What Do African-American Cantors, Yente Telebende, and Banjo-Playing Klezmorim Have in Common?

All will be the topics of Federation programs this winter presented by cultural historian Henry Sapoznik

The Lost World of African-American Cantors 1915-1953

On Thursday, January 27 at 6:45 p.m., Sapoznik will present “The Lost World of African American Cantors 1915-1953,” a talk about his acclaimed study of the forgotten moment of Black cantors who entered the Idah of the theater, on record, and on the radio in the 1890s and 1900s. His research was covered by the Jewish press around the world.

The history of black Jewish cultural interaction primarily focuses on how Jews adopted and adapted Black vernacular music: ragtime, jazz, swing, R&B, and blues, etc. – as performers, promoters, managers, club owners, and record labels. Join Sapoznik and explore the unknown African Americans who performed beautiful fashions for elite Nazi women in a dedicated salon. It was work that they hoped would spare them from the gas chambers.

This fashion workshop – called the Upper Tailoring Studio – was established by Hedwig Höss, the camp commandant’s wife, and patronized by the wives of SS guards and officers. Here, the dressmakers produced high-quality garments for SS social functions in Auschwitz and ladies from Nazi Berlin’s upper crust.

Drawing on diverse sources – the history of Black-Jewish cultural interaction, the wives of SS guards, and primary sources – Sapoznik will discuss the history of black Jewish tailors in Nazi Berlin’s upper crust. This will be a fascinating workshop that will leave you wanting to learn more.

HENRY SAPOZNIK, continued on page 6

Welcome to Winter 2022

“Whatever I see your smiling face, I have to smile myself…”

...goes a tune written by a singer-songwriter with some association to the Berkshires, and it’s true. Everyone was all smiles at Federation’s Festival of Lights celebration at The Mount in Lenox last December. More than 200 revelers enjoyed the NightWood light installations in Edith Wharton’s gardens, then came together for a menorah lighting and singalong. For a photo recap of our Chanukah event and Federation’s other meaningful holiday outreach, please turn to pages 10–12.

“All real living is meeting”

– Martin Buber

Rabbi Dennis S. Ross guides us through the parshiyot in his new book, A Year with Martin Buber

As Rabbi Dennis S. Ross admits in the introduction to his new book, A Year with Martin Buber: Wisdom on the Weekly Torah Portion, the writings of the great 20th-century Jewish thinker make for difficult reading. In Buber’s masterwork, I and Thou, his “voice is cryptic, poetic, wandering, and rapturous. All at once. Some say he enjoyed going out of his way to make simple ideas sound complicated.”

While Buber’s prose is abstruse, Ross reveals how his message is approachable, relevant, and informed by a deep connection to Jewish thought. Though “I and Thou” never mentions Jewish texts or teachers to support [its] arguments, thereby opening it to criticism,” Ross shows how Buber’s teaching is on a continuum with Leviticus 19:18 (“love your neighbor as yourself”) and Rabbi Hillel (“This is the whole of the Torah; the rest is commentary”).

In I and Thou, Buber holds that “all real living is meeting.” Writes Ross: “For Buber, a true ‘meeting’ with others involves what he calls ‘inclusion’ – that is, seeing both sides of a relationship, yours and mine, simultaneously.” The relationships we form, both deep and fleeting, are all spiritual opportunities. “This I-Thou moment of divine revelation is the foundation of Buber’s examined Jewish living, the basis of his utopian social vision, and his key to all that is spiritual and everlasting,” explains Ross. “We meet each other, love each other, and love God, all at the same time.”

A Year with Martin Buber is part of The Jewish Publication Society’s Daily Inspiration Series, which explores the ideas of Jewish thinkers through chapters

MARTIN BUBER, continued on page 15
In My View

Task Force on Hate Crimes Update
By Dara Kaufman

Some of you may know that in 2018 I was appointed as one of twelve members of Governor Charlie Baker’s Task Force on Hate Crimes. Since then, I have had the honor and privilege to work with a host of dedicated and talented individuals across the state, including committee chair Joshua Kraft and Massachusetts Secretary for Public Safety and Security, Terrence Reidy.

The radical increase in hate crimes across our country and the deep scars these crimes and other bias-based incidents leave on individuals and communities is genuinely frightening. There is so much work to do on so many levels to combat this growing trend. Locally, Federation continues to work with the Berkshire County Superintendents Roundtable and the ADL New England to fund and implement the A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Anti-Bias Peer training program in middle and high schools. More than 2,500 students and faculty members participated in this critical initiative to date. Fifteen middle and high schools across the Berkshires are implementing the program this school year.

On the state level, the Governor’s Task Force on Hate Crimes encourages effective coordination in the awareness, prevention, investigation, and prosecution of hate crimes throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. My fellow task force members include gubernatorial appointees in community advocacy, law enforcement, health care, law, government, and education. We represent a group diverse in gender, race, industry, region, age, and education. Thus far, our work has focused on two key areas: law enforcement and education.

In 2018, Governor Baker made four key recommendations for law enforcement based on the committee’s work. These included:

1. Designating a civil rights officer point person for hate crimes in every one of the 351 Massachusetts municipal police departments.
2. Creating a new website interface through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security for law enforcement to cross-reference hate crimes data across jurisdictions and time periods.
3. Encouraging law enforcement to use the National Incident-Based Reporting System as the foremost place to report hate crimes to state and federal authorities. In addition, Governor Baker recommended that agencies adopt the International Association of Chiefs of Police Model Policy on hate crimes.
4. Asking the Municipal Police Training Committee to work with the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to develop a comprehensive and specialized training course for the designated civil rights officers, available with no charge to local police departments.

In late 2019, the task force developed additional recommendations regarding actions to be taken in our schools to create a more inclusive and respectful environment. Educators and administrators would receive the tools to recognize and address bias-based conduct and hate crimes when they arise.

These included recommendations in seven key areas: (1) programming for students, (2) outreach to parents, (3) the relationship between schools and local police, (4) improved reporting mechanisms, (5) strategies for healing the school community in the aftermath of a hate crime, (6) the establishment of school policies and staff training to address incidents involving bias-motivated conduct, and (7) the creation of a comprehensive resource guide for school personnel.

This past November, the Baker-Polito administration released the completed School Resource Guide developed by a team of researchers from Northeastern University, American University, and the Anti-Defamation League of New England. The researchers reviewed materials from more than 60 organizations. They interviewed key stakeholders from the Task Force, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, Terrence Reidy, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (EOPSS), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Safety and Security to develop a comprehensive and specialized training course for the designated civil rights officers, available with no charge to local police departments.

In 2018, Governor Baker designated $400,000 in grant funding, administrated by the DESE in coordination with EOPSS, to prevent hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents in public schools. Schools across the Commonwealth are eligible to apply for funds to help support education, professional development, prevention, and community outreach to reduce bias-based incidents and crimes in their school community.

It has been gratifying to work with my colleagues from across the state to bring this important work to fruition. This past August, Governor Baker signed into law the establishment of a permanent MA State Task Force on Hate Crimes. I am grateful that I have been asked, together with a number of my task force colleagues, to continue our work with state leaders as part of this new legislative task force.

I encourage you to learn more about the work and recommendations of the task force online at mass.gov/lists/governors-task-force-on-hate-crimes-recommendations.

Dara Kaufman is the executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Thank you to our supporters!

The Berkshire Jewish Voice extends a very special “thank you” for the generosity extended by those who have sent in their contributions for voluntary subscriptions to the paper.

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14 households for 2022

[The task force] encourages effective coordination in the awareness, prevention, investigation, and prosecution of hate crimes throughout the Commonwealth.

It’s the 50th anniversary of the Lions of Judah! Join with Lions from around the globe to celebrate accomplishments, learn from one another, and be inspired. The 18,000 Lions worldwide build on a legacy of achievements and further a mission to build flourishing Jewish communities. We’ll fuel our passion for enhancing Jewish life at home, in Israel, and abroad. It all takes place on Sunday, January 9 at 7 p.m. Register at: jfeds.org/WomenMakeHistory

Dara Kaufman (far left) and task force colleagues meet with Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker (far right)
Tu B’Shevat tell us that growth continues to happen. We resist the urge to rush off and plant, cultivate, strive, and control. But the ground is still frozen? But the Jewish Arbor Day is still observed around the world. During a typical year in their regular efforts, the Jewish National Fund makes a big push for tree planting around Tu B’Shevat. However, the JNF also takes the sh’mita year as a chance to quiet our regular efforts. During this sh’mita year, JNF does not plant any new trees. They take the time to cultivate the trees already under their care. In our own practice for a sh’mita Tu B’Shevat, any fruit we enjoy as part of the seder should come from fruit picked from ownerless trees from which anyone can take.

Given all of this, Tu B’Shevat is not sounding like much fun. Still, the confluence of sh’mita and the holiday can be meaningful. Sh’mita is about stopping, like Shabbat. After six years of vigorous growing cycles, we let everything go still. While we remain still, our trees and fields do continue to grow. And this difference between us and our land is an invitation to reflect.

We need time to assess our world and where we fit into it. We need time not to go back but to figure out what we want now and for our future. Sh’mita can be our Jewish mass vacation.

Looking at the meaning of sh’mita and its connection to Shabbat, Rav Abraham Kook writes, “What Shabbat does for the individual, sh’mita does for the nation as a whole. The Jewish people, in whom the godly, creative force is planted eternally and distinctively, has a special need to periodically reveal the divine light within itself with full intensity. Our mundane lives, with their toil, anxiety, anger, and competition, do not entirely suffocate this creative force. On the sh’mita, our pure, inner spirit may be revealed as it truly is” (Shabbat Haaretz). Our orientation is to be toward God, and in our everyday lives, and it can be so easy to turn away from that. Just as Shabbat allows us to reset our spiritual clocks, the sh’mita is made possible through the generosity of Natalya and Sergey Yantovsky and Claudio and Penny Pincus, honorary publishers. The staff of the Federation and the BJV are deeply grateful.

This Tu B’Shevat 5782 could possibly be boring. After all, 5782 is a sh’mita year, the seventh year in our cycle of calendaring. This year Jewish gardeners are prohibited from sowing seeds and pruning trees. And so, celebrating this holiday this year has to be a little different.

For us earthly New Englanders, celebrating Tu B’Shevat can be exclusively an academic exercise anyway. Who among us will plant trees when the ground is still frozen? But the Jewish Arbor Day is still observed around the world. During a typical year in their regular efforts, the Jewish National Fund makes a big push for tree planting around Tu B’Shevat. However, the JNF also takes the sh’mita year as a chance to quiet our regular efforts. During this sh’mita year, JNF does not plant any new trees. They take the time to cultivate the trees already under their care. In our own practice for a sh’mita Tu B’Shevat, any fruit we enjoy as part of the seder should come from fruit picked from ownerless trees from which anyone can take.

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The Jewish Transportation Network Discount Taxi Vouchers for Jewish residents aged 65 years and older

Purchase $50 worth of taxi vouchers for $5

($540 if requested via mail) Vouchers are valid for three months and can be used with Tunnel City Taxi of North Adams, Rainbow Taxi of Pittsfield or Berkshire Taxi Co. of Great Barrington and Lee.

Some restrictions apply. Limit 10 voucher booklets per person/per year.

Purchase vouchers at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires 196 South St, Pittsfield, MA 01201. (413) 442-4360, ext. 10

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Download an application at jewishberkshires.org

Now more than ever, our kids need Jewish summer camp!
A Jewish Perspective on the Debate Over Ethnic Studies

On a proposed statewide curriculum and commission under consideration by the Massachusetts state legislature

By Jeremy Burton / Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston

Over the past eighteen months, our nation has been immersed in a heated and challenging conversation about our enduring legacy of racism. This reckoning has played out across virtually every aspect of society. One arena where this debate has become particularly fraught has been in our educational institutions.

For the Jewish community, our interests in this work are complex and multifaceted. As a community that deeply understands the importance of education as the ladder to opportunity, the continued ways that opportunity is not accessible to all students is a matter of collective urgency.

Unfortunately, as with so many things these days, the conversation about racial justice and education is too often dominated by the most extreme actors – those who seek to polarize and fracture communities.

Rather than engage in an honest reckoning with America’s racial past and present, some resort to scare tactics, sowing fear amongst parents that any curriculum change would harm their children. They lift up the most radical efforts that do exist and flatten the discourse as justification for rejecting any changes at all.

Others, notably those actors who seek to delegitimize every aspect of the American project, attempt to ride the wave of this conversation to advance their agendas. Their arguments continue to include the demonization of Israel and Jewish heritage in any and every forum. They minimize antisemitism in Western civilization to reduce empathy with legitimate Jewish concerns.

The result of these polarizing forces? In California, the state spent five years debating an ethnic studies curriculum, with multiple vetoes by the governor, ultimately failing to produce a curriculum that does exist and flatten the discourse as justification for rejecting any changes at all.

Our schools, as Yoffie suggests, but by building our holding-past past has left friends teachers to teach the Holocaust as a historical fact.

The conversation about racial justice and education is all too often dominated by the most extreme actors – those who seek to polarize and fracture communities.

Influence the outcomes (as happened actually in California). If enacted, the commission will need clear definitions, guidelines, and guardrails, so that there is no question about the intent of the legislature and the mandate of the commission.

At the same time, it is in our interest – as an organized Jewish community and as a member of the Commonwealth – to see greater and historical reparation.

The bill is imperfect. There are changes that need to be made before it is enacted. The rhetoric around this topic leans so heavily into catchwords that, when poorly defined, leave the door open to those with nefarious agendas to

The conversation about racial justice and education is all too often dominated by the most extreme actors – those who seek to polarize and fracture communities.

Left out in the middle are the rest of us: those committed to an honest conversation about our imperfect past; those who believe that our nation’s liberation really requires us to reckon with our history in order to build a better future; and those who heed the extensive research demonstrating that when children see themselves in their curriculum – in the history taught, in the literature read – they thrive.

Here in Massachusetts, we have an opportunity to do things better. In January 2021, a bill was filed in our legislature titled “An Act relative to anti-racism, equity, and justice in education.” Included in the bill’s provisions is establishing a state commission to develop a more inclusive curriculum for students across our Commonwealth.

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Menachem Kaiser: Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure

On Thursday, January 20 at 6:45 p.m., Menachem Kaiser will share the story he told in Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure, which recounts his quest to reclaim a family's apartment building in Poland and the astonishing entanglement with Nazi treasure hunters that follows. This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

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Explore the Work of Jewish Artist Barbara Kruger with Professor J. Carol Salus

On Thursday, January 6 at 6:45 p.m., J. Carol Salus, who teaches art history at Kent State University, will present “Barbara Kruger: Thought-Provoking Photographic Works.”

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs. This presentation was postponed from an earlier date.

 Writes Salus: “Kruger is known for her bold photographs to which she adds thought-provoking messages. These short texts, white inscriptions over a red field, treat social and political attitudes from gender stereotypes to consumerism. With a background in graphic design and photography, Kruger’s public installations have appeared in galleries, museums, billboards, municipal buildings, department stores, buses, train stations, and parks worldwide. Such rigorously composed works as 1 Shop Therefore I Am have been widely distributed under the artist’s supervision in the form of umbrellas, tote bags, postcards, mugs, T-shirts, and posters.”

J. Carol Salus earned her Ph.D. from Ohio State University. She taught throughout her career at Kent State University. She has published in Jewish Art and wrote a notable essay on “The Memorial to the Murdered European Jews” in Berlin after interviewing its architect, Peter Eisenman.

Dressmakers, continued from page 1

including interviews with the last surviving seamstress – The Dressmakers of Auschwitz follows the fates of these brave women. Their bonds of family and friendship not only helped them endure persecution but helped them play their part in camp resistance. Weaving the dressmakers’ remarkable experiences within the context of Nazi policies for plunder and exploitation. Adlington exposes the greed, cruelty, and hypocrisy of the Third Reich. Her program offers a fresh look at a little-known chapter of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Lucy Adlington is a British historian and writer with more than twenty years’ specialization in social history. Her previous non-fiction titles include Stitches in Time: The Story of the Clothes We Wear and Women’s Lives and Clothes in WW2: Ready for Action. Her fiction titles include the award-winning young adult novel The Red Ribbon. She runs the History Wardrobe series of costume presentations, and has an extensive collection of vintage and antique clothing.
Your Federation Presents

HENRY SAPOZNIK, continued from page 1

Yiddish and cantorial music in and for the Jewish community, in theaters on record, radio, and in concert, including now forgotten Black cantors – Mendele der Shvartzer Khazn, Reb Dovid Kalistrita, Abraham Ben Benjamin Franklin, Thomas LaRue Jones, and Goldye di Shvartze Khaznte, the first – and only – Black woman cantor.

The talk will feature dozens of historical graphics and translations of period Yiddish newspaper previews, ads, and reviews and the playing of the one known 1923 Yiddish and Hebrew records issued over almost half a century bring the presence and power of Yente Telebende back to life.

Result? Yente, was no yente.

These Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

BANJEW
Sapoznik’s third program, “BANJEW: A Century of the Banjo in Klezmer Music. ” will take place on Thursday, March 10 – more information in the next BJV.

Want to read some of Henry Sapoznik’s work? Then turn to page 20 for “The Yiddish Radio Project Exhibits; C. Israel Lutsky, The Jewish Philosopher.” For lots more, visit his website at henrysapoznik.com.

About Henry Sapoznik
Henry Sapoznik, a native Yiddish speaker and child of Holocaust survivors, grew up in an Orthodox home. In his teens, Sapoznik was introduced to traditional American music and took up the banjo. He studied with North Carolina masters Fred Cockerham and Tommy Jarrell during numerous trips to North Carolina with the late Ray Alden.

In 1972, Sapoznik co-founded the New York-area group The Delaware Water Gap String Band and confirmed his reputation as a noted player in southern playing styles and classic ragtime banjo.

Sapoznik was the founding director of the sound archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York from 1982 to 1995. While there in 1985, Sapoznik founded and directed the internationally acclaimed anthologies of Yiddish, jazz, old-time, cantorial, ragtime, blues, Italian, swing, blackface minstrelsy, and bluegrass recordings.

Sapoznik won a 2002 Peabody award for co-producing the 10-part NPR series “The Yiddish Radio Project” drawn from his collection of over 10,000 items now part of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. Please turn to page 20 for more on this project.


Henry Sapoznik’s recent projects are his CD, Banjew (Jalopy Records, 2017) and the 3-CD reissue anthology Probabilites: The Minstrel and Tin Pan Alley DNA of Country Music 1892-2017, co-produced with Dick Spottswood and David Giovannoni. It has been submitted for 2021 Grammy consideration.

He has also just co-produced and annotated a 2-CD anthology for Smithsonian-Folkways of American Folk Music from California recorded in the 1960s. He is currently working on a new book: Rediscovering Yiddish New York: A Guide to Jewish Landmarks in The City (Excelsior Press).
LOCAL NEWS

Afterlives: Recovering the Lost Stories of Looted Art

Congregation Ahavath Sholom hosting a virtual tour of the current exhibit at Jewish Museum

On Sunday, January 9 at 1 p.m., Congregation Ahavath Sholom has arranged a virtual tour of “Afterlives: Recovering the Lost Stories of Looted Art,” a special exhibit currently on view at The Jewish Museum in New York City. This exhibition traces the fascinating timelines of individual objects as they passed through hands and sites before, during, and after World War II, bringing forward their stories.

During World War II, untold numbers of artworks and pieces of cultural property were stolen by Nazi forces. After the war, an estimated 1 million artworks and 2.5 million books were recovered. Many were destroyed. This exhibition chronicles the layered stories of the objects that survived, exploring the circumstances of their theft, their post-war rescue, and their afterlives in museums and private collections.

“Afterlives” includes objects looted from Jewish collections during the war, including works by such renowned artists as Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Marc Chagall, Gustave Courbet, Paul Klee, Franz Marc, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Camille Pissarro. The Jewish Museum has also commissioned four contemporary artists to create new works that address the resonance of the exhibition’s themes: Maria Eichhorn, Hadar Gad, Dor Guz, and Lisa Oppenheim. Treasured pieces of Judaica, including rare examples of Jewish ceremonial objects from destroyed synagogues, will also be on view, along with rarely-seen archival photographs and documents that connect the artworks to history.

To participate in this virtual program, visit the CAS website www.AhavathSholom.com and click the blue bar on the front page. Space is limited, so sign up as soon as possible.

Young Shabbat and 21 Tremendous Texts!

Family fun and Torah study at Temple Anshe Amunim

-Temple Anshe Amunim is a Reform Jewish Congregation that promotes engaging and wide-spread participation in services, education, cultural, and social action programs. Here’s what’s going on this winter.

Young Families Shabbat

Please join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch for a six-part series to study 21 significant verses of Torah. Class will be held at noon on January 12, 19, 26 and February 2, 9, & 16, all Wednesdays. Join for one week or for every week. All are welcome. To register, go to tinyurl.com/TAA22WinterLecture

Twenty-One Tremendous Texts

Please join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch for a six-part series to study 21 significant verses of Torah. Class will be held at noon on January 12, 19, 26 and February 2, 9, & 16, all Wednesdays. Join for one week or for every week. All are welcome. To register, go to tinyurl.com/TAA22WinterLecture

The Temple, located at 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield, is an accessible building. For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910, email templeoffice@ansheamunim.org, or visit www.ansheamunim.org

“What Does the Bible Say About Love?” – New Beit Midrash Class at KI

Knesset Israel’s Beit Midrash program welcomes master teacher Gideon Amir for an intriguing Bible class, which will be held online on four consecutive Tuesday evenings, January 4, 11, 18, and 25, from 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m., in conjunction with evening davening. The class is open to everyone. Although there is no tuition charge, KI welcomes donations in support of adult education.

Asked to describe his class, Gideon wrote: “The word ‘love’ has so many meanings that it seems impossible to talk in general about it without first asking: What kind of love? In this course, we will review biblical attitudes towards different types of love: Love of parents to their children, man’s love of women and women’s love of men, love of a person to another person, God’s love of us, and our love of God. We will review the Bible’s views and, if time allows, will also look at the New Testament’s views, highlighting similarities and differences. Please have a full Bible (Tanakh) available when we study online, as we will be reading the relevant verses throughout our study.”

Gideon Amir was born in Holland to Holocaust survivors who went to Israel in 1947. He grew up in Jerusalem. After serving as an IDF paratrooper, Gideon received a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a master’s degree in Computer Science from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rechovot. He worked for different organizations in Israel and the United States as a computer engineer. In 1999, he followed his old interest in Judaic studies, earning a full-time graduate from Baltimore Hebrew University in 2001. He has taught Jewish and Bible subjects at various adult education programs like the Haberman Institute for Jewish Studies, Oscher at Johns Hopkins University, and Oasis. For more information and links to the course, visit knessetisrael.org.

Join the CAS Memoir Writing Workshop – Plus Other Opportunities to Be Creative

When was the last time you attended a salon? Do you remember hearing about the salons that Gertrude Stein hosted in Paris in the early 1900s? Ernest Hemingway and Pablo Picasso were among the frequent visitors to her salon.

In October, Congregation Ahavath Sholom hosted its own remarkable salon via Zoom. Five synagogue members participating in a monthly Memoir Writing Workshop read parts of their creations. A recording of the program can be viewed/heard on the CAS website at AhavathSholom.com.

The presenters were Susan Spiegel Soloway, Stephanie Sloane, Reverend Carol Kilian, Caroline Forsman, and Keren Weiner. Their readings include original poetry, fiction and nonfiction pieces. The Memoir Writing Workshop, part of the CAS Creative Arts series, is led by Barbara Janoff, Ph.D. She is an associate professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York in Manhattan, where she teaches writing and literature.

If you would like to join the Memoir Writing Workshop or the Photography Workshop, contact casoffice15@gmail.com.

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Ethnic-studies legislation in Massachusetts Raises Alarm from Jewish watchdog groups

By Sean Savage

(October 8, 2021 / JNS) Jewish groups in Massachusetts are raising concerns about a bill being proposed by state lawmakers that would facilitate the teaching of ethnic studies in schools. The legislation, known as S.365 “An Act relative to anti-racism, equity and justice in education,” has been proposed by State Sen. Jason Lewis (D – 5th Middlesex District). The bill, citing theJune 6, 2021 “insurrection” and the“imminent danger” posed by “disinformation and white supremacy,” says that “Education is the key to preventing and confronting acts of hate and bias,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy, who serves as co-chair of the Task Force. “We are grateful to the Task Force, the researchers, and all who participated in the development of this informative guide, which offers a roadmap to schools across the state in creating safe learning environments free from prejudice and bigotry.”

In the bill’s current form, the commission has no members from the legislature or the administration

Robert Lekind, director of the American Jewish Committee’s New England regional office, wrote that while they support efforts to educate students on racial justice, the “terms used are undefined and vague, failing the proposed commission broad discretion to interpret their meaning and scope.” Similarly, in a letter to Lewis and other lawmakers, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston expressed concern over the legislation.

The guide is intended to support school districts...by providing model policies that foster safe and inclusive learning environments

Governor’s Task Force on Hate Crimes Issues School Resource Guide

BOSTON – In November, the Baker-Polito Administration’s Task Force on Hate Crimes released a School Resource Guide outlining best practices to assist schools in developing a comprehensive hate crime policy.

The guide is intended to support school districts across the Commonwealth by providing model policies that foster safe and inclusive learning environments for all students, parents, teachers, staff, and administrators. The Administration also announced the availability of $400,000 in grant funding for local school districts to support the development and implementation of anti-hate crimes programming.

“Our administration was proud to revitalize the Hate Crimes Task Force, which has played an important role in ensuring that Massachusetts remains vigilant against any form of hate or discrimination,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “This school resource guide is a valuable addition to the previous work of the Task Force, and we are grateful to the Task Force members and the research team for their efforts. We look forward to working with them and our local school districts to further promote safe and welcoming learning environments for the Commonwealth’s students.”

(Dara Kaufman, executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serve on the task force. For more on her involvement, please see the story on page 2.)

Governor Baker revitalized the Hate Crimes Task Force in 2017, and soon after, the Task Force published a series of recommendations that included the creation of resources for educational institutions. According to 2019 FBI national hate crime data, educational institutions are the third most common location of hate crimes reported to law enforcement in Massachusetts.

“Education is the key to preventing and confronting acts of hate and bias,” said Senator Robert Barrett, who serves as co-chair of the Task Force. “We are grateful to the Task Force, the researchers, and all who participated in the development of this informative guide, which offers a roadmap to schools across the state in creating safe learning environments free from prejudice and bigotry.”

In particular, it noted issues related to the oversight of the “commission (in the bills’ current form, the commission has no members from the legislature or the administration), for promoting the BDS movement against Israel and not included lessons about anti-Semitism. While a revised version did address some issues, groups fear that the law mandating ethnic studies in schools in California has been ongoing for several years. The first draft of the state-approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) was criticized by pro-Israel groups and others for promoting the BDS movement against Israel and not including lessons about anti-Semitism.

The debate over ethnic studies in California has been ongoing for several years. The first draft of the state-approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) was criticized by pro-Israel groups and others for promoting the BDS movement against Israel and not including lessons about anti-Semitism. While a revised version did address some issues, groups fear that the law mandating ethnic studies in schools in California has been ongoing for several years. The first draft of the state-approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) was criticized by pro-Israel groups and others for promoting the BDS movement against Israel and not including lessons about anti-Semitism.

The debate over ethnic studies

The guide is intended to support school districts...by providing model policies that foster safe and inclusive learning environments

The School Resource Guide was developed by a team of researchers from Northeastern University, American University, and the Anti-Defamation League of New England. The researchers reviewed materials from more than 60 organizations. They conducted interviews with key stakeholders from the Task Force, the Executive Office of Public Safety (EOPSS), and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

The research team engaged a diverse set of experts, including police, school administrators, teachers, prosecutors, and representatives from the legal rights and civil liberties community. The guide’s publication coincides with the availability of a grant program and $400,000 in funding administrated by DESE, in coordination with EOPSS, to prevent hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents in public schools. The grant application will soon be available to school districts that can apply for up to $850,000 to fund education, professional development, prevention, and community outreach to reduce crimes motivated by race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and disability.

“Addressing hate crimes in schools is critical to creating a more inclusive and respectful society that experiences few hate crimes and less prejudice overall,” said Task Force Co-Chair – Josh Kraft, the president of Kraft Family Philanthropies. “On behalf of the Task Force, I extend our appreciation to the researchers and the many stakeholders who contributed to this meaningful resource.”

About the Governor’s Task Force on Hate Crimes

The Governor’s Task Force on Hate Crimes is tasked with encouraging effective coordination in the awareness, prevention, investigation, and prosecution of hate crimes throughout the Commonwealth. Its members include gubernatorial appointees with expertise in community advocacy, law enforcement, health care, law, government and education and represent a group diverse in gender, race, industry, region, age and education.

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ldoherty@litnetsb.org or 413-243-0471

Happy Tu b’Shevat

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Located in Great Barrington, MA

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1-3pm

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Day Camp fun includes
boating, swimming, farm,
sports, crafts, drama, music
and trip days!

Tevet/Shevat/Adar I 5782 Berkshire Jewish Voice • jewishberkshires.org Page 9

Happy Tu b'Shevat
Your Federation Presents

Sharing the Light of Chanukah

More than 200 community members of all ages joined together at The Mount in Lenox to celebrate the final night of Hanukkah with a tour of NightWood’s ethereal light and sound displays. We came together for a festive memorial lighting and singalong concert with the Jewish Musicians Collective. The evening was sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and its PJ Library program.
Volunteers Are Vital!

Our local PJ Library families decorated coloring sheets for Chanukah sent out with Federation’s Connecting With Community lunches. We also sent scanned copies to Berkshire senior residences, as well as to Berkshire Medical Center and Fairview Hospital – thank you to all the staff who printed them out and distributed the greetings. A special shout-out goes to Lisa Fletcher-Udel for her personal cards, which were also handed out with the lunches. We thank everyone who sent us their creations, as it helped make Chanukah very special! Todah Rabah!

B’shalom,
Susan Frisch Lehrer, Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

Another Pajama Drive Success!

In time for the holidays, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and our PJ Library program collected 530 new pairs of pajama sets and bottoms to help Berkshire kids keep warm this winter! We thank everyone for their generous donations to this vital community program for the Berkshire Office of the Massachusetts Department of Children & Families.

We’d also like to give a special shout-out to Carr Hardware for providing space for donation bins at their locations throughout Berkshire County.

Now You’re Talking Turkey

Helped by our super volunteers, Federation prepared and delivered Thanksgiving meals

On an unusually balmy autumn day in November, it felt more like Thanksgiving in July for community members enjoying the turkey dinners prepared by Cindy Bell-Deane and her crew with Federation’s Kosher Lunch Program. Cindy, assisted by Ken Conlow and Elaine Shindler, roasted three turkeys (39 lbs. total), prepared all the fixings (plus a delicious fresh-baked apple tart), and packed everything up into 38 bags for pick-up and delivery. Dave Pill and Eric Greenberg were on hand to help distribute the meals in Pittsfield and Lenox on November 18.
MAZEL TOV!

Sergey and Natalya Yantovsky on the arrival of granddaughter, Margot. Parents are Ilya and Kelsey Yantovsky.

Rabbi Deborah Zecher on the New York City debut of her new cabaret show, Jewish Cabaling: The Music of Carole King, Carole Bayer Sager, and Carolyn Leigh, performed in December at Don’t Tell Mama.

Karen and Rich Zink on the marriage of their daughter Lauren to Alex Diamond, son of Jeffrey and Amy Diamond. The families report they were thrilled that Rabbi Deborah Zecher came out of retirement to perform the ceremony.

TAMIR, whose one-woman show Now was nominated by the Berkshire Theatre Critics Association for its Berkshire Theatre Awards, known colloquially as “The Berkies.”

Shadow (Julia) Gordon, daughter of Alice Davenport and Sanford Gordon, on her January 25 bat mitzvah at Knesset Israel.

Loretta and Joel Prives on the October 31, 2021 marriage of their daughter, Leslie, to Josh Zucker in New York City.

David and Lea Finkel and Claudia Coplan on the birth of their granddaughter.

Jacob Klein, whose Berkshire Weather blog was featured in the last BTV blog, has a new gig on WTBR (89.7 FM) radio as the station’s on-air weather forecaster.

Audrey Salzmann on her 95th birthday.

Connecting with Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

Meals-on-Wheels & Meals to Go — Advance Reservation Required

Kosher lunch will be prepared on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. to reserve your meal for pickup and to arrange delivery if standing instructions are not in place. All are welcome to reserve meals for pick-up, although delivery may be limited in certain circumstances.

The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients. When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy. Adults 60 and over: $2 suggested donation. Adults under 60: $7 per person.

Volunteers are Vital! Volunteer drivers who can deliver meals-on-wheels are always appreciated. Please call Molly Meador at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14. The Federation’s kosher hot lunch program is offered in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire County.

What’s for Lunch?

Gluten Free Main Entrée ** and Dairy Free Main Entrée #

JANUARY

Monday, 3 ............ Meat loaf**, lentil soup, broccoli & cauliflower, hash browns, salad, Farmer’s loaf, and brownies.
Tuesday, 4 ............ Cranberry chicken**, corn cobettes, rice pilaf, salad, whole wheat bread, and apricots.
Thursday, 6 ............ “Seafood” linguini, Italian beans, beets, garlic bread, and cookies.
Monday, 10 .......... Shepherd’s Pie**, peas & carrots, salad, oat bread, and applesauce.
Tuesday, 11 ............ Roasted chicken**, split pea curry soup, Brussels sprouts, noodles with onions, potato bread, and pears.
Thursday, 13 .......... Fresh fish**, side of pesto Mac, mixed vegetables, salad, challah, and dried fruits for early Tu B’Shevat.
Monday, 17 .......... Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
Tuesday, 18 .......... Chicken nuggets** with sweet & sour dipping sauce, Oriental vegetable blend, rice bread, and pineapple.
Thursday, 20 .......... Hot dogs & vegetarian beans**#, vegetable soup, French fries, hot dog roll, and apricots.
Tuesday, 25 .......... Apricot glazed turkey tender**, potato toes Anna, Italian beans, pumpernickel bread, and grapes.

FEBRUARY

Monday, 27 .......... Tuna noodle casserole, salad, whole wheat bread, and Mandarin oranges.
Tuesday, 28 .......... Spaghetti & meat sauce#, vegetable soup, salad, green beans, garlic bread, and fruit cocktail.

Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?

Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-4360, ext 17

SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Candle Times

Friday, January 7 .......... 4:18 p.m.
Friday, January 14 .......... 4:26 p.m.
Friday, January 21 .......... 4:34 p.m.
Friday, January 28 .......... 4:43 p.m.
Friday, February 4 .......... 4:52 p.m.

ONGOING MINYANS

Sunday 8:45 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Tuesday 7 p.m.
Thursday 7 p.m.
Friday 7 a.m. and 5:45 p.m.
Saturday 9:30 a.m. and evenings approximately 30 minutes before sunset.

Knesset Israel

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Larry Newmark, 75, gifted storyteller, loved fishing, golf, and travel

PVDDC - Larry Newmark, 75, son of the late Helen and David Newmark, passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 30, 2021. Larry was always private with his emotions and, keeping true to form, passed away without being diag-
nosed with late-stage pancreatic cancer. “Papa,” as he is known to his four grandkids, burst with growth in Brooklyn, NY, and spent time in Delmar, NY, Lenox, MA, and Avon, CT, before returning to the Berkshires with his family in 1987 during a lifetime career with GE Plastics. Larry was a poetizing father figure to the Pittsfield community, where he earned his degree in Chemical Engineering and marched as a trumpet playing member of the University’s Blue Band. After retiring from General Electric, Larry started his consulting firm, LNJ Partnership, where he shared his Kaizen Black Belt expeditions and stories around the Northeast.

Larry was also a gifted storyteller who could pull up a chair with details and stories (many of which he told over and over) of a life well-travel-
ed. A true outdoorsman and angler centered around his love of fishing, with annual trips to Maine on his boat. He loved playing card games, traveling to Canada, New Mexico, Montana, and Wyoming for fly fishing adventures. His expertise in fly tying and his appreciation for the craft made his days on the stream much more than a fly fisherman. Larry also had a true love of golf and was a long-time member of the Country Club of Pittsfield. Golf also blended with his love of travel and spending time with his friends and family. His stories were woven centered around his love of fishing, with annual trips to Maine on his boat. He loved playing card games, traveling to Canada, New Mexico, Montana, and Wyoming for fly fishing adventures. His expertise in fly tying and his appreciation for the craft made his days on the stream much more than a fly fisherman.

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In the Bible’s era, in Buber’s time, and in our day, the Revelation also garners attention in all of Judaism that recognizes the Torah Paradox. To Buber, any attempt to make sense of the inexplicable truth of Torah on one hand and the truth of lived human experience – science, history, philosophy, culture, relationships, and more – on the other, and doesn’t obsess about how or why. Religion is based on faith; it’s not rational. No one should expect it to be provable, scientific, or logical. One can love both Torah and science at the same time, as I do, without worrying about being unable to reconcile the details and conflicts. Ultimately, the real question isn’t one of how the Torah came to be. I want to know what the Torah, the Rabbis, and modern interpreters teach about how to live.

Excerpted from A Year with Martin Buber: Wisdom on the Weekly Torah Portion by Rabbi Dennis S. Ross by permission of the University of Nebraska Press and imprint The Jewish Publication Society. © 2021 by the Rabbi Dennis S. Ross. Available wherever books are sold or from the Univ. of Nebraska Press 800.848.6224 and at nebraskapress.unl.edu.

Mount Sinai all in smoke, from Parshat Yitro

MARTIN BUBER, continued from page 1

on each weekly and holiday Torah portion, Ross breaks down each chapter with an overview of the parsha’s plain meaning (p’shat). He then provides two “interpretations:” the “Truth,” one exploring Buber’s thought and the other reflecting his own lived experience. Excerpted below is the chapter on Parshat Yitro, which will be read this year on January 22.

Yitro
All of Us, Together at Sinai
Exodus 18:1–20:23
God spoke all these words, saying, “I am Adonai your God.” (Exodus 20:1)

P’shat: Explanation
Just three months after leaving Egypt, Israel reaches Sinai and experiences the event known as the Revelation.

Creation, Redemption, and Salvation are the Torah’s centerpiece happenings. God creates the world, redeems Israel from Egypt, and, now, in Yitro, reveals the Torah at Mount Sinai. The capstone of the revelation, the Ten Commandments, open with, “God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am Adonai your God’” (Exod. 20:1–2).

The sum of Jewish teaching flows from this mountainous event between God and Israel. As Rabbi Yehuda Yitzhak says: “Whatsoever the prophets of the future prophesied, it was all received at Sinai” (Midrash Tunnim, Yitro 111). Moreover, the Rabbis maintain that the Revelation embraces everyone and everything – Israel, humanity, and the universe – all at once.

Rabbis imagine that each generation of Israel – every Jew that ever lived or will live – stands together at Sinai (Midrash Hagogul, Deut. 29:12), thus, embracing the centrality of Revelation. The Revelation also resonates in the heavens. The Rabbis teach that, while the angels jealously hoped to keep their revelations to themselves and out of human hands, Moses defends God’s decision to give the Torah to Israel, asking the angels, “Did you descend from Sinai, and did you go beyond Pharaoh to enslave you?” (Shabbat 88b). The Torah is worthy compensation for Israel’s four centuries of bondage, an ordeal the heavenly angels never endured.

The Revelation also garners attention in all of earth’s corners, affecting the natural order and all living things. In the name of Rabbi Yohanan, Rabbi Abahu teaches that, when the Torah was given, birds stopped chirping and flying and the sea’s waves ceased. “The wind went entirely silent when the Voice went out” (Rabbah 29:9). The Revelation impacts Israel, all people, and the entire world.

D’Rash: Buber’s Insight

What happened once happens now and always. And the fact of this happening is to us a guarantee of its having happened.

Buber brings a unique Jewish approach to this highest moment in Jewish history. The Rabbis imagine that all Jews – past, present, and future – were there at Sinai. And Buber brings each of us to that mountainside that very day by teaching that whenever you and I speak as I-Thou, we speak with God, just as Israel did at Sinai.

Revelation is ongoing for Buber, even as he seems to contradict himself when he teaches that each encounter is unique. So, the question becomes, “How can a one-of-a-kind event repeat itself?” The resolution to this question has to do with Eternal Thou. On the one hand, each I-Thou is discrete, never to recur. On the other hand, each and every I-Thou brings us into God’s presence in Eternal Thou. To be sure, the events and workings of Eternal Thou are as unprovable for Buber as that moment of Sinai is for the Rabbis. Nevertheless, Buber sees both as “fact.”

Even as one of our unique, kindred conversations is made of the same spiritual substance as our collective time with God at Sinai.

The Torah Paradox

This is the essence of these kinds of self-contradictions and paradoxes, and Buber accepts all of them as “fact.” He takes the Bible seriously, not literally. He takes the Bible as a record of the conver- sation between Israel and God. He also affirms that we speak to God by speaking to each other, and the Revelation we gain from one another at any point in history is as truthful as the Revelation at Sinai.

D’Rash: A Personal Reflection

The Torah Paradox

To be Jewish is to embrace a paradox. It requires the summoning of all one’s heart, soul, and strength to love and believe – without any basis in fact.

I unknowingly entered this paradox as a kid when I went to yeshiva, a school that was really two competing

truths on each hand and the truth of lived human experience – science, history, philosophy, culture, relationships, and more – on the other, and doesn’t obsess about how or why. Religion is based on faith; it’s not rational. No one should expect it to be provable, scientific, or logical. One can love both Torah and science at the same time, as I do, without worrying about being unable to reconcile the details and conflicts. Ultimately, the real question isn’t one of how the Torah came to be. I want to know what the Torah, the Rabbis, and modern interpreters teach about how to live.

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Rabbi Ross has also authored God in Our Relationships: Spirituality between People from the Teachings of Martin Buber and All Politics Is Religious: Speaking Faith to the Media, Policy Makers, and Community, and he has written for the New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Forward, and other publications. He has been a rabbi in synagogues across the Northeast as an Intentional Interim Rabbi. He is a Jewish resident and married to Rabbi Deborah Zucker, rabbi emerita of Hebrew of Southern Berkshire.

Join us for A Virtual Farewell in honor of Susan Frisch Lehrer’s Retirement

Wednesday, January 12
at 7 p.m. via Zoom

Register at

www.jewishberkshires.org

Over the last 14 years, Susan has supported hundreds of children and their families in their Jewish journeys through our PJ Library program. She has helped hundreds of community members put their Jewish values into action through Foundation-sponsored opportunities for tzedkut alam.

Share your best wishes, memories, and photos with Susan by visiting: www.kudoboard.com/boards/bq1DlykY

Farewell!

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Walking the Labyrinth

Rabbi Pamela Wax’s first volume of poetry confronts the grief of losing a loved one

After winning a poetry award and appearing at a 1986 poetry event with Adrienne Rich and Ellen Bass in Santa Cruz, CA, Pamela Wax remembers getting scared about the possibility of being a poet. In her early 20’s, she feared both the loss of “the muse” and not having a reliable income. Instead, she became a rabbi, wrote sermons, published essays, and took a lot of memoir and fiction writing classes.

Now, 35 years after that poetry award and reading, Wax’s first book of poetry, Walking the Labyrinth, will be published. The final—and longest—poem of the collection, “Gleanings from the Field,” will be published in the Spring of 2022. The title poem, reprinted here, received an honorable mention in the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Poetry Prize judged by Kim Stafford. Rabbi Wax is the Spiritual Care Coordinator at Westchester Jewish Community Services in White Plains, NY, and lives in both North Adams, MA, and the Bronx, NY, with her husband, Chaim Bronstein. She is a member of Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams (where she served as rabbi from 1996-2000), Knesset Israel in Pittsfield, and B’nai Jeshurun in Manhattan.

Writing About Loss: Poets Rabbi Pamela Wax and Rabbi Rachel Barenblat in Conversation on January 9

Rabbi Wax and Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, author of Crossing the Sea, will be in conversation about grief poetry and writing through the tough places at a special event sponsored by Congregation Beth Israel on Sunday, January 9 from 7:30-9 p.m. They will talk about the tradition of writing about loss through the poetic form and share some of their poems and process. Contact Ollie Jones at CBI for Zoom link, cbinadams@gmail.com. If there is interest, a writing about grief workshop may form from this gathering.

Walking the Labyrinth can be pre-ordered at a discounted price until its publication at mainstreetragbookstore.com. The book’s cover (see above left) features the Al and Frances Small Memorial Labyrinth on the property of Congregation Beth Israel.

Rabbi Pamela Wax

Walking the Labyrinth

by Pamela Wax

I am a connoisseur of labyrinths. I can tell you about the ancient drawing with Jericho at the center, suggesting that the walls came-a-tumbling down because of a parade of seven circuits, a merry-go-round of intention. What we do here stirs heaven to act. Tiny finger labyrinths were carved into walls outside old country churches in Europe, so supplicants might ground themselves for the sacred within, a prayer before prayer. I could explain how a maze confounds, a labyrinth uncovers the self, meditation in motion. It resembles a wound, a brain, a fingerprint, the revolving planets, the primal and timeless. I weave and spiral like Ariadne across the length of a football field contained within a 42- or 20-foot or 5-inch round. I might carry a question lightly in the back of my throat or a prayer tucked between my breasts. I may be in a candle-lit rectory in the Bronx, following a unicursal path branded in black paint on a waxed parquet floor, or inhaling an autumn Berkshire landscape while weaving in lanes drawn by shrubs, string, or stones. I could be prancing barefoot on grass or solemnly marching to the cadence of a dirge-like owl demanding answers to unknowable pain. Sometimes I create a Cretan-shaped labyrinth on a blank page starting at an intersection of four straight corners, then fill in seven concentric circuits, one arc following another, rainbows radiating, seeking the Eureka of wisdom that King Solomon honed on his daily constitutional through a whorling solar system on his palace grounds, seven orbits of stepping holy, holy, holy into the whole world of God’s glory, while he composed love songs and proverbs. I am superstitious but not fussy about my labyrinths if they get me where I’m going, which is now here and nowhere in time, mindful not to cross boundaries—ethical or spatial—to finish what I begin, and to remember that the one way is in the only way out.
Traveling with Jewish Taste
Croatia, Jews, and a New Novel
By Carol Goodman Kaufman

The Berkshire Hills Hadassah book club recently discussed David Grossman’s latest tour de force, More Than I Love My Life. The novel is a many-layered exploration of how both history and personal choices combine to impact the lives of subsequent generations. The story itself is a fictionalized version of the life of Eva Panić Nahir, an immigrant to Israel whom Grossman befriended over a period of years. A Jewish Croatian, Nahir was imprisoned and tortured on the barren and remote island of Goli Otok, under the regime of strongman Josip Broz (“Tito”).

The only connection to Croatia I’ve ever had was a trip planned with a fellow kibbutz volunteer back in the 1970s. We had heard about the magnificent coastline still calls to me. But that gorgeous place. I have never seen the coastline. My dad nixed that idea the moment he heard about it, so I have never seen the place. But that gorgeous coastline still calls to me.

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author that some of our favorite foods have taken from their traditions. She is currently at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, may be of her.

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

THE FUTURE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS IN YOUR HANDS.

HOW WILL YOU ENSURE THE JEWISH FUTURE?

To create your Jewish legacy contact: Dara Kaufman

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author that some of our favorite foods have taken from their traditions. She is currently at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, may be of her.

Ingredients:
1 lb. Russet potatoes
1 medium onion, sliced
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Directions:
Scrub the potatoes and put into a pot of cold water. Cook until soft, about 20 minutes. Allow to cool before peeling.

Preheat oven to 400. Place the sliced potatoes on a baking sheet and roast for 20 minutes.

Restani Krumpir, with sausages as is traditionally served

Croatian Restani Krumpir

Ingredients:
1 lb. Russet potatoes
1 medium onion, sliced
1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions:
Scrub the potatoes and put into a pot of cold water. Cook until soft, about 20 minutes. Allow to cool before peeling.

While the potato is cooking, sauté sliced onion until soft and starting to brown.

The book’s storyline jumps back and forth between the present and the 1930s Croatia during Tito’s regime. We meet three generations of women – Vera, age ninety; her granddaughter, film-maker Gili – on a journey to Goli Otok to visit the former prison camp at which Vera had been held. Using an ingenuous narrative device, Grossman reveals the family’s secrets layer by layer via a documentary that Gili and her director father, Rafi, film during the trip.

I’ll leave it to you to read this astounding novel and find out what happens, but I do want to connect the book to my usual subject: food and the indelible marks it can make on our memories. Despite a lifetime of resentment, rebellion, and regret, Nina does have one good memory of the short period she had with her mother while the family was intact. That recollection revolves around food. Nina tells Vera that, while working as a cook at a home for abused children, she prepared many of her mother’s dishes.

“Did they like it?” Vera asks.

“They liked their plates clean. Do you know how
Leaving the Mountaintop

Three weeks on California’s John Muir Trail showed a local historian that God and tradition follow us wherever we are willing to take them

By Michael Hoberman / Special to the BJV

In the summer of 2021, I hiked the 200-plus mile-long John Muir Trail through California’s High Sierra. Doing this was something I had dreamed of since I was a teenager. After I discovered the outdoors and read Muir’s books on the splendors of the Sierra Nevada for the first time.

My decision to hike the JMT came less than a year after the Sierra Club’s “cancellation” of its naturalist founder – the group cited “derogatory comments,” made in his youth, “that drew on deeply harmful racist stereotypes.” As a historian, I can’t say that I was surprised to hear that Muir, who died in 1914, had been made in his youth, “that drew on deeply harmful racist stereotypes.” As a historian, I can’t say that I was surprised to hear that Muir, who died in 1914, had been made in his youth, “that drew on deeply harmful racist stereotypes.” As a historian, I can’t say that I was surprised to hear that Muir, who died in 1914, had been made in his youth, “that drew on deeply harmful racist stereotypes.”

There was no Way

Muir was an Emersonian, which meant that he was a committed individualist who rejected society. Muir’s love for the wilderness was the love of a person who, as Emerson put it, sought and found a mirror image of his sovereign self in the natural world. He went there to avoid human company. As industrialism and urbanization dirtied the skies and waters and despoiled the natural world. He went there to avoid human company. As industrialism and urbanization dirtied the skies and waters and despoiled the natural world.

As he experienced the mountains possessed on a massive and unrelenting scale – physical grandeur. Evidence refer to God in his descriptions of the Sierra Nevada. He craved what the mountains were supposed to leave.

He happened to be one of the privileged few who got to stay there when everyone else was supposed to leave. Although he was not a professionally religious person, Muir didn’t hesitate to refer to God in his descriptions of the Sierra Nevada. He craved what the mountains were supposed to leave.

I met, I also carried a Garmin “inReach” GPS tracker that enabled me to stay in touch with friends and family both on and off the trail. It’s not just the technology that Muir – he of the tin cup and woolen trousers – might have found objectionable. In the bigger picture, though, it’s about mutual preservation or a “PCT-er” – that is, one of the 3,000 or so people who each year attempt to hike the 2,600-mile plus Pacific Crest Trail. The JMT stretches through California, Oregon, and Washington from Mexico to the Canadian border and runs contiguous to the JMT for 160 miles.

Hiking along the perimeter of Helen Lake, I greeted a guy who’d passed my campsite the previous evening. He was, as the trail lingo has it, a “PCTer” – that is, one of the 3,000 or so people who each year attempt to hike the 2,600-mile plus Pacific Crest Trail. The JMT stretches through California, Oregon, and Washington from Mexico to the Canadian border and runs contiguous to the JMT for 160 miles.

He happened to have darker skin than his, not to mention different cultural values of millions upon millions of other human souls – a significant number of whom happened to have darker skin than his, not to mention different cultural values than the ones he held in high esteem.

My experience of the JMT brought me to an even more important awareness of the limitations of Muir’s imagination, however, than did the revelations concerning his cultural prejudices. During my three-week hike, I learned that the gift of time spent in the wilderness has less to do with the sanctification of solitude that Muir championed than it does with the promotion of human values, including the profoundly Jewish notion that communal well-being should matter more to us than individual transcendence.

I won’t deny that I experienced some elongated moments of reverie and exhilaration as I hiked the JMT. Several times I walked as though I were walking up a mountain like the morning that I summited Muir Pass (11,898 feet). That’s the site of the Muir Hut, a remarkable round stone emergency shelter that is also a registered National Historic Landmark. Each turn in the 10-mile ascent to it from the Middle Fork of the Kings River yielded a new wonder: a small lake in a sea of rocks, the sudden view of a glittering glacier, a tiny garden-like meadow full of Indian paintbrush flowers. Ascending mountain passes can be a humbling experience. You think you see the point in the distance where you will break through to the other side of the range you are in, but then the trail makes a sharp turn, and you have no idea how you will emerge from behind the wall that contains you. At one point, I turned a corner and found myself on a height of land that I thought was the pass, only to see a massive lake set in a moonscape of boulders. Had I taken a wrong turn and lost the trail? In fact, the pass lay on the far, southwestern side of the lake and higher still than I’d imagined it would be.

Hiking along the perimeter of Helen Lake, I greeted a guy who’d passed my campsite the previous evening. He was, as the trail lingo has it, a “PCTer” – that is, one of the 3,000 or so people who each year attempt to hike the 2,600-mile plus Pacific Crest Trail. The JMT stretches through California, Oregon, and Washington from Mexico to the Canadian border and runs contiguous to the JMT for 160 miles.

I learned that hiking the JMT is a profoundly social experience. No matter which section of it you are traveling, you will encounter at least a dozen fellow hikers each day you are out there, if not more. If you crave solitude, you should go to Alaska, or at least someplace that is more than a five-hour drive from two of the nation’s most populous metropolitan areas. It probably isn’t what John Muir would have had in mind for the Sierras’ future. Modern-day thru-hikers are native to a densely populated and interconnected modern world. In addition to their backpacks, “Ultra Light” packs, and tents colored so brightly you can spot them over a mile away, they carry solar panels to charge their phones. While there is minimal cell service available along the JMT, a phone is also a camera and a source of social media and podcasts for hikers seeking audio accompaniment. Like most other hikers I met, I also carried a Garmin “inReach” GPS tracker that enabled me to stay in touch with friends and family both on and off the trail. It’s not just the technology that Muir – he of the tin cup and woolen trousers – might have found objectionable. In the bigger picture, though, it’s about mutual preservation.

During my first few days on trail, my adult son accompanied me, and the time we spent together deepened our bond. After he left, a friend from home would join me for several days, and our relationship prospered. New friendships are easy to strike in the atmosphere of the Sierras, where identities are quickly stripped down. I think that is why so many thru-hikers insist on being known by their trail names. (Being a JMT short-timer, by the way, I didn’t earn or pretend to deserve one – it’s the PCTers, out there for four or five months, who mostly follow the practice.) A trail name marks and recognizes the self in community and is removed from the trappings of off-trail conventions. It is a self that is named not by others according to societal expectation, aspiration, or traditional practice, but rather in relation to some demonstrable, if trivial on-trail truth – for example, a way of being, a daily habit of shining a headlamp in fellow hikers’ faces early in the morning, or a preference for Twinkies as trail snacks.

For example, I heard a PCTer complain that someone had recently asked him: “But what is your real name?” “My real name is BamBam,” he had answered, which was his way of saying that the trail itself is as “real,” and therefore as socially consequential, as any other environment.

The daily social exchanges on the JMT aren’t the only evidence that the trail is a “human institution. After a few days of being overwhelmed by the absence of artifacts aside from tents and backpacks, the trail itself – a mere twelve-inches-wide – takes on the aspect of a superhighway. Like other highways, its most memorable points are marked, literally, by signs denoting junctions with other such “superhighways.”

The gift of time spent in the wilderness has less to do with the sanctification of solitude that Muir championed than it does with the promotion of human values.
my experience, these junctions are where one will most likely encounter other hikers on break. Why? Because they manifest a human presence and consciousness on the otherwise culturally-vacant landscape – plus, they are the places from which the distance one has traveled or has yet to travel are measured.

Human-made signs are few and far between on the JMT. You might only see a half-drawn during a full day’s progress. More abundant are other indications that human beings made the trail by working together with a carefully thought-out plan devised by a group. You follow others’ blueprints in the dust and sand, reassurance that you are on trail. You’ll find cairns placed on the rocky shores where there is no dust, sand, or turf for the trail-makers to cut through. Switchbacks escort you to higher ground and make long climbs endurable. You pass intricately-constructed retaining walls and impermeable water bars, and then there are stretches of stairs – miles and miles of rocks that human laborers aided by horses and mules and guided by engineers’ plans picked up, carried, and levered into place.

The most famous and breathtakingly beautiful of those segments, the Golden Staircase, descends (or ascends, if you are a south-bound hiker) 1,500 vertical feet over a distance of two miles. Even without knowledge of the history of the trail’s construction (which took place over the half-century between its first conception in the 1880s and the completion of the Golden Staircase in the late 1930s), the casual hiker can’t help but note that the JMT is a powerful symbol of humanity’s presence in the wilderness. It is a 200-mile-long artifact whose construction necessitated the frequent use of dynamite at the cost of human lives and limbs. Its very existence is a human utterance in the void.

How often did I think about Judaism while walking the 230-odd miles from Cottonwood Pass to Yosemite? Was I reliving my ancestors’ 40 years of desert and limbs. Its very existence is a human utterance in the void.

The Muir Hut elevation, 11,898 feet

As I hiked and camped “alone” during the final four days of my trip (my son and hometown buddy had both flown home by then), I formed new bonds with other hikers I’d just met. I completed the trail’s final descent into the Yosemite Valley in the company of a father and daughter I’d first encountered on the trail about a week earlier. Our celebratory swim in the Merced River was joyful and heartbreaking in equal measures. The two hours we spent with one another that day were as memorable as any other episode in my life. I can’t imagine that I will ever see them again. Moses wasn’t an inhabitant of Sinai, but a stranger to its craggy heights. Coming down off the mountain wasn’t easy for him, what with the riotous greeting he knew he would receive at the hands of the assembled Hebrews, who craved human sustenance more than they hungered for divine transcendence. If he was wise, it was because he knew, as Zora Neale Hurston once wrote, that the man of the mountain’s most important job isn’t to stay up, but to come down.

Michael Hoberman lives in Shelburne Falls, and is a professor of American literature at Pitchick State University. He is a frequent presenter of historical talks for the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community program.
Before Dr. Laura, before Dr. Ruth, there was C. Israel Lutsky, the Jewish Philosopher. Before 1931 to the mid-'60s, Lutsky took to the air daily with letters from listeners seeking advice. He replied with spoonfuls of folk wisdom and dollops of abuse. Charlatan or sage, Lutsky was one of the most beloved and listened-to figures from the golden age of Yiddish radio. No other radio personality delved so deeply into the personal lives of his listeners. From men lamenting overextended family business to women bemoaning no-good children, Yiddish-speakers of all stripes solicited Lutsky's counsel on issues too sensitive for the ears of friends and relatives.

Short, pugnacious, and dapper to the point of risibility, the cigar-chomping Lutsky was an entertainer above all else. The “C” in his name stood for cantor, a role in which he had early success before going on to become an amateur pugilist, a vaudevillean, a socialist organizer, a cub reporter, and ultimately a radio personality. In this long-lived function, he demonstrated a hypnotist’s talent in bringing his correspondents to life in listeners’ minds, turning private grief into public catharsis and transforming platitudes into pearls of wisdom.

In short, the Jewish Philosopher was a snake-oil salesman, and as such, knew it wasn’t enough to gather a crowd. He needed to sell, sell, sell – and he did it with cantorial fervor. His longtime sponsor, Carnation Milk, was so pleased with his impassioned promotions they awarded him a pension at his retirement.

But shilling for sponsors was only the tip of the iceberg. Lutsky launched the Philosopher’s League, a kind of lonely hearts club devoted to spreading his teachings. And he went multimedia, publishing a magazine dedicated to himself. In 1937, in a bid to capitalize on the success of his radio show and his growing stature among listeners, C. Israel Lutsky launched the Jewish Philosopher’s League, Incorporated, “an organization that is truly a Cultural and Spiritual Cult,” and the Jewish Philosopher magazine, its house organ. Promising “a successful challenge to loneliness of the heart … loneliness of the soul … loneliness of the spirit,” the league was, in essence, a matchmaking service built around the magnetic personality of its leader.

Having paid the $10 initiation fee and $5 annual dues, league members could attend sponsored activities like dances, amateur drama classes, and boat rides. If the balance sheet totted up positive for Lutsky, no tally exists on aching hearts salved by the venture. Evidence does, however, exist that at least one heart was broken: by the Jewish Philosopher’s League treasurer, Morris Shimshak (his membership card is reproduced below, along with a photo of Rae M.K., who professed her unrequited love for Shimshak by letter). A little while later, Shimshak found himself on the outs, following a squabble with Lutsky about matters financial.

Endorsements of the league were dutifully penned into every Jewish Philosopher article, written by members of the league’s executive committee. True to its mission, The Jewish Philosopher ran a biographical sketch of Lutsky, an open letter from Lutsky to his listeners, and a novel-ette based on the solution of a letter writer’s woes. The first issue, dated November 1937, was also the last.

Day in, day out, for three decades running, Lutsky began his program with a freshly written tribute to the wonders of Carnation Milk. He lauded the economic efficiency of Carnation’s plants, the mysterious nutritional benefits of its powdered milk crystals, the allergy-preventing properties of its canned milk – all with the same emotion and sense of purpose that went into responding to “listener” letters. The force of Lutsky’s devotion was in full evidence when he summarily fired Isaiah Sheffer, his English-language announcer, for garbling a Carnation ad.

Lutsky was so enamored of his patron that he always sported a white Carnation in his lapel and, for his vacations, toured Carnation plants across the country, prancing about like Napoleon at Austerlitz. It thus seems apt that one-third of the surviving recordings of the program feature Lutsky dispensing Carnation ads rather than the milk of human kindness.

Henry Sapoznik will present three programs for the Federation this winter – please see page 1 for more information. For more stories like this, visit yiddishradioproject.org. Many thanks to Henry for allowing the BJV to share his work.