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Elevating Jewish Leaders of Color Series Concludes with Advocate for Ethiopian Jews

On Sunday, March 7 at 11 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires concludes its Elevating Jewish Leaders of Color series by welcoming Mazal Bisawer, the former media spokesperson for the Association of Ethiopian Jews (AEJ). She will talk about issues facing the Ethiopian community in Israel, as well as about diversity within the Jewish State.

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please use our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for a link to this program.

About Our Speaker
Mazal Bisawer is a key advocate for social change, equal opportunities and improved policies to advance the quality of life for Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Mazal is also a graduate of the program for political speakers at IDEA-Center For Liberal Democracy in Israel.

Mazal completed her studies at Tel Aviv University with a specialty in psychology and classical studies. She was a prominent leader of the student protests at TAU in 2015, and since then has been a frequent guest on

Honey on the Page
A Treasury of Yiddish Children’s Literature

Honey on the Page is Miriam Udel’s new translation of Yiddish prose and verse for children written between 1900 and 1975, in the author's words “an era in between a firmly implanted traditional religiosity and widespread assimilation.”

In her introduction, Udel—who is an associate professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture at Emory University’s Tam Institute of Jewish Studies—makes her case that these stories shed important light on Jewish culture, reflecting the ways authors and educators responded to social changes in Europe and later the United States and other countries where Jews resided. She writes: “The very essence of this literature was to affirm what Jewishness meant in a newly secularizing world.”

Udel combed hundreds of anthologies to find the fifty pieces in Honey on the Page—a book for adults and children in proximity to one another,” she writes. “What I mean by that peculiar phrase is that I have gone about the work of selection and translation. I’ve envisioned a child reading, with sympathetic and curious adults nearby.”

In an inspired turn of phrase that captures the humane spirit animating the work collected in Honey on the Page, Udel writes: “Again and again, these stories illustrate the disruption posed by radical kindness.”

Professor Udel is the daughter of Ed Udel, who resides in Dalton and who has long been leaders in our community and for the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. The BJV thanks Professor Udel for allowing us to share work from

Happy Purim 5781

In the Babylonian Talmud (Megillah 7b), the sage Reva expresses that “It is one’s duty to make oneself fragrant [with wine] on Purim until one cannot tell the difference between ‘curt Haman’ (cursed be Haman) and ‘barkh Mordekhai’ (blessed be Mordekhai).” The celebrations in this 19th century painting from Safed of a holiday celebration certainly raised a l’Chayim or more, and on this, our second Pandemic Purim, may the l’Chayims we raise auger well for a year of restored health and happiness. For more on the custom of getting farshnoshiket on Purim, please see page 24.

Questions for Miriam Udel
When did you first discover your interest in Yiddish literature, and when did you know that you wanted to pursue a career in academia studying it?

In 2001, I thought I might like to start graduate courses to better understand how, in a largely secularized Western world, the novel became a site for thinking about moral reasoning and hashing out ethical dilemmas. I had a meeting with

MIRIAM UDEL,
continued on page 22
In My View

Thank You for Supporting Federation’s Work During a Time of Uncertainty

Your donations to our Annual Campaign supported our community during a year of crisis

By Amy Lindner-Lesser / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

The year 2020 has both flown and crept by at the same time. If you are like me, you probably could not say goodbye to 2020 fast enough. Yet as I take a moment to reflect on this past year, I have a deep sense of gratitude and awe for the inspiring work of our community and our Federation.

I am so proud of Federation volunteers and staff for all they have done during the pandemic. Our programming and outreach remain dynamic and diverse. Our social services and support programs have never been more necessary to ensure the health and care of the most vulnerable in our community, both physically and mentally. Our PJ Library program continues to help overwhelmed families find moments of fun and connection.

I know we are all anxiously waiting for our turns to be vaccinated over the next few months. Meanwhile, our work continues. Please know that we at the Federation never take you for granted. We understand the struggles you are facing. Many have lost jobs; others have lost loved ones. Each of us is suffering from various forms of loneliness. Yet, when we see each other virtually, the smiles are broad, and when we speak on the phone or bump into each other at the supermarket (masked and 6 feet apart, of course), the conversation is authentic. There is a real sense of gratitude that we are in this together as a community, and there is no doubt that we are resilient. If I have learned anything from these past months, it is not to take anyone or any moment for granted.

The generosity of this community continues to amaze me. As the pandemic started, you helped us raise over $54,000 in COVID-19 relief. We expended nearly $46,000 thus far on emergency grants for food, rent, utilities, and burial support for individuals in our Jewish community. We also were able to provide additional grants to Berkshire food pantries and other organizations to support critical needs of our friends and neighbors across the region.

Our 2020 campaign got off to a slow start, but so many of you stepped forward to continue your annual gifts, to make new gifts, and to increase your gifts. Together we raised over $930,000! An amazing feat when you consider the year.

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THANK YOU to our extraordinary volunteers, board and committee members who make so much of what we do possible!
Purim is a unique Jewish holiday in that it features a Jewish woman as the central heroic figure. We often focus on Esther’s subtle manipulation of powerful men to achieve her goal of saving the Jewish people from physical destruction, but the Talmud sees other leadership qualities that have a far-reaching impact on Jewish life and law. The Talmud in Tractate Megilah includes Esther as the last of the biblical prophetesses. “Who were the seven prophetesses?” Rachel, Miriam, Devorah, Chana, Avisag, Chuldah, and Esther.” But perhaps even more interesting is that the Talmud also concludes that she was the person who initiated the process of human legislation that established Purim as a permanent holiday and the book of Esther as sacred scripture. Esther initiated a new process – can be considered the catalyst for the unfolding of a new era in Jewish history, a new chapter in the ongoing revelation of divine wisdom in which the human intellect and human agency take center stage as prophetic revelation.

The staff of the Berkshire Jewish Voice and Cathy Holland, honorary publishers.

By Rabbi Daniel Lehmann

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It is not incidental that Esther, a woman and a Jew of the Diaspora, embodies this critical transformation and expansion of revelation through the blossoming of human forms of halakha, Jewish law. Esther is more than a pretty face and a clever political powerhouse. She is the mother of one of Judaism’s most distinctive contributions to religious progress, the sacred process of legislation and innovation through human hermeneutics. We are living in a time when women are assuming new positions of leadership in unprecedented numbers within the Jewish community as well as throughout American public life. I am particularly proud that the two educational institutions in the Boston Jewish community that I led now have women in the top position of leadership for the first time. In Jewish education, religious and communal leadership is as well as scholarship, including traditional Jewish legal interpretation and analysis, women are taking their rightful place after centuries of exclusion.

It is not incidental that Esther, a woman and a Jew of the Diaspora, embodies this critical transformation and expansion of revelation through the blossoming of human forms of halakha, Jewish law. Esther, the heroine who saves the Jewish people from the physical threat of Haman, is also the heroine who pulls the Jewish people out of the darkness caused by the demise of prophecy. She is willing to sacrifice her life, approaching the king on her own, as she reveals her Jewish identity and orchestrates the reversal of her people’s fortune. Similarly, she sheds her prophetic privilege in order to instigate a process that expands human participation in the development of religious law and forces human leaders to take responsibility for religious legislation and innovation.

It is not incidental that Esther, a woman and a Jew of the Diaspora, embodies this critical transformation and expansion of revelation through the blossoming of human forms of halakha, Jewish law. Esther is more than a pretty face and a clever political powerhouse. She is the mother of one of Judaism’s most distinctive contributions to religious progress, the sacred process of legislation and innovation through human hermeneutics. We are living in a time when women are assuming new positions of leadership in unprecedented numbers within the Jewish community as well as throughout American public life. I am particularly proud that the two educational institutions in the Boston Jewish community that I led now have women in the top position of leadership for the first time. In Jewish education, religious and communal leadership as well as scholarship, including traditional Jewish legal interpretation and analysis, women are taking their rightful place after centuries of exclusion.

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American communal, corporate and political life is also witnessing an overdue sea change with regard to women in positions of leadership. The Biden-Harris administration, as one crucial example, has broken new ground in appointment women to powerful positions that until now have been occupied only by men. We need to highlight these achievements and continue the work to expand leadership opportunities for women in both the Jewish community and the broader society. And while there are many other examples of this in recent years, there is still a significant equity gap between men and women in the field of Jewish communal leadership and throughout our American political, cultural, and economic institutions that we urgently need to address.

I would like to make a modest proposal that we use the holiday of Purim as an opportunity to celebrate women’s leadership, especially in the religious, political and legal spheres. Purim, with its biblical and Talmudic narrative of Esther’s bold political and legislative creativity, can become an appropriate time to highlight the importance of women’s leadership. Purim has many compelling themes that make it much more than just a holiday for revelry, costumes and gift giving. Perhaps the appreciation of women’s leadership and the commitment to appoint more women to leadership roles will add a new dimension to Purim’s deep and complex matrix of meaning.

Rabbi Daniel Lehmann, Ph.D. served as the founding headmaster of Gann Academy – The New Jewish High School of Greater Boston in Waltham, MA, the founding director of the Berkshire Institute for Music and Arts, and the eighth president of Hebrew College in Newton, MA. He currently lives with his wife, Lisa Soleymani-Lehmann, M.D., Ph.D. in Stockbridge and is active with The Berkshire Minyan.

Welcome to the Berkshires!

The color photography in this issue of the Berkshire Jewish Voice is made possible through the generosity of Richard and Cathy Holland, honorary publishers. The staff of the Federation and the BJV are deeply grateful.

CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

College Scholarship Opportunity

Awarded annually to a graduating senior who has demonstrated leadership and participation in the Berkshire Jewish community. This scholarship is made possible through the generous support of

Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and Dr. Stanley and Faye Simkin Scholarship Fund

Deadline: April 22

For more information contact Jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA

Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team. Mitch Greenwald and Roman Rozenblum.

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**Jewish Ancestries in the Borderlands**

*Lessons for confronting the current crisis at the US-Mexico Border*

On Thursday, March 4 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., join Maxwell E. Greenberg, a Ph.D candidate in the Department of Chicana/o and Central American Studies at UCLA, who will look at the critical moment in the community’s nearly 100-year history and the challenges and successes that they have faced during that time.

*Visit jewishberkshires.org for a link to this program.*

**Nicholas Winton and the Improbable (Yet True) 1939 Kindertransport from Prague**

On Monday, February 22 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., join historian Ralph Nurnberger, whose topic will be “Nicholas Winton and the Improbable (Yet True) 1939 Kindertransport from Prague.”

*Visit jewishberkshires.org for a link to this program.*
Your Federation Presents

Artists Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner: Their Art and Studio Tour Live from East Hampton, NY

On Thursday, February 11 from 4 to 5 p.m., learn more about the careers of married Abstract Expressionist giants Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner from Joyce Raimondo, education coordinator at The Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, a national landmark located in East Hampton, New York.

This live, interactive virtual museum tour will be presented via Zoom. Please visit the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires calendar of events at jewisberkshires.org for a link to this program.

Raimondo will virtually guide visitors through Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner’s home and studio. Discover the creative ways Pollock and Krasner expressed their feelings with paint. Discuss the art displayed in their home, and explore the barn studio filled with paint splatters — evidence of their masterpieces.

Lee Krasner, an abstract painter, is known for her innovative technique of cutting and exploring the barn studio with paint. A painter and sculptor, her illustrations have been published in Art Explorers books. A painter and sculptor, her illustrations have been published in Art Explorers books.

Presenter Joyce Raimondo is author of seven children’s art books, including The Museum of Modern Art’s popular Art Safari series and the award-winning Art Explorers books. A painter and sculptor, her illustrations have been published in Art Explorers books.

The New York Times, Boston Globe, and other publications. Formerly the family programs coordinator at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, she is a leading expert in museum education. She is also the founding director of Imagine That! Art Education.

Imagery that captures movement and energy.

For further information on all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs, please call Nancy Maurice Rogers, Program Director, at (413) 442-4360, ext. 15.

Hello, Spring – Hike and Havdalah

LENNOX – On Saturday, March 13 from 3:30 to 5 p.m., join families at Mass Audubon’s Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary for a guided hike through the woodlands and learn about the animals as spring arrives – an awakening of life in the Berkshires.

Wear snowshoes and warm boots for a fun afternoon in the Great Outdoors sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. A 45-minute hike led by Mass Audubon educators leaves promptly at 3:45 p.m.

Post hike, there will be a story time, snacks, and a short Havdalah. A free Havdalah candle and spice set will be given to each family.

Please bring folding chairs. The program is suited for ages 4 and up. This is a COVID-safe, free program with limited capacity — you MUST RSVP by March 10. Links to registration are on the Calendar of Events on Federation’s website, jewisberkshires.org.

For more information, contact Susan Frisch Lehrer at slehrer@jewishberkshires.org. Pleasant Valley is at 472 West Mountain Road in Lenox.
On Monday, March 8 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., join Sasha Davis, whose topic will be “The World of Chaim Gross: Sculptor, Collector, and Educator.” She’s the executive director of the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation in New York. This will be a live, interactive virtual museum tour. This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for a link to this program.

Artist Chaim Gross (1902-1991) immigrated to the United States as a teenager, fleeing the unrest of World War I and anti-Semitism in Europe. He settled in New York City, becoming a sculptor renowned for his wood carvings that drew inspiration from African, folk, and modern forms. He collected from friends and artists he admired, building an art collection with wife Renee that currently numbers over 12,000 objects. Many of his closest friends were also Jewish immigrants, and his work became increasingly tied to his Jewish roots in the latter part of his career. The Grosses established a private foundation to preserve their art collections, home, and Gross’s sculpture studio at 520 LaGuardia Place in Greenwich Village, New York City. This talk will center on Gross’s unique biography, work, and legacy furthered through the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation.

Prior to serving as director of the Foundation, Davis was its curator of collections for over three years. She holds a BA in Art History from New York University and a certificate in Arts Administration, also from NYU.

Michael Solomonov Live Passover Cooking Demo

On Tuesday, March 16 at 8 p.m., learn from master chef Michael Solomonov how to make Passover favorites Charoset, Mina with Ground Beef, Cardamon and Coffee, and another dish to be announced soon.

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented online. Advance registration is required – the event link, password, and recipes will be sent prior to the event. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for a link to this program.

This event will be recorded and available for viewing for six days following the live demo, as well.

Chef Solomonov is a beloved champion of Israel’s extraordinary diverse and vibrant culinary landscape – his ChannaDish cooking demo last December was hugely popular. Along with Zahav in Philadelphia, Solomonov’s village of restaurants include Federal Donuts, Dizengoff, Abe Fisher, and Goldie.

In July of 2019, Solomonov brought another significant slice of Israeli food culture to Philadelphia with K’Far, an Israeli bakery & café. In November of 2019, Solomonov opened Merkaz, an Israeli pita sandwich shop, and in February of 2020 opened Laser Wolf, an Israeli skewer house.

Chef Solomonov is the 2011 James Beard Award winner for “Best Chef, Mid-Atlantic,” a 2016 James Beard Award winner for “International Cooking,” and “Book of the Year” recipient for Zahav: A World of Israeli Cooking. In 2017, he won the James Beard Award for “Outstanding Chef” and, in 2019, Zahav was James Beard Award winner for “Outstanding Restaurant.”

We know that many seniors are still isolated and we want to bring them a special treat of hamantashen for Purim. We need our kids to help with Purim cards. Create your own card or decorate a template of a card to be included in holiday care packages delivered to elders in our community. Email me below to request a template to decorate. Cards can be dropped off at the Federation office or be scanned and emailed by February 12.

Volunteers are needed to deliver gift bags to seniors who are home bound and in facilities across the Berkshires. Please let us know if you can assist with these important mitzvahs. The bags may be picked up at our Jewish Federation of the Berkshires office, 196 South Street, Pittsfield from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on:

- Monday, February 22
- Tuesday, February 23
- Wednesday, February 24

We ask that all volunteers wear masks (during pick-up and delivery) and ring the front doorbell of our office. You may deliver at your convenience. Please contact me at slehrer@jewishberkshires.org or (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 to let us know of your availability. Thank you!
Hevreh’s Annual Christmas Dinner Bags: Helping the Community During the Unsettling Times of 2020

Volunteers again delivered Christmas dinner bags to individuals and families in need across the Berkshires.

GREAT BARRINGTON – A annual tradition at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is for members of the congregation to volunteer to pack Christmas dinner bags for individuals and families in the Berkshires. Each year members of the congregation join together to fill bags with food to make a Christmas meal. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions, Susan Weinstein (organizer) and Jodie Friedman (Communication and Engagement Manager at Hevreh) packed all 18 bags, while the volunteers delivered the bags to recipients. Even with the pandemic, Hevreh was not short on volunteers, and members went out with festive hats, antlers, and smiles to deliver the Christmas dinner bags, which were packed with turkeys, ingredients for side dishes, and dessert.

This year, 18 pies were graciously donated by Great Barrington Bagel Company, and much of the food was given by The People’s Pantry located in Great Barrington. “It’s a cooperative venture between the pantry and Hevreh,” says Susan Weinstein. “The pantry gives us their leftover turkeys from Thanksgiving, and then we add anything that is not there. But this year they had 18 turkeys because they had received so many contributions.” The contributions to the pantry and the donation of all 18 turkeys allowed Hevreh to also give each winner $20 along with their Christmas dinner bag.

Individuals and families were able to enter a raffle for the bags at The People’s Pantry, and then 18 recipients were chosen and contacted by Weinstein. This annual tradition has allowed Hevreh members to give back to the community, expressing the important Jewish value of tikun olam.

Organizers Susan Weinstein and Jodie Friedman

Marking the One Year Anniversary of the COVID-19 Shutdown

Learn online with Hevreh’s scholar in residence, Dr. Betsy Stone

This March, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire welcomes Dr. Betsy Stone as its scholar in residence. She will host two online programs marking one year of pandemic shutdowns. These programs are free and open to the community. To get the Zoom links, email info@hevreh.org.

Dr. Stone is a retired clinical psychologist who currently teaches as an adjunct lecturer at The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). Her classes include:

- Human Development for Educators
- The Spiritual Life-Cycle
- Adolescent Development and
- Families in Crisis

She has also taught pastoral counseling, and about adolescent spirituality. Gen-Xers as parents, teenagers and their brains, leadership in crisis, and stress and anxiety. What We Worship, What We Leave Behind

On Friday, March 5 at 6 p.m., Dr. Stone will join Hevreh for Kabbalat Shabbat and will deliver a Dvar Torah on Purashat Ki Tisa. It will be open to the community.

Dr. Betsy Stone

The Jewish Transportation Network

Discount Taxi Vouchers for Jewish residents aged 65 years and older

Purchase $50 worth of taxi vouchers for $5

[If requested via mail]

Vouchers are valid for three months and can be used with Tunnel City Taxi of North Adams, Rainbow Taxi of Pittsfield or Berkshire Taxi Co. of Great Barrington and Lee.

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

Purchase vouchers at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

196 South St., Pittsfield, MA 01201. (413) 442-4360, ext. 10

This program is funded by the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County and administered by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

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

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

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

JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

Berkshire Minyan

Lay-led egalitarian minyan held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA (413) 428-4386, berkshireminyan.org

Berkshire Hills Hadassah

P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA (413) 443-4386

B’nai B’rith Lodge, No. 326

Chabad of the Berkshires

450 South St., Pittsfield, MA (413) 499-9899, jewishberkshires.com

Congregation Ahavath Sholom

Reconstructionist

North St., Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-4197, ahavathsholom.com

Congregation Beth Israel

Reform

53 Loin St., North Adams, MA (413) 663-5830, cbirev.org

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Reform

270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-4368, hevreh.org

Israel Philatelist Society

c/o Dr. Ed Hidtizer, (413) 447-7622

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

196 South St., Pittsfield, MA (413) 442-4360, jewishberkshires.org

Jewish War Veterans

Commander Robert Waldheim (413) 822-4546, sellit4@aol.com

Knesset Israel

Conservative

16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA (413) 443-4872, knessetisrael.org

Temple Anshe Amunim

Reform

26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA (413) 528-4197, berkshireminyan.org

Shalom

63 State Rd, Great Barrington, MA (413) 447-7622, www.thefbookloft.com
New Consul General to New England says ‘I’ll do my best to show what Israel is all about’

By Penny Schwartz / Jewish Journal

BOSTON – The friendly handshakes, informal drop-ins to Shabbat services, and schmoozing at cultural events have been replaced with Zoom meetings, socially distanced introductions, and face masks with the insignia of the Israeli and American flags.

Welcome to the COVID-19 era diplomatic world of Ambassador Meron Reuben, the newly appointed Consul General of Israel to New England, who began his new post in November in the midst of a pandemic. He follows Ambassador Ze'ev Boker, whose two-year assignment here ended.

Reuben arrived in Boston from Israel at a time when the global pandemic upended the time-honored traditions and gatherings where a new consul general would be out and about, meeting and greeting the Jewish community. Even his ability to meet in person with the region’s diplomatic corps has been a challenge.

“Everyone has been very welcoming, but it is difficult. I would have gone to shuls and met people. I’ll get there,” the ambassador told the Journal in a recent phone conversation.

“Diplomacy is very personal. You need to be there,” said Reuben, whose foreign ministry career has spanned more than three decades, including a year as Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations (2010-2011).

But he has not altogether avoided the personal touches. He’s arranged his spacious living room to accommodate a socially distanced meeting area, spacing chairs far apart and opening windows to allow in fresh air. His first purchase in Boston was an outdoor heater that he set up for meetings on his balcony.

Reuben met Governor Charlie Baker and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh in person when he participated in the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah on the Boston Common. He also took part in a virtual menorah lighting in Connecticut with Governor Ned Lamont.

Throughout the pandemic, the Consulate office has been open on a limited basis in order to carry out its day-to-day services.

The 59-year-old Reuben was born in South Africa and lived for a few years in London with his mother. They settled in Israel in 1974, before he turned bar mitzvah age. He studied diplomacy and international relations at Hebrew University and was an air traffic controller during his military service in the Israeli Air Force.

His diplomatic posts traversed five Spanish-speaking countries, including Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Colombia.

For the last five years, Reuben served as Israel’s chief of state protocol, the go-to foreign ministry official responsible for diplomats and visiting world dignitaries. At the end of his tenure, he was behind the scenes when leaders from the United Arab Emirates made a historic visit to Israel as part of the Abraham Accords in 2020.

But Reuben, a warm and engaging conversationalist with an easy laugh, is not motivated by the titles and limelight of photo ops that sometimes come with the role of a diplomat.

“My philosophy is that titles come and go. In the end, you have to be yourself. That is the main focus that I’ve always been interested in,” he said.

He is most at home with the “nitty gritty” of diplomacy as a way to foster dialogue and understanding between different cultures, nationalities, and within the broad base of the global Jewish community.

“You don’t need to call me Consul General. You can call me Meron,” he said.

Looking ahead, Reuben is eager to engage with New England’s robust academic community, a major center of education that also attracts many Israelis, he observed.

“I think, sometimes, we don’t get a good rap” on college campuses, Reuben said. “I hope to leave some kind of mark and explain more about Israel not being white and colonialist and being a multicultural and multietnic society, which it is. I’ll do my best to show what Israel is all about.”

He’d like to encourage more opportunities to forge stronger bonds between Israelis and American Jews across New England. Some 25,000 to 30,000 Israelis live in the region, but many are not active in synagogue life, one place where they might mix socially with Boston-area Jews.

He gives high marks to programs like Birthright Israel that bring college-age Americans on visits to Israel. Boston’s liberal social values appeals to Reuben, who is open about being a gay man. “I’d like to be able to live my life the way I want to,” he said. He anticipates that Boston will be a hospitable environment for him and his partner.

Reuben is the proud father of two grown daughters from an earlier marriage. One is an art student at Jerusalem’s prestigious Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. His youngest daughter is fulfilling her obligatory military service in a combat unit stationed on Israel’s southern border.

One of his fond memories of their growing up was when they would bring him one of their hundreds of children’s books.

“Dad, please read to us,” they’d say. He envisions reading Israeli children’s books to kindergartners here. It may offer the perfect way to connect a new generation of young people with Israel, he said.

This article originally was published in the Jewish Journal, jewisberkshires.org.

Grant Deadline for Wassermann-Streit Y’DIYAH Memorial Fund is April 1

SHEFFIELD — The Wassermann-Streit Y’DIYAH Memorial Fund is currently accepting grant applications for projects that offer the general public the opportunity to gain knowledge of Judaism in a meaningful and enjoyable way. This might be through programs or material that illustrate traditional practices, holidays, music, art, literature, theater, cinema, documented history, etc. The goal of the fund is to offer the public an understanding of traditional Judaism that might contribute to knowledge of differences while sharing commonsalities inherent in all people, and to correct misconceptions and false notions leading to manifestations of bias.

Individuals, schools, libraries and other nonprofit organizations in Berkshire, Columbia (NY), northwest Litchfield (CT) and northeast Dutchess (NY) counties are invited to apply by April 1 at www.berkshireacomic.org/YDIYAH.
Purim Megillah Reading with Hevreh
Plus additional late winter programs

On Friday, February 26 at 6 p.m., let your hair down with Hevreh of Southern Berkshire. Join with Hevreh teens and community members to celebrate Shabbat, Purim, and the retelling of the Story of Esther. Put on your best costume (since it’s Zoom, pants are recommended) and join in the fun!

For Purim and all programs listed below, email info@hevreh.org to be added to their listserv.

Services

Kabbalat Shabbat Services, Fridays at 6 p.m.
All are invited to join Rabbi Jodie Gordon and Rabbi Neil Hirsch for a traditional, introspective, and musical Reform service. Services often feature dance/movement, or written word. These Zoom sessions are for sharing and processing individuals’ creative product through nurturing, not critique. Questions? Contact info@hevreh.org to be directed to Heidi Katz or Larry Frankel.

Zoom Link
To get the Zoom link each week, email info@hevreh.org

Shabbat Morning Experience Saturdays at 10 a.m.
Join Hevreh for a contemplative Shabbat morning experience. Some weeks there will be Torah study and discussion, some weeks a Shabbat morning service. To get the Zoom link each week, email info@hevreh.org and be added to our listserv.

Creative Beit Midrash

Saturdays, February 13 & 27 and March 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
Together with Rabbi Hirsch, explore Jewish topics through your medium of choice – visual art, music, dance/movement, or written word. These Zoom sessions are for sharing and processing individuals’ creative product through nurturing, not critique. Questions? Contact info@hevreh.org to be directed to Heidi Katz or Larry Frankel.

Zoom Into Tot Shabbat In Your PJs

Saturdays, February 13 and March 13 at 9 a.m.
All are welcome to sing and dance their way into Shabbat with Hevreh! The online Shabbat morning experience is a terrible way to center your family for a day of rest and special time together. Join the rabbi and student cantor Gabe Snyder for a lively Shabbat experience.

Weekly Lunch N Learn

Wednesdays at 11:45 a.m.
Join Rabbi Neil Hirsch each week as he continues to be a guide on the path of sacred learning. All are welcome, and Rabbi Hirsch says “make sure to bring a friend!”

Beyond Bread: Winter Baking Course

Thursday, February 11 from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Join master baker Cheryl Holbert of Nonnad Bakery for a curated Zoom baking class. Bake delicious creations full of Jewish soul and creativity. All ages and kitchen experiences are welcome. Each course is $30 per person. Visit hevreh.org/winterbread to sign up and view the ingredients list. This time, Cheryl will be showing you how to bake fougasse.

Paul Green Needs A Kidney

Clarinetist Paul Green, well-known in the Berkshires (and elsewhere) for his fusing of Jewish and Jazz music, has had kidney issues since he was in his 30s. It’s been a slow progression, but he has recently been diagnosed with end-stage renal disease, and may need to start dialysis in the near future. The only “cure” for Stage 4 kidney disease is a kidney transplant, so Paul has begun the search for a living donor.

“I’m glad to have dialysis to keep me alive while I wait,” Paul says, “but it takes a lot of time and can cause more health problems. So, I’m hoping that I can get a transplant sooner rather than later.”

Paul has been accepted onto the kidney transplant list at UMass Memorial Hospital in Worcester. However, with around 100,000 people needing a kidney, it can be a wait of five to eight years before getting “the call.”

His local nephrologist and the transplant team at UMass have stressed that the best way to avoid dialysis is to have a preemptive transplant, and for that, Paul is on his own to find a kidney donor. A kidney from a living donor offers a much better prognosis. It’s important to know, too, that the donor’s costs for all the testing and the surgery itself is paid for by Paul’s insurance.

Paul is asking the community to share his need for a kidney far and wide. If you or someone you know might be willing to consider making a kidney donation for Paul, please contact him directly at (561) 302-5816 or kidneystories4paul@gmail.com

“I’m going public with this because there’s so much more that I want to accomplish in my life,” Paul says. “I am still expanding my musical horizons, finding relationships between Jazz and Klezmer music. Lately, I’ve been getting great satisfaction from my newfound talents as a composer and arranger. I fear that without a transplant, I will not be able to function long enough to fulfill my musical explorations or even — over time — continue performing, which, frankly, would be more devastating to me than anything else.”

Who can donate?

• A physically and emotionally healthy adult, age 18-65
• No high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, hepatitis or HIV
• No kidney, heart, liver or lung disease

Additional information about being a donor is available at the UMASS Memorial Transplant Center. For a confidential conversation, call (501) 334-1269 and ask to speak with the donor transplant team about donating a kidney to Paul Green.

Financial Assistance Available

No one could have anticipated the financial impact this pandemic would have. The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has provided a safety net for our Jewish community for more than 80 years and we are here to help individuals and families through this difficult time.

The Federation is offering onetime financial assistance to help Jewish community members struggling with essential needs such as food, utilities, mortgage and rent. Additional critical needs may be considered. Interest free loans are also available.

Any Jewish community member who has been impacted financially by the pandemic may be eligible. You do not have to belong to a synagogue or be part of the Federation to apply. Requests will be assessed on a case by case basis and are per household. All inquiries regarding assistance will be kept strictly confidential.

To inquire about assistance please visit
jewishberkshires.org/covid19-assist
Traveling with Jewish Taste

Purim in Persia

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

It’s Purim, and what better time to visit Persia, where the story of Queen Esther and her heroism took place? But let’s get some background first. How did our ancestors get to that part of the world?

 Millennia ago, the Babylonian Empire ruled the known world. During his reign, King Nebuchadnezzar II’s soldiers laid siege to Jerusalem. After three long years, they sacked the city, destroyed the Temple, and took about 10,000 Jews into captivity and back to Mesopotamia. By the rivers of Babylon, the book of Lamentations says, we wept. But despite our sorrow, our sages managed to produce the Babylonian Talmud while living in exile.

Then, seventy years after the fall of Jerusalem, Cyrus the Great came from his seat of power in what is now Iran and founded the Persian Empire. He finished off the Babylonians and he permitted our Jewish ancestors to return to the Land of Israel. At last, we could rebuild the Holy Temple on the very same place it had been before the destruction.

But many Jews remained in Persia. They settled in provinces throughout the kingdom, including in Shushan, nestled at the foot of the Zagros Mountains near the Chaoape River. That is where the story of Esther takes place.

And, as is so typical of our history, the Jews experienced good times and bad ones.

Between the third and seventh centuries CE, the Jewish community grew and thrived despite periodic persecution. But in the seventh century, Arab Muslims conquered the country and installed Islam as the official state religion. Jews became dhimmis, second-class citizens.

As elsewhere in the history of our people, throughout the 19th century Jews experienced persecution and discrimination, and it is reported that entire communities were forcibly converted to Islam. These calamities inspired both interest in the Zionist movement and ayalah to the then-Ottoman ruled Palestine by a significant number of Persian Jews.

Then, beginning in 1925 under the Pahlavi Dynasty, the country became westernized and Jews enjoyed a “Golden Age.” Under the Shah’s “White Revolution” reform plan of rapid modernization, Jews benefitted from the freedom to participate in the economic and cultural life of the country. They were Iranians, equal to their Muslim neighbors. For a little more than half a century, the Jewish community flourished. Tehran alone had 30 synagogues, and Jewish schools dotted the country.

That way of life was all to change with the Islamic revolution of 1979. What had been the Jews’ strength, their accomplishments and their asset to the country, was now viewed as cause for hatred. The then-80,000 members of the Jewish community feared for their lives, worried that they would be murdered or expelled by the new Islamic regime. It turned out that their alarm was not unfounded, as Jews were arrested and imprisoned, accused of spying for Israel. Over a dozen have since been executed.

In response, 60,000 Jews, a full two-thirds of the Jewish population, left the country. Those who were able headed to the United States, Israel, and Europe. But after the revolution, the government made it very difficult for Jews to leave, refusing to issue passports. Some Jews fled to freedom through Pakistan or Turkey. Hoping that their relatives left behind would send them the proceeds of their liquidated assets. That, too, proved problematic. The government had confiscated much, if not most, of their property.

Today, the number of Jews still residing in Iran is estimated at between 25,000 and 30,000. Making it the second largest Jewish population in the Middle East after Israel. And many are active in civic and political life. Ironically, the Iranian constitution mandates that one must treat non-Muslims “according to Muslim principles of ethics and justice.” Apparently, the Ayatollah Khomeini hasn’t read the constitution as he routinely denigrates the Jews, accusing them of being spies and of engaging in espionage.

Although 100 synagogues still stand in Iran is third of them in Tehran alone, as well as schools and a Jewish hospital, most of the synagogues are closed; the schools are required to remain open on Shabbat; and the schools’ curriculum is Islamic and taught under Muslim principals. Only on Fridays are religious classes allowed to be taught in Hebrew.

So, whether out of fear or actual belief, many Iranian Jews have become anti-Zionists, joining the annual Qods Day (Jerusalem Day) events protesting Israel. Some Jewish young men have even joined the Iranian army. Perhaps it is their anti-Zionist activities that have kept them safe. Perhaps it is their avowed nationalism, that they are first and foremost Iranians, that has kept them alive.

So, despite over two-and-a-half millennia of life in Persia/Iran and the rich culture they developed there, the Jews of modern-day Iran are faced with yet another Haman in their midst. Where is Esther when we need her?

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Ingredients:

**Meatballs:**
- 1 medium onion
- 1¼ cups pistachios or hazelnuts, shelled
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- 2 cups chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup oil

**Glaze:**
- 1/4 cup pomegranate molasses*
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

**Garnish:**
- 1 cup fresh pomegranate arils

**Instructions:**

1. In a food processor, grind all the ingredients, except olive oil and oil, in a food processor until you have a grainy paste.

2. Transfer to a large mixing bowl and add the meat and egg. Lightly knead until well combined. Cover and place in the refrigerator for 30 minutes and up to 24 hours.

3. Heat the oven to 400 degrees.

4. Remove the meat mixture from the refrigerator and shape into 24 balls.

5. Place the meatballs in a large Pyrex baking dish that has been coated well with oil, and brush the rest of the oil over the meatballs.

6. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes.

7. Meanwhile, combine all the ingredients for the glaze in a mixing bowl.

8. Reduce the oven to 400 degrees.

9. Glaze the meatballs and bake for another 5 minutes to infuse them with the flavor of the pomegranate.

10. Adjust seasoning and sweetener to taste.

11. Place the meatballs with sauce in deep serving dish and garnish with pomegranate arils.

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She is currently at work on a food history/cookbook, tracing the paths that some of our favorite foods have taken from their origins to appear on dinner plates and in cultural rites and artifacts around the world. She invites readers to read her blog at carolgoodmankaufman.com and to follow her on Twitter @goodmankaufman.
It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to. Bilbo Baggins, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

There are two distinct Yiddish words that denote the state of not being able to find your way.

The first is ‘farblondjet,’ which means ‘lost’ in the commonly understood sense of not knowing one’s whereabouts.

The second is ‘farfalen,’ which connotes the state of being hopelessly lost, cosmically lost, of having so completely misinterpreted any directions you might have had at your disposal, that not only do you not know where you are, but possibly where you are going, from whence you departed, and why you might have embarked on your journey to begin with.

When I’m out in nature, I get farfalen. Ordinarily, I am a rational person with a good sense of direction, but in the Great Outdoors, for whatever reason my ability to make lucid choices deserts me. Although I stick mainly to well-traveled trails that are not too far from civilization, I am always one who in the world-was-I-thinking blunder away from turning a cheery woodland frolic into an ordeal.

It was all great fun for a time. The air was wet and fresh; the fogginess imbued the skeletal unleafed trees with a poetically mournful cast; and the ice crusting the trail was too thin to be slippery; breaking apart underfoot with a pleasing snap, crackle, and pop. But after a certain point, I realized that the fun had been going on for a little too long, and that I was not at all sure that I was getting any closer to my ultimate destination. What’s more, the fog made it impossible to orient myself via the landscape or the sun. That was when the realization hit that ‘clockwise’ — unlike, say, north, south, east, and west — is not really a direction. Depending on how one might be oriented, clockwise might be going north, or north-east, or south, etcetera. (Duh.)

I spent a good deal of time soaking in the rugged beauty of the trails above Hollow Fields that afternoon, finally stumbling upon a well defined path that seemed to be taking me in a clockwise direction. All was true, until I arrived at the ‘T’.

“When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” Yogi Berra famously remarked, but if only it were that easy. The trail to my right, though winding in a clockwise direction, seemed to lead back to where I just came from — and I felt that I had been walking in circles already. The trail to the left seemed to lead downhill to sorta kinda maybe where the overlook might be; and given that I was starting to feel dog-tired, downhill seemed good. I was grappling with my choices when I noticed it — a white trail blaze on a tree on the trail going left. I don’t know how to explain my reasoning except to say that at that moment, I respected the woodland authority that what is written is what is represented. I followed the trail to my left.

All the while, images of me emerging, farfalen, from the woods onto a winding mountain road. I did not recognize. I had followed white blazes, then red blazes, then blue blazes, until I finally heard the sound of trucks and automobiles and followed them. I backed my way through branches, forded gullies, and scrambled over rock outcroppings in thick woods unvisited since the days of the Mohicans.

Exhausted and bedraggled, I made my way across the road to a lonely picnic bench just as daylight started to fade. I tried making a call — to someone in the distance, then a car pulled into the rest area and I ran over to it. I told the driver I’d just hiked Route 20 about a half mile from the New Hampshire border,” he said.

I started walking from Hollow Fields,” I told him. “Do you know where that is?” He shook his head no, have to go at least until I got to someplace where my cellphone worked. I’d walked for about ten minutes when the driver who’d spoken to pulled up alongside me and, chuckling, told me to get into his car. He said he had started laughing hysterically at my predicament and started to feel a little ashamed of himself, and so turned around in New Lebanon to come pick me up.

Where was this Hollow Fields now? (If Blanché Dubois always trying to explain the difference between ‘farblondjet’ and ‘farfalen’, warn them off Perry’s Peak, sharing the story of how I had ended up on Route 20. All that started to change on a steamy summer day in June 2020, when I joined a cadre of dedicated volunteers and a crack squad of BNRC arbiters to start grooming the ascent on the new trail up over Perry’s Peak. It was hard, sweaty work but after we enjoyed lunch at the top, a BNRC board member offered to show me the way down on the still unmarked trail. The key to making it down successfully, he said, was to keep turning right at each fork in the path — in other words, keep going clockwise. (Duh.) In any case, I still didn’t trust myself to go it alone until this November, when I saw the first signposts erected by the dedicated folks at BNRC. I summoned the courage to retrace my original journey of exploration, and figure out where I went wrong.

At the top of the first ascent on the trail leading to Perry’s Peak is a fine view south over Richmond and, in season, wild berry bushes, as well as a BNRC marker pointing right. This is where I’d found farblondjet the first time — I’d headed straight, which took me how to navigate over Perry’s Peak so I wouldn’t get lost in the dendritic tangle of poorly marked and maintained trails deeper in the woods. But somehow those guided hikes never materialized and my curiosity finally got the better of me.

The day I chose was a chilly, raw one in midwinter. The sky was slate grey and the hills were shrouded in a moderately-thick fog. Mine was the only car in the parking lot as I set out to explore the Perry’s Peak trail alone.

I share these details to show that I do not exaggerate when I write that I lose my ability to make lucid choices in the Great Outdoors. But it gets better. So as I entered the woods, I developed my game plan — since the place I wanted to get to, the overlook, was to the right of where I was walking, all I had to do was keep following trails that took me in a clockwise direction and I would get to where I wanted to go.

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Jewish Federation of the Berkshires – Distribution of Resources in 2020

$1,008,312

Includes distribution of Annual Campaign, Covid relief, earned income, and endowments as of December 31, 2020

■ Sustaining Jewish Community
  Berkshire Jewish Voice
  General Programming
  Passover Meal Distribution
  Community Havdalah & Concert
  Middle East Update
  Covid Relief – High Holiday
  Access Grants
  Holocaust Remembrance Event
  Torah Across the Berkshires
  Connecting with
  Community program
  Knosh & Knowledge program
  Community Calendar
  Community Relations & Advocacy
  Jewishberkshires.org and e-news
  Program Grants for Local Congregations

■ Fundraising
  Campaign Development
  Communications & Marketing
  Legacy Circle Program
  Major Donors Program

■ Israel & Overseas
  Jewish Agency for Israel
  Jewish Federations of North America
  Joint Distribution Committee
  World ORT
  Partnership2Gether- Afula Gilboa
  Ethiopian National Project
  Israeli & Overseas
  Sustaining Jewish Community
  Caring for Those in Need
  Ensuring a Jewish Future

■ Caring for Those in Need
  Covid Relief – Food & Essential Needs
  Covid Relief – Children & Families
  Covid Relief – Underserved Populations
  Hebrew Free Loans
  Emergency Assistance (non-covid)
  Friendly Visitors Program
  Community Social Worker
  Meals on Wheels
  Older Adult Kosher Lunch
  Older Adult Holiday Care Packages
  Tikvah Volunteer Opportunities
  Senior Programming

■ Ensuring a Jewish Future
  PJ Library Books & Resources
  Family Programming
  Family Volunteer Opportunities
  Jewish Education Grants
  ADL World of Difference Program
  Israel Travel/Study Scholarships
  Jewish Camp Scholarships
  Public School Advocacy
  Taglit Birthright
  UMASS Hillel

Across the Berkshires

3,620 kosher warm meals were served and delivered to older adults
144 children (and their parents) engaged through creative programs and at home holiday fun packs
6,936 attendees engaged in Jewish learning and celebration through 95 cultural, holiday and educational programs
702 holiday care packages delivered to isolated seniors
57 community members received emergency assistance for food, utilities, and housing
401 volunteers provided untold hours of operational, physical and emotional support to the Jewish community
113 students benefited from Jewish education grants to four local religious schools
750 isolated older adults received cards and holiday greetings created by our youth
1,740 books distributed to PJ library families to help nurture their Jewish identity
100 community members received assistance, referrals and support from our Social Worker
2,649 local students and faculty engaged in ADL World of Difference anti-bias training and/or No Place for Hate program in local schools

In Israel and Overseas

■ In the former Soviet Union, you helped provide ППЕ, food cards, meals-on-wheels, at home activities, medicine and winter relief to some of the poorest elderly Jews and at-risk children living with physical and intellectual disabilities, (JDC)

■ In Afula-Gilboa Israel, you helped provide a lifesaving air-seal medical device to the HaEmek Hospital as well as food baskets, ППЕ, and sanitizing services for low income residents in Afula and expanded technology outreach to local women who had suffered sexual assault and domestic violence. Most recently you helped provide laptops for remote learning to Ethiopian Immigrant children at the Beit Alpha Absorption Center. (JAFI Partnership2Gether)

■ In addition, you helped provide direct after school programs for at-risk students, shelter for battered women, a supportive home for abandoned youth, counseling for sexually abused women, food security for low income individuals and children.

Above is a small sampling of how you have made a difference in the lives of others
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 1,200 donors and hundreds of community volunteers who helped make the 2020 Annual Campaign and our emergency Covid Relief and Recovery campaign a resounding success. On behalf of those whose lives will be saved, touched, and changed, we thank you for your generosity and caring.

The 2020 Community Campaign Raised $931,878
On Thursday, February 11 at 7 p.m., violinist Yevgeny Kutik launches “Finding Home: Music from the Suitcase in Concert.” This five-episode docu-recital series is based on Kutik’s 2014 album Music from the Suitcase, a reflection on his family’s emigration from the former Soviet Union to the United States. Our dedicated community members followed through to ensure that these families were able to adjust to and thrive in their new homes.

Years later, Kutik began to explore the music from the suitcase and was enthralled with the pieces he uncovered. He recorded a selection of this music on his critically acclaimed 2014 album, Music from the Suitcase: A Collection of Russian Miniatures (Marquis Classical), which debuted at No. 5 on the Billboard Classical chart and was featured on NPR’s All Things Considered and in The New York Times.

Each episode revolves around a theme of “finding home” as Kutik explores anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, his family’s months as “stateless” refugees, the amazement and challenges of starting a new home in the United States, his teachers and mentors, and lessons for the future. The final episode will feature a musical tribute of thanks to his community.

Kutik explains the inspiration for this docu-recital series: “In 2020, as the pandemic cancelled concerts and upended plans for the foreseeable future, I was in search of inspiration. As I began sifting through these musical pages that my family brought over, it dawned on me that as difficult as this pandemic and resultant loss of opportunity was, with strength and determination, there would always be a way to begin again, to rebuild from nothing, as so tangibly represented by these scores.”

I spent the quiet months of quarantine collecting memories and stories from my family, looking through family photographs, and at the same time, for my own enjoyment, playing through some of my favorite scores from school and concerts for the past years. I began to realize that much like the collection of music my family brought over, I now had my own sheet music, representing my journey thus far. A semblance of a musical “home,” and of teachers, memories, and community.

“Finding Home: Music from the Suitcase in Concert” Episode 1 - The Fifth Line (Thursday, February 11) A glimpse at the structural, historical anti-Semitism in the former USSR. Kutik’s family decides to leave the Soviet Union in search of a better life; an introduction to the ‘music’ from the suitcase. Featuring Achiron’s Hebrew Melody, Shostakovich’s Sonata No. 2, and Stravinsky’s Divertimento from a Fairy’s Kiss. Episode 2 - In Between (Thursday, February 18) A look at the strange and stateless journey through Europe which millions of Soviet emigres undertook to start a new life; applying for asylum; an awe-inspiring recollection from the USSH, Featuring Tchaikovsky’s Sonya Lake, Khachaturian’s Nutcracker, and Bloch’s Baal Shem. Episode 3 - Begin Again (Thursday, February 25) Kutik’s family arrives in the United States; a closer look at rebuilding everything from nothing; the incredible power of community and selflessness. Featuring Rihm’s Romance, Achiron’s Hebrew Melody, Shostakovich’s Romance from Oedip, Prokofiev’s Waltz from Cinderella, and Sviridov’s Children’s Album. Episode 4 - Listen (Thursday, March 4) A tribute to the teachers and influencers who helped Kutik and his family grow and build; remembering Zinaida Gilels and Roman Totenberg. Featuring Prokofiev’s Sonata No. 2 Op. 94a, and Darius Milhaud’s Le Broujou sur le toit. Episode 5 - Coda (Thursday, March 11) Reflecting on his family’s journey, one small journey among millions; a musical tribute of thanks to Kutik’s community. Featuring Rachmaninoff’s Vocalise and Franck’s Sonate.
Connecting with Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

In response to coronavirus guidelines...

As of press time, all in-person Connecting With Community programming has been canceled. For the most up-to-date information and details on virtual programming, please visit our website www.jewishberkshires.org to sign up for our eblasts to receive a weekly listing of online opportunities.

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

Kosher lunch will be prepared on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. to reserve your meal for pickup and to arrange delivery if standing instructions are not in place. All are welcome to reserve meals for pick-up, although delivery may be limited in certain circumstances. The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients.

When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy.

Adults 60 and over: $2 suggested donation. Adults under 60: $7 per person.

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

What’s for Lunch?

# Dairy Free, ** Gluten Free Main Entrée

For more information on specific programs please see “Your Federation Presents” section of this paper.

FEBRUARY

Monday, 8 ............ Stuffed cabbage casserole*, #, baby carrots, rice, salad, pumpernickel bread, apricots, and tea.

Tuesday, 9 ............ Fried chicken*, #, vegetable soup, hash browns, green beans, Farmer’s loaf, apple sauce, and tea.

Thursday, 11 ........ Chef’s choice of pizza, salad, broccoli, mandarin oranges, and tea.

Monday, 15 ............ Closed for Presidents’ Day

Tuesday, 16 .......... Spaghetti & “sausage”* sauce*, salad, Italian beans, garlic bread, fruit cocktail, and tea.

Thursday, 18 .......... Chicken pateisief, vegetable soup, sweet potato fries, peas, hamburger rolls, pineapple, and tea.

Monday, 22 .......... Salisbury steak*, #, Italian wedding soup, rice, baby carrots, yie bread, applesauce, and tea.

Tuesday, 23 .......... Chicken cacciatore style*, #, noodles, mixed vegetables, Italian bread, parve cookies, and tea.

Thursday, 25 .......... Tuna noodle casserole, salad, whole wheat bread, hamentashen, and tea.

MARCH

Monday, 1 ............ Meat loaf**, #, celery rice soup, peas & carrots, mashed potatoes, pumpernickel bread, pears, and tea.

Tuesday, 2 ............ Orange chicken*, #, rice pilaf, salad, mixed vegetables, potato bread, tropical fruit salad, and tea.

Thursday, 4 ........ grilled cheese, salmon chowder, mixed vegetables, whole wheat bread, peanut butter cookies, and tea.

Monday, 8 ............ Sweet & sour meatballs*, #, noodles, baby carrots, Farmer’s loaf, and tea.

Tuesday, 9 ........ Chef’s pleasure of meat meals, and tea.

Thursday, 11 ........ Tuna salad platters*, #, minestrone soup, bread TBA, sugar cookies, and tea.

Monday, 15 ........ Beef stew, noodles, potato bread, applesauce, and tea.

Tuesday, 16 .......... Turkey piccata, chef’s choice of soup, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, salad, multi-grain bread, peaches, and tea.

Thursday, 18 .......... Chef’s pleasure of dairy meals, and tea.
Bob answered, charming her with his warm, he met his soon-to-be bride, Franklin School and New York in New York City in 1925 to study nursing at the Nursing Home. Born in Paterson, NJ, the son of Jacob (Jack) Wichman and Charlotte [Weiner] Wichman, Art graduated from Rutgers University in 1961 and did his graduate studies in finance at New York University. He worked in several investment-related jobs before beginning a long and distinguished career with JP Morgan Investment Management in 1981. He rose to managing director in the Healthcare and Biotech investment group, where he remained until his retirement in 2005.

He is known by all for his kindness, warmth, devotion to his family, and generosity. The United Way hired him to volunteer with Greenwich Call-A-Ride and Jewish Family Services of Greenwich, where he served as a volunteer and treasurer and then president. In recent years, he continued to be a unpaid JPS board member and tutored children twice a week at Building One Community, an immigrant support center in Stamford. He loved theater, open water sports, and was an avid bridge player.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 50 years, Anne; his adored children, Daniel of Greenwich, Michael of Darien, and Sarah of Brooklyn; his devoted family and friends.

Please consider a donation in his name to Jewish Family Services of Greenwich (https://jfsgreenwich.org/donate/) or Building One Community (https://buildingonecommunity.org/donate/).

Robert Stein, 95, loved skiing, hiking, fishing and swimming

LENOX – Robert Stein, 95, passed away on Sunday, December 13, 2020 at Kiddah Farm Nursing Home. Born in New York City in 1925 to Jack and Hattie (Greenbaum) Stein, he was a graduate of the Franklin School and New York University.

Bob served in the US Army during the Second World War in India and China. Back in New York after the war, he met his soon-to-be wife, Nance, whom he dued a wrong number and Bob answered, charming her enough to wrangle a sight-unseen date in the process. In his professional life, Bob’s first job was as an insurance broker, first with William Fleisch & Co. in New York City, later with Lee & Associates and the Obermann Group in Westchester.

Bob is survived by his wife of 70 years; sons Edward and wife, Katie; and beloved grandchildren Morgan and William. A memorial is planned for a later, post-COVID date. Please consider donating to HospiceCare in the Berkshires, 877 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Eve Berenblum Goldberg, 58, of Bedford, NY, a long-time resident of South Egremont, was spreading so much light in her life. Born March 30, 1962 in Providence, RI, to Andrew Berenblum and the late Sarah of Brooklyn, he cherished his devoted wife of 50 years, Anne; his adored children, Daniel of Greenwich, Michael of Darien, and Sarah of Brooklyn; his devoted family and friends. Eve is survived by her beloved husband, Brett Goldberg and daughter, Isa Goldberg of Santa Monica. In addition, he is survived by two children, Marvin Berenblum; mother, Susan Berenblum of Greenwich; brother, Andrew Berenblum; and sister-in-law, Daryl Wieland of Santa Monica. There was no more joyful and serene with one of her family members.

Eve is survived by her husband, Brett Goldberg and daughter, Isa Goldberg of Santa Monica. In addition, he is survived by two children, Marvin Berenblum; mother, Susan Berenblum of Greenwich; brother, Andrew Berenblum; and sister-in-law, Daryl Wieland of Santa Monica. There was no more joyful and serene with one of her family members.

Eve also had an impressive knack for cross-word puzzles. She was married by her husband, Brett Goldberg and daughter, Isa Goldberg of Santa Monica. In addition, he is survived by two children, Marvin Berenblum; mother, Susan Berenblum of Greenwich; brother, Andrew Berenblum; and sister-in-law, Daryl Wieland of Santa Monica. There was no more joyful and serene with one of her family members.

While he loved his work, he also volunteered in many charitable causes over the last decade, he was a popular member of the Tantas club and the "love of her life," the late Tony Greenberg. After marrying Tony, and while pregnant, she studied to become a CLA, attending classes with her late mother-in-law, Edith B. Greenberg.

With her belief in self-help, the supernatural and all things psychology books and articles and led new-age workshops, taught yoga, and turned people on to organic food and holistic medicine.

Eve was a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War and was assigned to work at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. As a public servant, first in affordable housing with the Melrose and Chelsea Housing Authorities, the MA Department of Housing and Community Development, and Department of Mental Health. In 1998, he and his wife Lisa (Sloan) moved to South Egremont, where he served as the town manager for 19 years.

While he loved his work, he also volunteered in many ways as a member of the Lions Club, tutored ESL through the Literacy Network of the Berkshires, and, at his untimely death, was being trained as a mediator for Berkshire Regional Housing Authority.

In 1988, working for the state housing authority, he met his wife Lisa (Sloan). They married in Salem, MA on October 10, 1986 and attended the joyful ceremony and party with beloved family and friends. There was no more joyful event for Bob than the birth of his daughter, Sally. In addition to Lisa and Sally, Bob leaves behind a large and loving family. Please raise a glass of red wine to Bob on March 17 when he would have turned 75.

Those wishing to make a donation are encouraged to donate to the Yemin Orde Youth Village, 1343 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01234 or the American Red Cross at https://www.redcross.org/.

Robert Laurence Nason, 74, Lee Town Manager for 19 years, volunteer to many organizations

LEE – Robert Laurence Nason, 74, died unexpectedly at home in Lee on January 5, 2021. Born in Everett, MA, on November 12, 1946, to Lawrence (Larry) and Bernice (Bunny Fale) Nason, he was the middle of three children born to Larry and Bunny. He claimed he was the “overlooked” middle child, his sisters, Brett, and wife, all of whom would certainly say his beloved middle brother was the best ambassador. Bob spent his very happy childhood in Melrose, MA, where he graduated from elementary and high schools. He grew up in a tight-knit family of four and remained in touch with many throughout his life. Bob played sports including football and basketball, and attended the Rotary Y camp in Boxford, MA. He also volunteered for the Y in his own community at the Village Y in Westborough, MA.

He was an avid traveler to the Middle East, where he attended the Healthcare and Biotech investment group, where he remained until his retirement in 2005.

He is known by all for his kindness, warmth, devotion to his family, and generosity. The United Way hired him to volunteer with Greenwich Call-A-Ride and Jewish Family Services of Greenwich, where he served as a volunteer and treasurer and then president. In recent years, he continued to be a unpaid JPS board member and tutored children twice a week at Building One Community, an immigrant support center in Stamford. He loved theater, open water sports, and was an avid bridge player.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 50 years, Anne; his adored children, Daniel of Greenwich, Michael of Darien, and Sarah of Brooklyn; his devoted family and friends. Eve is survived by her beloved husband, Brett Goldberg and daughter, Isa Goldberg of Santa Monica. In addition, he is survived by two children, Marvin Berenblum; mother, Susan Berenblum of Greenwich; brother, Andrew Berenblum; and sister-in-law, Daryl Wieland of Santa Monica. There was no more joyful and serene with one of her family members.

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A revolution hit the world of Yiddish teaching this summer when the multimedia textbook
The New Yiddish Textbook was published. For many years, Yiddish students have been
studying the language with Uriel Weinreich’s College Yiddish from 1949, or with
Selva Tucker’s Yiddish: An Introduction to the Language. Literature and Culture from
1995. Now, Yiddish students and teachers have a more up-to-date alternative. In eynem
is a monumental textbook, counting 800 pages (split up in two volumes), with beau-
tifully illustrated dialogues, word explanations, exercises and texts about Jewish
culture. It features a goldmine of material for the first two years of Yiddish studies.
A dedicated website offers even more teaching material, additional chapters and also
a teacher guide and work-sheets for the students. The pedagogical concept behind
it is the so-called communicative approach, but the textbook can also be used for
self-study.

Translator and journalist Frank Gabel interviewed text-
book co-author Asya Vaisman Schulman about this multi-
media “Yiddishland.” She is the director of the Yiddish
Language Institute and the Steiner Summer Yiddish
Program at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst. She holds a PhD in Yiddish
from Harvard, and her PhD research was on the Yiddish
songs and singing practices of contemporary Hasidic women.
The textbook was co-authored by Jordan Brown
and Mikih Yashinsky. Schulman spoke about the reasons to study Yiddish
today, about former Yiddish students’ careers, about
Hasidic Yiddish, and about how one can cultivate,
preserve and live in Yiddish in a secular context today.

One of the many interest-
ing features of the
textbook is its group of
recurrent characters, as they
represent today’s Yiddish
speaking community —
both learners and (native)
speakers of Yiddish. Could
you tell us more about these
characters? Who are the
typical Yiddish learners and
speakers of today?

There is a professor — Professor Dovid Rubin — and
her 11 students, who are all studying Yiddish. Each
of the students has a different background, and they all
represent groups of people who actually study Yiddish
today. They come from many different countries: the United
States, Canada, Poland, Israel, Germany, Argentina, and
Russia. There are non-Jewish students, religiously observ-
ing Yiddish, and culturally Jewish students. There are
graduate students, and undergraduate students, and
they study history, literature, linguistics, music, and
various other disciplines.

One of our goals with these
characters was for people studying Yiddish to see them-
selves reflected in the book, which helps them feel more at
home studying the language. Aside from the Yiddish class,
there is an assortment of Yiddish-speaking charac-
ters standing in for people whom learners are likely to
encounter in the Yiddish world: a Hasidic family in
Brooklyn, a secular Yiddishist
family in Manhattan, klezmer
musicians, actors in the
Yiddish theater, retired people
in Florida, journalists who
write for Yiddish newspapers,
a former Hasid, an immigrant
from the former Soviet Union,
a professor of Yiddish in Japan.
There are religious and
secular people, people of color,
and people of diverse back-
grounds and identities, just as
there are in the real Yiddish
world.

Readers of your textbook are introduced to standard
academic Yiddish. But they also get a taste of the other
Yiddishes out there. What are these other dialects and
sociolects of the Yiddish

YIDDISH TEXTBOOK, continued on page 20

MAZEL TOV
Mazel Tov to...

Jackie Bronner on her special birthday.

Steve and Lorraine German on the birth of their first granddaughter, Grace
Ann.

Professor Liz Schneider and Dr. Ben Liptzin on their December 20 wedding
at their home in Stockbridge.

Dr. Alan Gold, who marked 25 years as musical director at Temple Anshe
Aminth.

Karen and Richard Zink on the engagement of their daughter Lauren to Alex
Diamond, son of Jeffrey and Amy Diamond.

OBITUARIES, continued from previous page

Valdis Ansís Augstkalns, 81,
Holocaust survivor with an over-
comer attitude towards life
VIENNA, WV - Valdis Ansís
Augstkalns, 81, passed away Monday,
January 11 at his residence and is now
reunited with his wife and parents.
Born March 31, 1939 in Rezekne,
Latvia, the son of the late Janis
Augstkalns and Lidija Placerts.
Validis moved to the United States
in 1950 as a refugee from World
War II. He was a Holocaust survivor
with an overcomer attitude towards life.
He lived in Yuma, AZ and then
North Adams, where he graduated
from Drury High School in 1957. He
later obtained a master’s degree in
Chemical Engineering from University
of Massachusetts. Validis also served in
the US Army. He moved to the Vienna,
WV, area in 1963 and began his career
at DuPont Washington Works, where
he had worked for 42 years and devel-
oped several US patents. He will be
remembered for his wonderful stories
and his wealth of information on many
topics. He was well-read, enjoyed
science fiction books, and lived a
colorful full life.

Validis is survived by his daughter
Mary Catherine “MC” Augstkalns and
many friends.

In addition to his parents, he
was preceded in death by his
wife, Catherine Ann Ellingshausen
Augstkalns in 1998.

A life celebration was held at Leavitt
Funeral Home, Parkersburg, WV.
YIDDISH TEXTBOOK, continued from page 19

Central (‘Galitzianer’) Yiddish by listening to songs sung by speakers of those dialects. Students read the lyrics in ideal (Standard) Yiddish, listen to the recording, and are asked to identify how the singer’s pronunciation differs from the standard forms the students have learned. We learn about different orthographies by printing facsimiles of older editions of Yiddish texts in the book and asking students to identify patterns in how word spellings differ from those they’ve learned. Both of these skills are absolutely critical for Yiddish students, because once they go out into the world of Yiddish, they will encounter many varieties of the spoken and written language, so it’s important for them to begin familiarizing themselves with the differences.

The biggest group of Yiddish learners and speakers is to be found in the Hasidic communities. Your textbook reflects that fact by including Hasidic characters in dialogues and exercises and by giving information on Hasidic resources. How does the Yiddish that the Hasidic communities are using and thus developing in their everyday lives influence the Yiddish you are teaching in your classes?

Although we could not include many direct excerpts of Hasidic texts in the book for copyright reasons, we did want to make sure that Hasidic Yiddish is represented in the textbook, both to cultivate a respect for contemporary Hasidic culture (as part of our general mission to give voice to the full range of Yiddish culture) and to facilitate future encounters with Hasidic Yiddish that the learner may have. The Teacher Guide in particular references Hasidic children’s books, CDs, and games that the teacher may purchase in Hasidic stores or online to share with students and offers suggested activities to do with these resources.

For example, the chapter about weather references the Hasidic children’s book “Der guthartiker shneymentsh” (The Kindhearted Snowman), and the chapter about body parts references music-and-movement songs from the Hasidic children’s CD series “Zing un nesham” (Sing and Jump). In the chapter about clothing, we include a facsimile of a Hasidic poster from Williamsburg cautioning against the wearing of brightly-colored immodest clothing and ask the student to engage both with the cultural implications of such a text and with the Yiddish dialect it is written in.

You have been working as a Yiddish teacher for several years now. Your experience...
The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World

Virginia Postrel's superb new popular history of textiles also sheds light on a subject of particular Jewish interest

The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World by Virginia Postrel tells the story of how societies have walked through the ages, making and transforming natural fibers and animal skins into fabric. It is an engaging work of popular history that demonstrates how the need for textiles has driven science, business, technology, and culture.

Postrel, an award-winning journalist and independent scholar, presents a vivid historical narrative with global sweep while also deftly explaining the intricacies of working with fabrics and the incredible technological innovations that transformed their production over the millennia. The story is also forward-looking, with reporting on how the fabrics of tomorrow are now being created and how these new materials could change everyday life.

The chapter “Dyes,” Postrel relates an idiosyncratic experiment with color that is not just of interest to particular Jewish interest. In 2001, archaeologist Deborah Ruscillo learned in the summer of 2001. A specialist in the field of purple dye, she was intrigued by the ancient dyers and decided to produce – as archaeologist Deborah Ruscillo learned in the summer of 2001. A specialist in the field of purple dye, she was intrigued by the ancient dyers and decided to experiment with small quantities of murex snail flesh. She quickly discovered that the ancient dyers didn’t create an alkaline bath. Maybe seawater alone did the trick. It is somewhat alkaline, with a pH around 8.3, with 7 being neutral.22 The biggest revelation came when, almost by luck, Ruscillo tested the bath using seawater without steeping the dye. After immersing the samples for just ten minutes, she writes, “I watched as the white, slimy swatches dried to beautiful blue hues. This experiment had recreated the biblical ‘Purple’ or tekeleth, as it is known, sacred in antiquity as the color of the present, partic- ularly in the context of Jewish religion. It is known that this sacred blue was introduced from marine snails. The tali, or ritual prayer cloth worn by men during morning prayer or the wedding ceremony, was tradition- ally to have a blue fringe dyed from the tali. This rich blue, akin to the color of indigo-dyed light denim, is a wholly unex- pected result.”

To endure the stench, the archaeologist and her colleague had to wear masks. In an ancient dye setting, “The big flies were biting you – and wasps.” To endure the stench, “the same concentra- tion to just below boiling. They put the glands into a covered aluminum pot with a brass awl. ‘The big flies were biting you – and wasps.’” She used ingredients ancient murex workers were located far from settlements, and she soon expe- rienced the reason firsthand. “They put the glands into a covered aluminum pot with a brass awl. ‘The big flies were biting you – and wasps.’” She used ingredients ancient murex harvesters must have worked with the minute marine gastropods to obtain the much-valued pigment.

We know that purple hue was esteemed in antiquity as Israelites because its name has been preserved in a part of our liturgy proclaimed lovingly twice each day, in the evening and morning. As the excerpt below shows, however, yielding that dye from small carcasses would have been difficult and stomach-churning process for our forebears,” even though the purple’s no- toius stench conveyed prestige, because the dye was the real thing, not an imitation fashioned from cheaper plant dyes.

For sellers, the high cost reflected how laborious and disgusting the dye was to produce – as archaeologist Deborah Ruscillo learned in the summer of 2001. A specialist in analyzing animal remains, she was intrigued by the encounter of two classes of snails she found at archaeological sites – with one important difference. Unlike the ancient shellfish, these snails contained decaying meat. Immediately, Ruscillo says, “you are surrounded by flies – big hornets that are biting you – and wasps.”

The work also stained their hands a purple amount no ability of chemical theory, Pliny might have been right about the ingredients used. But in ancient times, the snail flesh from rotting, and seawater. Maybe dyers didn’t create an alkaline bath. Maybe seawater alone did the trick. It is somewhat alkaline, with a pH around 8.3, with 7 being neutral.22 The biggest revelation came when, almost by luck, Ruscillo tested the bath using seawater without steeping the dye. After immersing the samples for just ten minutes, she writes, “I watched as the white, slimy swatches dried to beautiful blue hues. This experiment had recreated the biblical ‘Purple’ or tekeleth, as it is known, sacred in antiquity as the color of the present, partic- ularly in the context of Jewish religion. It is known that this sacred blue was introduced from marine snails. The tali, or ritual prayer cloth worn by men during morning prayer or the wedding ceremony, was tradition- ally to have a blue fringe dyed from the tali. This rich blue, akin to the color of indigo-dyed light denim, is a wholly unex- pected result.”

External From The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World by Virginia Postrel is available from Basic Books, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc., as well as in local bookstores and through Amazon.

Virginia Postrel is a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion and has been a columnist for the Atlantic, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. She is the author of the highly acclaimed The Substance of Style and The Power of Glamour. Her research is supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the BJV for allowing us to share this work.

The Berkshire Jewish Film Festival (BJFF) continues its 34th season with “winter- Flicks: a series of outstanding films in virtual format. Watch from the comfort of your homes.

Tickets to each film are $8. Information and access available at berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org or by calling 413-445-4872, ext. 10.

Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story

Available from February 18 through March 1

From the IMDDB synopsis of this 2014 film: “Upon learning that 40% of the food that is produced globally ultimately gets discarded, couple docu- ments Grant Baldwin and Jenny Rustrum decide to embark on a 6-month experiment to eat all of the food that is discarded or will inevitably be discarded, with the goal of documenting the process. The one exception will be meals to which they have been invited by family or friends. They are surprised about how easy it becomes to find perfectly good food (especially once they learn the routine of where to find it), but how difficult it is to get food when there is nothing available for them to choose from.”

“The Substance of Style” by Virginia Postrel, an essay on fashion, is available from Basic Books, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc., as well as in local bookstores and through Amazon.

To start, Ruscillo baited with a covered aluminum pot with a brass awl. “The big flies were biting you – and wasps.” She used ingredients ancient murex harvesters must have worked with the minute marine gastropods to obtain the much-valued pigment.

Whereas ancient dyers used vats of a hundred liters or more, Ruscillo conducted her experiments with small pots, each containing about twenty-five snails (560 milliliters), enough to dye a sample swatch measuring six inches by eight inches. Even at this small scale, she encountered the dye’s legendary stench. “The great number of dye-works makes the city unpleasant to live in,” the Greek historian Strabo wrote of Tyre, “yet it makes the city rich through the superior skill of its inhabitants.”

“Unpleasant” is a serious understatement. “The work was so dirty that fifty meters away were complaining about how stinky it was,” says Ruscillo. “Because of the stench, she and her colleague had to wear masks. In an ancient dye center, the overbearing odor would have been multiplied many thousandfold.

The work also stained their fabrics also held the stench. Nearly two decades later, they still smell – despite washing in Tide. Surprisingly, Ruscillo got essentially the same result from every solution. The urine made the purple more vibrant, but in general, she recalls, “With the same amount of time, the same concentra- tion, and the same amount of water,” added ingredients “did not seem to make a difference in the hue.” (Seawater did make the dye more colorfast than fresh water.)

Next came the gross part. They cut out the glands and discarded the heavy generating piles of broken shells that closely resembled the ones archaeologists find at ancient sites – with one important difference. Unlike the ancient shells, these snails contained decaying meat. Immediately, Ruscillo says, “you are surrounded by flies – big hornets that are biting you – and wasps.”

They put the glands into a covered aluminum pot with a brass awl. “The big flies were sitting on the rims, laying these larvae and throwing them under the lid with their legs,” Ruscillo remembers. It was remark- able. “To the resulting maggot without ruining the dye, she had to heat the solu- tion to just below boiling.

Whereas ancient dyers used vats of a hundred liters or more, Ruscillo conducted her experiments with small pots, each containing about twenty-five snails (560 milliliters), enough to dye a sample swatch measuring six inches by eight inches. Even at this small scale, she encountered the dye’s legendary stench. “The great number of dye-works makes the city unpleasant to live in,” the Greek historian Strabo wrote of Tyre, “yet it makes the city rich through the superior skill of its inhabitants.”

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It was a cold, rainy autumn night in Chelm. The wind had torn open the door and shutters. In the middle of the night, Avrohom heard the door banging. So he woke up his wife, Mirtl, and said to her, “Wifey dear, did you lock the door?”

Mirtl replied, “Hubby dear, I thought that you had locked it.”

“I didn’t,” said Avrohom. “Go and lock it.”

“You go and lock it,” said Mirtl.

Said Avrohom, “No, I’m not going downstairs in this cold, and surely you know that when I say ‘no,’ it’s ‘no.’”

Said Mirtl, “The whole world knows that when a man is a rabbi, his wife is called a rebbetzin; when a man is Mr. Shoemaker, then his wife is Mrs. Shoemaker. You’re Mr. Stubborn, my husband, so that makes me Mrs. Stubborn. I too am staying in bed and not moving a muscle.”

Said Avrohom, “What you say makes sense. You know what? Let’s make a deal with each other that whichever one of us is the first to speak will lock the door.”

Said Mirtl, “Deal.”

So they lay there in silence. The wind blew, and the open door banged and banged until the house shuddered, but both of them kept quiet, and neither moved a muscle.

The rain poured, the wind blew, inside the house it was wet and cold enough to drive away wolves, but Avrohom and Mirtl didn’t budge.

Just before dawn, husband and wife heard footsteps and human voices. Thieves were talking. One thief said, “Just look at that open door! Let’s go inside and see what we can lift.”

Said the second thief, “Don’t talk so loud! Maybe the owners are home, but they’re sleeping!”

“Don’t be ridiculous!” answered the first one. “You hear how the door’s banging? That would wake the dead. Chances are nobody’s home. Come on.”

Husband and wife heard the thieves come into the house and start to empty out all the rooms. But husband and wife didn’t move a muscle. The thieves did their work and packed up everything they could get their hands on. Husband and wife lay in bed, not moving a muscle. The thieves did their work, and then they left the house, never seeing Avrohom and Mirtl.”

A Deal’s a Deal
Solomon Simon

BOOK EXCERPT, continued on next page
wife knew their home would be left naked and bare, but they didn’t let out a peep. The thieves gathered everything together and took off. They left the house without even shutting the door. Mirtl went and closed the door. Avrohom got up from his chair and clapped his hands together, saying, “Woe is me! Alas and alack! What did they do to you? You look just like a demon!” Avrohom left his chair and said very calmly, “You were the first to speak. So please go and close the door!” Mirtl went and closed the door. After all, a deal’s a deal!

About Solomon Simon (1890-1970): Born Shloyme Shimonsitsh in the town of Radinokotch near Minsk in Byelorussian Bielorussia, Simon escaped conscription in the tsar’s army by fleeing to the United States in 1913. He studied English at night while holding odd jobs, and served in the US Army starting in 1918, after which he taught Hebrew in the New York area. He became a dentist, but only worked enough to support his family while he focused on his writing. He became involved with the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, and other organizations committed to secularist Yiddish culture. He wrote for children and, later in his career, for adults. He died in Miami Beach.

The Teacher
Mashe Shitukier-Pajuyk

Tomorrow a new teacher comes
Woohoo! It makes me very glad
I’ve worked so hard on all my tricks
And little ways of being bad

Before he gets to know the class
Each and every single one
I’ll have my mischief at the ready
All my games and all my fun

But I’d rejoice in vain it seems:
Before I could see my plans through,
He fixed me with just one good look
He knew just what I’d hoped to do

How did he guess before he saw
The slightest little thing at all?
Heh heh, the teacher must have been
Just like me when he was small.

About Mashe Shitukier-Pajuyk (1914-1990): Born in Poland, Shitukier emigrated to Argentina with her family in 1925 and farmed on the Montefiore settlement, one of several Jewish utopian agricultural settlements throughout North and South America. She became a kindergarten teacher in Buenos Aires, and published several books. Her work for children uses widely anthropologized and translated into Hebrew and Yiddish. In 1974, she moved to Israel. Her epitaph reads, “It’s good to be young and to sing your own song, aloud and free.”
Alcohol on Purim

Are Jews really obligated to drink to the point of not knowing the difference between Haman and Mordecai? By Jeffrey Spitzer / My Jewish Learning

When it comes to drinking on Purim, the Talmud clearly under- scores that the achievement of Rabbai and R. Zeira was “as if the Megillah was all about. In practically every chapter of the Megillah, someone is mentioned being drunk at a drinking party. And the scroll concludes with Mordecai’s instruction to the entire Jewish people to drink so that the days as “gemilut chesed v’emet”, days of drinking and rejoicing (Esther 9:22 ).

It’s not clear why the Talmud satirizes this, but it’s likely that the reason was that the drinking wasn’t morally defensible. Purim was a special time when the Jewish people could relax a little in their celebration.

Are we to assume that people are sober enough to calculate the volume of wine or the number of hours one would be obligated to drink. The rabbis of the Talmud paid close attention to the nature of the oblig- ation. On Passover, the four cups of wine are for joy and for sancti- fication, but for Purim the addresses are like between the Hebrew letters called gematria.

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