrated, among other things, for the wit, sophistication, and intricacy of shows from *West Side Story* to *Sunday in the Park with George*. But a less well-

known avenue for his brilliance was his lifelong fascination with designing and constructing intricate puzzles and games, from treasure hunts to crosswords to parlor and board games.

Matching Minds with Sondheim is a journey into this rich but largely unmapped aspect of the composer's creative life, illuminating how Sondheim's playful designs delivered moments of clarity and connection for friends, colleagues, and anyone who's ever been captivated by his genius. This book opens, for the first time, the door into what Sondheim called his “puzzler's mind,” helping readers to better understand the man, his work, and-if they accept the challenge-themselves.

Gaming expert Barry Joseph draws from over 80 years of Sondheim's activities, including extremely rare and never-publicly-seen puzzles and game designs, scores of original interviews with the celebrity friends who played them, archival deep dives, and illuminating analysis from both puzzle designers and theater

professionals from around the world. Packed with illustrations and insights, this book does more than describe Sondheim's life in puzzles – it allows readers to match minds with the maestro by attempting to solve his puzzles and bring Sondheimian games into their own lives.

Barry Joseph is a games-based educator, game designer, and founder of the Games for Change Festival. Barry is an innovator in digital learning and teaches at New York University. He is also the founding director of the Brooklyn Seltzer Museum.

Ellison’s Oracle Poised to run TikTok, Raising Hopes for Tougher Rules Against Antisemitism

Jewish Federations the only Jewish group that lobbied for the bill to force its sale

(JTA) – American Jewish leaders have blamed Tiktok for allowing antisemitism to spread among young people and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently accused China of using the platform to promote anti-Israel sentiment around the world – a charge China denies.

The allegations form a backdrop to the high-stakes negotiations over TikTok's future in the United States that may be finally heading to a resolution. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced on October 30 that Beijing has green-lit a multi-billion dollar deal that would bring the social media platform's operations in the United States under American control.

“In Kuala Lumpur, we finalized the TikTok agreement in terms of getting Chinese approval, and I would expect that would go forward in the coming weeks and months, and we'll finally see a resolution to that,” Bessent told Fox Business following a meeting between President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

The deal follows a law passed last year requiring China-based ByteDance to sell or face a ban of the app, which U.S. officials have called a national-security risk.

Details of the agreement have not been released, but the White House has previously said that a consortium of U.S. investors led by Oracle Corporation – whose co-founder, Larry Ellison, is a longtime supporter of Jewish causes and of Israel – would acquire a controlling stake in the app.

For the leader of one of the largest and most broadly representative Jewish groups in the country, these developments are hopeful.

“At the Jewish Federations of North America, we are optimistic about this moment,” JFNA CEO Eric Fingerhut said while moderating a panel on the deal at the organization's Washington headquarters. “Frankly, the part that makes us the most optimistic is the parties that seem to be associated with the deal on the American side, especially Oracle and Larry Ellison personally, who's been such a strong supporter of our community.”

Also on the panel was social media expert Sarah O'Quinn, the U.S. director for public affairs at Center for Countering Digital Hate, who said she shared Fingerhut's optimism that TikTok's new owners would take steps to lessen the spread of antisemitism on the platform.

“This change in leadership – are they going to improve their policy?” O'Quinn asked rhetorically. “I think that's probably true based on... the broad support coming from Ellison and Oracle on that [issue].”

Federations ultimately decided to enter the fray because it was...an opportunity to hold lawmakers to their commitment to fighting antisemitism

Ellison, who was raised in a Reform Jewish household, briefly topped the list of richest people this year amid the surge in the value of tech stocks linked to the artificial intelligence boom. He has donated millions to Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, among other Israel-related causes and is reportedly close to Netanyahu. He says his affinity for Israel comes from his appreciation for the country's record of tech innovation and resilience.

Ellison's views in the debate over whether online hate speech should be countered with content moderation and policies restricting user expression are unknown. He became a major investor in Twitter when Elon Musk took over the platform and changed its name to X.

During the panel, Fingerhut said that even while it became clear that antisemitism was a problem on TikTok, JFNA was the only Jewish group that lobbied for the bill that would force its sale.

He revealed internal concerns at the time that JFNA's involvement could activate antisemitic tropes about Jewish power in politics.

“We asked ourselves that question when we were making the decision about whether to get involved,” he said. “Is this going to undermine the bill because it'll become a target of ... ‘here comes the Jewish community seeking to attack this company.’”

He said JFNA ultimately decided to enter the fray because it was a severe case, and an opportunity to hold lawmakers to their commitment to fighting antisemitism.

Panelists offered varying levels of optimism about TikTok's future but there was a consensus that the new owners should strive for cooperation and transparency with users and advocates over antisemitism and other forms of harm.

Daniel Kelley of the Center for Technology and Society at the Anti-Defamation League noted that the company has already become increasingly responsive, saying that his colleagues are now meeting with TikTok trust and safety staff on a monthly basis.

Quinn added that the best tool advocates have to influence social media companies in the absence of government regulation is public pressure.

“The most important thing as Americans and people who represent communities across the country is to make sure that you're sharing stories about how social media has harmed you or your family,” she said.

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Emergency Allocations Made by Federation and Jewish Women’s Foundation Will Help Relieve Food and Fuel Insecurity in the Berkshires

In Berkshire County, 22,270 children and adults rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for food assistance. Due to the government shutdown and resulting delays in SNAP benefits, nearly 20% of our Berkshire neighbors may face a food crisis. In addition, 8,000 households that depend on the federally funded HEAP program for fuel assistance are entering the winter season without adequate heating.

In response, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in November approved emergency allocations of \$11,000 to support food assistance and \$10,000 for fuel assistance to help our neighbors across Berkshire County. The Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County also approved an emergency allocation of \$10,000 to support local food pantries.

Together, these allocations represent a \$31,000 commitment from our Jewish community to help ensure that our neighbors have access to food and warmth during this critical time.

- Donate** – If you would like to donate to support food access, we encourage you to support to the Berkshire United Way’s county-wide effort. Click “Food and Other Emergency Needs” on the United Way’s Donate page: berkshireunitedway.org/donate.
- Berkshire County is home to a robust network of emergency food sites. If you, or someone that you know, is in need of food assistance or if you would like to donate directly to a community pantry, visit berkshireunitedway.org/food-access to find resources.
- Older Adult Kosher Meals** – Federation offers kosher meals for older adults (60 years old and above), which are available for pickup on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursdays. Contact our kitchen reservation line at (413) 442-2200 up to 24 hours in advance to reserve a meal for pickup.
- Other Emergency Assistance and Support** – Federation provides small, one-time emergency grants to Jewish community members facing urgent or essential needs. Our Community Social Worker, Jill Goldstein, also offers guidance in navigating local care services, accessing transitional assistance, and connecting with additional resources to help individuals regain stability and self-sufficiency. For support, contact Jill Goldstein at j.goldstein@jfswm.org or (413) 442-4360, ext. 17.

We are deeply grateful to our Federation donors whose generosity makes this care and support for our Berkshire community – and so much more – possible.

Deliver Meals to Homebound Seniors

Friendly drivers needed to deliver kosher meals to homebound seniors

By Heidi Katz / Coordinator of Volunteers

The number of people receiving home delivery of kosher meals through the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Kosher Meals on Wheels program has nearly doubled in the past year and is continuing to increase.

Federation volunteers bring hot meals to the homebound three days a week. What had been one route has now expanded into two. A delivery volunteer does more than simply drop off hot, nourishing meals. For many clients, the volunteer is the only person they might see and have a chance to chat with that day. Delivery volunteers get to know the people on their routes. Caring volunteers are our eyes and ears, helping our social worker know if a community member might need additional assistance of some kind.

“People need food...but also need people,” writes volunteer **Michael Ende**. “We all find ways to help others and for myself, delivering meals to others in our community has been as much a gift for me as a service for others.”

Friendly drivers are needed to deliver kosher meals to homebound seniors in Lee, Lenox, and Pittsfield, midday on Mondays, Tuesdays, and/or Thursdays. The Kosher Lunch program is supported by Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in conjunction with Elder Services of Berkshire County. This program is open to the public. Pickup is at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.

To volunteer or find out more, please email me at federation@jewishberkshires.org, or call me at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10.

Federation is aware that food needs are increasing in Berkshire County, with a significant rise in food insecurity driven by inflation, the end of federal stimulus programs, and a growing demand on food pantries. Local organizations report that demand for food assistance is higher than ever, by both the newly needy and those who have always needed help.

Volunteer **Sandy Reback** says: “I see participating in the program as much more than just delivering meals. It’s also about strengthening the connections within the Jewish community in the Berkshires. Plus, it’s a great way to meet some interesting people you may not otherwise come into contact with.”

If you or someone you know could benefit from a Kosher Meals on Wheels, please contact the Federation’s social worker at (413) 442-4360, ext. 17.

Jewish Care Services

Berkshire Jewish Communal Safety Net

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

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

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



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Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT. Published 9 times a year.

The color photography in this issue is made possible through the generosity of Debra Chudnow and David Wise, honorary publishers.

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Next issue publication date: **January 1, 2026 – February 8, 2026**
Press deadline: **November 10, 2025**
Advertising deadline: **December 11, 2025**

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A portion of your gift to Federation’s annual campaign is directed to our overseas partners (The Jewish Agency for Israel, World ORT, and JDC) that do vital work in Israel and across the Jewish world. Here is one story of how the Jewish Agency puts your generosity to good use.

Jewish Agency and Class Action Foundation launches \$18M grant program to support families of reservists

Introduced at The Jewish Agency’s Board of Governors meeting, the program will provide grants of up to 20,000 shekels (over \$6,000) to war-affected businesses owned by reservists’ spouses

JERUSALEM – (JNS) In the presence of hundreds of Jewish community leaders on November 4, The Jewish Agency for Israel and the Class Action Foundation launched a new grant program to support businesses owned by the spouses of Israel Defense Forces reservists.

The launch of the program was led by Maj. Gen. Doron Almog, chairman of the executive of The Jewish Agency; Mark Wilf, chairman of The Jewish Agency’s board of governors; Yehuda Setton, CEO and director general of The Jewish Agency; and representatives of the Class Action Foundation, chaired by retired judge Yaakov Shineman.

The Jewish Agency launched the new grant fund – totaling 60 million shekels (more than \$18 million) – at the organization’s board of governors meeting, which was attended by hundreds of Jewish community leaders from around the world, including representatives of the World Zionist Organization, Jewish Federations of North America, and Keren Hayesod.

Spouses of IDF reservists who own businesses that suffered significant economic harm during the war will be eligible for one-time grants ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 shekels (about \$1,500 to \$6,000), based on business size and eligibility criteria. Recipients will also receive a package of business and consumer assistance, including mentoring, guidance on exercising rights and professional workshops.

This fund is being launched with the support of world Jewry as a powerful expression of Jewish unity. Its purpose is to demonstrate global solidarity with Israel’s reservists and their families, and to express appreciation for their tremendous contributions to Israel’s security during the Swords of Iron war.

Since the Oct. 7 2023 terrorist attacks, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have left behind their families and jobs to serve extended reserve duty to defend the country. During this time, their spouses have borne the double burden of managing home and family life while struggling to keep their small businesses afloat amid severe economic uncertainty.

Businesses owned by spouses of reservists in Israel must meet the following two main criteria to receive assistance: The reservist has served at



PHOTO BY LIOR DASKAL/THE JEWISH AGENCY

Leadership from The Jewish Agency for Israel, the Class Action Foundation, and the Administrator General

least 200 days in reserve duty since the outbreak of the war on October 7, 2023; and the business has experienced a decrease of at least 30% in revenue compared to a corresponding pre-war period (for example, January-June of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023).

Maj. Gen. Doron Almog: “Since the horrific Simchat Torah attacks on October 7, we have seen the heroism of the reserve soldiers, men and women who left everything to defend the country out of unconditional love. Left behind were the partners who bore the burden of the family, the financial burden and the immense emotional load. Reservist families are the backbone of our national resilience. This fund is an expression of mutual responsibility and deep gratitude from the entire Jewish people, in Israel and around the world, with a clear message: You are not alone. This is an expression of our connection – one heart, one people, and one commitment – which leaves no one behind.”

Mark Wilf, chairman of the Jewish Agency’s board of governors, said: “Our new grant program reflects the deep, enduring bond between the Jewish people and the men and women who defend the State of Israel. Jewish communities worldwide are in solidarity with Israel’s reservists and their families – recognizing their sacrifice and ensuring that they have the support they need to recover and rebuild. This initiative is a tangible expression of our collective gratitude and unity as one Jewish family.”

Yehuda Setton, CEO and director general of The Jewish Agency, said: “The men and women of the IDF reserves, who left behind family and livelihood to defend us all, embody more than anyone the values of mutual responsibility and shared destiny. This fund is not merely financial assistance for their families – it is a bridge of hope and resilience that connects the families of reservists with the entire Jewish people, as one family. This is how we at The Jewish Agency, together with our partners, continue to build hope as the foundation for renewal.”

Retired judge Yaakov Shineman, chairman of the Class Action Foundation, said: “The Class Action Fund continues its efforts to assist those affected by the war, in accordance with the goals set by the courts in class action proceedings. The fund seeks to support the spouses of reservists so that they can sustain their small businesses for the benefit of consumers – thereby strengthening Israel’s society and economy. This is another initiative in the fund’s ongoing work to promote the physical well-being and resilience of those harmed by the war, and to stand by their side.”

The Jewish Agency for Israel

The Jewish Agency for Israel has been working since 1929 to secure a vibrant Jewish future. It was instrumental in founding and building the State of Israel and continues to serve as the main link between the Jewish state and Jewish communities everywhere. This global partnership has enabled it to address the Jewish people’s greatest challenges in every generation. Today, the Jewish Agency connects the global Jewish family – bringing Jews to Israel and Israel to Jews – by providing meaningful Israel engagement and facilitating aliyah. It also strives to build a better society in Israel and beyond by energizing young Israelis and their worldwide peers to rediscover a collective sense of Jewish purpose. The Jewish Agency continues to be the Jewish world’s first responder, prepared to address emergencies in Israel and to rescue Jews from countries where they are at risk.



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LOCAL NEWS

Light Up the Night!

Chabad to Celebrate the Eighth Night of Chanukah with a Grand Menorah Lighting, Fire Show, and Festive Community Celebration

LENOX – The glow of Chanukah will shine brighter than ever as the community gathers for a joyful outdoor Menorah Lighting and celebration on Sunday, December 21 at 4:30 p.m. at Lilac Park in downtown Lenox.

Get ready for an unforgettable evening filled with music, song, a dazzling fire show, and spirited festivity as families, friends, and neighbors come together to kindle the eighth and final light of the menorah – a powerful symbol of hope and unity that continues to illuminate hearts around the world.

“As darkness descends in our world, this giant menorah will stand tall as a radiant beacon of faith and resilience – a celebration of the enduring light of the Jewish people,” said Rabbi Levi Volovik of Chabad of the Berkshires. “Together, we’ll ignite not only the candles, but the warmth of community and the spirit of Chanukah itself.”

Attendees will enjoy hot, crispy latkes, fresh donuts, and the excitement of a spectacular *gelt* drop from the Lenox Fire Department! The evening will be further illuminated by a thrilling live fire performance, adding wonder and energy to the celebration. It’s also a special opportunity to thank our local fire-fighters and police officers for their dedication and service to the community.

In a time when the world yearns for peace and connection, this celebration carries deep meaning. “The menorah’s eight branches, all emerging from one central stem, remind us that we are all connected,” said Rabbi Volovik. “By lighting the menorah together in Lilac Park, we affirm that light, goodness, and unity will always triumph.”

This joyous event is part of Chabad’s worldwide Chanukah campaign, joining thousands of public Menorah lightings across the globe – from Australia to Africa, Hong Kong to Colombia, New York’s Ground Zero to the White House lawn – spreading warmth, joy, and the timeless message of Chanukah.

The celebration is co-sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, and Haddad Auto Dealership of the Berkshires.

“Come with your family, bring your friends,” says Chabad’s co-director Sara Volovik, “and light up the night with song, fire, and Jewish pride!”

Hadar (NYC) Welcomes Congregation Ahavath Sholom to its Growing National Network

NEW YORK CITY – Hadar has announced its newest cohort of Hadar Community Group Leaders, and Great Barrington’s Congregation Ahavath Sholom joins a dynamic and growing network of individuals dedicated to reimagining and revitalizing Jewish life across North America and beyond.

These new leaders are part of an inspiring movement of empowered community builders who are creating vibrant, inclusive spaces for learning, prayer, and connection. The decision to step forward as leaders represents not only a commitment to strengthening their local communities, but also a contribution to a broader transformation in contemporary Jewish life.

“We are honored to be part of Hadar,” said Rabbi Jennifer Rudin of CAS. “Together with Susan Hicks, I am excited to lead congregants through a process of study, song, and action as we create a Caring Committee at CAS.”

As CAS embarks on this journey, Hadar stands ready to support their vision, offering guidance, resources, and partnership to help them create spaces for deep Jewish engagement and spiritual growth.

About Hadar

The Hadar Institute is a center of Jewish life, learning, and practice that builds vibrant egalitarian communities in North America and Israel. Its vision for Jewish life is rooted in rigorous and nuanced Torah study, gender equality, meaningful Jewish practice, and the values of kindness and

compassion. For more information about Hadar Community Groups and how to get involved, visit hadar.org.

The Writing Life: Jewish Book Reading and Conversation

On Tuesday evening, December 9 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., join Dr. Barbara Viniar, Carol Goodman Kaufman, and Rabbi Pamela Wax for a Zoom reading and conversation about writing and “writing Jewish” today. This program is being presented by Knesset Israel.

About the Panelists

Dr. Barbara Viniar retired to the Berkshires in 2018 after 40 years of leadership in public higher education, including the presidency of Berkshire Community College. At various times in her career, she taught English and Women’s Studies as an adjunct at the undergraduate and graduate levels. After retiring, the chance discovery of a photograph of her grandmother with a man who wasn’t her grandfather led Viniar to begin writing a novel inspired by her grandmother’s life as an immigrant from Russia in the early 20th century. Her debut novel, *Little Bird*, was released in August 2025.

Carol Goodman Kaufman, a former psychologist and criminologist, now writes about happier subjects. These include her long-running feature on food and its history in the Berkshire Jewish Voice. Wearing another hat, she also writes for children. Among her works are the picture books *Once in a Full Moon*, *Pirate Ships and Shooting Stars*, *Detective Bears and Friends*, and her new chapter book, *Tuck and Friends*. With her deerstalker cap on, she writes mysteries. Her award-winning first novel, *The First Murder*, came out in 2024, and *Crak, Bam, Dead*, a collection of short stories, in 2025. She is currently at work on two novels in entirely different genres: a thriller and a historical novel (that has its beginnings in Pittsfield!).

THE WRITING LIFE,
continued on page 8

Happy Hannukah!

Wishing you a joyful and meaningful Hanukkah filled with light, love and blessings!

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LOCAL NEWS

THE WRITING LIFE,
continued from page 7

Rabbi Pamela Wax, the director of Adult Jewish Education and Programming at KI, is the author of two books of poetry, *Walking the Labyrinth* (Main Street Rag, 2022) and *Starter Mothers* (Finishing Line Press, 2023), as well as a forthcoming collection due out from Sheila-Na-Gig Press in early 2026. Her poems have received two Best of the Net nominations and awards from Crosswinds, Paterson Literary Review, Poets’ Billow, Oberon, and the Robinson Jeffers Tor House. Her poems have been published broadly in over 60 literary journals.

Please pre-register at www.knessetisrael.org/rsvp to receive the Zoom link for this program.

Shabbat, “Soul Spa”
Torah Study, and Zoom
Shabbat

Early winter at Congregation
Beth Israel

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

Kabbalat Shabbat Services – Friday, January 9 at 7 p.m.
All are welcome 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 the Saturdays of December 20 and January 17 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: The Saturdays of
December 6 & 27 and January 3 & 10 at 10 a.m.
via Zoom

Join CBI for a new Shabbat morning Zoom Torah study every Saturday! 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 cib-erkshires.com/calendar-of-events. Some Shabbat services dates may be subject to change, so please RSVP or check the calendar for updates.

First Friday Shabbat Zoom Gathering: The Fridays
of December 5 and January 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Gather around the Virtual Shabbat Table to share community and conversation online in celebration of the Jewish traditions of Shabbat, light the candles, and bless the wine and challah. Stay connected with CBI friends and neighbors, meet new ones, and enjoy the joys of fellowship and comfort of camaraderie. The Zoom link will be sent to those who RSVP via CBI’s website.

Anti-Semitism Revisited –
a Zoom book group

Join Rabbi Pam Wax online Tuesday evenings January 6-February 10 from 7-8:30 p.m. to discuss one chapter of the book *Anti-Semitism Revisited* by Delphine Horvilleur each week.
Read the Introduction (“Jews are Just Too Much”) and Chapter 1 (“Anti-Semitism is a Family Quarrel”) prior to the first session (each chapter is short and accessible).
Pre-register at knessetisrael.org/rsvp.

The Jewish Women’s
Circle Invites You to
a Special Chanukah
Celebration and Luncheon

LENOX – The Jewish Women’s Circle warmly invites women from across the community to a special Chanukah celebration and beautiful luncheon – an uplifting afternoon honoring the light, strength, and spirit of Jewish women.

The event will take place on Wednesday, December 17 at noon at the Chabad Center in downtown Lenox and will feature a delicious Chanukah luncheon, music, menorah lighting, inspiring discussions, and engaging Chanukah experiences that will illuminate the holiday celebration.

Together, participants will explore the unique role of women in the Chanukah story – from the heroism of Yehudit, to the enduring power of every Jewish woman to illuminate her home and community with faith and determination. The afternoon will celebrate the timeless themes of light, unity, and renewal, reminding us that even one flame can dispel immense darkness.

“Chanukah is all about light and renewal,” said Sara Volovik, co-director of Chabad of the Berkshires, who will be leading the program. “When women come together to share inspiration, laughter, and a delicious meal, we create warmth and light that extend far beyond the room.”

All women are welcome, regardless of background or affiliation. Bring friends and family to experience a beautiful afternoon of meaning, connection, and celebration.

Chabad of the Berkshires is at 17 West Street in Lenox.

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

Come curious, leave confident



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We wish all of our friends and neighbors
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community a happy and healthy Chanukah,
filled with light and sweetness!

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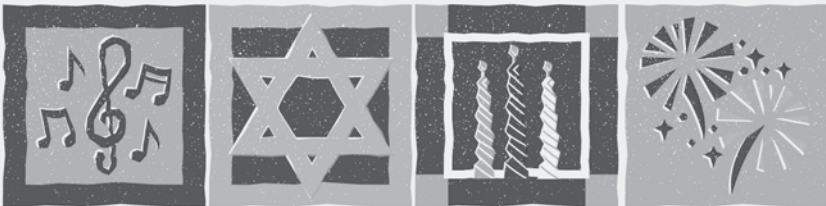
Sat. 12/13: Visit us at the Holiday Stroll in Great Barrington!

Sunday, 12/14: Yachad Chanukah
for families with school aged children
**Sponsored in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation*

Wednesday, 12/17: Chanukah Lunch n’ Learn:
Miracles in the Jewish Tradition

Friday, 12/19: Shabbat shel Chanukah Potluck & Celebration

FOR MORE INFO: HEVREH.ORG



LOCAL NEWS

Congregation Ahavath Sholom Welcomes New Rabbi, Jennifer Rudin



Rabbi Jennifer Rudin

GREAT BARRINGTON – Congregation Ahavath Sholom joyfully welcomed its new spiritual leader, Rabbi Jennifer Rudin, during a weekend of celebration held October 31 and November 1.

The festivities began Friday evening with a spirited musical Kabbalat Shabbat service, followed by a festive potluck dinner held in a beautifully decorated tent on the congregation’s lawn. Rabbi Emerita Barbara Cohen kindled the Shabbat candles, setting a warm and sacred tone for the evening. Members of the congregation shared poetry, and the gathering was filled with heartfelt song and prayer as congregants and friends of CAS joined together to mark this special occasion.

On Shabbat morning, the community gathered once again for a meaningful Torah passing ceremony, symbolizing the continuity of spiritual leadership. The service featured guest speaker Stephanie Rotsky, the first Social Justice Educator in the United States, whose remarks highlighted the importance of community engagement and compassion. The morning concluded with words of welcome and blessing for Rabbi Rudin as she begins her tenure at CAS.

“The weekend topped off what has been a smooth Rabbinic transition,” noted the Board of Directors. “We are grateful to everyone who celebrated with us, and especially to the Installation Committee, chaired by Barbara Janoff, for their dedication and hard work.”

With music, poetry, and prayer, the celebration reflected the congregation’s deep sense of community and its excitement for the future under Rabbi Rudin’s leadership.

Celebrate Chanukah at Knesset Israel

PITTSFIELD – Celebrate the Festival of Lights with Knesset Israel!

Shirei Shabbat
On Friday, December 19, join friends or make new ones at Knesset Israel for an energizing, musical Shirei Shabbat Friday evening service at 5:45 p.m., then stay for a delicious kosher Shabbat dinner at 6:45 p.m. Registration necessary for dinner. Adults \$25, under 18 free.

Chanukah Games and Candle-Lighting
Then on Sunday, December 21, from 3 p.m.- 5:30 p.m., join Knesset Israel for an afternoon of Chanukah games and candle-lighting, singing, Israeli dancing, and refreshments. Bring your Chanukah menorah and your favorite board games (Mah-Jongg, Scrabble, Pictionary, Uno?) and come play at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. Please pre-register for either or both events at www.knessetisrael.org/rsvp

Community Chanukah Concert at CBI

NORTH ADAMS - On Sunday, December 14 at 2 p.m., join the CBI choir and musicians for a celebration of the Festival of Lights with music both old and new. As the days wind down toward the winter solstice and the longest night of the year, Chanukah comes to remind us to take heart and seek the light of hope shining in dark times.

Musical selections will include traditional Ashkenazi and Sephardi Chanukah songs as well as contemporary compositions. The concert closes with a family-friendly singalong featuring some favorite Chanukah tunes.

Stay afterwards for refreshments, dreidels and gelt, and kid-friendly Chanukah arts and crafts.

And please bring a contribution for the potluck table – the meal will be dairy / vegetarian / pescatarian, so no meat please. RSVP cbiberkshires.com/event/chanukah-2025/

Funding provided by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Menorah Lightings in North County
North Adams City Menorah Lighting: Sunday, December 14 at 5 p.m. at City Hall, 10 Main Street
Williamstown Menorah lighting: Monday, December 15 at 5:40 p.m. at the Williams Inn.

Yachad Chanukah at Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Sunday, December 14 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., families are invited to join Hevreh of Southern Berkshire’s Religious School students and parents for a lively celebration of Chanukah! Participants will gather as a school community and, accompanied by the awesome Boker Tov Hevreh Band, sing, pray, enjoy latkes, and much more.

For the last few years, Hevreh has been donating holiday gifts to Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) that are distributed to the larger Berkshire community. When you visit Hevreh on December 14, please bring a new gift to be wrapped and distributed. Items that are most appreciated are toys for kids, gift cards, and new warm clothing for kids and adults.

For more information and to register, contact Hevreh at info@hevreh.org with Yachad Chanukah in the subject line.

AI for Regular People: Past, Present, and Future

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, December 7 from 9:30 a.m. to noon, Knesset Israel is pleased to offer a brunch-and-learn with KI member Professor Hod Lipson.

Artificial Intelligence and Robotics technologies have been accelerating over the past decade, outperforming humans in tasks once thought to be impossible to automate. Machines can now understand video and interpret language with unprecedented reliability. Cars can drive themselves and machines outperform doctors in medical diagnostics. AI can generate creative art and engineering blueprints. Soon, robots will be able to do simple physical tasks. But where will this technology go next, and how far can it reach? This talk will take a

deep dive into what is driving AI, how it really works, and where it is likely to go next.

Hod Lipson is a professor and department chair of the Mechanical Engineering Department at Columbia University in New York, where he works in the areas of robotics and AI. He is an award-winning researcher, teacher, and communicator. His recognitions include Esquire magazine’s “Best & Brightest,” Popular Science’s “25 most Awesome Labs in the US” and Forbes Magazine’s “Top 7 Data scientists in the world.” His TED talk is one of the most viewed on AI, and his work was centrally featured by the New York Times in “What’s ahead for AI,” a feature about self-aware and self-replicating robots, challenging conventional views of robotics. He is a co-author of the award winning books *Driverless: Intelligent cars and the road ahead* and *Fabricated: The New World of 3D printing*. Lipson directs the Creative Machines Lab, which pioneers new ways to make machines that create, and machines that are creative.

The brunch-and-learn is \$5 per person; please pre-register at www.knessetisrael.org/rsvp. This program is in-person only at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield.

Color Your World Mussar

PITTSFIELD – Make 2026 the year to begin (or continue) your Mussar practice!

Rabbi Pam Wax, the director of Adult Jewish Education and Programming at Knesset Israel, has been studying and practicing Mussar for 25 years and will welcome your participation in this monthly class.

Attendance in person at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield is highly recommended for those who are local, with a Zoom option available.

The first introductory session, providing a history and overview of Mussar, will take place on Monday, January 12, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monthly practice sessions will take place from February through June. Pre-register at www.knessetisrael.org/rsvp. \$72 for non-members of Knesset Israel or Anshe Amunim.

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Sunday, December 7th 4:00pm

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center Great Barrington, MA

Tickets: \$60 / \$35
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or cewm.org



Jewish Federation

OF THE BERKSHIRES

Let's do Lunch!

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

- DECEMBER**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1
Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), mashed potatoes, 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 coconut cookie.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4
Noon, Lunch...Pierogies with onions and mushrooms, sautéed cabbage, beets, salad, rye bread, and chocolate pudding.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8
Noon, Lunch...Rigatoni Bolognese (DF), broccoli, spinach, minestrone soup, garlic bread, and cinnamon pears.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9
Noon, Lunch...Honey mustard chicken (GF)(DF), California blend vegetables, rice with peas, salad, multi-grain bread, and apricots.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11
Noon, Lunch...Chick pea and mushroom noodle casserole, broccoli, salad, roll, and cookie.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15
Noon, In-person Chanukah lunch...Moroccan chicken stew (GF) (DF), couscous, spinach, lentil soup, pita bread, and apricots.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16
Noon, Lunch...Potato knish, cauliflower, roasted Brussels sprouts, borscht, rye bread, and Chanukah dessert.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18
Noon, in-person lunch...Brisket (DF), potato latkes, apple sauce, roasted root vegetables, chicken noodle soup, challah, and gingerbread bundt cake with poached pear.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 22
Noon, Lunch...Vegetable quiche, hash browns, California blend vegetables, salad, pumpkinnickel bread, and rice pudding.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23
Noon, Lunch...Turkey meatballs (GF)(DF) in marinara with pasta, Italian green beans, vegetable soup, hearty white bread, and peaches.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25
Closed for Christmas Day

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29
Noon, Lunch...Macaroni and cheese, broccoli, peas, cream of mushroom soup, whole wheat bread, and chocolate chip cookie.

- TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30**
Noon, Lunch...Honey balsamic chicken (GF)(DF), roasted butternut squash, herbed rice, salad, sourdough bread, and tropical fruit salad.

JANUARY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1
Closed for New Year's Day

MONDAY, JANUARY 5
Noon, Lunch...Meatloaf (GF)(DF), garlic mashed potatoes, baby carrots, salad, multi-grain bread, and brownie.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6
Noon, Lunch...Spinach pie, roasted potatoes, zucchini and yellow squash, lemon orzo soup, pita bread, and snickerdoodle cookie.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8
Noon, Lunch...Southwestern vegetarian stuffed pepper (GF), sweet potato wedges, corn, salad, white bread, and tres leche cake.

MONDAY, JANUARY 12
Noon, Lunch...Mushroom and pepper frittata (GF), potatoes au gratin, cauliflower, tomato soup, whole wheat bread, and tapioca pudding.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13
Noon, Lunch...Beef chili (GF)(DF), white rice, broccoli, salad, corn bread, and pineapple.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15
Noon, Lunch...Pasta primavera, spinach, stewed tomatoes, salad, dinner roll, and fruit crisp.

MONDAY, JANUARY 19
Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20
Noon, Lunch...Teriyaki salmon (GF)(DF), Asian vegetables, white rice, salad, Chinese noodles, and Mandarin oranges.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22
Noon, Lunch...Ratatouille (GF)(DF), quinoa, herbed chickpeas, cream of asparagus soup, sourdough bread, and banana pudding.

MONDAY, JANUARY 26
Noon, Lunch...Sloppy Joe pasta (DF), broccoli, roasted carrots, coleslaw, multi-grain bread, and applesauce.

Recovering from an illness or injury? Cooking becoming difficult?



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

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

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

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

Knesset Israel – 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield



ONGOING MINYANS

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

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Friday, December 5 4:02 p.m.
Friday, December 12 4:02 p.m.
Friday, December 19 4:04 p.m.
Friday, December 26 4:08 p.m.

MAZEL TOV!

Berkshire Bounty, whose work combatting food insecurity in the Berkshires was recognized with funding by the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). This statewide program is designed to support initiatives that provide more equitable access to locally grown, raised, harvested, and caught foods by strengthening the local food supply chain.

Richie and Marcie Greenfield Simons on their 40th wedding anniversary

Laura Frankenthaler on her special birthday

Ellen Masters on her 80th birthday

Cecily Levine on her special birthday

Joel Wolk on his special birthday and anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah

Marshall Raser on his 97th birthday

Dr. Almog Cohen and Rafael Sonnenreich on the birth of their son, **Chaim Noa**



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Your Federation Presents

Mobile Museum of Tolerance Debut Introduced a New Resource for Combatting Bias in Area Schools

Educators, local elected officials, and community members from across Berkshire County visited Federation’s office in Pittsfield on November 5 to learn more about the Mobile Museum of Tolerance (MMOT). Attendees experienced hands-on demonstrations in this self-contained classroom on wheels that offers immersive technology and facilitator-led workshops that use the lessons of history to promote greater tolerance – educators are already in discussions on bringing the MMOT to their schools in the near future. Thank you to our event co-sponsor Berk12 and to the Simon Wiesenthal Center for making this event possible. We also thank Berkshire District Attorney Tim Shugrue and Joann Shugrue, caseworker for Congressman Richard Neal, (holding Hate Has No Home Here sign below) for their support.



PHOTOS BY LISA REZNIK AND PAIGE WRIGHT

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Dec. 6 at 6 p.m.
Moroccan Havdalah

A Musical Journey at Williams College

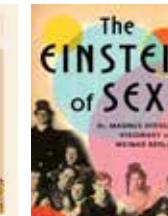
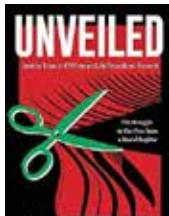
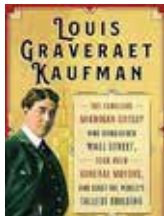
Share Havdalah with local students and celebrate the rich musical and linguistic heritage of Morocco’s Jewish community. Led by musician and educator Yona Elfassi, PhD, we’ll explore traditional and contemporary Moroccan songs, sing in Darija (Moroccan Arabic), and uncover the stories and rhythms that connect language, spirituality, and sound.

REGISTER: Email Rabbi Seth Wax at
smw4@williams.edu

Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

Williams College
Jewish Association

JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, December 11 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Matching Minds with Sondheim: The Puzzles and Games of the Broadway Legend with author and game designer Barry Joseph.

Thursday, January 15 at 10:45 a.m. (virtual)
We Are Black Jews: Ethiopian Jewry and the Journey to Equality in Israel with journalist and activist Roni Fantanesh Malkai.

Thursday, January 29 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Unveiled: Inside Iran's #WomanLifeFreedom Revolt with journalist and Israeli UN spokesperson Jonathan Harounoff.

Thursday, February 5 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Sesame: Global Recipes & Stories of an Ancient Seed with chef Rachel Simons.

Thursday, February 19 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
The Einstein of Sex: Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld: Visionary of Weimar Germany with journalist Daniel Brook.

Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)
Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose Kushner, Evelyn Lauder and the Dawn of The Breast Cancer Movement with founder of A 2nd Act and author Judith Pearson



SUMMER CAMP 2026 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE



You Can Afford Jewish Summer Camp! Federation can Help!

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is dedicated to making a Jewish summer camp experience affordable and accessible for every child by offering financial assistance.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 16
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Additional assistance is available through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Visit hgf.org for more information.



Jewish Federation[®]
OF THE BERKSHIRES

Camp scholarships are made possible by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires with support from the Arthur and Helen Maislen Camp Fund.

Celebrate Chanukah at NightWood

A FANTASTICAL JOURNEY THROUGH SOUND & LIGHT

SAVE THE DATE: Community Chanukah Celebration

Sunday, December 14 from 5-7 pm

Hosted by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
at 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, glow fun, 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.
REGISTER: tinyurl.com/Hanukah2025

This Event is Exclusively Outdoors. Dress Warmly!

Trails can be uneven and require secure footing. Self-guided route is 3/4 of a mile through the woods and gardens and includes both paved and unpaved pathways.



Your Federation Presents

A Hot Time at Hot Plate on a Chilly Autumn Day

The Berkshires Jewish Collective keeps making new connections

By Sarah Singer

The Berkshires Jewish Collective had a fantastic Sukkot gathering in October with almost 20 people at Hot Plate Brewery in Pittsfield. We shared a beautiful evening with Sukkot activities, the lulav and etrog, and an incredible potluck. People made new connections and it really felt like community. The event was in partnership with Hot Plate, and we're so grateful for their partnership and their work in building community across religions and backgrounds.

The idea for this event actually originated two years ago when Michael Duffy was sitting at the bar at Hot Plate talking about the idea of celebrating Sukkot there. Fast forward to this year, he brought it to the Berkshires Jewish Collective steering committee to explore a partnership, and the rest was history.

Here's how Hot Plate described the evening on their Facebook page:

"Sukkot is a harvest festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt, and even though we missed the official end of this seven-day festival this year, we were able to pull it off yesterday evening. We were joined by members of the Jewish community both here in The Berkshires and from Columbia County, NY. We

were really touched by how special of an event this was, by how the participants were from different temples and came together to celebrate, and how we as an interfaith community can continue to find ways to highlight and celebrate our shared values and beliefs rather than focusing on what divides us. Thanks to everyone else who came out on a chilly night to celebrate! We're so happy we could be a part of this!"

Save the Date for Chanukah!

We're planning 'Chanukah at the Co-Op' celebration on Thursday, December 18 at 5:30 p.m. at the Berkshire Food Co-op Great Barrington. It's for adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s with candle lighting, dreidels, sufganiyot, and some intention-setting around Rosh Chodesh. For more info, reach out to me directly at sarah@lifesyouradventure.com. You can also save the date on our WhatsApp group – use the QRC code on this page. Singles, couples, and families all are welcome.



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LOCAL NEWS

Moroccan Havdalah:
A Musical Journey at
Williams College



Yona Elfassi

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Saturday, December 6 at 6 p.m., community members are invited to support Williams College students and join in Havdalah through the rich musical and linguistic heritage

of Morocco's Jewish community to wish a warm good-bye to Shabbat.

Led by musician and educator Yona Elfassi, PhD, attendees will explore traditional and contemporary Moroccan songs, learn to sing in Darija (Moroccan Arabic), and discover the stories, rhythms, and cultural expressions behind the music. This experience will offer an immersive journey that bridges language, spirituality, and sound – a soulful way to end Shabbat and welcome the new week. To register, please email Rabbi Seth Wax at smw4@williams.edu.

Sponsored by the Williams College Jewish Association and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. The event take place at Williams College Jewish Religious Center at 24 Stetson Court.

The Williams College Jewish Association is also thrilled to welcome everyone to the northern Berkshires for this special opportunity, which will be featured in the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce's annual Holiday Walk.

Dr. Yona A. Elfassi, educator, researcher, and content creator was born in Morocco, lived in France and Spain, and has been based in Israel for the last ten years. He holds a dual PhD in Middle East Studies (Ben-Gurion University, Israel) and Sociology/Anthropology (Sciences Po Bordeaux, France). Yona founded *Limud Darija*, a movement dedicated to reviving Moroccan Arabic (Darija) and Jewish-Moroccan musical heritage through workshops, lectures, and communal singing; he also co-founded *Global Mimouna*, an initiative launched in 2019 to celebrate and share the rich traditions of Moroccan and North African Jewish communities through the Mimouna festival.

His work has taken him around the world, where he has lectured at leading universities and institutions. His academic journey transcends traditional boundaries. Fueled by the conviction that research ought to forge connections and deepen understanding, he extends his impact through academic endeavors, social initiatives, and short films. His mission is to contribute valuable insights to the dynamic fields of Muslim-Jewish relations, the plurality of identities, and the preservation of indigenous cultures.

Berkshire Jewish
Student-Athletes – Join
the 2026 JCC Maccabi
Games in Toronto!



Team Springfield (MA) Maccabi, sponsored by the Springfield Jewish Community Center, invites Jewish athletes from the Berkshires, Western Massachusetts, Central Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island to participate in the 2026 JCC Maccabi Games in Toronto, August 2–7, 2026.

Thanks to the generosity of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Jewish teen athletes from the Berkshires, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont are eligible for a \$500 subsidy, making this incredible experience more affordable than ever.

This Olympic-style Jewish sporting event is more than a competition – it's a chance to connect, grow, and create memories that will last a lifetime. Every summer, thousands of Jewish teens from across the globe gather for the world's largest Jewish teen gathering outside of Israel. In 2026, 2,000 athletes ages 13 to 17 will come together to compete in team and individual sports, participate in cultural and social activities, engage in meaningful community service, and celebrate Jewish identity in a safe and vibrant environment.

Whether you're an athlete eager to compete, a teen looking to make new friends, or a young person ready to explore Jewish culture on a global stage, the JCC Maccabi Games have something for everyone.

For more information, to register for the kick-off event, or to sign up for the Games, visit: springfieldjcc.org/jcc-maccabi-games/



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CULTURE & ARTS

ART OF ANCIENT HEBREW,
continued from cover

mosaic letters on synagogue floors, and end with monstrous and magnificent medieval manuscripts.

Additional sessions will be “Ben Shahn and the Art of Hebrew Calligraphy” on January 8, 2026 and “Hebrew Calligraphy and Letter Arts Today: Tattoos, Type, and Graffiti” on February 26, 2026. No knowledge of Hebrew language required.

Joanna Homrighausen writes and teaches at the intersection of sacred text, lettering arts, and scribal crafts. Having earned her PhD in Religion (Hebrew Bible) at Duke University, she teaches Religious Studies at the College of William & Mary, where she has taught the biblical Hebrew sequence, the history of ancient Israel, and first-year writing seminars.

In November, Professor Homrighausen previewed her first talk for the BJV. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

You wrote that in your first program for us that you’ll explore how Jews in the ancient and medieval worlds “made Hebrew letters go from a mere vehicle of thought to the very building blocks of creation.” Hebrew letters have meanings invested in them beyond the characters on the page – there are values, for example, assigned by gematria (the numerological system by which Hebrew letters correspond to numbers) so that words have different numerical, Kabbalistic values. So, can you explain what you mean about the building blocks of creation and calligraphy?

Hebrew language is this central, sacred, cultural touchstone of Jewish life. And consequently, Judaism has evolved some very creative and interesting ways to squeeze as much meaning and meaning-making out of the Hebrew language as possible. And so we have the texts that are in Hebrew, but we also have, like you said, traditions of *gematria*. You can find numerical symbolism in biblical verses and get whole new homiletic meanings, interpretations out of it. And then when you get to the Talmud, you get discussions of the meanings of Hebrew words that are rooted in the shapes of the letters, like the visual look at the letter forms.

Why does the Torah begin with the letter *bet*? Well, it’s open and it’s closed on three sides. It has a roof and a floor, and it has one side that’s open. And this is to represent that God made the world as a home for humans. And then, of course, there is the mystical stuff, the Kabbalistic ideas of creation through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which also goes way back in Jewish tradition. What I’m interested in thinking about and talking about is not just the meaning of the letters in the Kabbalah sense, but how do we look at them visually and appreciate that element? When we look at the visual dimension of the Hebrew letters and how they’re written in all kinds of different media – from synagogue carvings to medieval manuscripts to Torah scrolls – how does the art of the Hebrew letter touch on so many parts of Jewish life?

There is so much care invested in scripture being recorded accurately. Did the added layers of meaning and significance free up calligraphers or constrain them?



“The Yonah Pentateuch”; Germany; 13th century; British Library

On the level of playing with letter forms, I guess you could make an argument that there were constraints. So just for example, there’s a large body of Jewish law about how to write a Torah scroll. And there’s a good chunk of it that has to do with the way that you have to make letters because you don’t want people to misread a Torah scroll when they’re chanting on Shabbat. The letter *reish* cannot have a hard-edged corner. It must be pretty rounded so that you can tell it from a *daleth*. And the *yud* can’t extend really far down the little tail at the bottom – otherwise, it’ll look like a *vav*. I have a hunch that the tradition of having to hand-scribe things in Judaism kept calligraphy, kept the handmade lettering arts going. If you look at Western Christianity, that tradition of making major biblical manuscripts [by hand] went away after Gutenberg, more or less. I don’t think [the Jewish tradition] is restraining or opening. I think it’s both. There are constraints, as with everything in Jewish life. There are communal norms that must be respected and at the same time, within those norms, there’s a lot of creativity that can take place.

So long as everything is kept kosher.

Yeah. Of course, we have to keep separate the world of playful Hebrew calligraphy, made by people like [the artist] Ben Shahn or someone like Gabriel Wolf,

ART OF ANCIENT HEBREW,
continued on page 16

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COMMUNITY FILM SERIES 2026

JANUARY 11

WELCOME TO YIDDISHLAND
Documentary by Ros Horin
Discussion to follow with Sebastian
Schulman from the Yiddish Book Center

FEBRUARY 1

JOE PAPP IN FIVE ACTS
Documentary by Tracie Holder
Discussion to follow

MARCH 1

SHARI AND LAMB CHOP
Documentary by Lisa D’Apolito
Discussion to follow

ALL TICKETS ARE \$10. PROGRAMS BEGIN AT 2 PM.

DOORS OPEN AT 1:30 PM

Popcorn and refreshments available

Location: Temple Anshe Amunim

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Accessible building

CULTURE & ARTS

ART OF ANCIENT HEBREW,
continued from page 15

who’s designing tattoos. There’s a whole art calligraphy side of Hebrew letters of works that are not being made for communal ritual.

Let me ask about the other theme of your talk, about drawings that appear in the margins of a manuscript. I very much enjoyed Michael Camille’s excellent book about the marginal drawings in medieval Christian manuscripts, Image on the Edge. One reviewer described edges, margins, boundaries, and liminal zones as spaces where order can and does break down. These marginal images don’t usually stand alone, but in relation to and commentary upon a larger image or the text itself. Do margins serve Jewish artists in the same way as Camille described them serving in Christian manuscripts in the Middle Ages?

Marc Michael Epstein, who teaches at Vassar, applied a lot of Camille’s ideas to medieval Hebrew manuscripts, like Haggadahs that have Jews with the heads of birds and things like that. He argued that Jews were adopting the dominant cultural symbolism and illustrating scenes of daily life and of biblical memory in ways that could bring it into their own time, that also might be making comments on the place of Jews in Christian society. I think with any book form, there’s always this dialog between the “main text” and the margins. The margins are where we play. I think of a page of Talmud, where there are always a lot of different voices on the page.

I have an essay in the new Jewish Publication Society book, *Ketubah Renaissance*, about the contemporary revival of the hand-decorated ketubah that’s taken place since roughly 1970. I write about how a lot of these *ketubot* have the legal text in the center. What’s in the margins might be something very idiosyncratic and custom-made for a particular couple. I would wager to bet for a lot of Jews, especially Jews who are not as invested in traditional forms of *halakhah*, might not even know what the legal text in the middle means. The text is a set tradition, but maybe symbols around the periphery that they’ve chosen in the margins tell us something about what the couple values or what their story is as a couple. So in that case, the margins are saying more or mean more to some people than the actual text. So – what’s the text? What’s the margin? What’s the center? What’s the periphery? I think these are getting played with.

Marc Michael Epstein has definitely argued that there is social commentary going on. But it’s veiled and submerged because, of course, if a book gets into the wrong hands, you might attract persecution.

How are your three programs going to connect? “Ben Shahn and the Art of Hebrew Calligraphy” will be the next one in January and then “Hebrew Calligraphy and Letter Arts Today: Tattoos, Type, and Graffiti” in February

All three of them will use the art of Hebrew calligraphy, lettering, typography, all of those things, to open up different visions of Judaism and show how this art form connects to different parts of Jewish life – whether it’s law, ritual, whether it’s ideas about mysticism, and all the different ways the Hebrew alphabet is meaningful and is made meaningful. For the second talk, I’ll focus on Ben Shahn. His letters were very playful and very clearly embrace a handmade folk esthetic, with all its imperfections and messiness. That for him was part of his Jewish vision because he was so invested in social justice. And in the third talk, I’ll be looking at things like Hebrew tattoos, and how different typefaces have taken on different cultural associations, especially in Israel. There are typefaces that are for religious books, but there were, for example, in the early years of the Nation State of Israel, an interest in making typefaces that would express Israeli national identity. So I’ll be discussing all of these things that letters are doing beyond just conveying words.

10 Foolproof Yiddish Words to Use All the Time



“Nu?” (Illus.)

(via Chabad.org) – The following Yiddish words were selected for their elasticity of use. These are the words you can safely pop into your conversation for emphasis with little fear of messing up, since it is hard to misappropriate them. Yet, like a good dose of garlic in chicken soup, they add tremendous flavor to your conversations. Use them to wow your friends and show your Yiddish bona fides.

1. *Shmitchik*
Shmitchik is somewhat like doodad, a good word to describe something small whose name is unknown. So if you are cleaning your sink for Passover and wish to store the aerator safely, you can put it in an envelope and label it “faucet *shmitchik*.” You can be sure that you – and anyone snooping in your kitchen – will know exactly what you are referring to. Pronounce it: SHMIT-shik

2. *Gradeh*
Gradeh means “precisely” or “actually.” So even if you are not *gradeh* sure how to use this word, you can *gradeh* insert it into any sort of statement, and you’ve managed to emphasize your point, *gradeh*, just by adding a single word. Pronounce it: GRAH-deh
3. *Mamosh*
Mamosh is a Hebrew word that means “substance,” and denotes that something is really, really real. You can use this word wherever you’d use the English word “really.” It’s *mamosh* not a big deal if you overuse this one, since (like *gradeh*) it can fit in just about anywhere. Now in Judaism there are all kinds of things that exist on a spiritual plane. For example, a person’s good deeds can be seen as spiritual children, and blessing can be manifest in ways not apparent to us. But that’s not enough. We want the real deal. So when you give someone a blessing, specify that you want it to *mamosh* be so, in a tangible reality. Pronounce it: MAH-mish
4. *Vee Heist Es*
Vee Heist Es is Yiddish for “how is it called?” and is the equivalent of “what-chamacallit.” So if you do not recall the name for that pesky aerator, but don’t want to display your ignorance by calling it a *shmitchik*, you can just call it a *vee heist es*. A bit longer, but more sophisticated. Pronounce it: VEE hayst ess
5. *Nu*
Nu is like “um,” “ahem,” and “argh” all wrapped into one. It can also be a filler in speech when you are not sure what to say. Note that “*nu nu*” (with an emphasis on the first “nu”) has an entirely different meaning, along the lines of “oh well.” Pronounce it: NEW
6. *Avadeh*
Avadeh is a Yiddishization of the Hebrew word *vadai*, which means “certain.” So when your prospective Shabbat guest asks if she can bring along a friend, just answer with an expansive “*avadeh!*” Pronounce it: ah-VAH-deh
7. *Takeh*
Takeh means “indeed,” and it’s *takeh* true that this is also one of those words you can sprinkle liberally into your conversation without much fear of misuse. This is *takeh* the truth, *mamosh!* Pronounce it: TAH-keh
8. *Feh*
Feh is an expression of disgust. It is an appropriate reaction to something you find repulsive (“*Feh*, I hate the way the fish store smells!”). You can also use it to react to an activity you find distasteful or unbecoming (“You want me to shake hands with that lowlife? *Feh!*”). Pronounce it: Feh
9. *Nebach*
Nebach can be inserted to show sympathy for the unfortunate subject of your conversation, whom you can also refer to as a *nebach*. So you can say, “Her sister, *nebach*, has failed her nursing exam four times in a row. What a *nebach!*” Pronounce it: NEH-bakh
10. *Aderaba*
Aderaba is Aramaic for “au contraire,” and is frequently used in Talmudic parlance when questioning a stated premise. “You think you’ll get ahead by selecting the pay-as-you-go option? *Aderaba!* You’ll end up paying an extra percentage every month!” Pronounce it: AH-der-abba

This article originally was published at Chabad.org. Reprinted with permission.

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Treating Paul Celan



Paul Celan (1920-1970)

By Richard Berlin

They've healed me into pieces.
-Paul Celan

While considering Celan's suicide
I think back to Virginia Woolf drowning
herself and the psychiatrists who said
her soul was too sensitive to live
in an age filled with the madness of war,
though today we would call her "Bipolar"
and say it was the weight of depression
that made her fill her woolen coat with rocks.

Paul Celan never made it to Bloomsbury,
never starred in a Merchant-Ivory film,
but I keep re-reading his "Death Fugue" poem
and wonder if he ever learned to savor
Parisian coffee and croissants after
the war, his father dead from typhus,
his mother with a Nazi bullet through her neck.

I daydream I'm treating him at the Salpêtrière,
my office window shaded by a plane tree,
Celan seated across from me describing
nightmares even an SSRI can't cure.
I imagine my diagnosis, the way I would listen,
my metaphors. But after we've met
for the time it takes to smoke eight hundred
packs of cigarettes, after all the medication trials,
the damaged sighs and side effects, I wonder,
Would Celan still drown himself in the River Seine?



A retired Berkshire County, Massachusetts 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."



Happy Hanukkah

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Stuck and Unstuck in time

A 6th great-grandson retraces the footsteps of Colonial Era patriot David Levy and family

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

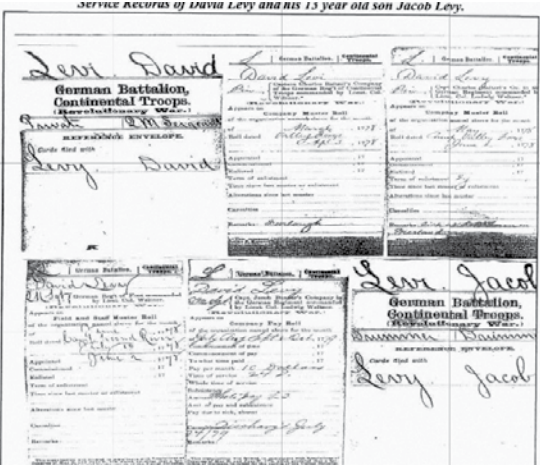
‘[Although] the direct descendants of Jewish men and women who lived in North America during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries...comprise a small minority of the Jewish American community (and some of their ancestors converted to Christianity generations ago), the progeny of early American Jews are symbolically important. They link all American Jews to the pioneer phases of the nation’s history and, by extension, to colonialism and slavery. The descendants of early American Jews both legitimize and implicate their later-arriving co-religionists. They are living links to a founding mythology that American Jews of many different backgrounds may choose to embrace or, for that matter, reject. As legacy of that mythology becomes more troubling and burdensome, the “self-understandings” that genealogy instills in its practitioners have evolved. Likewise, the cultural identities that Jews shape in the image of that mythology may shift in accordance with how the living descendants of early American Jews interpret or reinterpret their families’ legacies.’

Michael Hoberman, *Imagining Early American Jews* (p.160).

Last May, on a journey to interpret my early American Jewish family’s legacy in Frederick, MD, I parked my car just down the block from the site where Levy’s Brickyard once operated on the banks of Carrol Creek, which wends through the town. The brickyard was the primary business of David Levy, my 6th paternal great-grandfather, who died in 1804 and who I believe to be the *pintele Yid* in my gene pool. I discovered his identity after I matched DNA with my birth father and maternal birth family on Ancestry.com when I was in my mid-fifties, a stroke of good fortune that allowed me to situate myself on several family trees stretching back to Colonial America in the 17th and 18th centuries.

I can’t be certain David Levy was Jewish, but his last name and background strongly suggests that he was. His German-born wife, Maria Barbara Weiss, was a Christian, and baptismal records from Germany show that previous generations of her family identified as Protestants, as well – although their surnames could be construed as Jewish and their given names were almost all from the Old Testament. Fifteen-year-old David Levy had arrived in Annapolis, MD, from London on the merchant ship *Lyon* in 1756, likely one of the 91 convicts it transported from England to the colonies to serve seven or more years of indentured servitude. He and Maria wed in 1765 in Frederick, which was then a busy commercial hub along the main road taken by German settlers migrating south from Pennsylvania to the northern valley of Virginia. The couple had ten children together, nine of whom survived – lucky for the era in which they lived. One of them was my fifth great-grandmother, Sarah, who married Francis Geisinger and settled in nearby Middletown.

Frederick was my last stop along a tour to visit a few of the sites associated with David Levy, his family, and his three-year stint in the Continental Army. He was present at all of the key battles fought in the Mid-Atlantic states – Trenton and Princeton (NJ, 1776); Brandywine and Germantown (PA, 1777); Monmouth (NJ, 1778); the British retreat from New York that brought him as far north as White Plains and Fishkill (1778); and Major General John Sullivan’s action against the Iroquois in western Pennsylvania in 1779 (where he might have met coreligionists in Easton, a frontier outpost where Jews were the primary merchants; Samuel Moore Shute of the 2nd New Jersey Regiment wrote about the townspeople ‘Take them in general they are a very inhospitable set – all High Dutch [German] & Jew’). He crossed the Delaware River twice with Washington’s army and, in the winter of 1777/78, was present at Valley Forge, although he returned to Frederick for a time to recuperate from an illness before rejoining his regiment, the German Battalion. Not long after, David was joined by his 13-year-old son, Jacob, who served as a drummer boy.



David Levy and son Jacob’s service records

was notorious for the opportunities for corruption and fraud it presented, at least according to the park ranger I spoke to when I visited Valley Forge on my way to Frederick. Was David Levy a *hondler*? I suppose he had to have been.

His later career as a successful businessman seems to bear that out. He does seem to have been reliable, in any case – in 1780, after his return to civilian life, he was paid hundreds of pounds by the government to secure supplies for the Continental Army as the war moved to the southern colonies. All of this is recorded in a family history compiled in the early 2000s.

The day before I arrived in Frederick, I’d visited the battlefield sites at Princeton, Trenton, and Monmouth. At Valley Forge, the recreated encampment is situated on precisely spot where the German Regiment would have been. Standing there, I could look out over the same vistas that David Levy saw as a soldier nearly 250 years ago. By car, I covered the distances he would have had to traverse on foot, and when I found myself on rural roads free of construction, I’d stop to take in the countryside in order to get the feel of the landscape that surrounded him on his marches.

From the site of the brickyard, I walked through Frederick’s Historic District. Like many towns that attract tourist hordes, the buildings were plastered with ‘No Parking’ signs, making the place feel like something of a picturesque tow away zone. All around me were buildings dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries. These were the streets through which my ancestors walked, that a time-traveling David Levy would be able to navigate today. No doubt, he would be able to identify some of the red-brick buildings constructed with materials having been sourced from his eponymous brickyard. And, when he arrived at 119 West Patrick Street, he would see that the house he built for his family is still standing.



“Levy’s Tavern” on West Patrick Street, Frederick, MD

in here,” to a synagogue where his ancestors worshiped, “and, all of a sudden, the generations start to melt together’.”

Hoberman writes that “being ‘unstuck in time’ is the perfect metaphor for the notion of self-creation. To be unstuck in time, after all, is to transcend the mortality of past generations and to be capable of making present-day contact with bygone events and personalities.” While “genealogy activates the historical imagination,” we read our histories “in accordance with [our] current needs and desires.” Hoberman adds that the “condition of being unstuck in time cannot help but be offset by its opposite: being stuck in time...[It] reminds us that the past itself cannot be manipulated, that history is a compendium of unchanging realities, and that the ancestors who knew nothing of the values that we uphold in the present were exactly who they were.”

I had not read Michael’s book before I visited Frederick, but those passages exactly describe how I felt. I became unstuck in time – and what were *my* current needs and desires? To connect with the one *Yid* out of the 128 6th great-grandparents in my family tree – because 158 years after David Levy’s demise, one of his descendants returned to the embrace of *kl’al Yisroel* by being adopted by Henry and Eleanor Stern of Miami Beach, Florida, in 1962. Sure, the Revolutionary War stuff is cool, but I can trace two other great-grandparents back to that conflict, one with at least as colorful a Colonial Army resume as Levy’s. (I’ll be visiting that great-grandfather’s Virginia home and his battlefields in the South this November.) I feel the *pintele Yid* in my gene pool in a way I don’t feel the Californio Mexicans or the Sonoran Native Americans or the Celts (70 percent of my genetic makeup) or the English Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans (arrived as early as 1634) or Scottish royalty (don’t ask) or any of the others ancestors in the genetic hodgepodge and genealogical records revealed by Ancestry.com after I spit into a test tube. Don’t get me wrong – I embrace the entirety of my heritage. I would not much cotton to someone telling me that I’m *not really* Mexican American. No, I am *really* Mexican American – one-quarter, in fact, through my Californio grandfather, the first Hispanic member of a US Olympic team who was a fourth great-grandson of Jewish merchant David Levy. I just don’t feel what it means to be a 21st century Mexican American the way I feel what it might be like to be an 18th century Jew who had to figure things out as a member of a minority group in America.

So as for the bit that Hoberman describes as the descendants of Colonial Era Jews “link[ing] all American Jews to the pioneer phases of the nation’s history and, by extension, to colonialism and slavery” – David Levy was a slave owner. In his will, he left his wife Maria “her Negro woman” and later records



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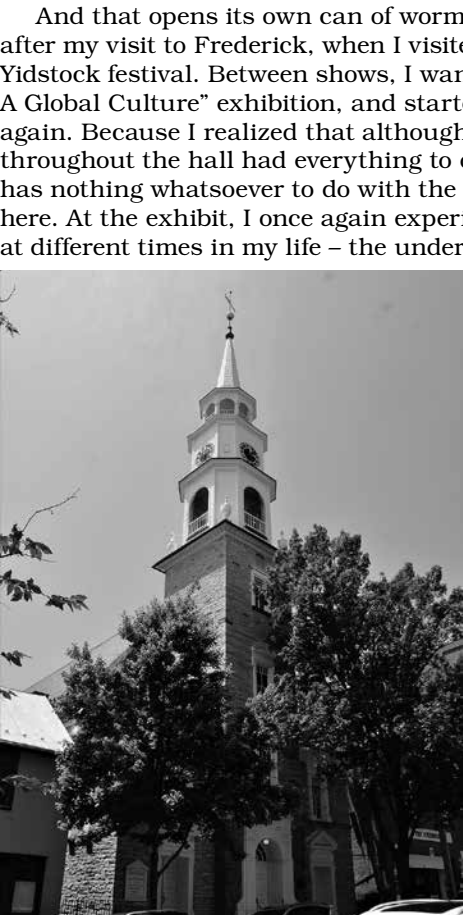
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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

detail his executors, my great-uncles, selling off his household goods, enslaved persons, livestock, and 200,000 burnt bricks. In my conversations with Michael Hoberman, we discussed the ways some Jews have fixed themselves in relation to the American past, an attitude that can be summed up by: “We came after all that bad stuff happened. It had nothing to do with us.” In his book, Michael amusingly points to Larry David’s experience on the *Finding Your Roots* program, where the comedian found out that his Jewish ancestors were indeed slaveowners – *oy vay is mier*, I think, is a proper response to that.

But as Michael pointed out to me, that if Jews have benefitted from American institutions and society because of the advantages conferred by their whiteness and European worldview, perhaps they have to accept the onus of American racism and misdeeds. That in turn makes me wonder whether anyone who benefits from America today – of any race, heritage, or national origin – must tote some of that historical baggage, as well. The problem is complicated and probably irresolvable for those of us who have to grapple with it as family history. Years before I found out that David Levy owned slaves, I was aware that I was descended from generations of slaveholders in Virginia. That David was Jewish doesn’t make me feel any differently about slavery or Jews, either in early America or later on. As Michael put it, “history is a compendium of unchanging realities.” My sense of myself being what it is – I’m an Ashkenazi Jew from Miami Beach who came of age in the last decades of the so-called American Century – I don’t feel guilt at being a descendant of an oppressor class any more than I feel a victim because I’m also descended from Mexicans and Native Americans (and Jews for that matter). While I’ve enjoyed finding out, in middle age, about my genetic make-up, even had I always known the truth, I can’t imagine myself, at any point in my life, using my backstory to advance my prospects or to align my identity with any ethnic group for the social cachet it might afford me. I am exactly as I am, an Ashkenazi Jew who is not an Ashkenazi Jew.



Trinity Chapel, Frederick, MD

And that opens its own can of worms, as I noticed this summer not long after my visit to Frederick, when I visited the Yiddish Book Center for its annual Yidstock festival. Between shows, I wandered amid the artefacts in the “Yiddish: A Global Culture” exhibition, and started to have that “unstuck in time” feeling again. Because I realized that although the Ashkenazi Jewish history celebrated throughout the hall had everything to do with making me the person I am, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the history and genealogy that brought me here. At the exhibit, I once again experienced an anxiety that has gripped me at different times in my life – the understanding that had I not been given up for adoption to a Jewish family, the personal and tribal history that means the world to me would mean nothing to me. And try though I might, I can’t feel Eastern Europe inside myself, although it shaped the lives of my family, my community, and most of the dearest friends I’ve had in my life. At moments like that, the Jewish part of me seems to unstick – and there had never been a place for it to latch onto within me until I found out about David Levy.

The Levy family worshiped at the German Reformed Church (now known as the Evangelical Reformed Church) on Church Street in Frederick, when the congregation gathered in what is now called Trinity Chapel. Fun fact – it’s where Francis Scott Key, of national anthem fame, was baptized. One curious detail noticed by one of the family historians was that while my great-grandmother, Maria, and



Gravestones of the writer’s fifth great-grandparents, Francis Geisinger (1763-1822) and Sarah Geisinger (1770-1835), in Middletown, MD. Their daughter, the author’s 4th great-grandmother Elisabetha, married a Littlejohn. Their daughter Elizabeth Littlejohn married a Turner in Frederick and that couple started the family’s move west, ending up in Southern California by the 1860s

some of the Levy children served as godparents for children baptized at the church, David never did. He speculates that David – for whom no baptism record has been found – was a Jew and remained a Jew, although his entire family identified as Christians.

Although David Levy’s last will and testament survives, none of the letters he might have written have been preserved, and it is impossible to know anything about his inner life. However he might have felt about being a Jew or a Christian, it is clear that David believed in America. Military records show he enlisted in the Continental Army on 7/21/1776, weeks after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, traveling nearly 50 miles east to Baltimore to do so, perhaps to avoid ruffling the feathers of Loyalists in Frederick. He joined the German Regiment, a regular unit that required three years of service. That English-born David would have enlisted in a German regiment seems unusual, although a family historian points out that not only did David marry a German woman, all his children married spouses of German extraction, and Germans seemed to comprise his business associates and social milieu, as well. Did he have an antipathy toward England for having been shipped out ignominiously as a teenager? Did he acquire a facility with the German language because he spoke Yiddish? Impossible to know.

When I interviewed Michael Hoberman, he said, “I think it’s important to let go of the idea that somehow we [Jews] came from somewhere else, because as the book explains, Jews in some number, have been here as far back as the 17th century.” To have seen where in America I come from during my spin through Revolutionary War battlefields, Valley Forge, Frederick, and the Mid-Atlantic states affirmed what I share with my 6th great-grandfather – I believe in America. My genealogical inquiries have revealed that my family stories contain all the nation’s historical complexities and moral contradictions – including a Jewish family that assimilated into Christian America. I come from America, nowhere else – there is nothing to be done about it.

At the end of my day in Frederick, I ascended the tall steps to Evangelical Reformed Church, sat down, and stared across the street at Trinity Chapel, where

DAVID LEVY,
continued on page 20



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OBITUARIES

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Daniel W. Kaplan, 93, devoted to the Jewish community, very strong work ethic, role model
PITTSFIELD – Daniel W. Kaplan, 93, died peacefully early Sunday morning October 12, surrounded by his family.
Born October 5, 1932 to Tillie (Alter) and Max Kaplan, Dan began his life in Brooklyn, NY, and grew up in the Bronx. A graduate of Bronx High School of Science, he attended City College (NY) where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering. Dan proudly fulfilled his draft duty in the U.S. Army where he served in the U.S. and Europe from 1955 to 1957. He began a career as a mechanical engineer for Mack Trucks, and then moved to General Electric, where he spent the next thirty years, until he retired.
On Memorial Day Weekend, 1959, Dan met Rita Rudich at the Laurels, in the Catskills. They married on February 28, 1960. Dan and Rita moved six times in their first six years of marriage – zig-zagging across the country from Pittsfield and Virginia to California and Illinois – and they took pride in sharing that astonishing fact with family and friends. They returned to Pittsfield in 1966 with their baby daughter, Tina. In the next few years, they welcomed Michael and Lauren into their home at 56 Anita Drive. They remained there on Anita Drive until they moved to Kimball Farms at the end of 2020.
Dan adored living in the Berkshires and enjoyed raising his family outside of the congestion and busyness

of the city. A devoted father and husband, Dan believed firmly in his values. He was especially devoted to the Jewish community and had a very strong work ethic. He lived these values, a model for his children and his six grandchildren. A diligent homeowner, Dan was a skilled handyman and rarely called on contractors or professionals for help around the house or with his car. Over the years, the array of projects included everything from numerous home repairs, and changing oil in his cars to fully renovating their kitchen, and even putting an addition onto the family's house as a retirement project. Dan and Rita were loyal volunteers at Tanglewood, the Berkshire Theatre Festival, and they delighted in showing their "city" friends the treasures of the Berkshires.
If you knew Dan Kaplan, you knew that being an engineer was a shoe that fit. His work at Pittsfield GE was constructive, practical, analytical, and focused. He spent much of his career between his drafting desk and the machine-shop floor, designing, engineering, and manufacturing submarine technology. He loved to be involved in a myriad of design and manufacturing projects, including working directly with the teams on the shop floor to guide machining, welding, and forming. It was a joy for him.
He and Rita were active and devoted members of Congregation Knesset Israel and the local Jewish

community. Dan was a long-standing member of the Knesset Israel Cemetery Committee; he felt a strong sense of duty in providing end of life rituals of respect and dignity to community members. Dan's commitment to Israel was deep, and in former years he joined groups in nearly two dozen volunteer service trips there. Acutely aware of the long history of antisemitism that led to the need for a Jewish state, Dan believed in the connection between the Jewish people and the State of Israel.
He is survived by his devoted wife of 65 years, Rita, who was the love of his life; as well as their children and grandchildren, all who made him proud and meant everything to him. He leaves his daughter, Tina Rubin of Agawam, MA, her children Max and Samantha, and their father Lawrence; son, Michael Kaplan of Taipei, Taiwan, his wife Carrie Tenebrini, and sons Jack and Eli; and Lauren Kaplan of Sudbury, MA, her husband Russell Green, and children Noah and Rebecca.
A funeral was held Thursday, October 16 at Knesset Israel, Pittsfield. Donations can be made in his name to the Knesset Israel Cemetery Fund, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201 or the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

DAVID LEVY,
continued from page 19



Francis and Sarah's son, David Geisinger was an officer of the United States Navy who served during the War of 1812 and was later Commodore of the East India Squadron, which focused on protecting American interests in the Far East, from 1848-1850. His flagship was the USS Congress, pictured here on the right.

my family members worshiped, where they were baptized, wed, and eulogized. The Levys would still recognize the façade and stone tower, although David and Maria would not have been around to see the graceful steeple completed in 1807. His daughter, Sarah, who married Francis Geisinger in that church, would have. I visited their graves in nearby Middletown the next day.
It was a perfect warm spring day and I lolled on the steps as the day began to ebb, getting that unstuck-in-time feeling. I imagined the church doors opening at the conclusion of a Sunday morning service and parishioners filing out onto the street, dozens of them milling about in front of the church to socialize. Their pent-up energy released, raucous children chased each other on the street. I saw the ladies in groups, animatedly sharing news and gossip. I saw the men huddling together to talk about the town, their businesses, and maybe some of the political news about the newly-minted United States of America. I sat watching them all for a long time, until the gathered started to disperse. David and Maria summoned their large brood. It was time to go home for supper. I watched eleven of them gather together and start walking home. They turned the corner in the direction of 'Levy's Tavern,' just minutes away on West Patrick Street. I saw their backs as they walked down Court Street, and then they were gone. I wanted to follow them home, but stopped myself. When I looked back at Trinity Chapel, I had stopped dreaming, stuck back in time.



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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15⁷⁹ lb.

Meal Mart 1st Cut Fresh Beef Brisket
Kosher

Streit's Egg Noodles
12 oz. • Select Varieties

2/\$3

with AdvantEdge Card

Osem Toasted Couscous
8.8 oz.

2⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Osem Chicken Consomme
14.1 oz.

5⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Osem Mini Croutons
14.1 oz. • The Original Mini "Mandel"

4⁴⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Manischewitz Broth
17 oz. • All Varieties

2⁹⁹

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Gefen Whole Roasted Chestnuts
5.2 oz. • Shelled

3⁴⁹

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Lipton Recipe Secrets Kosher Soup & Dip Mix
1.9-2.4 oz. • Select Varieties

2/\$5

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Kedem Tea Biscuits
4.2 oz. • Select Varieties

5/\$4

with AdvantEdge Card

Kedem Concord Grape Juice
64 oz. • Select Varieties

4⁴⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Joyva Sesame Tahini
15 oz.

7⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Farmers Horseradish
8.5 oz.

2/\$5

with AdvantEdge Card

Empire Kosher Whole Turkey
Frozen

4⁴⁹ lb.

with AdvantEdge Card

Empire Kosher Whole Roasting Chicken
Frozen

4⁶⁹ lb.

with AdvantEdge Card

Empire Kosher Boneless Chicken Breast 2 Lbs.
Frozen

18⁹⁹

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Meal Mart Chicken Wings
Frozen • 24 oz.

10⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Meal Mart Frozen Stew Meat
16 oz.

12⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Meal Mart Egg Rolls With Mushrooms & Vegetables
25 oz.

12⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Meal Mart Meat Balls in Marinara Sauce
33 oz.

17⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

PICS Cold Smoked Atlantic Salmon
4 oz. • All Varieties

6⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Vita Herring In Sour Cream
12 oz. or In Wine Sauce

5⁹⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Manischewitz Frozen Party Assortment Appetizers 8.4 oz.
Manischewitz Frozen Franks in a Blanket • 6 oz.

9⁴⁹

with AdvantEdge Card

Streit's Chanukah Candles
44 Ct.

89¢

with AdvantEdge Card

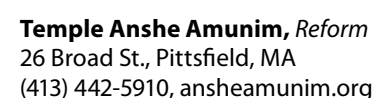
Celebrating the Festival of Lights

1⁴⁹ lb.

Market 32 Apples
U.S. #1 • 2 1/2" Minimum
Select Varieties

2/\$4

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CULTURE & ARTS

How the Yonkers-Born Son of Jewish Immigrants Became the King of American Comedy

In what could be called ‘Your Biography of Biographies,’ David Margolick chronicles the unlikely stardom of Sid Caesar

By Ann Levin / The Forward



Imogene Coca and Sid Caesar in the live 90-minute *Your Show of Shows* (1950), which ran every Saturday night

This story originally appeared in the *Forward* (forward.com). To get the *Forward's* free email newsletters delivered to your inbox, go to forward.com/newsletter-signup.

When Caesar Was King

By David Margolick
Schocken, 400 pages \$35

His comedic DNA is everywhere – *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *All in the Family*, the riffs and routines of Johnny Carson and Larry David. His writers included Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Neil Simon and Woody Allen. Even so, when author David Margolick interviewed the 2,000 Year Old Man for his new biography of Sid Caesar, Brooks told him, “People are going to say, ‘Gee, this is really good and really interesting. Just one question, David: Who’s Sid Caesar?’”

Now the book is out, and Margolick, a longtime New York Times and Vanity Fair writer, has put the question to rest. When *Caesar Was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy* is a lively and thoroughly engrossing account of who Caesar was, why he was so important, and how he transformed American comedy with his short-lived (1950-1954) but influential TV program *Your Show of Shows*.

At the peak of the show’s popularity, Caesar was the most highly paid comedian in America. Some 20 million people tuned into NBC every week to watch the program that was broadcast live on Saturday night from a studio in midtown Manhattan two decades before *Saturday Night Live*. The variety show featured film spoofs, pantomime, and sketches in which Caesar played a beleaguered husband opposite the brilliant Imogene Coca with her rubbery, “wonderfully flexible face,” as one critic put it.

Despite their comedic hijinks, Margolick repeatedly makes the point that Caesar, who died at age 91 in 2014, was “the unlikeliest of comics: introverted, ill at ease, tongue-tied.” Larry Gelbart, a writer for Caesar who went on to create the hit TV series *M*A*S*H* in the 1970s, described his boss’ personality as “zero, non-existent.” According to Simon, he was “extremely smart but completely inarticulate.” Even so, he could bring down the house by impersonating everything from an imperious German general to a fly crawling on a piece of feta cheese. He had what another one of his writers, Howard Morris, called a “meshugana energy.”

Though nothing about *Your Show of Shows* was overtly Jewish, Margolick makes a convincing argument that Caesar’s humor was intrinsically Jewish and that Jews across America read it as such. Among other things, it was Jewish in its “literate, detached, irreverent” point of view, in its “resentment toward the establishment and sympathy for the underdog,” and “in its obsession, born of privation, with food.”

Caesar grew up in Yonkers, the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland and Russia, who ran a rooming house and luncheonette. Since the eatery catered to laborers, many of them foreign-born, Margolick speculates that Caesar, who didn’t learn to talk until he was 3, developed his uncanny ability to mimic foreign languages – his signature double-talk – by absorbing the “sounds and sensibilities” of the conversations he overheard while busing tables.



L-R: Edie Adams, Caesar, Jonathan Winters, Ethel Merman, Milton Berle, Mickey Rooney and Buddy Hackett in *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*

After a deadbeat boarder left behind a saxophone, young Sidney learned to play it, eventually offering him a way out of his straitened circumstances. Soon he was playing gigs in the Catskills, where he branched out into comedy to earn a little extra money. By the 1940s, Caesar was back in New York, where he had the great good fortune to meet the Viennese-born Max Liebman, who had been producing musical revues at a resort in the Poconos and thought Caesar was “the finest comic talent since Charlie Chaplin.” Liebman would go on to direct *Your Show of Shows* and, more than anyone else, make Sid Caesar a star.

But the toll of producing a 90-minute live show over 30-odd weeks for more than four years was tremendous. By its fourth and final season, *Your Show of Shows* couldn’t sustain the level of brilliance and innovation it had achieved during the so-called golden era of live television production in the 1950s. Audiences were changing as more and more Americans outside the big cities, mostly in the Northeast, were acquiring TVs, and their taste skewed more in the direction of the bandleader and accordionist Lawrence Welk.

Margolick makes a convincing argument that Caesar’s humor was intrinsically Jewish and that Jews across America read it as such

Caesar turned 32 during the last year of *Your Show of Shows* and would go on to headline other shows including *Caesar’s Hour* and *Sid Caesar Invites You*, the latter briefly reuniting him with Coca. But by the 1960s, he was largely off the air, grappling with alcoholism, depression, and an addiction to pills.

In what is overall a tender and sympathetic portrait, Margolick doesn’t shy away from showing Caesar’s dark side, offering a complex portrait of an enigmatic genius who seemed to be just as much of a mystery to himself as he was to others. Beautifully written and brimming with life, this book establishes Margolick as one of the ultimate mavens of an era of American Jewish history in the mid-to-late 20th century that has all but ceased to exist.

Ann Levin is a writer and book reviewer who worked for many years at *The Associated Press*. Her personal essays and memoir have appeared in *Sensitive Skin*, *Mr. Beller’s Neighborhood*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Southeast Review*, *Porridge*, *Bloom* and many other publications. She has also read her stories on stage with the New York-based writers’ group *Writers Read*. Visit her website or follow her @annlevinnyc.



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CULTURE & ARTS

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Oil Be There For Hanukkah!

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

Hanukkah is just around the corner, and that means it's time to start thinking about the holiday menu. Of course, there are always the traditional foods fried in oil (you know, the latkes, sufganiyot, and bimuelos, among others), but what about something that doesn't need to be fried? Something that still incorporates the key symbol of Hanukkah?

My firstborn, Seth, has always been interested in cooking. One of my earliest memories of him in the kitchen is of his baking a carrot cake. But instead of canola or coconut oil, my usual go-tos for pareve baking, he had chosen olive oil. I recall being worried that the resulting cake would taste awful.

Well, I certainly learned my lesson. The resulting cake was delicious. In the ensuing years, I have found other uses for olive oil in sweets, none of which require frying in deep fat.

But let's talk about the olive oil itself. We all know the story of the Hanukkah miracle, repeated every year in Hebrew school. A little cruse of pure olive oil (did you even know what a cruse was when you were eight years old?) lit the Temple's menorah a miraculous eight days, the same length of time it took to get a fresh supply.

But why olive oil in particular?

Given that the Mediterranean has the right conditions to encourage growth and health – perfect climate, two clear seasons, and water – it was natural for our ancestors to cultivate olives for oil. Olive products were a major part of the early economy in the Land of Israel, and the oil has been indispensable throughout history for lighting and cooking, as a curative, and as a nutritional supplement.

Olive trees are among the oldest known cultivated trees in the world, having sprung up in their wild form 20 million years ago, as fossilized remains attest. They can live for millennia. In fact, the trees on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives are reputed to be over 2,000 years old.

And since we're talking about Hanukkah, the olives from which the oil was produced for the rededication of the Temple reputedly came from Tekoa, in the Judaeen hills just a few miles south of Jerusalem. Those trees may actually be alive today.



Ancient olive oil pressing

Olive oil could even be used as a form of currency in trade. In the Second Book of Kings (Chapter 4, Verses 1-7), the prophet Ovadiah's widow goes to the prophet Elisha to inform him that her sons will be taken due to her inability to pay her debts, and to ask him for advice. When asked what she has in the house, the woman tells Elisha that all she has is a vessel of olive oil. He then instructs the woman to borrow as many vessels as she can from her neighbors, to fill every one with the oil from her house, and then to sell the oil. The oil keeps flowing until all the vessels are filled, allowing her to save her sons from slavery and to make a living. Another miracle involving olive oil, perhaps?

Olive oil was also essential for sacred purposes. It was used for anointing kings and high priests, as we see in several sources. In the Torah itself we read, "And he [Moses] poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to consecrate him." (Leviticus 8:12) In the Prophets we read that "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." (Samuel I, 16:13) Also in Prophets: "There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent, and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" (1 Kings 1:39)

Olive oil was the fuel for the golden lamps in both the Tabernacle in the desert and the Temple in Jerusalem, and it was part of various offerings, either by itself (Exodus 29:38-40) or mixed with flour into cakes (Leviticus 7:11-12).

Surprisingly, people didn't actually use the fruit of the olive tree as a food until the Second Temple period. (Their mezze platters were obviously lacking.)

On the negative side, the use of olive oil for cooking could get Jews into trouble with the agents of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. Because they wouldn't use pork fat for frying as their Christian neighbors did, Jews used olive oil instead. The aroma of meat frying in olive oil apparently is different enough from that of lard that neighbors would report them to the Church, bringing untold grief. Holy indeed.

Back to Hanukkah: Most of us tend to use colorful wax candles for lighting in our hanukkiot, either those in ubiquitous little blue cardboard boxes found on supermarket shelves, or fancy schmancy ones from Israel. Cheerfully colorful, their dancing flames provide a bright and cheerful addition to the holiday.

While candles are perfectly acceptable, oil is the more historically accurate choice due to its prominent place in the story of the miracle. And it's not all that difficult to do. All you need is an oil hanukkiah, extra virgin olive oil, and a cotton wick. As with candles, place the oil cups from right to left, and light them with the shammash from left to right.

FYI, we do not light a menorah for Hanukkah. A menorah, like



Hanukkiah vs. Menorah

that in the ancient Temple, has seven branches. A hanukkiah has nine: one for the shammash and eight for the days of the holiday.

And speaking of the menorah, in case you've forgotten that part of the story: Rome, under the Emperor Titus, sacked the Second Temple in Jerusalem and took 50,000 Jews back to Rome as slaves. Among the spoils of war was the Temple's menorah. Titus had a triumphal arch built to celebrate his victory, and on that arch is an engraving of that very menorah. You can still see it on the arch today. That menorah is also the symbol of the modern State of Israel.

(FYI: Some scholars have determined that many Ashkenazi Jews have Italian DNA from having intermarried with locals back then.)

So, proclaim the miracle and light up the night. Happy Hanukkah!

To see how olive oil was made in ancient Israel, visit tinyurl.com/IsrOliveOil and view a real oil press from Katzrin in the Golan Heights.



Olive Oil Cake

Between the olive oil and the citrus in this recipe, dreams of golden Mediterranean afternoons will fill your mind when you bite into this moist confection.

- INGREDIENTS:
- 1 cup fresh extra-virgin olive oil

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

1½ cups granulated sugar

3 large eggs, at room temperature

Grated zest of one lemon

Grated zest of one orange

Juice of one lemon

1¼ cups whole milk, at room temperature

Confectioners' sugar and raspberries for garnish
- DIRECTIONS:
- Set the oven to 375 degrees.

Coat a 9-inch round cake pan with baking spray and line the bottom with parchment paper. Then spray the parchment and flour the pan, shaking out any excess flour.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda.

In the bowl of an electric mixer set on high, beat the sugar, eggs and lemon zest until very thick and fluffy, about 5 minutes.

With the mixer still running, gradually add the oil and beat until incorporated, another 2 minutes.

Reduce speed to low.

Add the milk and lemon juice.

Gradually add the flour mixture and beat until just combined.

Transfer the batter to the pan.

Bake the cake until a toothpick or skewer inserted into the center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes.

Transfer to a rack to cool for 20 minutes, then run a knife around the edge to release the sides of the cake from the pan.

Invert the cake onto a plate and then flip it back over onto the rack to cool completely.

Dust with confectioners' sugar and garnish with berries.

This cake will keep for a week if well covered.



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

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