Reflecting on an Eventful Year with Deep Gratitude for Our Jewish Community

By Judy Usow / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

I often thought about the year 2020 because long ago I calculated this would be the year my youngest daughter, Josie, would graduate from high school and leave for college. But this new decade came so much faster than I could have imagined. As I look toward the future, I can’t help but reflect on the past year with a deep gratitude for this community. My husband and I feel lucky to have raised proud, confident daughters in this caring Jewish community. As Federation president, I am continually inspired by so many in this community who live by their Jewish values.

On behalf of the Federation board of directors, I want to thank all the generous donors and volunteers who helped us surpass our campaign goal to raise $918,000! A special thank you to Elisa Schindler-Frankel and Larry Frankel, who kicked off the annual campaign on Super Sunday as campaign chairs and worked tirelessly to help us throughout the year.

Worth a Thousand Words

Local artist Pattie Lipman’s flowers will have to tide us over until spring

Over the past 25 years, Pattie Lipman’s artwork has appeared in exhibitions throughout the United States. This winter, her paintings were on view in Sanibel, FL in a group show titled “Forever Friends: Celebrating the friendship and inspiration of Hollis Garland Jeffcoat.” Lipman, who lives in Stephentown, is a former adjunct professor at SUNY – University at Albany who creates paintings, prints, and drawings – visit her website www.pattielipman.com. When asked by the BJV for some thoughts on her artistic approach, she replied that she’d rather have the work speak for itself. And so it does. For more pictures worth a thousand words, please turn to page 27.

The Kaleidoscope of Cuba – “Judaism hasn’t gone away”

On a religious mission, a local rabbi experiences the warmth of a small Jewish community holding on to its long and rich history

By Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

The following essay is excerpted from Rabbi Barenblat’s account of her 2019 visit to Cuba, where she and rabbinic colleagues from the United States toured the island on a religious mission and distributed medical supplies to grateful communities. Please visit her blog, velveteenrabbi.blogs.com (select November 2019 from the Archives) for a complete account of her trip.

What do I Know?

How on earth can I write, as an outsider, about the beautiful, wrenching, poignant, powerful experience of nine days on...
What a mechaieh, a life-giving thing, to get to join the local Jewish community in filling this little synagogue with holy spirit.

I am here with a small delegation from Congregation Beth Israel of North Adams, and a larger delegation from Temple Beth El of City Island in Bronx, NY. I am here with Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer of the Cuba America Jewish Mission, a rabbinic school friend. (Also with Rabbi David Markus of TBE, and with Rabbi Bella Bogart, a rabbi and musician; we three are also founding builders at Bayit.)

As soon as we visit our first synagogue, the Sinagoga Centro Sefaradi, I am struck by the locals’ fierce sense of identity, Jewish and Cuban. They tell us proudly that they have Shabbat services every weekend, and they always manage a minyan. They tell us proudly that there’s no anti-Semitism here. I half-think it’s propaganda, but people keep saying it. Is it possible that it’s true?

I never once feel unsafe in my kippah. Several times people come up to us and say that they have never seen a woman wearing one before. “Soy una rabbina,” I learn to say. “Yo trabajo en una sinagoga.” (And sometimes – when more explanation seems necessary – I add, “es como una iglesia para los Judíos.”) For that matter, I never once feel unsafe as an obvious American.

The things we carry

Everywhere we go on the island we bring medical supplies. Our first two stops are the Centro Sefaradi and the Patronato in Havana. Their pharmacy shelves were bare, emptied since last time R’ Sunny was here six months ago. They disburse medical supplies to anyone who needs, Jewish or not. There are other pharmacies (we visit one later) but their shelves are sparse too.

“Rite Aid or Walmart is like science fiction to us,” says one Cuban who has traveled abroad. I lose track of how many times and in how many ways my heart breaks. And I also lose track of how many times and in how many ways my heart soars.

Even just in Havana. The chapel at the Centro Sefaradi has light fixtures from Shevet Achim in Old Havana, the first Sefaradi congregation in Cuba, founded by immigrants from Turkey and Syria. Those fixtures still shine. I mean this literally and metaphorically! At the Patronato, I’m moved by the cheery preschool classroom funded by the Cuba America Jewish Mission.

The sanctuary at the Patronato looks like every mid-20th-century synagogue I’ve ever seen. Like the classic cars that serve as taxis all over Havana, it’s been repaired and patched and kept running ever since it was new. At home a space like that would feel staid, but it feels different here, even defiant here. It’s still here; it hasn’t gone away. Judaism hasn’t gone away.

And yet many Jews have departed. For the United States, for Israel, for Spain, for Mexico. There are fewer than a thousand Jews left on this island. The further inland we go, the smaller the communities we meet – but the heart and spirit we experience praying with them, eating with them, singing with them, just being with them, is enormous. Outsized. “My cup overflows.”

A heart aflre

We drive past lush green fields of banana trees and sugar cane to Cienfuegos, our first provincial stop. First we gather on the roof of an opulent former mansion, where we sip mojitos and gaze at a rainbow (appropriate during this week of parashat Noach!) Then we visit the home of the Langus family. Rebecca Langus welcomes us and (with our guide as translator) tells us her story.

She always knew she was Jewish, she tells us, but she didn’t learn what that meant until 1992 when the state officially exchanged...
Guest Editorial

It’s Not The Jews’ Job To Figure Out How To Stop Anti-Semitism. It’s Yours.

Jeremy Burton / Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston

As we were reeling from the news of the brutal stabbing attack in Monsey, New York last December that left nine Hasidic Jews hospitalized, a friend asked me, “When we call on civic leaders to fight more vigorously against anti-Semitism in the United States, what can they do?”

It’s an important question that requires an answer. But as I explained to my friend, it should not be my responsibility, or ours as a Jewish community, to answer it.

America is enduring the worst wave of sustained anti-Semitic violence in our nation’s history. In the fourteen months since the Tree of Life massacre in Pittsburgh, places of Jewish gathering have endured deadly attacks in Poway and Jersey City.

The New York City area in particular has endured a spate of attacks on mostly Orthodox Jews over the past few years that have escalated dramatically in recent weeks. The violent attack in Jersey City was only the culmination of what has become a new normal for Orthodox Jews.

And yet, while Jewish Americans are experiencing a crisis the likes of which we have never experienced in this country, experiencing an acute fear and sense of urgency about sustaining vibrant and public Jewish lives, what is happening in America right now is not just a crisis for Jews. It is a crisis for this nation as a whole.

We have seen this before, in other times and other countries, though less so in this golden haven of the United States. The sobering reality is that the violent anti-Semitism that has come roaring back is in fact a return to the “normal” of being a Jew in Western civilization. Anti-Semitism is not an aberration; it is a feature, built into the DNA of our society and expressing itself in new and timeless ways for the past two millennia.

We’ve also seen the heartrending conflicts within the Jewish community about what we ought to do, or what in retrospect we could have done about it. Those conversations — the victim blaming, the self-flagellation — are not productive.

Because when we engage in them, we fail to affirm that anti-Semitism is not, and has never been about, anything that we Jews do. My Jewish brothers and sisters in New York and New Jersey are not being attacked because of their political views, they are being attacked because they are the Jews who are visible, readily identifiable and most easily targeted.

But this series of attacks on a visible religious minority is not just an attack against Orthodox Jews. It’s not even just an attack against Jews. It is an assault on the very thing that makes us Americans.

Anti-Semitism is at its core, an expression of a society’s need to have an outgroup. If the US will now push anti-Semitism back into the closets from which it has emerged.

And yet, while Jewish Americans are experiencing a crisis the likes of which we have never experienced in this country, experiencing an acute fear and sense of urgency about sustaining vibrant and public Jewish lives, what is happening in America right now is not just a crisis for Jews. It is a crisis for this nation as a whole.

It’s not the Jews’ job to figure out how to stop anti-Semitism. It’s yours.

Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team.

Mitch Greenwald, Roman Rozenblum, and Colin Ovitsky

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Berkshire Jewish Voice welcomes signed letters on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. Letters are printed upon space availability. The BJV reserves the right to edit letters for content, length, and style. The BJV does not print anonymous letters, insults, libelous or defamatory statements. Published letters do not represent the views of the Federation, its board of directors, or the newspaper, but rather express the views of their authors. For verification purposes, please include full name, home address, and a day and evening telephone number. Send letters to: Berkshire Jewish Voice, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or email: astern@jewishberkshires.org.

The sobering reality is that the violent anti-Semitism that has come roaring back is in fact a return to the “normal” of being a Jew in western civilization
Your Federation Presents

President’s Message, continued from page 1

Also, thank you to David and Lorna Strasser, who continued that momentum by chairing our Major Donors Breakfast. We are deeply grateful to all the board members, host committee members, and volunteers who dedicated their time to reaching so many in our community and sharing the important role of our Federation. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the Federation staff for their dedication throughout the year.

This past year, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires embarked on an important strategic planning initiative. We set out to evaluate this community’s evolving needs and to examine how we can most effectively meet those needs to sustain a vibrant Jewish life here in the Berkshires.

With the help of a professional consultant, we heard from a very wide sampling of the Jewish community by holding town hall meetings, focus groups, and stakeholder meetings, as well as through an emailed questionnaire. We sought input from a broad range of voices including full-time and part-time residents, seniors and young adults, members of congregations, people who are unaffiliated with a synagogue, and those in interfaith relationships.

We hope to present the findings and recommendations to the board of directors in the next few months. Thank you to everyone who participated in the study! Your contribution will help shape the future of this community.

I also had the opportunity to attend FedLab in Washington, DC this past November with our executive director, Dara Kaufman, and Josh Bloom, a member of our executive board. Instead of the annual General Assembly conference, this year the Jewish Federations of North America tried something very different. They invited representatives from Federations across the country to spend three days engaging in deep conversations and interactive problem solving focused around the Jewish world’s most critical issues. We were encouraged to share viewpoints and were exposed to exciting new ideas and approaches.

It was apparent that those who attended FedLab were committed to having meaningful discussions to address the issues facing the Jewish world.

After facing the reality of horrific anti-Semitic events around the country and the world over the past couple of years, in 2019 the Berkshire Jewish community faced its own struggles with anti-Semitism.

This past October, Jewish students at Monument Valley Regional Middle School in Great Barrington were threatened by another student. Supporting these kids and their families, and working with local schools through the Anti-Defamation League’s A’s Difference program continues to be an important part of our Federation agenda. We must always stand up and speak out when and wherever we encounter hate and bias.

Finally, as I write this column members of the Federation’s allocations committee are reviewing grant proposals in order to decide how to make a meaningful impact with our campaign dollars in 2020.

Our allocations committee will determine how we will use our campaign dollars to build a strong Jewish community, to share our values and traditions with our children and families, to strengthen the Jewish identities of teens, to ensure that our seniors can live with dignity, and to support people in need and those facing crisis in Israel and around the world.

On page 14 you will find our 2019 annual report.

My husband and I feel lucky to have raised proud, confident daughters in this caring Jewish community. As Federation president, I am continually inspired by so many in this community who live by their Jewish values.

Judy Ussau

Letters to the Editor

Local High Schooler Grateful for Federation’s Ongoing Anti-Bias Efforts

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you for your continued advocacy and commitment towards eradicating anti-Semitism within our schools. I am a junior at Monument Mountain Regional Middle School.

While the recent anti-Semitic incidents at Monument Valley Regional Middle School have received significant press coverage, it’s not the first time that such events have occurred. When I was in sixth grade at the school, I was targeted with anti-Semitism on multiple occasions.

The incidents opened my eyes to our need for anti-bias education and training in our schools. It’s my hope that through education and training from groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, we can stop the perpetuation of hate and racism within our community. I am grateful to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for supporting the implementation of anti-bias education in schools throughout Berkshire County.

Thank you for your commitment to ending hate within our community and making our world a kinder place for all.

Alec Bachman
Great Barrington

Your PJ Donations Keeping Berkshires Kids Warm

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

The Department of Children and Families Pittsfield Area Office deeply appreciates your generosity through your PJ Library pajama drive program.

With your donation, the Department was able to provide children throughout Berkshire County with new warm cozy pairs of pajamas. Thank you for your continued support!

Respectfully yours,
Angela Bryan
Director of Area

Tiffany Bassi, M.S.
Supervisor

Women’s Foundation Supports STEM Education for Girls

Dear Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County:

Thank you for generously supporting the Gladys Allen Brigham Center and our new Girls Inc. Eureka! program.

Each year we feel fortunate to be in a community that sees the value in what we do for the children, youth, and families in the Berkshires and are willing to help us to continue to build our programs. Your support, along with your friends and neighbors, will help area girls become aware of the many possibilities that lay ahead by exploring STEM subjects beyond the classroom. Girls involved in this exciting new program will have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge, meet women and men in STEM careers, and visit are businesses and organizations in STEM-related fields.

We are grateful you chose to contribute to Girls Inc. of the Berkshires as we continue our work to empower girls to be strong, smart, and bold!

Warm regards,
Kelly A. Marton / Chief Executive Officer
Girls Incorporated of the Berkshires

ADL and Federation – Partners in Combating Bias and Hate in the Berkshires

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

On behalf of ADL, New England, we want to express our utmost gratitude to your community on behalf of your Federation’s 2019 grant totaling $23,000, as well as for its continued generosity and support over the years.

At a time when our schools and communities are experiencing an increase in incidents of hate and prejudice, ADL stands ready to assist Berkshire County schools and communities in responding to acts of anti-Semitism and any other form of hate, and helping prevent future such incidents. Our signature Peer Training Program equips educators and students with strategies and tools to address and help prevent future incidents in their communities. We are grateful for your partnership in this important effort.

ADL also looks forward to participating in Berkshire community initiatives to provide families with resources and strategies to foster a bias-free home environment and empower their children to recognize and report anti-Semitism and all other forms of prejudice and actively promote respect for religious, racial, cultural, and other human differences.

In keeping with our mission to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all,” we are incredibly proud to have the Federation as a partner in providing anti-bias education programs to the public, protecting our civil rights, and advocating on behalf of those whose civil rights are violated.

Best regards,
Robert Trestan
ADL Regional Director

Phil Fogelman
ADL Director of Education

Tiffany Bassi, M.S.
Supervisor

ADL Regional Director

Get Connected

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Tiffany Bassi, M.S.
Supervisor

ADL Regional Director

Get Connected
Letters to the Editor

Responding to Our Jewish Heritage Museum Trip

“Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County…”

Thank you so much for the powerful opportunity to share the history of the Holocaust with my son, Charlie. The current exhibit “Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away,” inspired my family to have further difficult conversations about the history of anti-Semitism, reflect on the dangers of prejudice and hate speech, and recognize frightening examples of anti-Semitism today.

Bart Raser
Pittsfield

Thank you for the opportunity to see the Jewish Heritage Museum. I found the speaker’s story interesting. It helped me see the Holocaust in a new way.

From,
Cam Miller
Williamstown

Thank you for sending my peers and me (and our parents) to New York City to visit the Jewish Heritage Museum. The most amazing part of the trip for me was the talk by Holocaust survivor Ruth Gruener. I had read the book based on her story, Destined to Live: A True Story of a Child in the Holocaust, and to be able to hear her tell her story in person was a surprise and an honor. It made history real to me.

Sincerely,
Eliot Stern
Pittsfield

If you go to visit the Jewish Heritage Museum in New York City, you may wish to see some of the other places that I recommend.

PHOTO BY LEE ROGERS

Your Federation Presents

Easy Chair Yoga for Flexibility, Mobility, and Peace of Mind

On Thursday, February 20 at 10:45 a.m., join Linda Novick for “Easy Chair Yoga for Flexibility, Mobility, and Peace of Mind.” This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series. Linda Novick says: “Chair Yoga is appropriate for people of all levels of mobility. It is a series of breathing and stretching exercises done in a chair, which increases mobility of the joints, flexibility, strength and stamina. Some of the exercises are performed standing behind the chair while holding on. Participants will learn breathing techniques to enhance lung capacity, as well as easy stretches and yoga postures. Yoga is good for all bodies. Beginners are welcome.”

Linda Novick, MFA, is an author, teacher, artist, and professional level Kripalu Yoga teacher. She currently teaches yoga at Berkshire West Fitness Center and Kinshalt Farms, and all over the Commonwealth with the Massachusetts Housing Authority.

She explains that her approach to yoga encourages everyone to listen and love their body. Her yoga classes encourage gentle stretching, proper breathing, strength and balance. She attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and has a BFA in art education, and has taught art for 50 years. She’s been teaching yoga since 1997, and lately has been focusing on easy yoga for elders. She taught on staff at Kripalu Center for 7 years, and is now a regular presenter, offering programs that combine painting and yoga. She’s the author of the book, The Painting Path: Embodiment Spiritual Discovery through Yoga, Brush and Color.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires /Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, February 20 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 11).

Foster Children and Fostering Families

On Monday, March 23 at 10:45 a.m., Jason E. Larrier, who works for the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families as a family resource recruiter, will talk about the Foster MA program in a presentation titled “Foster Children and Fostering Families.” This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series. Approximately 7,000 children in Massachusetts live with foster families. Children in foster care need stability and routine in their lives and to know there are adults who care about their safety and wellbeing. By becoming a foster parent, one provides a sense of security and a sounding board for children whose families are in crisis. The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) is actively seeking to expand its network of foster parents in every city and town across the state. The Department strives to place children with families they can relate to in the communities where they live to help maintain important connections to their school and friends during a trying time. Jason Larrier will talk about the situation in the Commonwealth.

A former foster parent himself, Jason Larrier has worked for the Department of Children and Families for the past three years. He worked in the Berkshire Area Office as an ongoing case manager for the Department of Children and Families before accepting his current role of family resource recruiter. In his role as a recruiter, he is tasked with sharing information about the need for foster parents in Berkshire County.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, March 23 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 11).

Aging in Amazement

On Monday, February 24 at 10:45 a.m., join Susie Kaufman, who will read selections from 2019 personal essay collection, Twilight Time: Aging in Amazement, reflections on memory, aging and mortality. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series.

Susie Kaufman is a retired hospice chaplain and spiritual director. Her writing has also appeared in the journal Presence as well as in Lilith and American and the anthology Writing Fire (2017). Her blog seventysometh- ing (susiekaufman.blogspot.com) has appeared regularly since 2015.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, February 24 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 11).

Berkshire Jewish Voice

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for sending my peers and me (and our parents) to New York City to visit the Jewish Heritage Museum. The most amazing part of the trip for me was the talk by Holocaust survivor Ruth Gruener. I had read the book based on her story, Destined to Live: A True Story of a Child in the Holocaust, and to be able to hear her tell her story in person was a surprise and an honor. It made history real to me.

Sincerely,
Eliot Stern
Pittsfield

Thank you for the powerful opportunity to share the history of the Holocaust with my son, Charlie. The current exhibit “Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away,” inspired my family to have further difficult conversations about the history of anti-Semitism, reflect on the dangers of prejudice and hate speech, and recognize frightening examples of anti-Semitism today.

Bart Raser
Pittsfield

You can now read and share Berkshire Jewish Voice feature stories online! Visit jewishberkshires.org and select Community & Events>Berkshire Jewish Voice for links to highlights of current and past issues.
Intergenerational: The Process of Aging, with Maggie Bittman

On Monday, March 16 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents “Intergenerational: The Process of Aging” with therapist Maggie Bittman. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, in Pittsfield, is part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community series.

This program will provide an opportunity to be a part of a group dialogue, created and facilitated by Bittman, who will explain her outlook and approach, emphasizing that aging begins at birth. She will discuss how all of us are confronted with four existential truths as we age—the search to find meaning and purpose; facing mortality; experiencing aloneness; and engaging free will.

Bittman will highlight how this is a lifelong process, and the ways people return to these existential truths at each stage of life with the added wisdom that comes with aging. Within this context, participants will discuss, share and offer support, as they explore these existential truths.

**IF YOU GO**

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, March 16 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 11).

An Introduction To Cannabis Medicine and the Emerging Cannabis Industry

On Thursday, March 5 at 10:45 a.m., join Maya Richards, the Training & Outreach Manager at Berkshire Roots cannabis dispensary in Pittsfield, who will provide “An Introduction To Cannabis Medicine and the Emerging Cannabis Industry.” This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires: Connecting With Community series.

Since legalization, there has been a lot of information and misinformation circulating about cannabis products and the emerging cannabis industry. This presentation will introduce topics related to cannabis medicine and how people are using the plant-based medicine to help alleviate certain symptoms. Says Richards: “We will go over what gives the cannabis plant its medicinal properties, the consumption methods people are using to achieve their desired outcome, and what the experience of visiting a dispensary is like in Massachusetts. There will be opportunities to ask questions throughout the presentation and during the Q&A at the end of the presentation.”

Maya Richards had an active role in opening Berkshire Roots’ medical cannabis dispensary as the dispensary manager in 2018, and has been responsible for education, outreach and engagement on behalf of the organization ever since. Prior to her work in the cannabis industry, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies with a concentration in Public Advocacy and a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Affairs with a concentration in Conflict Resolution from Northeastern University in Boston. After spending time working with grassroots organizations in Bali, Indonesia, and studying disarmament diplomacy and conflict resolution at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Maya returned to her hometown in Pittsfield to give back to the community she grew up in. She recognized that the emerging medical cannabis industry in Massachusetts presented her with an opportunity to positively impact her community.

**IF YOU GO**

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, March 5 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 11).

Commemoration – The Liberation of Auschwitz, 1945

On Thursday, February 27 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz with a program presented by educator and writer Hugh Black. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, in Pittsfield, is part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community series.

writes Black: “The liberation of Auschwitz occurred 75 years ago on January 27, 1945, when soldiers of the 66th Army of the First Ukrainian Front opened the gates of Auschwitz Concentration Camp. The prisoners greeted them with authentic liberators. It was a paradox of history that soldiers formally representing Stalinist totalitarianism brought freedom to the prisoners of Nazi totalitarianism.”

For this program, Hugh Black will discuss the subject from the literary perspective. Among the authors and books will be Primo Levi’s *The Truce* and *This was Auschwitz*, Antionio Hubre’s *The Liberation of Auschwitz*, and Yisrael Gutman’s *The Anatomy of the Auschwitz Deathcamp*. There will also be discussion around the topical concerns of today.

**IF YOU GO**

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, February 27 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 11).
My City of Dreams, with Author Lisa Gruenberg

On Monday, March 2 at 10:45 a.m., we welcome author and physician Lisa Gruenberg, whose second-generation Holocaust memoir, My City of Dreams was featured in the December edition of the Berkshire Jewish Voice. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Coll Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series.

In her memoir, Gruenberg, confronted with her elderly father’s flashbacks, begins to inhabit the story of his sister Mia, who disappeared into Germany in 1941. After her father’s death in 2005, Gruenberg traveled to Vienna, Germany, and Israel to explore this lost landscape, and to trace the fate of Mia, their extended family, friends, and neighbors. She wove her own story with theirs, linking up with others in her own extended family, friends, and neighbors. She wove her own story with theirs, linking up with others in this season.”

Alex Beam, author of Life and Death Inside America’s Premier Mental Hospital: “The past is a foreign country, sometimes best left unexplored. But Gruenberg takes the trip, figuratively and literally, in an attempt to recreate her father’s Vienna and the events that extirpated his sister, his parents, and 65,000 other Austrian Jews.”

Hello, Spring! A Family Walk in Bartholomew’s Cobble

SHEFFIELD – On Sunday, March 22 from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., celebrate the wonders of spring through an easy hike at The Ledges Trail at Bartholomew’s Cobble, where participants will learn about interconnections with nature through a Jewish lens.

PJ Library and Federation families are invited for a Spring Equinox Nature Walk with Arielle Arnon, lead educator of Teva, the experiential learning organization that fosters Jewish, ecological, and food sustainability.

This event is FREE! Children of all ages welcome. Please RSVP by March 18 by calling (413) 442-4360, ext. 10, or by emailing slerner@jewishberkshires.org. Snacks included, but bring your own water.

Please arrive on time, as the walk will leave promptly by 2:45 p.m. Bartholomew’s Cobble is at 105 Watoga Road in Sheffield. Meet at the Visitor’s Center.

Equinox Explorations with Earth Scroll

On Thursday, March 19 at 10:45 a.m., farmer, artist, and Earth-justice advocate Debra Tyler will help us celebrate the Spring Equinox by sharing her 3-year spiritual journey of making an Earth Scroll, a prophetic 54-foot illustration of global unity. The program is called “Equinox Explorations with Earth Scroll.”

This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Coll Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series.

Earth Scroll is a multi-faith movable mural of block and leaf prints, what Debra Tyler says “is a stunning reminder of our oneness with the world. It chronicles the solar seasons, rising and falling tides in accordance with the lunar phases, signs of the zodiac, and phenomenology of the natural world. Various spiritual belief systems are represented by Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Chinese calligraphy.

As part of “Equinox Explorations,” Tyler will demystify its symbols and how to read them. She says: “Together, we’ll take a close-up look at what’s happening in the natural world and ways in which different faith scriptures correspond to one another in this season.”

Debra Tyler lives in Cornwall, CT, where she raises miniature Jersey cows and teaches homesteading workshops. She is the founding director of the non-profit Motherhouse: Nurturing Self, Family, Community, and our Mother Earth. Embracing her Christian heritage and the call to serve Smithfield Church in Amenia, NY, Debra aspires to ordination as a Presbyterian minister. Concurrently, she strives to embody deep interfaith ecumenism, which is reflected in her Earth Scroll.

Let’s Bake Challah – Lots of Them!

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Sunday, March 8 from 10 a.m. to noon, join PJ Library and Federation families and the Williams College Jewish Religious Association (WCJA) for a challah bake. Learn about food insecurity in Berkshire County, participate in a mitzvah, and have fun!

This event will be held at the Williams College Jewish Religious Center at 24 Stetson Court. Emma Lezberg, a Williams College senior from Pittsfield and currently Tzedek director for WCJA said that “once or twice each semester, we bake about 72 miniatures of challah and sell them in our student center to raise money to combat food insecurity. Please join us!”

Monies raised will be donated to Mazon (a Jewish Response to Hunger) and the Berkshire Food Project.

Join us for a PJ Library story for the younger kids with a challah theme or one on feeding the hungry. And, of course snacks will be included.

This event is free, but RSVP Required by March 2 to (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 or slerner@jewishberkshires.org.
KI’s Annual Purim Concert

By Phil Coleman / Music Committee Chair, Knesset Israel

PITTSFIELD – I am very pleased to announce that year 12 of the great Purim concerts that KI is known for, is upon us. This year’s theme is “The Best of British Rock!” The concert will take place Saturday night at 7:30 p.m. on March 7 at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

An incredible history of rock and roll has emerged from the United Kingdom in the past 60 years. From the British Invasion through the Punk 1980s and up until today, this small island has produced some of the most memorable music in history.

Our setlist this year is diverse and most everyone should recognize the songs. We will be covering the Beatles, the Who, Queen, Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, and others. With a loving tongue in cheek, the band’s songwriters are really “re”writers. We take the theme of Purim and create memorable music in history.

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

Celebrate the Birth of Hadassah!
Join and contribute

BERKSHIRE HILLS HADASSAH
berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com

Happy Purim!

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.

Thank you to the many community members who joined the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in saying “NO HATE. NO FEAR. #JewishAndProud in the Berkshires” as part of the Four Freedoms Coalition march and gathering that took place on January 12 in Pittsfield.
Census 2020 – Why It’s Important to Our Jewish Community

She adds that the census also determines the number of electors each state has in the Electoral College, “and we all know from several recent elections that the number of electoral votes matters.”

As for how census results affect a region like Berkshire County more immediately, Loventhal says, “there are two buckets of consequences from the census. One is political power and the other is the money. The money is more than $1 trillion in federal spending outcomes,” she says. Businesses use it to decide where to expand or contract, or even what merchandise to stock in their stores. Philanthropists use the data to better direct their funds to communities in need.

“Absolutely, the census is the root of all data – it is objective, it is universal, it is publicly available, and it forms the baseline for all other surveys.”

Loventhal also points to the

Immigration Stakeholder’s Meeting

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Thursday, February 20 at 5 p.m., Hevreh of Southern Berkshire hosts B-A-S-I-C (Berkshire Area Support for our Immigrant Community), a coalition of social service organizations serving immigrants in Southern Berkshire County. This event is free.

BASIC is organizing a social celebration and opportunity for immigrants of the Berkshires to come together to identify community strength and needs. The group wants to create a space for immigrant voices to be heard.

Through facilitated small groups, participants will elicit stories and information about the immigrant experience in Berkshire County.

There will be notetakers at each discussion who will compile the information received into a report that should help plan future projects and provide support for grant writing. Provided will be dinner, transportation, childcare, and dancing to offer a safe, empowering and fun evening for the whole family.

For more information, go to www.basic berkshire.org.
BOSTON – The newly formed board of directors of the New England Friends of the March of the Living (MOTL) reports that it has been successful in raising funds from generous donors in order to expand awareness of the MOTL trip program throughout Massachusetts, and to offer every Jewish high school senior in the Commonwealth a $2,000 scholarship toward participation in a future MOTL Poland/Israel trip.

MOTL is an international organization which annually brings some 10,000 Jewish teens from 50 nations around the world to Poland and Israel to study the history of the Holocaust and to examine the roots of prejudice, intolerance and hate.

“This type of educational program is especially timely and important in the face of the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism and hate crimes in the U. S. and worldwide,” says Irv Kempner, son of Holocaust survivors and CEO and chairman of PFLS’s New England chapter. The mission of this one-of-a-kind program is to ensure the perpetuation of March of the Living through our Teen Trip Scholarship Fund and other activities to create awareness, to promote and fund the program. The MOTL experience instills the necessity to ‘Never Forget’ and the importance of supporting the State of Israel as the voice, refuge, and shield of the Jewish People, and of continuing to share the stories of Holocaust survivors for generations to come.”

Adds Kempner: “A City University of New York survey shows that 95 percent of past teen participants say the MOTL trip strengthened their Jewish identity and their bond with Israel. Ninety percent of respondents said MOTL made it more likely they would financially support Jewish causes, and 90 percent said they’re now more inclined to get involved when confronted with anti-Semitism, such as on their college campus.”

Registration for the 2020 MOTL is now open. The teen trip will be held April 17-May 1, 2020. For more information, visit the New England chapter of MOTL’s website at www.motlnewengland.org.

Additional funding may be available through Federation or Harold Grinspoon Foundation grants. Please call (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 for information.

PITTSFIELD – On Tuesday, March 10 at 6 p.m., Temple Anshe Amunim celebrates Purim with a special Purim feast of glitz and glamour. “Hot dog! It’s Purim!” Temple Anshe Amunim invites one and all to their special Purim and Shabbat celebrations.

One of Judaism’s most joyous holidays is occasioned for the highlight of TAA’s end-of-winter programming. No matter your age – 0 to 100+ – TAA invites you to celebrate with members, not-yet-members, friends and guests; and, please come in costume if you like!

Beginning at 5 p.m., the FPTY Youth Group will coordinate games and activities, followed by light refreshments and hamantaschen. Then, at 5:30 p.m., all are welcome to join in the merriment of a musical, humorous Purim and Shabbat experience led by Rabbi Liz Hirsch.

“Our temple family wishes a chapin somer – a joyous holiday – to all members of the Berkshire Jewish community!” says Rabbi Liz.

Temple Anshe Amunim, at 36 Broad Street, is a Reform Jewish congregation that promotes engaging and widespread participation in services, education, and social action programs.

AMHERST – The Yiddish Book Center’s Great Jewish Books Summer Program offers college students an opportunity to engage with modern Jewish literature. Under the guidance of college professors, students will explore important works of modern Jewish literature and consider how they speak to the opportunities and challenges facing today’s students. The program will begin on June 15, 2020.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2020 Great Jewish Books Summer Program. Great Jewish Books Summer Program students:

• Read and discuss important works of modern Jewish literature by writers such as Franz Kafka, Sholem Aleichem, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, and Isaac Bashevis Singer.
• Learn from college faculty as well as prominent visiting writers (including, in past years, novelists Allegra Goodman and Jami Attenberg, poet and critic Adam Kirsch, and graphic novelist and scholar Stan VanDerMeer).
• Develop skills for literary analysis and self-expression that will prepare them for college.
• Meet other teenagers from across the United States who love to read and who care about literature and Jewish culture.
• Get a taste of college life, from dormitory living to semi-nar-style classes.
• Discover how modern literature connects them to ancient traditions and contemporary ideas.

Students at Great Jewish Books come from a wide variety of backgrounds, Jewish affiliations, and experiences. People of multiple heritages, people of color, LGBTQ+ participants, and non-Jewish participants are welcome. Anyone who has an interest in Jewish literature and culture is welcome to apply.

For more information, contact Margaret, education program assistant, at greatjewishbooks@ yiddishbookcenter.org or (413) 256-4900, ext. 152. You can also follow the program on Instagram at @greatjewishbooks to see photos from previous years, news from the Center, and updates on this year’s program.

Put on your top hat, tie up your white tie, brush off your tails.
Connecting with Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

Enjoy an educational program followed by a delicious kosher hot lunch!
Programs take place on most Mondays and Thursdays at 10:45 a.m. Lunch is served Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays at noon.

Advanced reservations are required to attend lunch.
Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 am on the day you would like to attend.
Open to the public. All are welcome! Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Rd, Pittsfield, MA.

Adults 60 and over: $2 suggested donation
Adults under 60: $7 per person
Program only is free!

When making a reservation please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy.
The Federation’s kosher hat lunch program is offered in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire County.

What’s for Lunch?

# Dairy Free, ** Gluten Free Main Entrée
For more information on specific programs please see “Your Federation Presents” section of this paper.

FEBRUARY
Monday, 17 ............ Closed for Presidents’ Day
Tuesday, 18 ............ Fish sticks, cream of mushroom soup, sweet potato fries, green beans, muffins, peaches, coffee, tea, and milk coffee.
Tuesday, 25 .......... Beef stew**, rice, Italian bread, applesauce, and tea.

MARCH
Monday, 2 ............ 10:45 a.m., My City of Dreams with author, physician, and educator Lisa Gruenberg. Lunch: Meat loaf**, mashed potatoes, peas & carrots, salad, Farmer’s loaf, fruit cocktail, and tea.
Tuesday, 3 ............ Chicken with sundried tomatoes, mushrooms & artichokes**, fettucini & garlic butter, bread TBA, mandarin oranges, and tea.
Thursday, 5 ........... 10:45 a.m., “An Introduction to Cannabis” with Maya Richards, Training & Outreach Manager at Berkshire Roots. Lunch: Macaroni & cheese, tomato zucchini medley, salad, scones or muffins, popsciles, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
Tuesday, 10 .......... Tuna noodle casserole, salad, beets, Challah, pears, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
Tuesday, 17 .......... Corned beef & cabbage**, baby carrots, red skinned potatoes, salad, rye bread, mint stuffed brownies, and tea.
Thursday, 19 .......... 10:45 a.m., "Equinox Explorations with Earth Scroll" with farmer, artist and earth-justice advocate, Debra Tyler. Lunch: Dairy surprise, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
Calendar – Ongoing Events
Around the Community


Monthly, fourth or fifth Sunday – Volunteers from Congregation Beth Israel, 53 Lois Street, North Adams “Take and Eat” program, cook, package, and deliver hot meals for all North Adams clients of “Meals on Wheels.” Information: (413) 663-5830 or office@cbiweb.org.


Sundays, continuing through March at 10 a.m. – Knesset Israel continues its “Introduction to Judaism” series. For information, call (413) 445-4872, ext. 16, or visit the calendar page of knessetIsrael.org for schedule. Individual classes cost $10.

Monthly on Sundays through the winter months at 4 p.m. – “An Afternoon Movie at Hevreh.” Spend your Sunday afternoon with friends watching movies, chatting, and socializing. This is a free movie although donations for snacks are accepted. Next film, the Mel Brooks comedy for snacks are accepted. Next film, the Mel Brooks comedy.

Sundays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington, offers an hour of “Shalom Yoga, Gentle Stretch and Meditation” with Nina Lipkowitz a certified Kripalu and Jewish yoga and meditation teacher. Check https://hevreh.org/calendar/ for updates. All levels welcome. Contact Nina at ninalipkowitz@gmail.com with any questions.

Wednesday, from 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington, offers an hour of “Shalom Yoga, Gentle Stretch and Meditation” with Nina Lipkowitz a certified Kripalu and Jewish yoga and meditation teacher. Check https://hevreh.org/calendar/ for updates. All levels welcome. Contact Nina at ninalipkowitz@gmail.com with any questions.

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Wednesday at Knesset Israel, – “Enhanced Prayer Class for Adults” 10 to 11:30 a.m. at 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, KI library. What are we saying when we read prayers at a service? How does the siddur language connect with my life today? How can I be more comfortable with the language and process of prayer? Facilitated by Myrna Hammerling. Newcomers always welcome. Information: (413) 445-4872, ext. 16.

Wednesday, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. at Chabad of the Berkshires (through June 13), – Join together with fellow Jewish women in the Berkshires for inspiring Torah study, warm camaraderie, hot tea and deli-cious refreshments! Please RSVP to saravolovik@gmail.com or call (413) 499-9899.

Wednesday at Hevreh, – “Lunch N Learn” with Rabbi Neil Hirsch at 11:45 a.m. is open to anyone who wants to deepen their relationship to Jewish study through text and discussion. Says Rabbi Hirsch: Currently, we are studying the Book of Judges, which tells the stories of the Israelites as they attempted to set up the Land of Israel. It’s a story of one people encountering others, the tensions that exist between those parties, and the complic-ated, ongoing relationship of a Covenantal Nation with its God. While the study is ongoing, we welcome people whenever they may be available to join. “Classes available via video conference or conference call. Email Rabbi Hirsch a nhirsch@hevreh.org to find out how to join remotely.

Thursday, fourth of each month – Hadassah Book Club. For times, locations of meetings, and further information about the books: Pattie Lipman plipman@fairpoint.net.

Thursday at 10:30 a.m. – Janet Lee will continue to teach an intermediate mat Pilates class at Hevreh every Thursday. Bring a mat and water. Contact Janet Lee at jlee@hevreh.org to learn more, and check hevreh.org/Calendar for any weekly changes.

Friday at 9 a.m. – Meditation with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat in the Congregation Beth Israel sanctuary, 53 Lois Street, North Adams, overlooking the Berkshire mountains. Silence, chanting, and meditation designed to help prepare for Shabbat. All welcomed. Information: (413) 663-5830 and www.cbicwe.org.

Friday, once a month at 5:30 p.m. (followed by a family style Shabbat dinner at 6:30 p.m.) – Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Shire Shabbat (“Songs of Shabbat”). Unique service combines melodies from Carlebach, Debbie Friedman, and Camp Ramah in Canada/ashuc and filled (“spirited”) family friendly experience. Cost for dinner $25 adult; $15 teen, children FREE. Dinner reservations are due by the Monday before services. Full information: (413) 445-4872, ext. 10.

Friday, March 20 at 6 p.m. – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire hosts evening services and a community Shabbat dinner hosted by Hevreh’s 6th and 7th grade families and sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Community Shabbat is free and open to the entire community with advance RSVP visit hevreh.org to let them know you’ll be there.

Saturday at 8:45 a.m. – at Hevreh, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Every Shabbat morning, gather in Rabbi Neil Hirsch’s study and dive into the less-often read books of the Bible. All are welcome to begin the day with coffee while studying and relaxing on Shabbat. Sessions will be between 45 and 60 minutes.

Saturday at 9:30 a.m. Temple Anshe Anumin, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield – “Torah Plus: Exploring Jewish Text and Culture.” Join Rabbi Liz FG. Hirsch for a conversation based on the texts of the Jewish people and reflect on Jewish values and thinking and what it means “to be Jewish.” All texts are offered in English. Free and open to the public. Information (413) 442-5910 or templeoffice@ansheanumin.org.

Saturdays through February and March at 10 a.m. – Hevreh hosts a Shabbat Lab. Organizers write: “Each Shabbat, we will use our Palace in Time as a platform to mine for meaning and insight, to study and pray together, and often to eat together. Take a look at the schedule at hevreh.org and what you’ll see are the things we do whenever we come together for Shabbat, with a particular emphasis on something a little different and a little special. All are welcome.” For more information, call (413) 528-6378.

Open House

June 7 & 14
10am-12pm
June 28, 1-3pm

EISNER DAY CAMP

Located in Great Barrington, MA

Campers 4-7 years old
Age 4 by July 1, 2020 to rising 2nd grade

Week-long sessions:
June 29 - August 14, 2020

Optional pick-up & drop-off service
Financial assistance available upon request

413.528.1652 | eisnercamp.org | eisnerdaycamp@uri.org

Attentive, caring and energetic staff!

Day Camp fun includes boating, swimming, farm, sports, crafts, drama, music and trip days!
On a Rainy Berkshires Evening, the Jewish Community Joined Together for a Warm Havdalah Concert

On January 25, more than 150 hardy souls braved a pounding mid-winter rainstorm and came together for a festive community Havdalah hosted by Knesset Israel in Pittsfield. Rabbi David Weiner of KI and Hevreh of Southern Berkshire’s Rabbi Neil Hirsch led the ceremony marking the end of Shabbat, backed by concert headliner Jacob “Spike” Kraus and his band, which was augmented by community members Rabbi Liz Hirsch of Temple Anshe Amunim, Jon Gotterer, Alan Gold, Colin Ovitsky, and Jonathan Denmark (who wowed the crowd with some mean licks on the electric guitar).

Berkshire Jewish teens from across the county also had a chance to get to know each other better at a pre-concert supper and program hosted by Temple Anshe Amunim.

This community event was co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and all of its affiliate congregations, with additional funding generously provided by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Ringing Out Chanukah 5780 with a Dazzling Display of Light and Spirit

Despite a major winter storm looming on the evening of December 29, 125 members of our Jewish community joined holiday revelers enjoying the spectacular Winterlights festival at the Naumkeag Gilded Age mansion in Stockbridge for a Federation-sponsored celebration of the Festival of Lights. On this last night of Chanukah 5780, Federation Executive Director Dara Kaufman lit the candles of a menorah, while Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch of Temple Anshe Amunim led the crowd in brachot and a selection of favorite Chanukah tunes.
This is just a sampling of how, together, we are making a difference in the lives of others.
The 2019 Community Campaign Raised $918,000

Thank You for Making a Difference!

“It is not what one says, but rather what one does that makes all the difference in the world” – Pirkei Avot 1:17

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires acknowledges the tremendous effort of over 1,218 donors and many community volunteers who helped make the 2019 campaign a resounding success. On behalf of those whose lives will be touched, saved, and changed, thank you for your generosity and caring.
Connecting With Community kosher lunch
Spouses, to whom she referred those with her children’s dearly. Her relationships honor the Jewish family as they grow, marry, and mously. She took great pride in Judaism, Camps Eisner/Newton-Wellesley Orthopedic Surgery, when she wasn’t working at Mayyim Hayyim. She contributed to the community in the form of volunteer work and leadership roles in organizations including Temple Beth Shalom, The Anti-Defamation League, Women of Reform Judaism, Camps Eisner/Newton, and The Roxbury Latin School, among others. Strong and caring, tender and thoughtful, Patti generously manifested itself in myriad ways, consistently. She took great pride in her family and watching her children grow, marry, and have their own children while they honor the Jewish family values she and Louis held so dearly. Her relationships were sacrosanct, including those with her children’s spouses, to whom she referred as “daughters-in-law” and “son-in-law.” Her friends will fonduy remember the songs and poems that she wrote in their honor for special events. Patti was an incredible friend behind friend- ships that span decades, none greater than hers with her husband of 48 years. They relished their time together and with family, especially in the Berkshires, where they dined at Tanglewood, Jacob’s Pillow, and Shakerag, and where they traveled to with family and in friends, where they routinely enjoyed The Boston Symphony Orchestra and The Huntington Theater. Patti’s light and life will be missed by the concerts that she attended.

Patti’s memory will live on for generations to come as she touched so many in her short 68 years with warmth, joie de vivre, and spunkiness. Memories of her vivacity and strength will live on in her children, Louis of Newton, her children, Joel and Holly Grossman (Lawrence, CA), and Joel and Elizabeth Grossman (Dover, MA), and her grandchildren, Jason, Silverman (Brooklyn, MA), her nine grandchildren, Avi, Ezra, and Jacob Bearzi, Alexia, Henry, Sydney and Bobby, who will remember their Mimii dearly. Patti also leaves behind her brother and sister-in-law, Alan and Margie Levin (Wayland, MA).

Funeral services were held at Temple Beth Shalom, Neenham, MA on January 12 with interment following at Sharon Memorial Park. Donations may be made to The Patti & Louis Grossman Educational Scholarship Fund at Temple Beth Shalom www.tbshneenhaim.org/donate or Mayyim Hayyim in Newton, MA www.mayyimhayyim.org.

Joel Cartun, husband, father, grandfather
NEW YORK, NY – Joel Cartun of Westwick, Greenwich, CT and New York City passed away peacefully on Sunday, December 22 at Kimball Farms Nursing Center, Greenwich, CT. Born in Pittsfield on January 24, 1928 to Clara and Luigi Cartun, Eleanor attended local schools and graduated from Pittsfield High School. She lived in the Berkshires her entire life except while attending school and briefly working in New York City. She then moved back to Lenox and worked as a draftsperson at General Electric in Pittsfield.

She married Daniel Secunda of Pittsfield in 1954. Eleanor and Dan raised four children in Pittsfield. They not only gave their children the opportunity to try many different activities, they also joined them. Eleanor and Dan took figure skating lessons and tennis lessons, and the whole family went on ski vacations in Vermont. Eleanor was also very active in local organizations. She took on the position of the local figure skating club and often volunteered at Temple Anshe Amunim and at local Hasidic events.

Once her children were grown, she worked as an in-house financial manager for her family business, New England Furniture. Eleanor was also an avid reader and writer and continually learning. In their retirement, Eleanor and Dan attended the best classes as part of the Osher Life Long Learning Institute at Berkshire Community College. They also loved listening to classical music, faithfully attending performances at Symphony Hall and the Symphony Center. Eleanor and Dan even celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends on the Tanglewood lawn.

Eleanor was an artist. She attended Traphagen School of Fashion, majoring in fashion illustration. She also enjoyed painting, drawing, knitting and sewing, and, in her retirement years, quilting, which is what she probably loved most. She attended numerous fabulous classes, designing and quilting many beautiful bedspreads, throwing and designing heirlooms for everyone in her family.

Eleanor is survived by her children, Susan Secunda of New York City, Sara Secunda of Cambridge, MA, and Jonathan Secunda of Omaha, NE; daughter-in-law, Peg Mounts Secunda; and two granddaughters, Sydney and Bereket. Eleanor was predeceased by her husband, Daniel Secunda at Tanglewood, and her brother, John Bearzi.

Funeral services were held Friday, December 27 at Temple Anshe Amunim with Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch, spiritual leader, officiating. Burial followed in the Temple Section at the Pittsfield Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to either, Hospice Care at the Berkshires or to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research, both in care of the Temple Anshe Amunim Congregation.

Sheldon Ir Rothberg, 81, professor and spiritual leader
GREAT BARRINGTON – Sheldon Ir Rothberg, a longtime resident of Sheffield, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, surrounded by his loving family. In 2015, he became a Resident of Fairview Commons Nursing Home in Great Barrington.

Born in Boston on August 8, 1938, the son of Morris and Helen Rothberg, Sheldon graduated from The University of Vermont in 1962 where he returned to earn his master’s degree in 1967. He and his wife Linda moved to Pittsfield in 1970 with their two chil- dren, Adam and Jude. He married his second wife Heidi in 1982 and they lived with their daughter Natanah in Sheffield.

Sheldon was Professor of English and Humanities at Berkshire Community College from 1970-2002. He founded and led Project Outreach Seniors beginning in 1978. He played the drums with Randy Dickinson, the plays of William Shakespeare, airplanes, and tennis, and all of it was beloved by his students.

His love for Judaism led him to serve for seven years as spiritual leader at Temple Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington.

Sheldon was survived by his brother Warren; ex wives Linda and Heidi; children Natanah and partner Ben Heinstein and Jude and husband Rob.

Funeral services were held Friday, January 24 at Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Great Barrington. Donations may be made to the Sheldon I. Rothberg Memorial Fund c/o Finney & Stevens Funeral Home, 420 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

OBITUARIES

JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

Berkshire Jewish Voice • jewishtumble.org
February 17 to March 22, 2020

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

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

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

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

JEWISHERISHIRES.ORG

Shalom

Donate. Volunteer. Make a Difference.

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its atheism for agnosticism. When Rebecca was growing up, her Turkish grandmother insisted that they eat matzah (sent each year by the Joint Distribution Committee) at Pesach – but she never knew why they ate it or what it signified until the 1990s.

She tells us how she taught herself everything she knows about Judaism – gesturing to their small library of Judeic books, all donated by communi- ties like ours – in order to teach her children. The community in Cienfuegos now is eight families: eighteen people, three of whom are chil- dren. They meet for Shabbat services in her living room, set up with white monobloc chairs.

After her prepared remarks, she chats with the rabbis on our trip. We ask her what fuels her and where she finds her sense of hope in this work. In response, Rebecca tells us simply that everything she does for love. That woman, who rarely spoke even if she hadn’t said a word. Her care for her community and for Jewish tradition shines out of her face, out of her being.

We ask the Cubans if they take to persist as Jews community or if it is a place like this? To show up for Shabbat every other week because there are literally only eighteen of you and if a handful don’t show, there’s no minyan? Is there something about being in a place where religion used to be forbidden that makes people now want to claim the right and privi- lege of spiritual practice in community?

What does it take to profess and choose and celebrate Jewishness in a place where the economic picture is so difficult? Are there many young people who choose to emigrate to Israel, or Mexico, or Europe, or wherever else they can? We ask what would help the communities most. The answer I keep hearing is a feeling of political economy so that they can at least begin to live.

Holy spirit

Our next stop is Sancti Spiritus, where motorbikes and bicycles share the roads with horses pulling wagons that serve as group taxis. As in Cienfuegos, our historic hotel is old Spanish-style, built around central court- yards, with old heavy wooden furniture. It feels a million light-years away from the hip mid-century-modern (as light-years away from the furniture. It feels a million light-years away from the furniture. It feels a million light-years away from the furniture. It feels a million light-years away from the furniture.

The Barría family in chanting from the local Jewish community in filling this little synagogue with holy spirit.

Miracles in Camagüey

Our final stop is Camagüey, where we admire Spanish colonial architecture and beautiful narrow streets (which we tour via “bicitaxi.”) It is our last full day in Cuba and it feels my tears pricking; I am overstimu- lated, my mind racing with images and questions. I want to spend a few years a professors in the local Jewish community in filling this little synagogue with holy spirit.

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Fallen Angel: Hannah Senesh
Reimagining the experience of the Jewish poet, fighter, and martyr

Fiction by Talia Caine

A voice called. I went.
I went, for it called.
I went, lest I fall.
As the crossroads
I blocked both ears with white frost
And cried
For what I had lost.
— Hannah Senesh, “At the Crossroads”

It is 1943. I live on the Sedot Yam Kibbutz in Yerushalayim, my holy land, having left my mother and brother behind in Hungary. It is an idyllic place, one my father may have loved, had he been here. We are all equal and live in harmony. I cook, wash, and write poems; may my father smile upon me, for I follow in his footsteps. No one is better than another, there is only peace, no war.

My hell.
I live surrounded by the beauty of my God, taking and taking and never giving. What is life if one lives only to receive? I cook and I clean with no other purpose, my poems never to come to fruition, to live and to die, trapped under this too gracious star.

They were my deliverance. The men sent by Adonai, my hopes, my dreams, and the angels of my death, all in a few mortal bodies.

"Hannah. I come from the Jewish Agency."
"And what do you want with me?"
"There is a war going on."
"I am aware."
"Hannah, our people, our brothers and sisters, are dying in Europe. They need help."

"What do you want?"
"We want you."

No more of this. No more drudgery, no more writing poems to escape the formless sludge of life, to cook and to clean day after day, no end, never doing anything to aid my nameless siblings, caught in the gunfire, millions dying under my worthless hand.

May my father smile upon me. My apa, who wrote forever, as an author and journalist, but not a poet. He loved my poems. I was eight years old when the angels touched his heart, stopped the blood in it, turned his body cold and brought his soul to God.

Does he watch me now, as I leave my friends of the last two years? As I take what little I own and am driven away? As I unpack many hours later in my bunk, and begin my studies as a wireless operator?

May my father smile upon me. Over now. Months of training, and for what? To sit at a desk, speak into a headset, to feel that one is helping? My peers are thankful for the opportunity, this free pass to obtain all of the feelings of helping, to be able to claim bravery and helpfulness while never risking anything. To warn soldiers of an attack, to sit in a compound and phone a hospital as their brethren are torn limb from limb miles away, to go to sleep at night and feel they helped as commanders write tear-stained letters to new widows, as families cry together and beg for the last bloodied remains of husbands, of sons, of fathers. How could anyone be satisfied with a life like that?

Not I. I know of the operation that shall be performed, of the people needed. I do not think, I do, for I must.

"Commander."
"Hannah."
"I have heard of a mission. Of paratroopers, sent into Europe to aid the efforts of the Jewish people."

"There is such a mission. What about it?"
"I want to go."

Let them chuckle. Women, on a mission such as this! Let them laugh, let them point, let them shake their heads. I will not relent. Finally, someone says that women will not be suspected. After all, the Germans will never believe that a woman would be brave enough to be a true soldier. "She could make it," he says, "Let her go." I will be sent into Hungary, where my mother still resides.

May my father smile upon me.

I train in Egypt, land of my ancestors, of the Pharaohs, of Moses and of Aaron and of Miriam, and now the land of my rebirth. I train with 32 of my Jewish brethren, nearly all of whom hail from Europe, to become paratroopers—to fall from the sky unharmed, to hide so we can stay that way. In the few moments I am not training, I explore this beautiful place—I see rolling hills of sand, oceans of ground stones, waves of rocky shreds flowing out into the distance, forever rushing toward their God.

The day comes.
The airplane, the rushing wind, the tears and the hugs, the promises that we will see each other again all the while knowing that this is likely the last time we will ever look upon each other. And then, we jump.

Falling toward the earth, the winds loud in our ears, watching my brethren pull the strings of their parachutes, be pulled toward the sun like birds taking flight, just for a moment, and their angels of protection pull them up, to pause... and float toward the ground once again. Pulling my own string; a moment of stillness, of being frozen, of life and death colliding, fighting over me in that one second... and the life, for now, winning over, my angel pulling me to her chest a few feet above. And then gravity takes hold of me again, my angel releases me, and I begin to float down, down, down to the open arms of Yugoslavia, so close to my beloved Hungary. May my father smile upon me.

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret fastness of the heart.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

—Hannah Senesh, "Blessed is the Match"

I spend three months in Yugoslavia, my journey to my birthplace paused by the German invasion. My mother in danger, and me safe and sound with Tito's partisans, a resistance group in hiding. Trapped again, never to end, always to be held away from my calling. Feels like years.

Finally, we step across the border into Hungary. A few hours of remembrance, triumph, of knowing that I am home again. Then, guns, shouts, the red symbol of the Nazis, once of peace, now of death, burned into my head forever as I am pushed into a truck, driven away.

I am sorry, apa. Torture. Just have to stay quiet, can't say anything, won't say anything, keep quiet.

Blood. On my hands, my face, my torn and tattered clothing. They can't do this forever, just have to stay quiet, keep quiet, don't say anything. Pain in my limbs, my face, my head, my chest, my heart, my soul. Just can't speak, stay quiet, stay quiet, don't speak, just glare, what else can they do?

Another day. It's been months, one more day. I lost my front tooth a little while ago. Led to a new room. What will be waiting? I don't care anymore. Pushed through a new door. What else could they possibly throw at me?

Wasn't expecting this. My mother, my anya, here. Love courses through my distance, forever waves of rocky shreds of ground stones, oceans of sand, hills of sand, rushing wind, the exploring this beautiful up, to pause... and the life, for now, winning over, my angel pulling me to her chest a few feet above. And then gravity takes hold of me again, my angel releases me, and I begin to float down, down, down to the open arms of Yugoslavia, so close to my beloved Hungary. May my father smile upon me.

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—Hannah Senesh, "Blessed is the Match"
rate cells. Made stronger. May my father smile upon me.
We wander like ghosts around the compound for three months. A glimpse, a smile, a tear, and then we are torn from each other once again. Her presence, her spirit, keeps me strong through the continued pain. I will not be broken. When will they see that?
Finally, they do. I am given a trial, one that could have only ever have had one outcome, and sentenced. Death. I always knew that this would be the end, though I pled my case. Perhaps they may someday see that I have only ever done God's work. But more likely, they will never allow themselves to understand. Like the wireless operators, they wish never to be in danger, but these men are much, much worse in that girls want no harm to come to their bodies, and these men want no harm to come to their egos, their pride, their souls. Hopeless.
That night in my cell, I am at peace. But there is one more attack left.

HANNAH SENESH,
continued on page 25
What Made Milwaukee Famous Has Made a Nudnick Out of Me

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

Most of us rely on, or at least appreciate, knowledgeable guidance that might connect us with the best examples of the things that give us pleasure—food, art, music, movies, whatever. So here’s a rule of thumb that I find useful in navigating advice about matters involving subjective taste: “You’ll probably like what an enthusiast recommends. You might like what a nerd recommends. You probably won’t like what a nudnick recommends.”

My experience is that an enthusiast will enjoy a thing in itself, in the moment, without too many prejudgments. A nerd may collect more information and perhaps appreciate something he enjoys more profoundly, but that enjoyment is likely to be particular, circumscribed, and defined in opposition to many things he does not care for. In contrast, a nudnick—defined in The Joys of Yiddish as “a contrast, a nudnick”—is a most interesting sort of person, a particular kind of beer enthusiast. I had this insight after an experience in New England.

I had this insight after an encounter with the resident Beer Nudnick at the local boozefor emporium I patronize, an amiable fellow who was going on about Tree House beers, which has often been cited as the best craft brewery in New England and whose beers I had not yet tried. So I asked the Beer Nudnick if the store had any Tree House beers in stock, and he responded, “Oh, no, that is only sold at the brewery near Starbirdge, and it would be seriously illegal to sell them elsewhere.” And though I am experienced enough around nudnicks to know better than to ask why it might be seriously illegal to sell Tree House beers any place other than the brewery—because he would tell me—I did inquire if he’d ever been to their tap room. I heard that people drive for hours to Tree House and wait on long lines to buy their beers, that it’s a real scene and a lot of fun.

The Joys of Yiddish as “a contrast, a nudnick” defined the Tree House brewery all the time when they just opened, before anyone had heard of it. With the phrase “before anyone had heard of it,” I understood I had blundered into a nudnick’s maw.

I no longer ask the Beer Nudnick for advice, and even feel a little self-conscious if he’s hovering around the cooler, to the point of sometimes waiting until he walks away before taking out the six-pack I’ve made up my mind to buy. I thought that at my age I might be past feeling insecure about my tastes, but such is the power of the nudnick—to make you feel as if the experience you are enjoying is not as good as you, in your lamentable ignorance, believe it to be. That’s the nudnick’s only power, in fact, but it is a superpower. I eventually came to appreciate the courage to reject the Beer Nudnick, however, on the day after I returned from a visit to San Diego, home to one of the most vibrant brewing scenes in the country—scores and scores of microbreweries, seemingly a sort of paradise. I had stumbled upon a map of the country’s craft brewers, and eagerly visited the one closest to my hotel, Karl Strauss Brewing Company, which operates three popular brewpubs in the area. The beers I tried were fantastic.

When I spotted the Beer Nudnick, I said to him: “Hey, you know where I just came back from—San Diego? They have a huge craft beer brewing scene. I mean, they have over 150 breweries there.”

“Well,” the Beer Nudnick said, “too bad only four or five of them are any good.”

Channeling Homer Simpson, I thought: I would kill everyone who is anything but very good. He launched into an explanation of how the breweries out there were mostly producing West Coast IPAs, most of them not particularly well-done or at least not first-rate, and he’d had a great many of them because he participates in a community of trade people who share beers from around the country, and anyway, he is most interested in sours, and there are a...few...very...few very...decant sour beers coming out of San Diego, so...yay.

I don’t know how many of you have tried a sour beer, but if the beer the Beer Nudnick had previously recommended tasted like blended cleaning products, a sour tastes like...so have you ever had two bowls of water out for your dogs and noticed that your dogs are only drinking out of one of them, and then checked out the water in the bowl they aren’t drinking out of and started to gag? Sour beers taste like that.

So which nurvemers did I visit, the Beer Nudnick asked me, reeling off a list of those he preferred.

“Uh...um, just one,” I said, “and none of those I think you just mentioned.”

“I went to the Karl Strauss brewpub.”

He responded with a look of great pity. You may have noticed that, a few paragraphs back, I mentioned that Karl Strauss had three locations. This may have seemed like an insignificant detail, but one that I mentioned quite purposefully to create dramatic tension, signaling to the nudnick-savvy among you that I was about to be controlled by nudnackery. Because to a nudnick, a brewery that only three people know about is good. A brewer with three bustling locations serving delicious beers to thirsty, appreciative throngs can ONLY be, for lack of a better word, “thin.”

The pity that had marked his visage gave way to a stoic expression of distaste, as if I’d just told him that sure, Bud Light Lime-a-Rita is good, but not as good as the Bud Light Razz-Ber-Rita.

“And...and, they gave me some sample glasses of some other beers,” I said. “I thought they were pretty good, too.”

“Which kind?” he asked.

“I...I don’t know,” I answered, unable to look him in the eye.

The Beer Nudnick said nothing.

“Just my hosts shared some other San Diego beers that I liked,” I said.

“Which ones?” the Beer Nudnick asked, perking up and repeating the names of the beers he heard me ordered.

“...I don’t recall,” I said.

“I should always provide a picture of the label,” counseled the Beer Nudnick. “So you’ll remember what you drank.”

I asked him if he actually did that.

He hauled his iPhone out of his pocket and held it up.

Alarmed that he might start scrolling through his photos, I hastily hid him a good afternoon, and, fully in his gaze, reached into the cooler and took out a six-pack of Troegs Perpetual IPA, which I imagine is deliciously beneath his contempt.

My tasting notes: “Troegs Perpetual IPA is a smooth Imperial ale with a suitably hoppy finish absent the cloying sweetness typical of too many double IPAs. It packs a punch.”

He seemed to like it. I imagine it makes it perfect for a chilly night spent indoors, a nice bonus being that three or four of them are enough to banish all feelings of inadequacy and any all thoughts of nudnacks.”
By Maya Kaufman / Special to the BJV

Local teen had a learning adventure in Israel with help from Federation

Back to Her Roots
Young Judaism

This summer I had the amazing opportunity to attend the Roots Israel Service Learning Adventure, a community service program of the Jewish National Fund and the Alexander Muss High School in Israel. For three weeks I traveled, learned, and volunteered with 20 teens from all over North America and a few from Europe, too. I made many new friends and had amazing experiences as we traveled from the north of Israel all the way to the south.

One of the reasons I liked this trip was the many opportunities we had to volunteer. I think this was the best way to really learn about the people of Israel. We visited and played water games with disabled youth at the Banet School in Jerusalem, helped clear walking paths for the disabled in the Carmel Forest, and packed food baskets for those in need with Yad Ezra. However, my favorite volunteer activity was at an organization called Save A Child’s Heart at the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, Israel. This organization has helped over 5,000 children who have heart problems get the medical care they need. They help children regardless of where they live or come from, including kids from the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Iraq and many other countries. I got to spend time and play games with two Ethiopian girls. They were so sweet and, while we had some language barriers, we gave each other lots of hugs!

We spent one weekend in Jerusalem. On Friday evening, we gathered to sing and dance while saying the prayers for Kabbalat Shabbat. One of my favorite places I visited there was the Western Wall. Seeing all these people coming together to pray at this ancient site made me feel like I was part of something much bigger than myself. At home, being Jewish has always felt a little like I was on the outside, but here I felt equal.

I also liked visiting Mt. Herzl and learning about the many soldiers and people who risked their lives for the State of Israel and the Jewish People. While there, we visited the grave of a lone soldier. He had been a participant in the Alexander Muss High School in Israel program and it had such an impact on him, that he had made the decision to join the IDF. My father was a soldier in the IDF and maybe I will consider doing the same one day.

Traveling and learning about Israel made me feel like there was much more to being Jewish and being a part of the Jewish People than just what I had learned at Hebrew school and at camp. I hope to go back one day to spend more time learning about and experiencing my Jewish homeland. I think I would really like to spend a semester studying there.

I am very grateful to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for helping me have this experience.

Maya Kaufman is a ninth grader at Wahconah Regional High School.
Traveling with Jewish Taste

Barbados - A Haven for Jews Fleeing European Persecution in the 17th and 20th Centuries

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

It was 10 degrees back home, so I was thrilled to be sailing in the sunny Caribbean, where temperatures hovered around 85 every day. Joel and I, along with our good friends Rhonda and Charlie, visited several islands and, like every other tourist, enjoyed the lush green landscapes and the tropical fruit drinks. And, while we had the option to visit more of the same, as well as the numerous jewelry stores on the islands, we were looking for something a bit less commercial. We were fortunate to discover a true gem — a Jew if you will.

We found the history of Barbados Jewry. Our guide through Bridgetown’s Synagogue Historic District was transplanted New Yorker, Neil Rechtman, who has put his long-ago Brandeis major in Jewish studies to work as a volunteer docent. From him, we learned that Jews arrived in Barbados in 1628, and were once again fleeing for their lives after the Portuguese brought the Inquisition to Brazil.

There was no arable land left on the island for the immigrants to farm, but these Sephardic Jews had something far more valuable. They brought with them the technological expertise to make sugar cultivation and refining more efficient. The changes they instituted helped to make the country a world leader in sugar production and early exporter for the country’s economy.

In 1654, the community built the Nidhe Israel Synagogue, and within two decades, nearly 300 Jews lived in Barbados. They continued to prosper well into the 19th century. But, despite all their contributions to Barbados, life for the Jews wasn’t all rosy. On October 23, 1668, due to jealousy on the part of Britich businessmen, the Jews of Barbados were banned from all forms of trade and were confined to a ghetto in the capital city. It took another 150 years until those discriminatory laws were removed. Even so, Barbados was the first place in the entire British Empire in which Jews obtained full political rights.

The death knell for the Barbados Jewish community came in 1831, when a massive hurricane devastated the island economy and destroyed the Nidhe Israel Synagogue. Many Jews left the island, significantly diminishing the community’s population. The community continued to decline until 1929, when the last living Jew on the island couldn’t support the synagogue’s upkeep. He sold it to a local lawyer.

Once sold, the synagogue saw many changes, including removal of the women's gallery and construction of a full second story. The building changed ownership many times, serving over time as commercial space and law offices.

Then, in 1931, a full 100 years after the hurricane that changed island life forever, the Barbadian-Jewish community rose again when one Moses Altman left Poland for Barbados, followed in quick succession by four families fleeing persecution and certain death in Nazi Europe. Unfortunately, there was no longer a synagogue for them, so the community had to build their own little shul. The temple, in the late 1950s, the government seized Nidhe Israel property and began to build a courthouse. Moses Altman’s son, Henry, and grandson, Sir Paul Altman, petitioned the government to give the building back to the Jewish community. Then-Prime Minister Tom Adams, agreed to do so — if they could raise the money to rehabilitate it. They did and, money in hand, renovation began. Using archival photographs, contractors built an exact replica of the original structure.

The restored Nidhe Israel Synagogue was rededicated in 1987. One of the oldest such buildings in the Western Hemisphere, it features a dark wood ark, beautiful European chandeliers, and black and white marble floors. The original stained glass window featuring a Star of David was found hanging over the governor-general’s swimming pool, and was returned to the community and installed in the synagogue.

While still owned by the National Trust, the building is back in use as a synagogue, although the building weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. And, even though the community counts only 50 Jews, the historic district’s UNESCO Heritage Site status ensures its maintenance in perpetuity.

Our trip was an enriching experience, going, archaeologists from the University of the West Indies were digging in the parking lot, seeking the rabbi’s house. A graduate student came upon what turned out to be the community’s mikvah. Because the first thing a community of Jews must do is to build a mikveh, this building probably predates the synagogue. An underground spring still provides the fresh running water that makes the now-rehabilitated facility kosher, although Neil acknowledged that nobody uses it at present.

The last excavated place on our tour was the cemetery. Considered to be the oldest Jewish burial ground in the Western Hemisphere, the earliest stone is dated 1658. The tombs were dug into the clayey loam, and the sites are marked by the original headsstones. Restoration work on those continues.

On the final stop of our tour, Neil led us into the museum. Opened in 2008, its glass-fronted cases set into the floor display artifacts dug up during the renovation. The items give a glimpse into the lives and habits of the many Jews who have lived on Barbados over the centuries. The cases are set in sand in homage to the Crypto-Jews, who often spread sand on the floors of their hidden prayer spaces to muffle the sound and protect their clothes from the prying eyes of those who might betray them to the Inquisition. Also on view is a professionally-produced documentary that traces the journeys of the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities to the island nation. One particularly fun exhibit asks museum goers to identify spices by their scents puffed out from a display board.

All in all, our visit to the Synagogue Historic District was a most enlightening and enjoyable experience. I recommend it highly.
Before my fevered eyes.

Journal, to be found and burned years later to

for a community. To spend a childhood writing

continued from page 21

Hannah Senesh,

this morning?

A few sheets of paper. A pen. Were they there

reach into my coat and discover my salvation.

the thin jacket I am wearing. Hands shaking, I

fit that I am powerless to end. I wait until the

onto the floor.

continues to rip through me, and I cough blood

to hide from the strong, to insert an artificial

singing, acting, and listening to Israeli music.

Knesset Israel in Pittsfield, and enjoys writing,

Talia Caine of Richmond is a junior at

May my father smile upon me.


On Prayers of the Shema

Blessings to Zalman Schachter-Shlomo, who, in

the years before most of us had ever even heard of

global warming or climate change, rendered the second

paragraph of the Shema as a prophecy of what would

happen if we continued to mistreat the Earth. Thanks to

him, the “V’nechi on Shamo,” which used to make us

uncomfortable because it sounded like a threat from

God who controls the rain, now speaks directly to our

souls. What once seemed like a prayer that was far behind

the times now reads like a prayer that is ahead of our

times.

We owe much to the anony-

mous poet who gives us a fresh version of the “V’nechi

blessing of the Shema in this

collection. We owe whoever it was for the phrase: “with every

heartbeat, with every breath, with every conscious act”
simply because it is so much more alive than the “with all thy

heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might,” which

we have been saying for so long that we no longer hear it.

And how much more alive are these words:

“Teach them to your chil-

dren, talk about them at

work; Whether you are tired or

when you feel rested.

Let them guide the work of

your hands;

Keep them in the forefront of

your vision.

Do not leave them at the

doorway or outside your

gate.”

Let me be clear: This text is not meant to replace the

standard one. On the contrary, it only works if you know the

original version, so that you can understand why the poet

speaks of the work of your
CULTURE AND ARTS

Top Jewish Children’s Books Include Stories about a Yiddish Culture Rescuer and the Holocaust

By Penny Schwartz / JTA

PHILADELPHIA – A picture book about the founder of the National Yiddish Book Center and a debut graphic novel of a gripping Holocaust story are among the gold medal winners of this year’s Sydney Taylor Book Awards for Jewish children’s books.

The top awards handed out by the Association of Jewish Libraries were announced in January at the American Library Association’s midwinter meeting in Philadelphia as part of the latter association’s Youth Media Awards.

The Sydney Taylor awards recognize books with “high literary standards while authentically portraying the Jewish experience.”

The Book Rescuer: How a Mensch from Massachusetts Saved Yiddish Literature for Generations to Come, by Sue Macy and illustrated by Stacy Innerst, won in the picture book category. The biography traces Aaron Lansky’s unlikely path to rescuing Yiddish language books and helping to keep alive Yiddish culture.

J. Palacio’s debut graphic novel, White Bird: A Wonder Story, took the top honor for middle grade readers. It is based on characters from Palacio’s bestselling “Wonder” series of books that have been made into a film.

Leslea Newman, the author of 70 books, including many Jewish titles, was recognized with the body of work award. Her new picture book, Gittel’s Journey: An Ellis Island Story, illustrated by Amy June Bates, won this year’s Sydney Taylor silver medal and also garnered the recently announced 2019 National Jewish Book Award in children’s literature. Her trailblazing book “Heather Has Two Mommies” remains in print after 30 years.

Fourteen honor and notable book winners were named, as well. The winners will receive their awards, which are named for the author of the “All-of-a-Kind Family” series, at the American Library Association’s annual conference in June in Evanston, Illinois.

There is more in this collection, including some pages that do not touch me and some that may not move you. But try it for yourself, and you may find in it echoes of moments when the soul of the writer danced or yearned or sighed or sung or dreamed with pain. And you may find some pages that will stir you to do the same.


Beside Still Waters, continued from page 25

hands, or the foreground of your vision, or of the doorway to your house, each of which echoes a passage in the traditional prayer book. It is living midrash that the author is creating here – not a substitute for the text that we grew up with.

On Ma’ariv Prayers

We have said the prayer that thanks God for bringing on the evening so many times by now – both in Hebrew and in English – that it no longer helps us feel much awe at the setting of the sun. And so, I welcome this version of the prayer for the setting of the stars, a brief excerpt from which I cite below:

“The sun wheels over the horizon
Like a glowing penny falling into its slot.
Day is spent, and in its place the changing moon,
The spatterdash of stars across the sky’s expanse.”

Beside Still Waters, continued from page 25

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RESTLESS AS A WILLOW IN A WINDSTORM... JUMPy AS A PUPPET ON A STRING

We’d say that you had spring fever, but we know it isn’t spring. So for the time being, here are more of Pattie Lipman’s warm still-life paintings of flowers to hold us over until real flowers bloom—plus a portrait of Great Barrington’s Rabbi Everett Gendler.

For more of Pattie’s work, visit www.pattielipman.com.

Rabbi Everett Gendler

Follow-up: Stolen Marc Chagall Painting Sells for $130,000 at Auction in Israel

By Marcy Oster / JTA

JERUSALEM — A painting by Jewish modernist Marc Chagall (featured in the January issue of the BJV) sold at auction for $130,000, the lowest estimated bid suggested by the auction house.

The buyer, from Tel Aviv, wishes to remain anonymous, a spokesman for the Tiroche Auction House in Herzliya told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

The artwork, the size of a standard sheet of office paper, was sold in late January.

Titled “Jacob’s Ladder,” the oil painting by the famed Jewish modernist was scheduled for a 1996 sale but was stolen days before that auction. It was found in 2015 in the estate of an elderly woman in Jerusalem after her death.

Migdal Insurance, which paid the 1996 claim on the stolen Chagall, demanded custody of the painting and a Tel Aviv court ruled in 2015 that the painting be transferred to the insurance company. Migdal offered the work for sale through Tiroche to recoup the money it paid to the painting’s previous owner.


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Irving Berlin: New York Genius

Biography of Jewish American songwriter captures the simplicity of his art and the complexity of his personality

Book Review by Albert Stern | BJV Editor

With Irving Berlin: New York Genius, Kaplan has accomplished a feat that is too rarely achieved by biographers—putting portrait of a significant figure that tells you everything you need to know about his life, art, and achievement without sharing more information than you might care to read.

This briskly paced and accuratbee biography on the songwriter and showman is part of the “Jewish Lives” series published by Yale University Press. Kaplan the scribe seemingly absorbed Berlin the tunesmith’s own modus operandi—keep things simple and sophisticated. It is Arguably the closest Kaplan comes to becoming a widower at age 89. He was a quintessential New Yorker of his generation and a cultural icon of his time. Berlin died in 1989, but his music lives on. Kaplan’s biography of the songwriter offers a glimpse into the world of a master composer and a man of great achievement without sharing too much more of new material, the middling Calf and played “White Christmas” to a chapel full of homeless men.

What was the most Jewish thing about Berlin? As I read it, it was his passionate love for America and his immigrant’s gratitude for all it gave him.

P.S.

Irving Berlin’s story is a quintessentially Jewish story. Writes Kaplan: “Berlin may have strayed going to shul when his father died, may have worked hard on purging the greenhorn from himself and becoming a true American. But his kind of assimilation was to espouse his Jewishness…[daughter] Mary Ellin Barrett says. “He was very much a Jew.” And his Jewishness permeated his songs.

Berlin looked back on his tenement childhood with nostalgia—“Every man should have a Lower East Side in his heart.” And apparently he often returned to the old neighborhood just to walk its streets. One of the most charming parts of the book relates how the songwriter took a theater columnist on a vivid tour of his old stomping grounds in downtown Manhattan, which included a menschlike stop at a Chinatown mission where “Berlin sang and played ‘White Christmas’ to a chapel full of homeless men.”

Kaplan wrote of the song “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” he said. “Absolutely. I sweat blood in the early twenties, I was already a prosperous internationally-recognized hitmaker, a sort of popular music as both a songwriter and producer before and after the advent of radio. He was an integral figure in the development of Broadway, not only as a creative artist but as an impresario who, with partners, built the Music Box Theater on 45th Street—my present revues featuring his work. Berlin conquered Hollywood by scoring the film Holiday Inn, Top Hat, and Follow the Fleet, and then the immortal dancing of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. He designed and performed in military-themed revues during both world wars, and traveled brusely while in his mid-50s in both European and Pacific theaters to entertain the troops.

He was by temperament egocentric. Hitherto, Berlin’s life and times—literally a point, put pen to paper to try and write another song? Wouldn’t he ever have kept trying? As Shakespeare died at fifty-two, we’ll never know, but Irving Berlin lived 49 years longer than the bard and spent decades of that time eating out his kishkes because he couldn’t write another “Cheek to Cheek.” The will that produced the songs that propelled him to the top, that it’s a faculty out his kishkes because he couldn’t write another “Cheek to Cheek.” The will that produced the songs that propelled him to the top, that some people tend to be particularly, but asserts “it’s one, and that it’s a faculty with which artists tend to be endowed, but says “it isn’t there.” The fine balance between confidence and insecurity was upset after his herculean and exhausting efforts to entertain possessed—It was not inconsiderable—was egocentrism hard won and Berlin after, yet was undercut by a fear of failure that he never overcame. Kaplan quotes a letter he wrote to a friend: “Every time I start a song… I wonder if this is the time to reach it and find it isn’t there.” The fine balance between confidence and insecurity was upset after his herculean and exhausting efforts to entertain.

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